

Rifleman 2113 William Henry Blackmore

1st Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment

1880 – 1915



Life in the Community

William Henry was born in Swansea in 1880 and is shown on the 1881 census as being 6 months old living with his father William (29) and his mother Rosa (29) and an older brother Sydney (2)

The family moved to Caerleon around 1888 and the men of the family were involved with horses initially his father William and, when they were old enough, William Henry and his brothers Sydney and James were employed in grooming or horse transport.

From the 1891 Census the family were living at Broadway Caerleon and William Henry was a scholar and his father was a Coachman.

From the Census of 1901 the family were living in Newbury, and his father was a Coachman.

Prior to 1911 the family had moved to Llanwern and William's parents and his younger brother Ernest were living at 1 Rockwell Terrace

In 1911 William was working as butler to Eva Pemberton at Woodlands Malpas

By January 1915 the family moved had to Milton Cottage Llanwern.

Military Service

William joined the First Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment in August 1914 and was recruited at the Drill Hall in Stow Hill, Newport. The men of the First Battalion, along with the other two battalions in the regiment, became heavily involved in the second Battle of Ypres, which began on 22 April 1915.

This regiment was unusual in that it had no units of the regular army all of its battalions were of the Territorial Force. They moved on mobilisation to Pembroke Dock but by 10th August went to Oswestry and by the end of the month were at St James' in Northampton.



It is quite possible that William Henry is in this picture which was taken of the First Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment as they prepared to leave for Northampton.

Their training then took them to Hemingstone near Ipswich and in December 1914 to Barningham near Thetford in Norfolk. In early January 1915 they were at Cambridge and by 13th February 1915 they had landed in France coming under orders of 84th Brigade in 28th Division.

On 8th May 1915 the Monmouthshire Regiment were trying to defend the Frezenberg Ridge from a ferocious German attack. By the end of the day, the Regiment had lost 455 men and officers. The Regiment's war diary states:-

7th May 1915

The strength of the regiment was 23 officers and 565 men.

8th May 1915

The intense German bombardment, described afterwards by Sir John French when addressing the Brigade at Herzelee, as probably the heaviest to which troops had ever been subjected, began at about 6.30 am and as the morning wore on there were many casualties in our trenches. A German Infantry attack was launched somewhere about the junction of the 84th and 83rd brigades and the line was first broken south of the Ypres-Zonnebeke road. Once the enemy infantry had broken through the action became a flank as well as a frontal attack as far as our brigade was concerned. A

heavy machine gun fire from the right flank was directed on our trenches and the trench on our right and the breach on the right gradually widened.

Men of another regiment were seen by our men to go forward and surrender on our right and shortly afterwards men of yet another regiment came down our communication trench in the portion of the trench held by D company and impeded the bringing up of Supports to reinforce the front trenches. Our Supports were greatly impeded by this party retiring and at this point Lt. E S Phillips was killed while bringing up his Supports. Men of the Cheshire Regiment said the order was to reinforce on the left, but Capt. H T Edwards refused to move his men and was killed while holding his trench. Sgt Garbutt with fixed bayonet remained at the entrance of the communication trench to hold back the men retiring.

The Germans were by degrees able to bring fire to bear from the rear and the position at the right of the battalion became untenable and eventually almost all were either killed, wounded or captured. Capt. E C Dinkdale (adjutant) was killed while leading an attack on a machine gun position in a building. There now remained A Company part of B Company. Supports were seen to be advancing under terrific shell fire. The advance of these Supports (afterwards found to be the 12th London Regiment) was most gallant, but only a few men survived to reach within 300 yards of the trenches and these were forced to retire in twos and threes as best they could later in the day. Their machine gun however was able to get to work from the vicinity of the road in the rear of our trenches. The officer in charge of the gun was soon wounded and Lt C Hepburn fought it until wounded himself.

When all communications by wire was cut Col Robinson (commanding officer) and Major Williams (2nd in command) came up into the trenches from HQ. It may be said here that any artillery reply on our side was totally inadequate to meet the German bombardment. Major Williams was killed about 11 o'clock. The commanding officer, after consultation with the Northumberland Fusiliers on our left decided to attempt to take up a new position to cover the flank and gave orders to the remainder to retire to a position in echelon.

This operation was attempted Col Robinson while superintending this was killed. Capt. M C Llewellyn took charge of the left communication trench party and Major C A Evill brought the remainder out by the right communication trench firing as they went. These trenches only extended for a short distance they were very narrow and shallow and full of mud and bodies. Casualties were very heavy as open ground had to be traversed, which had a gentle rise in face of the enemy, there were very few who survived. Eventually the remnant under heavy fire of rifles machine gun and artillery reached the support trenches in front of Wieltje which were being manned by the Royal Irish Regiment.

The only officers left were Major C A Evill, Capt. O.M. Williams and Lt C Hepburn (wounded). The Northumberland Fusiliers retired towards this trench line later with very heavy casualties. They were followed up by Germans, but when fire was opened from our trench this forward movement of Germans was stopped and they were seen to be digging in 300 or 400 yards in front. Another extremely heavy bombardment of HQ trenches took place towards dusk and there were again very heavy casualties of regiments in them, but the German infantry did not come on again. The machine gun

section of the 1st Welch Regiment under Lt Monk was on our right and though their guns were buried more than once they stuck to their place and did very good work now, as well as earlier in the day when they were in a more advanced position. Towards evening other regiments came up and manned the trenches those coming into our position being the Dublin Fusiliers.

The survivors of our regiment spent the night in dug-outs about 600 yards behind these trenches Major Evill and Capt. O M Williams being at HQ dug-out of the 1st Welch Regiment.

Casualties for 8th May 1915.

Officers

Killed 5

Wounded 5

Wounded and prisoner 7, 1 since died of Wounds

Missing 1

Prisoner 1

Total 21

Other Ranks

Killed 33

Wounded and missing 82

Missing 319

Total 434

At the end of the day on the 8th May all that were left were 2 Officers and 131 Men.

It is possible that the total of 85 men from Newport killed on 8 May 1915 is the greatest loss suffered by any Welsh town in a single day in the First World War.

William was reported "Missing" and assumed for official purposes to have died on 8th May 1915.

Medal Entitlement

Private 2113 William Henry Blackmore's medal entitlement was the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
BLACKMORE	<i>1st Battalion R. 216.</i>		<i>2113</i>
<i>Williams</i>			
Medal	Date	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	<i>11/05/19</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>Pip 8 5-15.</i>
BATTION	<i>20 20</i>		
15 th TAB	<i>1/1903</i>	<i>657.</i>	
Theatre of War first served in	<i>1. France</i>		
Date of entry therein	<i>13-2-15.</i>		



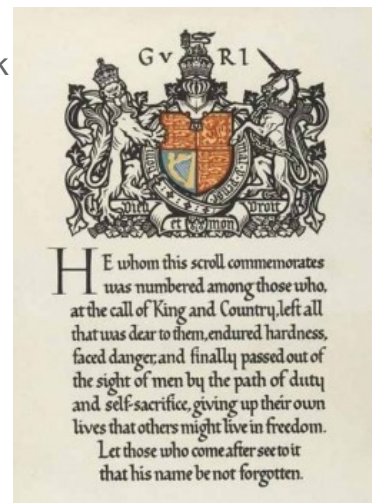
In the 1920's when the First World War medals were issued they were commonly referred to as "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred".

It coincided with a popular comic strip published by the Daily Mirror newspaper which first appeared on 12th May 1919. Pip was the dog, Squeak the penguin and Wilfred the young rabbit. For some reason the three names of the characters became associated with the three campaign medals being issued at that time to many thousands of returning servicemen, and they stuck.

The medals were issued in the 1920's to the fallen serviceman or woman's legatees if a Will existed. If no Will existed, they were issued to the next-of-kin in the order of precedence laid down in Army Order 256 of 1917.

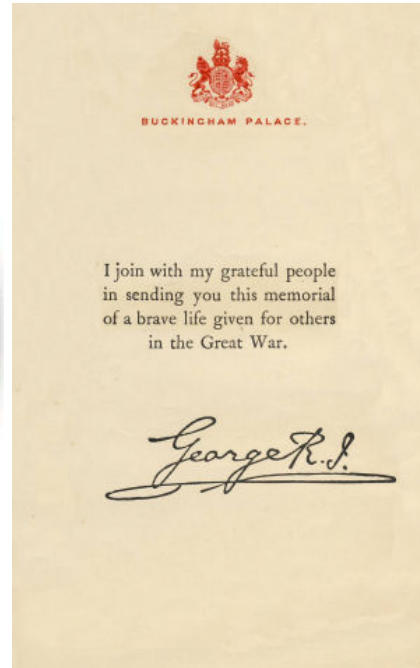
This Scroll accompanied the medals of servicemen and women who fell in the War and carried the full Name, Rank and Number beneath the last line of the script.

The Army record of soldiers effects show that his father William, who was his legatee, received £5 10s 7d on the 11th September 1916 and a War Gratuity of £3 0s 0d on 18th September 1919. This would have the equivalent purchasing power of £306 in 2017.



Commemoration of the Fallen

The Bronze Memorial Plaque was issued to the next of kin of servicemen or women who had fallen in the Great War. It just had the recipient's name cast in the box above the lion's head no rank was given as it was intended to show equality in their sacrifice. 1,355,000 plaques were issued, which used a total of 450 tonnes of bronze, 600 of these plaques were issued to women. Distribution started in November 1919 and they continued to be issued into the 1930s to commemorate people who died as a consequence of the war. The circular shape and coin-like appearance soon contributed to the nickname of this memorial plaque becoming widely known as the "Dead Man's Penny", the "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny".



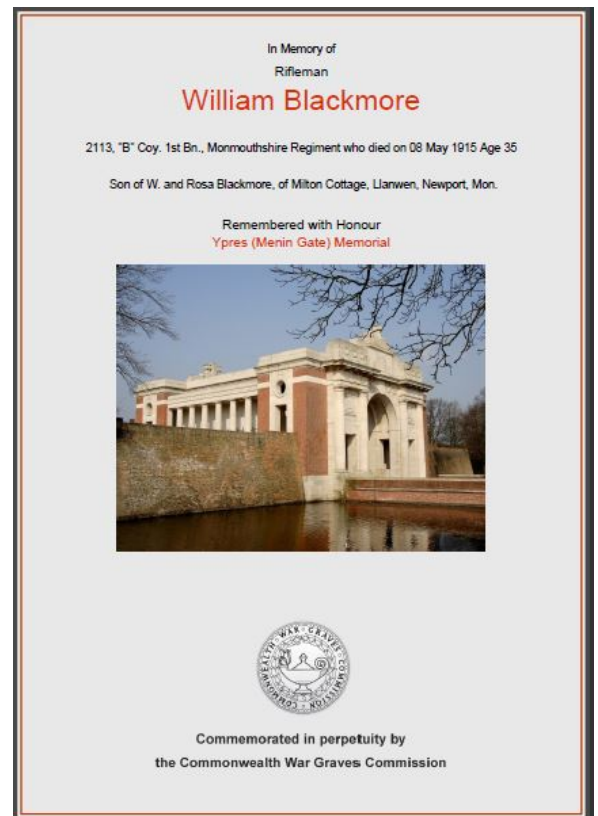
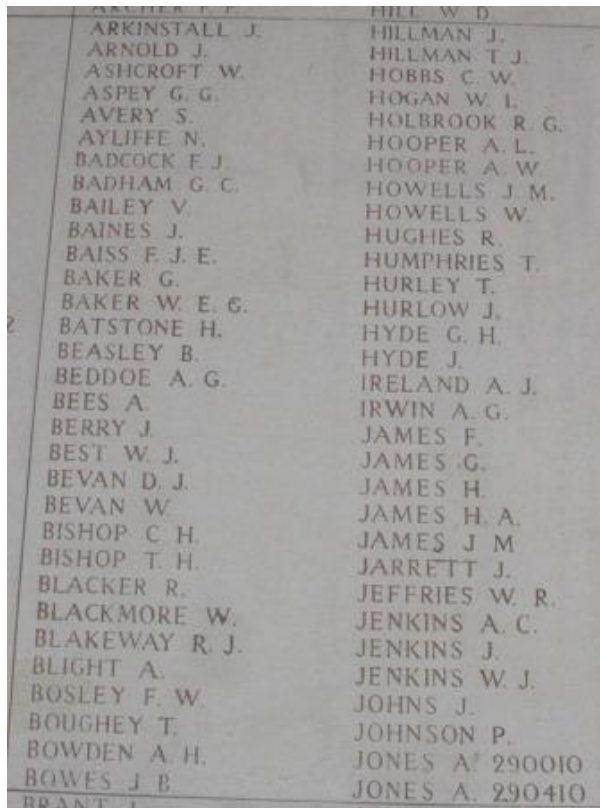
William has no known grave and is remembered on The Menin Gate Memorial on Bay 50 Stone H.

Carved into the panels of the Menin Gate are the names of 54,896 officers and men who died in the area between the outbreak of war in 1914 and 15th August 1917 and who have no known graves.



Thousands of soldiers in the British Army and Commonwealth Forces lost their lives fighting in the Ypres Salient. The remains of over 89,000 of them have never been found or identified. They are, therefore, buried somewhere in the Ypres Salient with

no known grave. The site of the Menin Gate Memorial was considered to be a fitting location to place a memorial to commemorate the missing soldiers.



In his speech at the unveiling of the Menin Gate memorial in 1927, Lord Plumer of Messines said:

"One of the most tragic features of the Great War was the number of casualties reported as, 'missing, believed killed'.

When peace came, and the last ray of hope had been extinguished, the void seemed deeper and the outlook more forlorn for those who had no grave to visit, no place where they could lay tokens of loving remembrance.

It was resolved that here at Ypres, where so many of the missing are known to have fallen, there should be erected a memorial worthy of them which should give expression to the nation's gratitude for their sacrifice and their sympathy with those who mourned them. A memorial has been erected which, in its simple grandeur, fulfils this object, and now it can be said of each one in whose honour we are assembled here today: He is not missing; he is here!"



William is remembered at St Mary's church, Malpas, Christchurch War Memorial and at Malpas Community Centre.

William is also remembered in the graveyard of Langstone Parish Church on a commemorative stone alongside his father and two of his brothers and in the Book of Remembrance held on the People's Collection Wales website.





The Newport cenotaph was unveiled by Lord Tredegar in June 1923, to commemorate the local people who died in active service in the First World War. It now also commemorates people who died in subsequent wars. There are no names on the memorial but William's name appears on the listing.