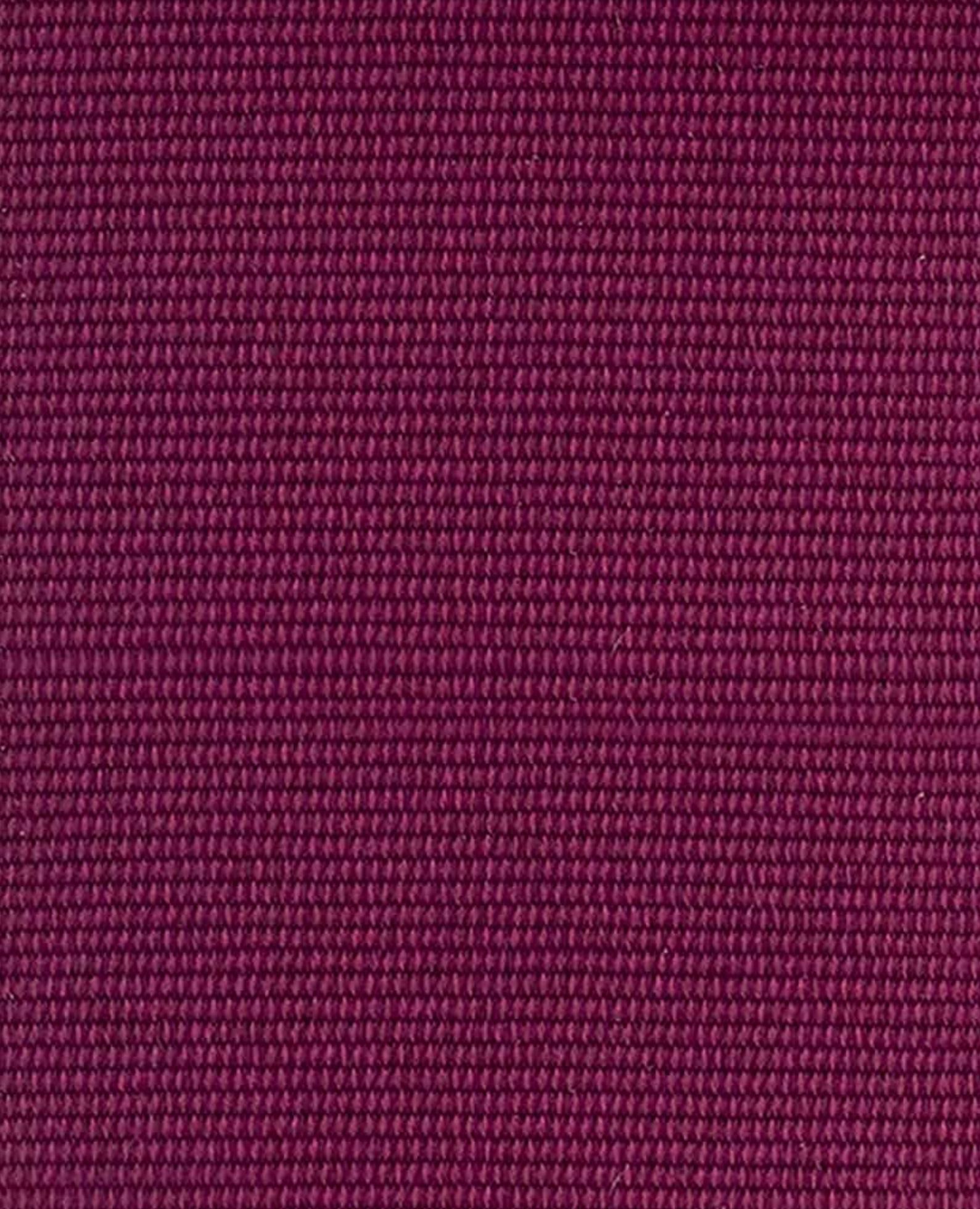




# VICTORIA'S WORLD WAR ONE LEGACY

Recipients of the Victoria Cross 

 ANZAC-2014-2018-  
CENTENARY  
*Sharing Victoria's Stories & Making Connections*





## RECIPIENTS OF THE VICTORIA CROSS



The following 26 stories are about outstanding valour on the battlefields of the Great War. They tell the story of those men, either born or resident of Victoria, or who enlisted here, who were recipients of the Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest award for bravery in wartime, and now Australia's pre-eminent award for conspicuous gallantry in combat.

The award dates back to 1856 when it was instituted by Queen Victoria after the Crimean War and made retrospective to cover that conflict. It is an award that from the outset could be awarded to a soldier of any rank, providing the action could be attested by witnesses and took place 'in the face of the enemy'.

When hostilities broke out between the great powers of Europe one hundred years ago, Australia had been a nation for only 14 years. The colony of Victoria had been established in 1851, only five years before the introduction of the Victoria Cross, and the Queen had given her name to both. In 1914, the nation went to war as part of the British Empire, with Prime Minister Andrew Fisher vowing to support Great Britain 'to our last man and our last shilling'.

In Victoria, enthusiasm for participation appears to have been particularly strong. It is not hard to understand why. This was not contemporary multi-cultural Australia. With one exception, the 26 names of the recipients are of Anglo-Celtic origin, and many had been born in the United Kingdom. The notion of the mother country was deeply embedded in the majority of the population who saw Australia as an extension of 'home'. Also, as with all the countries involved, there was initial exuberance, a quest for adventure and a naiveté about war that had men flocking to enlist. Some of that exuberance is reflected in these pages.

Despite the shared ethnic and cultural background of the 26 men, they were all very different. Some were extremely young and many were from the bush, but their education and occupations – of those who were old enough to have one – were varied, and for those who survived, their futures were equally mixed. Most ranks are represented but it is the non-commissioned officers who dominate the list.

Not surprisingly most of the exploits occurred at Gallipoli and on the various battlefields of France; this includes the first Australian soldier of the war to receive the Victoria Cross, Albert Jacka.

But other actions occurred in further fields. William Dartnell, born in Collingwood in 1885 and buried in Kenya, was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously, after dying in September 1915 while fighting against the German army in East Africa.

Samuel Pearse was born in Wales, migrated to Mildura, joined up when he was 17 and survived France, but received his posthumous Victoria Cross for fighting with the British in Russia against the Bolsheviks in 1919. The account of his death is another example of extraordinary bravery, and where he earned his award demonstrates the breadth and complexity of conflict spawned by the Great War.

These 26 stories are not about celebration; rather, they commemorate the feats of ordinary men who became extraordinary in the midst of battle. When we read about what they did we can only wonder how any of them survived, but many did and returned to Victoria to lead long and fruitful lives.

But lest we forget, many Victorians – and Australians – did not return. Young men from many nations did not return. Those who did come back were often physically and mentally broken.

These 26 men are not Victoria's only wartime heroes. Rather, these stories, remarkable as they are, lead us to remembrance of the often unsung selflessness, sacrifice, courage and determination of so many Australian men and women who have served at home and abroad throughout our nation's history.



## LEST WE FORGET

“Everyone has a connection to the First World War, either through family, local community, place of work or country of origin. The Anzac Centenary is an occasion for Victorians of all backgrounds and cultures to remember those who served.”

The Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP  
Premier of Victoria



“August 2014 marks 100 years since the beginning of the First World War. Over the Centenary, we will remember the troops who served in the Pacific, at Gallipoli, in the Middle East and on the Western Front.”

The Hon Damian Drum MLC  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs



# CONTENTS



6  
ROBERT MATTHEW BEATHAM

7  
FREDERICK BIRKS

8  
ALBERT BORELLA

9  
MAURICE VINCENT BUCKLEY

10  
ALEXANDER STEWART BURTON

11  
PERCY HERBERT CHERRY

12  
THOMAS COOKE

13  
WILLIAM THOMAS DARTNELL

14  
WILLIAM DUNSTAN

15  
ROBERT CUTHBERT GRIEVE

16  
GEORGE MAWBY INGRAM

17  
ALBERT JACKA

18  
WILLIAM DONOVAN JOYNT

19  
ALBERT DAVID LOWERSON

20  
ROBERT MACTIER

21  
FRANK HUBERT MCNAMARA

22  
RUPERT VANCE MOON

23  
GEORGE RAYMOND DALLAS MOOR

24  
JAMES ERNEST NEWLAND

25  
SAMUEL GEORGE PEARSE

26  
WALTER PEELER

27  
WILLIAM RUTHVEN

28  
CLIFFORD WILLIAM KING SADLIER

29  
ISSY SMITH

30  
WILLIAM JOHN SYMONS

31  
FREDERICK HAROLD TUBB

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication contains images of people who have passed away.*

# ROBERT MATTHEW BEATHAM



DATE OF BIRTH  
16 June 1894

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Glassonby,  
Cumberland (Cumbria),  
England

DATE OF DEATH  
9 August 1918

PLACE OF DEATH  
Near Rosières, France

Robert Beatham was born in the small northern English town of Glassonby, Cumberland in 1894. One of nine sons of John and Elizabeth Beatham, he migrated with his brother Walter to Australia in 1913. When war broke out he was working as a labourer in Geelong, Victoria. On 8 January 1915, Beatham enlisted in the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and undertook basic training at Broadmeadows camp. His father and six of his brothers would also serve during the Great War. On 17 April, Beatham boarded His Majesty's Australian Transport (HMAT) *Hororata* at Port Melbourne with other reinforcements for the 8th Battalion. After several weeks in Egypt, he returned to Australia on medical grounds. Following treatment, he re-embarked in September and served briefly at Gallipoli. In March 1916, he arrived in France and soon was on the Western Front with the rest of the 1st Division.

Over the next two years Beatham was in the thick of the action, as his battalion took part in many of the major battles of the war. He was seriously wounded during the ferocious Battle of Pozières in August 1916 and did not return to his unit for a year. In October 1917, he was once again wounded, this time at Broodseinde during the bloody slaughter of Passchendaele, and evacuated to England to recover. In February 1918, he returned to his unit and soon after took part in the fighting to stem General Ludendorff's offensive.

On 9 August near Rosières, he received his Victoria Cross. When his company was held up by multiple machine-gun positions, Beatham and Lance-Corporal Nottingham charged forward with rifles and hand grenades, destroying four of the positions and killing and capturing two dozen Germans. Although wounded, Beatham continued to advance but was cut down by machine-gun fire while destroying a fifth position. He died instantly and was buried at Heath Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery near Harbonnières. In March 1919, his mother received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace. Tragically, he was the fourth of her sons killed during the Great War.



# FREDERICK BIRKS



DATE OF BIRTH  
16 August 1894

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Buckley, Flintshire,  
North Wales

DATE OF DEATH  
21 September 1917

PLACE OF DEATH  
Glencorse Wood, Belgium

Frederick Birks was born in 1894 in the small mining town of Buckley, Flintshire in North Wales. One of six children of Samuel and Mary Birks, life was not easy after the death of his father in a pit accident at the colliery when Birks was five years old. He attended St Matthew's Church of England school and was an exemplary pupil, as well as a good boxer and footballer. Leaving school at 14, Birks found work at the local steelworks. In 1910, he is believed to have joined the local Territorial Army unit serving in the Royal Artillery. An adventurous young man, he was inspired to travel by an uncle living in outback South Australia. With two friends, he boarded the Orient Line steamship *Otway* in London in August 1913 and set off for Melbourne.

Soon after their arrival the three went their separate ways. Over the next year, Birks worked in Tasmania and South Australia before returning to Melbourne. Almost as soon as war broke out, he enlisted in the AIF, undertaking his basic training at Broadmeadows camp, north of Melbourne. Soon he was posted to the 2nd Field Ambulance, 2nd Brigade, 1st Australian Division. On 19 October, his unit embarked on the HMAT *Wiltshire* bound, they believed, for the United Kingdom. While crossing the Indian Ocean the ship turned north, heading for Alexandria, Egypt.

In early April 1915, after several months training in Egypt, they set sail once again, this time for Lemnos in the Aegean Sea, where final preparations for the Gallipoli landings took place. Landing with his unit on 25 April, Birks was soon in the thick of the action. Serving with the 2nd Brigade at Cape Helles during the Battle of Krithia, he was recommended for the Military Medal. In late June he was wounded by shrapnel but soon after returned to duty. By late September he had returned to Egypt. He sailed for Marseilles with the rest of the AIF in March 1916.

By June, Birks was on the Somme and would soon take part in the bloody fighting around Pozieres. It was here, on 26 July, that he was awarded the Military Medal for 'constant good services' in retrieving wounded men under heavy shellfire. After his unit was removed from the frontline, Birks used his leave to visit his family in North Wales. In March 1917, he was selected for officer training and received his commission the following month. On 18 May, he was taken on strength with the Victorian 6th Battalion in time for Third Ypres, known ever after as Passchendaele. The Battle of Menin Road in September 1917 would be his first and last action with his new unit.

On 20 September, his company was in Glencorse Wood. Here they were held up by German machine-gun fire and Birks, accompanied by a Corporal, charged the enemy gun. After the Corporal fell wounded, Birks killed the German crew and captured the weapon. He then organised a small group of men to attack another strong point. This position was also taken before Birks pressed forward and, organising men of various units, he helped consolidate the gains the Australians had made at the edge of Polygon Wood. The next day, while helping to dig out men who had been buried by artillery fire, he and several other men were killed by shellfire. Birks was recommended for the Victoria Cross, with the official citation appearing in the *London Gazette* on 8 November 1917. Seven weeks later his mother Mary died on Christmas Day, soon after hearing of her son's death.



# ALBERT BORELLA



DATE OF BIRTH  
7 August 1881

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Borong, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
7 February 1968

PLACE OF DEATH  
Albury, New South Wales

Born in 1881 in the tiny central Victorian town of Borung, 60 kilometres north-west of Bendigo, Albert Borella was the oldest Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the Great War. He attended the local state school before farming in the Echuca and Borung districts in the first decade of the 20th century. He later served for 18 months with the Victorian Rangers before moving to Melbourne in 1910, where he joined the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board. He was successful in a pastoral lease ballot, so he moved to Daly River in the Northern Territory in 1913. Soon after taking up this lease, war was declared. At this time recruits were not being accepted from the Northern Territory, so Borella set out on foot for Queensland. After arriving in Townsville, he enlisted on 15 March 1915, joining the 26th Infantry Battalion as a Private. His unit departed Brisbane on board *HMAT Ascanius* on 24 May 1915.

Borella served with his unit at Gallipoli from September to November 1915, before being evacuated with jaundice. With the rest of the units of the 7th Brigade, he sailed for southern France in March 1916. Soon after arriving on the Somme, he was shot in the arm during the Battle of Pozières Heights on 29 July.

After several months spent recovering in England, he returned to his unit and was promoted to Sergeant in January 1917. Two months later, Borella received the Military Medal for conspicuous bravery during the 26th Battalion assault on Malt Trench, Warlencourt. It was in this same battle that fellow Victorian and member of the 26th Battalion, 2nd Lieutenant Percy Cherry, received his Victoria Cross for extraordinary bravery. Within a few weeks of this action Borella was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, and in August he was sent to England for officer training.

Returning to his unit in early 1918, Borella served near Dernancourt, north-east of Amiens, France. The unit was soon in the frontline, as the final great German offensive of the war drove the Allied forces back. During the next few months, the 26th Battalion was involved in innumerable patrols and raids on the German lines. In July, the 2nd Division moved into position near Villers-Bretonneux and, on 17 July, 36-year-old Albert Borella performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. During an attack on a German trench he charged towards a machine-gun that was firing on the Australians, killing the gun crew with his revolver and capturing the weapon.

Continuing to advance with a small party of men, he then took an even more strongly defended position and captured at least 30 of the enemy. By then he had moved beyond his objective and an enemy counter-attack drove his men backwards. Under his command they retreated in good order, inflicting heavy casualties on the Germans. Originally Borella was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order for this action but this was upgraded to the Victoria Cross.

A week before the armistice, Borella was invalided home to Australia. He took up a soldier settlement block near Hamilton, Victoria and married Elsie Jane Love on 16 August 1928. In 1939, he changed his name by deed poll to include his mother's maiden name and was known thereafter as Albert Chalmers-Borella. During the Second World War, he served with various garrison and prisoner-of-war units in Australia before being discharged in 1945. He settled in Albury, New South Wales, where he raised his family of four sons. Borella died and was buried with full military honours in 1968 at the age of 86.



# MAURICE VINCENT BUCKLEY

(*alias Gerald Sexton*)



DATE OF BIRTH  
13 April 1891

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Hawthorn, Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
27 January 1921

PLACE OF DEATH  
Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria



Maurice Vincent Buckley was born in Hawthorn, Victoria in 1891 to Timothy and Honora Mary Buckley. His father was from Cork in Ireland and his mother was Victorian. Buckley attended the Christian Brothers' school in Abbotsford before beginning work as a coach-trimmer or upholsterer on coaches and motor vehicles. When war broke out he was working in Warrnambool. On 18 December, he enlisted in the AIF and joined the 13th Light Horse Regiment at Broadmeadows camp in March 1915. He departed Sydney on board HMAT *Ceramic* on 25 June 1915. Soon after arriving in Egypt, he was admitted to hospital with venereal disease and on 31 August returned to Australia on HT *Wiltshire*. Absconding from Langwarrin Camp after several months' treatment, he was declared a deserter in March 1916.

After making his way to Sydney, he enlisted using the alias Gerald Sexton on 8 May 1916. Sexton was his mother's maiden name and Gerald was the name of his recently deceased brother. Posted to the 13th Infantry Battalion, he once again departed Australia aboard the HMAT *Ceramic* on 7 October 1916. In January 1917, he finally reached the front, and saw action with his unit at Bullecourt, Polygon Wood, Ypres and Passchendaele.

In early 1918, he was promoted to Lance-Corporal and was involved in the fighting at Hèbuterne and Villers-Bretonneux. By June he was made a Lance-Sergeant and placed in charge of a Lewis gun section. During the Battle of Hamel, he was wounded by shellfire but returned to his unit two days later on 8 July 1918. Buckley's bravery saw him awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for silencing multiple German machine-gun positions on 8 August that had been holding up the advance of his company.

On 18 September, Buckley performed the incredible deeds that would see the Victoria Cross added to the Distinguished Conduct Medal. As the 13th Battalion took part in the attack on the French town of Le Verguier, advancing behind a creeping barrage, several German machine-guns fired on his unit. His citation states that 'during the whole period of the advance, which was very seriously opposed, Sergeant Sexton [Buckley] was to the fore dealing with enemy machine-guns, rushing enemy posts, and performing great feats of bravery and endurance without faltering or for a moment taking cover'.<sup>1</sup>

When a German artillery piece also held up the assault, Buckley once again charged forward with his Lewis gun and killed its crew. He then ran across open ground swept by enemy fire to destroy a trench mortar team before attacking a German dugout. After this, he continued to attack enemy machine-gun posts in the same manner. By the end of the day it was estimated that Buckley had killed or captured more than 150 Germans. When his commanding officer announced that he was to receive the Victoria Cross for his actions, he told his disbelieving audience who he really was and why he had enlisted under an alias. At Buckingham Palace on 29 May 1919, King George V pinned the Victoria Cross to his chest.

On 27 October 1919, Buckley boarded HT *Raranga* and was discharged medically unfit from the army on 11 December 1919. On 15 January 1921, Buckley was critically injured in a horse riding accident at Boolara, in the La Trobe Valley. An operation was unsuccessful and he died on 27 January at hospital in Fitzroy. A requiem mass was held for him in St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne before he was buried with full military honours in Brighton Cemetery. Ten Victoria Cross recipients acted as his pallbearers.

<sup>1</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 13 December 1918.

# ALEXANDER STEWART BURTON



DATE OF BIRTH  
20 January 1893

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Kyneton, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
9 August 1915

PLACE OF DEATH  
Lone Pine, Gallipoli

Alexander Burton was born in 1893 in the small Victorian town of Kyneton. After attending the local state school, he found work as an ironmonger in Euroa. From 1910, he served in the local cadet unit as well as singing in the Euroa Presbyterian Church choir. On 18 August 1914, he travelled to Seymour where he enlisted in the AIF. He was posted to the 7th Battalion commanded by Colonel Harold 'Pompey' Elliot and departed from Port Melbourne with his unit on HMAS *Hororata* on 19 October 1914. His training at Mena in Egypt was briefly interrupted when the 7th and 8th Battalions were moved to Ismailia after Ottoman forces threatened the Suez Canal.

On 25 April 1915, Burton was on board a hospital ship with a throat infection so did not land at Gallipoli with his unit. A week later he was well enough to join them at 400 Plateau – later to be called Lone Pine. Soon the 2nd Victorian Brigade departed Anzac Cove to take part in the assault at Krithia near Cape Helles. Returning to Anzac Cove a few weeks later, Burton saw action at Steele's Post and Monash Valley before being slightly wounded in mid-May. In July he was promoted to Lance-Corporal and soon after to Corporal.

Within weeks, many in the Australian forces found themselves embroiled in the ferocious Battle of Lone Pine. It was during this battle, when Turkish forces were desperately counter-attacking positions taken by the Australians, that Burton performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. Burton was defending a section of trench from Turkish attackers, with Lieutenant Tubb and Corporal Dunstan.

The three men repeatedly repelled the Turks with rifle fire and showers of hand grenades, frantically rebuilding their defences each time they were blown down by the Turks. Eventually the veritable hail of Turkish bombs wrecked the parapet and one exploded between Burton and Dunstan. Dunstan was wounded and Burton killed outright. He was 21 years old. On 15 October, Burton's Victoria Cross was gazetted and in January 1916 he was mentioned in despatches. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Australian memorial at Lone Pine. Burton was also honoured in the Avenue of Honour in Euroa and had a bridge in town named after him.



# PERCY HERBERT CHERRY



DATE OF BIRTH  
4 June 1895

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Drysdale, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
26 March 1917

PLACE OF DEATH  
Lagnicourt, France



Percy Cherry was born in Drysdale on the Bellarine Peninsula in 1895. When he was seven years old his family moved to the town of Cradoc in the Huon Valley, south of Hobart, Tasmania. Cherry became a champion apple-packer, following in his father's footsteps, and was also a member of the local cadet unit. As an 18-year-old he was commissioned in the 93rd Infantry Regiment but when war was declared he was too young for overseas service. He enlisted in the AIF on 5 March 1915 and was posted to the 26th Infantry Battalion – a combined Tasmanian-Queensland unit. Because of his age he was not given a commission, instead receiving the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant. His unit departed Brisbane on 29 June 1915 aboard HMAS *Aeneas*. In August he was promoted to Company Sergeant-Major and in September arrived at Anzac Cove. He saw service at Taylor's Hollow and Russell's Top but was evacuated after being wounded in the face by a grenade in early December. Upon his return to Egypt he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant.

While in Egypt he attended a machine-gun course and was then posted to the 7th Machine Gun Company. Arriving in France in March 1916, he commanded the company's 1st Battery in action near Armentières, Fleurbaix and Messines. He was wounded in a sniping duel with a German officer during the Battle of Pozières in July and the next month, while still recuperating, was promoted to Lieutenant. Posted back to the 26th Battalion as a Company Commander, he was promoted temporary Captain in command of A Company on 9 December 1916. In February 1917 his rank was confirmed, and within weeks he was in the thick of the action during the fighting for Malt Trench, Warlencourt. In the early hours of 2 March he led his company through a break in the wire and assaulted two German machine-gun positions, killing or capturing both. He was wounded in this action but remained at his post, turning one of the guns on the retreating enemy. Although he never knew it he would receive the Military Cross for this action.

Within days the 26th Battalion was back in action as the British and Australian forces pursued the retreating Germans who were withdrawing behind the Hindenburg Line. After a German counter-attack had taken the French village of Lagnicourt, the 7th Brigade, including Cherry's 26th Battalion, was ordered to retake it. In the face of fierce German opposition his battalion continued to advance, but all of its officers were either killed or wounded. Despite this, Cherry rallied his men and advanced into the village, forcing the Germans out. Expecting a German counter-attack, Cherry organised resupply and prepared defences. The battle raged throughout the day and, although wounded, Cherry remained in command. At approximately 4:30pm that afternoon he was killed by artillery fire. His commanding officer recommended him for the Victoria Cross for 'bravery beyond description'.<sup>2</sup> He was 22 years old. He was buried in Quéant Road Cemetery, Buissy, France.

<sup>2</sup> Victoria Cross recommendation, 7th Australian Infantry Brigade, no date.

# THOMAS COOKE



DATE OF BIRTH  
5 July 1881

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Kaikoura, Marlborough,  
New Zealand

DATE OF DEATH  
24–25 July 1916

PLACE OF DEATH  
Pozières, France

Thomas Cooke was born in 1881 in the town of Kaikoura on the South Island of New Zealand. In his early twenties he moved to Wellington with his family where he followed the same trade as his father, carpentry. A keen musician, he played the cornet in the Wellington Garrison Band. In 1912, Cooke migrated to Australia with his wife Maud and their three children, settling in Richmond, Melbourne. He once again worked as a builder. On 16 February 1915, he enlisted in the AIF and undertook training at Broadmeadows camp. He was allocated to the 24th Battalion, eventually sailing from Port Melbourne aboard HMAT *Commonwealth* on 26 November 1915. Arriving in Egypt, he joined the 8th Battalion and sailed for France on 26 March.

From April to July 1916, the 8th Battalion was stationed in various locations in the relatively quiet sectors of Fleurbaix, Messines and Armentières. As the Battle of the Somme raged this quiet spell was not to last. The 2nd Division moved south towards the Somme battlefields as reserve for the 1st Division's attack on Pozières. After they took the village on 24 July 1916, the 2nd Division moved forward to support them. The 8th Battalion was allotted the task of moving through the village proper and did so during the evening of 24–25 July. Intense and sustained artillery fire met them, and while this was happening Cooke was ordered forward with his Lewis gun team to an exposed position to provide fire into the German flank. As they advanced into the maelstrom, the rest of the men were killed. Cooke took up a position and was seen to fire on the enemy but no support could reach him.

When assistance finally arrived it was too late. Cooke was found slumped dead over his Lewis gun. He was recommended for a posthumous Victoria Cross having 'set a splendid example of determination and devotion to duty'.<sup>3</sup> He has no known grave and is remembered at the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.



<sup>3</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 9 September 1916.

# WILLIAM THOMAS DARTNELL



DATE OF BIRTH  
6 April 1885

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Collingwood,  
Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
3 September 1915

PLACE OF DEATH  
Near Maktau,  
Kenya, East Africa



William Dartnell was born in Collingwood, Melbourne in 1885 to Henry Dartnell of England and his Australian-born wife, Rose-Ann. In 1900, when he was only 15 years old, Dartnell joined the 5th Contingent of the Victorian Mounted Rifles and saw service in the Boer War. After returning to Melbourne he married Elizabeth Edith Smyth in 1907. Soon after they settled in Fitzroy, but by 1913 Dartnell had decided to move to East London in South Africa. After the outbreak of war he sailed for England on 23 September 1914 and enlisted there under the name of Wilbur Taylor Dartnell in the 25th (Service) Battalion (Frontiersmen), the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). As a temporary Lieutenant he made several trips to Belgium in charge of drafts of artillery horses but did not see combat.

In April 1915, the Fusiliers departed for British East Africa, docking in Mombasa on 6 May. Their primary task was to guard the Uganda Railway from German attacks. In June the Fusiliers boarded Ugandan Railway lake steamers and assaulted the German naval base at Bukoba, with Dartnell being mentioned in despatches after being the first man to enter the enemy fort. Soon after this battle the unit moved to the town of Voi in preparation for the advance into German East Africa. On 25 July Dartnell was confirmed in the rank of Lieutenant. To support the British advance through inhospitable countryside the railway line was extended. Once again the Fusiliers were tasked with stopping the German raiding parties, which were attacking the engineers and derailing trains with alarming regularity.

On 3 September 1915, while leading a patrol near the town of Maktau, Kenya, a large German formation surprised Dartnell, killing and wounding several of his men and forcing the remainder to withdraw.

Badly wounded in the leg and with his horse shot from under him, Dartnell ordered the rest of his men to retreat while he stayed behind to provide covering fire and attempt to protect his wounded men. When the enemy later withdrew, Dartnell was found dead with his rifle and surrounded by dead enemy soldiers. He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross after losing his life 'in a gallant attempt to save others' and is buried in Voi Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, 100 kilometres inland from Mombasa. He was survived by his wife and daughter. On 7 October 1916, his widow was presented with his Victoria Cross at Government House, Melbourne by Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, Governor-General of Australia, in a private ceremony. In 1956, his widow attended the Victoria Cross Centenary celebrations in London.

# WILLIAM DUNSTAN



DATE OF BIRTH  
8 March 1895

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Ballarat, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
2 March 1957

PLACE OF DEATH  
Melbourne, Victoria

William Dunstan, the fourth child of William and Henrietta Dunstan, was born in 1895 in Ballarat where he attended Golden Point State School. As was the norm in those days, he left school at 15 and joined the clerical staff at Snows Drapers. Under the system of compulsory universal military training that was introduced in 1911, Dunstan served for three years as a cadet, rising to the rank of Captain. On 2 June 1915, he enlisted in the AIF as a Private and was sent as a reinforcement to the 7th Battalion. He boarded HMAT *Wandilla* on 17 June and sailed for the Middle East. Soon after arriving at Gallipoli he was in action with his battalion, being mentioned in despatches on two occasions. He was promoted to Acting Corporal on 5 August and, only days later, was involved in the battle that would earn him his Victoria Cross.

During the ferocious combat at Lone Pine on 9 August, Dunstan, Corporal Burton and Lieutenant Tubb desperately defended their trench against sustained Turkish attacks. Their sandbag barricade was repeatedly destroyed by a deluge of bombs, which the three kept rebuilding as they fought off the Turks. At the height of the battle Burton was killed by a bomb, and Dunstan was wounded by gunshot and shell fragments, which temporarily blinded him. After reinforcements arrived and the position was stabilised, Dunstan was admitted to the 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station before being evacuated to the 15th General Hospital in Alexandria, Egypt. As his eyes were permanently damaged, he returned to Australia on 30 September aboard HT *Ulysses*, and was medically discharged on 1 February 1916. On 10 June 1916, he was awarded the Victoria Cross by the Governor of Victoria on the steps of Parliament House, Melbourne.

Dunstan continued to serve in the Citizen Forces in Ballarat, rising to the rank of Brigade Major 18th Brigade before the end of the war. In 1918 he married Marjorie Carnell, a Ballarat girl, and they had three children. He spent most of his working life as an accountant with the *Herald and Weekly Times* under Keith Murdoch. On 2 March 1957, he died aged 62 and, after a funeral service attended by seven Victoria Cross recipients, was cremated. His ashes were interred at Springvale Cemetery.



# ROBERT CUTHBERT GRIEVE



DATE OF BIRTH  
19 June 1889

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Brighton,  
Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
4 October 1957

PLACE OF DEATH  
Melbourne, Victoria



Robert Grieve was born in Brighton, Melbourne in 1889 to John and Annie Deas Grieve. He attended Caulfield Grammar School and then Wesley College. Following his father into the soft goods trade, he became an interstate traveller and then joined his father's firm, Connibere, Grieve and Connibere in Flinders Lane, Melbourne. He served in the Victorian Rangers during 1915, until he enlisted in the Victorian 37th Battalion, AIF on 23 February 1916, receiving his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. On 3 June, the 37th boarded HMAT *Persic* and sailed for Europe. They arrived in England in late July and commenced training before being deployed, with the rest of the 3rd Division, to the trenches near Armentières in late November 1916. Grieve spent much of the winter of 1916–17 seconded to the 10th Light Trench Mortar Battery. In April he rejoined the 37th, receiving his captaincy and command of A Company in time for 3rd Division's first real test – the Battle of Messines.

Just before 11pm on 6 June 1917, the 37th Battalion, along with the other assault battalions of the 3rd Division, moved out of their billets and began to march towards the front. At 3.10am on 7 June, the first of the massive mines tunnelled under the German defences near Wytshaete exploded, followed soon after by another 18.

British artillery then began falling upon the German trenches to add to the devastation. In some sectors of the line German resistance was almost totally absent, the enemy dead or stupefied, not able to do anything other than surrender to the Australians and the New Zealanders on their left flank. But as the advance continued towards the German 'pillboxes' or blockhouses, machine-gun fire began to mow them down. His company was being cut to pieces when he took matters into his own hands. His Victoria Cross citation in the *London Gazette* recounts: 'During an attack on the enemy's position, in the face of heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, and after all his officers had been wounded and his company had suffered very heavy casualties, Captain Grieve located two hostile machine-guns which were holding up his advance. He then, single-handed, under continuous fire from these two machine-guns, succeeded in bombing and killing the two crews, reorganised the remnants of his company and gained his original objective. Captain Grieve, by his utter disregard of danger, and his coolness in mastering a very difficult position, set a splendid example, and when he finally fell wounded, the position had been secured and the few remaining enemy were in full flight.'<sup>4</sup>

With all the other officers of his company killed or wounded in this action, Grieve's extraordinary heroism may have gone unrecognised. Thankfully, several of the surviving non-commissioned officers, in particular Sergeants Robison and Rosing, provided sworn statements, allowing his battalion Commander to forward the recommendation to higher command. Grieve was evacuated to England where he received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace. Due to his injury he missed the majority of the horrors of Passchendaele. He returned to his unit on 29 October but had not fully recovered and was invalided home to Australia in May 1918. Three months later he married May Isabel Bowman who had nursed him in England. Upon his return to Melbourne Grieve re-entered the soft goods trade and, like his father before him, ran a business in Flinders Lane. His wife died several years later and they had no children. On 4 October 1957, 40 years after he had performed his astonishing act of bravery, he died of a heart attack. He was buried in Springvale Cemetery, as were six other Victoria Cross recipients.

<sup>4</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, Thursday 2 August, 1917.

# GEORGE MAWBY INGRAM



DATE OF BIRTH  
18 March 1889

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Bagshot, near Sandhurst  
(Bendigo) Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
1 July 1961

PLACE OF DEATH  
Hastings, Victoria



George Ingram was born in 1889 in the small central Victorian town of Bagshot, north-east of Bendigo. At the age of 14, after attending Lilydale State School, he began working as a carpenter. At the same time he also joined the militia as a cadet. After completing his apprenticeship he moved to Caulfield before settling in Murrumbena. In 1910 he married Jane Nichols in East Prahran. On 10 December 1914, he enlisted in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) and served in New Guinea throughout 1915. On 12 January 1916, approximately one month after returning to Melbourne, Ingram was discharged from the AN&MEF and later the same day enlisted in the AIF. He undertook training at Broadmeadows camp for much of the rest of 1916.

On 2 October 1916, Ingram boarded HMAT *Nestor* in Port Melbourne as a reinforcement for the 24th Battalion. He joined his unit in the field in January 1917 and soon found himself in the thick of the action. By March he had been promoted to Acting Sergeant, and within days of this promotion he received the Military Medal for his role in the fighting around Bapaume as the Australians pursued the retreating Germans towards the Hindenburg Line.

As the non-commissioned officer (NCO) in charge of a bombing section, Ingram 'showed great courage and initiative' and was chiefly responsible for holding off and then forcing back a considerably larger enemy force.<sup>5</sup> Soon after this action he fell ill and was hospitalised in England, thus missing the Battle of Bullecourt. He returned to his unit in June and moved with them to the Ypres sector to participate in Passchendaele. After another hospitalisation in September he returned to his unit in October and was made Company Sergeant-Major.

As with many AIF battalions, the 24th was under strength by 1918 but was involved in turning back the German Spring Offensive in March and April 1918. In June, Ingram was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant but was hospitalised again until mid-July. From late August until mid-October, the 24th Battalion was involved in a succession of battles beginning with Mont St Quentin and concluding at Montbrehain, where Ingram was awarded his Victoria Cross.

On 5 October, as B Company advanced towards the town, Ingram's platoon came under sustained rifle and machine-gun fire. Over the next few hours he led multiple attacks on several large German positions, killing and capturing dozens of the enemy and putting many of their automatic weapons out of action. By 8pm that day the battalion had succeeded in capturing Montbrehain, in no small part due to Ingram's bravery. He received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 15 February 1919.

When he returned to Australia, Ingram worked in the building industry again and was a permanent Shrine Guard at the Shrine of Remembrance from 1935 until 1944. In 1956 he attended the Victoria Cross Centenary commemorations in London's Hyde Park. He died at home in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula on 1 July 1961 and was buried in Frankston Cemetery.

<sup>5</sup>Military Medal citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 140, 27 August 1917.

# ALBERT JACKA



DATE OF BIRTH  
10 January 1893

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Layard, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
17 January 1932

PLACE OF DEATH  
Caulfield,  
Melbourne, Victoria

Albert Jacka was born in 1893 in the tiny Victorian town of Layard, near Winchelsea, south-west of Geelong. When he was five years old his family moved to Wedderburn, north-west of Bendigo. After attending the local state school he followed his father's trade and worked in the timber industry. At the age of 21, he enlisted in the AIF at Heathcote in September 1914, but as his papers were lost he had to travel to Melbourne and re-enlist on 18 September. Jacka departed Melbourne with his unit on 22 December 1914 aboard HMAT *Ulysses*. After two months training in Egypt, the 14th Battalion left for Lemnos to prepare for the landing at Gallipoli. Albert Jacka and an advance party of the 14th landed at 4:30pm on 25 April 1915. They soon took up positions at Courtney's Post. It would be here that Jacka would earn his Victoria Cross – the first Australian to do so in the Great War.

A massive Turkish offensive to drive the Australian and New Zealand forces off their positions was launched on 19 May. During this fighting a section of the Australian trenches was occupied by the enemy. Jacka organised a party of men to fire on the Turks while he outflanked them.

His Victoria Cross citation states that 'Jacka at once most gallantly attacked them single-handed and killed the whole party, five by rifle fire and two with the bayonet'.<sup>6</sup> Promotion quickly followed, meaning that by November he was Company Sergeant-Major. He received his Victoria Cross at Windsor Castle from King George V on 29 September 1916. Jacka arrived in Marseilles on 8 June 1916. He was soon in the thick of the action again.

A month after arriving in France, during the Battle of Pozieres, he performed more extraordinary acts of bravery which arguably should have seen the award of a bar to his Victoria Cross. It was not to be and the now 2nd Lieutenant Jacka was awarded a Military Cross. On 7 August the Germans overran a section of the Australian line and captured dozens of Australians. Witnessing this, Jacka charged the enemy and a furious close-quarters battle ensued as Jacka, with assistance from the erstwhile prisoners, routed the Germans. Having been wounded in this action Jacka was admitted to London General Hospital for surgery, returning to his unit in France in December 1916. In August 1916, while recovering from his wounds, he was promoted to Lieutenant.

In March 1917, Jacka was promoted to Captain and became the 14th Battalion Intelligence Officer. It was while performing this role that Jacka received his third decoration, another Military Cross. In July at Ploegsteert Wood he was wounded again, requiring another lengthy hospitalisation in England. Returning to his unit he led them into battle against German pillboxes at Polygon Wood on 26 September 1917. His war finally came to an end in May 1918 when he was badly gassed at Villers-Bretonneux.

After arriving back in Australia in September 1919 aboard the HT *Euripides*, he went into business with ex-comrades from the 14th Battalion. In 1921 he married Frances Veronica Carey and they later adopted a daughter. He was elected Mayor of St Kilda in 1929 and his business, like many others, collapsed during the Great Depression. His health began to suffer and in December 1931 he was admitted to Caulfield Military Hospital, where he died on 17 January 1932. He was 39 years old. Eight Victoria Cross recipients were his pallbearers and he was buried with full military honours in St Kilda Cemetery. Jacka Boulevard in St Kilda and the suburb of Jacka in Canberra are both named in his honour.



<sup>6</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 24 July 1915.

# WILLIAM DONOVAN JOYNT



DATE OF BIRTH  
19 March 1889

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Elsternwick,  
Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
5 May 1986

PLACE OF DEATH  
Windsor,  
Melbourne, Victoria



William Joynt was born in Elsternwick in 1889, the third son to Irish-born Edward Joynt and his Victorian-born wife Alice. After attending Melbourne Church of England Grammar School, he spent the next few years travelling around Australia as a pastoralist. He spent time in North Queensland, Western Australia and the Mallee in north-western Victoria. When the Great War broke out he was farming on Flinders Island in Bass Strait. He returned to the mainland and enlisted on 5 May 1915. Due to his previous two years service with the Victorian Rifles militia unit he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. He finally departed Melbourne aboard HMAT *Wiltshire* on 7 March 1916 as a reinforcement for the 8th Battalion. He arrived in France in May and joined his battalion two months later.

Joynt soon found himself in action as the 8th Battalion took part in the fighting around Pozières in July and August 1916. It was after this battle that one of the unit's members, Thomas Cooke, received a posthumous Victoria Cross. After leaving Pozières, the unit moved north to Ypres for the latter part of the year.

In September, Joynt was shot in the shoulder during fighting around The Bluff and was evacuated to England for several months. While he was absent the 8th was moved again, spending the winter back on the Somme. Joynt was fit enough to return to his unit in January 1917. For the next 18 months the 8th Battalion was engaged in almost continuous action, first in the pursuit of the Germans back to their defensive positions on the Hindenburg Line, and for the second half of 1917 in the morass of Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres. It was during this campaign that his older brother Gerald was killed on 25 September 1917 in action with the 57th Battalion at Polygon Wood, Belgium.

The 8th Battalion, like the rest of the AIF, was instrumental in turning back the German Spring Offensive in March and April 1918. It was later in the year, during the massive Allied offensive launched on 8 August near Amiens, that Joynt performed the deeds for which he received his Victoria Cross. On 23 August 1918, during his battalion's assault on Herleville Wood, 17 kilometres south-east of Albert, Joynt realised that the advance was breaking down as the 6th Battalion, which they were supporting, was

Deviating from his line of advance, and having taken command of the company after his Company Commander was killed, Joynt rallied the men of the 6th Battalion and continued the assault. As the enemy fire from the wood continued to hold up the attack, Joynt led a bayonet charge and 'turned a stubborn defence into an abject surrender'.<sup>7</sup> Originally recommended for the Distinguished Service Order, this was upgraded to the Victoria Cross. Three days later Joynt was seriously wounded, evacuated to England and took no further part in the war.

After returning to Australia in 1920, Joynt took up a soldier settlement block in Berwick. His interests were many and varied and a few years later he entered the printing trade. He continued in printing and publishing for the rest of his life. In 1932 he married Edith Amy Garrett. An inaugural member of Legacy and a supporter of the construction of the Shrine of Remembrance, he served in the militia and also during the Second World War as a Major in charge of various bases in Victoria. When he died on 5 May 1986 at the age of 97, he was the last surviving WWI Victoria Cross recipient. He was buried with full military honours in Brighton Cemetery.

<sup>7</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 36, 14 March 1919.

# ALBERT DAVID LOWERSON



DATE OF BIRTH  
2 August 1896

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Myrtleford, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
15 December 1945

PLACE OF DEATH  
Myrtleford, Victoria



Albert Lowerson was born in 1896 in the north-eastern Victorian town of Myrtleford, 45 kilometres from Wangaratta. A labourer, he was dredging for gold at Adelong in the Riverina district of New South Wales when he decided to enlist. After signing up on 16 July 1915, he was allotted as a reinforcement for the 21st Battalion. Two months later, on 29 September, he boarded RMS *Osterley* at Port Melbourne bound for the Middle East. He joined his unit in January after its return from Gallipoli and left with it in March as the AIF sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to Marseilles. After a brief period to acclimatise near Armentières, the 21st Battalion was the first AIF unit to see action on the Western Front in April 1916. The unit was soon moved to the Somme with the rest of the AIF and became embroiled in the battle for Pozières in late July and early August.

In late August Lowerson was wounded during the fighting for Mouquet Farm, a battle that cost his battalion dearly. While he was away recovering he was recommended for the Military Medal for 'gallant and skilful work' during the fighting at Armentières and Pozières.<sup>8</sup> It was not forthcoming. In November he was promoted to Corporal and in April 1917 to Temporary Sergeant.

Three weeks later, in early May, he was seriously wounded during the battle for Bullecourt. It was six months before he had recovered sufficiently to return to his unit. In the meantime the 21st had taken part in bloody action during Third Ypres, including the seizure of Broodseinde Ridge. His battalion spent the winter of 1917–18 recovering from these losses.

The action did not decrease throughout 1918 as the 21st Battalion first helped to stem the German Spring Offensive near Amiens and was then in action for most of the rest of the year. Lowerson would fight at General Monash's great triumph, the Battle for Hamel in July, and only weeks later at Amiens. On 28 August, he distinguished himself at Herbécourt, and in September during the assault on the heights of Mont St Quentin Lowerson performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. On 1 September, as his battalion approached their final objective, they were subjected to withering machine-gun fire from multiple positions. Seizing the initiative, he led a party of men and attacked a German strong point, bombing the enemy into submission, and capturing 'twelve machine-guns and thirty prisoners'.<sup>9</sup>

Although he had a severe leg wound he ensured that the position was consolidated and his men ready to repel any further enemy action. He returned to duty three weeks later and was wounded for a fourth time during the fighting at Montbrehain on 5 October, the final AIF action of the Great War.

Lowerson received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 1 March 1919 and returned to Australia in April. After the war he went back to Myrtleford and farmed a soldier settlement block during the interwar period. He married Edith Larkins at St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne in 1930. During the Second World War he served in various training establishments until his discharge in 1944. He died of leukaemia in 1945 and was buried in Myrtleford cemetery, survived by his wife and daughter. In 1966 the local swimming pool was named in his honour.

<sup>8</sup> Military Medal recommendation, 15 September 1915.

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Cross recommendation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 61, 23 May 1919.

# ROBERT MACTIER



DATE OF BIRTH  
17 May 1890

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Tatura, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
1 September 1918

PLACE OF DEATH  
Mont St Quentin, France

Robert Mactier was born in Tatura, west of Shepparton, in 1890. The seventh of 10 children of Scottish-born Robert Mactier and his Victorian-born wife Christina, he attended Tatura State School where he was a noted sportsman and shooter. He worked on his father's properties and when he enlisted gave his occupation as 'farmer'. After careful consideration about whether or not to join up, he travelled to Seymour, enlisted on 1 March 1917 and was soon sent to the Recruits Battalion at Broadmeadows camp. Two months of training followed before he and 151 other reinforcements for the 23rd Battalion made their way to Port Melbourne. On 11 May 1917, they left Melbourne aboard HMAT *Ascanius*.

After training in England for four months, Mactier arrived in France on 15 November 1917. Ten days later he joined the 23rd Battalion.

As with all AIF units, the 23rd was heavily involved in the fighting to stop the German Spring Offensive, which was launched in March 1918. In April he was gassed during the fighting around Albert in the Somme but returned to his unit soon after. In July he took part in the triumphant AIF battle at Hamel, and later in the August offensive, which signalled the imminent demise of the German army. On 1 September 1918, the Battle of Mont St Quentin began and Mactier performed the deeds for which he received the Victoria Cross.

Acting as a runner, he was sent forward by his commanding officer to determine why his company was not able to move forward to its jumping-off point. On his own initiative, Mactier charged forward and attacked the German machine-gun position, which was the cause of the delay.

After killing its crew with hand grenades and a pistol, he continued to advance and single-handedly attacked the next, and larger, German position. Realising that a third machine-gun was on their flank and firing on his comrades, he charged for a third time, again destroying the Germans' position. As he was setting off on a fourth charge he was killed by fire from another German machine-gun. Not only did Mactier display incredible individual heroism, but it was also 'entirely due to his exceptional valour and determination' that his unit was able to take part in the successful assault on Mont St Quentin over the next few hours.<sup>10</sup> He was buried in Hem Farm Military Cemetery, north-west of Péronne. Mactier is remembered in his home town of Tatura where there is a stained-glass window in St Andrew's Church dedicated to him and a local park named after him.



<sup>10</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 14 December 1918.

# FRANK HUBERT MCNAMARA



DATE OF BIRTH  
4 April 1894

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Rushworth, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
2 November 1961

PLACE OF DEATH  
London, England

Frank McNamara was born in Waranga, a small Goulbourn Valley town near Rushworth, west of Shepparton, in 1894, and was the only Australian airman to receive the Victoria Cross during the Great War. In 1910, when he was 16 years old, his family moved to Melbourne. The following year he joined the Senior Cadets and in 1912 he transferred to the Brighton Rifles (46th Infantry Battalion). When he was 19 he studied to become a teacher and briefly taught at several Victorian schools. His enrolment at the University of Melbourne was interrupted by the outbreak of war. After mobilisation he served at both Fort Queenscliff and Point Nepean. At the end of 1914 he attended an officers' training course at Broadmeadows and upon graduation immediately began instructing at the Training Depot, also at Broadmeadows. After four months he volunteered for flying training. He began his flying course in August 1915, soloed in a Bristol Boxkite in September and received his wings in October. He was subsequently posted to No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC) as adjutant and departed Melbourne with his unit aboard HMAT *Orsova* on 16 March 1916, bound for the Middle East.



Soon after his arrival in Egypt, he was sent to the Central Flying School in England and seconded to the Royal Flying Corps. In August the same year, he returned to Egypt and was posted back to No. 1 Squadron, which was based at Heliopolis. On 22 December 1916, he flew in his first combat operation.

The early months of 1917 saw him fly many more sorties, several of these bombing missions in support of ground operations attempting to seize the important town of Gaza. It was during an operation on 20 March 1917 that McNamara earned his Victoria Cross. One of his bombs exploded prematurely, damaging his aircraft and badly wounding him in the right thigh. Turning towards base, he saw fellow pilot Captain DW Rutherford on the ground beside his plane and a large group of Turkish cavalry charging towards the landing site. McNamara rapidly brought his single-seat Martinsyde G 100 down beside Rutherford. After Rutherford had climbed onto the wing McNamara attempted to take off, but he could not control the aircraft properly because of his wound and the plane crashed. Both airmen escaped without further injury and then set McNamara's aircraft alight.

Before the Turks arrived they managed to quickly repair Rutherford's plane and, with McNamara at the controls, took off just ahead of the enemy. Weak from loss of blood, McNamara managed to fly them safely back to base. While still recovering from his wound he was promoted to Captain and Flight Commander of No. 4 Squadron, AFC but due to his leg wound he was unable to resume flying duties. In August he was invalided back to Australia, and on 4 October 1917 McNamara's Victoria Cross was gazetted 'for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during an aerial bomb attack'.<sup>11</sup>

McNamara went on to have a distinguished career in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and served throughout the Second World War in the United Kingdom, and on secondment to the Royal Air Force. After being retired from the RAAF in 1946, he continued to live in England and died in Buckinghamshire on 2 November 1961. He is memorialised by a park in Shepparton and at the Oakey Army Aviation Centre in Queensland.

<sup>11</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, 4 October 1917.

# RUPERT VANCE MOON



DATE OF BIRTH  
14 August 1892

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Bacchus Marsh, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
28 February 1986

PLACE OF DEATH  
Barwon Heads, Victoria



Rupert Moon, usually known as 'Mick', was born in 1892 in Bacchus Marsh to Arthur and Helen Moon. He spent his childhood in Maffra, Gippsland and later attended Kyneton Grammar School. Following in his father's footsteps, he joined the National Bank at the age of 16, working in several branches across Victoria. He was also an active member of the militia and served in the 13th Light Horse Regiment and the 8th Infantry Regiment. When war broke out in July 1914, Moon was working as a bank clerk at the Collins Street branch of the National Bank, the same branch as his father. On 21 August 1914, he enlisted as a trumpeter in the 1st AIF. Two months later, on 19 October 1914, he boarded the HMAT *Wiltshire*.

After arriving in the Middle East, Moon continued training in Egypt, eventually being deployed with the 4th Light Horse to Gallipoli in May 1915. The unit served without their horses as infantry and saw some fierce action, particularly around Ryrie's Post on Holly Ridge. Apart from a brief spell in hospital, he remained on the peninsula until the withdrawal in late December. In March 1916, he was promoted to Sergeant and he arrived in Marseilles on 17 June 1916.

On 9 September 1916, he was transferred to the Victorian 58th Infantry Battalion and was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. His new unit was still recovering from the catastrophic Battle of Fromelles in July 1916 and it did not see major action again until 1917. As the Germans withdrew behind the Hindenburg Line, the 58th was involved in the pursuit and soon participated in the Battle of Bullecourt. It was during this battle, on 12 May 1917, that Moon earned the Victoria Cross.

Leading his men towards a German strong point, Moon was hit by enemy fire. He continued to attack before being wounded a second time, as they captured a large section of the German trench system. Steadying himself after his second wound, he attacked a large German dugout, from which enemy soldiers were pouring to reinforce their comrades in the fortifications. After being hit a third time, he staggered on and the German position was taken with almost 200 prisoners. While ensuring that his men held the position in depth with multiple lines of defence, he was shot in the face and his jaw was broken.

It was only after this fourth wound that he consented to leave the field of battle. His Victoria Cross citation states that 'his bravery was magnificent and largely instrumental in the successful issue against superior numbers'.<sup>12</sup>

Moon returned to Australia on HT *Corinthic* on 10 January 1918. Desperate to go back to his unit, he was declared fit and boarded HT *Euripides* on 1 May 1918, rejoining his unit in August 1918. After further service in France he returned with the 58th to England in late 1918, and finally to Australia on 3 August 1919, almost exactly five years after he had enlisted.

Moon worked at various jobs after the war, both interstate and overseas. In 1931, he married Susan May Vincent with whom he had a son and a daughter. When the Second World War broke out he was a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps and by 1943 was an Assistant Staff Captain. After the war he lived in Mt Duneed and eventually settled in Barwon Heads, where he died in 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 12 June 1917.

# GEORGE RAYMOND DALLAS MOOR



DATE OF BIRTH  
22 October 1896

PLACE OF BIRTH  
St Kilda, Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
3 November 1918

PLACE OF DEATH  
Mouvoux, France



George Moor was born at his Gaunt's house in Pollington Street, St Kilda behind the Esplanade Hotel in 1896. His parents, William Henry and Eva Moor, moved back to England before George began primary school. He attended Appleby House School on the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England between 1906 and 1910, before moving to Cheltenham College. When he was only 17 years old he enlisted as a Private in the Public Schools Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers. Within five weeks of war being declared, his father had ensured that Moor received a commission and he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, the Hampshire Regiment, the unit his father had served in many years before. After a brief period of training, the Hampshires departed Avonmouth, Bristol on 29 March 1915 and set sail for Egypt.

As part of the British 29th Division, the Hampshires were tasked to land at V Beach, Cape Helles on the morning of 25 April. Their landing vessel, the *River Clyde*, was beached so that the soldiers aboard could close with the enemy rapidly. Along with the other units aboard the ship, the Dublin Fusiliers and the Munsters, the unit was cut to pieces as the men ran down gangplanks towards the shore.

The sea turned red for 50 metres from the beach as hundreds of men fell dead and wounded into the water. Moor was one of the lucky ones, escaping the carnage unscathed, although his luck was not to last and he was hit on 28 April. He returned to action soon after and by 10 May his battalion had shrunk from 1,025 to 250 men.

Three weeks later, on 6 June, Moor performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. The Third Battle of Krithia, launched two days earlier, had begun with great promise but soon Turkish resistance increased. Late on 5 June the Hampshires were still advancing, despite heavy losses. Early the next day, Moor's unit had only two unscathed officers, and this was soon reduced to one, leaving 18-year-old Moor in command of the remnants of his battalion. Almost as soon as this happened a more critical situation developed, as a Turkish attack on a neighbouring unit caused a disorganised mass of men to retreat, leaving the flank of the Hampshires exposed. His Victoria Cross citation states that Moor 'immediately grasped the danger to the remainder of the line, dashed back some 200 yards, stemmed the retirement, led the men back and recaptured the lost trench'.<sup>13</sup>

Unstated in this account but acknowledged elsewhere, including in the Hampshire regimental history, is the allegation that Moor shot several of the retreating men, which caused the rest of them to halt their retreat and return to the fray. As all of the officers of his unit had been killed or wounded by this time it was officers of neighbouring units who, having witnessed his incredible actions and stabilising of the line, recommended he receive the Victoria Cross. Soon afterwards Moor was sent back to England suffering from dysentery.

After recovering, Moor rejoined his unit in 1916 in France where he received the Military Cross and Bar for further acts of great bravery. He was seriously wounded and gassed on two further occasions and died a week before the war ended at Mouvoux, France, succumbing to the influenza epidemic sweeping Europe. He was 22 years old.

<sup>13</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 24 July 1915

# JAMES ERNEST NEWLAND



DATE OF BIRTH  
22 August 1881

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Highton, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
19 March 1949

PLACE OF DEATH  
Caulfield,  
Melbourne, Victoria

James Newland was born in 1881 to William and Louise Jane Newland in Highton, Geelong. At the age of 18 he joined the army and briefly served in the Boer War with the Australian Commonwealth Horse. He transferred to the Royal Australian Artillery in Victoria after his return to Australia, serving between 1903 and 1907 before giving a year's service as a policeman in Tasmania. In 1910, he joined the Australian regular army and was a member of the instructional staff until the outbreak of war in 1914. He enlisted in the small town of Pontville, north of Hobart on 17 August 1914 and was made Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant of the 12th Battalion. The unit departed Hobart on 20 October 1914 aboard *HMAT Geelong*, bound for Egypt and eventually Gallipoli.

The 12th Battalion was one of the first ashore on 25 April and Newland was shot in the arm sometime during this day or the next, before being evacuated to 1st General Hospital, Heliopolis, Egypt and returning to his unit on 26 May. Two weeks later he was detailed to return to Alexandria to take charge of a transport, but by October was back on the peninsula and was promoted to Lieutenant on 15 October. In November he was in hospital in Egypt again after contracting dengue fever.

He was promoted to Captain on 1 March 1916, and in late March he travelled with his unit to Marseilles, arriving on 5 April. In late August, during the Battle of the Somme, and after successfully commanding an attack near Mouquet Farm, he was recommended for the Military Cross and the French Croix de Guerre but this was downgraded to a mention in despatches.

On 1 March 1917, he was again wounded in action and treated for a gunshot injury to his face. He rejoined his unit at the end of March. At Boursies and Lagnicourt near Bullecourt, between 7 and 15 April, Newland performed several extraordinary deeds for which he would receive the Victoria Cross. On the night of 7 April, he led A Company in its assault on the German strong point known as the Windmill. Despite very heavy resistance they were successful and forced the Germans out. The following night the enemy counter-attacked and Newland 'by personal exertion, utter disregard of fire, and judicious use of reserves ... succeeded in dispersing the enemy and regaining the position'.<sup>14</sup> The battle had cost his battalion 240 casualties however, and they were withdrawn from action. The respite was only temporary, and in fierce fighting near Lagnicourt on 14–15 April Newland again demonstrated tactical initiative, incredible heroism and inspiring leadership.

When his company was attacked from two different directions Newland managed to control his men in a tactical withdrawal to a more favourable position and fight off a superior enemy formation until support arrived to reinforce the line. Three weeks later, during the second Battle of Bullecourt, Newland was wounded for a third time and had to be evacuated to England. He received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 21 July 1917. Due to the severity of his wound he returned to Australia in September 1917 and was discharged medically unfit in March 1918.

Newland returned to Tasmania, but after his first wife died in 1924 he moved back to Victoria and married Vivienne Broughton in Bendigo the following year. Throughout the interwar years he was a member of the permanent military forces, before being placed on the retired list in 1941 after almost 40 years of service. During the Second World War he was a member of the inspection staff at the Maribyrnong Small Arms and Ammunition Factory. He died of heart failure at Caulfield on 19 March 1949 and was buried in Brighton Cemetery. He was survived by his second wife and daughter.



<sup>14</sup>Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 169, 4 October 1917.

# SAMUEL GEORGE PEARSE



DATE OF BIRTH  
16 July 1897

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Penarth, Glamorgan, Wales

DATE OF DEATH  
29 August 1919

PLACE OF DEATH  
Near Emptsa, North Russia

Samuel Pearse was born in the small South Wales town of Penarth, just outside the capital Cardiff in 1897. When he was 14 he migrated to Australia with his father and a brother. After they had settled on a property at Koorlong, near Mildura, the rest of the family joined them. Samuel worked on the family farm and picked up seasonal work, including trapping, fruit-picking and working on a local paddle steamer. With his parents' written permission he enlisted in the AIF on 5 July 1915, just before his 18th birthday, giving his occupation as a trapper. Posted to the 7th Battalion, he departed Melbourne aboard HMAT *Star of Victoria* on 10 September 1915. Allotted to D Company, he briefly served with his battalion at Gallipoli in December before they were evacuated on the RMS *Empress of Britain* to Egypt. After further training and integrating reinforcements his unit left for Marseilles, France in March 1916.



On 24 August 1916, Pearse was transferred to the 2nd Machine Gun Company and the same day was wounded in action. A good soldier while in action, once out of the line he found himself in trouble, regularly receiving field punishment, having his pay stopped and being reduced to the ranks. He was also evacuated to hospital on numerous occasions for a variety of reasons. However, his bravery during battle was undeniable and this was demonstrated during Passchendaele when he was awarded the Military Medal on 31 October 1917. In May 1918, he was wounded in action and was sent to England for treatment, not re-joining his unit until after the armistice.

While waiting to be discharged and return to Australia, he met Catherine Knox of the Women's Auxiliary Army Service. They were married on 1 June 1919 and soon Catherine was pregnant. They fatefully decided to remain in England until after the birth. Pearse was discharged from the 1st Machine Gun Battalion, AIF on 18 July 1919 and almost immediately re-enlisted in the 45th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers, otherwise known as the Russian Relief Force.

Within weeks he was in action near Emptsa, 200 kilometres south of the port of Archangel, in support of White Russian forces attempting to drive back the Bolsheviks. During the attack on Bolshevik defences outside the town on 29 August 1919, Pearse performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. His citation states that 'Sergeant Pearse cut his way through the enemy barbed wire under very heavy machine-gun and rifle fire and ... seeing that a blockhouse was harassing our advance and causing us casualties, he charged the blockhouse single-handed; killing the occupants with bombs'.<sup>15</sup> Seconds later a burst of machine-gun fire from another position cut him down, killing him instantly. The following year his wife and infant daughter migrated to Australia. He is remembered in his adopted country with a public park in Mildura, which is named after him.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 23 October 1919.

# WALTER PEELER



DATE OF BIRTH  
9 August 1887

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Barker's Creek, near  
Castlemaine, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
23 May 1968

PLACE OF DEATH  
South Caulfield, Melbourne,  
Victoria



Born in 1887 at Barker's Creek north of Castlemaine in central Victoria, Walter Peeler was the eighth child of William and Mary Ellen Peeler. He worked on his parents' orchard in Barker's Creek and at Thompson's Foundry in Castlemaine. He married Kathleen Emma Hewitt in 1907. He was working as a labourer in the Gippsland town of Leongatha when he decided to enlist on 17 February 1916. He was posted as a Private to the machine-gun section of the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, which sailed from Melbourne aboard HMAT *Wandilla* on 6 June 1916. After further training in England, the battalion arrived in France in late November 1916 and served in the Armentières sector.

In May 1917, Peeler and his unit moved to Ploegsteert, Belgium in preparation for the assault on Messines. Here they supported the 3rd Australian Division during its initiation to combat on the Western Front. Peeler was slightly wounded by shrapnel during this battle but remained on duty. On 1 October the pioneers moved to Zonnebeke, and three days later Peeler's actions during the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge would earn him his Victoria Cross. Peeler and two dozen other Lewis Gun section members from the 3rd Pioneers were seconded to the 37th Battalion to assist as anti-aircraft gunners.

As they moved forward with the assault wave, Peeler became involved in ground combat. Despite the massive artillery bombardment that preceded the attack, the Germans continued with an attack of their own which had been planned for the same day and time, at dawn on 4 October.

On at least four occasions over the space of two hours Peeler charged enemy machine-gun emplacements, killing and disabling at least 30 of the enemy in the process. His Victoria Cross citation states that Peeler 'displayed an absolute fearlessness in making his way ahead of the first wave of the assault, and the fine example which he set insured the success of the attack against most determined opposition'.<sup>16</sup> Eight days later he was involved in further fighting at Passchendaele but this time was wounded. Hospitalised in England, he received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 8 January 1918. On 29 August 1918 he returned to Australia.

Between the wars, Peeler worked for the Department of Lands and at the Sunshine Harvester Works. In 1934 he was appointed Custodian of the Shrine of Remembrance and held this position until 1964, except for the years 1940–45. Lowering his age quite considerably, he enlisted in the 2nd AIF after the outbreak of the Second World War and served with the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion. His unit departed for the Middle East aboard the *Queen Mary* in April 1941, arriving in time to see action with the 7th Division during the Syrian campaign. After the entry of Japan into the war, the 7th Division departed the Middle East in January 1942. Diverted to Java, Dutch East Indies, his unit was soon captured by the Japanese and Peeler spent the next three and a half years in various POW camps, and laboured on the notorious Thai–Burma Railway. Upon his return to Melbourne he learnt that his son Donald had been killed in the Bougainville campaign in December 1944. He returned to the Shrine, eventually retiring in 1964. He died on 23 May 1968 and was buried in Brighton Cemetery. He was survived by his wife and four of his children.

<sup>16</sup>Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 31, 7 March 1918.

# WILLIAM RUTHVEN



DATE OF BIRTH  
21 May 1893

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Collingwood, Melbourne,  
Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
12 January 1970

PLACE OF DEATH  
Heidelberg, Melbourne,  
Victoria



William 'Rusty' Ruthven was born in 1893 in Collingwood to Peter and Catherine Ruthven. He attended Collingwood Primary School and was working in the timber industry as a wood machinist when war broke out. On 16 April 1915, at 21 years of age, he enlisted as a Private and was assigned to the 22nd Infantry Battalion, 2nd Division. After several months training at Broadmeadows camp he boarded HMAT *Anchises* on 26 August 1915, one of more than 150 reinforcements for the 22nd Battalion. In October he joined his unit at Gallipoli and saw action before the withdrawal of the force in December. Along with the majority of the AIF, Ruthven left Egypt bound for France in March 1916, after they had integrated further reinforcements.

In April, the battalion was sent to the Fleurbaix sector where Ruthven was wounded on the 17th. He rejoined the battalion in August, just missing the bloody combat that the AIF experienced during the Battle of Pozières. By September, Ruthven and his unit had moved north to Ypres before marching south again to spend the 1916–17 winter on the Somme. During this period, on 26 January 1917, he was promoted to Sergeant. The year 1917 was a long and bloody one for the Australians, with the 22nd Battalion seeing action from Bullecourt in April 1917 through to Broodseinde Ridge in October.

After a relatively quiet 1917–18 winter, the 22nd Battalion was in action again, helping stem the tide of the German Spring Offensive in March and April 1918. Soon after this action Ruthven earned his battalion's only Victoria Cross.

On 19 May the 6th Brigade, of which the 22nd Battalion was a member, was tasked with capturing the Somme village of Ville-sur-Ancre. The 22nd Battalion was to outflank on the right while their sister battalions, the 21st, 23rd and 24th, moved in and crossed the Ancre River from other directions. As Ruthven's company moved forward, the Company Commander was wounded. Ruthven took charge of those in his vicinity, including company headquarters, and continued the assault. When held up by a German machine-gun position he charged forward and put it out of action with rifle, bayonet and bombs. The Australians moved forward and he consolidated the position. Realising more Germans were moving along the 'caterpillar' – a sunken road running from the village up a nearby hill – he charged forward armed only with a revolver. His Victoria Cross citation states that he 'single-handedly mopped up the position and captured the whole of the garrison, amounting in all to thirty-two'.<sup>17</sup>

The next month Ruthven was wounded at Méricourt-sur-Somme and in July 1918 he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. He returned to Australia in October with other Victoria Cross recipients to assist with recruiting, as by this stage most of the Australian battalions had been reduced to 400 men or fewer. Accorded a hero's welcome in Melbourne, the war ended soon after his return and he was discharged from the AIF in December. He married Irene May White in Abbotsford in 1919 and they later had a daughter and a son. He took up a soldier settlement block at Werrimull in the Sunraysia region of Victoria, west of Mildura, but after several hard years the family returned to Collingwood. In early 1932 he was one of the Victoria Cross pallbearers at Albert Jacka's funeral. During the Second World War Ruthven served in a number of garrison battalions, including at Murchison, the largest POW camp in the state. A man with a keen interest in politics, he was first elected as a Collingwood councillor, then mayor, and later became a long-serving Labor Party member of parliament from 1944 until 1961. He died, aged 77, on 12 January 1970 at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital and was survived by his wife and children.

<sup>17</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 185, 27 November 1918.

# CLIFFORD WILLIAM KING SADLIER



DATE OF BIRTH  
11 June 1892

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Camberwell, Melbourne, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
28 April 1964

PLACE OF DEATH  
Busselton, Western Australia

Clifford Sadlier was born in 1892 in Camberwell, Victoria to Irish-born Thomas and Mary Ann Sadlier from Adelaide. He attended University High School before his parents moved to Perth, settling in Subiaco. He was working as a commercial traveller when he decided to sign up. He and his brother Clarence Andrew James Sadlier enlisted together in Perth on 26 May 1915 and were posted to the Australian Army Medical Corps. After service in Heliopolis, Egypt with the 1st Australian General Hospital he boarded HT *Nestor* on 9 February 1916 as a member of the nursing staff, bound for Australia.

Soon after his return he re-enlisted in the AIF and was posted as a reinforcement to the 51st Battalion, a Western Australian unit that had been formed after the expansion of the AIF in Egypt in March 1916 as part of the 13th Brigade, 4th Division. Due to his previous experience he was soon promoted to Acting Sergeant. On 9 November 1916, he boarded HMAT *Argyllshire* in Fremantle, Western Australia, and sailed for the United Kingdom.

Upon arrival in England he reverted to the rank of Private but shortly thereafter he was recommended for a non-commissioned officer course at Candahar, Tidworth. After successfully completing this course, he rejoined his battalion in France on 13 May 1917 and five days later was promoted to Corporal. The 51st was serving at Ypres and took part in the Battle of Messines in June and Polygon Wood in September. The winter of 1917–18 was spent in the line on the Somme.

Along with the rest of the AIF, the 51st Battalion was rushed forward to meet the German advance during the spring offensive, and in late March 1918 took up positions near Dernancourt on the River Ancre. The climax of this battle took place at Villers-Bretonneux over 24 and 25 April – ANZAC Day. It was for his actions on this day that the now Lieutenant Sadlier received his Victoria Cross. At 10pm on the 24th he led his platoon through Abbey Wood. As they moved forward into the darkness, they came under sustained machine-gun fire from their flank, which cut down dozens of the Australians.

Sadlier immediately organised a Lewis gun and his bombing section and they assaulted the enemy guns. He was hit in the thigh but continued forward as his men dropped around him. The first position containing two guns was taken but by this time all his men had been killed or wounded. He therefore 'attacked a third machine-gun with his revolver, killing the crew of four and taking the gun. In doing so, he was again wounded'.<sup>18</sup> This time he had to be evacuated due to the severity of the wound.

He returned to England for further treatment and in August boarded the SS *Karachi* bound for Melbourne. Soon after arriving in October 1918, he travelled back to Perth and was discharged from the army in early 1919. He married Maude Victoria Moore in 1922. During the 1920s, he worked as a manufacturer's agent before joining the Repatriation Department in 1936. Upon his retirement he moved to Busselton, south of Perth. He died there on 28 April 1968, survived by his second wife, Alice Edith Smart.



<sup>18</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 185, 27 November 1918.

# ISSY SMITH

(*Ishroulch Szmilowitz, also listed as Israel Shmeilowitz or Shlmovitz*)



DATE OF BIRTH  
circa 18 September 1888

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Alexandria, Egypt

DATE OF DEATH  
11 September 1940

PLACE OF DEATH  
Moonee Ponds,  
Melbourne, Victoria

Ishroulch Szmilowitz was born in Egypt in 1888 (or 1886 or 1890) to Orthodox Jewish parents, Moses and Eva Szmilowitz. His parents had migrated to France from Russia and his father was working at the French Consulate in Alexandria. When only 11 years old, Ishroulch stowed away on a merchant ship bound for London. He lived there with his older brother Maurice, attended school and worked at various part-time jobs.

When only 16 years old (or 14, depending on his actual date of birth) he enlisted in the Manchester Regiment on 2 September 1904, and anglicised his name to Issy Smith at the suggestion of the Recruiting Sergeant. He served with the 2nd Battalion, the Manchester Regiment, at Aldershot, known as the home of the British army, and with the 3rd Manchesters in South Africa before extended service in India with the 1st Manchesters, from 1906 to 1912. After eight years service he took his discharge and returned to England. Soon after his return he decided to try his prospects in Australia. When war broke out he was living in Ascot Vale with his girlfriend Elsie Porteous McKechnie, who accompanied him from England.

When Smith attempted to enlist, he was informed that because he was still on the British army reserve list he would have to report to Victoria Barracks, St Kilda Road for onward passage to England where he would rejoin 1st Battalion, the Manchester Regiment. He departed Melbourne with the first AIF convoy on 19 October 1914, was made Acting Lance-Corporal on 19 December and finally re-joined his unit at Festubert, south of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. Soon after this his unit was ordered north to Ypres and within days Issy Smith would earn his Victoria Cross. On the morning of 26 April, during an attack by the Indian Brigade, of which the 1st Manchesters were a part, his unit came under sustained machine-gun and artillery fire – both high explosive and gas. Despite this maelstrom of fire, Smith ‘went forward towards the enemy’s position to assist a severely wounded man, whom he carried a distance of 250 yards to safety whilst exposed the whole time to heavy machine-gun and rifle fire’.<sup>19</sup> He continued to bring wounded men in, all the time under intense enemy fire.

Smith was eventually wounded and evacuated to the United Kingdom to recover. While recuperating he assisted with recruiting and drew large crowds, particularly in areas with sizeable Jewish populations. Meanwhile his unit had been redeployed to Mesopotamia and when Smith had fully recovered, he re-joined his regiment in early 1916. He saw out the war in that theatre of operations, being wounded in action on several further occasions. At the cessation of hostilities he returned to London where he married Elsie in 1919. Finding it difficult to return to peacetime life, he and his family moved back to Melbourne in 1925. Three years later he was working for British International Pictures and soon after became a Justice of the Peace. During the Great Depression he worked for the Dunlop Rubber Company as a commercial traveller and his final job was at Essendon Airport where he worked for the Civil Aviation Department. A prominent member of the Jewish community in Victoria, he died at his home in Moonee Ponds aged 52 and was buried with full military honours in the Jewish section of Fawkner Cemetery.



<sup>19</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 23 August 1915.

# WILLIAM JOHN SYMONS



DATE OF BIRTH  
10 July 1889

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Eaglehawk, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
24 June 1948

PLACE OF DEATH  
London, England

William Symons was born at Eaglehawk, north of Bendigo in 1889 to William and Mary Emma Symons. His father died when he was 15 and soon after the family moved to Brunswick, Melbourne. He worked as a commercial traveller and was a long-serving member of the militia, spending five years in the 5th Battalion and then another three years in the 60th Battalion. On 17 August 1914, only weeks after the outbreak of war, Symons enlisted in Carlton and, due to his previous military service, was immediately made Colour Sergeant of A Company, 7th Battalion. Two months later, on 19 October 1914, the 7th Battalion left Port Melbourne on board the HMAT *Hororata*.

After further training in Egypt, the 7th sailed to Lemnos, in preparation for the landing at Gallipoli. The 2nd Brigade was in the second wave and landed after the beach had been secured. After being ashore for less than a day Symons was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. The 2nd Brigade moved to Cape Helles only days later to take part in the attack on Krithia, and suffered serious losses there. They were then moved back to Anzac Cove and August found them embroiled in the Battle of Lone Pine, where four members of the 7th Battalion received Victoria Crosses.

Having captured substantial sections of the Turkish frontline trenches on 6 and 7 August, the Australians had to defend these gains against intense enemy counter-attacks. On the morning of 9 August Symons' battalion Commander, the famous Harold 'Pompey' Elliott, is reputed to have told Symons that he did not expect to see him again but that 'we must not lose that post'.<sup>20</sup> Symons led the charge on Jacob's Trench and repelled the Turks, killing several of them with his revolver. They returned in greater numbers and Symons and his men drove them back again. Eventually, as his citation states, 'his coolness and determination finally compelled the enemy to discontinue their attacks'.<sup>21</sup>

Suffering from gastroenteritis, Symons was evacuated to hospital on Lemnos and eventually to London where he received his Victoria Cross from King George V on 4 December 1915. In March 1916, he returned to Melbourne where he was given a rousing welcome at public receptions in Brunswick and Bendigo. The next month he was sent to Seymour to join the 37th Battalion, a newly formed unit that was to be part of the 10th Brigade, 3rd Division.

After a brief training period he departed Australia for a second time on 3 June 1916, with the rank of Captain as Company Commander, 'D' Company, 37th Battalion, aboard HMAT *Persic*. Arriving in England in late July, his battalion trained in England for several months before landing in France in November. They spent the bitterly cold winter of 1916–17 on the Somme and Symons was wounded during a large-scale trench raid on 27 February 1917. The unit fought its first major battle at Messines in early June 1917. On 7 June, Symons was badly gassed and had to be hospitalised in England for several months to recover, not returning to action until January 1918. As with the rest of the AIF, the 37th was involved in the fight to repel the German Spring Offensive and Symons fought at Dernancourt in March. While on leave in England in August he married Isobel Annie Hockley in Hampshire and on 16 August they sailed on the SS *Makura* bound for Melbourne.

Symons returned to live in England in 1922 and became a director of various companies. He and his wife settled on Hayling Island in Hampshire and had three daughters. During the Second World War Symons commanded the 12th Battalion, Leicestershire Home Guard. He died of a brain tumour in 1948.



<sup>20</sup> adb.anu.edu.au/biography/symons-william-john-8736

<sup>21</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 15 October 1915

# FREDERICK HAROLD TUBB



DATE OF BIRTH  
28 November 1881

PLACE OF BIRTH  
Longwood, Victoria

DATE OF DEATH  
20 September 1917

PLACE OF DEATH  
Passchendaele, Belgium

Frederick Tubb was born in 1881 at Longwood, a small town between Seymour and Euroa in Victoria, and went to East Longwood State School. His parents, Harry and Eliza Tubb, had been born in England and his father was the headmaster at East Longwood. He had a keen interest in farming and military service and served in various militia units, including the Victorian Mounted Rifles, the Australian Light Horse and, in 1913, the 58th Battalion (Essendon Rifles). Three weeks after war broke out, he enlisted in the AIF and was posted to Headquarters Company, 7th Battalion as a Lieutenant (Transport Officer). His brother Frank was in the same company as a Transport Sergeant. After a brief training period the unit departed from Port Melbourne aboard HMAT *Hororata*, on 19 October 1914.

Tubb joined his battalion at Gallipoli on 10 July 1915 and was promoted to Captain a month later.

Three days after this promotion, he was involved in the bitter fighting at Lone Pine and, along with Corporals Burton and Dunstan, performed the deeds that saw them all receive the Victoria Cross. Turkish forces launched a concerted attack to drive the Australians from the newly captured section of trench held by Tubb and his company. Assisted by Burton and Dunstan, Tubb valiantly held back the Turks despite the shower of bombs which rained down on the trio. Each time their defences were blown apart they rebuilt them and fought the attackers off. His Victoria Cross citation states that 'Tubb, although wounded in the head and arm, held his ground with the greatest coolness and rebuilt [the barricade] and finally succeeded in maintaining his position under heavy bomb fire'.<sup>22</sup>

Tubb was evacuated to hospital on Malta because of the severity of his wounds and a week later transferred to England. It was decided that his injury needed extended rehabilitation and he departed for Australia aboard HT *Baltic* on 4 March 1916.

After spending time with his family, he convinced an army medical review board that he was fit enough to return to service and on 2 October 1916 he left Melbourne on HMAT *Nestor*. He was finally removed from the 'struck off' list on 23 December 1916 and, after attending the 4th Army School and being promoted to Major, rejoined his battalion on 2 May 1917. During the Battle of Passchendaele, the 2nd Brigade was attacking along the Menin Road, Belgium. After the 5th and 6th Battalions had taken their objectives, the 7th passed through to assault the third objective. Tubb was hit by rifle fire and seriously wounded. He was evacuated to the 3rd Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne but died of his wounds. He was buried in the Lijessenthoek military cemetery, Poperinghe, Belgium. He is remembered in the Euroa Avenue of Honour and a nearby hill is now called Tubb Hill. Three of his brothers also served with the AIF, and all of them returned to Australia.



<sup>22</sup> Victoria Cross citation, *London Gazette*, 15 October 1915.

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Page 7

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Page 8

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Page 12

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Page 13

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Reinforcements, 21st Battalion, on a wharf  
at Port Melbourne before embarking on the  
troopship HMAT *Shropshire*, 1916**

