

= James Newland =

James Ernest Newland , VC (22 August 1881 ? 19 March 1949) was an Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross , the highest decoration for gallantry " in the face of the enemy " that can be awarded to members of the British and Commonwealth armed forces . Newland was awarded the Victoria Cross following three separate actions in April 1917 , during attacks against German forces retreating to the Hindenburg Line . While in command of a company , Newland successfully led his men in several assaults on German positions and repulsed subsequent counter @-@ attacks .

Born in the Victorian town of Highton , Newland joined the Australian military in 1899 and saw active service during the Second Boer War . He continued to serve in the Australian Army 's permanent forces on his return to Australia , and completed several years service in the artillery . Transferring to the militia in 1907 , Newland became a police officer in Tasmania before re @-@ joining the permanent forces in 1910 . Following the outbreak of the First World War , he was appointed to the Australian Imperial Force and was among the first wave of men to land at Gallipoli . In the days following the landing , Newland was wounded and evacuated to Egypt where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant .

Transferring to the Western Front in 1916 , Newland was Mentioned in Despatches for his leadership while commanding a company during an attack at Mouquet Farm . He was wounded twice more during the war and medically discharged in March 1918 ; he returned to service with the permanent army . Newland held various appointments between the two world wars , and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1941 . He died of heart failure in 1949 .

= = Early life = =

Newland was born in the Geelong suburb of Highton , Victoria , on 22 August 1881 to William Newland , a labourer , and his wife Louisa Jane (née Wall) . In 1899 , he enlisted in the Commonwealth Military Forces and was assigned to the 4th Battalion , Australian Commonwealth Horse , as a private . The unit later embarked for South Africa , where Newland saw active service in Cape Town during the Second Boer War .

Returning to Australia in 1902 , Newland re @-@ settled in Victoria and joined the Royal Australian Artillery in July the following year . He served in the artillery for over four years , before transferring to the militia in September 1907 . In 1909 , he became a police officer in the Tasmanian Police Force , where he remained until August 1910 , when he re @-@ enlisted in the permanent army . He was posted to the Australian Instructional Corps ; he served with this unit until the outbreak of the First World War . In a ceremony at Sheffield , Tasmania on 27 December 1913 , Newland married Florence May Mitchell .

= = First World War = =

On 17 August 1914 , Newland transferred to the newly raised Australian Imperial Force following the British Empire 's declaration of war on Germany and her allies . Assigned to the 12th Battalion , he was made its Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant and embarked from Hobart aboard HMAT Geelong on 20 October , bound for Egypt . Following a brief stop in Western Australia , the troopship arrived at its destination seven weeks later . The 12th Battalion spent the following four months training in the Egyptian desert .

At the commencement of the Gallipoli Campaign , the 3rd Australian Brigade ? of which the 12th Battalion was part ? was designated as the covering force for the ANZAC landing , and as such was the first unit ashore on 25 April 1915 , at approximately 04 : 30 . Newland was wounded in the days following the landing , suffering a gunshot wound to his arm , and was evacuated to the 1st General Hospital . While at the hospital , he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on 22 May , before returning to the 12th Battalion four days later .

Newland was engaged in operations on the Gallipoli Peninsula until 9 June , when he was withdrawn from the area and placed in command of the 12th Battalion 's transport elements

stationed in Egypt . Promoted to lieutenant on 15 October , he was hospitalised for ten days in November due to dengue fever . Following the Allied evacuation of Gallipoli in December , the 12th Battalion returned to Egypt where Newland continued as transport officer . Promoted to captain on 1 March 1916 , he was made adjutant of the 12th Battalion fifteen days later . It embarked for France and the Western Front later that month .

Disembarking at Marseilles , the 12th Battalion was initially posted to the Fleurbaix sector of France . After involvement in minor operations , it transferred to the Somme in July , where it participated in the Battle of Pozières , its first major French action . Newland was posted to command A Company from 8 August , and was subsequently moved to Sausage Valley along with the rest of the 12th Battalion in preparation for an attack on Mouquet Farm .

Mouquet Farm was a ruined complex connected to several German strongpoints , and formed part of the Thiepval defences . On 21 August , Newland led his company in an assault on a series of trenches slightly north east of the farm . By 18 : 30 , the company had captured its objectives and several of Newland 's men rushed off in pursuit of the retreating Germans . Newland immediately stopped them and organised the company into a defensive position ; the trench was consolidated by 05 : 00 the next morning . Praised for his " ... great coolness and courage under heavy fire " during the attack , he was recommended for the Military Cross . The award , however , was downgraded to a Mention in Despatches , the announcement of which was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 4 January 1917 .

Following its involvement at Pozières and Mouquet Farm , the 12th Battalion was briefly transferred to the Ypres sector in Belgium in September , before returning to Bernafay Wood on the Somme late the following month . Newland was admitted to the 38th Casualty Clearing Station with pyrexia on 4 December . He was moved to the 2nd General Hospital at Le Havre , and returned to the 12th Battalion two weeks later following recuperation . On the same day , he was attached to the headquarters of the 2nd Australian Brigade for duty as a staff officer . He was granted leave on 21 January 1917 on completion of this stint .

Re -joining the 12th Battalion , Newland once again assumed command of A Company . On 26 February 1917 , he was tasked with leading it during the 12th Battalion 's attack on the village of La Barque during the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line . At Bark Trench , a position on the north side of the centre of La Barque , the company encountered a German strongpoint and Newland received a gunshot wound to the face . He was admitted to the 1st Australian Field Ambulance , and returned to the 12th Battalion on 25 March after a period of hospitalisation at the 7th Stationary Hospital in Boulogne .

= = = Victoria Cross = = =

By early April 1917 , there remained three German held outpost villages ? Boursies , Demicourt and Hermies ? between the area to the south of the I Anzac Corps position and the Hindenburg Line . An attack by the 1st Australian Division to capture them was planned for 9 April , the same day the British offensive opened at Arras . For his actions on three separate occasions during the assault , Newland was awarded the Victoria Cross .

On the night of 7 / 8 April , the 12th Battalion was tasked with the capture of Boursies , on the Bapaume ? Cambrai road . The attack was a feint to mislead the German forces on the direction from which Hermies was to be assaulted . Leading A Company as well as an attached platoon from B Company , Newland began his advance on the village at 03 : 00 . The company was soon subject to heavy rifle and machine gun fire from a derelict mill approximately 400 metres (440 yd) short of the village , and began to suffer heavy casualties . Rallying his men , Newland charged the position and bombed the Germans with grenades . The attack dislodged the Germans , and the company secured the area and continued its advance .

Throughout 8 April , the Australians were subjected to heavy shellfire from German forces . At approximately 22 : 00 , the Germans launched a fierce counter attack under the cover of a barrage of bombs and trench mortars against A Company 's position at the mill . They had some initial success and entered the forward posts of the mill , which were occupied by a platoon of

Newland 's men under the command of Sergeant John Whittle . Newland , bringing up a platoon from the battalion 's reserve company , charged the attackers and re @-@ established the lost ground with Whittle 's assistance . The 12th Battalion was relieved by the 11th Battalion on 10 April , having succeeded in capturing Boursies at the cost of 240 casualties , of which 70 were killed or missing .

After a four @-@ day reprieve from the frontline , the 12th Battalion relieved the 9th Battalion at Lagnicourt on 14 April . Around dawn the next day , the Germans launched a severe counter @-@ attack against the 1st Australian Division 's line . Breaking through , they forced back the 12th Battalion 's D Company , which was to the right of Newland 's A Company . Soon surrounded and under attack on three sides , Newland withdrew the company to a sunken road which had been held by Captain Percy Cherry during the capture of the village three weeks earlier , and lined the depleted company out in a defensive position on each bank .

The German forces attacked Newland 's company several times during the battle , but were repulsed each time . During one of the assaults , Newland observed that the German attack was weakening and gathered a party of twenty men . Leading the group , he charged the Germans and seized forty as prisoners . As reinforcements from the 9th Battalion began to arrive , a combined counter @-@ attack was launched and the line recaptured by approximately 11 : 00 . During the engagement , the 12th Battalion suffered 125 casualties , including 66 killed or missing . Newland and Whittle were both awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions at Boursies and Lagnicourt ; they were the only two permanent members of the Australian military to receive the decoration during the war . At 35 years and 7 months old , Newland was also the oldest Australian Victoria Cross recipient of the First World War .

The full citation for Newland 's Victoria Cross appeared in a supplement to the London Gazette on 8 June 1917 :

War Office , 8th June , 1917 .

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Officers , Non @-@ commissioned Officers and Men : ?

Capt. James Ernest Newlands , [sic] Inf . Bn . , Aus . Imp . Force .

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty , in the face of heavy odds , on three separate occasions .

On the first occasion he organised the attack by his company on a most important objective , and led personally , under heavy fire , a bombing attack . He then rallied his company , which had suffered heavy casualties , and he was one of the first to reach the objective .

On the following night his company , holding the captured position , was heavily counter @-@ attacked . By personal exertion , utter disregard of fire , and judicious use of reserves , he succeeded in dispersing the enemy and regaining the position .

On a subsequent occasion , when the company on his left was overpowered and his own company attacked from the rear , he drove off a combined attack which had developed from these directions .

These attacks were renewed three or four times , and it was Capt. Newland 's tenacity and disregard for his own safety that encouraged the men to hold out .

The stand made by this officer was of the greatest importance , and produced far @-@ reaching results .

= = = Later war service = = =

In early May 1917 , the 12th Battalion was involved in the British and Australian attempt to capture the village of Bullecourt . While engaged in this operation on 6 May , Newland was wounded for the third and final time of the war by a gunshot to his left armpit . Initially admitted to the 5th Field Ambulance , he was transferred to No 1 Red Cross Hospital , Le Touquet , the next day . The injury necessitated treatment in England , and Newland was shipped to a British hospital eight days later .

On recovering from his wounds , Newland attended an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace on 21 July , where he was decorated with his Victoria Cross by King George V. Later the same day , Newland boarded a ship to Australia . It arrived in Melbourne on 18 September , and Newland

travelled to Tasmania . He was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force as medically unfit on 2 March 1918 .

= = Later life = =

Following his discharge , Newland retained the rank of captain and returned to service with the permanent military forces . Between the two world wars , he held various appointments in the army , including adjutant and quartermaster of the 8th , 49th , 52nd , 38th and 12th Battalions , as well as area officer and recruiting officer . In 1924 , Newland 's wife Florence died of tuberculosis . On 30 April 1925 , he married Heather Vivienne Broughton in a ceremony at St Paul 's Anglican Church , Bendigo ; the couple would later have a daughter . Promoted to major on 1 May 1930 , Newland was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1935 .

Following the outbreak of the Second World War , Newland was seconded for duties as quartermaster instructor at the 4th Division headquarters . On 10 May 1940 , he assumed his final army appointment as quartermaster , A Branch , at Army Headquarters in Melbourne . He served in this position until August 1941 , when he was placed on the retired list with the honorary rank of lieutenant colonel .

In retirement , Newland served as Assistant Commissioner of the Australian Red Cross Society in the Northern Territory during the later months of 1941 . He joined the inspection staff at Ammunition Factory , Footscray on 2 January 1942 . At his home in Caulfield , Victoria on 19 March 1949 , he died suddenly of heart failure at the age of 67 . He was accorded a funeral with full military honours , and was buried at Brighton Cemetery . In 1984 , Newland 's daughter , Dawn , donated her father 's medals to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra , where they currently reside .