



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 11AM 28.10.2009

MEDIA RELEASE

Whittle Victoria Cross comes to Memorial

The Australian War Memorial is delighted to announce Sergeant John Whittle's Victoria Cross has been lent to the Memorial.

"We are grateful for the loan of Whittle's Victoria Cross, so that all Australians can be reminded of the great sacrifice that has been made during wartime," said Senior Historian, Peter Burness.

Born in Tasmania in 1883, Whittle was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 8 and 15 April 1917 at Boursies and Lagnicourt in France.

After a successful bombing assault on a ruined mill, Whittle was placed in command of a post just beyond it. Around 10pm the Germans counter-attacked and succeeded in entering the small trench. Whittle quickly reorganised his men, charged the enemy and restabilised the position.

Captain Newland (also a VC winner) then arrived and the two worked together until the line was re-established. Newland, under attack from three directions, withdrew his men to a sunken road and lined them out in defence along both banks. Just as this move was completed, Whittle, who had seen some Germans moving a machine gun into a position which offered a commanding arc of fire, jumped to his feet and charged the enemy gun crew. He killed the whole crew and then carried the machine gun back to the Australian positions.

Whittle survived the war, and died in Glebe NSW in 1946.

"The Victoria Cross is the Commonwealth's highest military honour, and serves to remind all Australians of the great sacrifice made by Australian servicemen and women," Mr Burness said.

The Memorial has 58 Australian Victoria Crosses already on display, part of the largest public collection of Victoria Crosses in the world.

The Victoria Cross was loaned anonymously to the Memorial. It will be conserved before going on display in the future.

What: Whittle Victoria Cross and interviews

Where: Administration Building
Australian War Memorial
Treloar Crescent, Campbell

When: 11am, Wednesday 28 October

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27 October 2009

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