



LORD ASHCROFT'S  
"HERO OF  
THE MONTH"

# Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Frederick Hayward

VC, MC & Bar

## ENDURANCE

AGGRESSION • BOLDNESS  
INITIATIVE • LEADERSHIP  
SACRIFICE • SKILL

The many Victoria Crosses and George Crosses in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum in London are displayed under one of seven different qualities of bravery. Whilst Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Frederick Johnson Hayward VC, MC & Bar's award is not part of the collection, Lord Ashcroft feels that it falls within the category of endurance:

"Endurance is the opposite of Aggression. It is all about 'cold courage', about knowing the cost and being prepared to pay it. It involves mental and physical resilience, not giving in and rising above the pain. It is almost infinite."



county. On Christmas Eve of the same year, he was promoted to Temporary Lieutenant. In March 1915, after being made a full Lieutenant, and also being transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Wiltshires, Hayward travelled to France.

On 8 October 1916, Hayward was decorated for the first time, being awarded the Military Cross for his earlier bravery at Stuff Redoubt, Thiepval, France. However, around this time he was also wounded, requiring hospital treatment in London to remove a piece of shrapnel from his eye.

Hayward was promoted to Acting Captain on 19 December 1916. On 18 September 1917, he was awarded a Bar to his MC for his gallantry at Messines Ridge on 7 June of that year.

However, it was for his bravery near Fremicourt, France, from March 22 to 24 March 1918 that Hayward, then aged 26, was awarded his VC. On 21 March, the Germans launched their so-called Spring Offensive against a section of the Front manned by the British Third and Fifth Armies.

In fact, at 4:40am on 21 March, several divisional camps were woken



up by the sound of the heavy artillery fire that marked the start of the Spring Offensive. With the 1<sup>st</sup> Wiltshires initially in the village of Achiet le Grand and, later that morning, north-west of Fremicourt, much of that day and the night of 21/22 March was spent preparing for the inevitable German onslaught.

The citation for Hayward's VC, announced on 24 April 1918, takes up the story of what happened during 22, 23 and 24 March and how brave the young officer was throughout those three days:

'For most conspicuous bravery in action. This officer, while in command of a company, displayed almost superhuman powers of endurance and consistent courage of the rarest nature. In spite of the fact that he was buried, wounded in the head, and rendered deaf on the first day of operations, and had his arm shattered two days later, he refused to leave his men (even though he received a third serious injury to his head), until he collapsed from sheer physical exhaustion.'

'Throughout the whole of this period the enemy were attacking his company's front without cessation, but Captain Hayward continued to move across the open from one trench to

another with absolute disregard for his own safety, concentrating entirely on reorganising his defences and encouraging his men.

'It was almost entirely due to the magnificent example of ceaseless energy of this officer that many most determined attacks upon his portion of the trench system failed entirely.'

Over a three-day period, Hayward had repeatedly showed astonishing endurance and courage, continuously encouraging his men despite the severity of his wounds. Having eventually collapsed from exhaustion on 24 March, he and other injured officers and men were evacuated on the night of 25 March.

Hayward survived his serious injuries. He was presented with both his VC and the Bar to his MC by King George V at an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 24 October 1918, less than a month before the end of the war.

Hayward remained in the Army after the end of hostilities and was appointed Adjutant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Wiltshires in 1919. Between 1919 and 1921, he served in Dublin, Egypt and Palestine. On 21 September 1927, he was promoted to Captain.

Hayward retired to the Reserves in 1935. On 9 July 1938, he married Linda Bowen at Christ Church, Burbage,

## VICTORIA CROSS HEROES II

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is a businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His sixth book on gallantry, *Victoria Cross Heroes Volume II* was published in hardback in 2016 and is now available in paperback. For more information, please visit: [www.victoriacrossheroes2.com](http://www.victoriacrossheroes2.com) Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collection is on public display at Imperial War Museum, London. For more information visit: [www.iwm.org.uk/heroes](http://www.iwm.org.uk/heroes). For details about his VC collection, visit: [www.lordashcroftmedals.com](http://www.lordashcroftmedals.com) For more information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit: [www.lordashcroft.com](http://www.lordashcroft.com). Follow him on Twitter: @LordAshcroft



ABOVE  
An abandoned British trench which was captured by the Germans; in the background, German soldiers on horseback view the scene. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW  
Personnel pictured crossing Westminster Bridge during the Peace Parade on 19 July 1919. During the victory parades that year in London and Paris, Hayward helped - along with Lieutenant S.J. Parker MC, DCM - to carry his battalion's Colours. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

TOP RIGHT  
German troops on the move during the Kaiser's Offensive in March 1918. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

RIGHT  
British troops near Longueval, France, on 24 March 1918. The men are waiting by the roadside while 'the transport of the retiring army passed'. The original caption states the advancing Germans are only a few miles distant. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E04659)

