LORD ASHCROFT'S "HERO OF THE MONTH" Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Hayward VC, MC & Bar



Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Frederick Hayward

THE MONTH"

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."

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

The original

caption states the advancing

Germans are

miles distant.

(COURTESY OF THE

AUSTRALIAN WAR

MEMORIAL · E04659)

only a few

army passed

EGINALD FREDERICK Johnson Hayward was born in Beersheba Mission Station, East Griqualand, South Africa, on 17 June 1891. He was the eldest son of Frederick Johnson Hayward, a stockbreeder whose family were originally from Wiltshire, and his wife, Gertrude

While he lived in South Africa, Reginald was educated at Hilton College, Natal, and Durban Business College. At school and college he was a talented sportsman, excelling at rugby, football and cricket: indeed, in 1911, he represented Natal against visiting English rugby teams. He was also a good shot and a fine horseman. In the spring of 1912, aged 20, Hayward travelled to the UK, where he attended the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. He continued to play rugby to a high standard, captaining his college's first XV and also playing for Rosslyn Park and Middlesex.

On 29 September 1914, just a month after the outbreak of the Great War, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant into the 6th Battalion, The Wiltshire Regiment - no doubt chosen because of his family links to the



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 1st 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 1st Wiltshires initially in the village of Achiet le Grand and, later that morning, northwest 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 1st Wiltshires in 1919. Between 1919 and 1921, he served in Dublin, Egypt and Palestine. On 21 September 1927, he was promoted to Captain.

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

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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 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. For details about his VC collection, visit: www.lordashcroftmedals.com For mo



information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit: www.lordashcroft. com. Follow him on Twitter: @LordAshcroft

Buxton, Derbyshire. In the same year, and with war looming against Hitler's Germany, he was recalled to the Army, serving with Anti-Aircraft Command. Between 1945 and 1947, he served as Commandant, Prisoner of War Camps, before retiring from the Armed Forces for a second time with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

From 1947 to 1952, Hayward worked in the BBC's Publications Department and from 1952 to 1967 he worked as Games Manager at the Hurlingham Club in London.

Hayward died at his home in Chelsea, central London, on 17 January 1970, aged 78. He was cremated at Putney Vale Crematorium on 23 January and his ashes were scattered in the Garden of Remembrance. His widow, Linda, died later the same year, in August. Hayward is commemorated at both Putney Vale Crematorium and in St Mary's Church, Limpley Stoke, Wiltshire.

I do not own the medal group belonging to this courageous officer. In fact, his medals are on display at the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment's Museum in Salisbury, Wiltshire. The museum also has Hayward's silver presentation

sword along with a painting of him by Cowan Dobson, the leading Scottish portrait artist. 📀

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)