



LORD ASHCROFT'S  
"HERO OF  
THE MONTH"

# Sergeant Henry Dalziel

VC

## BOLDNESS

AGGRESSION • INITIATIVE  
LEADERSHIP • SACRIFICE  
SKILL • ENDURANCE

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 Sergeant Henry Dalziel's VC medal group is not part of the collection, Lord Ashcroft feels that it falls within the category of boldness:

**"At certain times people take a calculated risk. With audacity, dash and daring, much can be achieved. In simple terms, who dares wins. Boldness combines force with creative thinking. It is impetuous and often completed before anyone knows what is going on."**



ABOVE The village of Le Hamel and the country in the direction of Corbie, seen from the trenches held by the Germans until the battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918. The enemy front line on the morning of the 4 July was on the crest of the hill in the middle distance but after the successful attack the trench in which the men are seen was occupied by the supports some 200 yards behind the new front line. This is the corner of Vaire Road where Dalziel performed his VC action. (Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial; E02844A)

BELOW  
Private Henry Dalziel pictured wearing his Victoria Cross prior to his return to Australia. Note that he is wearing a bandage under his hat. (Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial; A05444)

HENRY DALZIEL was born in Irvinebank, North Queensland, Australia, on 18 February 1893. He was the son of James Dalziel, a miner, and his wife Eliza (née McMillan). He attended local schools, including Irvinebank School.

As young boys, he and his brother, Victor, discovered tin samples, which led to the opening of the Boulder Mine, near Emuford, Queensland. After finishing his education, Dalziel – often known as "Harry" – worked as a fireman with the Queensland Government Railway.

In January 1915, five months after the start of the Great War, Dalziel, by then aged 21, enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). On 16 April 1915, Dalziel embarked from Brisbane with reinforcements for

the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Queensland and Tasmania). His brother, Victor, also served in the AIF during the Great War. In July 1915, Dalziel joined

the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Gallipoli, Turkey, and it was there, serving in the machine gun section, that he became known as "Two Gun Harry". After taking part in the Battle of Sari Bair (6-21 August 1915), Henry Dalziel was invalided to the UK, via Egypt, on 29 August 1915, suffering from rheumatism.

Dalziel, a no-nonsense Australian and a soldiers' soldier, spent the best part of a year recuperating and was treated at the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital. On 14 August 1916, he left for the Somme and was part of the Allied line at Bois Grenier. In France, Dalziel took part in actions at Mouquet Farm, Pozières, Flers and Gueudecourt. In September 1916, he was appointed driver and, in the spring and early summer of 1917, he fought at Bullecourt and took part in the capture of Messines Ridge. However, he reverted from being a sergeant to a private, at his own request, on 31 July 1917.

On 16 October 1917, Dalziel was wounded by shrapnel at Polygon Wood, Belgium, and thirteen days later he was evacuated to the UK for a second time. However, once again, he made a good recovery and was back in France by May 1918, rejoining the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion as a gunner.

It was on 4 July 1918 that Dalziel showed such bravery at the Battle of Hamel that he became the 1,000<sup>th</sup> recipient of the VC - Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. The Battle of Hamel was a successful attack by the Australian and US Armies, supported by British tanks, against German positions in and around the town of Le Hamel in northern France (See pages 44-51).

The citation for Dalziel's VC, published in *The London Gazette* on 17 August 1918, details his crucial part during the brief but important battle: "For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty when in action with a Lewis Gun section.

"His company met with determined resistance from a strong point which was strongly garrisoned, manned by numerous machine guns and, undamaged by our artillery fire, was also protected by strong wire entanglements. A heavy concentration of machine gun fire caused many casualties, and held up our advance.

"His Lewis Gun having come into action and silenced enemy guns in one direction, an enemy gun opened fire from another direction. >>





## 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** Australian soldiers and British tank crew stand beside H52, No. 9001, one of the three Mk. V tanks knocked out of action in the fight for Hamel on 4 July 1918. The left track has been 'thrown' off and the un-ditching beam appears to have been broken. Note the French Tricolour on the roof of the house. It was put there by an officer of 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF on the morning of the battle to mark the capture of the position. (Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial; E03843)



**ABOVE** A group of VC recipients who were invited to Sydney to join in the 1938 Sydney Anzac Day march. Dalziel is fifth from the right. All of the men were Great War recipients, except for James Rogers (third right) who was awarded his VC for his actions in the Boer War. (Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial; 04497)

Private Dalziel dashed at it and with his revolver killed or captured the entire crew and gun and allowed our advance to continue. He was severely wounded in the hand but carried on and took part in the capture of the final objective.

"He twice went over open ground under heavy enemy artillery and machine gun fire to secure ammunition, and though suffering from considerable loss of blood, he filled magazines and served his gun until severely wounded through the head. His magnificent bravery and devotion to duty was an inspiring example to all his comrades and his dash and unselfish courage at a critical time undoubtedly saved many lives and turned what would have been a serious check into a splendid success."

Yet again, Dalziel had been severely wounded. Not only did he lose his trigger finger on his injured hand, but

his skull was so badly smashed that his brain was exposed. Only the best medical treatment back in Britain saved his life and he eventually spent nearly four months in hospital. He received his VC from King George V at an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 13 December 1918.

Unsurprisingly, his VC action marked the end of his frontline action but altogether, during four years of fighting, Dalziel had been injured no less than 32 times. In January 1919, Dalziel embarked to return to his native Australia where he was given a hero's welcome. On 16 June of that year, he was honourably discharged from the AIF, medically unfit.

On 8 April 1920, Dalziel married Ida Ramsay – a nurse whom he had met during his recovery in Brisbane – at the Congregational Manse, South Brisbane. Dalziel had been unable to take up his

former job on the railways because of his wartime injuries, and for a time he tended an orchard nearby. However, he then took up the offer of land at a soldier settlement block in Queensland, where his wife had to do the bulk of the farm work on the smallholding that they called "Zenith". During the Great Depression, Dalziel travelled to Sydney to work in a factory, leaving his wife on their smallholding. However, when his wife fell ill, he returned to Queensland. In 1933 they settled in Brisbane but Dalziel was unable to find work.

After he and his first wife divorced, Dalziel remarried and his second wife, Elsie Kanowski, went on to have three children with him. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he rejoined the Army in June 1940, finally ending his military service with the rank of Pioneer Sergeant in December 1943. In June 1956, he attended the VC centenary commemorations in London's Hyde Park as part of the Australian contingent and later went on to visit the site of his VC action at the Battle of Hamel in France.

Dalziel died on 24 July 1965, at the Repatriation General Hospital in Greenslopes, Brisbane, shortly after suffering a stroke. He was 72 and his funeral service was conducted with full military honours.

Dalziel is commemorated at several locations in Australia. His medals are on display at the Australian War Museum after they were purchased by a benefactor at auction in 2010. ☉

**RIGHT** American and Australian troops dug in together during the Battle of Hamel. Hamel was fought in the early morning and US troops attacked at battalion strength, on what was their National Day, for the first time in the British line. (NARA)

