

# Ashcroft's broadside at 'woke' museum

LORD Ashcroft has launched a scathing attack on the Imperial War Museum (IWM), accusing it of prioritising LGBTQ+ issues over the exploits of Britain's military heroes.

Lord Ashcroft said the museum's decision to no longer display his world-renowned collection of Victoria and George crosses is proof it is in the grip of a woke culture with no real interest in the armed forces.

He said the museum, established in 1917 to commemorate the sacrifices of the First World War, should be renamed the Imperial Woke Museum. In The Mail on Sunday,

By Chris Hastings

he writes: 'For most of the 15 years that my VCs and GCs collection was on display at the IWM, I was proud to be associated with a museum that "provides for, and encourages, the study and understanding of the history of modern war and 'wartime experience.'"

'However, under its current leadership, I genuinely expect that someone will soon query whether it's appropriate to use the words "imperial" and "war" in its title for fear of offending the woke brigade.' Lord Ashcroft also criti-



**FORMER HOME:**

Lord Ashcroft's medal collection has been forced to move

future trustees.' Until recently the peer's collection of 245 VCs and a small number of GCs, valued at about £70million, had been on display in a gallery funded by him and bearing his name. But last year the Museum decided that it no longer wanted them.

The medals will be displayed by the National Army Museum within the next two years. It is a place which he says 'still holds dear values such as bravery, duty, self-sacrifice, humility, and loyalty.'

Although from July onwards a series of temporary exhibitions will feature selected items from the collection.

cised Sir Keir Starmer's recent decision to appoint three new trustees who lacked any actual military experience.

He adds: 'One of the trustees, Professor Dame Janet Beer, an

academic, was awarded her damehood "for services to higher education and equality and diversity." I would like to see ex-military personnel, not the Government, taking the lead on the appointment of

## At least one place values duty, bravery and sacrifice

**S**O farewell 'Imperial Woke Museum', hello National Army Museum. For those who missed the announcement, the latter has agreed to display my collection of Victoria Crosses (VCs) and George Crosses (GCs), the largest of its kind in the world.

This is the very same medal collection that the Imperial War Museum decided was no longer suitable to exhibit.

I am grateful that the National Army Museum, a mile and half up the Thames, still holds dear values such as bravery, duty and sacrifice.

The 'Imperial Woke Museum', however, has other priorities, which is why, after 15 years, it decided from the end of September last year to shut the Lord Ashcroft Gallery.

This was the gallery that, at the request of the IWM, I had spent £5million creating in 2010.

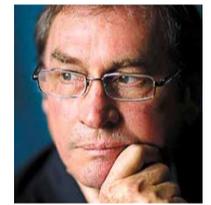
The museum's new priorities include focusing on LGBTQ+ history. A virtual tour, 'Exploring LGBTQ+ Stories in Times of Conflict', was launched late last year.

Its website says: 'The trail introduces key historical figures and lesser-known heroes who displayed great courage and resilience.'

The on-going project also carries a major exhibition whose subjects include Enid Mary Barraud, a bisexual land girl who often dressed as a man and sometimes went by the name of 'John'. The project marked the 25th anniversary of the lifting of the ban on gay people serving in the Armed Forces.

These individuals undoubtedly have interesting stories but to highlight their contribution to the war on the grounds of who they preferred to sleep with is in danger of being patronising to their memory.

And the display, so soon after my collection was being made homeless, suggests the museum had grown tired of Armed Forces personnel whose extreme valour didn't



By **LORD ASHCROFT**

FORMER CONSERVATIVE PARTY DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

suit today's vogue for tales of identity repression – for which the public is now apparently so hungry.

For most of the 15 years that these 245 VCs and a smaller number of GCs were on display at the IWM, I was proud to be associated with a museum that 'provides for, and encourages, the study and understanding of the history of modern war and wartime experience.'

However, under its current leadership, I genuinely expect that someone will soon query whether its very name is offensive – an imprimatur of colonial excess, no doubt, that will trigger any poor soul who enters the building.

Last year, Sir Keir Starmer appointed three new trustees to the IWM, whose term will run to 2029.

None of them has a military background. One of the trustees, Professor Dame Janet Beer, an academic, was awarded her damehood 'for services to higher education and equality and diversity.'

I'd like to see ex-military personnel, not the Government, taking the lead in appointing future trustees.

● Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. For more on his work, visit [lordashcroft.com](http://lordashcroft.com). Follow him on X/Facebook @LordAshcroft.

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