



Boroondara Remembers:

HONOURING VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS

LEARNING RESOURCE



Image: Stretcher bearers World War I, by H. Septimus Power, Australian War Memorial

The 'Boroondara Remembers: Honouring Victoria Cross Recipients' project was supported by the Victorian Government and the Victorian Veterans Council.

More Information:

For more information about the Learn with Boroondara Arts program, education resources and activities, please contact us:

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The Victoria Cross is the highest award for service men and women to honour acts of bravery during wartime. It was created in 1856 by Queen Victoria and has been honouring service people since 1854. Any serving member of any armed forces worldwide can receive this award.

Three members of Boroondara community who have received The Victoria Cross honour are:

- **James Rogers** (1873 - 1961, Boer War)
- **Maurice Vincent Buckley** (1891 - 1921, WWI)
- **Clifford William King Sadler** (1892-1964, WWI).

This educational resource is designed to engage years 9 and 10 students in a classroom setting to learn more about the three Victorian Cross (VC) recipients, how their stories were told through wartime reporting and how medical services were an integral part of war.

The topics cover:

- **English: Level 9**
Language / Language for interaction (VCELA428)
- **Visual Arts: Levels 9 and 10**
Explore and Express Ideas (VCAVAE040)
- **History: Levels 9 and 10**
Historical Knowledge, The Modern World and Australia. Australia at war (1914 – 1945): World War I (VCHHK142).

DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

The Victoria Cross award is a bronze medal designed as a cross with a circular centre. In the centre sits an image of a lion guardant standing at the foot of the Royal Crown (Commonwealth Monarch), with the words "For valour" inscribed on it. "For valour" means great courage in the face of danger, especially in battle.

The medal is suspended from a crimson-red ribbon.

On the reverse of the medal, you can find the following inscribed:

- Date of the act of bravery
- Name and rank of the recipient,
- and Unit of recipient.

For more information on The Victoria Cross, please visit awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/vic_cross





Boroondara Victoria Cross Recipients



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THE VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS



CLIFFORD WILLIAM KING SADLIER	Age	22 years
	Born	Camberwell, Victoria
	Occupation	Commercial traveller
	Next of kin	J G Sadlier, father
	Height	5 feet, 9½ inches
	Complexion	fair
	Eyes	blue
	Hair	fair
	Enlistment date	31 May 1915



Clifford William King Sadlier was born in Camberwell in 1892 and was the youngest of four children to parents Thomas George Sadlier and Mary Ann Roberts.

The family moved from Victoria to Western Australian when Clifford graduated from University High School. Clifford began working as a commercial traveller before he enlisted in the war, joining the AIF in May 1915.

Clifford was 22 years of age when went to war. While not a medical person himself, his initial posting was to the hospital and convalescent home where he served in the Australian Army Medical Corps, embarking for Egypt in June and working in the 1st Australian General Hospital in Heliopolis.

He returned to Australia in March 1916 on nursing duties before re-embarking eight months later, this time on active service with the rank of Acting Sergeant with the 7th Reinforcements for the 51st Battalion.

In February 1917 Clifford undertook a course for non-commissioned officers in England, before travelling to France in May where he was quickly promoted to Corporal. He rose through the ranks again, being promoted to Second Lieutenant and then Lieutenant by April 1918.

Clifford was involved in the second battle of Villes-Bretonneux on 24-25 April 1918, which is where he won his Victoria Cross. In an action described by war historian

Charles Bean as 'an extraordinarily bold attack' on German machine-gunners, Clifford and his battalion staged a counterattack which resulted in heavily casualties.

The citation attached to his award reads as follows:

For conspicuous bravery during a counter-attack by his battalion on strong enemy positions.

Lt. Sadlier's platoon, which was on the left of the battalion, had advanced through the wood where a strong enemy machine-gun post caused casualties and prevented the platoon from advancing.

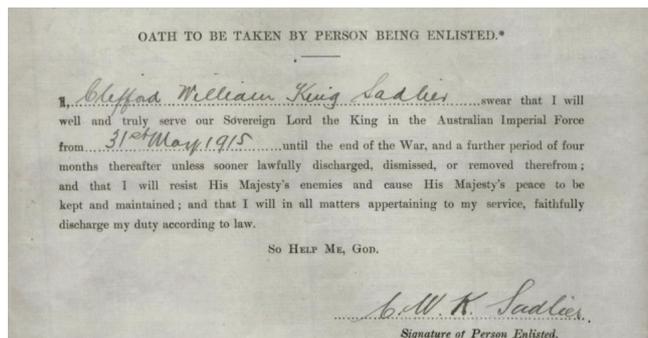
Although himself wounded, he at once collected his bombing section, led them against the machine guns, and succeeded in killing the crews and capturing two of the guns.

By this time Lt. Sadlier's party were all casualties, and he alone attacked a third enemy machine gun with his revolver, killing the crew of four and taking the gun. In doing so, he was again wounded.

The very gallant conduct of this officer was the means of clearing the flank, and allowing the battalion to move forward, thereby saving a most critical situation.

His coolness and utter disregard of danger inspired us all.¹

Image:
Extract from Clifford Sadlier service record, National Archives Australia



By the end of that day, Villers-Bretonneux was once again in allied hands, but Clifford's military career was just about over.

In October 1918 he was invalided back to Australia and his official service with the AIF ended in March 1919.²

After his war service, Clifford returned home to Western Australia and married Maude Victoria Moore in Perth in 1922.

Clifford had an unsuccessful run at politics in 1930 when he contested the seat of Nedlands as a Nationalist. His marriage to Maude unfortunately ended in divorce after 12 years. Clifford re-married Alice Edith Smart in Perth in 1936. He worked as a clerk in the Repatriation Department until he was invalided out in 1949. He died in 1964.

1. *Third Supplement to The London Gazette*, 9 July 1918, p. 8156.
2. Merrilyn Lincoln, 'Sadlier, Clifford William King (1892-1964)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sadlier-clifford-william-king-8323>, accessed 15 May 2023.



Image:
Lieutenant Clifford William King
Sadlier VC. Australian War Memorial





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THE VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS



MAURICE VINCENT BUCKLEY (AKA Gerald Sexton)	Alias	Gerald Sexton
	Age	23 years
	Born	Hawthorn, Victoria
	Occupation	Coach trimmer
	Next of kin	Timothy Buckley, father Agnes Buckley, mother
	Height	5 feet, 7½ inches
	Complexion	dark
	Eyes	grey
	Hair	brown wavy
	Enlistment date	18 December 1914



Maurice Vincent Buckley was born in Hawthorn in 1891 to Timothy Buckley and Honora Mary Agnes Sexton (known as Agnes). Maurice was the third child of eight for the couple who had married in 1887 and began their family almost immediately.

Maurice Buckley has the unusual honour of being one of few, if not the only, Victoria Cross winner who was also a deserter.

Maurice enlisted almost as soon as Australia joined the war effort, signing up to the 13th Light Horse Regiment on 18 December 1914. He was 23 years old. His younger brothers also enlisted – Gerald in July 1915 and William the year after – claiming to be 19 years of age, when in fact he was only 17.

Maurice arrived in Egypt in March 1915 but within six months he had been hospitalised and sent home to Australia for treatment at Langwarrin Hospital in Victoria. But by January 1916 he had left, against orders, and was considered a deserter.

But this was not the end of Maurice's military service. In May 1916, Maurice re-enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), but used the alias Gerald Sexton. It was a name he created from his brother

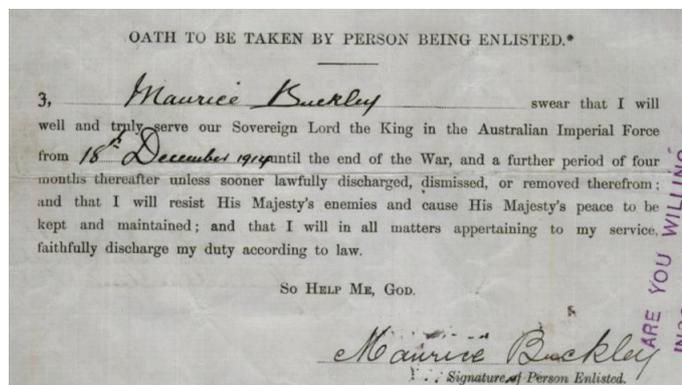
(who passed away in October 1915) and his mother's maiden name.

Maurice (now Gerald Sexton) was attached to the 13th Battalion as a private and departed for France in October 1916, joining his unit at the Somme in January 1917. He fought in some of the worst conflicts of the war, including Bullecourt, Polygon Wood, Ypress and Passchendale. Maurice was promoted to Lance Corporal in January 1918 and served at Hébuterne and Villers-Bretonneux. He was promoted again six months later to Lance Sergeant and charged with managing the Lewis gun section, which included nine operators and around 16 guns.

In July 1918, Maurice was wounded by a shell at the battle of Hamel and was sent to recover for two weeks before re-joining his unit on 8 August. He earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions under fire near Morcourt. One description of the action described Maurice's battalion advancing through farmland and tall crops when they were suddenly under enemy fire. Despite the number of casualties around him:

... he stood in full view of the enemy, firing from the hip until he had put the enemy machine gun out of action.¹

Image:
Extract from Maurice Buckley's service record, National Archives Australia



On 18 September 1918, during an attack at Le Verguier in northern France, Maurice displayed 'the most conspicuous bravery and performed deeds which, apart from their gallant nature, were in a great measure responsible for the Battalion's success'.² His actions on this day earned Maurice the Victoria Cross medal.

Maurice came to the rescue of one company when he rushed towards and shot at the enemy, and then raced under machine gun fire across open ground to put a trench mortar out of action. Still under heavy machine gun fire, he led his men towards the direction of the enemy fire, all the while firing his Lewis gun and being able to clear the enemy's dug outs. By the end of the day, Maurice was responsible for disabling at least six machine-gun positions, capturing an enemy field gun and almost 100 enemy prisoners.

Sexton rushed the trench, firing his gun from the hip and killed or took prisoner all the members of the post.³

Sergeant Gerald Sexton was awarded the Victoria Cross on 9 December 1918. Eight months later, Maurice revealed his true identity and a second notice was issued in the London and Commonwealth of Australia Gazette recognising that Gerald Sexton was in fact Maurice Buckley. Maurice returned to Australia in October 1919 and was discharged from the AIF in December 1919 after being declared medically unfit.

Less than two years after returning from the war in 1919, Maurice tragically lost his life. On 15 January 1921 he was involved in a horse-riding accident after trying to clear a railway line at Boolarra in Victoria's east. The accident proved fatal, and Maurice Buckley died in hospital in Fitzroy twelve days later. Ten other Victoria Cross recipients were pall bearers at his funeral and he was buried with full military honours.⁴

1. *London Gazette*, 5 December 1918, cited in B2455, service record, National Archives of Australia.
2. World War I service record, Maurice Vincent Buckley, National Archives of Australia.
3. World War I service record, Maurice Vincent Buckley, National Archives of Australia.
4. David Horner, 'Buckley, Maurice Vincent (1891-1921)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/buckley-maurice-vincent-5416/text9181>, accessed 17 May 2023.



Image:
Sergeant Maurice Vincent Buckley.
Australian War Memorial





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THE VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS



JAMES ROGERS	Age	25 years
	Born	Moama, NSW
	Occupation	Farmer
	Next of kin	John Rogers, father
	Height	6 feet, 2 inches
	Complexion	fair
	Eyes	blue
	Hair	brown
	Enlistment date	1 October 1898



James Rogers was born in Moama, NSW in 1873, the third child of six for parents John Rogers and Sarah Louisa Johnstone.

His family moved to Victoria's Western District, to a farm in Heywood in 1886 as James was growing up. By the age of four, James was already riding horses.

James began his working life as a farmer and grazier before embarking on his extensive military career. James served in both the South African Campaign (the Boer War) and the First World War.

James Rogers was 25 years old when he first enlisted for military service. In 1898 he joined the local company of Victorian Mounted Rifles where he proved himself to be a superior horseman, an excellent shot with a rifle and a tough bushman. When the South African War started (the Boer War), James was one of the first to enlist in 1899 as a private with the 1st Victorian Mounted Infantry Company.

Departing Melbourne in October 1899, originally for one year of service, James stayed in South Africa to help the Provincial Mounted Police and joined the

South African Constabulary as a sergeant. In June 1901 he was part of the No. 6 Troop, which joined the Royal Irish Rifles on a patrol in search of Boer forces.

On 16 June 1901, as the troops were returning home, they were ambushed by Boer sniper fire. An attack followed, resulting in heavy enemy fire. When the horse of Commanding Officer Frank Dickinson was shot, James Rogers returned through enemy fire to rescue Lieutenant Dickinson. He attempted this daring rescue twice more for two other men who had fallen, before also catching and returning two horses that had escaped amidst the battle.¹

It was as a result of these courageous efforts that James Rogers, who had been mentioned in dispatches, was awarded the Victoria Cross on 18 April 1902.²

Back in Australia, James returned to farming and started a family. In 1907 he married Ethel Maud Seldon and together they had two sons, James Callow Rogers (born 1907) and Gordon Lionel Seldon Rogers (born 1911).

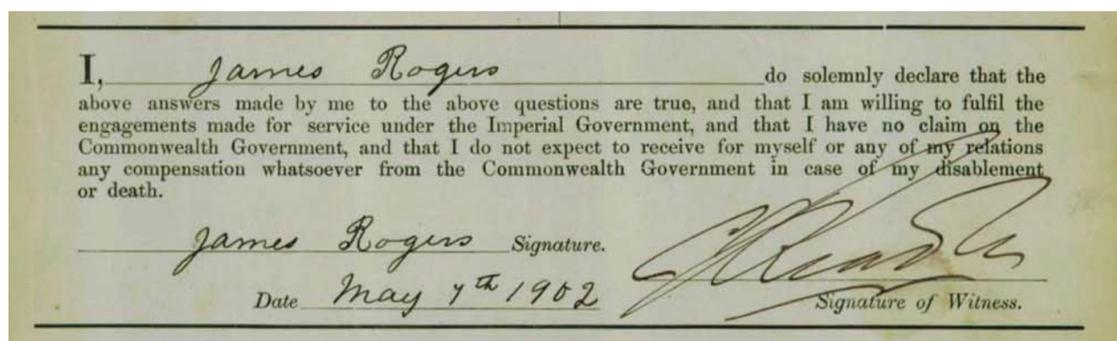


Image: Extract from James Rogers service record, National Archives Australia



James' military career was not over. When Australia entered World War I in 1914, James enlisted almost immediately, joining the 3rd Light Horse Brigade Train. He received a serious gunshot wound to his left shoulder at Gallipoli on 4 August 1915 and was evacuated to Egypt to recover for two months. He served for the next few months with the Anzac Provost Corps in Egypt, before being invalided back to Australia in July 1916.

Returning from the First World War, James worked as a range assistant at the Williamstown Rifle Range Ordnance Branch of the Australian Military Forces (AMF).³ He resigned from this role in 1922 and resumed farming at a property at Bolton close to Manangatang, Victoria.

But a combination of ill-health from his war injuries and bad seasons compelled him to give up farming and return to Melbourne to look for work.⁴

The Rogers family moved to 4 Laver Street, Kew and James and Ethel continued to live in this family home until Ethel's death in 1958.⁵ James' son Gordon was keen to follow in his father's military footsteps and as soon as he turned 18, he enlisted in the militia forces in the 22nd Field Brigade in 1929.

James Rogers died in the Concord Repatriation Hospital on 28 October 1961. He was cremated with military honours in Melbourne and his name is on a memorial cairn at Heywood, Victoria.⁶

1. *Western Mail* (Perth), 31 December 1936, p. 11.
2. *London Gazette*, 17 January 1902, p. 384.
3. World War I service record, James Rogers, National Archives of Australia.
4. *The Sun* (Sydney), 22 October 1929, p. 17.
5. Sands & McDougall directory lists James Rogers at 4 Laver Street, Kew in 1930. There is no record of him living there in 1925. Gordon Rogers' enlistment record from 1929 lists his next of kin, James Rogers, as living at 4 Laver Street, Kew.
6. Anthony Staunton, 'Rogers, James (1873-1961)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rogers-james-8257/text14461>, accessed 15 May 2023.

Image: The only living Australian Victoria Cross winner of the Boer War, Mr James Rogers of Kew (left), with his son Gordon Rogers during a visit to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) School of Administration for his son's passing out as a pilot officer in the RAAF, 1944.
Australian War Memorial





Activities



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TOPIC 1: WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT BELONGING TO A PLACE?

<p>All three of the VC recipients – James Rogers, Maurice Vincent Buckley and Clifford William King Sadler – have connections to the current day Boroondara City Council but have lived in other parts of the country as well. Some also have links to relatives living in Boroondara today.</p>	<p>Think about your own connections to place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is your link to the City of Boroondara? ▪ Where else have you lived? ▪ Where does your extended family live? ▪ What helps make where you live feel like home? ▪ Do you feel like you belong where you are? If so, why? If not, why not?
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<p>TASK After thinking about the above questions, write a short response (approximately 200 words) on why being able to have connections to a place (or places) is an important part of understanding your own identity and sense of place in the world.</p>	<p>TASK Draw or create your own personal map connecting you and your family to all the places that have meaning in your life. This map does not have to be to scale or geographically accurate, but can be a creative interpretation of your place in the world. Think of this like a family tree of places.</p>
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VICTORIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography
Identify, analyse and explain significant interconnections within places and between places over time and at different scales, and evaluate the resulting changes and further consequences (VCGGC129)

Visual Arts
Explore and Express Ideas

Explore the visual arts practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts and themes in art works (VCAVAE040)



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TOPIC 2: HEROIC TALES AND WAR REPORTING

Read the reports about how each of these three men – Clifford, Maurice and James – earned their Victoria Cross medals and think about the way in which language is used to talk about their actions.

CLIFFORD SADLIER 'His coolness and utter disregard of danger inspired all.'

For conspicuous bravery during a counterattack by his battalion on strong enemy positions.

Lt. Sadlier's platoon, which was on the left of the battalion, had to advance through a wood where a strong enemy machine-gun post caused casualties and prevented the platoon from advancing. Although himself wounded, he at once collected his bombing section, led them against the machine guns, and succeeded in killing the crews and capturing two of the guns.

By this time Lt. Sadlier's party were all casualties, and he alone attacked a third enemy machine gun with his revolver, killing the crew of four and taking the gun. In doing so, he was again wounded.

The very gallant conduct of this officer was the means of clearing the flank, and allowing the battalion to move forward, thereby saving a most critical situation. His coolness and utter disregard of danger inspired all.

Lt. Clifford William King Sadlier, A.I.F.

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Extract from *Third Supplement to the London Gazette*, 9 July 1918, p. 8156.

Image: Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 11 July, 1918, Issue 30790, p. 8156, published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, viewed 22 Mar 2024.
www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30790/page/8156



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TOPIC 2: HEROIC TALES AND WAR REPORTING

MAURICE BUCKLEY (AKA GERALD SEXTON) '...displaying boldness which inspired all.'

The 13th Australian Infantry Battalion, AIF, was to skirt to the south, and it was during this action that Sgt Gerald Sexton won his VC.

After a bad start caused by Allied artillery, the 13th set off behind the creeping barrage and successfully cleared several outposts.

Firing his Lewis gun from the hip, Sgt Sexton cleared two of them.

When the advance had passed the ridge at Le Verguer, Sgt Sexton's attention was directed to a party of enemy manning a bank, and to a field gun which was causing casualties and holding up a company.

Sgt Sexton, without thought for his own safety, called his section to follow.

Under heavy machine gun fire he rushed down the bank and killed the gunners of the field gun then, still under heavy machine gun fire, he returned to the bank.

From there he led his section towards the direction of the machine gun fire, and again firing his Lewis gun from the hip cleared the dug-outs and captured 30 prisoners.

When the advance continued from the first to the second objective the Company again came under heavy machine gun fire which held up the advance.

Supported by another platoon, he disposed of the enemy guns, displaying boldness which inspired all.

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Extract from the *London Gazette*, 5 December 1918.





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TOPIC 2: HEROIC TALES AND WAR REPORTING

JAMES ROGERS

'...at tremendous risk to himself'

...that he accepted it. The Boers were occupying the surrounding hills, and the rearguard was engaging them from the valley while the main body withdrew. The rearguard retired to the cover of a Katir kraal, and Sergeant Rogers noticed that the Boers were making an encircling movement, and he suggested to Lieutenant Dickinson retirement closer to the main column.

Dickinson agreed, they mounted, and Rogers led them. He knew the country because he had ridden the veldt for well over a year. Then Rogers moved to the right to question a native, and was about 500 yards away from the rearguard when he saw Lieutenant Dickinson was down and the others galloping on, unaware of his plight. Rogers wheeled his horse and raced for his officer.

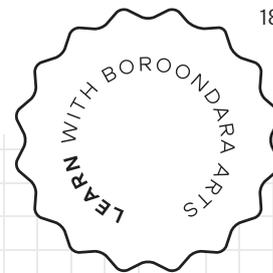
It was a race in reality, for the Boers were riding hard to capture him, and they fired from the saddle as they came. Rogers arrived first, and while helping this heavy man to mount, the Boers called upon him to surrender. His answer was several shots from his rifle. With Lieutenant Dickinson behind him he galloped away; but the rearguard was now in real trouble. In the high growth some men had ridden into an obscured fence, and two of their horses were shot. Rogers dropped Lieutenant Dickinson as

that he accepted it. The Boers were occupying the surrounding hills, and the rearguard was engaging them from the valley while the main body withdrew. The rearguard retired to the cover of a Kaffir kraal, and Sergeant Rogers noticed that the Boers were making an encircling movement, and he suggested to Lieutenant Dickinson retirement closer to the main column. Dickinson agreed, they mounted, and Rogers led them. He knew the country because he had ridden the veldt for well over a year. Then Rogers moved to the right to question a native, and was about 500 yards away from the rearguard when he saw Lieutenant Dickinson was down and the others galloping on, unaware of his plight. Rogers wheeled his horse and raced for his officer. It was a race in reality, for the Boers were riding hard to capture him, and they fired from the saddle as they came. Rogers arrived first, and while helping this heavy man to mount, the Boers called upon him to surrender. His answer was several shots from his rifle. With Lieutenant Dickinson behind him he galloped away; but the rearguard was now in real trouble. In the high growth some men had ridden into an obscured fence, and two of their horses were shot. Rogers dropped Lieutenant Dickinson as soon as possible. He handed him over to Trooper Daley, who took him up and acted on Rogers's shouted advice, "Go for your life!" Rogers then rode back to where the two men were with dead horses. He picked one up and told the other to retire and shoot alternately, but not to surrender, as he would be back for him. He rode back to the column and for the third time went back; each ride was further as the column was rapidly retiring, and he got his third man. James Rogers then noticed two Tommies on foot, whose horses were galloping back to the Boers. Rogers as a bushman was able to cut out one of these horses and lead it back, and helping the two Tommies to mount, got them away. Through the gallantry of Sergeant James Rogers the lives of an officer and several men were saved at tremendous risk to himself.

Extract from *Western Mail* (Perth), 31 December 1936, p. 11

Image: 1936 'Winners of the VICTORIA CROSS', *Western Mail* (Perth, WA : 1885 - 1954), 31 December, p. 11. , viewed 22 Mar 2024, www.nla.gov.au/nla.news-article50055325





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TOPIC 2: HEROIC TALES AND WAR REPORTING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss how language is used in these articles to valorise and glorify their actions.
- Why do you think newspapers were so keen to report war stories in this way?
- How do you think that James, Maurice or Clifford might describe their own actions? Would it be any different from this?
- How would these actions be written about if they were the actions of the enemy?

TASK

Try re-writing one of these reports from the perspective of James, Maurice or Clifford OR from the point of view of a journalist writing from the other side (the enemy perspective).

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

English

Language for interaction

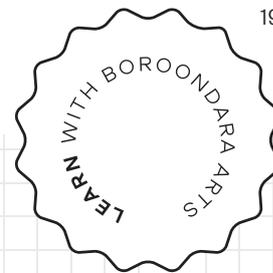
Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, including allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (VCELA428)

History

Australia at war (1914 – 1945): World War I

Different historical interpretations and contested debates about World War I and the significance of Australian commemorations of the war (VCHHK144)





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TOPIC 3: A PLACE FOR HEALING

All three men – James, Maurice and Clifford – spent time in hospitals during their war service. Medical services were an integral part of the war effort and the dangers that the men and women faced on the battlefield, resulted in incredible advancements in medical technology and knowledge that fundamentally transformed the practice of medicine.

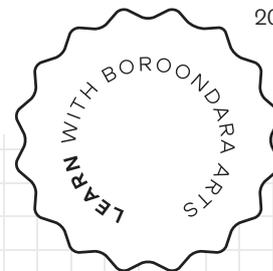
WATCH

Watch this short film produced by the Imperial War Museum in London to learn more about medicine during World War I.

Please note: this film contains some historic graphic images of facial reconstruction and war-related injuries.

www.iwm.org.uk/history/medicine-in-the-first-world-war





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TOPIC 3: A PLACE FOR HEALING

RESEARCH PROJECT

Choose a topic related to medicine during World War I and produce a presentation (minimum of five slides) exploring the following questions:

- Who/what is it?
- Where was it located?
- How long did the person/place provide medical services?
- What interesting fact did you learn?
- Why did you choose to research this topic?

Think about exploring places like:

1st Australian General Hospital in Heliopolis

www.anzacday.org.au/australian-ww1-hospitals

A casualty clearing station

vwma.org.au/explore/units/95

A hospital ship

www.navyhistory.au/australian-hospital-ships

Highton convalescence home, now part of Camberwell Grammar School

Read: Boroondara Remembers, pp. 146-150

Or choose a case study of people, like:

Nurses

www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/nurses/ww1

Voluntary Aid Detachments

www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/vad

Doctors

www.pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-women-doctors-who-fought-to-serve

Other medical persons

www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/1918/medical

Hint: Try looking for images to illustrate your presentation using the State Library Victoria catalogue or the Australian War Memorial collection.

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

History

Australia at war (1914 – 1945): World War I

Effects of World War I, with a particular emphasis on the changes and continuities brought to the Australian home front and society (VCHHK142)

Hint: Try looking for images to illustrate your presentation using the State Library Victoria catalogue www.slv.vic.gov.au or the Australian War Memorial collection www.awm.gov.au.

