

Victoria Cross Online



Issue 36 October 2025

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the 36th edition of Victoria Cross Online Magazine.

The feature article this month is by yours truly on one of the smallest recipients of the Victoria Cross, Arthur "Titch" Vickers VC, who is buried relatively close to me in Witton Cemetery, Birmingham.

In my next series of articles, I am going to focus on the 10 youngest recipients of the Victoria Cross. I will begin this month with three of the five joint 10th youngest recipients and their stories.

There is also the sad news of the closure of the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum as of 30th September 2025.

There is also the story of the unveiling a new blue plaque in Ipswich to honour Arthur Saunders VC.

There is also the announcement of the Frederick Bell VC Memorial Lecture to be held in Australia on 14th November 2025.

Finally, there is news of the latest two VC grave cleans courtesy of the Victoria Cross Trust.

STOP PRESS – There is a tribute to Michael Pratt GC who passed away this month in Australia aged 70.



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“Titch VC”

By Mark Green



Arthur “Titch” Vickers (1882-1944) was born at 7 Court, Woodcock Street, Aston, Birmingham on 2nd February 1882. His father, John, was a strip brass caster, and his mother was Amy nee Kennedy. John and Amy married on 4th April 1874 at St Laurence Church, Birmingham, Warwickshire. Arthur had six siblings, with three older brothers, a younger brother and two younger sisters.

Arthur was educated at Dartmouth Street School, Aston. He enlisted on 29th May 1902 and served for six years. He was then employed as a brass carter and later by General Electric Company at Witton, Birmingham 1908-14. It took him six attempts to re-enlist on 12th August 1914, having been rejected due to his height, which seems unusual given his previous service. He was nicknamed “Midge” or “Titch”. Arthur was posted to France with his Battalion on 4th May 1915.

On 25th September 1915 at Hulloch, France, during an attack by his battalion on the first line German trenches, Private Vickers on his own initiative, went forward in front of his company under very heavy shell, rifle and machine-gun fire and cut the wires which were holding up a great part of his battalion. Although it was broad daylight at the time, he carried out this work standing up and his gallant action contributed largely to the success of the assault.

“Titch VC”

By Mark Green

**3719 Private Arthur Vickers, 2nd Battalion,
The Royal Warwickshire Regiment.**

For most conspicuous bravery on 25th September, 1915, during operations before Hulluch.

During an attack by his battalion on the first line German trenches, Private Vickers, on his own initiative and with the utmost bravery, went forward in front of his company under very heavy shell, rifle and machine-gun fire, and cut the wires which were holding up a great part of the battalion. Although it was broad daylight at the time he carried out this work standing up. His gallant action contributed largely to the success of the assault.

“Titch VC”

By Mark Green



“Titch VC”

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At the time of his VC award, he was living with his sister, Amy in Park Road, Aston. The VC was presented to him by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 15th January 1916. He was later promoted to Sergeant and served in the Territorial Force / Army post-war. He was a member of the VC Guard at the interment of the Unknown Warrior on 11th November 1920.

Arthur married Lily Agnes nee Price on 29th April 1922 at St Peter & St Paul Church, Aston. He was still living with his sister at the time. Lily was previously a warehouse girl, and was living with her parents at 49 Beales Street at the time of the marriage. They had one child – Arthur Herbert Vickers, born in 1923, though tragically he lived only a couple of months and died later that year. Arthur was working as a core builder at the time of their marriage. From 1935, he was a millwright's mate at Messrs Lucas Ltd and later in life in collected glasses in a public house.

Arthur died of carcinoma of the stomach and pulmonary tuberculosis at City Hospital, West Heath, Birmingham on 27th July 1944. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Witton Cemetery; it was marked with a headstone by Birmingham City Council on 13th November 2000.

In addition to his VC and Croix de Guerre, he was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19 and George VI Coronation Medal 1937. His medals are held by the Royal Warwickshire Regiment Museum, Warwick.

“Titch VC”

By Mark Green



“Titch VC”

By Mark Green



Authors Collection

“Titch VC”

By Mark Green



Arthur Vickers VC taking part in a Remembrance Day parade, probably 1950s
Courtesy of Dave West

Royal Warwickshire Regiment Museum

The Youngest VCs – 10=



Robert Jones (1857-1898) was born in Penrhos, near Raglan, Wales on 19th August 1857. He enlisted into 2/24th Regiment of Foot (later South Wales Borderers) on 10 January 1876 aged 19.

Shortly after his enlistment, the Regiment had set sail for South Africa and the Zulu War. By the tender age of just 21, Robert Jones found himself about to face the large Zulu force heading towards Rorke's Drift on the 22nd January 1879.

Robert Jones VC – 21 years old
at time of action

During the first assault from the Zulus, Jones found himself in a ward of the hospital facing the hill. Together with Private William Jones, they defended the hospital to the last, until the Zulus were starting to break through. Robert worked hard to remove the patients from the hospital, and they successfully managed to get six out of the seven men moved. When they went back for the final patient, Sergeant Maxfield, who was delirious with fever, Robert found him being stabbed to death by the Zulus.

Both Robert and William Jones were gazetted for the Victoria Cross on 2nd May 1879, and he was presented with his medal on 11th September that year by General Sir Garnet Wolseley at Utrecht, KwaZulu Natal. Shortly after this, Jones was posted to India with the 2nd Battalion.

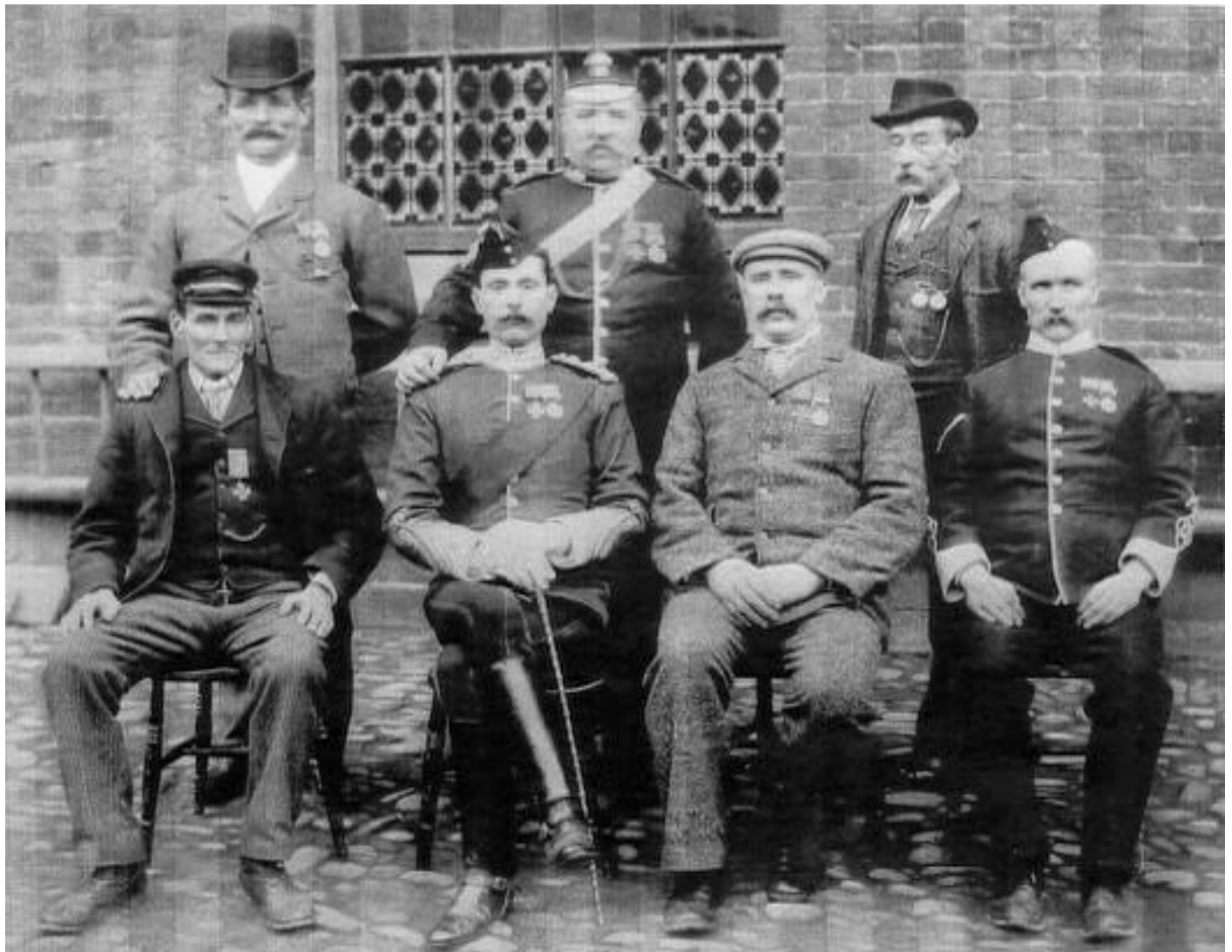
The Youngest VCs – 10=

2nd Battalion 24th
Regiment

Private William Jones and
Private Robert Jones

defence.

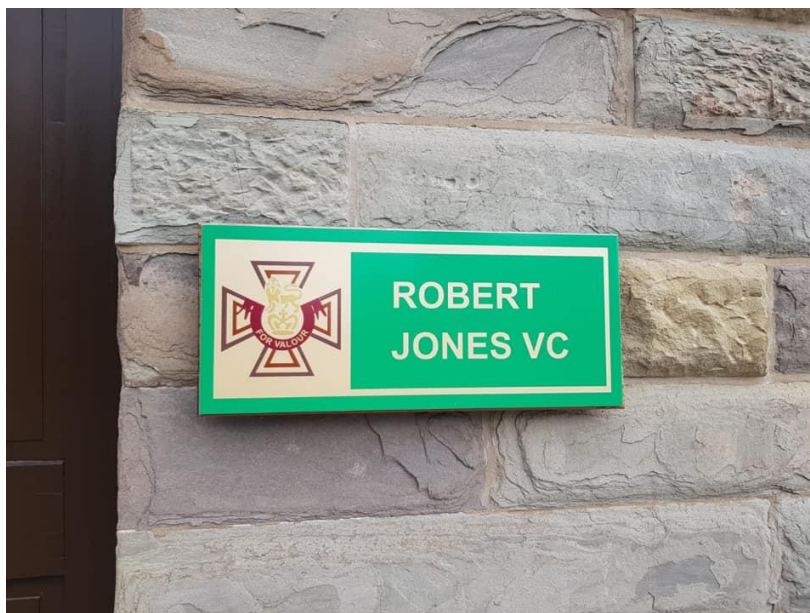
In another ward, facing the bill, Private William Jones and Private Robert Jones defended the post to the last, until six out of the seven patients it contained had been removed. The seventh, Sergeant Maxfield, 2nd Battalion 24th Regiment, was delirious from fever. Although they had previously dressed him, they were unable to induce him to move. When Private Robert Jones returned to endeavour to carry him away, he found him being stabbed by the Zulus as he lay on his bed.



The Youngest VCs – 10=

He transferred to the Army Reserve in 1882. He subsequently returned to farm labouring at Peterchurch in Herefordshire. There he married a local girl – Elizabeth Hopkins in 1885 and they had five children. Sadly, Robert's life came to a tragic end. In the summer of 1898, having attended a reunion of VC recipients from the South Wales Borderers earlier in the year at Brecon, began to suffer from headaches. (see image on previous page – Robert Jones VC is seated on front row, second from right)

On the 6th September 1898, Jones' body was found in the woods, with a shotgun wound to the head. At the coroner's inquest, a verdict of suicide through having an unsound mind was returned. Sadly, the stigma of suicide at the time in the eyes of the church, meant that Jones' coffin had to be passed over the church wall rather than through the church gates, and his headstone when placed was facing away from the church. His grave is the only one in St Peter's Churchyard, Peterchurch that the headstone is facing away. His medals were for a time in private ownership, before being purchased by the Ashcroft Trust, and are now displayed alongside the medals of John Chard in the Imperial War Museum.



The Youngest VCs – 10=



The Youngest VCs – 10=



The Youngest VCs – 10=



Valentine Bambrick (1837-1864) was born on 13th April 1837 in Cawnpore, India, to a father who was stationed there with the 11th Light Dragoons. Both his father and his uncle, after whom he was named, were troop sergeant majors in the 11th and had seen service at Waterloo to Bhurtpore. His older brother, John, would later join the 11th Hussars, as the 11th Light Dragoons became, and was one of the Gallant Six Hundred who charged down the North Valley at Balaklava.

Valentine Bambrick VC – 21 years
old at time of action

When Valentine was just 16, he enlisted with the 1/60th Rifles, stationed in India. When the Mutiny broke out in 1857, the regiment was heavily involved at the Siege of Delhi and the hard campaigning that followed as the mutineers were hunted down. It was during the assault on the city of Bareilly, 140 miles east of Delhi, that Bambrick displayed outstanding courage as the British troops charged through the narrow streets and alleyways. A party of Ghazis cornered him and his company commander, Lieutenant Cromer Ashburnham. He managed to cut down one of the Ghazis, and fought off the other two, receiving two wounds in the process.

He received his VC in 1859 but there is no record of an investiture. When the 60th returned to the UK, Bambrick preferred to stay in India and transferred to the 87th (Royal Irish) Fusiliers.

The Youngest VCs – 10=

When they returned to Ireland, Bambrick took his discharge at Aldershot on 16th November 1863 and celebrated his introduction to civilian life with a night on the town. While he was relaxing in an establishment, he heard the cries of a woman from upstairs. Going to her aid, he found a commissariat sergeant named Russell beating a woman. Bambrick waded in and got the better of the NCO.

Later Russell brought a charge of assault and theft of his medals against Bambrick and was backed up by some of his fellow soldiers. Bambrick, at his own expense, paid for the female victim to stay in a hotel until the trial. When the trial began in Winchester on 3rd December 1863, his only defence witness had disappeared. Russell was able to call on his fellow soldiers as prosecution witnesses and their word was taken. Bambrick was found guilty and jailed for three years in Pentonville Prison.

This was harsh, but worse followed. Under the terms of the Royal Warrant, he was forced to forfeit his VC for the theft of a comrade's medals. Bambrick tragically couldn't handle the shame and hanged himself in prison on 1st April 1864. He was buried in an unmarked grave in St Pancras and Islington Cemetery, East Finchley. His medals are not publicly held.

60th Regiment (1st Battalion)	Private V. Bambrick Date of Act of Bravery, 6th May, 1858	For conspicuous bravery at Bareilly, on the 6th of May, 1858, when in a Serai, he was attacked by three Ghazees, one of whom he cut down. He was wounded twice on this occasion.
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The Youngest VCs – 10=



The Youngest VCs – 10=



William Leefe Robinson (1895-1918), the youngest of seven children of Horace Robinson, a coffee planter on the Kaima Betta Estate at South Coorg, India, was born at Tollideta, South Coorg on 14th July 1895.

He was brought to England as a baby, he returned to India with his family at the age of seven where he received his elementary education at the Bishop Cotton School. At 14, he once more returned to England and, with his brother Harold, entered St Bees School in Cumberland in September 1909.

William Leefe Robinson VC – 21
years old at time of action

At St Bees, he became a popular figure, and in the course of the next five years there, became Captain of Eaglesfield House, Captain of the Rugby XV, a prefect and a Sergeant in the school's Officer Training Corps. Leaving St Bees, he enrolled at the military college at Sandhurst on 14th August 1914, and on 16th December 1914 was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. Three months later, on 29th March 1915, he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer for flying duties.

Immediately following his transfer, he was posted to France, where he joined No 4 Squadron RFC at the St Omer depot; a BE2c army co-operation unit commanded by Major C.A.H. Longcroft. His stay with No 4 Squadron was brief, for on the 9th May, during a routine reconnaissance over Lille, he was wounded in the right arm, and invalided home to England.

The Youngest VCs – 10=

Recovering from his injury quickly, he applied for pilot training, was accepted, and reported to South Farnborough to commence training on 19th June 1915.

Making his first solo flight on 18th July, Robinson qualified for his Royal Aero Club Certificate, No 1475, on 28th July. A further course of “advanced” instruction at the Upavon Central Flying School resulted in the award of his RFC “wings” on 15th September 1915. On 2nd February 1916 he joined his first operational unit as a pilot when he travelled to Sutton’s Farm airfield in Essex, base for 39 (Home Defence) Squadron. The airfield stationed six BE2c aircraft to undertake night missions against German Zeppelins.



The Youngest VCs – 10=

Robinson's first encounter with a German Zeppelin came on the night of 25th-26th April 1916. He was fortunate enough to sight and close in on a Zeppelin. The airship was the LZ97, flying at about 10,000 feet. Only able to climb to 8,000 feet, he caught up with the LZ97 over Seven Kings and opened fire from below at extreme range. The airship released part of its ballast, and rose swiftly, away from Robinson. The following four months were frustrating for Robinson and 39 Squadron with many attempts failing to intercept raiding airships. This would change on the night of 2nd-3rd September 1916, when a total of 16 German airships set out with one common objective – London. Over Cuffley, Hertfordshire, Lieutenant Robinson, flying a converted B.E.2c night fighter, sighted a German airship – one of 16 which had left bases in Germany for a mass raid over England. The airship was the wooden-framed Schütte-Lanz SL 11, although at the time and for many years after, it was misidentified as Zeppelin L 21. Robinson made an attack at an altitude of 11,500 ft (3,500 m) approaching from below and closing to within 500 ft (150 m) raking the airship with machine-gun fire. As he was preparing for another attack, the airship burst into flames and crashed in a field behind the Plough Inn at Cuffley, killing Commander Wilhelm Schramm and his 15-man crew.

Robinson was an instant celebrity as many had witnessed his exploits from the ground, and with it came the swift announcement, on 5th September (just three days later), of the immediate award of the Victoria Cross. In all, Robinson received over £4,200 in "prize" contributions, and used some of this cash to purchase a new Vauxhall "Prince Henry" automobile. On 8th September 1916, he attended a special investiture at Windsor Castle, where he received his VC from King George V. The constant public attention was an embarrassment to a modest man like Robinson, who pleaded with the RFC higher authorities for duties in an less public area.

The Youngest VCs – 10=

War Office,

5th September, 1916.

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to award the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Officer:—

Lt. William Leefe Robinson, Worc. R. and R.F.C.

For most conspicuous bravery. He attacked an enemy airship under circumstances of great difficulty and danger, and sent it crashing to the ground as a flaming wreck.

He had been in the air for more than two hours, and had previously attacked another airship during his flight.

The Youngest VCs – 10=



The Youngest VCs – 10=

He was posted to 48 Squadron at Rendcombe, with the rank of Captain. The new unit was in the process of forming for operational service in France, and was first to equip with a new design; the Bristol F2A fighter two-seater.

On 8th March 1917, the squadron moved to France and took up quarters at Bertangles. Its first operational sortie was on 5th April and met near-disaster. Led by Robinson, with Lieutenant Warburton as observer, six F2A's crossed the trench lines and were almost immediately set upon by five Albatross DIII's from Jagdstaffel 11, led by Germany's leading fighter pilot, Manfred von Richthofen. Of the six F2A's, four were shot down within minutes; Robinson was brought down intact by Sebastian Festner near Mericourt. Robinson and Warburton, who were not wounded, were taken to Douai, there to await transportation to a regular POW camp.

For the rest of the war, Robinson suffered imprisonment in a series of POW camps. Going initially to Freiburg-in-Briesgau, he became one of a four man team attempting to dig an escape tunnel under the outer defences – despite his crippling fear of claustrophobia. The tunnel escape came to nothing, but on 18th September 1917, Robinson and a companion managed to escape in broad daylight, and set off towards the border.

Four days later, they were re-captured and returned to Freiburg. Robinson was court-martialled and sentenced to 1 month's solitary confinement in the fortress at Zorndorf. He was then moved to Clausthal, then to Holzminden where he was singled out for harsh treatment. When the armistice was signed on 11th November 1918, Robinson was a very sick man, and he was finally repatriated to England on 14th December 1918.

The Youngest VCs – 10=

Desperately ill, he became a bed patient in the home of a colleague, Captain Noel Clifton, in Stanmore, Middlesex. He then contracted the influenza virus which was sweeping the country. With his fiancée, Joan Whipple, and a sister by his bedside, he died on 31st December 1918, due to heart failure, brought on by the influenza. On 3rd January 1919, with full military honours, he was buried in a quiet corner of All Saints Churchyard Extension in Harrow Weald, Middlesex. In addition to his VC, he was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20 and Victory Medal 1914-19 with Mentioned in Despatches oakleaf. The medals were held privately until November 1988 when at an auction at Christie's in London, Michael Ashcroft purchased the medal group for £92,000 (£99,000 including commission) and they are now part of the Ashcroft Collection in the Imperial War Museum.

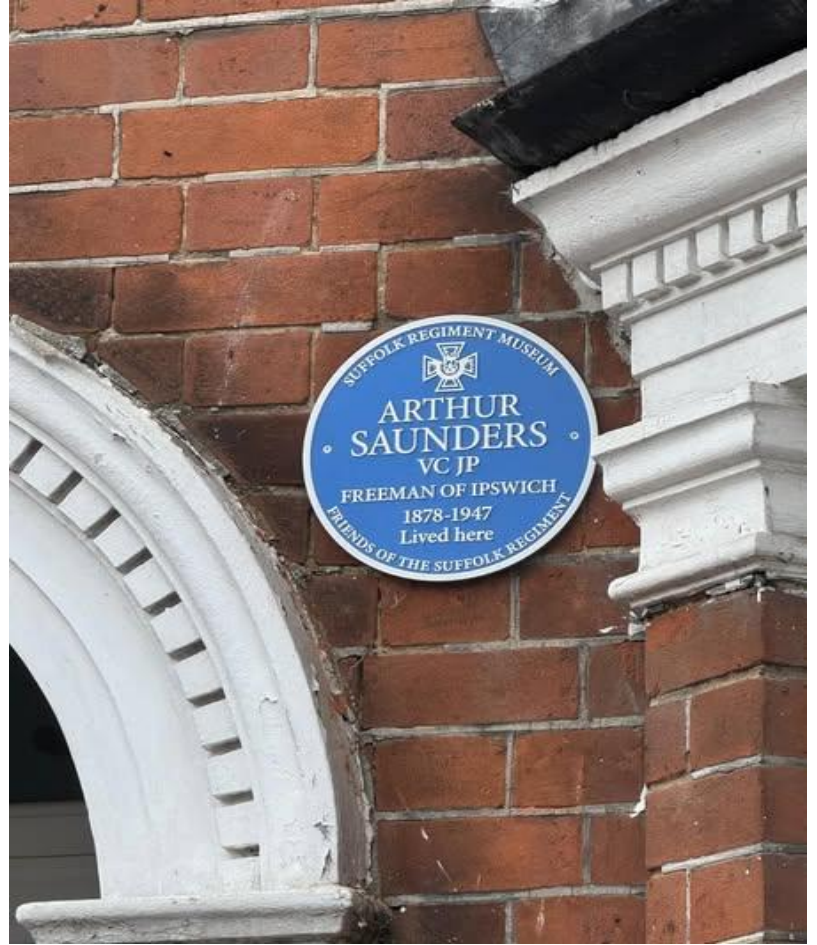


The Youngest VCs – 10=



Arthur Saunders VC

Blue Plaque



On 29th September 2025, a small service was held at 354 Foxhall Road in Ipswich, Suffolk. The house had been bought in 1916 by Arthur Saunders of the 9th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment with money that was raised for him following the award of the Victoria Cross during the Battle of Loos in 1915.

The service saw the unveiling of the blue plaque, an initiative led by David Empson, and supported with a standard bearer from the Felixstowe Branch of the Royal Anglican Regiment Association. Taff Gillingham (who kindly provided the above photos) provided a talk on the actions of Arthur Saunders VC in the presence of David Mark Durrell, a relative of the Ipswich hero.

Ashcroft Gallery Closes



Noel Chavasse VC and Bar

1916 and 1917, France and Belgium, King's (Liverpool Regt) and Royal Army Medical Corps

Captain Chavasse is one of only three men to have received the VC twice: on the Somme and at Ypres. As a regimental doctor, he searched tirelessly under intense fire for the wounded, often close to German lines. He was mortally wounded by an artillery shell.

Lord Ashcroft Collection



Sadly, as previously reported, the Lord Ashcroft Gallery on the top floor of the Imperial War Museum in London, closed on 30th September 2025. The decision made by the Trustees of the Museum to close the largest collection of Victoria Crosses and George Crosses in the world has been widely criticised not least by Lord Ashcroft himself. It is very uncertain the fate of the collection moving forward such as the medals of Noel Chavasse VC and Bar, MC (photo – Richard Thompson)

Frederick Bell VC Memorial Lecture



FREDERICK BELL VC MEMORIAL LECTURE 2025

Join us for an evening with The Honourable Jonathan Huston MLA, Member of Nedlands as he shares insights into the life and death of Kevin 'Dasher' Wheatley VC, MG

Tickets - \$5 at the door or on Eventbrite.

Refreshments provided with tickets



6pm for 6:30
14 NOVEMBER 2025



Contact us - text message only
0429 300 999



Visit our website
WWW.COTTESLOERSL.ORG.AU

Location

War Memorial Town Hall
Cottesloe Civic Centre
109 Broome St

RSVP: cottsrlevents@hotmail.com



Teesdale VC and Sykes VC Graves



Over the past couple of months the Victoria Cross Trust has been involved in the cleaning of two Victoria Cross graves. The first was in Bersted, near Bognor Regis, Sussex, the grave of Sir Christopher Charles Teesdale VC (<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-christopher-charles-teesdale-vc-kcmg-cb/>) awarded the VC for his gallantry at Kars during the Crimean War. He led the charge into the redoubt, held the position, and then was later seen rescuing the wounded. The second grave is that of Ernest Sykes VC in Lockwood, Yorkshire (<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/ernest-sykes-vc/>) awarded the VC for his actions on 9th April 1917 near Arras, when he went out under heavy fire and rescued five wounded men.

Support the VC Trust at

<https://donate.justgiving.com/charity/victoriacrosstrust/donation-amount>

Michael Pratt GC

1954-2025

On the morning of 4th June 1976, three armed men entered the Clifton Hill Bank. One of the men ordered the staff to lie on the floor, another jumped over the counter and removed money from the tills, while the third remained in the public area and fired a shot in the direction of the manager and a customer when they ran towards the rear of the bank. Constable Pratt was off duty and unarmed. He was driving past the bank and saw the men entering the bank. He could see that they were masked and carrying a firearm. He immediately turned his car, switched on the lights and, sounding the horn, mounted the kerb, blocking the entrance. He instructed a passer-by to call for police assistance. The raiders were taken by surprise, but one of them threatened Pratt with a gun, signalling to him to move the car.

He refused, removed the key from the ignition and armed himself with the handle of the car jack. The men then attempted to leave by kicking in the lower section of the glass door and climbing over the bonnet of the car. As the first man straddled the front of the car Pratt grabbed him firmly, and during the struggle the robber was knocked unconscious. By this time a second gunman had left the bank and climbed over the car; he now aimed his weapon and threatened to shoot Pratt from close range. The first man had by now recovered consciousness and was getting to his feet, so the officer grabbed him again; as he did so, the man called to the gunman to shoot the officer. A shot was fired, and Pratt was seriously wounded. The men then fled the scene.

Michael Pratt GC

1954-2025

His GC was announced on 4th July 1978, and the three robbers were eventually arrested, charged and convicted. Their sentences ranged from 6 to 18 years. Pratt's injuries were so severe he was given the last rites by a priest whilst lying on a trolley in the emergency ward of St Vincent's Hospital. He lost nearly three pints of blood, and remained in intensive care for eight days, before a further 3 weeks in St Vincent's before fully recovering.

Following the incident, he was forced to retire from the Victoria Police Force on 21st July 1979, aged just 24. After the shooting, he had been off work for 2 and a half years. However, he later got a job with the Victoria Totalizator Board where he worked until 1986.

Afterwards, he ran his own delivery business, followed by a pizza restaurant, until 1992. After a further job with a fire protection company, he rejoined the Victoria Police Force as an administrator in December 1996. He regularly attended the reunions of the VC and GC Association, and had 8 grandchildren.

Michael attended the most recent VC and GC Association Reunion earlier this year, but sadly he passed away in Kilmore Private Hospital in Victoria surrounded by the family on 11th October 2025 aged 70.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/michael-kenneth-pratt-gc-direct-recipient/>

Michael Pratt GC

1954-2025



Michael Pratt GC (left) pictured with George Wheatley (son of Kevin "Dasher" Wheatley VC MG) at a Digger Day in Nowra, NSW in 2018 (Photo courtesy of George Wheatley)