



Captain Jeffries led a party of a dozen men to charge an enemy pillbox from the rear, capturing 25 German prisoners and two machine guns. They had reached their first objective and dug in, but they had suffered great losses and had only three officers left.

Then the senior forward officer of the brigades, Major Buchanan of the 39th Infantry Battalion, was killed by another burst of machine gun fire.

What followed is described in this extract from CEW Bean's Volume IV of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*.

At this critical juncture Captain Jeffries (34th Infantry Battalion) ... led out a few men from the first objective and made for the gun.

It was shooting in short bursts, and he was able to work up fairly close. Seizing a moment when it was firing to the north, he and his men rushed at it from the west. It was switched around, killing him, and sending his men to the ground. But when its fire eased they worked around it, rushed the position, and seized twenty five Germans and two machine guns.

Captain Jeffries actions were described in Colonel Martin's letter as 'gallant in the extreme'. He had put several German machine guns out of action and captured many prisoners, removing the chief danger and allowing the battalion to advance further. Sadly, there were more German strongholds ahead and the battle eventually ended in defeat with over 50 per cent casualties for the 34th.

A most inspiring influence

For his bravery, Captain Jeffries was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation described how his 'example had a most inspiring influence'.

In a 1919 memorial service in the survey room of the superintendent's offices at Abermain Collieries, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Nash unveiled a portrait of his late colleague, Captain Jeffries, and said:

A better and more promising officer I did not know. He was highly respected by those serving under him and by his superiors.

One can well imagine Captain Jeffries, on finding the enemy in a position doing considerable damage to his comrades, calling for volunteers to follow him and with his small band going forward and destroying that stronghold, unfortunately sacrificing his own life in doing so to save his comrades.

Actions such as this won the war, and helped in no small way to build up that fearless determination 'to do or die' always so prominent in the traditions of the Australian Army and so characteristic of the Australian soldier when he gets his back to the wall.



Honouring the Memory of a young hero



Produced by the Defence Housing Authority to mark the official opening of the Clarence Jeffries Estate, Adamstown, Newcastle, on 26 April 2005.

All images reproduced with the permission of the Australian War Memorial.
Australian War Memorial Negative Numbers P01920.028, E04516 and E01088.

...at Adamstown, Newcastle



VC Citation

Captain CS Jeffries

CITATION: *For most conspicuous bravery in attack, when his company was held up by enemy machine gun fire from concrete emplacements. Organising a party, he rushed one emplacement, capturing four machine guns and thirty five prisoners. He then led his company forward under extremely heavy enemy artillery barrage and enfilade machine gun fire to the objective. Later, he again organised a successful attack on a machine gun emplacement, capturing two machine guns and thirty more prisoners. This gallant officer was killed during the attack, but it was entirely due to his bravery and initiative that the centre of the attached was not held up for a lengthy period. His example had a most inspiring influence.*

London Gazette 18 December 1917

Clarence Jeffries Estate

The Defence Housing Authority's Clarence Jeffries Estate at Adamstown near Newcastle is named in honour of one of the region's bravest sons, killed in action during the First World War.

Located on a former Army Reserve site, the 68 home estate is just six kilometres from the Newcastle business district.

Streets in the development are named for famous battles fought during the war and include Fromelles Place, Bullecourt Circuit and Amiens Place.

The \$21.6 million Clarence Jeffries Estate will meet the growth in Defence housing requirements forecast for the Newcastle region over the next few years.

From Wallsend to Passchendaele

When Clarence Smith Jeffries was born in Wallsend near Newcastle in 1894, he began a journey that would see him transformed from local boy to local hero by the time he was just 23 years old.

The only child of Joshua and Barbara Jeffries, the young Clarence was schooled in Newcastle. He then joined the surveying staff of the Abermain Collieries, where his father was superintendent.

For several years, he was chief surveyor in charge of the Collieries' survey department while serving an apprenticeship to his father as a mining engineer.

When the Compulsory Training Act of the Commonwealth came into force, Jeffries enlisted as a Private in the 14th Infantry Regiment under Major Edward Nash of West Maitland.

A few weeks after war was declared, he was called up for home defence and then, as a Lieutenant, engaged in instruction work at Newcastle and Liverpool Australian Imperial Force (AIF) camps.

In early 1916, Lieutenant Jeffries joined the 34th Infantry Battalion at Maitland and by May he had set sail from Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom.

Years later, then Lieutenant-Colonel Nash described how Lieutenant Jeffries had bravely answered the call of duty.

[He] left home with its comforts and the fondest of parents, to go forth and assist in fighting the good fight for our liberties and freedom...

Straight, upright, and manly, he stood from boyhood to manhood. In short, he possessed all the fine qualities that go to make a man and a gentleman. Kind, courteous, and considerate for others, yet with all punctual and diligent in the performance of all duties entrusted to him.



The Battalion spent several months training in England before crossing to France and into the trenches of the Western Front.

During the battle of Messines in June 1917, Lieutenant Jeffries led a party of 50 volunteers in a reconnaissance of the enemy lines. Shortly after going over the parapet he was severely wounded in the thigh from enemy machine gun fire but he carried on to secure the information required. For these actions, he was promoted to Captain.

Then on 12 October of that year, he fought what was to be his last battle, in the muddy fields near Passchendaele in Belgium.

Gallant in the extreme

After the battle of Passchendaele, the 34th Battalion's Colonel Martin wrote to Captain Jeffries' father Joshua, describing his son's last moments.

The task was a difficult one, and was made doubly so by the heavy rain which fell on the preceding night, making the approach march for the attack and the getting of field guns and ammunition almost super-human.

At 5.25 am on October 12 the attack was launched. Our artillery barrage was thin owing to the soft nature of the ground and the gun trails sinking, consequently many enemy strong points were left entirely for the infantry to deal with.