

## **Press Release**

### **Hailsham Tribute To First World War Victoria Cross Hero**

A commemorative paving stone is set to be unveiled in Hailsham next year to honour the memory of Victoria Cross winner, Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter.

The Victoria Cross is the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces and the commemorative stone is part of a national scheme that will see every Victoria Cross recipient of the First World War - 628 in total - commemorated with a paving stone in their place of birth.

The first Victoria Cross commemorative paving stones were laid in communities around the UK on 23 August 2014 and each ceremony will take place 100 years to the day since each recipient's actions.

Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC was born in Eastbourne on 9 April 1887 and was educated in Hailsham. In December 1902 he enlisted under the name of Nelson Smith into the Royal Field Artillery, where he attained the rank of Bombadier, but was discharged on the 17th August 1903 as medically unfit.

Declared fully fit in August 1906 he again enlisted into the RFA and served three years with the regiment. However, whilst on service with the RFA in Singapore he was once again declared medically unfit and returned to England and discharged.

Upon the outbreak of WWI, Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC joined Lowther's Lambs in September 1914, promoted corporal on the same day, then sergeant and later Warrant Officer Class II.

He was then sent to France attached to 'A' Company, 12th Bn, Royal Sussex Regiment, and served with this detachment until his death on the 30th June 1916 whilst winning his Victoria Cross.

The Victoria Cross stone will be installed next to the war memorial in Hailsham High Street during a special ceremony which will take place in June 2016, marking the 100th anniversary of Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC's act of gallantry that won him the prestigious Victoria Cross during the early years of the First World War.

Town Mayor Councillor Jo Bentley said: "The Town Clerk John Harrison and I sought permission from the Department of Communities & Local Government to honour Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC by purchasing a commemorative Victoria Cross stone to honour his courage and provide a lasting legacy of this Hailsham-raised and educated hero, a true son of Hailsham."

"But this stone will also serve as a representation of the bravery of all born, raised or educated in our town who served in the First World War and of the sacrifice of those who fell."

Mike Weller, chairman of the Royal British Legion Hailsham & District Branch said: "It is an honour and a privilege to have the VC commemorative paving slab laid in front of Hailsham War Memorial. By doing this it adds more meaning, not only to the name of Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC, but also to the other names of those who gave their lives under difficult conditions in the fight for freedom of the world at that time."

Local historian and researcher Dave Dyer, author of *The Heroes of Hailsham*, which was published in 2011 to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hailsham War Memorial said: "Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter VC was a true son of Hailsham, the town where he was brought up and educated. His parents lived in Hailsham for many years afterwards and some family descendants still live here."

"It is a great honour for Hailsham to have this commemorative stone and residents should be proud of what it stands for and remember his supreme act of gallantry."

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**Notes to Editors:**

- The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is currently helping local communities around the UK to commemorate Victoria Cross (VC) recipients of the First World War by presenting councils in areas where they were born with commemorative paving slabs.
- The VC was introduced on 29 January 1856 by Queen Victoria and is the highest military decoration. It is awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy" and takes precedence over all other orders, decorations and medals. It is usually presented to the recipient or to their next of kin by the British monarch at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

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