

Percy Valentine Storkey VC

Percy Valentine Storkey was born in New Zealand and had worked in administration at the University of Sydney. He had begun legal studies at Sydney Law School in 1913. He enlisted in the AIF on 10 May 1915, just short of his 24th birthday. He embarked on *Suevic* as a second lieutenant with the 6th Reinforcements of the 19th Battalion, in the same company as fellow law student Alan Russell Blacket.

On 14 November 1916 he joined the unit in France and was wounded within a week near Flers at the end of the Battle of the Somme. He was promoted to lieutenant on January 1917 and was wounded again on 10 October 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres. He returned to his unit in time for the great German offensive and was in continuous action from 21 March. On 7 April 1918 his company was tasked to attack German positions near Hangard Wood. It was a savage battle with twenty five per cent of the attacking force hit by machine gun fire before they reached their objective. Storkey led a small group of 12 men around to the rear of the German trenches and led an attack. The Australians were outnumbered ten to one and in the violence 30 Germans were killed and another 50 or so captured. Storkey's action saved his men from annihilation. The attack on Hangard Wood was a success and secured the southern side of Villers-Bretonneux. Storkey was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallant leadership at Hangard Wood. Storkey fought with his unit throughout the advance to the Hindenburg Line. He was promoted to temporary captain and appointed company commander in May then confirmed in that rank on 10 June 1918. King George V presented the award to Storkey in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace in July 1918.

He returned to Australia 26 November 1918 and his appointment in the AIF was terminated in January 1919. He joined the Reserve Forces in July 1920.

He completed his studies in law and was called to the New South Wales Bar on 8 June 1921. He practiced in common law from old Selborne Chambers and went on circuit in the South Western District. He was appointed Crown prosecutor in that district in 1925. He was described in *Bar News (2008-09)* as being practical, realistic, courteous and compassionate. He was often briefed by the Crown and appeared in a number of reported cases.

He re-enlisted in the army in October 1938 as the Second World War loomed, but left service when he was appointed a judge of the District Court and Chairman of Quarter Sessions for the Northern District of New South Wales in May 1939.

Further information is available in 'His Honour Judge Storkey VC' in *Bar News* Summer 2008/2009 pp 87 – 89.

Also in Holt, HTE. *A Court Rises*. The Law Foundation of New South Wales. North Sydney. 1976.

Also in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. By Warren Derkenne