

# Cornwell VC goes to the Imperial War Museum

By A STAFF REPORTER

The Victoria Cross awarded to the boy sailor Jack Cornwell, perhaps the most famous V.C. of all time, was presented to the Imperial War Museum at a poignant little ceremony in London yesterday.

It has been handed over "on long loan" by Mrs. Irene Cornwell, widow of his eldest brother Ernest.

Boy First Class John Travers Cornwell was 16 and four months old when he won it amid the awful carnage on H.M.S. Chester at the Battle of Jutland.

He was sight-setter on the forward 5.5-in. gun in the Chester, a light cruiser, when she was set upon and badly mauled by a number of German ships.

Although mortally wounded early in the action, Jack Cornwell remained at his post, quietly awaiting orders, with the rest of the gun crew dead or wounded all around him.

Within a short time he was dead. Today he would have been 68.

His sister, Mrs. Alice Payne, helped Mrs. Cornwell to unveil the museum's latest acquisition by pulling away a large Union Jack from the neat display of other Cornwell mementos, where it will rest.

She said he had been a kind, gentle boy, 10 years her junior, whose acts of bravery and unselfishness were not limited to that memorable end on the deck of the Chester. He had once won a Boy Scout award for freeing a girl from a drain.

Two survivors from the Chester were at the ceremony, former Leading Stoker Albert Horne, a Welshman, now aged 75, and Rear-Admiral H. E. Morse, then lieutenant in control of the torpedoes, who reported Cornwell's courage to the ship's captain.

"I could do little myself because the torpedo tubes were out of action, so I was in an excellent position to witness what was happening. I saw this shell land right in the middle of the fo'c'sle gun, and then noticed how this boy still sat there", Admiral Morse said. "It was a very gallant deed."

Mr. Horne recalled how they lost 35 men killed and 45 wounded in 20 minutes of explosive action.

"I never knew Jack Cornwell", he said. "I saw him only once, when they landed him later at Immingham. Later the captain called to see him in hospital but when he got there he was told that the boy had passed away."

Another brother was killed in 1918 in France, shortly before the Armistice.

Mrs. Cornwell said she had talked it over very carefully with his family before handing the V.C. over. "We're all getting on now, you see" she said. Her husband used to be very proud of his brother, she said "in his quiet way". Jack could not have seen much of life, could he? Not at 16, she said.

Pictures, page 12.

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