



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No. 64

PREPARED BY: G.H. Cumming

DATE: 1 October 2000

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR NEVILLE REGINALD HOWSE, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., K.St.G., F.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (1863-1930)



Neville Reginald Howse

Neville Howse was the first Australian soldier to win a Victoria Cross.

He was born on 26 October 1863 in Stogursey in the English county of Somerset and, after schooling in Taunton, he gained the medical diplomas of M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. in 1886.

He emigrated to New South Wales in 1889 and established a medical practice in the north coast town of Taree.

In 1895, he returned to England for further study to obtain his F.R.C.S. and, after his return to New South Wales, he began a medical practice in the central west town of Orange.

In January 1900, he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the New South Wales Army Medical Corps and he sailed to the Boer War with the 2nd contingent which arrived in South Africa on 22 February 1900.

The Principal Medical Officer was Bro. Lieutenant-Colonel William 'Mo' Williams, a member of the Harmony Lodge of Australia No. 5, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

Williams' work was outstanding and much of Howse's later success was due to his influence.

On 24 July 1900, a mounted infantry brigade, which included a detachment from the Medical Corps, was engaged against an enemy force in the Orange Free State near Vredefort when Howse saw a trumpeter in the front line fall wounded. He galloped to his aid under heavy enemy crossfire and, after his horse had been shot dead, Howse proceeded on foot to the trumpeter, tended his wounds and brought him back to safety. His bravery earned him the Victoria Cross, the only one ever awarded to a medical member of the Australian forces.

He returned to Sydney and was promoted to Captain in October 1900 and, in February 1902, with the rank of honorary Major, he returned to South Africa.

