**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Wednesday 15 APRIL 2015**

**Captain Percy Cherry VC MC to be honoured in park naming ceremony**

* **Percy Cherry Park commemorates Drysdale WW1 hero, 20 April 10am**

Percy Cherry Park in Curlewis is set to be officially named on Monday 20 April to commemorate local World War 1 hero Captain Percy Cherry VC MC, who had ‘bravery beyond description’.

It is 100 years since Captain Percy Cherry, then 19, left to serve in the 1st AIF. He was first sent to Gallipoli and served at the Somme battles, including Pozières in 1916, before being killed in action on the Hindenburg Line at Lagincourt in March 1917.

He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, an honour for which his Battalion Commander recommended him, for ‘bravery beyond description’. He also received the Military Cross. In recognition of his heroic service, the park adjacent to Griggs Creek in Curlewis will be named Percy Cherry Park. It is located not far from where he was born in Drysdale.

Direct descendant and local resident Bill Westhead said the naming of Percy Cherry Park is very important for his family in honouring Percy’s courage, helping to heal the generational pain of the family’s losses, and understanding the incredible commitment of those who fought in the Great War.

“The ANZACs’ courage and persistence in the face of overwhelming odds is exemplified by the acts of courage and sacrifice down the military ages. It is a symbolic day – not for the glorification of war, but for the reverence of the participants.

“When a serviceman or woman is deployed into combat, their extended family is on watch. There is no peace. The huge casualties are emotionally devastating on families and communities, and the effects remain in their social fabric.

“As part of this naming ceremony, we should all remember the ANZACs and those who followed and fought to preserve our country’s democratic rights and the enabling of free speech. It’s a freedom that we need to cherish every day,” Mr Westhead said.

Simon Ramsay, MLC Member for Western Region, will be officiating at the naming ceremony for Percy Cherry Park.

The ceremony will commence at 10am on Monday 20 April on Creekside Drive in Curlewis.

For more information please about the location of Percy Cherry Park visit: http://www.bayviewcentral.com.au/latest-news

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**THE PERCY CHERRY STORY**

Percy Herbert Cherry was born on 4 June 1895 in Drysdale, Victoria, son of John Gawley Cherry and his wife Elizabeth, née Russel. The family lived at Mannerim until 1902 when they moved to Cradoc Tasmania.

On 15 March 1915, Cherry enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force posted to the 26th Battalion. Considered too young for a commission he went to Egypt a Quartermaster Sergeant. As a company sergeant major in the 26th Battalion he reinforced Gallipoli where he served at Taylor’s Hollow and Russell’s Top.

He was wounded on 1 December and evacuated; a week later he was promoted to Second Lieutenant. He was transferred to the 7th Machine-Gun Company (2nd DIV AIF) and commanded the company’s 1st Battery at Fleurbaix, Messines and on the Somme until 5 August and was wounded in a duel with a German officer at Pozières.

Cherry was promoted to Lieutenant on 25 August 1916 and resumed duty on the Somme in November. In December he was made a temporary Captain and transferred back to the 26th Battalion as a company commander. At Warlencourt on 1–2 March 1917 he took part in an attack on Malt Trench. When he and his men found a small gap in the enemy wire, he rushed two machine-gun posts, capturing one single-handed and turning the gun on the fleeing Germans before being wounded himself. He was to receive the Military Cross for this gallant episode.

On 26 March 1917 his battalion was ordered to storm the village of Lagnicourt. Cherry’s company encountered fierce opposition and after all the other officers had been killed or wounded, he ‘carried on with care and determination … and cleared the village of the enemy’. The Germans counter-attacked and the battle raged all day long. Though wounded in the leg, Cherry remained at his post but in the late afternoon he was killed by a shell.

As a result of this action he was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, an honour for which

his battalion commander had recommended him for ‘bravery beyond description’.

Captain Percy Cherry never learnt of the honours bestowed; the Military Cross and the

Victoria Cross were both announced after his death.

He is buried in the Queant Road Cemetery, Buissy, France. He was unmarried.

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