

Unique Victoria Cross collection finds a new home in Sheffield

A unique collection of military memorabilia that tells the stories of some of the country's Victoria Cross (VC) heroes is to go on display at Sheffield's National Emergency Services Museum (NESM) after it leaves its current site in Doncaster.

The Ashworth Collection, owned by the Doncaster-based charity The Victoria Cross Trust (VCT), will lose its base in April when the Ashworth Barracks Museum closes for good. NESM has offered a permanent home for the majority of the remaining collection, which may otherwise have been sold or split up, at its museum in Sheffield City Centre.

NESM will create a new gallery to house the collection on behalf of the VCT within the World War I zone of its forthcoming exhibition about the history of the fire service. The new space, which is due to open towards the end of 2020, will be designed in collaboration with the VCT. It will include exhibits currently at Ashworth such as recreated trenches and a display honouring double VC recipient, Noel Godfrey Chavasse.

The museum is currently working with the VCT to formally establish a partnership that will see the two work together on delivering events and outreach activities, dual-volunteer opportunities and joint funding ventures. The two charities will also co-operate to deliver the history of the Victoria Cross and the emergency services to the general public.

Matthew Wakefield, chief executive of NESM, says, 'We're pleased to have been able to take this important collection into our care and offer it a new permanent home that means the majority of these objects and displays can stay in South Yorkshire.'

'As part of the redevelopment of our fire service gallery we will be able to tell the story of these remarkable VC recipients in the wider context of the development of the emergency services at war and during peace time. It will be a great addition to our museum.'

Guy Aston, trustee from the VCT, says, 'We're excited to be working with NESM to ensure the majority of our remaining collection can stay on public display. The museum will take on the long-term care of our collection on our behalf and allow us to concentrate on our main mission which is to restore, clean and maintain the graves of VC recipients and educate people about the history of the VC.'

The Ashworth Barracks museum will close on 19 April. The new gallery at NESM is expected to open at the end of the year.

The National Emergency Services Museum is the world's largest 999 museum, showcasing all of our emergency services through hands-on learning with history. With over 40 vehicles on site from manual and horse power to steam and motor and with three floors of exhibits to explore, discover and learn including real Victorian police cells there really is something for all the family. For more information visit www.visitnesm.org.uk.