

Keith Payne VC AM



Victoria Cross Online
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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to a very special 12th edition of Victoria Cross Online Magazine. It features an interview with Keith Payne VC AM in honour of Keith turning 90 on 30th August. With the support of the Payne family, Keith agreed to an interview. Many thanks to Rick Meehan of the Keith Payne VC Veterans Benefit Group for facilitating the interview on my behalf.

Then there is an article by regular contributor Richard Pursehouse on Charles Upham VC and Bar and his wife Molly.

Thirdly, there is the latest in the work of the Victoria Cross Trust, who began the month with a visit to Cheltenham Cemetery, where three VC graves were cleaned.

Finally, there is a report from Steve Lee who attended the unveiling of the green plaque in honour of Ferdinand Le Quesne VC in Clifton, Bristol.



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Keith Payne VC AM

1. As a young man what made you decide to join the Australian Army?

I was brought up mainly during the Second World War period. At that time, we had a lot of American and home town troops travelling through the hometown area and training in the Atherton Tablelands. So, I was pretty much accustomed to uniform personnel as was the citizens in the north during that period. At the end of hostilities against Japan, the Cold War suddenly became a glow on the horizon. I would say nearly 90% of the young generation and the ex-servicemen, the CMF was up to fully up to strength in those days. So firstly, I joined the regimental cadets rather than the school cadets. We trained with the CMF and one all those things. To answer the question as to why I went into uniform, it was probably because at that time and what was happening at that time and everything, I felt it was a responsibility to carry on and be part of Australia's Defence at that time.

2. You served in Korea between 1952 and 1953 what was that experience like?

From a young's man's point of view and remember I was only nineteen, we were at that period of service in Korea we were a younger generation because of the cold. The cold was so bitter, so so bitter. Any time a Korean veteran thinks about anything he thinks of the cold and not the enemy activity but the enemy activity was definitely there. We had a quite a few fire fights and from a young soldier's point of view and it is written in military history, 1 RAR and battles and everything, I get a mention there for having served on a battle front and being down in a deep trench and everything else. So, it was a young man's war, it was a bitter war, however it has come to say that we have allowed freedom to the southern end of the Korean peninsula and that to me means so much and it probably means just as much to anybody else who served and pulled a trigger in Korea, that we had achieved something that cannot be taken away.

Keith Payne VC AM



Keith Payne VC AM

3. How did you meet Flo, whom you married in December 1954?

Meeting my bride. After Korea I had been posted to Townsville because I was still getting over a medical problem and that I needed the warmth of North Queensland to fix my bone structure and everything. As part of my posting back there I was now a corporal at aged 20 and I had to qualify and get a driver's licence. My god we used to drive T Model Fords when I was about 14. However, I had to get a military driver's licence. So, I went down on a driver's mechanics and course, at the same time at the training school Flo was in and serving and on a clerical course, so I had seen this pretty little damsel across the hallway and thought this little lady I would love to get to know a lot more. The rest is history.

4. What did you know about Vietnam before being posted there with AATTV in February 1969?

Quite a lot. We were kept in touch with all the information and everything on that what was occurring and Australian military fronts at that time. I was in New Guinea and Java. I had also served as an instructor the Officer Cadet College at Scheyville. So, we were getting the information, us older blokes as to what was happening all the time and what was happening in the task force and more specifically what was happening with the Training Team that were spread all over the country individually or as one or two all-over the damn county. The information we were getting was spot on. The military was not holding back any information. They knew that we were reliant on all that information.

Keith Payne VC AM



Keith Payne VC AM

5. In keeping with the title of your autobiography “No One Left Behind” – was that your first thought on 24th May 1969?

NO, NO. My first thought after the battle was there and we had to pull back off the hill and everything. My first thought was to try and get people back off the hill that may have been wounded and everything else like that. The complete withdrawal only happened as a result of other people’s movements on that night.

6. Did you feel that your actions that day were “special” or in keeping with your training?

I feel what I did was in the lines of my responsibility. I was the Company Commander. We were in a mess with an enemy regiment far more people than what we had. My responsibility was to look after my soldiers. Try and get as many out as I could. Because that I felt was the commander’s responsibility.

7. How would you define “leadership” which you undoubtedly showed in abundance that day?

The total acceptance of the responsibility of position.

8. What was it like meeting Queen Elizabeth II on Britannia for your investiture?

It was lovely to see the Queen again. I had met her previously of course. But on that occasion we just smiled at each other and I was thinking that I had been here before but under different circumstances. I don’t know what Her Majesty was thinking but in conversations many years later, Her Majesty always commented Mr Payne and I need no introduction. We are old friends.

Keith Payne VC AM



Keith Payne VC AM

9. You had the pleasure of knowing all three of the other VC recipients from Australia in Vietnam..... Wheatley, Badcoe and Simpson. What are your memories of them?

Bloody good Soldiers. Bloody good soldiers. I served with Simmo in Korea conflict, Simmo was a little bit older and a guiding light for me until such time that I knew I was on that footing. Dasher was Dasher. Dasher was a damn fine Australian and a damn fine soldier. I had only met peter after he transferred out of artillery and into infantry. He was doing similar schooling at Canungra when I was there doing other jobs.

10. You have had the pleasure of meeting many VC recipients (and indeed GC recipients) over your time as a VC holder...who impressed you most?

Putting them on different levels of social activities, social activities I would leave quite a number in that particular group who were damn fine people but as a special Sir Roden Cutler became my mentor. Just prior to his death, actually the day before, he was in hospital and requested he wanted no visitors only family, but when I turned up and I told the sister who I was and that I wished to see him and if he didn't wish to see me, please say 'Bye Bye'. He allowed me to enter his room. He told me to carry on the good work I'm doing and from my, mentor I treated him as my mentor.

Keith Payne VC AM



11. You are the last living Australian holder of the Imperial Victoria Cross – do you see yourself as a father figure to the younger generation of VCs?

No, I don't think anybody can be a father figure to generations to come of being awarded the VC, you don't know who they are, where they are, what family they come from and I don't believe you can be a father figure. You may, you may, may is the word here become the memory of people they read about who has preceded them who has been awarded the Victoria Cross.

Keith Payne VC AM

12. Do you have any advice for any future recipients of the Victoria Cross?

Keep to your personal self, do what you can for the veteran community.

13. Since retiring from the Army in 1975, you have been heavily involved in Veterans Affairs. How passionate are you about this?

Very passionate. On that particular subject, there have been a considerable shortfall from our federal government and their treatment of veterans after their campaigns. And every campaign is different and every campaign will have different types of injuries. Mental health problems, unfortunately the federal government on a lot of occasions do not look at the problem of the veteran and maintain a close look of any veteran of any campaign.

14. As you enter your 91st year (happy birthday by the way), how much more do you wish to achieve for veterans?

There is one big problem that I have at the moment. The problem of Post Traumatic Stress being fixed up before I depart this earth.

15. Mark (the editor) had the pleasure of meeting you at the Union Jack Club in London in 2016, and your first words to me were “Hi, I’m Keith, and mine’s a red wine!” You chose not to talk about the VC action as such but did tell me the story of how a platypus caused your finger to be finally amputated.....have you forgiven the critter?

(Laughs strongly) That lovely little problem. That lovely little bloke. I should have known better than to handle him the way I did. One doesn't know too much about a platypus and if you treat him like a little pussycat. That pussycat didn't exactly operate the same way as the platypus. And yes I have forgiven him.

Keith Payne VC AM



The editor of this magazine Mark Green (right) with Alastair Kennedy-Rose (left) on meeting Keith Payne VC AM at the Union Jack Club in 2016.

16. Last year, you had the sad duty of attending the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, with your son, Son, Colin.....what are your memories of your many meetings with Her Majesty?

A beautiful, a beautiful understanding lady who I would consider the greatest accepted royal of our millennium.

Keith Payne VC AM

17. You also lost a great friend in Captain Limbu earlier this year.....thoughts about him

Ah Limbu, Limbu was a fine soldier. He fought his way and earned his Victoria cross as a lance corporal in Borneo in the early 1960s. His character and gentleman ship for the country folk that he belonged to, put Limbu on a scale, that he not only became a friend a little bit of as guidance. He achieved a fair bit in his civilian life, he became a magistrate and everything like that. He worked in the royal house he was commissioned in the royal house. That was his character. He was such a fine charactered man gentle yet at the same token a man who gave great guidance.

18. Finally, how proud are you of the work being done by the Keith Payne VC Veterans Group?

I'm extremely proud, they are covering all the bases as much as possible and looking after the veterans. In addition, they are carrying out similar duties in representation of the nation, this was more evident at the recent funeral of Captain Rambahadur Limbu VC in Nepal. A big thank you must go to Rick Meehan OAM and Fred Campbell OAM for their diligence and hard work. I only hope that the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Federal Government appreciate the fact that they did represent Australia at the funeral of Limbu VC.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/keith-payne-vc-am/>

Keith Payne VC AM



Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse



There have been only three awards of a second Victoria Cross medal (a 'Bar') since it was instituted in January 1856, and of these three recipients, only one was awarded to a soldier in a combat action – Charles Upham.

Mary Eileen McTamney from Dunedin, New Zealand, became engaged in 1938 to fellow New Zealander Charles Hazlitt Upham. Mary was in England when the Second World War broke out and by the time she managed to return to New Zealand Charles had enlisted as a private and been posted abroad.

Due to his five years' experience in the New Zealand Territorial Army, he rose through the ranks quickly and shortly after the New Zealand Second Division was evacuated from Greece to Crete in 1941, he had been promoted to second lieutenant.

Three New Zealanders were awarded the Victoria Cross for their exploits in the defence of Crete in May 1941, – Sergeant Jack Hinton, Sergeant Alfred Clive Hulme and Second Lieutenant Charles Hazlitt Upham.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-hazlitt-upham-vc-and-bar/>

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Upham was presented with the Victoria Cross ribbon by General Auchinleck, the award having been 'gazetted' in October 1941. Upham was so nervous he forgot to salute after General Auchinleck presented the ribbon until he had stepped back several paces. He was promoted to captain shortly afterwards. In July 1942 during the fighting at First El Alamein, the badly wounded Upham - he had originally been reported 'missing' in various newspapers - was captured after his actions which would eventually result in a Bar to his first Victoria Cross.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-hazlitt-upham-vc-and-bar/>

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H.M. THE KING is here holding an Investiture in the interior of Buckingham Palace ; and decorating CAPT. CHARLES UPHAM, New Zealand Military Forces, with the V.C. he won at Crete in 1941. On the left is SERGT. JOHN HINTON, also awarded the V.C. in October 1941 for gallantry during the evacuation from Greece.

The Germans noticed the ribbon he wore and after constant escape attempts, he ended up in the P.O.W. Camp Stalag Luft III - Colditz. When Charles Upham was liberated by American forces along with the other prisoners in April 1945, - Upham wanted to join the Americans and continue fighting - he was ordered to London. He received his first Victoria Cross at a Buckingham Palace investiture ceremony from King George VI in mid-May 1945.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-hazlitt-upham-vc-and-bar/>

Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse



The following month after his investiture at Buckingham Palace, Upham made his way to Brussels in search of his fiancée Mary.

Mary explained in an interview she had been nursing wounded soldiers on the Continent and when it was officially confirmed to her that he was alive and free, she made her way to Brussels but she missed him by a day. She followed him to England and they finally met up, six years since they had last seen each other.

After returning to England Charles Upham had resided with his sister, Mrs Home-Siedle, at 'Norfolk Cottage' Barton Common Road, Barton-on-Sea, near New Milton, Hampshire, who was the wife of Lieutenant-Commander G. E. Home-Siedle, R.N.V.R.

Charles and Mary were finally able to go through with their plans to get married and a date in June 1945 was set for their wedding, originally arranged to be held in London.

Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse



Instead, a 'very quiet' ceremony took place in Barton-on-Sea, after the accidental death in Italy while on Active Service of John Agar, New Zealand Forces, the bridegroom's brother-in-law. The Reverend Father Pinkman officiated at the ceremony on 20 June, conducted at the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in the town, a hastily-organised alternative venue. The couple spent their honeymoon at the Fairlawn Hotel in New Milton and toured the New Forest.



Charles returned to New Zealand with the intention of taking part in the fighting in the Far East, arriving shortly before Japan surrendered. His newly-wedded wife Mary remained in London and continued her work as a nurse, staying at the New Zealand Club in Lowndes Square.

Unbeknown to Charles, information was being collected to put his name forward for another medal, actually the SAME medal he had already been awarded.

Charlie and Mary



Double V.C.'s Wife Congratulated

Mrs. G. H. Upham, the wife of the New Zealand Double V.C., Captain Upham, is seen being congratulated by Lady Freyberg, wife of Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Freyberg, V.C., who has recently been appointed as the new Governor-General of New Zealand. Captain Upham won his first V.C. for gallantry at Crete, and has disclaimed any knowledge of what incident has prompted the new award

Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse

The dossier was presented to King George VI, who, in September 1945, concurred for nearly an hour at Buckingham Palace; mindful it was only four months since he had presented Upham with his first Victoria Cross, he asked Major-General Sir Howard Kippenberger, Upham's commanding officer, about awarding Upham a Bar to his Victoria Cross:

'Does he deserve it?'

Kippenberger replied: *'In my respectful opinion, Sir, Upham won this VC several times over.'*

The King agreed. Shortly afterwards, the second award was officially announced in a Supplement to the London Gazette on 26 September 1945, which was not normally published on a Wednesday.

Although Charles Upham was in New Zealand, his wife Mary Eileen Upham was still in England, where she had been working as a Red Cross welfare officer. When asked for her response to the news, Mary (known as Molly) described her husband as *'short, sturdy, shy.'*

Mary Upham was at the Fern Leaf Club, London, when the news was announced, surrounded by jubilant New Zealanders. She said: *'The news has overwhelmed me. I'm just so proud I can't talk about it. I wish we could be together, but I'm waiting, anxiously for a ship. Poor Charlie, he's so shy he'll probably take to the bush for a few days.'*

Shortly after, when Mary met Lady Freyberg, wife of General Sir Bernard Freyberg VC, Commander-in-Chief of the New Zealand Forces, she commented that *'Her husband was my husband's inspiration.'*

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-hazlitt-upham-vc-and-bar/>

Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse



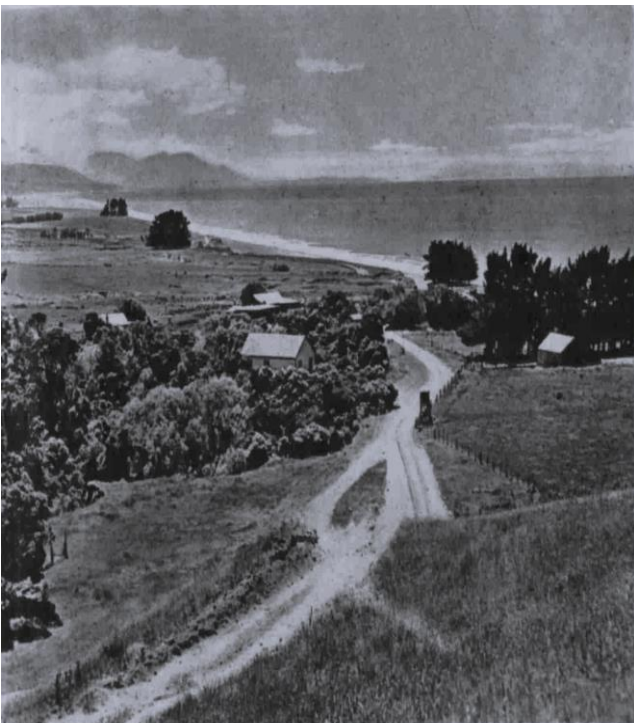
TWICE-HONOURED FOR OUTSTANDING BRAVERY: CAPTAIN CHARLES UPHAM ON HIS SHEEP FARM AT HUNDALEE, WITH HIS HORSE AND DOG.

Having returned to New Zealand, Charles Upham took up sheep farming in a remote area, and attempted to live quietly on his farm. His hope for a more normal life was short-lived: his leg was badly burned by blazing petrol leaking from a lamp he was using in December 1946. He refused to allow an ambulance to be called and instead he used a farm truck to make the long trip from his farm in North Canterbury to Christchurch, a distance of around one hundred miles.

Upham did not travel to London to receive the Bar to his Victoria Cross. The Daily Mirror reported on 2 October 1945;

V.C. - BAR IN HIDING :

Captain Charles Upham has refused an offer by the New Zealand Government to fly him to London to receive the Bar to his V.C. Publicity and admirers have driven him to hiding - he is on a peninsula where there are no roads or telephones, and access is possible only by launch.



SITUATED IN TYPICAL NEW ZEALAND SHEEP COUNTRY: "RAFA DOWNS," WHERE CAPTAIN CHARLES UPHAM, V.C. AND BAR, NOW RAISES SHEEP ON 5000 ACRES.

Charlie and Mary

By Richard Pursehouse

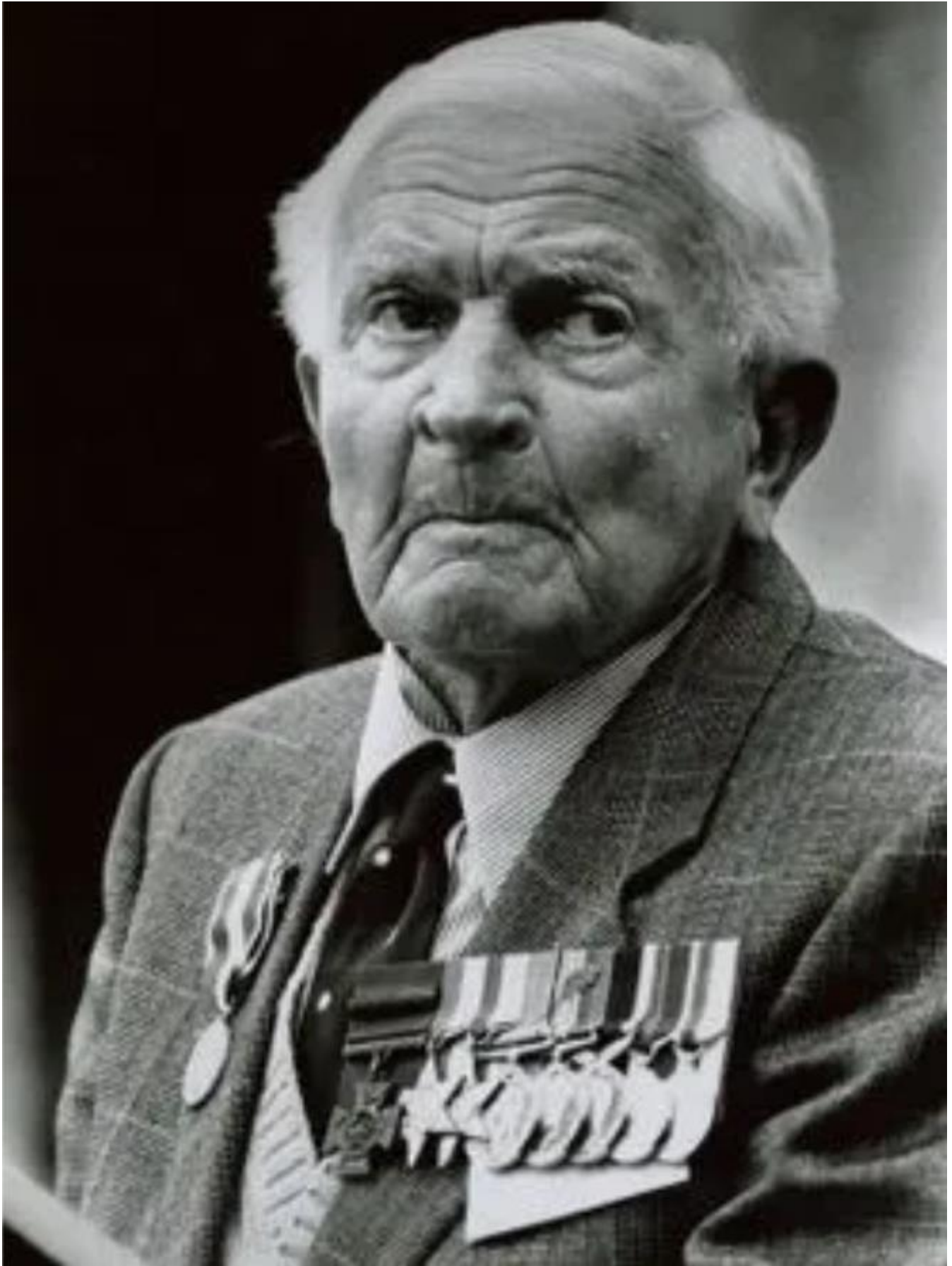
He did however travel to Greece with Major-General Sir Howard Kippenberger for an ANZAC ceremony in 1952, was invited to the F.A. Cup Final in London the following month and travelled to London in the 1956 for the centenary commemoration of the introduction of the Victoria Cross. In January 1954 he was presented to the Duke of Edinburgh at a civic garden party in New Zealand, attended by Queen Elizabeth and the Duke. He was accompanied by his wife Mary Eileen and his mother Agatha Mary.

Charles Hazlitt Upham VC and Bar died in November 1994. He was survived by his wife and three daughters Amanda, Virginia and Caroline (two of whom were twins).

Mary passed away in August 2000. She was a distant relative of Noel Chavasse VC and Bar, awarded the Victoria Cross twice during the Great War. There have been only three recipients of the Victoria Cross and Bar – Noel Chavasse VC and Bar, and Arthur Martin-Leake VC and Bar, were Royal Army Medical Corps officers: Captain Charles Upham is the only recipient of a Bar to the Victoria Cross awarded for combat action. As officers, none of the three double-VC recipients were eligible for the additional £5 annual stipend.

The medal group of Charles Hazlitt Upham VC and Bar was purchased in 2006 by the Imperial War Museum with the backing of Lord Michael Ashcroft Trust, and the medals are on permanent loan to the National Army Museum, Waiouru, New Zealand.

Charlie and Mary



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VC Trust News

Over the course of August 31st and September 1st 2023, the Victoria Cross Trust visited Cheltenham Cemetery in Gloucestershire to renovate and clean a number of military graves. The Cemetery has the graves of four Victoria Cross recipients as well as a number of other military figures. The Trust cleaned three out of the four VC graves (the fourth of James Forbes-Robertson VC was not cleaned as the headstone had been removed by the family). The images on the next three pages are of the cleaned graves (courtesy of Keith Lumley) with links to the men's stories.



VICTORIA CROSS TRUST

Their website and all the fund raising activities, aim to generate income to subsidise the upkeep and preservation of Victoria Cross graves; many of which had been forgotten, were unmarked, without headstones or had fallen into disrepair, without any living family members to maintain or look after them. The Trust is a charity which looks at maintaining the graves that fall outside the remit of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. If you wish to support the work of the Victoria Cross Trust, you can donate to their Just Giving page at the following link:

<https://donate.justgiving.com/donation-amount?uri=aHR0cHM6Ly9kb25hdGUtYXBpLmp1c3RnaXZpbmcuY29tL2FwaS9kb25hdGlvbnMvYjA5YzNiMzQ3OGlyNDljYmJmZjFkODUyMmYzYTtk3NmM/aXNDaGVja291dEFwaT1mYWxzZQ==>

VC Trust News



<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/thomas-de-courcy-hamilton-vc/>

VC Trust News



<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-simpson-knox-vc/>

VC Trust News



IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF

WILLM GEO. NICHOLAS MANLEY, C.B., V.C.
SURG. GEN. ARMY MED. DEPARTY.
BORN DEC. 17. 1831.
DIED NOV. 16. 1901.

Le Quesne VC Plaque

Memorial plaque to Lt. Col. Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne VC – 6 Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol

On Saturday 2nd September 2023 Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society commemorated Ferdinand Le Quesne VC with a memorial plaque on his former home in Clifton. The plaque was instigated by Christopher Ackroyd, grandson of Harold Ackroyd VC. Lt. Col. Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne was awarded the VC for actions on 4th May 1889 at Tartan Village, Burma (now Myanmar), his citation reads as follows.

‘The Queen has been graciously pleased to signify Her intention to Confer the decoration of the Victoria Cross upon the undermentioned Officer of Her Majesty's Army, -whose claim has been submitted for Her Majesty's approval, for his conspicuous bravery during the attack on the village of Tartan, Upper Burma, by a Column of the Chin Field Force, on 4th May, 1889, as recorded against his name Displayed conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during the attack on the village of Tartan, by a Column of the Chin Field Force, on the 4th May last, in having remained for the space of about ten minutes, in a very exposed position (within five yards, of the loop-holed stockade from which the enemy were firing), dressing with perfect coolness and self-possession the wounds from which Second Lieutenant Michel, Norfolk Regiment, shortly afterwards died. Surgeon Le Quesne was himself severely wounded later on whilst attending to the wounds of another officer’.

Le Quesne VC Plaque

Memorial plaque to Lt. Col. Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne VC – 6 Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol

Ferdinand moved to 6 Victoria Square in 1946 and died there on 14th April 1950 aged 86.

Brian Worthington opened the ceremony followed by a short talk on Ferdinand's life by Christopher Ackroyd. Robert Clayton, great great nephew of Ferdinand flew down from Edinburgh with his son Alex also gave a short speech. The plaque was then dedicated by Mrs Peaches Golding OBE, Lord-Lieutenant of Bristol followed by a short prayer, Last Post, one minute silence, Reveille and the Exhortation.

Guests were then invited to home of Christopher and Alexandra Ackroyd for refreshments. Robert Clayton, his son, Christopher Ackroyd, Ned Malet de Carteret and I then visited the grave of Ferdinand and nearby Canford Cemetery.

