

'THE MAN THEY COULDN'T KILL'

Victoria Cross Online



STAN HOLLIS
VC

MARK GREEN

FOREWORD BY KEITH PAYNE VC AM

Issue 21 June 2024

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the 21st edition of Victoria Cross Online Magazine. The feature article this month is a mixture of a blatant plug by yours truly and a historical necessity that the magazine marks the 80th anniversary of D-Day by featuring the story of Stan Hollis VC. It will be an abridged version of his story – as I don't want to give away all secrets of the book!

There will also be the next three instalments of the Medical VCs series featuring Ferdinand Le Quesne VC, Owen Lloyd VC and Henry Douglas VC.

There is also a feature on the brewing debate in Australia over the potential award of a posthumous Victoria Cross of Australia to Richard Norden DCM.

There is also a feature on the upcoming release of a postage stamp to mark the 80th anniversary of the action of Sherbahadur Thapa VC.



Contents

3-13 “The Man They Couldn't Kill” by Mark Green

14-15 Ferdinand Le Quesne VC

16-18 Owen Lloyd VC

19-22 Henry Douglas VC

23-25 Australia Debates VC

26-27 Sherbahadur Thapa VC Stamp by Daniele Cesaretti

The Man They Couldn't Kill

It would be crass of the editor of this magazine to not to mark the 80th anniversary of Operation Overlord, the D-Day landings, without including the story of Company Sergeant Major Stanley Elton Hollis VC of the 6th Battalion, Green Howards. Of course, you will all be aware that he was the only recipient of the Victoria Cross for his actions that day (in fact he received two separate recommendations for separate incidents, which were eventually incorporated into his citation) and I will be giving an abridged version of his story in this article. This is mainly so I don't give away too many spoilers from his story which are included in my now published book on Stan entitled "Stan Hollis VC: The Man They Couldn't Kill". I know some of you have already purchased and read a copy of the book at the time of this issue going to press. If you haven't 1. what are you doing? and 2. I will include how to get a copy at the end of the article just in case.....anyway on with the business part of the article...



The Man They Couldn't Kill

Stanley Elton Hollis (1912-1972) was born in Archibald Street, North Ormesby, Middlesbrough, the son of Alfred and Edith Jane Hollis (nee White). He attended the local school until the age of 14 in 1926, when his parents moved the family to Robin's Hood Bay where Stan worked in his father's fish and chip shop. In 1929, at the age of 17, Stan became an apprentice to a Whitby shipping company to learn to be a Navigation Officer. He made regular voyages to West Africa but in 1930 he fell ill with Blackwater Fever which ended his merchant navy career.

Returning to North Ormesby, Middlesbrough he got a job as a lorry driver and married Alice Clixby in 1933, with whom he had a son (Brian) and a daughter (Pauline). In 1939 he enlisted as a Territorial Army volunteer in 4th Battalion, The Green Howards. At the outbreak of World War II he was mobilised and joined the 6th Battalion, The Green Howards and went to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force in 1940 where he was employed as the Commanding Officer's dispatch rider. He was promoted from Lance Corporal to Sergeant during the evacuation from Dunkirk.

At Dunkirk in 1940, a mortar shell had stripped all the clothes off his back and riddled him with shrapnel, yet, naked and wounded, he managed to swim through the surf to a waiting rescue boat. He then fought from El Alamein to Tunis as part of the British 8th Army in the North African Campaign. Hollis was appointed Company Sergeant Major just before the invasion of Sicily in 1943 where he was wounded at the Battle of Primasole Bridge.

Hollis was a maverick character. Always his own man, he'd lost his stripes more than once in his Army career for stepping out of line (often for going awol to see his wife Alice), but his obvious leadership qualities always won them back. He was a big man in every sense, with a volcanic temper and huge fists, which he wasn't slow to use if provoked. With his red hair, 6ft 2in frame and rugged looks, he was not someone to mess with, and his comrades nicknamed him "The Man They Couldn't Kill".

The Man They Couldn't Kill



During the early hours of June 6, 1944 – D-Day – lines of scared young soldiers waited in the dark for the order to board the landing craft that would take them into battle on the beaches of northern France. At the last minute they were issued with an unexpected piece of equipment — a condom each! ‘What are these for?’ boomed out the voice of Sergeant-Major Stan Hollis, a hulking power-house of a man from the back streets of northern England. ‘Are we going to fight the Germans, or f*** them?’

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stanley-elton-hollis-vc/>

The Man They Couldn't Kill

Within minutes of the landing craft grounding to a halt, he showed himself not just fearless but the bravest of the brave and an example to all. As he and his men of the Green Howard regiment stormed up Gold Beach at the very heart of the Normandy invasion force, his deeds earned him the Victoria Cross, the supreme award for gallantry. His was – surprisingly, given the scale of the operation and the opposition the invaders had to overcome – the only one awarded on D-Day.

After wading ashore in waist-deep water through a hail of mortar fire, he and his men negotiated a minefield and crawled uphill towards their objective, a battery of German big guns which were busy laying down a barrage of shells on the Allied invasion fleet out in the Channel. As they approached, they suddenly came under fierce machine-gun fire from a pill box on their flank. It was very well camouflaged, but I could see guns moving around the slits,' Hollis recalled. His company was in danger of being wiped out.

Reaching the pill box, he shoved the barrel through a slit and let fly. Then he climbed on the roof and, leaning over, popped a grenade inside for good measure. The explosion was his signal to jump down and throw his considerable weight against the door and burst inside. Two German soldiers lay dead, the rest too wounded or dazed to react. Hollis then turned his attention to a neighbouring pill box, down a 100-yard communications trench. As he strode towards it, changing the magazine of his sten gun as he went, Germans poured out of it with their hands in the air. He had single-handedly captured 20 of the enemy. More importantly, by putting the pill boxes out of action, he had saved the lives of his own men as they now pressed on towards the German gun battery and silenced it.

The Man They Couldn't Kill



Hollis VC landing point on Gold Beach (Paul Lee)

This action alone merited a VC. But three hours later, his face running with blood after a graze from a German sniper's bullet, Hollis followed up with another act of selfless bravery. The company's advance into the Normandy countryside was impeded by another German position, this time in an orchard. Eight British men lay dead and two others were pinned down. Hollis charged the enemy once again, firing from the hip as he went, and held his ground, despite hostile bullets whipping around him, until the two were able to escape. His actions were witnessed by senior officers, who cited him for his valour.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stanley-elton-hollis-vc/>

The Man They Couldn't Kill

'Wherever the fighting was heaviest, Sergeant Major Hollis appeared,' said the official report of his VC, 'and in the course of a magnificent day's work he displayed the utmost gallantry. 'On two occasions his courage and initiative prevented the enemy from holding up the advance at critical stages. His bravery saved the lives of many of his men.' But Hollis was self-effacing about what he'd done that morning. He'd just been lucky, he insisted. 'If I hadn't done the things I did, then somebody else would have.'

Though he was reputed to have killed 100 Germans, it wasn't that he was an ace with a gun. Indeed, he said of his ability with a rifle: 'If I fell down I couldn't hit the floor'. Nor was he the most efficient battlefield soldier. On one occasion on D-Day he lobbed a grenade — 'I threw it like a cricket ball; I could never do it the proper Army way' — and forgot to take the pin out first. 'Fortunately, I'd followed it up straight away. Two Germans had seen it coming and kept their heads down. By the time they realised it wasn't going off, I was on top of them and shot them both.' He was decorated with his Victoria Cross by King George VI on 10th October 1944.



The Man They Couldn't Kill

Sadly, all this did him little good after the war. For a short while he was a celebrity, called on to open fetes and visit factories — all of which, modest man that he was, he hated. The fame was soon over. Despite his VC, he found it hard to find work in post-war Britain, a grim place of rationing and austerity. A soldier's professional skills, so valued in war, were redundant now. Men of Hollis's age and experience — the country's saviours — often found themselves passed over for younger workers. He was reduced to supporting his wife and two children by pushing trolleys of scrap into a blast furnace. To his credit, he didn't whinge. Nor did he rush to leap on the benefits bandwagon of the new welfare state. Hollis refused to go on the dole or take the war pension to which he was entitled. He even refused family allowance payments.

He finally got work as the landlord of a pub in Middlesbrough, and that remained his occupation, one he enjoyed immensely, for the rest of his life. He was a hugely popular landlord, though there were occasions when young toughs with too much beer inside them would want to pick a fight with the man with the VC. 'No one ever bested him,' recalled his daughter Pauline. 'He would make a joke of it but if they wouldn't take no for an answer, he would take them outside. They always regretted it.'

But the war years took their toll. Bullets and shrapnel remained lodged in his body for the rest of his life. His children remember him standing behind the bar of The Green Howard — re-named by him in honour of his regiment — for hours on end with blood seeping from painful old wounds in the bones of his feet. He didn't boast about his achievements and took no pride in the Germans he had killed in battle. If he got word that a journalist was on the way to the pub to interview him, he would slip out of the back.

The Man They Couldn't Kill



Medal Group image courtesy of the Green Howards Regimental Museum Trustees

Yet nor was he prepared to forgive and forget. During his escape from Dunkirk, he had seen the bodies of British soldiers massacred by the enemy. The sight haunted him. When in 1963, the film epic *The Longest Day* was released to great fanfare, some bright PR spark thought it would be marvellous to get D-Day hero Hollis along to the premiere to shake hands with a former German officer. Where a new generation was ready to bury the hatchet, an affronted Hollis was not. 'I find it impossible to treat a man as an enemy one minute and then shake his hand,' he said. 'I saw the result of too many of their atrocities ever to trust, or like, the Germans again.'

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stanley-elton-hollis-vc/>

The Man They Couldn't Kill

For years after he had terrible nightmares. His children remember him locking himself in his room for days on end, crying to himself that he had blood on his hands. Those wounds and the long-term suffering they caused may well have contributed to his premature death from a stroke at the early age of 59 on 8th February 1972 at Liverton Mines. He was laid to rest in Acklam Cemetery, Middlesbrough with full military honours, attended by three fellow VCs. In 2015, following a campaign to raise £150,000 a statue was erected in his memory in Middlesbrough. He is also commemorated in Crepon, France with a statue of him at the Green Howards Memorial.

His medal group which he personally kept in a drawer with bottle tops he collected for charity, was bought by medal collector Sir Ernest Harrison OBE, chairman of Racal and Vodafone. Harrison presented the medal to the Green Howards Museum in Richmond, North Yorkshire in 1997. Ten years later, he purchased, for the Green Howards, the Normandy hut which Hollis had attacked. On 10th May 2024, just prior to the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the Victoria Cross Trust visited Acklam Cemetery and cleaned and repaired the grave.



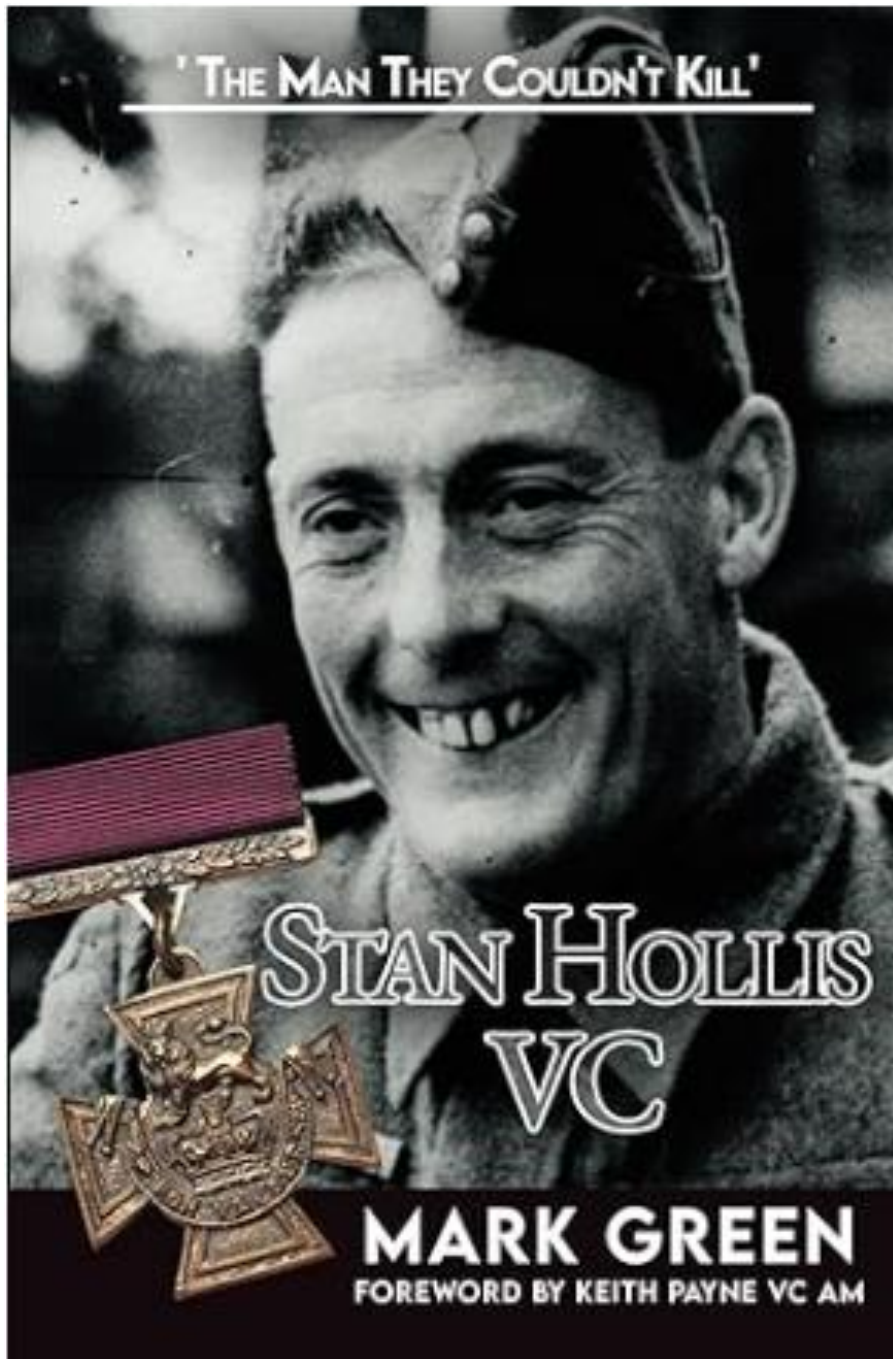
The Man They Couldn't Kill



Image of the refurbished grave of Stan Hollis VC courtesy of
Keith Lumley of the Victoria Cross Trust
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stanley-elton-hollis-vc/>

The Man They Couldn't Kill

Now for the blatant plug.....how to get a copy of my book if you haven't got one....



The book is available currently from three outlets.

You can order a signed copy via my website, here:

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stan-hollis-vc-the-man-they-couldnt-kill/>

(if you want a signed copy and live outside UK please choose the above and select the £16 version rather than £12.50 version.

Or unsigned via Amazon, here -

<https://amzn.eu/d/8CsWyx2>

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/stanley-elton-hollis-vc/>

Medical VCs

14. Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne VC



Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne (1863-1950) was born on Christmas Day 1863 in Jersey, Channel Islands. He was the third son of Lieutenant-Colonel Giffard N. Le Quesne, Royal Jersey Artillery, and Augusta, daughter of the late Admiral Charles Simeon. He was educated in the Channel Islands and at King's College Hospital, London. He served in the Burma Campaign of 1889.

In the expedition against the Chins he was severely wounded, mentioned in despatches, and for his services in this campaign, received the Victoria Cross

On the 4th May 1889, during the attack on the village of Tartan, Burma, by a column of the Chin Field Force, Surgeon Le Quesne remained for the space of about ten minutes within 5 yards of the loopholed stockade, from which the enemy was firing, dressing the wounds with coolness and self-possession, the wounds of an officer who shortly afterwards died. Le Quesne was himself severely wounded later while attending to the wounds of another officer.

He was presented with his medal by Major-General Sir J Gordon in Rangoon on 18th February 1890. He later served with the Chin Lushai Field Force in 1890, and with the Wuntho Field Force of 1891. In 1898 he was promoted to Major. In 1901-1902, he served in the South African War, earning the Queen's Medal with three clasps. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1906, and retired in December 1918.

Medical VCs

14. Ferdinand Simeon Le Quesne VC

Le Quesne lived in the West Country in his retirement, and lived through both World Wars. He died aged 86, on 14th April 1950 in Bristol. He was buried in Canford Cemetery, Bristol. His medals are held by the Jersey Museum, St Helier, Jersey.

Medal group image below courtesy of Ned Malet de Carteret



Medical VCs

15. Owen Edward Pennefather Lloyd VC



Sir Owen Edward Pennefather Lloyd (1854-1941) was born on 1st January 1854, son of Major M. Pennefather Lloyd, 59th Regiment, who hailed from County Roscommon, Ireland. He was educated at Fermoy College, Cork, and at Queen's University, Cork. He obtained three degrees of LRCS, LRCP and LM at Edinburgh University.

He enlisted with the Army Medical Service in 1878, and served throughout the Zulu Wars of 1879, and was present at the attack and capture of Sekukani's stronghold in the Transvaal War of 1881-1882.

Little is known of his career between the end of the Transvaal War and the Kachin Expedition of 1892-93, where he was present during the assault on Fort Sima, which ultimately would lead to the award of the Victoria Cross.

Medical VCs

15. Owen Edward Pennefather Lloyd VC

Army Medical
Staff

Surgeon - Major
Owen Edward
Pennefather Lloyd

During the attack on the Sima Post by Kachins, on the 6th January last, Surgeon-Major Lloyd on hearing that the Commanding Officer, Captain Morton (who had left the fort to visit a picket about 80 yards distant) was wounded, at once ran out to his assistance under a close and heavy fire, accompanied by Subadar Matab Singh.

On reaching the wounded Officer, Surgeon-Major Lloyd sent Subadar Matab Singh back for further assistance, and remained with Captain Morton till the Subadar returned with five men of the Magwe Battalion of Military Police, when he assisted in carrying Captain Morton back to the fort, where that Officer died a few minutes afterwards.

The enemy were within ten or fifteen paces keeping up a heavy fire which killed three men of the picket, and also Bugler Purna Singh. This man accompanied Captain Morton from the fort, showed great gallantry in supporting him in his arms when wounded, and was shot while helping to carry him back to the fort.

(The Native Officer and five sepoy's above alluded to have been awarded the Order of Merit.)

On 6th January 1893, while the attack was progressing on the Fort, Surgeon Major Lloyd went, with the aid of an Indian NCO called Matab Singh, to a commanding officer (Captain Morton) who was wounded. Lloyd then stayed with the officer whilst Matab Singh went back to fetch further help so Morton could be carried. Sadly, despite successfully carrying Morton back to the fort, he died a few minutes later. Throughout the action the enemy were within 15 paces of Lloyd, keeping up a heavy fire, and Lloyd was wounded.

Lloyd was gazetted for the VC on 2nd January 1894, and was presented with his medal on 24th March 1894 by Brigadier-General George Bird in Mandalay, Burma. He married Florence, daughter of Captain and Lady Morgan of Bridestown House, County Cork, and they had a son and a daughter. He then became Medical Officer to the Franco-British Boundary Commission on the Burma Frontier, 1898-1899.

Medical VCs

15. Owen Edward Pennefather Lloyd VC

He then became the Principal Medical Officer to the Bareilly Brigades in India, and Honourable Surgeon to the Viceroy of India. He then became a Principal Medical Officer in South Africa. He was created a Companion of Bath in 1910, and retired in 1913. Following his retirement, he enjoyed field sports, and had a reputation as a big game hunter. He eventually settled on the south coast, where he died in St Leonards on Sea, Sussex on 5th July 1941. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, West London. His medals are held and displayed at the Museum of Military Medicine, Keogh Barracks, Mytchett, Surrey.

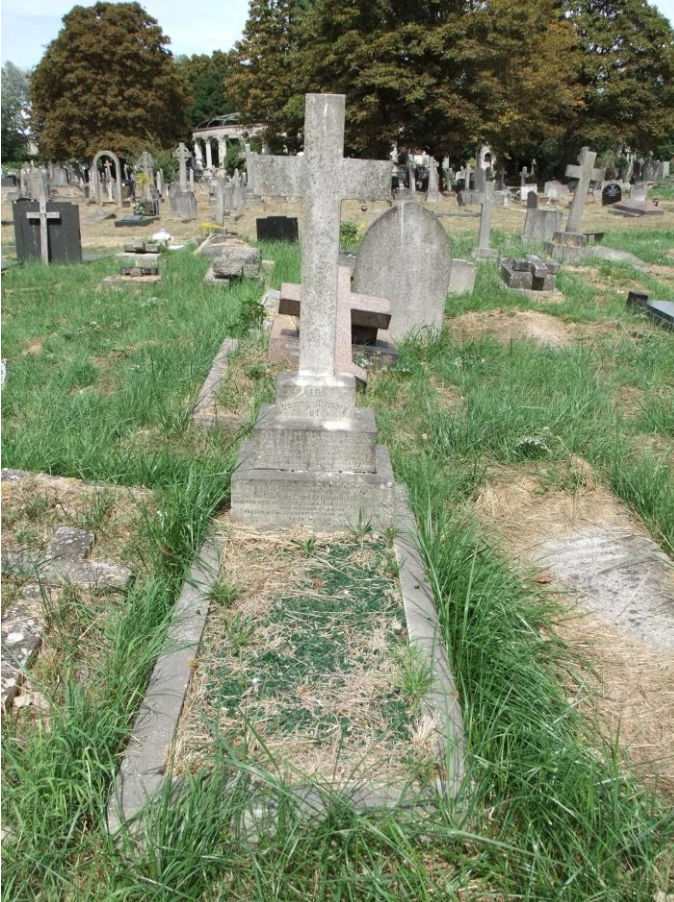


Image of medal group courtesy of Thomas Stewart

Medical VCs

16. Henry Edward Manning Douglas VC



Henry Edward Manning Douglas (1875-1939) was born on 11th July 1875 in Gillingham, Kent, the son of George Alexander and Elizabeth Douglas. He had eight known older siblings: Anne Jane, William, George Alexander, Julia Mary, Elizabeth Frances, Ellen Louisa, James Joseph and Charles Francis, as well as a younger sister Margaret Lloyd.

Four years before he was born, his father was employed as a Prison Warden in HM Chatham Prison. The family's address was "F9 Wardens Drive, Convict Prison". Ten years later Henry's father George had been promoted to Chief Warden in HM Woking Prison where he lived with his family in "21 Prison Street".

On the 1871 and 1881 census returns, Henry's parents and eldest sister Anne Jane places of birth were given as Ireland, and the rest of the family's as Gillingham Kent. After being educated in Edinburgh, Henry took the Scottish triple qualification in 1898.

On 28th July 1899 Henry, aged 24, enlisted in to the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Lieutenant. By the 11 October 1899 the Second Boer War between the British and the descendants of the Dutch settlers, the Boers, had started. Their 'argument' was mainly over the rights of British settlers in the Transvaal Republic.

Medical VCs

16. Henry Edward Manning Douglas VC



At dawn on 11th December 1899, at what would become known as the Battle of Magersfontein, British troops attempted to capture a Boer position in order to relieve the diamond-mining town of Kimberley. It was here that Henry, who was wounded himself, acted with great bravery and advanced on to the open plain to attend to the wounds of Major Robinson, Captain W. E. Gordon of the Gordon Highlanders, and many other wounded men under a hail of bullets. In total, 120 British soldiers were killed and 690 wounded. For his bravery, Henry was awarded the Victoria Cross (London Gazette, 29th March 1901).

Henry was presented with his VC on 25th July 1901 by King Edward VII at St James' Palace, London. In addition to this, he was mentioned in despatches, received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), and the Queen's Medal with two clasps.

After the Second Boer War ended with a British victory on 31 May 1902, Henry, on his return to England, did duty for a while at St George's Barracks, London. He was promoted to Captain on 27 July 1903 before leaving for active service in East Africa with General Egerton's command in Somaliland [1903-1904] and at the Battle of Jalahalli in India [1904-1908].

Medical VCs

16. Henry Edward Manning Douglas VC



Thomas Stewart

After this last battle it would seem that Henry decided to have a break from his military life and, as part of a group of thirty-six men lead by Robert Sterling Clark (1877-1956), took part in a sixteen-month expedition to North China. Following his return from China, he became a resident at the Royal Army Medical College in Westminster, London. In 1911, he was promoted to Major.

Henry returned to the battlefields in the Serbo-Turkish War of 1912-1913 and with the Greek forces in the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1913 in which he received the Serbian Red Cross and the Order of the Samaritan.

Medical VCs

16. Henry Edward Manning Douglas VC



Kevin Brazier

On 1st March 1915 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and on 1st January 1918 to Brevet Colonel. Henry was also a "Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George", as well as receiving the Croix de Guerre with palms, and the Serbian Order of St. Sava as reported in the London Gazette. From 1926 to 1929, Henry was a Consultant at the Royal Army Medical College Millbank London. During this time, on 27th March 1926, he received promotion to the rank of Colonel.

Three years later, on 12th October 1929, he was promoted to the rank of Major General, and became the Deputy Director of Medical Services at Southern Command in India. Aged 60, Henry retired from the Army on 13th October 1933. His retirement was short-lived and three years later he died on 14th February 1939 at St Andrews House, Droitwich, Worcestershire. Three days later, he was buried in the same grave as his brother George (who had died in 1927) in Epsom Cemetery, Epsom, Surrey.

Australia debates VC



Over the last weeks, a fierce debate has continued to escalate in Australia over the potential award of a posthumous Victoria Cross for Australia to Richard Leslie Norden. The award would be an upgrade on Norden's award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for his actions in Vietnam on May 14, 1968 during the Battle of First Support Base Coral. The campaign to recognise Norden with the Victoria Cross for Australia has been going on for sometime. On September 7, 2020, a retired Lieutenant Colonel George Hulse OAM wrote to Mrs Petrina Cole the Director of the Honours and Awards in the Department of Defense.

In the letter, Hulse stated that Private Norden "performed acts that transcend the award of the DCM" and were more in keeping with the award of the Victoria Cross for Australia. On November 24, 2021 after over a year of deliberation, Lieutenant General Rick Burr AO DSC MVO responded to Lieutenant Colonel Hulse refusing the application stated that the award of the DCM was appropriate. On December 7, 2021, Hulse decided to make an application to the Defence Honours Awards Appeals Tribunal seeking a review of Rick Burr's decision stating that it did meet the criteria for the VCfA and that Lieutenant Colonel Bennett (Norden's CO on May 14, 1968) and the Chief of the Army had not done justice to Private Norden. On July 20, 2022 the Tribunal gave their recommendations saying Burr's decision should be reversed and that the Governor General of Australia should grant the award of the Victoria Cross for Australia.

Australia debates VC

That was July 2022, and we are now in May 2024 – so what has been the delay? What has come to light is that the recommendation of the Tribunal has been sitting on the desk of the Defence Minister, Richard Marles for the past two years, without being passed onto the Governor General David Hurley AO. The reasons for the delay has been subject of heavy debate in Australia with many Veterans organisations and associations suggesting that it is a political decision to delay. One such critic of the delay is Martin Hamilton-Smith, the Chairman of the Australian SAS Association who also has gone on record as believing that the decision not to award Norden a VC back in 1968 was down to a quota system in place on the number of gallantry awards that could be given out for any one action or time period of action.

The Victoria Cross was awarded four times to Australian service personnel in Vietnam, two posthumously to Kevin “Dasher” Wheatley VC and Peter Badcoe VC, and two to Ray Simpson VC and Keith Payne VC AM. It has been believed that four was the quota for awards of the VC in Vietnam. It has been known that Harry Smith MC, awarded the MC for his actions at the Battle of Long Tan in 1966, was a fierce campaigner into his later years of many Australian politicians championing the cause of more recognition of the actions of the men at Long Tan and other battles in Vietnam.

The case for Norden’s upgrade to the VCfA has of course, been boosted in recent years, by the decision to award Teddy Sheean a posthumous VCfA, following a very long campaign by the family and others to upgrade his Mentioned in Despatches to a VCfA. The point to note here is that in the case of Sheean, and indeed Norden (if it does go through) that they would be being bestowed upon an award which did not exist at the time of their actions. The Victoria Cross for Australia was created on January 15, 1991 when the Australian Government (as did those of Canada and New Zealand) decided to create their own Honours systems. Previous attempts to campaign for upgrades to a VC had always been turned down, with the convention of belief being a statement of King George VI who stated that you should never look back with regard to gallantry awards.

Australia debates VC

King George VI's words were heeded by his daughter Queen Elizabeth II and when the debate was raging on for the upgrade to a VCfA for Teddy Sheean it was believed that it would be turned down by Her Majesty on the grounds described above. It is now believed that it may have been approved as the VCfA is different award to the VC with its own warrant, and this may have persuaded Her Majesty to rubber stamp the Governor General's decision. It was then expected following the Sheean decision that the potential for the Norden case to be accepted would be greatly enhanced.

Norden, sadly, if it is approved by the Governor General of Australia and indeed King Charles III, would receive a posthumous VCfA. Following his service in Vietnam, he became a Police Constable in the Australian Capital Territory. Tragically, he was killed in the line of duty in Canberra on October 31, 1972 in a motorcycle accident. He was laid to rest in Woden Cemetery, Philip, Canberra, ACT.

What will happen in this case....time will tell.....and I will certainly keep you posted in Victoria Cross Online, and maybe in future there will be an article announcing the award of the VCfA to Richard Leslie Norden. Who knows?



Sherbahadur Thapa VC Stamp

On June 26th 2024, a press conference will be held in Faetano Town Hall, Faetano, San Marino. The press conference is being held by the Poste San Marino. They are announcing the release of a new postage stamp which will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the actions of Sherbahadur Thapa VC of the 9th Gurkha Rifles.

On the night of 17th-18th September 1944, 1/9th Gurkha Rifles were ordered to seize three commanding positions, the last of which was not captured until the early hours of 19th September. By that time the forward company of the battalion had run out of ammunition and it was then that Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa and his section commander jumped into action. Rifleman Sherbahadur Thapa and his section commander, who was afterwards badly wounded, charged and silenced an enemy machine-gun. The rifleman then went on alone to the exposed part of a ridge where, ignoring a hail of bullets, he silenced more machine-guns, covered a withdrawal and rescued two wounded men before he was killed.

Sherbahadur Thapa's body was recovered and he was buried with full military honours in the Gurkha War Cemetery, Rimini, Italy. His posthumous VC announced in the London Gazette on 28th December 1944, was presented to his mother at a special ceremony in March 1945. She had travelled from Nepal to the Red Fort in Delhi for the occasion, and the medal was given to her by the Viceroy of India, Field Marshal Lord Wavell. The medals were later donated by the family to the 9th Gurkha Rifles Museum, Varanasi, India.

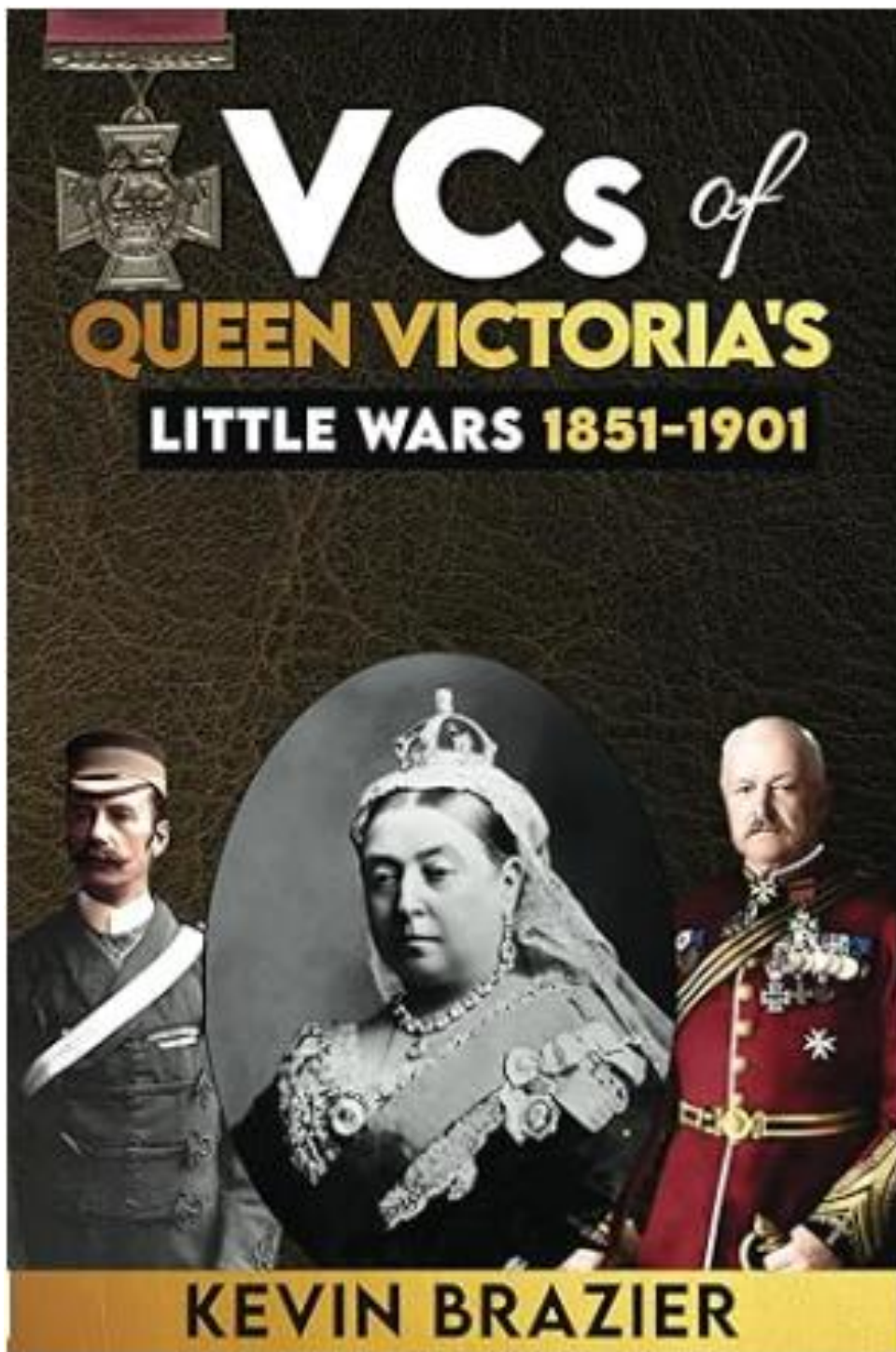
Information and photos all courtesy of Danny Cesaretti

Sherbahadur Thapa VC Stamp



Information and photos all courtesy of Danny Cesaretti

New Book



On 5th June 2024, the latest book by renowned author of military books, Kevin Brazier was published by Barnthorn. Kevin's previous works include "The Complete Victoria Cross" "The Complete George Cross", "Victoria Crosses of the Zulu and Boer Wars", and "Victoria Crosses of the Gurkha and Indian Regiments".

Queen Victoria's Little Wars by Kevin Brazier tells the story of those who were awarded the VC for actions during some of the lesser-known wars and conflicts during her reign.

William Manley, the only man to be awarded both the VC and the German Iron Cross, and three whose VCs were forfeited are covered. The two Sartorius brothers, Euston and Reginald, are also included, as is Andrew Fitzgibbon, whom recent evidence has shown to be the youngest recipient of the award at 15 years and 3 months.

To order <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Queen-Victorias-Little-Wars-1851-1901/dp/191712001X>