



Cameron Baird VC MG
10 Years On

Victoria Cross Online
Issue 9 June 2023

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the June edition of the Victoria Cross Online magazine. This month's feature article is extremely poignant in that it is the 10th anniversary on the 22nd of this month of the recipient's VC posthumous action. I am indebted to Doug and Kaye Baird for commissioning Craig Blanch to write the article about Cameron Baird VC MG.

Secondly, there is a brief article by Steve Lee, who attended the unveiling of a blue plaque in Bristol in memory of Maurice Rogers VC.

Thirdly, there is the latest in the story of Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG's challenge against allegations of war crimes in Afghanistan.

Finally, there is a review of a new book "The Renfrewshire VCs" and an update of news about the new Victoria Cross Online website.



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“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

It is said that a principle is not a principle until it is tested. Ten years ago on the 22nd of June, Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG died defending the principles that guided his life: loyalty and selflessness. It was the measure of the man he was.

One of the greatest tributes to Cam’s memory was that he was “a good soldier and a good person”. These were the words used by Kaye Baird in my interview with Cam’s parents in 2017. The simple expression frames a life well lived. His legacy is held in hundreds of stories from friends and strangers alike, as his time on this earth continues to inspire.

The “good person” was evident early. Cam was a champion all-round sportsman. He was also a big kid with a kind heart, who would give his winning ribbons to other kids who lacked his gifts. He was destined for a career at the top level of Australian Rules Football when injury intervened at a critical time. But it was not his winning performances that drew people to Cam. He was a beacon who loved and celebrated life, with a natural ability to bring out the best in others.

Cam was physically big, loud, fun, caring, and modest. Once asked what he did for a living, he responded: “You know those little stickers they put on apples? I’m the guy that puts those on the apples”.

The “good person” was at the core of the “good soldier”.

“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

Lance Corporal Cameron “Bairdy” Baird first deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 with the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Cdo) (later the 2nd Commando Regiment). On 22 November he was an acting team commander ordered to clear a Taliban stronghold. While storming a compound, Private Luke Worsley was killed by machine gun fire. Cam assisted in getting Luke’s body to a place of safety before returning to lead the fight to secure the compound. One of the team recalled that “[Cam] went in front of the team; he threw grenades; he was firing his weapon; he was telling us where to go. He was just amazing.”

The death of Luke hit the unit hard. None more than Cam. Not only had he lost a friend, but it was the unit’s first death in Afghanistan, and it happened under his watch. Unavoidable civilian deaths also weighed heavily on him.

That night the assembled crowd silenced as Cam picked up his guitar. He played Green Day’s *Good Riddance (Time of your life)*, and sung in raw voice with eyes closed, lost in his thoughts. Some sang, while others took their own quiet journey.

Brendan Baird, Cam’s brother recalled:

Luke’s death was very hard for Cameron. It was an awful situation for him. You know, to see a fellow soldier and someone who he was friends with, you know, die in battle. I remember him saying to me, “If I’m finding it hard, how’s the family going?”

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was **Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG**

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

For his actions during the fight, Cam was awarded the Medal for Gallantry, but it was recognition he found hard to accept. It took some time and counselling from teammates and family, but Cam eventually accepted the award only “if it’s accepted for all of us”. In the period between rotations, Cam visited Luke’s parents’ and became a regular, welcome visitor.



Corporal Cameron Baird (left front) with his team in 2009. Unblurred members; Private Tim Aplin rear left; Private Merv McDonald rear right; Private Dean Parkinson standing front second from right. As the war progressed, the land vehicles gave way to helicopter insertion. Image courtesy of Dean Parkinson

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The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

In 2009, Private Dean Parkinson was on his initial rotation to Afghanistan. Two months after he arrived he transferred to Cam's team, joining up with his mates Privates Timothy 'Aps' Aplin and Mervyn 'Merv' McDonald, among others still serving. Dean had met Cam but knew him more by reputation. In his first serious firefight of the tour while clearing a Taliban compound he got to see Cam in action.

At one point, the team's rapid advance put them under the fire of their own covering force, as well as a storm of enemy rounds from the compound. Dean recalls:

Amongst all this chaos and hail of bullets, Cam Baird just stands up, looks up at the hill and just yells at 'em, throws red smoke to indicate front line troops, (this is where our guys are), and just berates them and I won't say the words, but he was letting them fly. I remember just looking at this guy, going *Wow!*

Once the mission was completed, Cam called the team together. Dean continues:

Cam said, 'That was some of the best soldiering I'd ever seen'. I say this not lightly, because it is one of the best compliments I'd ever been given...and to have that guy basically telling [us]... that was just unbelievable."

“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

Of the four teammates: Cam, Dean, Tim, and Merv, only Dean would survive the war. Tim Aplin was killed in a helicopter crash in June 2010. Another helicopter crash claimed the life of Merv McDonald in August 2012.



Left to right: Privates Tim Aplin and Mervyn McDonald, and Corporal Cameron Baird aboard Surveillance Reconnaissance Vehicle 'Iron Maiden', c 2009. All three died serving in Afghanistan. Image courtesy Dean Parkinson

“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

In February 2013 Cam deployed for his fourth rotation to Afghanistan. On 22 June, a platoon of the 2nd Commando Regiment was tasked with a mission deep inside enemy territory. Cam was a team leader of six commandos.

The platoon was inserted by helicopters close to a river and the village of Ghawchak in the Khod Valley. The Australians came under fire almost immediately from a group that Cam spotted moving across the river. He crossed the river with two of his team and killed six of the enemy, before returning and pushing through the village.

Cam led his team toward a grove where Taliban fighters were preparing an ambush. The team killed several of the enemy fighters before the remainder fled. They were in the process of moving to another location when the commander of a team in the town was seriously wounded.

Without pause, Cam led his men toward the stricken commander. The route was through a series of compounds which had to be systematically cleared of enemy. On several occasions Cam drew fire to himself, enabling his team to gain the upper hand. At one point a machine gun opened fire from a nearby building. Cam charged a doorway to the structure, but the intensity of the fire forced him to retire. His rifle jammed on a second attempt. He withdrew and checked it for damage. Seeing no obvious problem, he replaced the magazine and braced for a third attempt.

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<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

Cam rushed the doorway and managed to create a foothold for his team to engage and capture the position. But Cam never saw the victory. He was already dead. His rifle had seized, leaving him defenceless. It is thought that his rifle had been damaged on the second attempt by a bullet to the flash eliminator, and Cam had missed the minor damage at the end of the barrel. But it may have been enough to restrict the weapon's ability to operate properly. The [damaged rifle](#) is now on display at the Australian War Memorial.

Cam's body was returned to base at Tarin Kowt. Friends from his unit washed his body and dressed his wounds, then took turns to mount a guard of honour throughout the night. When news reached Australia, there was disbelief in the unit that “Bairdy” was gone. His body arrived back in Australia on 29 June.



The ramp ceremony with a 2nd Commando Regiment honour guard at RAAF Base Richmond on the arrival of Cam's body to Australia on 29 June 2013. On hand were Doug and Kaye Baird, along with the Chief of Defence Force, the Chief of Army, and the Australian Special Operations Commander. Image courtesy of Department of Defence.

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<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

Among the effects sent home to his parents was the black folder Cam took on every deployment. It contained pictures of every Australian killed in Afghanistan. Cam had written in the book “The only bad decision was a decision not made”. One of those decisions cost him his life – a decision that put him in harm’s way because that was his job. True leaders lead. For his actions on 22 June 2013, he was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for Australia.



The Governor General, Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO, presents the Victoria Cross for Australia to Cam’s parents, Doug and Kaye Baird in 2014. Image courtesy of the Department of Defence.

“The only bad decision Was a decision not made.”

The man who was Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG

A protected-identity commando was quoted at the announcement of the Victoria Cross by Prime Minister Tony Abbott:

Corporal Baird’s courage and resolve proved the tipping point. His repeated attempts to attack that room with six insurgents inside was the bravest event that I have ever seen in my experience on two tours as a commando.

Warrant Officer Dave Ashley commented:

Corporal Baird’s actions epitomised the courage and quick thinking needed to be a commando...Even though his weapon failed, he fixed the weapon...and got straight back into the battle. And it’s that kind of momentum that needs to be continued to win a firefight.

I know in both my head and in my heart that Cameron Baird is one of Australia's greatest-ever soldiers.

Former senior team commander Richie Young said of his friend:

He was just born to lead. Everyone was a better soldier for being in Cam’s team. Blokes would literally die for him, and I reckon it’s because they knew, if it came to it, he’d absolutely do the same.

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But Cam touched more than family, friends, and teammates. Two weeks before he died, Cam had replied to questions in a letter he had received from a young school student, Campbell Byrd. Campbell had written to an unknown soldier as part of a school project. His answers reveal a man of dedication, honesty, compassion, and humility. An excerpt of Cam’s handwritten reply reads:

To Campbell,

My name is Cameron and I am 32 years old.

...

Sometimes my job is difficult but I have good reasons to do it. Making the world a safer place for others is one reason. I think we are very lucky in Australia, we are safe and can live our lives as we wish...

...

I am a team commander in an assault platoon...My main role over here is war fighting. The enemy use Afghanistan as a place to harbour their ‘jihad’ holy war. This enemy kills and harasses the local population, so we try and help and they fight us. War is very complicated and hard to explain.

...

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[I have not always wanted to be in the Army]. As you grow older things change in your life, so you have to adjust. When I was 12 years old I wanted to be a footballer or a sportsman, but I wasn't good enough to be professional...Since joining I have been really happy with it...And I have heaps of good mates I work with.

...

Always try your best in whatever you do, and always be happy in your life.

Enjoy and have fun.

Regards,

Cameron

It is the last known letter written by Cam before his death. It is now held in the National Collection of the Australian War Memorial.

Kaye and Doug Baird still receive regular correspondence from strangers about their son. The following is a typical example:

I just wanted to reach out and say thank you, for sharing his story on Australian Story...What an incredible human you raised...I believe every Australian should watch it. For Cam. For themselves. For every Australian Army serviceman and woman. Your amazing son made more of an impact than you may ever quite know.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/cameron-stewart-baird-vc-mg/>

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Cam still serves in the form of Cam’s Cause, a charity formed after his death. It is dedicated to the welfare of soldiers and veterans of his 2nd Commando Regiment family. Its motto is, appropriately, ‘Aspire to Inspire’.

Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC MG was a soldier’s soldier. Someone who had immense moral and physical courage in equal measure. Cam was also that brave, larger than life kid everyone wanted to be. At school, at sport, or at war.



Craig
Blanch
would like
to convey
his heartfelt
thanks to
Doug Baird
OAM and
Dean
Parkinson
for their
invaluable
assistance
in telling
Cam’s
story.

Rogers VC Plaque

Several months ago, an article appeared in my local County RBL Bulletin newsletter requesting assistance and support from Dr John Black to have a blue plaque erected on the home of the birthplace of Sgt Maurice Rogers VC MM. Maurice was born in 1919 at 39 Brighton Road, Redland, Bristol. Having contacted John, we stayed in contact, and he kept me fully informed of his progress. Having worked with Bristol Civic Society, Blue Plaque Committee John was able to arrange a plaque and set about raising the necessary funds which he duly did. On Wednesday 26th April 2023 I was honoured to attend the unveiling and dedication ceremony. Sgt. Maurice Rogers VC MM enlisted as a Band Boy in the Wiltshire Regiment aged just 14 during 1934. Maurice became Platoon Sgt of the carrier platoon of the 2nd Wiltshire Regiment during WWII having been evacuated from Dunkirk. He was awarded the Military Medal for actions in Sicily and shortly afterwards was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross at Anzio in Italy. He is buried at Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio. His VC action reads as follows.

'The citation in the London Gazette of 8th August 1944, gives the following details: In Italy, a battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment was ordered to attack high ground held by the enemy. 'The carrier platoon of the leading company dismounted were ordered to capture the final objective. They advanced under intense fire and sustained a number of casualties. The platoon, checked by the enemy's wire and the intensity of his machine-gun fire, took cover some 70 yards short of their objective. Serjeant Rogers continued to advance alone, and penetrated 30 yards inside the enemy's defences, drawing their fire and throwing them into confusion. Inspired by his example, the platoon began the assault. Serjeant Rogers was blown off his feet by a grenade and wounded in the leg. Nothing daunted, he ran on towards an enemy machine-gun post, attempting to silence it. He was shot and killed at point blank range. This N.C.O.'s undaunted determination, fearless devotion to duty and superb courage carried his platoon on to their objective in a strongly defended position. The great gallantry and heroic self-sacrifice of Serjeant Rogers were in the highest tradition of the British Army'.

Article courtesy of Steve Lee, www.memorialstovalour.co.uk with thanks from the editor.
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/maurice-albert-windham-rogers-vc-mm/>

Rogers VC Plaque



Article courtesy of Steve Lee, www.memorialstovalour.co.uk with thanks from the editor.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/maurice-albert-wyndham-rogers-vc-mm/>

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny



Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG is a man currently under intense media and public scrutiny following this month's decision in the Federal Court in Sydney which dismissed his claims of defamation against several Australian publications and media outlets.

Roberts-Smith was born on 1st November 1978 in Perth, Western Australia. He is the elder of two sons born to Len and Sue Roberts-Smith, his father being a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia. Ben graduated from Hale School in 1995. In 1996, at the age of 18, Ben chose to enlist in the Australian Army. He completed his basic training at Blamey Barracks in Kapooka, South Australia.

From his basic training, he moved to Lone Pine Barracks in Singleton, NSW to initial employment at the School of Infantry. He was then posted to 3 RAR (Royal Australian Regiment) and became a Section Leader in the Direct Fire Support Weapons Platoon. With 3 RAR, he was deployed to East Timor on two tours.

In 2003, the completion the selection process for the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and was initially posted to 3 Squadron at Campbell Barracks in Western Australia. He took part in operations in Fiji in 2004. He would be deployed to Afghanistan on 6 tours, the first two in 2006 and 2007. He would return in 2009, 2010 and 2012. In 2006, he was awarded the Medal of Gallantry for his role as as a patrol sniper with Special Operations Task Group.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/benjamin-ben-or-rs-roberts-smith-vc-mg/>

Ben Roberts-Smith VC Under Scrutiny



On 31st May 2006, Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith was employed as a patrol scout and sniper that was tasked with establishing an observation post near the Chora Pass in Oruzgan province, Afghanistan.

On 2nd June, the observation post had become the focus of the Anti-Coalition Militia force and repeated attempts to locate and surround the position ensued. In one particular incident the Militia attempted to outflank the observation post. Roberts-Smith was part of a two-man team tasked to move out of their relatively secure position in order to locate and neutralise the Militia and regain the initiative. This task was successfully achieved.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/benjamin-ben-or-rs-roberts-smith-vc-mg/>

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny

On 11th June 2010, Corporal Roberts-Smith again deployed to Afghanistan, subsequently being awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia for his actions during a helicopter assault into Tizak, Kandahar province, in order to capture or kill a senior Taliban commander. Immediately upon the helicopter insertion, the troop was engaged by machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire from multiple, dominating positions. Two soldiers were wounded in action and the troop was pinned down by fire from three machine guns in an elevated fortified position to the south of the village. Under the cover of close air support, suppressive small arms and machine gun fire, Roberts-Smith and his patrol manoeuvred to within 70 metres of the enemy position in order to neutralise the enemy machine gun positions and regain the initiative.

Upon commencement of the assault, the patrol drew very heavy, intense, effective and sustained fire from the enemy position. Roberts-Smith and his patrol members fought towards the enemy position until, at a range of 40 metres, the weight of fire prevented further movement forward. At this point, he identified the opportunity to exploit some cover provided by a small structure.

As he approached the structure, Roberts-Smith identified an insurgent grenadier in the throes of engaging his patrol. Roberts-Smith engaged the insurgent at point-blank range resulting in the death of the insurgent. With the members of his patrol still pinned down by the three enemy machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, which enabled them to bring fire to bear against the enemy. His actions enabled his Patrol Commander to throw a grenade and silence one of the machine guns. Seizing the advantage, and demonstrating extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry, Roberts-Smith, with a total disregard for his own safety, stormed the enemy position killing the two remaining machine gunners.

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny

On 23rd January 2011, Corporal Roberts-Smith was invested with the Victoria Cross for Australia by the Governor-General Quentin Bryce in Perth, becoming the second Australian and the second operator at the Special Air Service Regiment to receive the award. On Australia Day 2014, Corporal Roberts-Smith was awarded a Commendation for Distinguished Service as a patrol commander with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan from June to November 2012.



Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny

Ben left the Army in 2013 at the age of 35 with the rank of Corporal, and served part-time with the Army Reserve until 2015. In 2013, Roberts-Smith launched his own consultancy, RS Group Australia, where he advised numerous national clients across a variety of sectors in relation to corporate culture, strategic restructuring and change management.

In October 2013, Roberts-Smith announced that he was leaving the full-time Army. The University of Queensland (UQ) offered him a scholarship to study a Master of Business Administration (MBA), with a view to UQ setting up a program to support other elite SAS soldiers transitioning to a corporate career. When Roberts-Smith graduated in December 2016, becoming Australia's first enlisted Victoria Cross recipient to complete a degree after receiving the honour, he said "I joined the army at 18 so I hadn't gone to university for a Bachelor degree and I didn't have the base level of business knowledge because there were many things I just hadn't been exposed to."

In April 2015 (twenty months prior to graduation), Roberts-Smith was appointed deputy general manager (GM) of regional television network Seven Queensland by Seven Network GM Neil Mooney, following leadership seminars for the station. Two months later, Roberts-Smith was promoted to GM Seven Queensland.^{[59][60]} In April 2016, the role of general manager of Seven Brisbane was added to his responsibilities following the resignation of former Queensland cricketer and business executive Max Walters.

At the time, Ben had been married to Emma (nee Groom) since 1998. He and Emma had twin daughters in 2010. Sadly, Ben and Emma divorced in 2020.

In 2017, the first serious questions began to be asked about Ben's actions in Afghanistan. One cited incident was during the Battle of Chora Pass in 2006 involving the killing of an alleged Taliban spotter. The patrol report identified one single unarmed spotter, but Ben later claimed two armed insurgents had approached their position. He later stated he remembered incorrectly.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/benjamin-ben-or-rs-roberts-smith-vc-mg/>

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny



In June 2018, a joint ABC–Fairfax investigation detailed an assault on the village of Darwan in September 2012 during which a handcuffed man was allegedly kicked off a cliff by an Australian special forces soldier nicknamed "Leonidas" after the famed Spartan king. On 6 July 2018, Fairfax Media reported that Roberts-Smith was "one of a small number of soldiers subject to investigation by an inquiry looking into the actions of Australian special forces soldiers in Afghanistan". In August 2018, Fairfax Media also reported allegations by several soldiers of being bullied by Roberts-Smith, as well as a female companion's claim that she was subjected to an act of domestic violence in Australia. Roberts-Smith has denied these allegations.

In November 2018 the Australian Federal Police announced that they "received a referral to investigate allegations of war crimes committed by Australian soldiers during the Afghanistan conflict"

.The Federal Court of Australia declared in September 2020 that no charges against Roberts-Smith had been laid.^[36] In April 2021, the AFP confirmed it was also conducting a probe into allegations that Roberts-Smith had destroyed or buried evidence directly related to the ongoing investigation. In January 2019, Ben announced he had commenced defamation proceedings against Fairfax Media and three journalists, Nick McKenzie, Chris Masters, and David Wroe.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/benjamin-ben-or-rs-roberts-smith-vc-mg/>

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny

In August 2020, it was reported that legal experts had raised concerns about a personal relationship between Roberts-Smith and his defamation lawyer, saying it could constitute unprofessional conduct.

News Corp Australia published a photo of Roberts-Smith holding hands with the woman, who they reported was visiting him in his new apartment in Brisbane. The woman conceded that it was "unwise to spend time with him socially".

In the Federal Court, the Fairfax/Nine Entertainment lawyer Sandy Dawson claimed that Roberts-Smith and his wife had given inconsistent accounts about the status of their relationship during previous years.

On 1 September 2020, Dawson told the Federal Court that the Australian Federal Police have information, including an eyewitness, that allegedly implicates Roberts-Smith in Afghanistan war crimes. The defamation trial, expected to last for 10 weeks, commenced in June 2021 in Sydney.

The Federal Court has established an online file in view of the public interest where documents are placed when considered publicly accessible.

In April 2021, *The Age* published an article alleging that Roberts-Smith had attempted to cover up the alleged crimes by hiding incriminating images on a USB drive buried in his back yard, which has since been obtained by the Australian Federal Police.

A colleague of Roberts-Smith, referred to as Person 16 (identity legally protected as part of proceedings), told the court in 2022 that Roberts-Smith had shot dead an Afghan teenage prisoner, and bragged about it. Fairfax Media's defence against Roberts-Smith's suit ended in early April 2022 after calling witnesses for 11 weeks.

Ben Roberts-Smith VC

Under Scrutiny

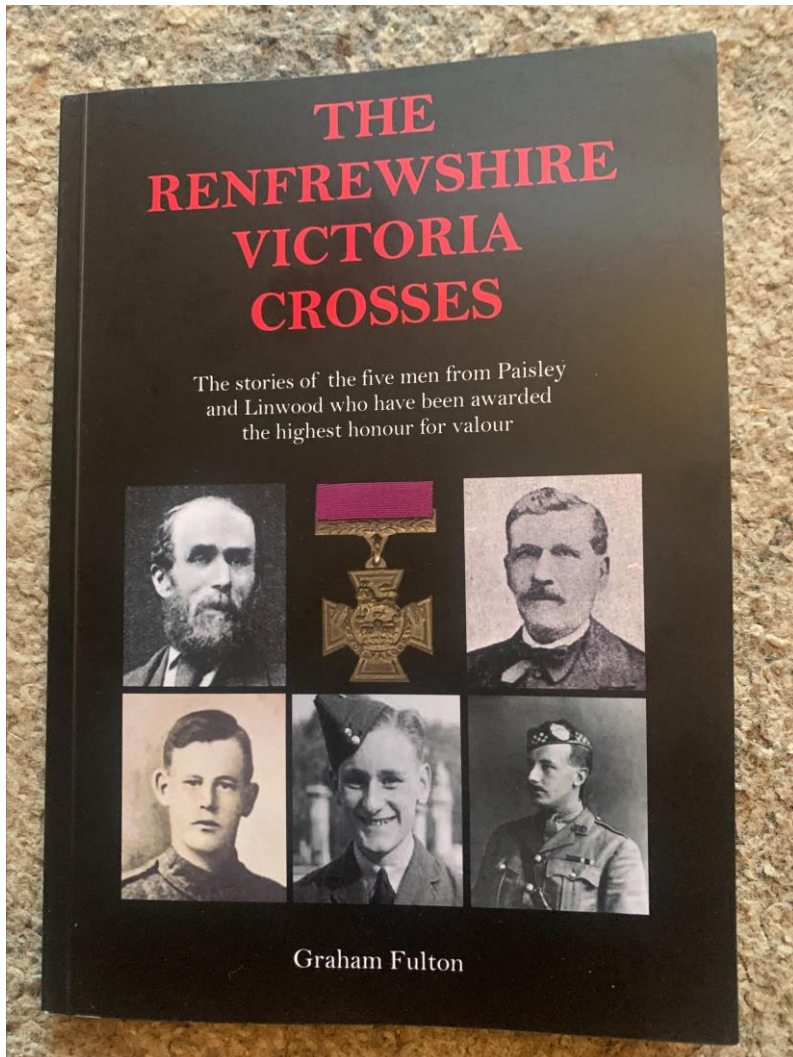
On 1 June 2023, Justice Anthony Besanko dismissed the defamation case brought by Roberts-Smith, finding that the newspapers, *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the *Canberra Times*, had established substantial or contextual truth of many of their allegations, including allegations that Roberts-Smith "broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement and is therefore a criminal", and "disgraced his country Australia and the Australian army."

Besanko's judgment is not a criminal finding of guilt, but a determination based on civil standard of the "balance of probabilities".

Besanko found that three murder allegations against Roberts-Smith had been proven. Besanko found that it was substantially true that during the Darwan mission in 2012, Roberts-Smith "murdered an unarmed and defenceless Afghan civilian, by kicking him off a cliff and procuring the soldiers under his command to shoot him"; and that during the Whiskey 108 mission in 2009, Roberts-Smith committed two murders, one murder "by pressuring a newly deployed and inexperienced SASR soldier to execute an elderly, unarmed Afghan in order to 'blood the rookie'", and the other murder Roberts-Smith committed "by machine gunning a man with a prosthetic leg"; Roberts-Smith later asked other soldiers to drink using the prosthetic leg. It was also ruled that two allegations of murder at Syahchow and Fasil in 2012 were not proven.

It is unclear at this time what the future holds for Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG. There are rumours of criminal charges following the end of the defamation case, and the legal bills are now estimated at \$AUS25 million. Opinions on the case have divided Australia and in particular the military community. Some believe that he is innocent of the charges, but many also believe he could now receive a lengthy prison sentence. What is certain is that Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG still vehemently denies all allegations of impropriety whilst serving in Afghanistan. Any further developments will of course be reported on Victoria Cross Online.

Book of the Month

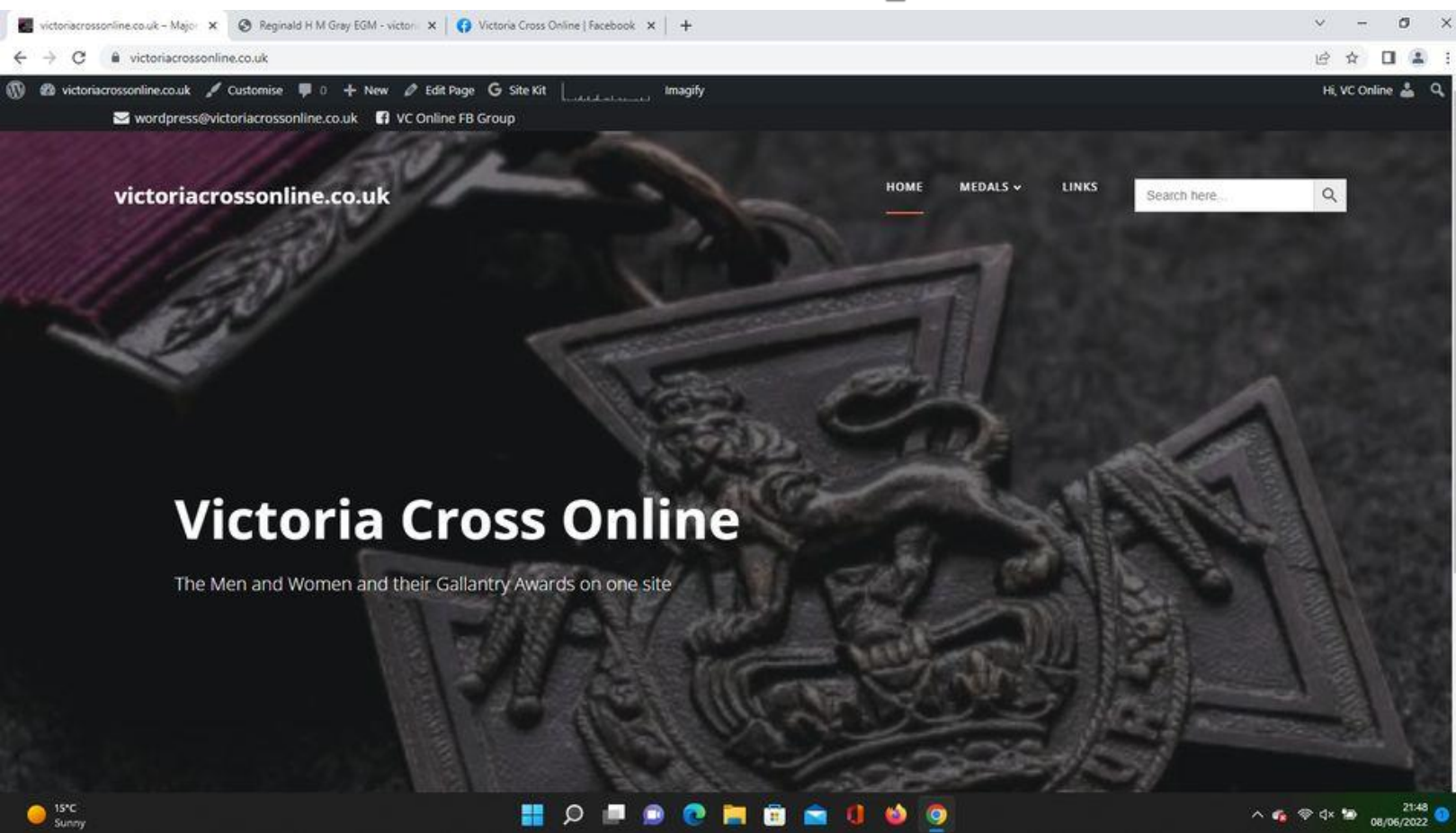


Earlier this month, I was fortunate to be made aware of a new publication “The Renfrewshire Victoria Crosses” by Graham Fulton. Graham is a published poet of 35 years’ experience who has turned his literacy abilities to writing the stories of five men from Renfrewshire in Scotland. The men covered are James McKechnie VC, Samuel Evans VC, Arthur Henderson VC MC, Hugh McIver VC and John Hannah VC, all from several different conflicts and areas of service. The book also covers two other men who have a connection to the county though not born there – John Meikle VC and John McDermond VC.

The 5 men mainly featured hail from either Paisley or Linwood, and the author had regularly used his own photographs of memorials to the men in the Renfrewshire area. He has researched each man’s story in depth using a variety of websites, primary sources and secondary texts. The book is noted for its ability to interweave global historical events such as the Crimean War, World War I or World War II with local history.

The book is an easy read, only just over 100 pages, and can be picked up and put down at a reader’s leisure. I am very fortunate to have received a signed copy thanks to the intervention of a third party, Steve Lee, from www.memorialstovalour.co.uk (a website referenced in the book). I suggest anyone interested in the book contact Steve or the publishers “Published in Silence Press” in Paisley.

Website Update



In the past month, changes have been afoot with the Victoria Cross Online website. As some readers will be aware, my previous website was vconline.org.uk which has been operational between 2014 and 2022. Unfortunately due to technical issues and a change of web hosting platform, the old website was unable to be updated / edited. As a result in February 2022, I began the process of transferring the content of the old website into a brand new website www.victoriacrossonline.co.uk – Over the course of the last year, the new website has been taking shape.

As this issue goes to press, about 85% of the content of the old site has been moved into the new site. As a result, all recipients of the Victoria Cross, George Cross, Dickin Medal, Albert Medal, Edward Medal, Empire Gallantry Medal, Cross of Valour, and New Zealand Cross are covered on the site. I am currently still working on the US Medal of Honor section and this will continue this year. If you search for any recipient on a search engine, and click on a vconline.org.uk page, it will automatically transfer you to the homepage of the new website. Thanks for all your support.