

Victoria Cross Online

ARNHEM VCs



— MARK GREEN —

Issue 30 March 2025

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the 30th edition of Victoria Cross Online Magazine.

There is no main article this month as I have little time to prepare the issue since completing the February issue. There is a brief announcement of the very exciting news of the upcoming publication of my 2nd book entitled "Arnhem VCs".

There is then of course, the next three instalments in my current series of pieces on the Royal Marine recipients of the Victoria Cross. It will cover the stories of Frederick Lumsden VC DSO and Three Bars, Edward Bamford VC and Norman Finch VC.

There is then the news of the recent sale of the Charles Cowley Victoria Cross medal, sold at Noonans in London on 11th March.

Finally there is the story of the remarkable decision of the Imperial War Museum to end their association with Lord Ashcroft, meaning the future of the Ashcroft Collection of well over 200 Victoria Crosses, and also George Crosses is unclear.



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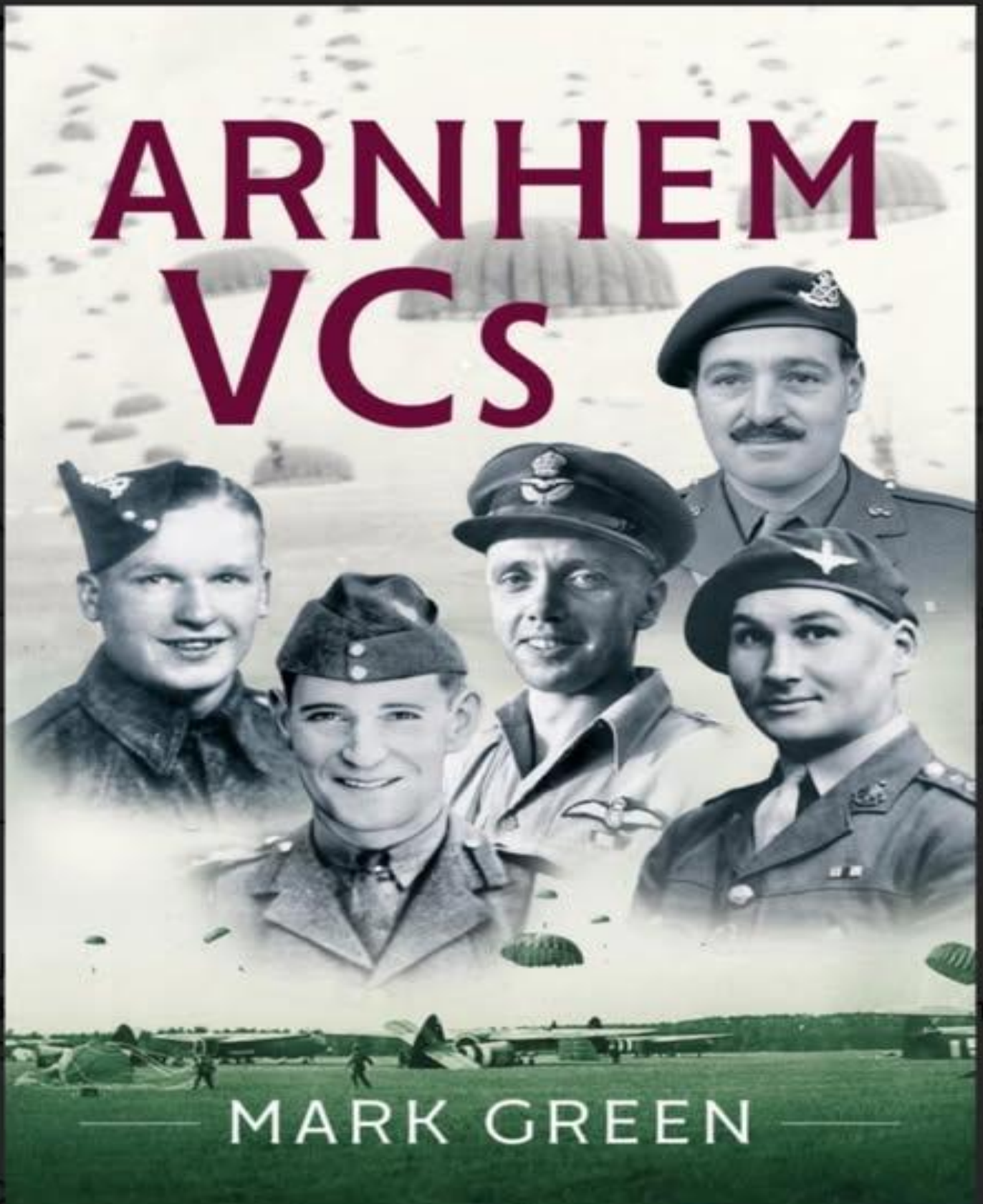
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Arnhem VCs Book



Arnhem VCs Book

In the coming weeks following the publication of this issue of Victoria Cross Online magazine, my second book will hopefully be published by Barnthorn Publishing. After last year's release of my debut book entitled "Stan Hollis: The Man They Couldn't Kill", I was inspired to find another project to get my teeth into. I was fortunate that I managed to sell a few copies of the book which gave me the confidence to write again.

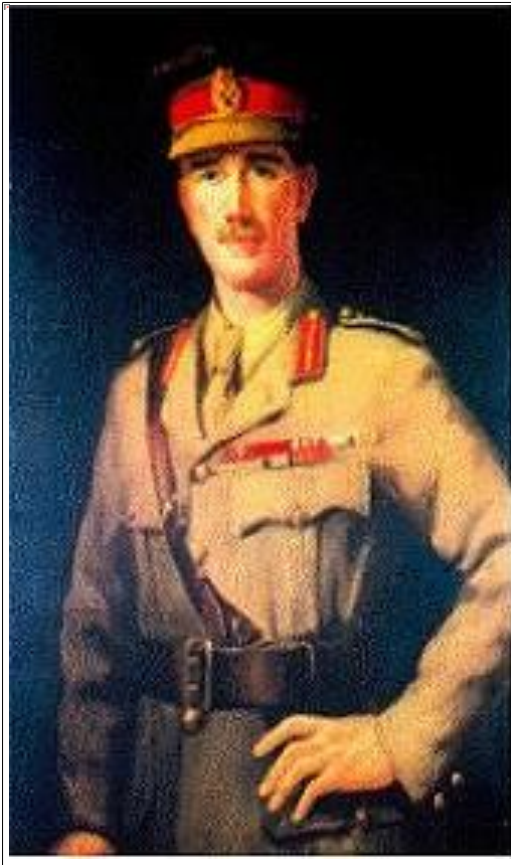
For a topic for my next work, I have been always fascinated by the Battle of Arnhem or Operation Market Garden. Having watched the film "A Bridge Too Far" many times, and through my research into the recipients of the Victoria Cross I realised no book has been published before which contains the stories of the five men awarded the VC in that battle.

When I was researching the book, only one of the five men (David Lord VC) had a previous biography written about him, and the other four men had not. The idea was then born to write "Arnhem VCs". I pitched the idea to Neil Thornton and Ashley Barnett of Barnthorn, who as always, have been incredibly supportive of the project. I was also fortunate that Neil has written about Arnhem himself when compiling his excellent biography of Major Digby Tatham Warter VC DSO, who was close at hand to one of the five Victoria Cross actions, that of Jack Hollington Grayburn VC.

I will release exact details of how to obtain the book via my website, on my Facebook VCO group, and via Barnthorn. It will be available to buy on Amazon, Barnthorn or via my website.

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC



Frederick William Lumsden (1872-1918) was born at Fyzabad, India on 14th December 1872. His father was John James Foote Lumsden MA, born in Aberdeen. His father was part of the Indian Civil Service and held numerous appointments in various Districts as a magistrate and commissioner. Frederick's mother was Margaret "Marguerite" Lowther nee Whyte, born in Meerut, India, and married John on 9th May 1863 at Agra.

Frederick had five siblings, with all four brothers being born in Gorakhpur, India.

Frederick was educated at The Gym, Old Aberdeen and Bristol Grammar School from 1886-1888. He then trained at the Royal Military College Sandhurst from 1888-1890 and was commissioned on 1st September 1890. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 1st September 1891. He acquired numerous qualifications in gunnery, torpedo, musketry, signalling, equitation and military law at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, HMS Excellent and in Army schools.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/frederick-william-lumsden-vc-cb-dso/>

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC

Frederick married in December 1894 to Mary Ellen Augusta Harward at Portsea, Hampshire. They had a daughter, May Sunbeam Violet Lumsden, born in 1895. On 17th December 1894 he embarked on the battleship HMS Nile and served in the Mediterranean and Malta. He joined the Ascension Island garrison on 20th January 1896 on the strength of HMS Penelope. He was promoted to Captain in June 1897 and served on HMS Resolution and HMS Formidable.

Frederick joined the Freemasons, initiated in the Navy Lodge on 17th May 1907. He was then a student at the Staff College, Camberley in 1908 and spent six months in Germany in 1909-1910, gaining a 1st Class Interpreter Certificate. From June 1910 he was GSO2 Straits Settlement Command Singapore until April 1914. He returned to Britain on 3rd June and served on HMS Illustrious, before commanding No 1 Howitzer in the Howitzer Brigade RMA and took it to France on 15th February 1915. On 19th April, he took command of the four guns of the Howitzer Brigade RMA. He was then appointed GSO3 HQ First Army on 27th July, Brigade Major 21st November and Staff Officer with Canadian Corps Troops on 27th November. He was awarded the DSO for his outstanding service and devotion to duty on 1st January 1917.

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC

On 3rd-4th April 1917 at Francilly, six enemy field guns having been captured, it was necessary to leave them in dug-in positions, 300 yards in advance of the position held by our troops. The enemy kept the captured guns under heavy fire. Maj. Lumsden undertook the duty of bringing the guns into our lines. In order to effect this, he personally led four artillery teams and a party of infantry through the hostile barrage. As one of these teams sustained casualties, he left the remaining teams in a covered position, and, through very heavy rifle, machine gun and shrapnel fire, led the infantry to the guns. By force of example and inspiring energy he succeeded in sending back two teams with guns, going through the barrage with the teams of the third gun. He then returned to the guns to await further teams, and these he succeeded in attaching to two of the three remaining guns, despite rifle fire, which had become intense at short range, and removed the guns to safety. By this time the enemy, in considerable strength, had driven through the infantry covering points, and blown up the breach of the remaining gun. Maj. Lumsden then returned, drove off the enemy, attached the gun to a team and got it away.

He was gazetted for the VC on 8th June 1917, and was appointed to command 17th Highland Light Infantry, in order to qualify for command of a brigade. He was then awarded a Bar to his DSO for his actions near Fayet, France on 9th April 1917; he made a reconnaissance of an enemy position, moving over open ground under heavy fire, bringing back valuable information. He was awarded a second Bar to his DSO for his actions a day later, when he was in charge of a large reconnaissance party, he carried out the task allotted with conspicuous success, skilfully withdrawing the party at a critical time.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/frederick-william-lumsden-vc-cb-dso>

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC



Frederick W. Lumsden.

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC

Maj. Frederick William Lumsden, D.S.O.,
R.M.A.

For most conspicuous bravery, determination and devotion to duty.

Six enemy field guns having been captured, it was necessary to leave them in dug-in positions, 300 yards in advance of the position held by our troops. The enemy kept the captured guns under heavy fire.

Maj. Lumsden undertook the duty of bringing the guns into our lines.

In order to effect this, he personally led four artillery teams and a party of infantry through the hostile barrage. As one of these teams sustained casualties, he left the remaining teams in a covered position, and, through very heavy rifle, machine gun and shrapnel fire, led the infantry to the guns. By force of example and inspiring energy he succeeded in sending back two teams with guns, going through the barrage with the teams of the third gun. He then returned to the guns to await further teams, and these he succeeded in attaching to two of the three remaining guns, despite rifle fire, which had

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Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC

Frederick was presented with his VC and DSO with Two Bars by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 21st July 1917. He was wounded on 2nd August and on the 30th August. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 25th October 1917. He was then awarded a 3rd Bar to his DSO for his actions on 2nd December 1917 around Volt Farm, Mallet Copse and Double Copse near Ypres during a large raid in which part of his Brigade formed the left flank in support of 97th Brigade; he led an assault on a group of seven pillboxes and conducted valuable reconnaissance.

He was appointed Companion of Bath on 3rd June 1918, and was Mentioned in Despatches eight times. He was also awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre on 14th September 1918. Sadly, Frederick did not survive the war. He was made temporary GOC of 32nd Division on 6th May 1918. On 4th June 1918 he was in the Brigade's trenches at Blairville, near Arras when an enemy attack was imminent. Having moved into an exposed position to evaluate the situation, he was hit and killed by a sniper. He was buried in Berles New Military Cemetery. The Brigade was then taken over by a fellow VC, Lewis Pugh Evans.

In addition to his VC and DSO with Three Bars, he was awarded the Companion of the Order of the Bath, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19 with Mentioned in Despatches oakleaf and Belgian Croix de Guerre. The VC group was purchased by the Royal Marines Museum in April 1973, where it is held.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/frederick-william-lumsden-vc-cb-dso>

Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC



Royal Marines VCs

7. Frederick Lumsden VC



Medal Group when on display at the now closed Royal Marines Museum, Southsea (courtesy of Thomas Stewart)

Royal Marines VCs

8. Edward Bamford VC



Edward Bamford (1887-1928) was born at 34 Langdon Park Road, Highgate, London, on 28th May 1887, the second of three sons to the Reverend Robert and Blanche Edith Bamford, of Elmtree, St Marychurch, Torquay, Devon. Educated at Sherborne School and Malvern House in Kearnsey, near Dover, he entered the Royal Marines on 1st September 1905 as Second Lieutenant and attended the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, before joining the Portsmouth Division, Royal Marine Light Infantry, on 1st July 1907. A noted student, he shared in the award of the King George Prize Scholarship and was promoted to Lieutenant on 1st July 1906. It would be 10 years before his next promotion, during which time his appointment were mostly sea-going posts in either the Home or Grand Fleets.

His first ship was HMS Bulwark of the Channel Squadron, which he joined on 5th December 1908. Having passed a course in physical training, he later moved to HMS Magnificent on 18th March 1910, before joining HMS Britannia, after a few months on shore duty, on 5th September 1911.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-bamford-vc-dso/>

Royal Marines VCs

8. Edward Bamford VC

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-bamford-vc-dso/>

He served on Britannia until November 1915, and was aboard when she ran aground near Inch Keith, on her way to support Beatty's battlecruisers in the action fought off the Dogger Bank the previous January. Returning to the Portsmouth Division, he attended a musketry course at Hythe in January 1916, gaining a first class certificate and was posted to the Western Front, on brief attachment to the Guards Brigade, then manning the lines in the Ypres Salient.

He was then posted back to sea, and was promoted to Temporary Captain on 2nd May 1916, and appointed to the newly commissioned light cruiser HMS Chester, as officer commanding the Royal Marine contingent. He was then involved in the Chester's narrow escape at the Battle of Jutland. He commanded two guns manned by his marines. Wounded and slightly burned about the face when his after control station was blown to pieces by a shell burst. He later helped extinguish a cordite fire, and he was awarded the DSO (LG, 15th September 1916) and the Order of St Anne, 3rd Class (with Swords), which was awarded by the Russian Government.



Sherborne School Victoria Cross
Memorial (courtesy of
www.memorialstovalour.co.uk

Royal Marines VCs

8. Edward Bamford VC

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-bamford-vc-dso/>

Bamford's injuries healed quickly and he returned to the Chester, and was promoted to Captain on 1st September. He remained with the Chester until February 1918, when he was appointed to command a company of the specially formed 4th Royal Marines for the duration of the Zeebrugge operations. On 22nd/23rd April 1918 at Zeebrugge, Belgium, Captain Bamford landed on the Mole from HMS Vindictive with three platoons of the Royal Marines storming force in the face of great difficulties. When on the Mole and under heavy fire, he commanded his company with total disregard of personal danger and he showed a magnificent example to his men. He first established a strong point on the right of the disembarkation and when satisfied that it was safe, led an assault on the battery to the left. When they returned to Deal, the survivors were paraded and instructed to elect a representative to receive the VC. Bamford was chosen.

Captain Edward Bamford, D.S.O.,
R.M.L.I.

For most conspicuous gallantry.

This officer landed on the mole from "Vindictive" with numbers 5, 7 and 8 platoons of the marine storming force, in the face of great difficulties. When on the mole and under heavy fire, he displayed the greatest initiative in the command of his company, and by his total disregard of danger showed a magnificent example to his men. He first established a strong point on the right of the disembarkation, and, when satisfied that that was safe, led an assault on a battery to the left with the utmost coolness and valour.

Captain Bamford was selected by the officers of the R.M.A. and R.M.L.I. detachments to receive the Victoria Cross under Rule 13 of the Royal Warrant, dated the 29th January, 1856.

Royal Marines VCs

8. Edward Bamford VC

His award was gazetted on 23rd July 1918, and it was presented to him 8 days later at Buckingham Palace by King George V with the other 5 Zeebrugge VCs. His gallantry was also marked by promotion to Brevet Major and the award of the French Legion of Honour. He then served on HMS Royal Sovereign until March 1919. He then joined HMS Highflyer bound for the East Indies. He returned to the Division in May 1921 where he spent three months at the Deal Depot. He was attached to the entourage of the Crown Prince of Japan, and was awarded the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun.

In September 1924, he set off on his last sea-going appointment on HMS Curacao, operating in the Atlantic. Two years later, after a short spell with the Plymouth Division, he set off for the Far East to take up an appointment as small arms instructor in Hong Kong. He was promoted Major on 1st March 1928, but in September, during a stay at Wei Hai Wei, China, he contracted a mystery illness. In urgent need of a hospital, he was taken on HMS Cumberland on 28th September, bound for Hong Kong. Sadly, on the 30th September 1928, 10 miles from Shanghai, Bamford passed away.

Bamford was originally thought to be buried in Bubbling Well Road (English) Cemetery, Shanghai. It has now been recently discovered that he was in fact buried in Hungjao Cemetery in Shanghai. His medals are held by the Royal Marines Museum, Southsea, Hampshire.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-bamford-vc-dso/>

Royal Marines VCs

8. Edward Bamford VC



Image of the Bamford VC DSO medal group at the now closed
Royal Marines Museum, Southsea
(Thomas Stewart)

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-bamford-vc-dso/>

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



Norman Augustus Finch (1890-1966) was born at 42 Nineveh Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, on Boxing Day 1890, the son of John Finch, a postman, and his wife Emma Amelia. He attended Benson Road Board School and Norton Street Council School and worked as a tool machinist for the Birmingham firm H.W. Ward & Co, before joining the Royal Marine Artillery on 15th January 1908. He was described on his papers as standing 5ft 11, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion.

Finch, who later forfeited 346 days' service towards his engagement and pension for being under age, trained at Eastney and embarked in the cruiser *Diadem*, his first ship, on 17th June 1909. The following year he left the Home Fleet and, as gunner second class, joined HMS *Minotaur* for a two-year stint on the China Station. A short time at Eastney separated spells in the Portsmouth training cruiser HMS *Spartiate* and the Chatham cruiser HMS *Antrim*, which he joined on 3rd December 1912.

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/norman-augustus-finch-vc-msm/>

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC

He served on Antrim for three years, being promoted to Bombardier (1913) and Corporal (1915), before returning once more to Eastney on 19th August 1916. During this time Antrim operated out of Rosyth with the Third Cruiser Squadron as Rear-Admiral William Pakenham's flagship. Antrim had narrowly evaded a U-Boat attack on 9th October 1914, and a report, subsequently published in the Birmingham Mail, stated that Finch had been given a shore job after "his nerves gave way".

He quickly found a niche as a trainer. Promoted Sergeant on 15th March 1917, he became a Temporary Instructor for gunnery at sea in November. Finch went back to sea in the battlecruiser Inflexible, part of the Grand Fleet, in the following January, but shortly afterwards was recalled as preparations began for the raid on Zeebrugge.

On 22nd/23rd April 1918 at Zeebrugge, Belgium, Sergeant Finch was second in command of the pom-poms and Lewis gun in the foretop of HMS Vindictive. At one period Vindictive was being hit every few seconds, but Sergeant Finch and the officer in command kept up a continuous fire, until two heavy shells made direct hits on the foretop killing or disabling everyone except Sergeant Finch who was, however, severely wounded. Nevertheless, he remained in his battered and exposed position, harassing the enemy on the Mole until the foretop received another direct hit, putting the remainder of the armament completely out of action.

Finch was still recovering in hospital from shrapnel wounds to his right hand and right leg when he learned that he had been chosen to receive the VC. Officially it was stated that he was elected for the honour by non-commissioned officers and other ranks of the 4th Royal Marines. No one was more surprised than Finch himself. "Seems to me if one has the VC, the whole lot ought to have it."

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



After his investiture at Buckingham Palace on 31st July 1918, Finch returned to Eastney Barracks in style, with a band leading the way and his flag-bedecked car being drawn by a party of marines to the parade ground, where, amid loud cheering, he was received by the Commandant, RMA.

He married Elizabeth Jane Ross on 3rd April 1919 in Birmingham, and five days later took up a new appointment as Instructor of Coast Defence Gunnery. The following August, Finch, who had been paid a war gratuity of £32 with £14 from the Naval Prize fund, was promoted Colour Sergeant. He signed on for a further engagement on 8th January 1921, and in July joined the 10th Royal Marines Battalion, his service with this unit being broken by two months in HMS Crescent. In September 1922 he went to the 11th Battalion which, with the Corps' other Zeebrugge VC, Edward Bamford, among its officers, was deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean for a year.

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC

On 27th January 1924 Finch received a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Promoted to Barrack Quartermaster Sergeant on 23rd December 1925, he eventually retired in 1929 on his 39th birthday with three good conduct badges to his name and a recommendation for the Meritorious Service Medal, which he duly received.

Settling in Southsea with his wife and son, who later served in the RAF, Finch became a postman and then, a bank messenger in Portsmouth's North End. On New Year's Day 1931 he was made a Yeoman of the Guard. Mobilised briefly during the Munich Crisis of 1938, he returned to his old job as Quartermaster Sergeant in the Portsmouth Division in October 1939. He served in Corps home establishments throughout the war, being promoted Temporary Lieutenant (Quartermaster) on 25th February 1943. Released from service in August 1945, he returned to his job as a bank messenger and ceremonial duties with HM Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard, in which he became only the second marine to hold the rank of divisional Sergeant Major. His last award was the Royal Victorian Medal (silver) which he added to his 1935 Jubilee Medal and 1937 and 1953 Coronation Medals.

Following his wife's death from cancer, Finch, now in his 60s, moved to a small flat. He lived there alone until, after suffering a heart attack, he was persuaded to move in with a friend, another ex-marine, and his family. Finch spent the last two years of his life with the Shaws, whose children nicknamed him "Flump". Norman Finch died in St Mary's Hospital, Milton, Portsmouth, on 15th March 1966 and was cremated at Portchester Crematorium six days later. His impressive collection of medals were bequeathed to the Corps he had served so faithfully. They are still displayed at the Royal Marines Museum, Southsea, Hampshire.

Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



Royal Marines VCs

9. Norman Finch VC



Medal Group when on display at the now closed Royal Marines Museum, Southsea (courtesy of Thomas Stewart)

Cowley VC Sale



On 11th March 2025 at Noonan's Auctioneers in Mayfair, London, the posthumous Victoria Cross awarded to Charles Henry Cowley was auctioned. The medal had a pre-auction estimate of between £180,000 - £220,000. The hammer price realised was £200,000. The buyer's identity is yet to be revealed.

Ashcroft Gallery to Close



The Imperial War Museum in London has announced the permanent closure of the Lord Ashcroft Gallery, which houses around 200 Victoria Crosses and George Crosses.

On June 1 2025, the gallery will close, with the medals placed in storage while the museum undergoes redevelopment.

Lord Ashcroft, whose £5m donation helped open the gallery in 2010, expressed disappointment over the decision, urging visitors to see the collection before it closes.

He posted on X: "Sad for me. I've got this from the Imperial War Museums closing the Lord Ashcroft Gallery displaying around 200 VCs representing the finest deeds of servicemen in the UK's history.

"Sadly into storage for the time being and my £5m cost to open lost. Please visit before closing..."

Ashcroft Gallery to Close

The IWM says the closure is part of a wider effort to update its galleries and better represent conflicts beyond the World Wars.

Since 1968, the museum has displayed Victoria Crosses and George Crosses, and it remains committed to showcasing stories of bravery and sacrifice.

"We plan for VC and GC medals from the Imperial War Museum's collection to continue to be displayed across our UK branches, integrated within galleries that tell the full story of the conflict in which these acts of bravery occurred," the museum stated.

The IWM is working on new gallery spaces on its upper floors to expand coverage of more recent conflicts, including the Cold War, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Lord Ashcroft Gallery has been a key feature of the museum since it opened, with its collection including some of the most famous gallantry medals in British military history.

While some medals will return in future exhibits, the full Lord Ashcroft collection will no longer be on display in one dedicated space.

The museum has thanked Lord Ashcroft and other private lenders for making the collection accessible for the past 15 years.

However, the decision marks the end of a standalone gallery dedicated solely to gallantry medals, shifting focus to broader narratives of war and conflict. Visitors have until 1 June 2025 to see the gallery before it closes permanently.