

AUSTRALIAN

Victoria Cross Online

Instituted on 14 February 1975 by Her Majesty, The Queen of Australia.



**VICTORIA CROSS
FOR AUSTRALIA
(VC)**

Awarded for the most conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy. There are awarded for battle acts.



**CROSS OF VALOUR
(CV)**

Awarded for acts of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme peril. There are awarded for further acts.



**COMPANION OF THE
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
(AC)**

GENERAL DESIGN
Appointment is made for eminent achievement and merit of the highest degree.
MILITARY DESIGN
Appointment is made for eminent service in duties of great responsibility.



**OFFICER OF THE
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
(AO)**

GENERAL DESIGN
Appointment is made for distinguished service of a high degree.
MILITARY DESIGN
Appointment is made for distinguished service in responsible positions.



**STAR OF GALLANTRY
(SG)**

Awarded for acts of great heroism in action, in circumstances of great peril.



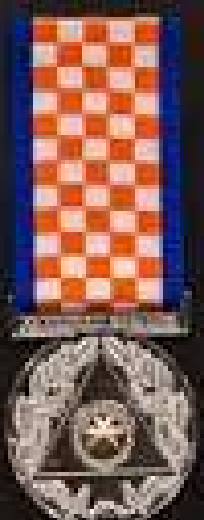
**AUSTRALIAN
FIRE SERVICE MEDAL
(AFSM)**

Awarded to members of the fire services of Australia for distinguished service.



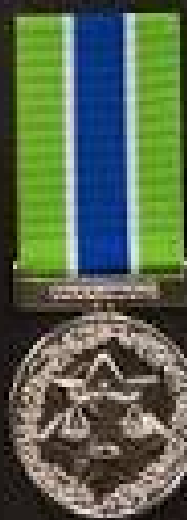
**AMBULANCE
SERVICE MEDAL
(ASM)**

Awarded to members of the ambulance services of Australia for distinguished service.



**EMERGENCY
SERVICES MEDAL
(ESM)**

Awarded to members of the emergency services of Australia for distinguished service.



**AUSTRALIAN
CORRECTIONS MEDAL
(ACM)**

Awarded to members of the Australian states of territory police corrections services for adults.



**AUSTRALIAN
INTELLIGENCE MEDAL
(AIM)**

Awarded to distinguished members of the intelligence community of the Australian states of territory police corrections services for adults.

Issue 46 August 2026

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the ^{46th} edition of Victoria Cross Online Magazine.

This month's edition sees the welcome return of Australian historian Anthony Staunton, who has previously provided some excellent pieces for this magazine, and this month is no exception. His article discusses the recent issues with the Australian Honours System and the award / non award of different decorations. I would also like to pass on condolences to Anthony on the loss of his beloved wife, Anna who passed away this month just prior to publication.

There is also the next two entries in my series on the RAF Victoria Cross recipients, with this month's features being on Hughie Edwards VC and Arthur Scarf VC.

There is also links to two podcasts I will have completed this month on two of my books. One was completed with John James from "The Briefing Room" and the other with the Royal Engineers Historical Society.

News also of the medal group of Joshua Leakey VC moving to the National Army Museum, and also of the donation of the medal group of Garth Neville Walford VC.



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Administering Courage: Failures in Australia's Gallantry and Bravery Honours

by Anthony Staunton

In honour of Anna Staunton, my greatest fan, my greatest assistant, and my greatest supporter who died suddenly on Wednesday 12 August 2026.

In August 2025, it was reported that an independent review of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, provided to the Government in November 2024, had identified serious deficiencies in staffing, performance, information technology and communications.

The review examined the Australian Honours and Awards system and drew particular attention to the large and growing backlog in processing Order of Australia nominations. Although the review did not expressly address the decline in the number of Australian Bravery Decorations over the past five years, it is reasonable to ask whether similar administrative weaknesses may also have contributed to that contraction.

In February 1975, Prime Minister Whitlam announced the establishment of Australian honours, including the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations and the National Medal. The Australian Bravery Decorations comprise three decorations—the Cross of Valour, the Star of Courage and the Bravery Medal—as well as the Commendation for Brave Conduct. There is also a Group Bravery Citation, which recognises a collective act of bravery.

The Cross of Valour has been awarded only twice this century, both in 2003 for acts associated with the Bali bombings the previous year. The first three awards were for incidents in Australia between 1988 and 1996, now three decades ago. In more than 50 years, the decoration has been awarded only five times.

From 1976 to 2021, at least one Star of Courage was awarded in every financial year, with the highest number in a twelve-month period—twelve—granted in 2018–19. Over that period, the award averaged four recipients per year. No Star of Courage has been awarded since March 2021.

The third decoration, the Bravery Medal, has been awarded 1,587 times, including three second awards. Across the fifty years from 1976 to 2026, an average of about 32 Bravery Medals were awarded each year. In the last five financial years, however, that figure has fallen to 16 awards per year, and across the last three years it has dropped further to 12 per year.

In 2025, the Governor-General's website was updated to state that “the Australian Bravery Decorations Honours List is released annually on National Wattle Day (1 September). Additional announcements may be made at other times as required.” This marks a departure from fifty years of established practice, during which two Australian Bravery Decorations Honours Lists were typically published each year, in March and August, and suggests a notable change in the administration of these honours.

Evolution of Australian awards

In 1918, the ALP Triennial Conference held in Perth adopted what might be described as a nationalistic agenda, a position later reaffirmed at the 2021 Triennial Conference in Brisbane. Most ALP federal and state governments, with a few exceptions, boycotted the New Year and King's or Queen's Birthday honours. The principal exceptions were wartime awards for active service by federal ALP governments and civilian bravery awards recommended by both federal and state governments.

Administration of the Australian honours system was centralised in Canberra, excluding politicians from the process and leaving the states with presentation ceremonies only. This appears to have narrowed media coverage to investitures and a few specific issues, such as “no gongs for diggers”, the Long Tan awards, and the Victoria Cross for Australia awarded to Teddy Sheean. Until last August, there was little discussion of the growing backlog in processing Order of Australia nominations, and none about the decline in Australian Bravery Decorations.

After the Fraser Government was elected in December 1975, British awards for meritorious service were restored, while the Order of Australia remained in place. Although the Fraser Government did not recommend British non-combat awards, Liberal and National state governments continued to do so.

In 1983, the new Hawke Government ceased federal government recommendations for British honours. Following the 1990 British New Year Honours, in which there was no supplement listing awards to Australia, Queen Elizabeth II signalled her view that Australia should in future rely on the Australian honours system. After consultation with political parties and the states, Prime Minister Keating announced on 5 October 1992 that Australia would henceforth recommend only Australian honours. Future UK awards to Australians would be treated as foreign awards.



Howard and Rudd governments

The Howard Government was elected in 1996 with a policy of reviewing Vietnam awards. Although the process became known as the Vietnam End of War List, the review focused on approximately eighty recommendations approved at the highest Australian command level in Vietnam but downgraded in Canberra. Because the review of the Vietnam End of War list took place after 1992, it resulted in recommendations for Australian rather than British awards. An Interdepartmental Committee considered the matter on 11 November 1997 and recommended medals for officers and commendations for other ranks.

The story broke in the media, the headlines declared “No gongs for diggers”. Former senior public servant Noel Tanzer later conducted an inquiry, which resulted in six soldiers finally receiving gallantry medals for Vietnam. The inquiry also revealed that nearly four times as many members of the Australian Army served in Vietnam as served in Korea, yet Vietnam service resulted in only three times as many awards.

Other unresolved Vietnam War medal issues remained in the background, particularly those concerning awards for Long Tan. For the 40th anniversary of the battle in 2006, the Howard Government invited Vietnam veterans who had been at Long Tan, or who had been in support on the day of the battle, to a commemoration at Parliament House. Prime Minister Howard spoke with Harry Smith, who as a major had commanded D Company, 6RAR, during the battle. Further investigation into awards for Long Tan was undertaken and continued under the Rudd Government after it came to power in 2007.

On 23 July 2008, the Rudd Government created a non-statutory administrative body to examine Defence medal issues. On 5 January 2011, under the Gillard Government, that body became the independent statutory Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT).

The non duplication or double medalling issue

In 2020, Teddy Sheean was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia. The award generated considerable publicity, but when I later downloaded the Commonwealth Gazette notice, I was surprised to read that the Mention in Despatches (MID) awarded by the King in 1943 had been cancelled. I later checked the London Gazette which had a similar cancellation notice.



The MID cancellation was surprising because Teddy Sheean was the twenty-second recipient of a late award who had previously received the MID. In most of the other cases, the MID had been awarded for the same action that, many years later, led to an Australian decoration. Why, then, was the MID of a deceased sailor cancelled when there was no published policy or protocol supporting such a step?

I have asked Defence for documentation, but I have received neither a copy of any relevant British protocol nor an explanation of why such a British protocol would apply, given that British practice concerns the upgrade of one British award to a higher British award. In the seven British cases in which Distinguished Service Orders and Distinguished Conduct Medals were upgraded or corrected to the Victoria Cross, the cancellation occurred within a period ranging from one month to eighteen months.

The King's Speech 1920

Comments about the Victoria Cross for Australia and the Medal for Gallantry awarded to Ben Roberts-Smith suggest public unawareness of King George V's view on the forfeiture of gallantry awards. Canadian soldier

Filip Konowal VC was charged with murder in 1919 and was still awaiting trial when the King's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, wrote on 26 July 1920: "The King feels so strongly that, no matter the crime committed by anyone on whom the VC has been conferred, the decoration should not be forfeited. Even were a VC to be sentenced to be hanged for murder, he should be allowed to wear the VC on the scaffold."

In 1991, former Queensland Police Commissioner Terence Lewis was jailed for corruption and was stripped of his Knight Bachelor, Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and Queen's Police Medal for Merit. He retained the George Medal, which had been awarded for gallantry, and the National Medal, which had been awarded for service. The cancellations are recorded in the Queensland Government Gazette.

Filip Konowal VC

The King's statement is known in military history circles, but the name of the soldier involved was not publicly identified until 2017, with the publication of *A Canadian Hero: Corporal Filip Konowal, VC and the Battle of Hill 70* by Lubomyr Y. Luciuk. Filip Konowal, who was born in Ukraine, was awarded the Victoria Cross on the Western Front in 1917. On 19 July 1919, Konowal went to the aid of a friend who was being viciously beaten by a knife-armed Austrian, seized the weapon, and killed the man. Konowal waited for the police and reportedly said, "I've killed fifty-two of them; that makes the fifty-third."

The trial was held in 1921, with medical experts agreeing that Konowal was mentally unstable because of war-related head injuries. Found not guilty by reason of insanity, he was institutionalised for seven years. When released in 1928, after his condition had improved, he found work as a caretaker at the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King noticed the Victoria Cross ribbon and arranged for Konowal to be reassigned to a permanent position in his personal office.



Conclusion

In 1998, the Australian Order of Wear was applied to determine the appropriate Australian honours to substitute for the British awards originally recommended during the Vietnam War. This approach failed to account for a critical feature of the British honours system as it existed before 1993: separate gallantry awards for officers and other ranks, with officer awards placed higher in the Order of Wear. Although both officers and enlisted personnel were eligible for Australian gallantry decorations, the methodology adopted disadvantaged soldiers and produced the "No gongs for diggers" reaction. The Tanzer Report corrected an injustice that should never have arisen.

Australia runs its own honours system and sets its own rules, but those rules should be transparent and open to public scrutiny. Since 1998, there have been more than two dozen cases in which a recipient of a British MID also later received an Australian decoration. Yet the first cancellation of an MID did not occur until twenty-two years later—and it concerned the MID of a deceased sailor. Cancelling an award issued under a different honours system more than seventy-seven years after the fact is extraordinary. More extraordinary still is that the MID is not a medal at all, but an emblem worn on a campaign ribbon, and yet it appears to have been cancelled under Australia's unwritten double medalling policy.

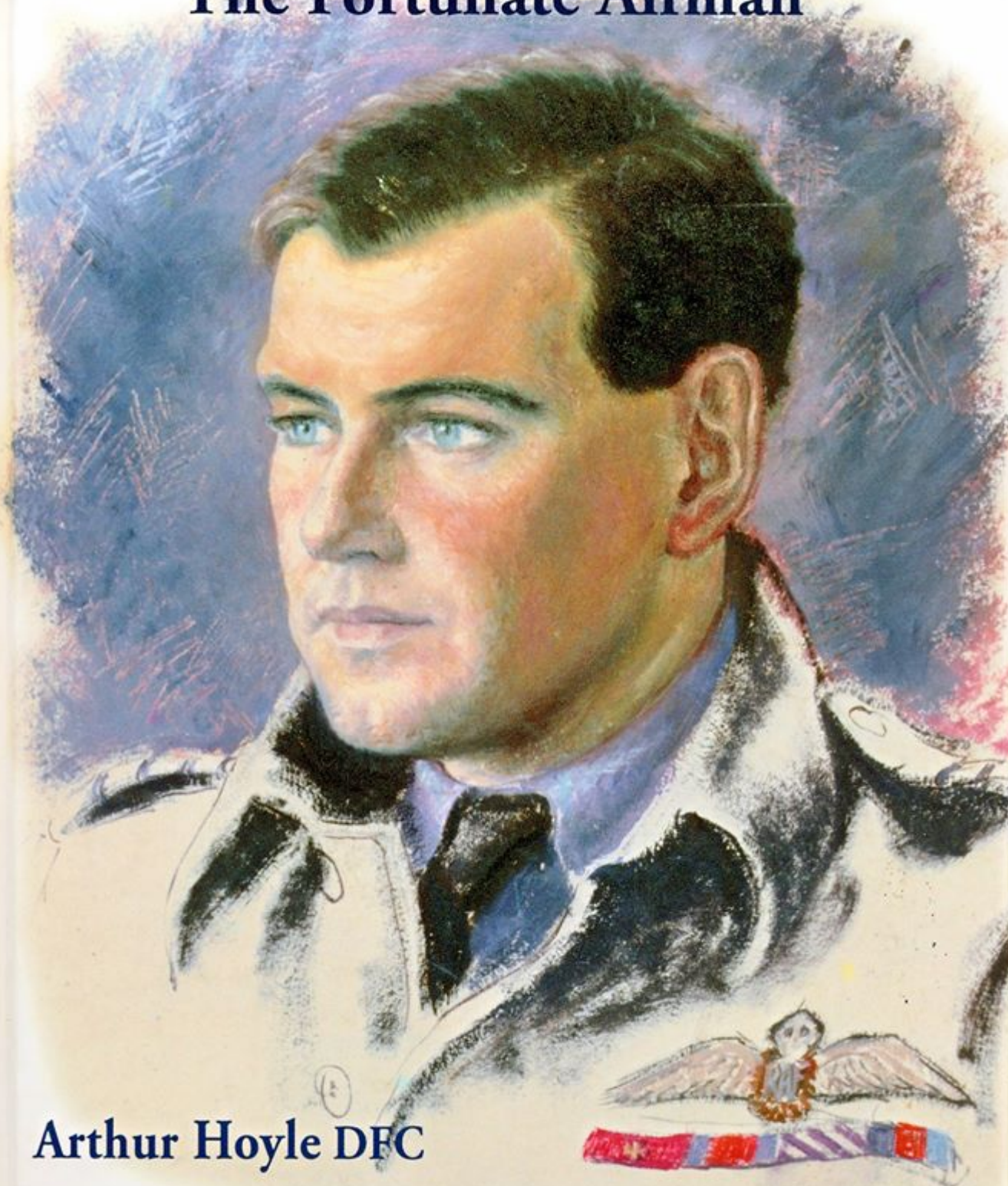
In the seventy-five years of Australian division on the issue of honours, one point of agreement remained: wartime honours. That consensus encompassed the eleven Victoria Crosses recommended by the Curtin and Chifley governments, as well as non-combat honours recommended by both federal and state governments of differing political persuasions. The Fraser Government operated a dual system, but it did not submit British gallantry recommendations. However, in the last five years the number of Australian Bravery Decorations have been seriously reduced and from last September are being only awarded once a year.

RAF VCs

Hughie Edwards VC

HUGHIE EDWARDS V.C.

The Fortunate Airman



Arthur Hoyle DFC

Sir Hughie Idwal Edwards (1914-1982) was born on 1st August 1914 at Fremantle, Western Australia, third of five surviving children of Welsh-born parents Hugh Edwards, farrier, and his wife Jane Ann, née Watkins. Called Idwal by his family, he was to be known as Eddie in the Royal Air Force and Hughie to his Australian aircrews. He attended White Gum Valley State School and Fremantle Boys' School, which he had to leave, reluctantly, after gaining his Junior certificate because the family finances could no longer support him.

After working in a shipping agent's office, a racing stable and a factory, Edwards enlisted in the Permanent Military Forces in March 1934 and served with the 6th Heavy Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, which manned the defences of Fremantle. Six ft 1½ ins (187 cm) tall and about 12 stone (76 kg) in weight, he played Australian Rules football for South Fremantle and cricket for the Fremantle garrison team. His stay in the army was brief as, much to his surprise, he was accepted as a cadet in the Royal Australian Air Force on 15th July 1935 and sent to No.1 Flying Training School, Point Cook, Victoria. He was not a natural pilot but on graduation was rated as 'above average'.

The Royal Air Force was seeking recently graduated officers such as Edwards; he and six others arrived in England and were granted short-service commissions on 21st August 1936. Edwards loved the club-like atmosphere of the pre-war RAF. He soon became proficient on the new Blenheim bombers and was promoted to flying officer in May 1938, but in August he flew into a cumulo-nimbus cloud and his aircraft iced up and went into an uncontrollable spin. After baling out his crew, he managed to escape at low altitude but his parachute caught on the radio aerial and he 'rode' the aircraft to the ground. He was critically injured and spent much of the following two years recovering, afraid that he would be unable to take part in World War II, which had broken out in September 1939.



By sheer determination and constant pressure on the medical authorities, in April 1940 Edwards finally gained permission to resume flying. Promoted to flight lieutenant, he sustained only minor injuries when he crashed in October after becoming lost in a nationwide blackout. In February 1941 he joined No.139 Squadron, again flying Blenheims. The squadron was engaged in the dangerous task of attacking German convoys off the coast of Europe as well as bombing nearby targets on land. Edwards had another accident but survived unscathed. With the heavy loss of crews, life expectancy being only a few weeks, promotion came quickly to the survivors and in April he was made acting squadron leader.

In May Edwards became the commander of No.105 Squadron as an acting wing commander. Demoralised by the mortality rate and poor results, the squadron rallied to his determination to make it the best in the group. Edwards was almost worshipped by his crews. He was severe but fair and outstandingly courageous, while admitting that he was as frightened as his men. On 15th June he led a formation of aircraft against enemy merchant shipping off the Dutch coast. He attacked one ship from mast height, severely damaging it, and for his 'great leadership, skill and gallantry' was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On 4th July 1941 a group of twelve Blenheims led by Edwards made a daylight attack on the German city of Bremen. His bombers had to fly under high-tension wires, through a balloon barrage and into intense anti-aircraft fire. The surviving aircraft were riddled with holes. Four of the attacking force were shot down and Edwards' own Blenheim returned with a wounded gunner, a smashed radio rack and a large part of the port wing shot away. For this gallant action Edwards was awarded the Victoria Cross. Later that month he took his squadron to the besieged island of Malta to attack Italian convoys on their way to Libya. To his chagrin he was not allowed to fly; after two months only three of his crews survived out of the eighteen that had arrived.

*Air Ministry,
22nd July, 1941.*

ROYAL AIR FORCE.

The KING has been graciously pleased to confer the Victoria Cross on the undermentioned officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery:—

Acting Wing Commander Hughie Idwal EDWARDS, D.F.C. (39005), No. 105 Squadron.

Wing Commander Edwards, although handicapped by a physical disability resulting from a flying accident, has repeatedly displayed gallantry of the highest order in pressing home bombing attacks from very low heights against strongly defended objectives.

On 4th July, 1941, he led an important attack on the Port of Bremen, one of the most heavily defended towns in Germany. This attack had to be made in daylight and there were no clouds to afford concealment. During the approach to the German coast several enemy ships were sighted and Wing Commander Edwards knew that his aircraft would be reported and that the defences would be in a state of readiness. Undaunted by this misfortune he brought his formation 50 miles overland to the target, flying at a height of little more than 50 feet, passing under high-tension cables, carrying away telegraph wires and finally passing through a formidable balloon barrage. On reaching Bremen he was met with a hail of fire, all his aircraft being hit and four of them being destroyed. Nevertheless he made a most successful attack, and then with the greatest

skill and coolness withdrew the surviving aircraft without further loss.

Throughout the execution of this operation which he had planned personally with full knowledge of the risks entailed, Wing Commander Edwards displayed the highest possible standard of gallantry and determination.

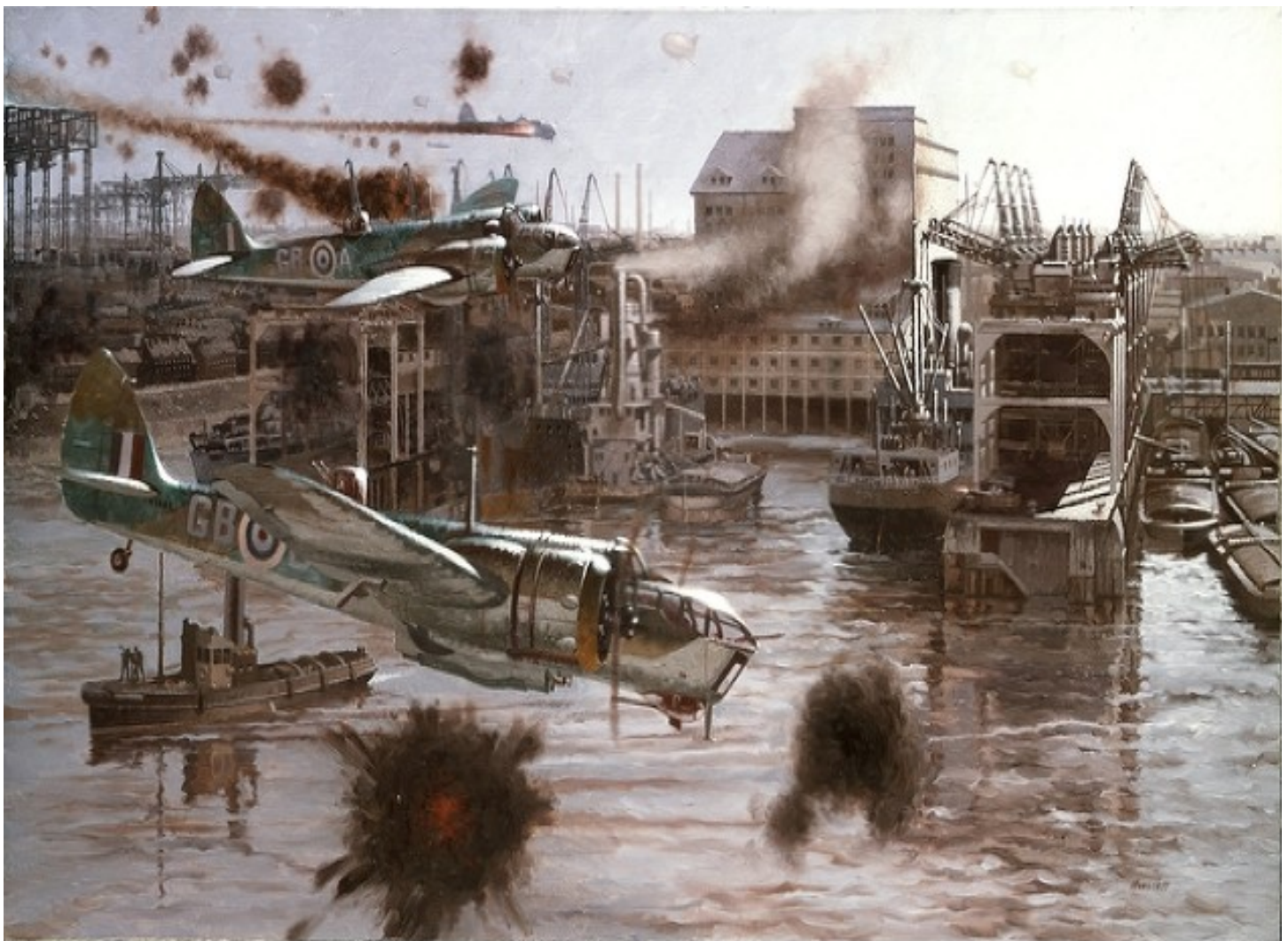


WING COMMANDER EDWARDS WITH TWO OF HIS CREWS

Following a propaganda tour of the United States of America in October-December, Edwards married Cherry Kyrle ('Pat') Beresford, née Kemp, the widow of a friend, on 21st January 1942 at St Mary's Church of England, Bryanston Square, London. A few days later he took command of No.22 Operational Training Unit. In August he was posted to the command of No.105 Squadron, flying his favourite aircraft, the Mosquito. The squadron took part in many successful attacks, including the destruction of the Philips factory at Eindhoven, the Netherlands, in December and the submarine-engine plant in Copenhagen in January 1943. In most of these attacks Edwards played the leading role. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his part in the Eindhoven raid.

In February Edwards was promoted to acting group captain and placed in command of the large RAF station at Binbrook, Lincolnshire, which became the base from which No.460 Squadron, RAAF, operated until the end of the war. Edwards found his first substantial command—of a large number of Australian ground and air crews—a challenging task. He soon started operations on Lancaster bombers, almost certainly doing more trips than he was allowed. Losses were heavy in the battle of the Ruhr and the battle of Berlin, but morale never faltered, due in large part to his example. He was very popular with his crews, provided they did not have to fly with him: he was a poor pilot with more enthusiasm and courage than ability.

Edwards was sent to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as group captain, bomber operations, in December 1944 and as senior air staff officer at Lord Louis Mountbatten's headquarters, South-East Asia Command, in January 1945. He was engaged first in supporting the 14th Army in Burma and then, after being posted to Malaya and to Batavia (Jakarta), in the rescue of prisoners of war and Dutch civilians from the troubled Netherlands East Indies. Having been mentioned in despatches, he was appointed OBE (1947).



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Returning to England in May 1947, Edwards attended the RAF Staff College, Bracknell, Berkshire. He spent the following years flying jet aircraft and instructing. In 1956 he was posted to command the large RAF station at Habbaniyah, Iraq, which was besieged during a military coup in 1958. He acquitted himself well in a tense situation and withdrew the force without casualties. In October that year he was made commandant of the Central Fighter Establishment, West Raynham, Norfolk, as an acting air commodore (substantive 1 July 1959). He was appointed CB in 1959 and an aide-de-camp to Queen Elizabeth II next year. In 1961 he attended the Imperial Defence College, London. Director of organisation (establishments) at the Air Ministry from January 1962, he retired from the RAF on 30th September 1963.

Edwards took up a post in Sydney as resident director of a large mining firm, Australian Selection (Pty) Ltd. His wife died in 1966. At the registrar-general's office on 11th September 1972 he married Dorothy Carew Berrick, née Nott, a divorcee. On 7th January 1974 he was sworn in as Governor of Western Australia. He was appointed a Knight of Grace of the Order of St John in May and KCMG in August. Impeded by chronic ill health, Sir Hughie resigned on 2nd April 1975 and returned to Sydney. Survived by his wife, and by the son and daughter of his first marriage, he died suddenly of subdural haematoma after a fall on his way to watch a Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 5th August 1982 at Darling Point and was cremated at Karrakatta Crematorium, Perth and his ashes interred in the cemetery.

The most highly decorated Australian of World War II, he had been respected by all with whom he came in contact and revered by those with whom he served. The Australian War Memorial, Canberra, holds his medals, his portrait (1944) by Stella Bowen and a painting (1982) by Ray Honisett of the episode in which he was awarded his VC. A bronze statue of him by Andrew Kay was erected in Kings Square, Fremantle, in 2002.





RAF VCs

Arthur Scarf VC



Arthur Stewart King Scarf (1913-1941), known to the family as John, and to many friends as "Pongo", was born in Wimbledon, Surrey on 14th June 1913. Educated principally at Kings College, Wimbledon, he gained little distinction academically, and he channelled most energy into his sporting activities. He played rugby for his school, and his non interest in academics almost got him expelled from the College. On leaving the College in 1930, he took up employment in an insurance office, but the atmosphere didn't suit him, and he applied for the Royal Navy.

His lack of academic qualifications though stymied his application to the Royal Navy and he was rejected. Instead, in January 1936, he applied to join the RAF for pilot training, and was accepted by a discerning interview board whose decision was based on potential rather than paper qualifications. For his first three months he underwent initial flying instruction at the AST, Hamble on Avro Cadet biplanes; then progressed to 9 Flying Training School, Thornaby, flying Hawker Hart trainers under the skilled guidance of veteran fliers Squadron Leader D'Arcy Grieg DFC AFC and Flight Lieutenant John Grandy (in later years, Chief of Air Staff, RAF).

On graduation to pilot on 11th October 1936, he was posted to 9 Squadron at RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire to fly the Handley Page Heyford bombers with which the unit was then equipped. His stay with 9 Squadron was brief and, after a short detachment to 206 (GR) Squadron at Hemswell on 20th March 1937, flying Hawker Hind bombers. Just 4 weeks later, on 18th April, he was posted to Abingdon, Berkshire to form a new unit, 62 Squadron, flying Hinds, which moved to RAF Cranfield in June 1937. Promoted to Flying Officer, he was immediately detached to Manston in the summer of 1937 for a short navigation course, then rejoined A Flight, 62 Squadron at Cranfield.

62 Squadron then converted to Bristol Blenheim I bombers in February 1938, and when war looked imminent the following year, they were posted to Singapore via India, and arrived at Tengah airfield, Singapore, though for two years they saw no active service. The routine was exercises, training flights, and manoeuvres including mock dogfights and bombing runs. In February 1941, they changed bases and moved north to Alor Star in the Kedah Province, close to the neutral Siam (Thailand) border. Then, in December 1941, Japan struck. They launched an invasion force at Kota Bahru on the east coast, and five RAF Squadrons were detailed to attack at first light on the invaders.

On 9th December 1941 in Malaya, near the Siam border, all available aircraft had been ordered to make a daylight raid on Singora (where the Japanese Army was invading), in Siam. Squadron Leader Scarf, as leader of the raid, had just taken off from the base at Butterworth when enemy aircraft swept in destroying or disabling all the rest of the machines. Scarf decided nevertheless to fly alone to Singora. Despite attacks from roving fighters he completed his bombing run and was on his way back when his aircraft became riddled with bullets and he was severely wounded, his left arm had been shattered, he had a large hole in his back and was drifting in and out of consciousness. He managed to crash-land the Blenheim at Alor Star, without causing any injury to his crew, and was rushed to hospital where he died two hours later.

Working at the hospital where he passed away, was his wife, Elizabeth (known as "Sally") a nurse, whom he had married in Penang in April 1941. She had volunteered to work at Alor Star Hospital to be near her husband. She donated blood to try and help save his life in the operating theatre. Sadly, he collapsed and died soon after he last saw her and squeezed her hand and said "Keep smiling, Sal" Arthur was laid to rest in Taiping War Cemetery, Malaya.

Air Ministry, 21st June, 1946.

The KING has been graciously pleased to confer the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to the undermentioned Officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery:—

Squadron Leader Arthur Stewart King SCARF (37693), Royal Air Force, No. 62 Squadron.

On 9th December, 1941, all available aircraft from the Royal Air Force Station, Butterworth, Malaya, were ordered to make a daylight attack on the advanced operational base of the Japanese Air Force at Singora, Thailand. From this base, the enemy fighter squadrons were supporting the landing operations.

The aircraft detailed for the sortie were on the point of taking off when the enemy made a combined dive-bombing and low level machine-gun attack on the airfield. All our aircraft were destroyed or damaged with the exception of the Blenheim piloted by Squadron Leader Scarf. This aircraft had become airborne a few seconds before the attack started.

Squadron Leader Scarf circled the airfield and witnessed the disaster. It would have been reasonable had he abandoned the projected operation which was intended to be

a formation sortie. He decided, however, to press on to Singora in his single aircraft. Although he knew that this individual action could not inflict much material damage on the enemy, he, nevertheless, appreciated the moral effect which it would have on the remainder of the squadron, who were helplessly watching their aircraft burning on the ground.

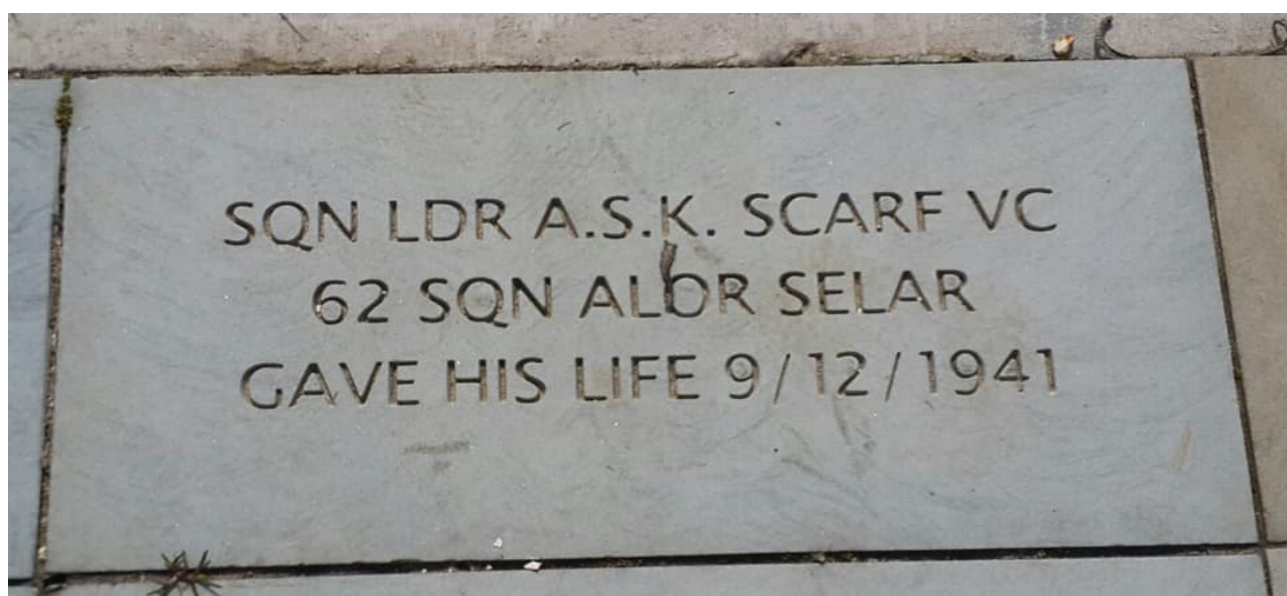
Squadron Leader Scarf completed his attack successfully. The opposition over the target was severe and included attacks by a considerable number of enemy fighters. In the course of these encounters, Squadron Leader Scarf was mortally wounded.

The enemy continued to engage him in a running fight, which lasted until he had regained the Malayan border. Squadron Leader Scarf fought a brilliant evasive action in a valiant attempt to return to his base. Although he displayed the utmost gallantry and determination, he was, owing to his wounds, unable to accomplish this. He made a successful forced-landing at Alor Star without causing any injury to his crew. He was received into hospital as soon as possible, but died shortly after admission.

Squadron Leader Scarf displayed supreme heroism in the face of tremendous odds and his splendid example of self-sacrifice will long be remembered.



In the chaos of the Malayan campaign, most records were lost or destroyed, and it was not until 1946 that the full story of Scarf's heroism was brought to the notice of the RAF authorities. He was immediately recommended for a posthumous VC, and this was approved and then gazetted on 21st June 1946; his widow receiving the medal at an investiture on the 30th June. Shortly afterwards, his parents donated a sum of money to the RAF to create the Scarf Trophy, to be awarded to the Far East Air Force Squadron considered best in weaponry. Scarf's medals were on loan to the RAF Museum, Hendon for a number of years. They were sold at Spink & Sons, London on 27th April 2022 for a hammer price of £550,000. The purchaser has yet to be revealed. It has now been revealed that the purchaser is an overseas buyer and a temporary block has been put on the sale in the hope of keeping the medal group in the UK. The RAF Museum started a fundraising campaign in January 2023 to attempt to raise the £660,000 they believe will keep the group in the UK. Following a large media campaign both in national newspapers and on social media, it was announced on 1st May 2023 that the funds had been raised to match the auction sale price. The medals will go on display at the Royal Air Force Museum in Hendon in the summer of 2023.





Latest Podcasts

During the past month, I have followed up on last month's appearance on the Kohima Educational Trust's webinar with Dr Robert Lyman MBE, talking about the Burma Campaign VCs, with two further appearances on popular podcasts/webinars.

On 5th August I had the pleasure of speaking with John James from "The Briefing Room" podcast where I was able to speak more about the recipients of the Victoria Cross in the Burma Campaign. Similar to the webinar for the KET, I focused on the stories of a small snapshot of the 29 recipients. With a high percentage of posthumous awards (60%), it is the most of any theatre in the Second World War. On 20th August, I faced a change of subject when I had the chance to talk about the 5 VCs of Operation Market Garden (again with a 75% posthumous award rate). I had been invited by the Royal Engineers Historical Society to give a webinar on the subject of my second book. The webinar was due to take place last year but due to some ongoing health concerns with yours truly, it was delayed to this month.



For access to all my podcasts visit <https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/podcasts/>

Leakey VC Moves

In July 2026, it was announced that the National Army Museum in Chelsea, was to be the new home of the VC medal group of Joshua Leakey VC. Leakey's medals had previously been on loan to the Airborne Forces Museum, at IWM Duxford.

The actions for which Leakey was awarded the Victoria Cross occurred on 22 August 2013 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. A routine joint patrol composed of British paratroopers, US Marines and Afghan soldiers had targeted a village to search for illegal weapons. Having been flown into the area in Chinook helicopters, the patrol was attacked by machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades soon after dismounting. Leakey's helicopter had landed on a hill near the village and he, with three other paratroopers and an Afghan soldier, were to provide fire support for the main segment of the patrol. From their vantage point, his section could see the attack and heard over their radio that someone had been injured. Leakey ran up the hill to assess the seriousness of the attack and came to the conclusion that urgent action was needed. Though he was only a lance corporal, he took control of the situation and led his section down to the group under attack.

Having reached the group under attack, he gave first aid to the wounded US Marine Corps captain and began to evacuate him from the battlefield. While under fire, he returned to the machine guns that his section had left at the top of the hill. He moved one to a better position to fire at the attacking Taliban even though he was under constant, accurate fire (bullets were ricocheting off the weapon he was carrying). His actions inspired other soldiers to join in the fight back.

While he was manning the machine gun, he was also shouting updates of the situation into his radio. Having realised that more than one machine gun would be needed to effectively fight back the insurgents, he allowed his gun to be taken over by another soldier. He then ran once more through heavy fire to retrieve a second machine gun, position it in a suitable site, and then manned it to fire at the Taliban. The skirmish lasted approximately 45 minutes during which 11 insurgents were killed and four wounded. It was only when air support arrived that fighting ceased. When it did, he handed the second machine gun over to another soldier. He then returned to the injured American officer and oversaw his medical evacuation.

The Ministry of Defence summarised the reasons for awarding Leakey the Victoria Cross as follows: "Under fire yet undeterred by the very clear and present danger, Lance Corporal Leakey ran across the exposed slope of the hill three times to initiate casualty evacuation, re-site machine guns and return fire. His actions proved the turning point, inspiring his comrades to fight back with renewed ferocity. Displaying gritty leadership well above that expected of his rank, Lance Corporal Leakey's actions singlehandedly regained the initiative and prevented considerable loss of life."



Walford VC Medal Group

It was announced in June 2026, that the owners of the Garth Neville Walford VC medal group had chosen to donate the medal group to the Royal Artillery Collection, currently housed at Larkhill in Wiltshire. The planned museum at Larkhill is still to be fully completed so the medal group will be stored until it is possible for it to be displayed.

When the First World War broke out, Walford was at the Staff College and he went out to France in the middle of August, where he served with the 27th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. During the retreat from Mons, he was twice fortunate to escape shell bursts close by him. One caused superficial wounds to both arms, and the other blew off his cap without harming him. He saw action at the Battle of the Aisne in September, and was evacuated home ill later that month.

Promoted to captain in October 1914, he returned to the brigade at Ypres, where he held a number of temporary staff appointments. In January 1915, he was summoned home to take up a new appointment, as brigade major Royal Artillery, with the newly constituted 29th Division destined for the Dardanelles. After a brief spell in Leamington Spa, he sailed for Egypt in March 1915. He arrived in Lemnos on 12th April and he joined a party of senior officers to observe a naval bombardment.

On 26th April, 1915, subsequent to a landing having been effected on the beach at a point on the Gallipoli Peninsula, during which both Brigadier-General and Brigade Major had been killed, Lieutenant-Colonel Doughty-Wylie and Captain Walford organised and led an attack through and on both sides of the village of Sedd el Bahr on the Old Castle at the top of the hill inland. The enemy's position was very strongly held and entrenched, and defended with concealed machine-guns and pom-poms. It was mainly due to the initiative, skill and great gallantry of these two Officers that the attack was a complete success. Both were killed in the moment of victory.

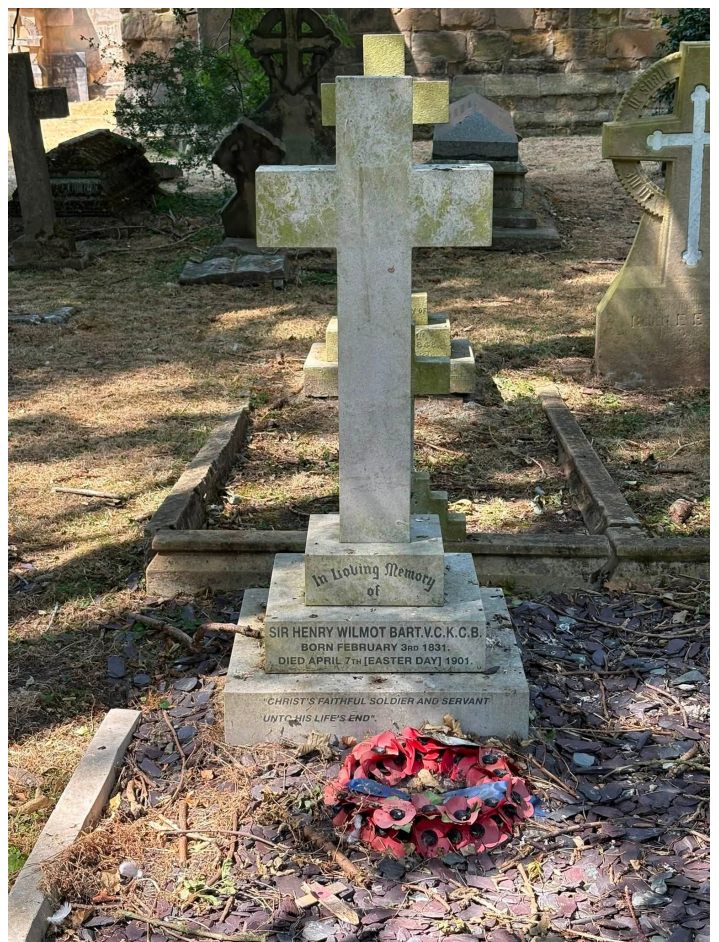
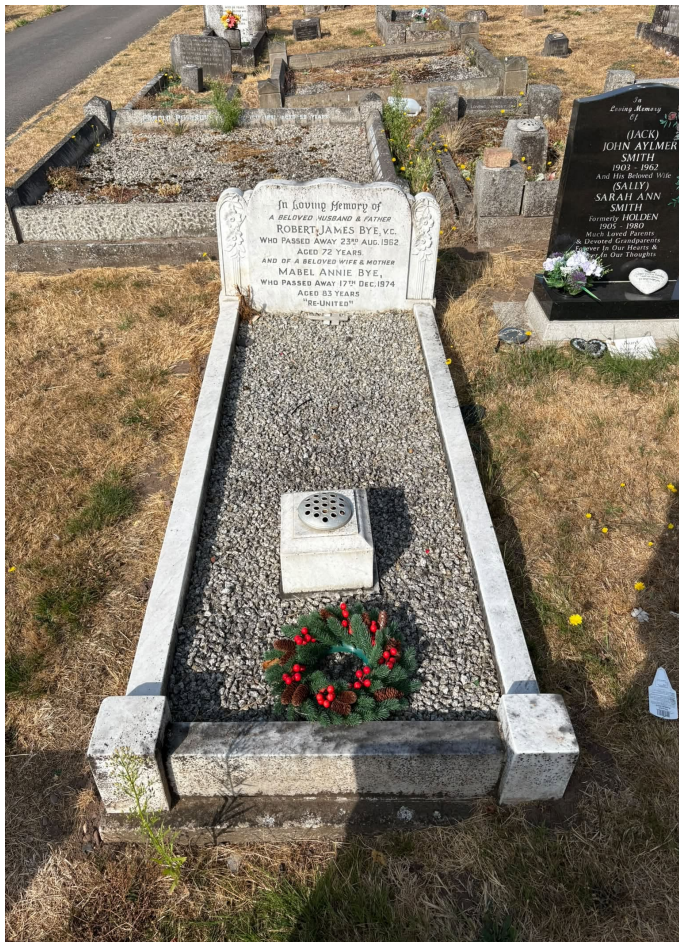
He was buried close to where he fell at Sedd el Bahr, and was later re-interred at the V Beach Cemetery, Gallipoli. In addition to his VC, he was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20 and Victory Medal 1914-19.



VC and GC Road Trip

On 11th August 2026, I had the pleasure of catching up with Kevin Brazier, author of "The Complete Victoria Cross", "The Complete George Cross", and many other books covering subjects such as the Knights Cross, the US Medal of Honor, and even John Wayne. Kevin has provided many images from his extensive travels across the world photographing the graves of recipients of the Victoria Cross and George Cross. I have had the pleasure of accompanying Kevin on two trips overseas, and several trips in the UK.

On this particular trip, we met in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, where we visited the graves of three VC recipients and a George Cross recipient. We visited the graves of Robert Bye VC in Warsop Cemetery, Frank Emery Nix GC in Pilsley Lawn Cemetery, Charles Edwin Stone VC MM in Belper Cemetery, and finally Sir Henry Wilmot VC in St Mary's Churchyard, Chaddesden near Derby.



VC Grave Cleans

During August 2026, the Military Grave Restorer, Steve Davies has been out and about clocking up the miles restoring and cleaning the graves of many of our nations' servants in our armed forces. Amongst this month's work were visits to restore the graves of four VC recipients. There was a revisit to the grave of John Rouse Merriott Chard VC (of Rorke's Drift) whom had a retouch up of the lettering on his headstone. Steve had previously visited the grave to complete this task.

Steve also visited the graves of Sir Gerald Graham VC and George Channer VC, who are buried very close to each other in East-the-Water Cemetery in Bideford, Devon. He also completed a restoration of the grave of Sir Reginald Hart VC in St Mary's Churchyard, Netherbury, Dorset.



<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-gerald-graham-vc-gcb-gcmg/>

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/george-nicolas-channer-vc-cb/>

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-reginald-clare-hart-vc-gcb-kcvo/>

If you wish to support Steve Davies' fabulous work in restoring VC and other military graves go to his fundraising page at <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/steven-davies-4>