



*'Behind every award of a Victoria Cross is a remarkable story involving all those qualities that we British hold most dear: loyalty, duty, sacrifice, care for others, a great good humour and a deep humility'*

### **HRH The Prince of Wales**

It is hardly surprising, given the rich history of the VC and all the decoration stands for, that so many people should want to own one. My desire for one of the medals was fostered by my boyhood dreams, my fascination with bravery, my admiration for my own father's courage and my growing interest in military history. One of the finest qualities of the VC is the egalitarian cornerstone on which it was founded. It is wonderful that Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious bravery award can be won by any man or woman (or even child – as Andrew Fitzgibbon and Thomas Flinn proved), regardless of class, colour, religion, creed or rank, provided they exhibit truly exceptional courage in the face of the enemy.

It has been calculated that the chance of surviving an act that would earn a Victoria Cross is one in ten. How many people today could put their hand on their heart and say they were brave enough to embark on any single act knowing that nine times out of ten they will be killed while doing it?

No system of rewarding bravery is infallible. For every VC awarded, there were no doubt several others that ought to have been given but slipped through the net. Nobody will ever know how many men over the past 150 years have missed out on the decoration because their daring actions went unnoticed, or the witnesses to it were killed. Other worthy recipients have no doubt died lonely deaths, some of them destined to remain for ever in unmarked graves. The fact that so much bravery inevitably goes unrecorded is the reason why the tomb of any nation's unknown warrior usually has the highest gallantry decoration bestowed upon it. Yet make no mistake: every VC recipient featured in this resource deserves his place in history for being in that special category – the bravest of the brave.

### **Lord Ashcroft, KCMG**

Founder of The Ashcroft VC  
Collection and author of  
the book *Victoria Cross Heroes*

**This educational pack has been sponsored by Lord Ashcroft, KCMG**

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This collection of materials draws on the remarkable true stories of some of the men of valour who have won the Victoria Cross during the last one hundred and fifty years. The activities have been designed to be used within the History curriculum at secondary-school level, but most are also suitable for use in English: to develop speaking and listening, writing and media awareness skills, or in the Citizenship curriculum – for example in considering conflict resolution, the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature of Britain over time, and the impact of global issues on our lives.

A strong strand of transferable skills – developing knowledge and understanding; communication and literacy – and key concepts run through the materials, together with the chance to carry out further enquiry, use ICT and link to the accompanying DVD.

## The DVD

The three DVD programmes are each in chapters, as indicated on pages 5–7, and relate to the major themes and conflicts listed below:

Materials	Learning Outcomes
<p><b>An Introduction to the VC</b> (DVD Programme 1)</p> <p>Pages 8–12 explore the background to, and key facts about, the VC. This allows an exploration in History, English or Citizenship of the nature of valour and bravery, sacrifice and courage. There is a briefing (p.8) and ICT exercise (p.9) to introduce the VC, and sorting/discussion activities (on pp.10–12) to consider the nature of valour and to begin to introduce some of the amazing VC-winning deeds.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Suitability:</b> History, English, PSHE/Citizenship</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Communication skills</li> <li>● Skills in working with others</li> <li>● ICT skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Victorian conflicts: The Crimean War (1854–1856)</b></p> <p>Page 13 consists of a ‘starter’ activity – a one-minute analysis of a picture – which could be used for media analysis or within the study of the Crimean War in History lessons. Page 14 provides the chance to acquire knowledge about the Crimean War, and to consider public reaction to art (poetry) and news. Page 15 is an illustration.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b>            English – 19th-century literature and poetry            History – KS3: Unit on GB 1750–1900                      GCSE: British Social &amp; Economic                      AS/A Level: 19th-century British &amp; European studies</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Critical awareness</li> <li>● Use of visual sources</li> <li>● Poetry analysis</li> <li>● Speaking and listening</li> <li>● Literacy development</li> <li>● Understanding genre</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Indian War of Independence (Indian Mutiny 1857–8)</b></p> <p>Page 16 presents a brief overview of the ‘uprising’ in India, with space for cartoon-style summaries of six of the events mentioned. Page 17 provides the chance to research the events during the troubles in India. Page 18 illustrates the aggressive reoccupation of Delhi and can be used as stimulus material.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b>            English – Development of prose writing/research skills            History – KS3: Unit on GB 1750–1900/Empire                      GCSE: SHP Modern World Study: India                      AS/A Level: 19th-century British/Empire            Citizenship/PSHE – Terrorism and War Crime</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comprehension</li> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Enquiry and communication</li> <li>● Evaluation and ethical judgements</li> <li>● Interpretation</li> </ul>

# Using the Materials

<p><b>The Zulu War (1879)</b> Pages 19–21 provide a sequencing activity related to Zulu King Cetshwayo and the Zulu nation's attack on Rorke's Drift (correct sequence: d, g, b, c, e, i, a, h, f). Page 20 is an account of Private 716 Robert Jones' action at the defence of Rorke's Drift, with a related illustration on page 21.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b> English – Storytelling, narrative, biography History – KS3: Unit on GB 1750–1900/Empire AS/A Level: Empire Consideration of the role of the individual in history</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comprehension/narrative skills</li> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Chronology/sequencing skills</li> <li>● Reportage and genre awareness</li> <li>● Writing skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Crete (1897)</b> A single page about the inter-ethnic rivalry on Crete in 1897, which can be used to link to modern conflict and peacekeeping within Citizenship or History.</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recounting skills</li> <li>● Interpretation skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>War Poetry</b> Pages 23–22 (and The Charge of the Light Brigade poem on page 14) provide opportunities to look at responses to war and interpretation/public reaction.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b> English – Poetry History – GCSE: Modern World History/Source use</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Source-use skills</li> <li>● Critical awareness</li> <li>● Thinking skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Great War (1914–1918)</b> (DVD Programme 2) Page 26 highlights the multi-ethnic nature of the Great War using a matching exercise (answers: a2, b7, c10, d8, e6, f9, g5, h3, i4, j1), with the spheres of war considered in the remainder of this section: pages 27–28 tell the story of a double VC winner and humanitarian motivated by his faith, with pages 29–30 also considering the role of an individual – the air ace James McCudden, and p.31 looking at the Sea War.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b> English – Links to fiction/non-fiction writing History – KS3 and GCSE: 20th-century History: The Great War Citizenship – Concepts of service and commitment/duty</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive attitudes to multiculturalism</li> <li>● Anti-racist values</li> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Communication skills</li> <li>● Writing for an audience</li> <li>● Speaking and listening</li> </ul>
<p><b>Afghanistan (1921)</b> The defence of a supply unit in 1921 provides the chance to consider conflict resolution and to link to modern events.</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Media awareness skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Second World War (1939–1945)</b> (DVD Programme 3) The multi-ethnic contribution to the defeat of fascism and aggressive nationalism/expansionism is described in the matching exercise (p.33) answers a9, b1, c5, d7, e4, f2, g10, h3, i8, j6) with the nature of warfare and sacrifice exposed on pages 34 and 38 (Air War), 35 (Jungle War) and 36–37 (Underwater Warfare). The tasks focus on different genres of writing and recording.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Links:</b> English – Writing for purpose History – KS3: 20th century GCSE: Modern World Studies PSHE – Skills/qualities/values debates</p>	<p><b>Engagement with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing for purpose/genres</li> <li>● Knowledge and understanding</li> <li>● Role of the individual/significance</li> <li>● Values and attitudes development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Iraq (2003)</b> The final two pages explore the story of one of the most recent VC winners, Pte Johnson Beharry, and are based on enquiry and reporting in English, History or PSHE.</p>	<p><b>Development of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reportage skills/enquiry</li> <li>● Evaluative skills</li> </ul>



## Programme One

### Opening Sequence

- Introduction: HRH The Prince of Wales

### Programme Chapter 1. The Crimea

- The introduction of the VC and the Crimean War 2' 18"
- The attack on Sebastopol and the first VCs – Edward Daniel VC
- The interest of HM Queen Victoria in the VC 10' 00"

### Programme Chapter 2. The Indian Mutiny

- The Indian Mutiny – William Raynor VC, John Buckley VC 12' 50"
- Commentary by Richard Holmes (historian) 15' 20"
- Execution of rebels by cannon fire 17' 13"
- The Siege of Lucknow and William Hall VC, the first black recipient of the VC 18' 00"
- Henry Wood VC and the rescue of an informer 21' 00"
- Early forfeitures of the VC: Edward Daniel 23' 30"
- The rise of Henry Wood VC 24' 40"

### Programme Chapter 3. The Zulu Wars

- Isandhlwana and the loss of the regimental colours 26' 10"
- The Defence of Rorke's Drift 27' 00"
- Fred Hitch's account of sighting the Zulu army, and accounts of the attack 30' 00"
- Fire in the hospital and the defence of the compound 33' 00"
- Commentary by Michael Naxton (Curator of the Ashcroft Collection) 37' 30"

### Programme Chapter 4. The Boer Wars

- Resistance to British control of South Africa 38' 50"
- Recapturing the guns, William Congreve VC and defeat by the Boers 39' 50"
- The case of Frederick Roberts VC and the posthumous award of the VC 43' 40"
- Commentary by Michael Naxton 44' 50"
- The mysterious tramp and the claims he made 49' 50"

### Closing Sequence



## Programme Two

### Opening Sequence

- Introduction: HRH The Prince of Wales – The Great War and the VC. The nature of courage 1' 00"

### Programme Chapter 1. World War One, 1914: Beginnings

- The Expeditionary Force at Mons, Belgium – Private Maurice Dease VC. Private Sidney Godley VC 2' 15"
- Mass recruitment and the arrival of new troops 6' 30"
- Noel Chavasse VC and Bar 7' 00"
- Jack Cornwell, from tea delivery boy to Boy, 1st Class 8' 20"
- Jackie Smyth VC and positive thinking 9' 20"
- The citation and Smyth's own account of the nature of courage 11' 10"

### Programme Chapter 2. 1915–1916: Fresh Troops

- Albert Jacka VC and Gallipoli 13' 00"
- The Battle of Jutland: Cmdr Jones VC 16' 50"
- 'Boy' Cornwell VC 19' 00"
- The Somme, Billy McFadzean VC and an act of self-sacrifice in the Ulster Regiment 20' 50"
- The hero's grave – archive footage, and discussion of the public mood 24' 40"
- Noel Chavasse VC (II) 25' 30"
- A field amputation 25' 30"

### Programme Chapter 3. 1917: Dark Days Ahead

- The Air War 27' 40"
- The fighter pilots. William Leefe Robinson and the Royal Flying Corps defence against the Zeppelins 28' 40"
- Star status for Robinson 31' 45"
- Commentary by Michael Naxton (Ashcroft Collection Curator) 32' 20"
- Noel Chavasse VC (III) 33' 40"
- Paschendaele and trench conditions 35' 30"
- The death of Noel Chavasse VC and the award of the Bar 37' 00"

### Programme Chapter 4. 1918: Victory at Last

- Wilfrith Elstob VC and holding back the enemy 40' 00"
- The end of the war and the return of Sid Godley VC 43' 50"
- William Leefe Robinson VC and Albert Jacka VC  
Jackie Smyth VC and the reinternment of Noel Chavasse VC 45' 00"



## Programme Three

### Opening Sequence

- Introduction: HRH The Prince of Wales  
The nature of the VC winners and the changing face of warfare 0' 42"

### Programme Chapter 1. RAF Bomber Command

- Bomber Command and the Second World War.  
Andrew Mynarski VC's attempt to save Pat Brophy 2' 30"
- The Battle of Kohima and Captain 'Jack' (John) Randle VC 5' 50"
- The nature of courage explored by veterans 10' 00"

### Programme Chapter 2. World War Two to Korea

- XE-3 and the attack at Singapore, Diver James Magennis VC  
and Lt Ian Fraser VC 11' 00"
- Lord Ashcroft, KCMG speaks about the Ashcroft Collection  
and the representation of courage 16' 45"
- Korea and the defence of a position: the influence of  
Bill Speakman VC and the powers of leadership 17' 40"
- Archive news footage of Speakman, and his modern  
account: selling his medals to make ends meet 22' 00"

### Programme Chapter 3. Korea to the Falklands

- Lord Ashcroft speaks about his collection 24' 35"
- Malaysia and the Sarawak campaign: the Gurkha  
contribution in Borneo. Rambadahur Limbu VC rescues  
his comrades under fire 25' 00"
- Archive footage of Limbu's investiture and discussion  
of public reaction to campaigns 29' 50"
- Vietnam and the Australian Army's role 30' 50"
- Keith Payne VC's rescue of scattered men in Vietnam 33' 30"
- The Falklands Conflict. Sgt Ian McKay VC and the  
advance on Mount Longdon 34' 20"
- Ian's mother speaks of his courage 37' 20"

### Programme Chapter 4. Johnson Beharry VC

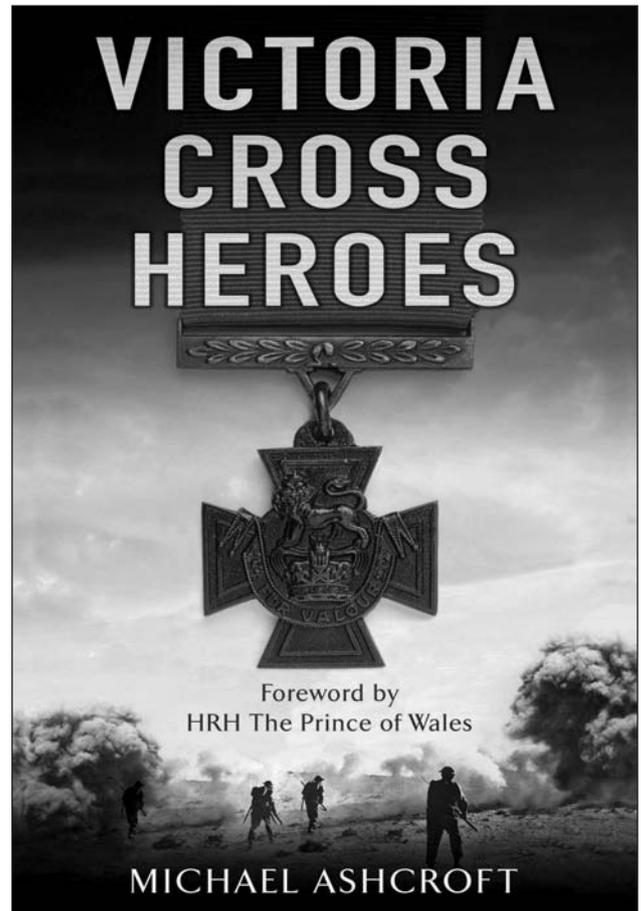
- The War in Iraq and a deadly ambush 37' 40"
- Richard Holmes explains the significance of  
Warrior armoured vehicles 38' 40"
- Johnson Beharry VC, Richard Deane MC and  
Dave Falconer MC recount the events of the first ambush 39' 00"
- The second ambush and 'the killing area', and the citation  
for 'unquestioned valour'. 42' 20"
- Beharry's attitude to his medal, and the expectation  
of the public 44' 30"
- Closing montage of medal winners 46' 00"

# For Valour: The Victoria Cross



For centuries the idea of giving medals to men of all ranks was considered unnecessary. The Duke of Wellington argued that the honour of serving the king was enough. From 1854–56 the British fought Russia in the Crimean War. *The Times* newspaper carried reports of the wars and the suffering and bravery of the men – and for the first time war photographs in the newspaper brought a sense of realism about the conditions faced by the soldiers and sailors. The idea of a new award for heroism was agreed in mid-1855, with Queen Victoria choosing the design and wording: For Valour, and Prince Albert suggesting the title: The Victoria Cross.

- All Victoria Crosses awarded are announced in the *London Gazette*.
- Up to the present the VC has been awarded only to men, but it is 'open' for award to both sexes. Five civilians, working with the military, have been awarded VCs: four during the Indian uprising in 1857, and one in Afghanistan in 1879.
- Fourteen men outside of British Empire and Commonwealth forces have been honoured with the VC: Six Americans, three Danes, two Germans, a Belgian, a Swiss and a Ukrainian. One of the American awards was to the USA's Unknown Soldier in 1921 as a mark of respect for American valour in The Great War.
- The Great War (1914–1918) saw the highest number of VCs awarded in one conflict: 633, of which 188 were posthumous awards.
- The Second World War (for Britain 1939–1945) saw 182 awards made, of which 87 were posthumous.
- The highest number of awards for a single action was eleven VCs given for the defence of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu Wars in 1879.
- The highest number in a single day was twenty-four at the Relief of Lucknow in 1857.
- At the time of writing the VC has been granted 1,356 times, with 295 of these being posthumous recognition of valour.
- Living award winners currently receive a special pension of £1,495 per year.
- Only three men won the VC 'twice' (VC and Bar): Arthur Martin-Leake, Noel Chavasse and Charles Upham.



*The Victoria Cross is approximately 3.75 cm wide and carries the words 'For Valour' on the front. It weighs about 0.87 ounces Troy or 27 grams, including crimson (wine) red ribbon, suspension bar and V-shaped clasp. The metal is a dull brown. The bar is embossed with laurel leaves and the winner's name is engraved on the rear, along with their rank and unit. It is rare for a first name to be included – but some medals carry this detail.*

*The rear of the medal is engraved with the date of the valiant act for which the award was made, placed in the centre of the circle. The youngest VC recipients were fifteen years old: Andrew Fitzgibbon, a medical orderly in China, 1860, and Thomas Flinn, a drummer at Cawnpore, India, 1857. The oldest winner was 61: Lt William Raynor VC, who defended a position for five hours with nine others during the Indian 'Mutiny' in 1857.*

## Want to Know More?

Visit: <http://www.victoriacrossheroes.com>

The Victoria Cross has only ever been made by one company, a goldsmiths and silversmiths which has seen long service to the Royal family – Hancocks of London – a family firm established in 1849.



## **Task:**

**This task focuses on the manufacturing process and design of the medal, and is based on visiting Hancocks' website: [http://www.hancocks-london.com/vc\\_manufacture.htm](http://www.hancocks-london.com/vc_manufacture.htm)**

**Carefully read the information about the manufacture of the Victoria Cross and then answer these questions:**

*1. Where is the metal for the Victoria Cross kept?*

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*2. In what sort of object was the metal for the Victoria Cross found before being cut off and stored in Britain?*

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*3. Most people believe that the metal for the VCs was captured in the Crimea – but is it Russian?*

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*4. What is engraved on the medal before it is presented to winners of the VC?*

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*5. What is special about the way that a Victoria Cross is made?*

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*6. Traditionally, how many Victoria Crosses are made at any one time?*

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**Now click on the bar to go to the section on 'Supply'**

*7. Are VCs cast for individuals?*

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*8. Why are some VCs issued twice?*

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**Want to Know More?**

Visit: <http://www.victoriacrossheroes.com/tenthings.html>

# 'The Right Stuff': The Characteristics of Bravery



In his book about the Victoria Cross and the men awarded this high honour, Michael Ashcroft explores some of the qualities of VC winners. Apart from valour (tremendous courage), he suggests that most VC winners have also been modest and have claimed that their actions were not extraordinary at all. This page includes some of the qualities Michael Ashcroft saw in the stories of VC winners.

 **Cut out the qualities cards (below). In pairs or small groups...**

*Which ones do you feel are most important in the modern world? Which ones are needed by:*

- 1) **The prime minister?**
- 2) **A top athlete?**
- 3) **A journalist?**

<b>ambition</b>	<b>leadership</b>
<b>compassion</b>	<b>liking a fight</b>
<b>comradeship</b>	<b>loyalty</b>
<b>coolness under pressure</b>	<b>patriotism</b>
<b>determination</b>	<b>physical strength</b>
<b>faith</b>	<b>resentment of authority</b>
<b>focus</b>	<b>selflessness</b>
<b>hatred of enemy</b>	<b>sense of duty</b>
<b>humility</b>	<b>service to others</b>
<b>independence</b>	<b>wildness</b>

## **Want to Know More?**

The nature of bravery is explored throughout the film documentary *Victoria Cross Heroes* and on the website <http://www.victoriacrossheroes.com>



The VC or Victoria Cross is the highest military award for valour: for acts of tremendous courage, determination and bravery. It is rarely awarded and never bestowed until careful evidence is gathered to verify the statements of witnesses.

The GC or George Cross is the highest civilian award for bravery. It is given rarely, and represents recognition of self-sacrifice, bravery or dedication to others in dangerous circumstances.

The youngest winners of the VC were just fifteen years old: Drummer Thomas Flinn, in India in 1857, and Hospital Apprentice Andrew Fitzgibbon, in China in 1860. In theory both awards can be gained by young people, and the VC by those taking orders from British military personnel on active service – but modern legal limitations restrict military service to adults.

## To Discuss

*Should there be a special award for children who show great courage?*

*If so, what criteria would you list to decide who would win this award?*

*Would you award the honour to:*

<p><b>A teenager who dives into a flooded river to rescue a younger child</b></p>	<p><b>A fourteen-year-old who climbs down a cliff face to rescue an injured dog</b></p>	<p><b>A child in a war zone who risks sniper fire to take food and water to trapped families each day</b></p>
<p><b>An eight-year-old who has cancer but remains cheerful and raises money for charity</b></p>	<p><b>A blind child who traps robbers in her home</b></p>	<p><b>A sixteen-year-old who twice goes into a burning building to rescue a neighbour's children</b></p>

## Extension

*What name would you give to your award?*

*Who would decide who wins the award?*

*Who would present the award and where?*

*Design the medal or award for the award winners.*

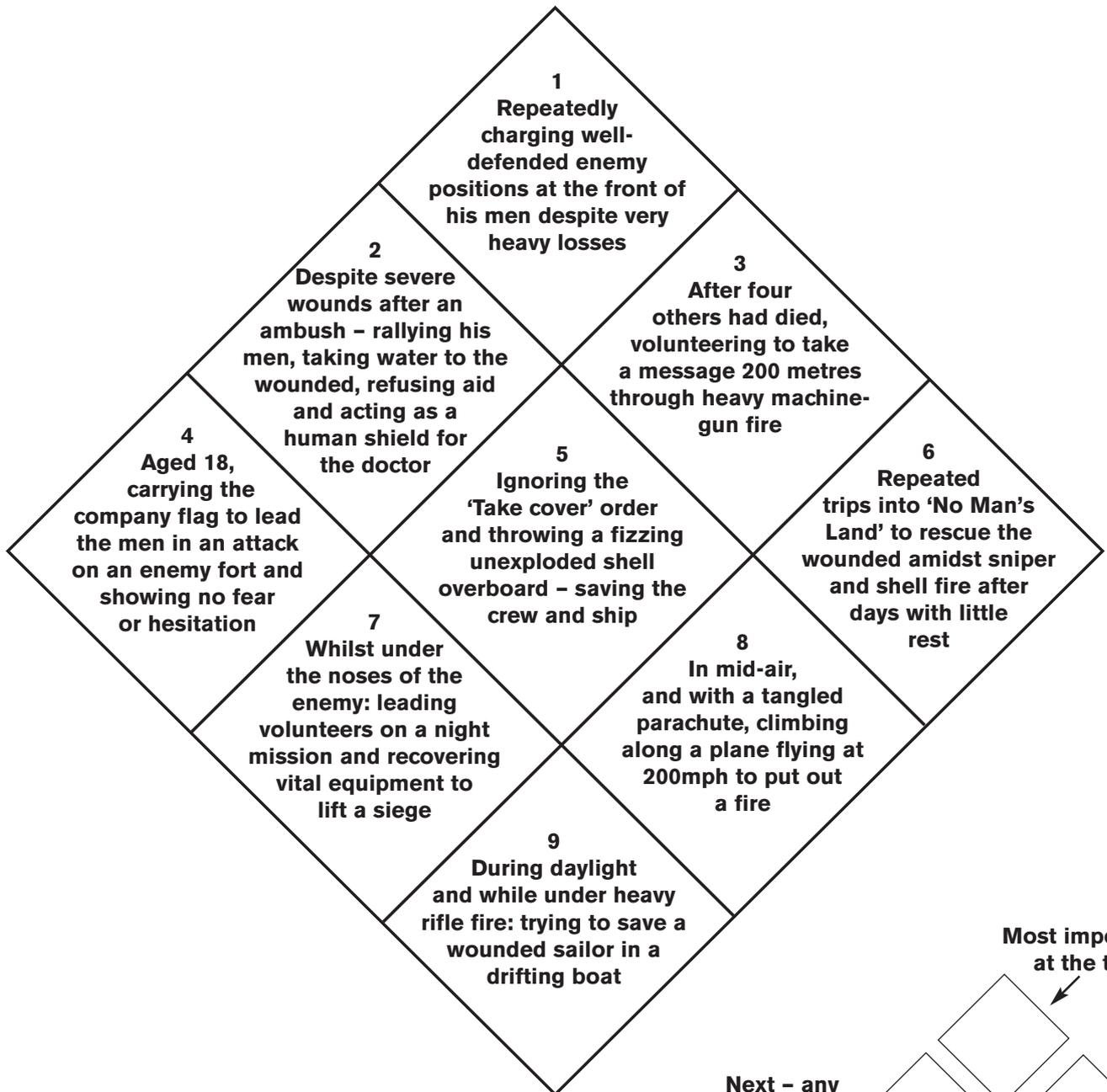
# The Bravest of the Brave



The winners of the Victoria Cross have all shown remarkable bravery in very difficult circumstances. This task provides a chance to think about some of those acts of valour.

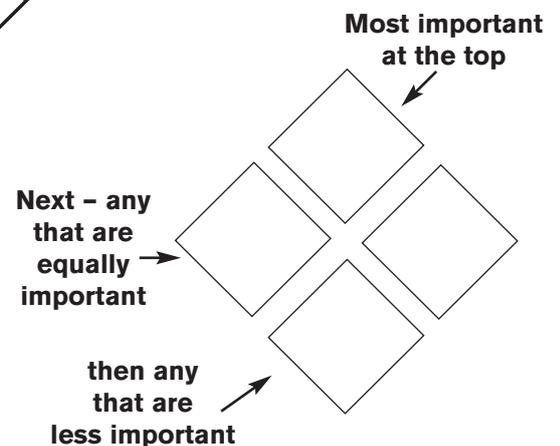
 **Cut out the nine cards. In pairs or small groups...**

Discuss whether any represent more remarkable acts of bravery than others. Sort your choices out as shown in the diagram below.



## The Individuals

1. Naik (Corporal) Agansing Rai VC – Burma campaign, WW2
2. Sepoy (Private) Ishar Singh VC – Afghanistan 1921
3. Pte Alfred Wilkinson VC – Western Front, The Great War
4. Midshipman Duncan Boyes RN VC – Shimonoseki Expedition Japan 1864
5. Mate Charles Lucas RN VC – Crimean War 1854
6. Surgeon Noel Chavasse RAMC VC and Bar – The Great War, France
7. Lt Howard Elphinstone VC – The Crimean War, Sebastopol 1855
8. Sgt Norman Jackson RAFVR VC – Whilst airborne, WW2, 1944
9. Surgeon William Maillard RN VC – Tax Riot, Crete 1898

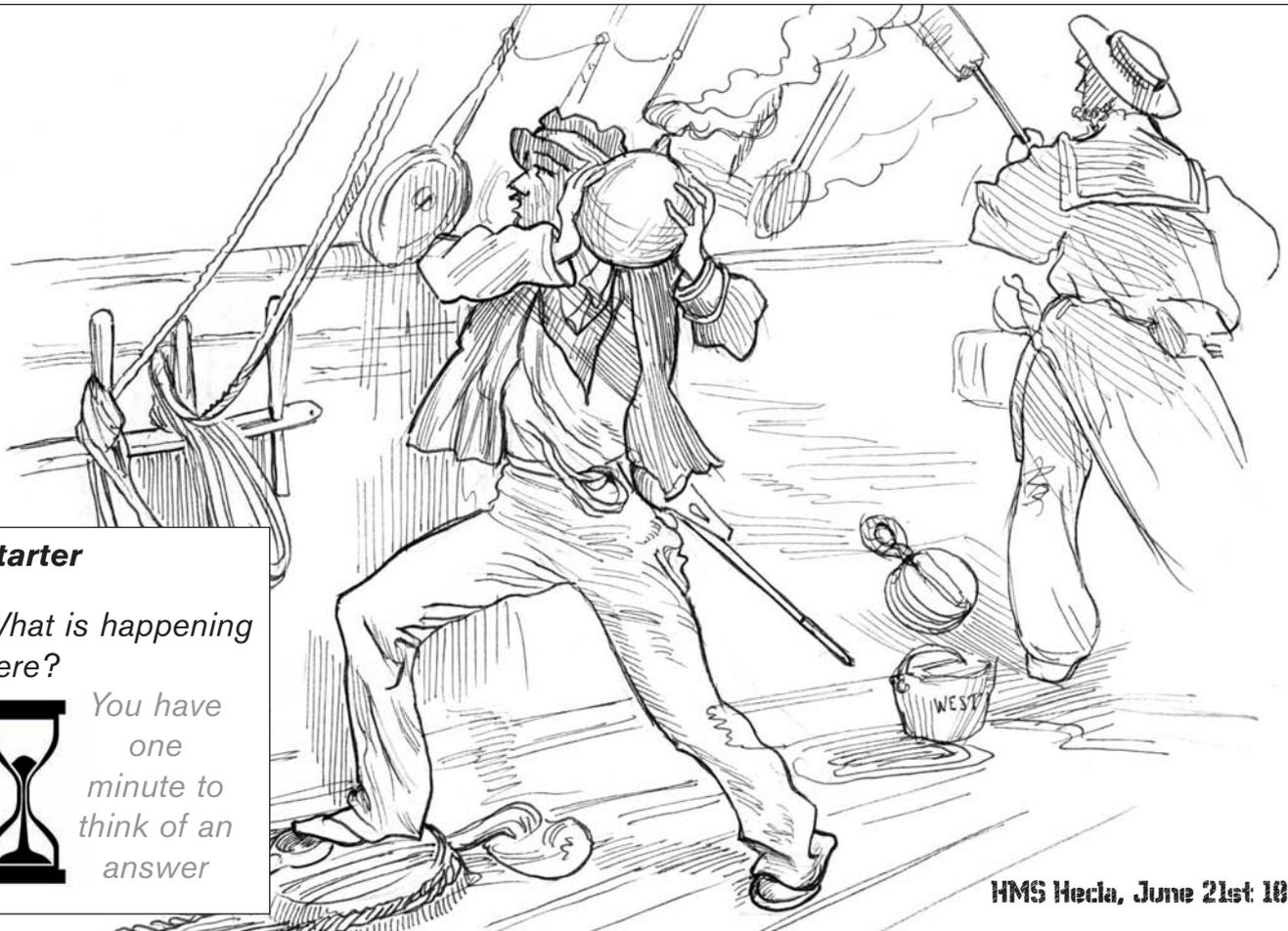


# Charles Lucas: The First VC

The Crimean War was fought between 1854 and 1856 by Imperial Russia against Britain, Sardinia, France and the Ottoman Empire. The main engagements took place on the Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea. Although the Russians were eventually defeated, both sides paid a high price, with 140,000 known casualties.

More died from disease than as a result of fighting, and the war saw the 'innovations' of nursing, distant as well as close artillery and the use of railways and the telegraph. On 20th September 1854 the first major battle – the Battle of Alma – took place, followed by actions at the Battle of Balaclava (25th October) and the Battle of Inkerman (5th November).

Siege warfare was a feature of the war, with the fall of Sebastopol on 11th September 1855 contributing to the allied victory. Valour during the campaign was rewarded with a new medal, the Victoria Cross, of which 111 were awarded.



## Starter

What is happening here?



You have one minute to think of an answer

HMS Hecla, June 21st 1854

## The Answer

Mate Charles Lucas, the son of a County Armagh family in Ireland, is saving his ship and shipmates by throwing a live unexploded enemy shell into the sea – despite the order to take cover. His valour, speed and willingness to take a risk meant the explosion took place with a loud bang below the waterline, with two men injured but the warship *Hecla* saved. The steam sloop HMS *Hecla* was making charts of water depth – finding suitable anchorages for the British and French fleets in the Crimea. The work relied on fast departure if the slower vessels of the Russian navy spotted the ship. The act of bravery shown by Lucas meant that chronologically he won the first VC – although Lt Cecil Buckley RN was the first to be announced in the *London Gazette* and Cmdr Henry Raby RN was the first man decorated with a VC by Queen Victoria in 1857.

## Want to Know More?

Visit: [http://www.victoriacrosssociety.com/sample\\_articles.htm](http://www.victoriacrosssociety.com/sample_articles.htm)

# 'When Can Their Glory Fade?'



## Part A.

Balaclava in the Crimea was the supply base for the British force besieging Sebastopol. It was defended by Royal Marine artillery on six redoubts, defended by 4,400 Turkish foot soldiers, Lord Lucan's cavalry and the 93rd Highland Regiment of Foot under Sir Colin Campbell.

Prince Menshikov, the commander of the Russian forces in the Crimea, and the Tsar's former Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, ordered an attack on Balaclava at 5am on 25th October 1854. If Balaclava fell then the Siege of Sebastopol could be lifted.

The *Times* reporter William Howard Russell called the Highlanders' valiant defence of their position the 'thin red streak tipped with steel', which Tennyson later changed to 'the thin red line' in his poem.

In the fierce Russian attack four of the gun positions fell, and when British commander Lord Raglan saw the Russians removing the guns he ordered Captain Nolan to pass the order to Lord Lucan that his cavalry should 'prevent the enemy carrying away the guns'. However, when he received the order, Lucan could see only the much larger Russian Don Battery and therefore attacked the wrong guns!

### Source 1.

'Attack, sir? Attack what? What guns, sir?' asked Lucan on receiving the order, to which Nolan flung out his arms in the general direction of the Don Battery and replied: 'There, my lord, is your enemy. There are your guns.'

When Lucan passed the order on to his brother-in-law, Lord Cardigan, the commander of the Light Brigade, Cardigan queried it. 'Allow me to point out that the Russians have a battery in the valley on our front and batteries and riflemen on both sides,' he said. 'I know it,' replied Lucan, 'but Lord Raglan will have it. We have no choice but to obey.'

Cardigan carried out what he believed were his orders. He led the 632 men of the Light Brigade against the mighty Russian guns. As they moved forward, Captain Nolan, who had received permission to charge with the 17th Lancers in the first line, suddenly rode ahead motioning wildly with his arms. It may be that the true nature of the order had occurred to him and he was attempting to call off the charge. If this was his intention, he had no chance to share it, as he was immediately struck in the chest by a shell splinter and killed. The Heavy Brigade, which had been following the Light Brigade into the charge, was suddenly halted on Lucan's order leaving the Light Brigade to continue alone towards the guns.

The Russians were astonished at the sight hurtling towards them. A captured British lancer was later asked by a Russian general what he had been given to drink to encourage him to charge in so reckless a fashion.

General Bosquet watching on the heights remarked: 'C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre' (It is magnificent, but it is not war).

**Max Arthur, Symbol of Courage p.14. Published by Pan Books, London 2005**

## Part B.

Despite the cannon fire some of the Light Brigade did hack through the Russian gunners, only to find Russian cavalry behind them. The Light Brigade wheeled around and rode back down the valley, being shelled and shot at as they returned. The whole incident lasted for 25 minutes, with 110 Britons down, 130 wounded, 58 captured, 475 horses lost, and 375 men returning uninjured. Nine Victoria Crosses were awarded. William Russell described the events as a 'hideous blunder' although Max Arthur notes that it also came to be remembered as a gloriously fearless act of obedience which represented the finest qualities of the British soldier.

### Source 2.

#### **The Charge of the Light Brigade** Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered:  
Their's not to make reply,  
Their's not to reason why,  
Their's but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,  
Flashed as they turned in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wondered:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right through the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reeled from the sabre-stroke  
Shattered and sundered.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came through the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.

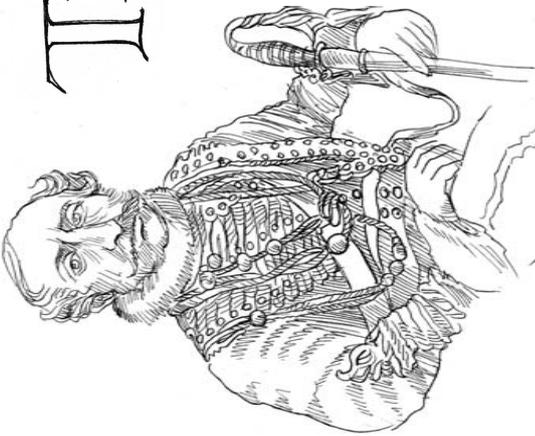
When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wondered.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!

## Tasks:

What sort of messages does Tennyson convey about the qualities of the Light Brigade?

What would you expect was the British public's reaction to the news of the Light Brigade's action?

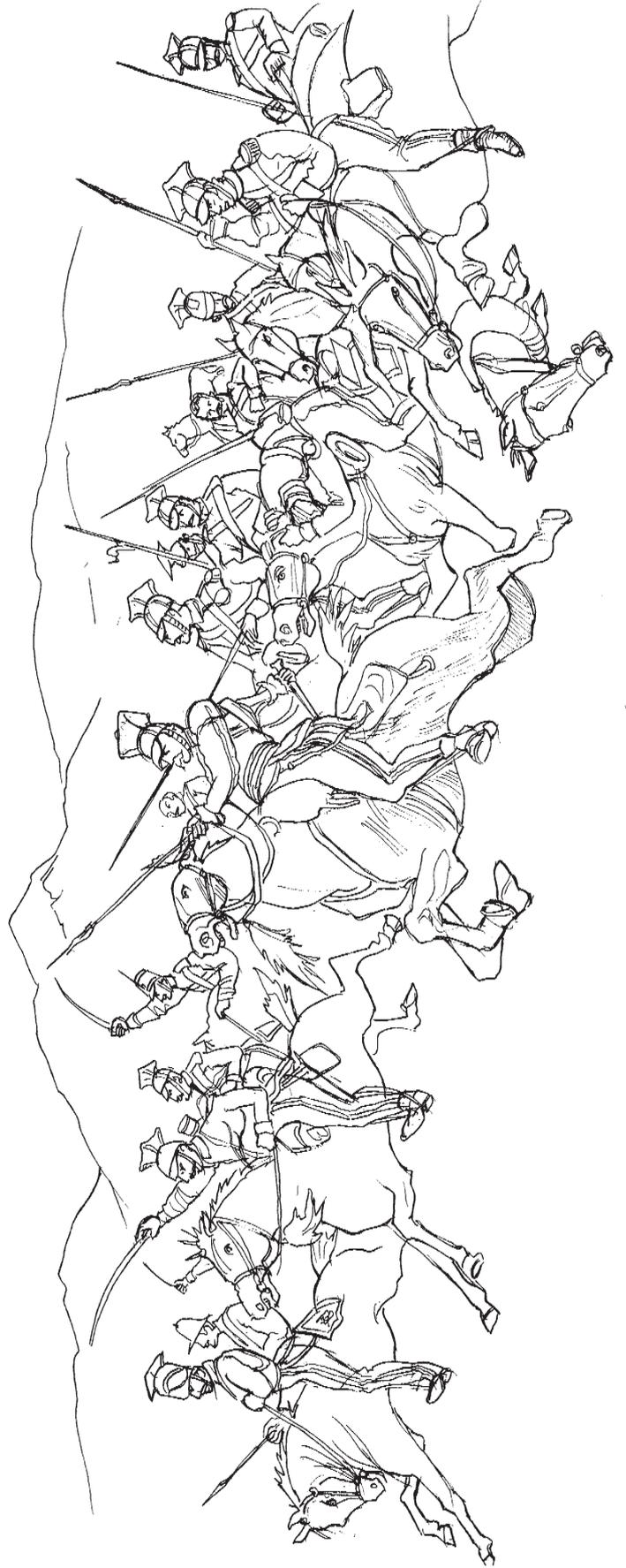
# THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE



Lord Cardigan



Lord Lucan



Charge of the Light Brigade

# The Indian War of Independence



The British East India Company had built powerful trading interests in the Indian subcontinent from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century – often forcefully imposing their will on local rulers and populations. In 1857 some of the people of the British Indian Empire (modern Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) rose up against the British ‘occupation’ of India.

There was considerable bloodshed and savagery before what the British saw as an uprising, and what some modern historians call a war of independence, was crushed.

## Task:

Read the central column, and choose six of the events to illustrate in the boxes provided.

	<p><b>An uprising at Meerut on 10th May 1857 began the revolt against British rule</b></p>	
	<p><b>The trigger was a gun cartridge that was rumoured to be greased with lard (pork fat) or tallow (cow fat)</b></p>	
	<p><b>These fats were forbidden to both Muslims and Hindus, and their use was considered a deep religious insult</b></p>	
	<p><b>At Lucknow (Cawnpore), the Governor’s Compound was besieged for 90 days</b></p>	
	<p><b>The uprising was strongest in the north and centre of India; many ordinary people and some rulers stayed loyal</b></p>	
	<p><b>Many army units rebelled and killed their officers!</b></p>	
	<p><b>The female leader of Jhansi, the Rani, led a fierce series of attacks, until she was killed. Today she is seen as an Indian nationalist heroine</b></p>	
	<p><b>Gradually, British forces restored their control. The suburbs of Lucknow were retaken by the British in March 1858</b></p>	
	<p><b>Punishment was severe: rebels captured were tied to cannons and blown apart. In Delhi all civilians found inside the retaken city were bayoneted by the British</b></p>	
	<p><b>The fall of Gwalior, 20th June 1858, marked the end of ‘the mutiny’</b></p>	

The result of the uprisings and their suppression was called ‘the Devils Wind’ by the Indians – brutal and extreme – and a cause of long-term resentment against the British ‘occupiers’ in India.

## Want to Know More?

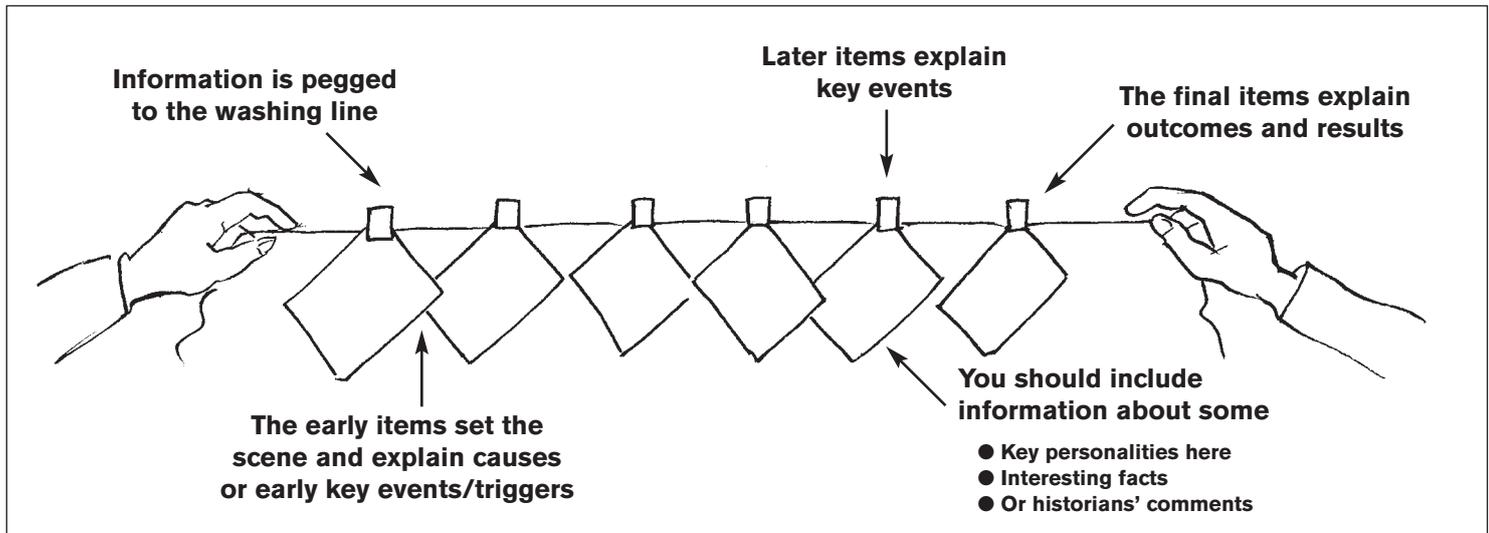
Visit: [http://www.victoriacrosssociety.com/sample\\_articles.htm](http://www.victoriacrosssociety.com/sample_articles.htm)

The first programme in the *Victoria Cross Heroes* film documentary includes accounts of valour during the first Indian War of Independence/the Indian Mutiny.

# Researching the Indian War of Independence



- Your task is to research the first Indian War of Independence – also called the Indian Mutiny by some British historians.
- You will need to work to a strict time limit in order to be able to present your findings on time.
- You will need to agree the format your presentations will take – it could include a poster-sized sheet of information; a PowerPoint presentation or a 'clothes line' approach as in the drawing below.



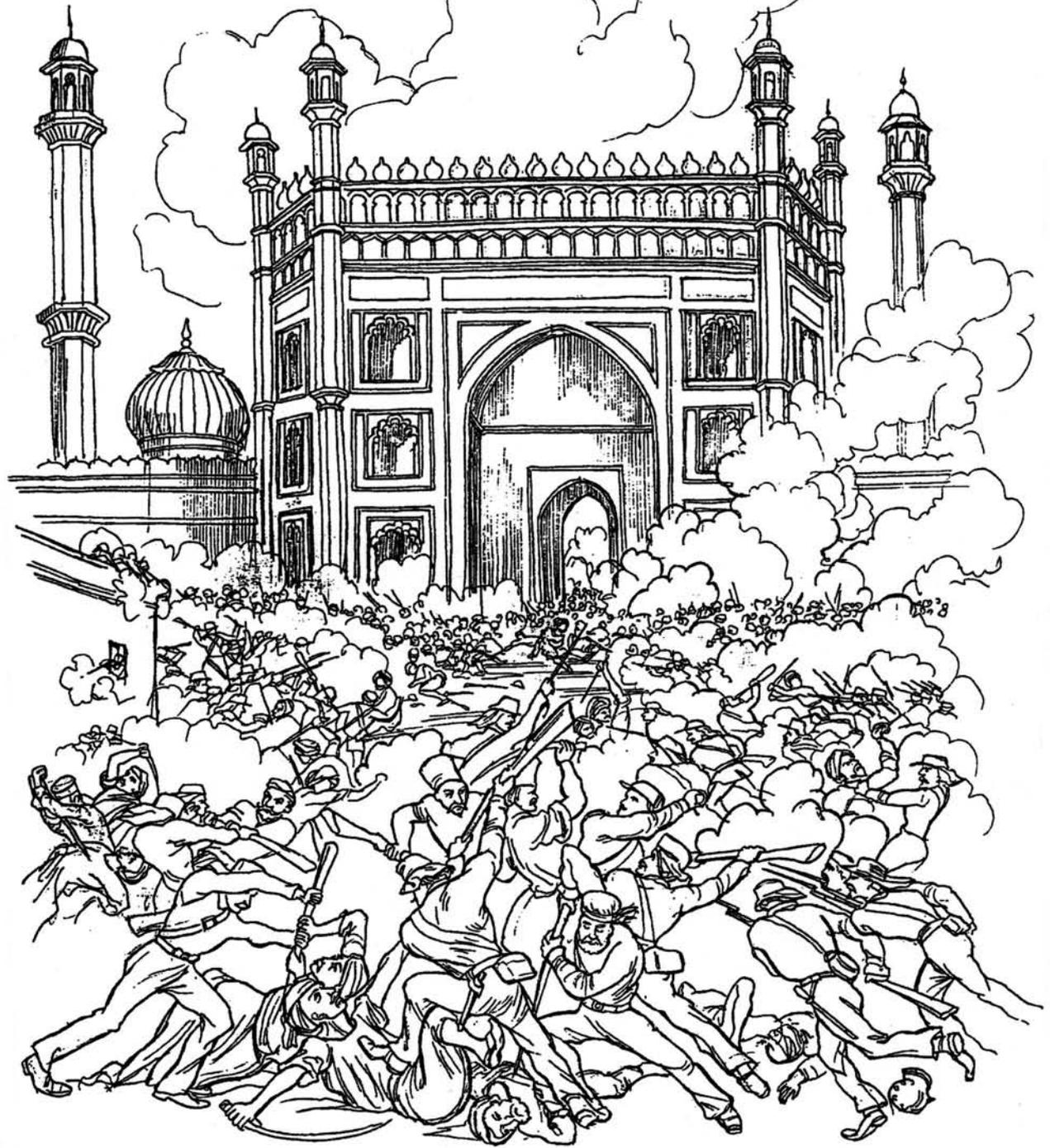
The best presentations will be historically accurate, informative and interesting.

## Did you know?

- The Governor of Lucknow (modern Cawnpore) guessed the uprisings elsewhere would spread – and prepared for a siege, which lasted 90 days.
- Lt Frederick Roberts won a VC for saving the regimental flag and saving a 'loyal' Indian soldier – and survived only because his enemy's gun failed to fire.
- William McDonell won a VC, even though he was a civilian, for saving 35 others.
- 'Rebels' were executed using field guns – which were fired after they'd been tied to them.
- Captain Charles Gough, a member of a family that won four VCs, gained his VC while saving his brother, Hugh – who also gained a VC for carrying out other deeds.
- Thomas Kavanagh, another civil servant, won a VC whilst accompanying the spy Kanauji Lal on a mission.

## Want to Know More?

The first programme in the *Victoria Cross Heroes* film documentary includes accounts of some of the events during the first Indian War of Independence/the Indian Mutiny.



THE RE-CAPTURE OF DELHI  
14 SEPT. 1857

Action at the gates of Delhi

# The Defence of Rorke's Drift:



The Anglo-Zulu War in South Africa lasted from 11th January 1879 to the capture of the Zulu king on 28th August of the same year. The conflict was caused by British territorial expansion and interest in gaining control of the mineral resources of the region. The eventual victory ended the Zulu control of their national lands but was gained only at great cost since the lightly-armed Zulus were a formidable fighting force resisting a foreign invasion. Cetshwayo had become Zulu king in 1873, and saw that European expansion would lead to war. His preparations were effective and his men almost fearless despite usually carrying only assegai spears and wooden shields. The Zulu army of 40,000 was tremendously fit, moved fast, and easily outpaced Lord Chelmsford's force of 5,000 British and 8,200 African soldiers with their packs, equipment and wagon trains.

In late January the British force trying to suppress the Zulus was camped at Isandhlwana. While the commander, Lord Chelmsford, was away with a column of men supporting reconnaissance forces in the territory, 1,600 British and 2,500 African soldiers remained at the camp. Unexpectedly, a 20,000-strong Zulu army swept down on, and through, the camp, killing everyone who stood and fought. The Zulus took no prisoners – and even killed their own men if they were seriously wounded. 806 of the Europeans and 471 of the African defenders were killed. When Chelmsford's group returned they discovered a scene of absolute carnage, and made their way to the nearest post, the small Swedish missionary station at Rorke's Drift, expecting to find devastation there: it was only a small military hospital holding sick and wounded soldiers, with a tiny guard commanded by Lieutenants John Chard and Gonville Bromhead.

## Task:

**Read the ten statements below. Then arrange them in the correct sequence to tell the story of the defence of Rorke's Drift.**

<p><b>A. During the late evening hand-to-hand fighting continued. Holes were pickaxed in the hospital walls to allow escape. Zulu snipers fired at the defenders. Fierce attacks were held back with bayonets.</b></p>	<p><b>F. When Lord Chelmsford arrived from Isandhlwana he found 350 dead and 500 wounded Zulus (all later killed by the British), and 17 dead and ten wounded defenders.</b></p>
<p><b>B. As defence preparations continued, 100 men arrived from elsewhere, and were sent to delay the 20,000-strong army of Zulus. The wounded remained in the hospital building and Private Hitch, on the roof, kept watch for the Zulu advance.</b></p>	<p><b>G. The river crossing at the Drift was abandoned to concentrate the men around defences made of maize sacks, biscuit boxes and the mission buildings. Time was limited and the defences were about 1.3 metres high by 4pm.</b></p>
<p><b>C. At 4.15pm firing from the hills was heard. The advance-party officer rode in to report his men were falling back and the Native Natal Contingent had withdrawn: this left 162 men, including 35-80 in the hospital as defenders.</b></p>	<p><b>H. After midnight only occasional shots were fired. First light allowed repairs to the defences and another attack was expected but never came. The fighting had lasted eight hours.</b></p>
<p><b>D. At 3.15pm on 22nd January 1879 two riders approached the Rorke's Drift mission at great speed and reported the disaster at Isandhlwana. The officers decided to hold the position.</b></p>	<p><b>I. Three Zulu regiments of between four and six thousand warriors attacked around 4.30pm. They were held back with rifle fire and bayonets but repeatedly stormed the walls and barricades, showing great bravery.</b></p>
<p><b>E. By early evening the British and South African defenders fell back to an inner defence line, leaving the hospital isolated. The Zulus set light to the hospital's thatched roof and pushed against the doors, forcing those inside to retreat room by room.</b></p>	<p><b>J. As the attack began only six fit men, including Surgeon Reynolds, were in the barricaded hospital with the sick and wounded.</b></p>

# 716 Jones VC



On 22nd January 1879 one of the most famous defensive actions in military history took place at the former Swedish Missionary Station at Rorke's Drift in South Africa. A force of 162 British and South African soldiers held off an attacking force of between four and six thousand Zulu warriors. 350 Zulus died, with 500 injured at the scene when the relief force arrived – all of these Zulus were subsequently killed by the British.

In this account Michael Ashcroft, the founder of the world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses, describes how one of the eleven Victoria-Cross winners at Rorke's Drift distinguished himself in what became the single highest VC-winning action in British military history. The shout of 'Here They Come!' marked the start of the attack.

*'Private 716 Robert Jones was stationed in a room at the back of the (hospital) building which contained a barricaded external door and window. It was occupied by a patient, Corporal Jessy Maher of the NNC (Native Natal Contingent). As the Zulus neared the maize bag wall they came under sustained fire and a fierce battle was soon raging all around the mission. A sustained attack followed on the northern maize bag wall and Lt. Chard was forced to order the men holding it to retreat behind another defensive line – a wall made from wooden biscuit boxes – at the eastern end of the enclosure. This left those in the hospital isolated and vulnerable.*

*When he ran out of ammunition 716 Jones helped Maher into the adjoining kitchen where 593 Jones was positioned with six more patients. The situation was desperate and the two men retreated to the original room, where they crossed bayonets and took up a position at the doorway. 716 Jones and 593 Jones managed to bayonet every other Zulu who broke through, although 716 Jones received three wounds from assegai stabbing spears.*

*In a short lull in the fighting the men helped the patients through a high window which led to the area between the north and south maize bag walls. Once most of the injured men had escaped, the two men held the Zulus back in the doorway while at the same time trying to dress the last patient – Sergeant Robert Maxfield who was delirious with fever.*

*At this point a pickaxe smashed through the wall behind them. It was Private 1395 John Williams making an escape route for Private Harry Hook and their patients, who had been in the western end of the building. The two men managed to get their eight surviving patients through the hole whilst fighting off the pursuing Zulus. By now Maxfield was dressed but he refused to move. The two Joneses took over guarding the escape hole from Hook and Williams, who were helping their patients out of the high window. With the roof smouldering and Zulus trying to force their way through the hole the Joneses retreated to join Hook and Williams. As the four men prepared to leave the building 716 Jones – having already passed his .577 Martini-Henry rifle through the window – made a final attempt to save Maxfield. However, he was only in time to see the patient being repeatedly stabbed by the Zulus. As he clambered out of the window to relative safety, the roof of the burning building collapsed. The four rescuers and fourteen patients then had to race across the enclosure and into the biscuit box area. Privates Thomas Cole and 1398 Joseph Williams had been killed rescuing the patients: the latter was stabbed and, as was the Zulu tradition at the time, had his stomach ripped open. Privates 716 Robert Jones and 593 William Jones survived, with 716 Jones being awarded the VC along with Lt Chard and nine others. When 716 Jones left South Africa later that year he was still recovering from four assegai wounds and had a bullet still in his body.*

*It is likely that the trauma had a heavy cost for 716 Jones, who left the army in 1886 to work as a labourer for ten years before taking his own life with a shotgun.'*

## Task:

**Write a letter home from one of the hospital patients saved from the Zulus, or write a description of the battle from the Zulu viewpoint.**

## Want to Know More?

Visit: <http://www.britishbattles.com/zulu-war/rorkes-drift.htm>

# ZULU THE WAR 1879



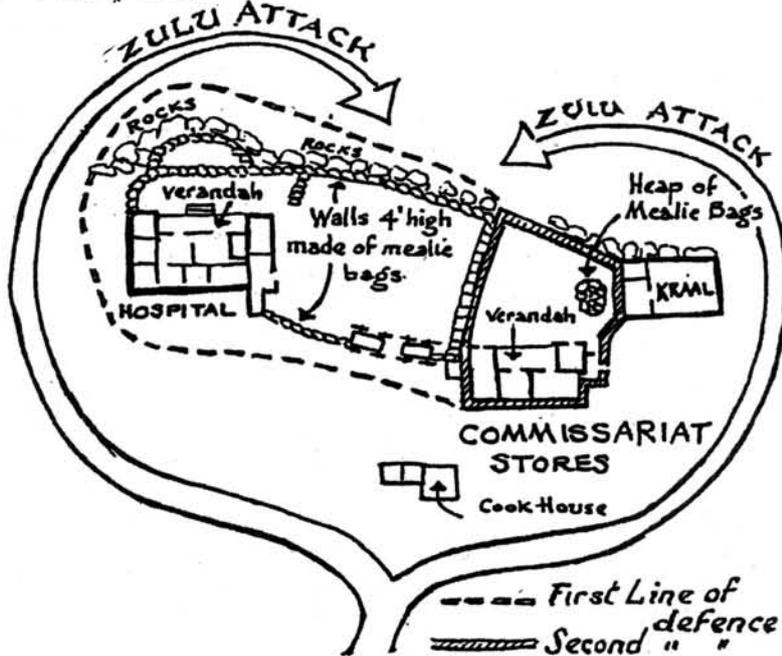
KING  
CETSHWAYO



Private 716 Jones

## RORKE'S DRIFT

22<sup>nd</sup> Jan.  
1879



Lt Chard  
VC



Action at Rorke's Drift.

# Culture Clash on Crete



The gradual decline of the power of the once-vast Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century resulted in the gradual break-up of the Empire. In Greece a rising feeling of nationalism prompted a war of independence, and in 1832 Greece became self-governing.

The separate island of Crete, with a majority Christian population worshipping as Greek Orthodox believers, also tried to break from the Ottoman Turks in 1866 and 1897. In the later uprising Greek troops were landed on the island and raised their flag, leading to a war with Turkey. Concerns over instability in the area resulted in the major powers, Britain, France, Russia, Austria, Italy and Germany, all sending warships to the Aegean.

The island was divided between Greek forces in control of rural areas and Ottoman forces holding the towns. A religious divide had split the country, and cultural rivalry and religious intolerance led to skirmishes and atrocities from both the Christian and the Muslim residents and troops.

In Candia a force of 130 men from the Highland Light Infantry attempted to place a tax official in power on behalf of the international forces. The Muslim townspeople revolted and perhaps a thousand Christians were murdered. The town was set alight and the British Vice-Consul died in the inferno.

The British force retreated to a defensive position in the Customs House and were besieged. The Turkish governor refused to intervene so help was sought from the nearest warship, HMS *Hazard*. Two detachments of 50 sailors and marines were landed, but as casualties rose a doctor was needed. Surgeon William Maillard, Lieutenant Lewes RN and his steward were rowed ashore but came under fire from Turkish mercenaries – called Bashi Bazouks. The party scrambled ashore, but Seaman Stroud had been wounded and was still in the rowboat. Dr Maillard ran back amidst a hail of bullets to rescue the man, only to find Stroud was already mortally wounded. As the boat was beginning to drift and the shooting continued Maillard returned to the cover of the beach, where his comrades saw his clothes were riddled with bullet holes – but he was unwounded. The group reached safety although the rioting left many hundreds dead, including 17 Britons. As a result of the bloodshed, Turkish rule of Crete ended.

Maillard was recommended for and awarded a VC, which was unusual because there was no state of war in force and because the recommendation came directly from the First Lord of the Admiralty to the Queen.

Maillard later said that instead of a medal he should have been reprimanded – he took a great risk despite being the only doctor available to the British forces on Crete, the same evening treating 70 of the infantry and naval group.

## Task:

**Retell the story, at a level suitable for middle secondary-aged pupils, as it might appear in a Turkish school history textbook.**

## Want to Know More?

Visit: <http://www.victoriacross.org.uk/bbmailla.htm>



Public opinion about wars and the nature of warfare in the modern age is heavily influenced by the media: newspapers and magazines; TV and radio; films on the 'big screen'; the Internet and so on.

Today, global news can be broadcast live into people's homes – sometimes after being manipulated by governments or powerful 'media barons', politicians or lobby groups. In the past there was limited access to the news – few people could read before the mid-nineteenth century and news took time to travel.

The Battle of Waterloo of 1815 was only reported in London newspapers a week after it happened less than 100 miles away!

During the Crimean War (1854–56) news reports in *The Times* from William Howard Russell and photographs by Roger Fenton made a significant impact on the general public, who learnt of the hardships of the British forces and also read critical accounts of poor military decision-making, badly managed supplies and appalling conditions.

## Task:

**In a pair or larger group...** Discuss why the government and military leaders might:

- Be keen to control and limit the range of information about campaigns: that is published in the public domain.
- Want to circulate certain stories more widely.

Public opinion can be a very strong force and modern governments try to pay close attention to the mood of the people. During times of conflict, public opinion can be unpredictable.

### ***The Boer War***

**William Plomer**

*The whip-crack of a Union Jack  
In a stiff breeze (the ship will roll),  
Deft abracadabra drums  
Enchant the patriotic soul –*

*A grandsire in St James's Street  
Sat at the window of his club,  
His second son, shot through the throat  
Slid backwards down a slope of scrub,*

*Gargled his last breaths, one by one by one,  
In too much blood, too young to spill,  
Died difficultly, drop by drop by drop –  
'By your son's courage, sir, we took the hill.'*

*They took the hill (Whose hill? What for?)  
But what a climb they left to do!  
Out of the bungled, unwise war  
An alp of unforgiveness grew.*

## Task:

**Read the poem *The Boer War* written by William Plomer**

- In the first stanza (paragraph), what things does Plomer mention to suggest that a mood of patriotic excitement is being created?
- How does Plomer contrast the position of the ruling classes with that of the soldiers in South Africa in the Boer War?
- What language does Plomer use to show his disapproval/dislike of the war?
- Plomer faced tremendous public criticism for this poem. What reasons can you give to explain this reaction? (Think about how people who are very patriotic might respond.)

# The Saviour of His Country?



The Victorian poet and author Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865 in India and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. He is perhaps best remembered today for writing *The Jungle Book*, the *Just So Stories* and his poem *If*. However, he was famous in his lifetime for his stirring jingoistic writing and George Orwell called him 'a prophet of British Imperialism'.

## Tommy

Rudyard Kipling

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,  
The publican 'e up an' sez, 'We serve no red coats here.'  
The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,  
I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:

O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Tommy, go away';  
But it's 'Thank you, Mister Atkins,' when the band begins to play –  
The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play,  
O it's 'Thank you, Mister Atkins,' when the band begins to play.

I went into a theatre as sober as could be,  
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;  
They sent me to the gallery or round the music-'alls,  
But when it comes to fightin', Lord! they'll shove me in the stalls!

For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Tommy, wait outside';  
But it's 'Special train for Atkins' when the trooper's on the tide –  
The troopship's on the tide, my boys, the troopship's on the tide,  
O it's 'Special train for Atkins' when the trooper's on the tide.

Yes, makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep  
Is cheaper than them uniforms an' they're starvation cheap;  
An' hustlin' drunken soldiers when they're goin' large a bit  
Is five times better business than paradin' in full kit.

Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?'  
But it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll –  
The drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll,  
O it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll.

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,  
But single men in barracks, most remarkable like you;  
An' if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints,  
Why, single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints;  
While it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Tommy, fall be'ind,'  
But it's 'Please to walk in front, sir,' when there's trouble in the wind –  
There's trouble in the wind, my boys, there's trouble in the wind,  
O it's 'Please to walk in front, sir,' when there's trouble in the wind.

You talk o' better food for us, an' schools, an' fires, an' all:  
We'll wait for extra rations if you treat us rational.  
Don't mess about the cook-room slops, but prove it to our face  
The Widow's Uniform is not the soldier-man's disgrace.

For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Chuck him out, the brute!'  
But it's 'Saviour of 'is country' when the guns begin to shoot;  
An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;  
An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool – you bet that Tommy sees!

## Task:

### Carefully read the poem *Tommy*

- *Where is Tommy Atkins refused service?*
- *When is Tommy's help needed?*
- *What devices does Kipling use to contrast the different ways that Tommy is treated?*
- *Does Kipling's use of language suggest he carries any particular stereotypes of men who were soldiers at the time? Or is he challenging the stereotypes others may have?*

## Extension

Carry out Internet/other research

- *What was Kipling's impact on Victorian literature and cultural life?*

## Want to Know More?

Visit these websites:

Kipling biography: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudyard\\_Kipling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudyard_Kipling)

The Kipling Society: <http://www.kipling.org.uk>

Kipling's poetry: [http://poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/kipling\\_ind.html](http://poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/kipling_ind.html)

# 'At the Going Down of The Sun'

Remembrance of brave deeds can take many forms, and public memorials such as monuments can be found in most small villages as well as in towns and cities; however, art and poetry can be very personalised and powerful. Occasionally such works gain international recognition.



## **I. The Soldier**

**Rupert Brooke**

*If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave once her flowers to love, her ways to roam;  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness  
In hearts of peace, under an English heaven.*

## **II. Elegy in a Country Churchyard**

**G.K. Chesterton**

*The men that worked for England  
They have their graves at home:  
And bees and birds of England  
About the cross can roam.*

*But they that fought for England,  
Following a falling star,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have their graves afar.*

*And they that rule in England,  
In stately conclave met,  
Alas, alas for England  
They have no graves as yet.*

## **III. For the Fallen**

**Laurence Binyon**

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.*

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables at home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.*

### **Task:**

Read the different poets' reactions to the Great War, (of 1914–1918 for Britain, and other dates for other nations).

### **In threes:**

- Take one poem each and analyse it to show the techniques the poet uses to express his views and manipulate the reader.
- Each team of three should then report back to each other about the poems.
- What reasons can you suggest to explain why some of these poems are more popular than the others?

### **Want to Know More?**

Visit the website of the privately-funded Ashcroft Collection, a trust which holds the world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses for the nation: <http://www.victoriacrossheroes.com>

For one of the medal winners: what sort of memorial would you suggest to recognise the valour demonstrated in winning the Victoria Cross?

# A Multicultural War



The British Empire was created over several centuries and in part depended on British – English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish – innovation, effort and energy. However, the part played by the peoples of the colonies themselves should not be underestimated: in building, enriching and defending the Empire.

In this task you should match the heads and tails below to tell the stories of the multi-faith, multi-cultural, multinational nature of Empire forces in the Great War from 1914–1918.

<p><b>a. Rubber planter Basil Horsfall was born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and served in France. He was wounded in the head, and, although bleeding</b></p>	<p><b>1. showing a disregard for his own safety in order to protect his men from a machine-gun emplacement.</b></p>
<p><b>b. Jorgen Jensen, a Dane serving with the Australian Army, won his VC aged</b></p>	<p><b>2. badly, he continued to reorganise a defence, counter-attacked and was the last to withdraw when ordered to pull back.</b></p>
<p><b>c. At Gallipoli in Turkey, New Zealander Cyril Bassett laid a telephone line whilst under heavy</b></p>	<p><b>3. men, after they were wounded or killed in Hollebeke, Belgium despite his own wounds.</b></p>
<p><b>d. During 30 hours of attacks on his post at the Dialah River in</b></p>	<p><b>4. Belgian-French, Arabic and English. He won his VC commanding troops in France, having also served in South Africa and India.</b></p>
<p><b>e. Ukranian-Russian-born Canadian Filip Konowal won his VC in France at ‘Hill 70’ during fighting in craters, cellars and</b></p>	<p><b>5. winners who came from the street. You can see a one-minute movie of this on: <a href="http://histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10192">http://histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10192</a></b></p>
<p><b>f. Irish Private John Caffrey rescued a badly wounded soldier from No Man’s Land, as well as a corporal with him who was injured</b></p>	<p><b>6. machine-gun emplacements. He destroyed several enemy positions before being wounded.</b></p>
<p><b>g. Valour Road in Ontario, Canada, commemorates three VC</b></p>	<p><b>7. 26 when he captured a large number of prisoners and safely brought them to our lines.</b></p>
<p><b>h. Sepoy (Private) Khudadad Khan VC from India continued single-handedly firing a large machine gun, designed for use by several</b></p>	<p><b>8. Mesopotamia, South-African-born Oswald Reid inspired his men with his leadership and courage.</b></p>
<p><b>i. British officer Adrian Carton de Wiart, born to Belgian and Irish parents in Brussels, was brought up in Egypt and spoke</b></p>	<p><b>9. during the rescue. Caffrey survived the war and died aged 62 in 1953.</b></p>
<p><b>j. Raphael Zengel, an American-born Canadian, was 23 when he won his VC by</b></p>	<p><b>10. fire and in full daylight. He joked that ‘I was so short the bullets flew over me!’</b></p>

## Want to Know More?

The second programme in the *Victoria Cross Heroes* film documentary tells the stories of a small number of the valiant men who defended the Empire during the Great War.

# Courage and Compassion: Noel Chavasse VC and Bar

One of the most remarkable stories of the Great War was that of Noel Chavasse, an all-round athlete and sportsman, doctor and officer who became well known for his compassionate treatment of his men: this is his story.



**Early Life:** Noel Godfrey Chavasse was the younger of twins born to Edith and Francis Chavasse, an Anglican priest in Oxford. The family moved to a new parish in Liverpool, where the boys grew up. Noel studied medicine at university, and twin brother Christopher studied to be a priest. Both young men were very good athletes and ran for Britain in the 400 metres at the 1908 Olympics.

**The Great War:** At the start of the war Noel joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and was attached as a surgeon-lieutenant to the King's (Liverpool) Regiment: 'the Liverpool Scottish'. Meanwhile, Christopher joined up as an army chaplain and served in France.

**The Western Front:** A number of Noel Chavasse's letters home from France are still in his family's ownership and demonstrate his care for his men, concerns over access to washing and delousing facilities, and the use of an early tetanus jab to reduce the risk of infection from cuts and wounds. Noel also frequently asks for 'comforts' for the men to lift morale. As the letters progress they demonstrate Noel's continuing cheerfulness and compassion during periods of heavy losses.

In March 1915 the battalion lost a lot of men at the Second Battle of Ypres, where gas was used, and Noel asked for a gramophone to play to the men. In June the Battle of Hooge left the regiment with only 140 officers and men fit for service and many of Noel's friends dead or injured.

**No-Man's-Land:** Although medical orderlies and stretcher-bearers were really the ones required to search for the wounded in No-Man's-Land, Noel Chavasse would work all day and then head into No-Man's-Land at night on a regular basis – and as a result he was recommended for the Military Cross. However, Noel was not popular with senior officers all the time – he frequently asked uncomfortable questions and complained about the men's living conditions. He was outspoken about shell shock and the treatment of those who showed signs of what we would now call a nervous breakdown, but which at the time were seen as weakness and cowardice. It is likely that this attitude held back Noel's promotion.

**The Somme:** In late July 1916 the regiment was posted to near Mametz Wood, and on August 8th suffered heavy losses trying to advance at Guillemont – losing one sixth of their force during four assaults. 167 men from 600 were wounded, and 17 officers were killed or wounded during this action alone.

Noel was wounded when shell splinters were blown into his back, but he continued working and later went into No-Man's-Land, passing within 20 metres of the German front line to rescue three wounded men. As a result Noel was awarded the VC, and his stretcher-bearers were awarded two Distinguished Conduct Medals, and two Military Medals.

**Returning to Active Service:** After some brief medical leave Noel refused a posting away from the front line, and returned to his unit. On 31st July 1917, during the Third Battle of Ypres, the order to advance came again, and, although held up by barbed wire, ground was gained after a new tank broke through. Noel moved his first-aid post forward to Setques Farm – a high-risk strategy as counter-attacks continued.

**Shellbursts:** Whilst working in his aid post Noel was hit in the head by shell splinters, causing blood loss and a possible fractured skull. The wound was dressed but he refused evacuation, again went into No-Man's-Land with a torch that night, and continued to work without rest.

Later a shell burst directly over the dugout and only Noel was left alive, but badly hurt. He crawled to a nearby dugout for help and was able to explain what had happened. He was evacuated with severe stomach wounds and was operated on at the Brandhoek Casualty Station.

Although he cheerfully recovered from the anaesthetic, he died on 4th August at 2pm. He was posthumously awarded a second VC (a Bar). His medals are displayed at the Imperial War Museum, London. He is one of only three men to have gained a VC and Bar.

# Noel Chavasse VC and Bar



Listen carefully to the story of how Noel Chavasse won the Victoria Cross twice. The first time, listen to make sense of what is happening. The second time, listen so you can fill in the rest of this sheet.

1. *The Reverend Francis and Mrs Edith Chavasse had twins called*

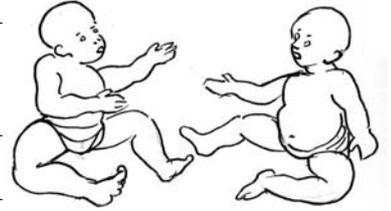
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2. *The boys were talented, and studied at university to become*

---

---



3. *They were also keen sportsmen and*

---



4. *During the Great War Noel volunteered as a surgeon and served with*

---

5. *He saw action in*

---

---

*and was involved in the battles at*

*1915:*

---

*1916:*

---

6. *To keep morale high he asked his parents to send a*

---

7. *Noel became well known for working long hours cheerfully and for heading out into No-Man's-Land with a torch to*

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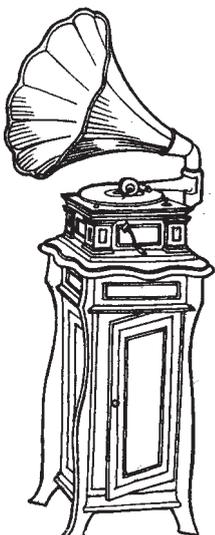
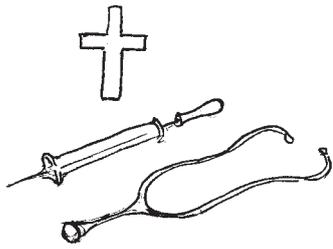
8. *Dr Chavasse won his VC and Bar because*

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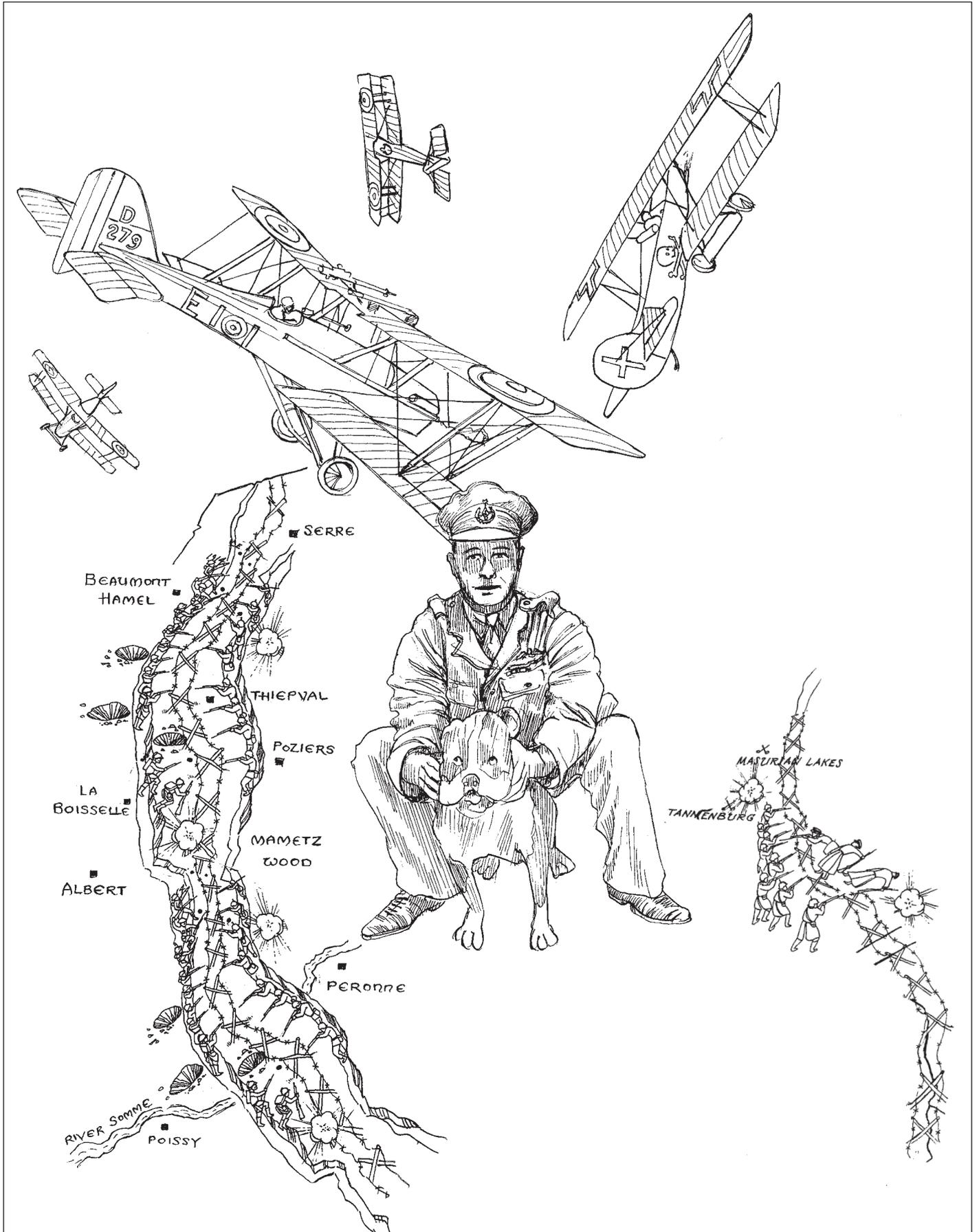
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# Major McCudden RFC



Major McCudden RFC - VC and Bar, DSO and Bar, MC and Bar, MM, Croix de Guerre

# James McCudden: Air Ace

## Early Flight Technology

Aeroplanes were a recent idea when the Great War began. The first very basic military aircraft were introduced in France only in 1911, with 132 machines in service by 1914 and a similar reserve force. The British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was smaller initially – but by 1918 each of the great powers had several thousand machines. Aeroplanes were made of light wood, canvas, resin and wire and there was little chance of survival if engines failed or wing or rudder damage was inflicted. The life expectancy of pilots could be very short. Despite the advances, the weather really determined whether flying was possible, and night flying took place only by accident. British squadrons operated in flights of twelve machines. By 1918 larger deployments were being used in support of ground troops. Aerial bombing had begun, using Zeppelins and some aeroplanes.



## Public Interest

The general public took great interest in the exploits of the flyers – considering them to be a somewhat more romanticised form of warrior than the sea and land forces. As a result there was a great demand for news of air aces and their battles in the clouds. The most decorated British air ace of the Great War was James McCudden, a major in the RFC, who by 1918 had won the VC, DSO and Bar, MC and Bar, MM and Croix de Guerre. McCudden was born into a military family and followed this tradition, first becoming a boy soldier, then a bugler, then a sapper in the Royal Engineers. Joining the RFC in 1913, he became one of the early pilots, but could strip down and repair an engine as well as any air mechanic. McCudden rose through the ranks, was commissioned, and by the time of his death had reached the rank of major. His brothers William (Willie) and John (Jack) were killed on active service in 1915 and 1918. In a time when aircraft technology and flying tactics were changing rapidly, McCudden used his advanced knowledge and skills to weigh up potentially dangerous situations based on a practical, rational attitude. He believed care with machine guns and tactics were the keys to success and developed an approach to attack involving swooping from above. This combination of knowledge, skills and awareness were the basis of his being recognised as a brilliant tactician whose techniques have been used by RAF instructors to the present day.

## McCudden's citation for the Victoria Cross read:

*'For most conspicuous bravery, exceptional perseverance, and a very high devotion to duty. Captain McCudden has at the present time accounted for 54 enemy aeroplanes. Of these, 42 have been destroyed, 19 of them on our side of the lines. Only 12 out of the 54 have been driven out of control. On two occasions, he had totally destroyed 4 two-seater enemy aeroplanes on the same day, and on the last occasion all 4 machines were destroyed in the space of one hour and thirty minutes. While in his present squadron, he has participated in 78 offensive patrols, and in nearly every case has been the leader. On at least 30 occasions, whilst with the same squadron, he has crossed the lines alone, either in pursuit or in quest of enemy aeroplanes. The following incidents are examples of the work he has done recently: on 23 December 1917, when leading his patrol, 8 enemy aeroplanes were attacked between 14.30/15.50 and of these 2 were shot down by Captain McCudden in our lines; on the morning of the same day, he left the ground at 10.50 and encountered 4 enemy aeroplanes and of these he shot 2 down; on 30 January 1918, he, single-handed, attacked 5 enemy scouts, as a result of which 2 were destroyed. On this occasion, he only returned home when the enemy scouts had been driven far east; his Lewis gun ammunition was all finished and the belt of his Vickers gun had broken. As a patrol leader he has at all times shown the utmost gallantry and skill, not only in the manner in which he has attacked and destroyed the enemy, but in the way he has, during several aerial fights, protected the newer members of his flight, thus keeping down their casualties to a minimum. This officer is considered, by the record he has made, by his fearlessness, and by the great service which he has rendered to his country, deserving of the very highest honour.'*

**London Gazette, 2nd April 1918**

Ironically James McCudden was killed in an accidental crash on 9th July 1918, believed to have been caused by an engine fault – despite 57 victorious sorties involving 19 captured aircraft, 27 and one shared destroyed, eight and two shared 'down, out of control!'

## Task:

McCudden was stunningly successful in his chosen area of combat. His book *Flying Fury – Five Years in the RFC* is going to be republished. You have to write a summary of his life and career for the back cover.

## Want to Know More?

Visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_McCudden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_McCudden)

During the Great War of 1914–1918 supplies to Britain were threatened by the German submarine fleet.

Submarines during the Great War were diesel-powered on the surface and battery-powered under the water, using bulky electric motors. The diesel engines recharged the batteries, and it was necessary to surface on a regular basis to obtain fresh air.



The tactical use of submarines changed during the war. To begin with the plan was to use them as part of a surface fleet; later they were seen as invaluable in a hunter–killer role. Depth charges were developed to shake apart the plates and their seals in order to cause a submarine to implode in the underwater pressure.

The German U-boat fleet was based on four flotillas, usually of around 60 vessels. 810 vessels were built and 210 of these were lost by accident or enemy action.

The U-boats developed the tactic of surfacing close to undefended or lightly defended merchant ships, forcing them to surrender. The captains would be ordered to take to the lifeboats and any cargo the Germans wanted would be taken before the ship was sunk. In response Britain developed a series of 'Q-ships' – defended vessels with a Royal Navy crew made to look like undefended merchant ships. A Q-ship would wait for a submarine to threaten it and surface, and then attack the vulnerable submarine when it surfaced with twelve-pound guns hidden in dummy steering houses or deck cargo.

On 8th August 1917 the Q-ship *Dunraven* sighted UC71, a German submarine, which later dived, resurfaced at 11.43pm and fired at the ship with a deck gun from about 3,100 metres away. *Dunraven's* Commander Campbell ordered men into a boat to give the appearance of panic. Three of UC71's shells struck the poop deck and a depth charge on the ship exploded. No movement was allowed, so the ship appeared abandoned.

The ship was burning, and the deck getting hotter. Petty Officer Ernest Pitcher and his hidden gun crew had to lift their ammunition onto their knees to stop it exploding! Commander Campbell later spoke of his dilemma: what should he do next? His men were at severe risk, but the mission had to be accomplished in order to save many other lives.

At 12.58pm, before the gun could be used against UC71, an explosion in the ship blew the gun crew into the air. Pitcher and a crewman survived by chance when they landed on dummy railway trucks. The deck gun was now used to fire at the diving submarine without impact.

The U-boat resurfaced again at 2.30pm and launched torpedoes at *Dunraven* until it ran out of ammunition. The Q-ship also prepared torpedoes – launching two before UC71 finally dived and disappeared. A British destroyer arrived to tow the badly damaged Q-ship to Plymouth but *Dunraven* sank at 3am.

A number of medals were awarded to crew members for this action. As the bravery of the gun crew, and their willingness to stay concealed in terrible conditions, was especially valiant, it was decided to award one of the crew a VC. A ballot among the men awarded the medal to Ernest Pitcher on behalf of the team.

Pitcher survived the war to become a woodwork teacher, then a publican, before serving on a shore station during the Second World War. The action on *Dunraven* also led to the award of the French Medaille Militaire and the Croix de Guerre. Ernest Pitcher's Victoria Cross is held in trust by the Ashcroft Collection.

## Tasks:

**You are the producer of a major film about the Q-ships of the Great War of 1914–1918**

Decide which stars might play the lead roles and then list the key parts of the HMS *Dunraven* story that you will include in your screenplay – you will need to present your plans to your investors (your teacher and class!) for approval.

# Trouble in Afghanistan



Britain was facing border problems on the North-West Frontier of India in the 1920s, especially from Mahsud tribesmen in Afghanistan. To ease the movement of troops a road-building programme was begun along the border. On 10th April 1921 Sepoy (Private) Ishar Singh, of the Indian Army, was escorting a supply convoy through a valley when they were attacked from both sides by a hundred Mahsud tribesmen.

## Source 1.

*'When the convoy protection troops were attacked, the Sepoy (Ishar Singh) was No. 1 of a Lewis-Gun Section. Early in the action he received a very severe gunshot wound to the chest, and fell beside his Lewis-Gun. Hand to hand fighting having commenced, the British Officer, Indian Officer, and all the Havildars (Sergeants) of his Company were either killed or wounded, and his Lewis-Gun was seized by the enemy. Calling up to other men, he got up, charged the enemy, recovered the Lewis-Gun and although bleeding profusely, again got the gun into action. When his Jemadar (Corporal) arrived he took the gun from Sepoy Ishar Singh and ordered him to go back and have his wound dressed. Instead of doing this the Sepoy went to the Medical Officer, and was of great assistance in pointing out where the wounded were, and in carrying water to them. He made innumerable journeys to the river and back for this purpose. On one occasion, when the enemy fire was very heavy, he took the rifle off a wounded man and helped keep down the fire. On another occasion, he stood in front of the Medical Officer who was dressing a wounded man, thus shielding him with his body. It was over three hours before he finally submitted to being evacuated, being then too weak from loss of blood to object. His gallantry and devotion to duty were beyond praise. His conduct inspired all who saw him.'*

**London Gazette, 25th November 1921**

## Source 2.



## Source 3.

Report in the *Madras Mail* newspaper

A telegram from HM the King, George V, Emperor of India, has been sent to the Commander of the 28th Punjabi Regiment:

*'Please convey to Ishar Singh and his Regiment my warm congratulations on this first occasion on which a Sikh soldier has won the Victoria Cross. It was well and gallantly won.'*

## Task:

**You are the editor of the *Amritsar Times* in India in December 1921. The news of Ishar Singh's VC has just been announced. Write the headline and story announcing the news to your readers.**

## Want to Know More?

To learn about the recipients of the VC in lists by conflict, force, nation or name, visit:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria\\_Cross\\_recipients](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Cross_recipients)



During the Second World War, fought by British Empire and Commonwealth forces between 1939 and 1945, one of the posters used showed a multi-ethnic group marching alongside each other under the title 'Together'. The intention was to stress the multinational alliance working together to defeat Hitler, the Nazis and racist fascist aggression. Since this conflict members of the 'United Nations' of 1939–45 have continued to defend the values of tolerance, respect for diversity and democracy.

## Tasks:

**Link the heads and tails to tell the stories of some VC winners since 1939.**

<p><b>a. Squadron Leader John Nettleton, from Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe), a</b></p>	<p><b>1. part of an attack on a Nazi-controlled Moroccan harbour under heavy fire.</b></p>
<p><b>b. Frederick 'Fritz' Peters, a Canadian naval officer, served in both World Wars, and was</b></p>	<p><b>2. decoration for bravery in Vietnam, saving soldiers who had become dispersed, and fighting against the odds.</b></p>
<p><b>c. In June 1944 Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu, of the Fijian Infantry, rescued two wounded comrades in Papua New</b></p>	<p><b>3. missions in Burma, North Africa and Iraq. He won the DFC, and was awarded the VC.</b></p>
<p><b>d. Andrew Mynarski VC, a Canadian with Polish parents, refused to leave a burning bomber over Germany in an attempt to save</b></p>	<p><b>4. combat against the Germans. He tried to escape after capture so often that he was kept at Colditz Castle.</b></p>
<p><b>e. Charles Upham, from New Zealand, was awarded a VC and Bar for fierce</b></p>	<p><b>5. Guinea. Wounded during a third rescue, he saw others die trying to save him – so he stood and died to prevent further losses.</b></p>
<p><b>f. Australian soldier Keith Payne VC won his</b></p>	<p><b>6. Warrior armoured personnel carriers in Iraq on two occasions in 2005.</b></p>
<p><b>g. Sepoy (Private) Kamal Ram VC fought with the Indian forces through Italy in 1944–5 at the age of only</b></p>	<p><b>7. his friend Pat Brophy. Mynarski died, but Brophy was thrown clear by the impact and survived.</b></p>
<p><b>h. David Lord VC, an Irishman from Cork, was a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF who carried out daring</b></p>	<p><b>8. the Gurkha force fought with great valour. Rambadhur Limbu won his VC for rescuing and protecting wounded comrades.</b></p>
<p><b>i. During fighting against communist and nationalist forces in Malaysia in the Sarawak campaign and in Borneo</b></p>	<p><b>9. pilot, gained his VC in a daylight raid on a German diesel-engine factory in 1942.</b></p>
<p><b>j. Private Johnson Gideon Beharry VC, from Grenada, saved the crews of several</b></p>	<p><b>10. 19. His attack on a machine-gun post allowed his force to move forward more safely.</b></p>

The third programme in the *Victoria Cross Heroes* film documentary tells the stories of several of the men of the Empire and Commonwealth forces who have defended democracy alongside British forces.

## Want to Know More?

For a list of VC winners by nationality visit:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Victoria\\_Cross\\_recipients\\_by\\_nationality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Victoria_Cross_recipients_by_nationality)

# Once More For Luck



It is difficult to compare different acts of bravery, but some stand out as stunning in nature. Twenty-five-year-old Norman Cyril Jackson RAFVR was prepared to risk his life for his comrades on the day that he volunteered for 'one more sortie for luck' – a 31st mission, and the same day he had been told his first son had been born.

## Task:

Read the story of how Norman Jackson RAFVR VC won his medal – then, as if you are his commanding officer in 1944, write to his wife to report his capture by the Germans.

*'The airman was the flight engineer in a Lancaster detailed to attack Schweinfurt on the night of 26th April 1944. Bombs were dropped successfully and the aircraft was climbing out of the target area. Suddenly it was attacked by a fighter at about 20,000 feet. The captain took evading action at once, but the enemy secured many hits. A fire started near a petrol tank on the upper surface of the starboard wing, between the fuselage and the inner engine. Sergeant Jackson was thrown to the floor during the engagement. Wounds which he received from shell splinters in the right leg and shoulder were probably sustained at that time. Recovering himself, he remarked that he could deal with the fire on the wing and obtained his captain's permission to try to put out the flames.*

*Pushing a hand fire-extinguisher into the top of his life-saving jacket and clipping on his parachute pack, Sergeant Jackson jettisoned the escape hatch above the pilot's head. He then started to climb out of the cockpit and back along the top of the fuselage to the starboard wing. Before he could leave the fuselage his parachute pack opened and the whole canopy and rigging lines spilled into the cockpit. Undeterred, Sergeant Jackson continued. The pilot, bomb aimer and navigator gathered the parachute together and held on to the rigging lines, paying them out as the airman crawled aft. Eventually he slipped and, falling from the fuselage to the starboard wing, grasped an air intake on the leading edge of the wing. He succeeded in clinging on but lost the extinguisher, which was blown away.*

*By this time, the fire had spread rapidly and Sergeant Jackson was involved. His face, hands and clothing were severely burnt. Unable to retain his hold, he was swept through the flames and over the trailing edge of the wing, dragging his parachute behind. When last seen it was only partly inflated and was burning in a number of places. Realising the fire could not be controlled the captain gave the order to abandon the aircraft. Four of the remaining members of the crew landed safely. The captain and rear gunner have not been accounted for.*

*Sergeant Jackson was unable to control his descent and landed heavily. He sustained a broken ankle, and his right eye was closed through burns and his hands were useless. These injuries, together with the wounds received earlier, reduced him to a pitiable state. At daybreak he crawled to the nearest village, where he was taken prisoner. He bore the intense pain and discomfort of the journey to Stalag Luft with magnificent fortitude. After 10 months in hospital he made a good recovery, though his hands required further treatment and are of only limited use.*

*This airman's attempt to extinguish the fire and save the aircraft and crew from falling into enemy hands was an act of outstanding gallantry. To venture outside, when travelling at 200 miles an hour, at an incredible height and in intense cold, was an almost incredible feat. Had he succeeded in subduing the flames, there was little or no prospect of his regaining the cockpit. The spilling of his parachute and risk of grave damage to its canopy reduced his chances of survival to a minimum. By his ready willingness to face these dangers he set an example of self-sacrifice which will ever be remembered.'*

**London Gazette, 26th October 1945**

After landing Jackson sought help at a nearby cottage. The Nazi authorities paraded the injured man through the nearest town before sending him to a prison camp, from which he later made two escape attempts.

## Want to Know More?

Visit <http://www.airscene.org/monument/Quotations.htm> for quotations about the war in the air in World War Two, and <http://www.airscene.org/monument/VCAwards.htm#vc> for details of awards of VCs for WW2 airmen



## The Jungle War

In 1941 Japan unexpectedly entered the Second World War in a surprise attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor. Japanese expansion in Asia had started in 1937 with an attack on China. Rapid overwhelming attacks on South-East Asian states led to Japanese occupation of much of the region. By March 1944 the Japanese were pushing towards India. General Slim's 14th Army in Central Burma was given the responsibility of holding the Japanese back – despite fierce Japanese action.

Air superiority remained with the British and US forces, and the 17th Indian 'Black Cat' Division defended the key locations of Imphal and Kohima. Part of the defence force included Gurkha units from the mountain kingdom of Nepal. To be successful the Japanese required a fast victory – they had no supply lines so had to live off whatever they could capture or take in the jungle.

The Black Cats put up a remarkable resistance, and forced the Japanese into retreat. In the pursuit through monsoon conditions the Japanese lost 65,000 men through starvation, disease and combat. The plan to invade India had collapsed.

## VC Citation for Naik (Corporal) Agansing Rai

*'In Burma on 24th and 25th June, 1944, after fierce fighting, the enemy, with greatly superior forces, had captured two posts known as "Water Piquet" and "Mortar Bluff". These posts were well sighted and were mutually supporting and their possession by the enemy threatened our communications. On the morning of 26th June, 1944, a company of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) was ordered to recapture these positions.*

*After preliminary artillery concentration, the company went in to attack but on reaching a false crest about 80 yards from its objective, it was pinned down by heavy and accurate fire from a machine gun in "Mortar Bluff" and a 37-millimetre gun in the jungle, suffering many casualties. Naik Agansing Rai, appreciating that more delay would inevitably result in heavier casualties, at once led his section under withering fire directly at the machine-gun and, firing as he went, charged the position, himself killing three of the crew of four. Inspired by this cool act of bravery the section surged forward across the bullet-swept ground and routed the garrison of "Mortar Bluff".*

*This position was now under intense fire from the 37-millimetre gun in the jungle and from "Water Piquet". Naik Agansing Rai at once advanced towards the gun, his section without hesitation following their gallant leader. Intense fire reduced the section to three men before half*

*the distance had been covered. But they pressed on to their objective. Arriving at close range, Naik Agansing Rai killed three of the crew and his men killed the other two. The party then returned to "Mortar Bluff" where the rest of their platoon were forming for the final assault on "Water Piquet".*

*In the subsequent advance, heavy machine-gun fire and showers of grenades from an isolated bunker position caused further casualties. Once more, with indomitable courage, Naik Agansing Rai, covered by his Bren gunner, advanced alone with a grenade in one hand and his Thompson Sub-Machine gun in the other. Through devastating fire he reached the enemy position and with his grenade and bursts from his Thompson Sub-Machine gun killed all four occupants of the bunker.*

*The enemy, demoralised by this NCO's calm display of courage and complete contempt for danger, now fled before the onslaught on "Water Piquet" and this position too was captured. Naik Agansing Rai's magnificent display of initiative, outstanding bravery and gallant leadership, so inspired the rest of the Company that, in spite of heavy casualties, the result of this important action was never in doubt.'*

**London Gazette 5th October 1944**

Agansing Rai was born in 1920 in Asmara in Eastern Nepal. He joined the army in April 1941 and was made a naik (corporal) in 1943. He received his VC from the Viceroy of India in 1945. He became a subadar (sergeant major) and joined the Indian army in 1947. He retired in 1971 as an honorary captain, and died in 2000.

## Task:

**Read the account of Agansing Rai's involvement in the defence of Burma, and then write an obituary for Agansing Rai VC.**

# Sink the Takao



Towards the end of Second World War action continued against the Japanese in the Pacific region of Asia. Fighting was intense and ruthless, and liberating island by island required control of the sea and air.

The Royal Navy identified a heavily-defended Japanese target, the cruiser *Takao*, and dispatched the submarine HMS *Stygian* and the midget sub XE3 to sink the *Takao*.

With a crew of four HMS XE3 was hot, stuffy and cramped. The mission commander was Lt Ian Fraser, nicknamed 'Titch', but even he could not stand up in the sub! Diver James 'Mick' Magennis had the unenviable task of leaving the tiny XE3 to place explosives on the target. Both men would win the VC in the attack – travelling through 80 miles/128 km of mined waters, past listening posts and underwater snags and through an anti-submarine boom.

## Michael Ashcroft recounts the story:

*'XE3 was given the task of sinking the Takao, a 10,000-ton Japanese cruiser, in the Johore Straits, Singapore. XE3 was towed to the area by a conventional submarine, Stygian, and slipped her tow at 11pm for the hazardous forty-mile journey through wrecks, minefields, listening posts and surface patrols. Conditions inside the midget sub were cramped, stuffy and uncomfortable. At 12.30pm the next day, the target was in sight and at 1.52 pm Fraser began his attack.*

*At 3.03pm – on his second attempt – Fraser slid XE3 directly under the Takao, which was anchored in shallow water with her stern less than 30 metres from the Singapore side of the straits. Magennis slid out of the 'wet and dry' compartment – which could be flooded or pumped to let a diver out or in – and began fixing limpet mines to the cruiser. He had to chip away at barnacles for more than half an hour in order to attach the magnetic explosives. Also, the magnets were unusually weak so he had to swim and retrieve them time and again. Eventually, despite a leak from his oxygen line, he attached half a dozen limpets to the hull before returning, exhausted, to the submarine. It was almost impossible for him to close the hatch because his hands had been shredded clearing the barnacles.*

*Fraser now had to release two side charges, each with two tons of Amatol, a high explosive. The port charge slipped away cleanly but the starboard one stuck to the midget submarine. The tide was going out and XE3 had become wedged beneath Takao and would not budge. For more than an hour, Fraser struggled with XE3's controls to break free but to no avail. It looked as if the midget submarine and her crew would be blown to pieces by her own explosives. They knew they had only six hours before the charges went off. Then, suddenly, the midget submarine shot backwards, out of control, surged towards the surface and caused a big splash just fifty yards from the cruiser. None of the Japanese crew saw it, and XE3 returned to the bottom. However, the starboard charge was still attached.*

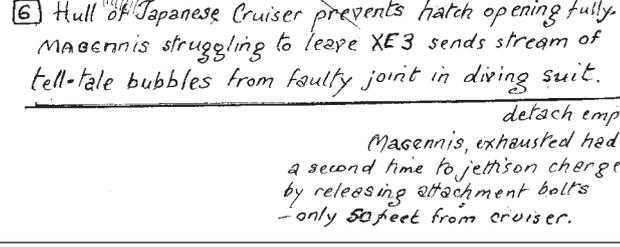
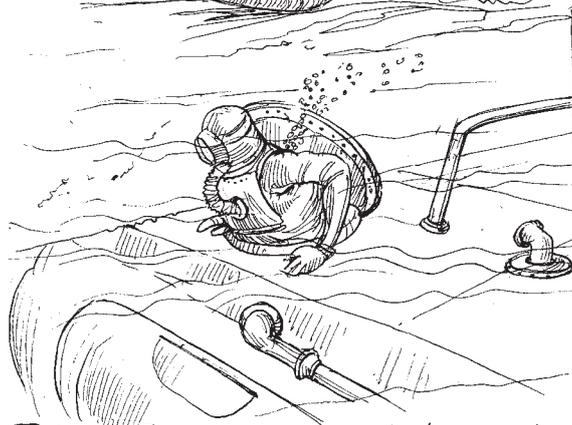
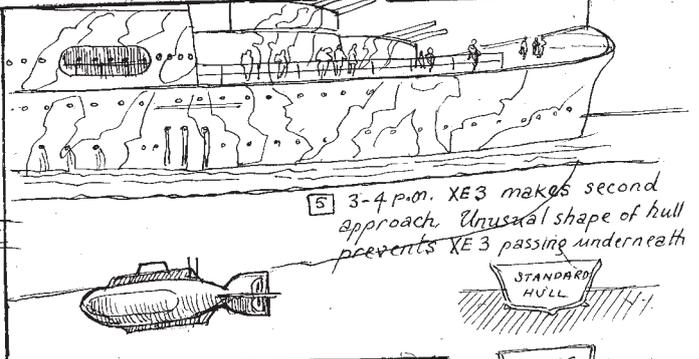
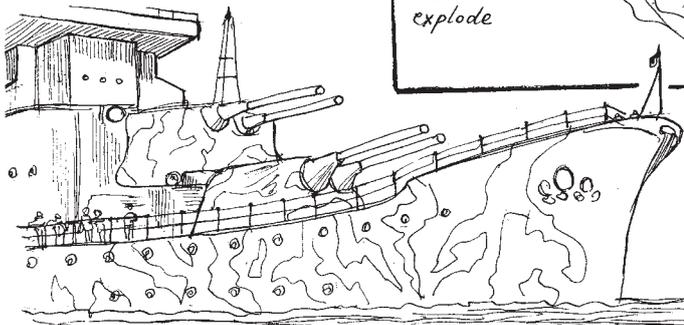
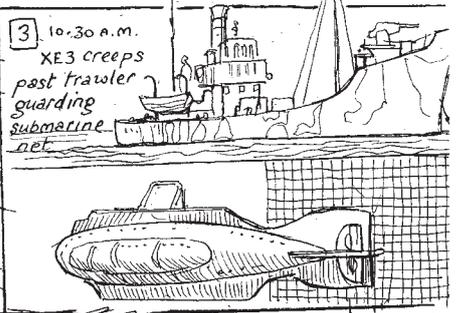
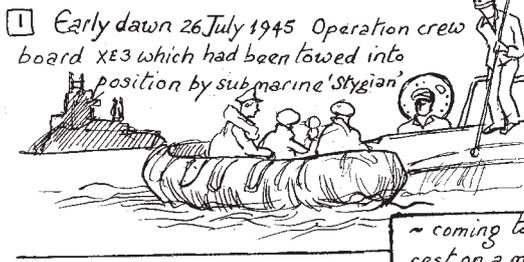
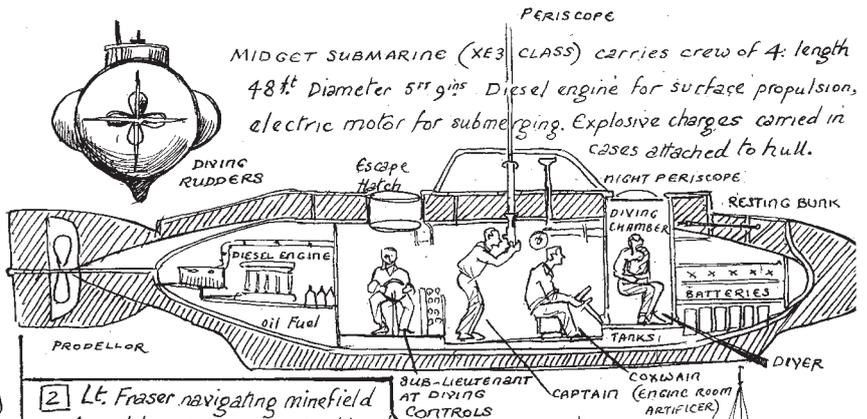
*Knowing that Magennis was exhausted and injured, Fraser volunteered to dive to free it. Magennis, who had already done enough to win a VC, insisted he was the more experienced diver and said: "I'll be all right as soon as I've got my wind, sir!" A little later, he slipped into the water clutching a large spanner, and after five minutes of struggle succeeded in releasing the charge. As soon as he was on board again, XE3 began her journey back at full speed, again negotiating the hazards that had been encountered on her approach. Eventually, she rendezvoused with Stygian and was towed to safety. The charges that they laid blew a sixty-by-thirty foot hole in Takao's hull, although it was later learned that she had only a skeleton crew aboard. Several days later, Fraser and Magennis were on the base ship Bonaventure when the telegraphist received a message saying that the two men had been awarded the VC. Even though it was 1am when the captain heard the news, he insisted on celebrating. On a warm night off the Australian coast, the crew partied until dawn. Fraser and Magennis received their VCs from George VI at Buckingham Palace on 11 December 1945.'*

**Source: *Victoria Cross Heroes*, pp. 288–9**

## Task:

**After the war Magennis's story was told in a comic-strip magazine for young people. If you were the editor/artist, which parts of the story would you illustrate as the key points?**

The story of the attack on the *Takao* is told in the third programme of the film documentary *Victoria Cross Heroes*.



# The Ultimate Sacrifice



Flying Officer Leslie Manser was 20 years old when he won the Victoria Cross, although he never knew it had been awarded to him: his act of courage cost him his life.

In early 1942, during the Second World War, RAF Bomber Command was struggling with heavy losses and limited accuracy of attacks on targets. Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris decided to launch a force of 1,000 bombers against a German city and picked Cologne (Köln): Germany's third largest city.

On 30th May the 32 airfields used for the attack launched 1,046 bombers, of which 989 were later claimed to have reached their target. 1,455 tons of bombs were dropped and 600 acres of the city of Cologne including many historic buildings were destroyed.

The carpet bombing of Cologne was over in an hour and a half, resulting in many deaths and as much devastation as had been previously been inflicted on Germany.

*'As the aircraft was approaching its objective it was caught by searchlights and subjected to intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Flying Officer Manser held on his dangerous course and bombed the target successfully from the height of 7,000 feet.*

*Then he set course for base. The Manchester had been damaged and was still under heavy fire. Flying Officer Manser took violent evasive action, turning and descending to under 1,000 feet. It was of no avail. The searchlights and flak followed him until the outskirts of the city were passed. The aircraft was hit repeatedly and the rear gunner was wounded. The front cabin filled with smoke; the port engine was overheating badly.*

*Pilot and crew could all have escaped safely by parachute. Nevertheless, Flying Officer Manser, disregarding the obvious hazards, persisted in his attempt to save the aircraft and crew from falling into enemy hands. He took the aircraft up to 2,000 feet. Then the port engine burst into flames. It was ten minutes before the fire was mastered, but then the engine went out of action for good, part of one wing was burnt and the air-speed of the aircraft became dangerously low.*

*Despite all the efforts of the pilot and crew, the Manchester began to lose height. At this critical moment, Flying Officer Manser once more disdained the alternative of parachuting to safety with his crew. Instead, with grim determination, he set a new course for the nearest base, accepting for himself the prospect of almost certain death in a firm resolve to carry on to the end.*

*Soon the aircraft became extremely difficult to handle and, when a crash was inevitable, Flying Officer Manser ordered the crew to bail out. A sergeant handed him a parachute but he waved it away telling the non-commissioned officer to jump at once as he could only hold the aircraft steady for a few seconds more. While the crew were descending to safety they saw the aircraft, still carrying their gallant captain, plunge to earth and burst into flames.*

*In pressing home his attack in the face of strong opposition, in striving against heavy odds to bring back his aircraft and crew, and finally, when in extreme peril, thinking only of the safety of his comrades, Flying Officer Manser displayed determination and valour of the highest order.'*

**London Gazette, 23 October 1942**

## Tasks:

- What reasons can you give to explain Flying Officer Manser's actions in May 1942?
- Is heavy bombing of cities acceptable in wartime?

## Want to Know More?

For a list of VC winners by campaign, visit:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Victoria\\_Cross\\_recipients\\_by\\_campaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Victoria_Cross_recipients_by_campaign)

# 'Extreme Gallantry and Unquestioned Valour'

## Adapted from citation for Johnson Gideon Beharry VC – Private, 1st Battalion Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment



'In the early hours of 1st May 2004, Beharry was the driver of a platoon Warrior armoured fighting vehicle. His company were moving into the city of al Amarah to a foot patrol that had become pinned down under sustained small arms, heavy machine-gun fire, improvised explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenade attack.

The road was empty of all civilians and traffic – an indicator of a potential ambush ahead. The platoon commander ordered the vehicle to halt; it was immediately hit by multiple rocket-propelled grenades and engulfed in a number of violent explosions, which physically rocked the 30-tonne Warrior.

The platoon commander, the vehicle's gunner, and a number of soldiers in the rear were wounded. Beharry had no means of communication. He did not know if his commander or crewmen were still alive. On his own initiative, he closed his driver's hatch and moved forward through the ambush position, halting just short of a barricade across the road.

The vehicle was hit again by sustained rocket-propelled grenade attack from the alleyways and rooftops. These explosions caused it to catch fire and fill rapidly with thick smoke. Beharry opened up his hatch cover to clear his view. The best course of action to save the lives of his crew was to push through. He drove his Warrior, not knowing if there were mines, and was able to lead the remaining five Warriors towards safety.

As the smoke in his driver's tunnel cleared, he was just able to make out another rocket-propelled grenade heading towards him. He pulled the hatch down with one hand, whilst controlling his vehicle with the other. The explosion, flames, and force of the blast passed directly over him and down the driver's tunnel, further wounding the semi-conscious gunner in the turret. The impact of this rocket destroyed Beharry's armoured periscope, so he was forced to drive the remainder of the route with his head exposed to enemy fire. While his head remained out of the hatch, he was hit by a 7.62-mm bullet, which penetrated his helmet and remained lodged on its inner surface.

Beharry continued until he broke through to the outside of the Cimic House outpost, which was receiving small arms fire from the surrounding area. He brought his vehicle to a halt outside, climbed onto the turret of the still-burning vehicle and manhandled his wounded platoon commander out of the turret to the safety of a nearby Warrior. He then returned to lift out the gunner and move him to a position of safety; again he returned to the rear of the burning vehicle to lead the disorientated and shocked casualties to safety.

Remounting his burning vehicle for the third time, he drove it into the defended perimeter of the outpost, thus denying it to the enemy. Only at this stage did Beharry pull the fire-extinguisher handles, immobilizing the engine of the vehicle, and move himself into the back of another Warrior. Once inside Beharry collapsed and was evacuated.

He had medical treatment on and 11th June 2004 Beharry's Warrior was part of a quick reaction force tasked to attempt to cut off a mortar team that had attacked a base. As the lead vehicle he was moving rapidly through the dark city streets towards the suspected firing point, when his vehicle was ambushed from a series of rooftop positions. A rocket-propelled grenade detonated on the vehicle's armour, just fifteen centimetres from Beharry's head, resulting in a serious head injury. Other rockets struck the turret and sides of the vehicle, incapacitating his commander and injuring several of the crew.

With the injury obscuring his vision, Beharry managed to reverse the Warrior, until it struck the wall of a nearby building. Beharry then lost consciousness as a result of his serious head injury and was in a coma for some time. His actions almost certainly saved the lives of his crew.

Beharry displayed repeated extreme gallantry and unquestioned valour, despite intense direct attacks, personal injury and damage to his vehicle in the face of relentless enemy action.'

### Task:

**Write either a tabloid or a broadsheet headline and short article reporting on the award of the Victoria Cross to Johnson Beharry.**

# Bravery Under Fire



Grenadan-born British soldier Johnson Beharry's Victoria Cross was awarded for his actions during the conflict in Iraq in 2004. In this task you are planning a radio programme about the events that led to Beharry's award. Your target audience is broad – from younger listeners in the 16–25 age range through to the retired. The programme is part of a short documentary series on bravery, and this will be one of the last programmes.

Your researcher has arranged for you to interview Johnson Beharry VC, Richard Deane MC and Dave Falconer MC, and they have agreed to allow their answers to form part of the programme.

- What will you ask the men?
- What else do you need to find out/arrange?

The planning sheet below might help you work out the structure for your programme:

## PLANNING

1. Main aims of broadcast
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2. Plan for content			
Presenter	Timing		Content
	From	To	
	00:00		<b>1.</b> Welcome/Introduction
			<b>2.</b>
			Closure/Credits

Remember that this is a radio production – therefore language will be important to help get and keep the listeners interest and to create a mental image for them of the events being discussed.

The third programme in the *Victoria Cross Heroes* film documentary includes interviews with Johnson Beharry VC and his superior officers, Richard Deane MC and Dave Falconer MC.