
MONARCHY NEW ZEALAND

The Journal of The Monarchist League of New Zealand Incorporated

ISSN 1174-8435



Volume 14 Issue 1 February 2009



The Monarchist League of New Zealand, Inc.

Patron: Hon Sir Peter Tapsell, KNZM MBE MBChB
Otago FRCSEd FRCS

The Honorary Secretary, 216 Victoria Avenue,
Remuera,
Auckland 1050, New Zealand

Website URLs:

<http://www.geocities.com/Capitolhill/Parliament/7802>
<http://www.monarchy.org.nz/>

Council:

Chairman: Professor Noel Cox, LL.M. MTheol PhD
Auckland MA Lambeth LTh Lampeter
GradDipTertTchg AUT FRHistS

Secretary: Mrs Robyn Bridgman, QSM

Treasurer: Captain Chris Barradale, Master Mariner

Councillors:

Roger Barnes, Esq., FHSNZ
Brett Cunningham, Esq., BSc Otago BA
LLM(Hons) Auckland
Miss Ruth Dillon
Sean Palmer, Esq., BA York MPhil AUT

League Officers:

Legal Adviser:

Professor Noel Cox

Librarian and Archivist:

Professor Noel Cox

Provincial Representative, Waikato:

Professor Peter Spiller, BA LLB PhD
Natal LL.M. MPhil Cambridge PhD
Canterbury PGCertTT Waikato FRHistS
FHERDSA AAMINZ

Provincial Representative, Thames-Coromandel:

Merv Tilsley, Esq.

Editor, *Monarchy New Zealand*:

Professor Noel Cox

Webmaster:

Professor Noel Cox

Auditor:

Stephen Brewster, Esq., BCA Victoria
University of Wellington MBA
MTaxS(Hons) Auckland CA

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Editorial**
- 3 **News in Brief**
- 3 Princess Anne's visit
- 4 The Queen's Christmas Broadcast
- 5 New Year's Honours List
- 5 Commonwealth Day
- 5 **Royal News**
- 5 The Prince of Wales at 60
- 6 **League News**
- 6 The Queen's Birthday Service
- 6 Launch of new website
- 6 **Coinage commemorates Prince Charles' 60th Birthday**, Stephen Brewster
- 7 **New Royal Marines Band CDs Released**, Stephen Brewster
- 8 **Royal Marine awarded George Cross**, Stephen Brewster
- 9 **George Cross**, Stephen Brewster and Dick Ryan
- 11 **Contact details for provincial representatives**

Monarchy New Zealand is published by The Monarchist League of New Zealand Inc. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy of The Monarchist League of New Zealand. Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, *Monarchy New Zealand*, 7 Cotter Avenue, Remuera, Auckland 1050, New Zealand. Tel: +64 9 523-4408; Fax: +64 9 523-4405; E-mail: noel.cox@xtra.co.nz

Editorial

On 8th November last year the people of New Zealand went to the polls, for the fifth general election since the introduction of MMP. It was the 19th election since the accession of Her Majesty The Queen, and the first for Governor-General Anand Satyanand. Unlike the other elections since 1996, there was a clear majority party winner, thus rendering the role of the Governor-General easier. But the Governor-General should never be regarded as holding a mere sinecure.

A variety of commentators predicted that the advent of Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) voting for the House of Representatives in 1996 would result in a more activist Governor-General, faced with the need to oversee the formation of a coalition or minority government. They argued that the Crown's reserve powers, hitherto used extremely rarely, if ever, may be used more often, giving the Governor-General more opportunities to exercise control over the incumbent government.

However it was flawed logic to assume that MMP would require a more interventionist Queen's representative. The Governor-General's role is essentially non-political, in that they do not seek to involve themselves, nor should politicians seek to involve them, in politics. Political power rests with Parliament and the responsible Ministers drawn from members of Parliament.

Arguments that the Governor-General can act as a guardian of the Constitution also overstate the case. Unlike in Australia, there is no constitutionally-ordained impasse which would require vice-regal intervention. Like the Sovereign in the United Kingdom, the Governor-General can only intervene to preserve the constitutional order itself.

In forming governments and dissolving Parliament, the Governor-General would have to follow the course of least political risk. They would seek to leave matters of political choice in the hands of the politicians.



If an election gives no clear result it should be a matter for the politicians, not the Governor-General, to resolve. It was suggested that the Governor-General should commission the leader of the largest party to form a government. But the largest party may be unable to form a government. It is the responsibility of politicians to ensure that the Crown is never without a ministry. The Governor-General should encourage the leaders to reach agreement, but it is their choice (or those of their supporters in

Parliament) which determines the composition of a government.

In the event of the political leaders failing to achieve agreement, there is then a limited role for the Governor-General, though as the Governor-General should not prefer any particular form of government, minority or coalition this risks embarrassing the office. The Clerk of the Executive Council, as agent for the Governor-General, liaised with the Prime Minister over the arrangements for the change to the new coalition Government in 1996. But they did not attempt to suggest, let alone impose, any particular coalition.



While the viability of any minority or coalition government is dependent on parliamentary support, there is no need to make formal provision for this, as the conventions are quite clear. MMP reinforces the importance of Parliament, rather than revives anachronistic Crown discretion – anachronistic in that no Sovereign since 1839 has prevented the formation of a government. Politicians, rather than the Governor-General, must make the essential choices of selecting a Prime Minister and determining whether to end the life of a Parliament. In this the advent of MMP will make no essential difference to our constitutional system.

The task for the Governor-General is to ascertain the will of Parliament. In the case where parties have publicly formed alliances, there is no need for advice from the incumbent Prime Minister or any other source. The outcome would be clear. In other cases he or she may have to act as a facilitator (but not arbitrator), providing such assistance as he or she could to bring about the formation of a government.

There could well be more uncertainty after an election than the nation is used to, perhaps for a period of some weeks. Elections prior to 2008 have

certainly shown that. But uncertainty alone is not a problem, so long as there is a clear process for resolving it. Such short-term uncertainty will have little long-term effect on the constitution. But it does serve to emphasise the role of the Governor-General as de facto head of State, and of the Crown as a part of the political structure of the country. It is the Governor-General, and not the Queen, that the public, as well as political leaders, would expect to resolve any impasse.

As with most other constitutional changes since 1986, the advent of MMP may have actually brought the Governor-General more closely into alignment with the position of the Sovereign in the United Kingdom. For, in focussing attention once more upon the reserve powers of the Crown, it has acted as a counterbalance to the traditional view of vice-regal versus royal free will (that is, that the independence of the realms led to the effective removal of the Crown).



The advent of MMP may still make a considerable difference to the law and working of the constitution. But this will perhaps not be in the way commentators suggested. For it may be in the long-term evolution of the constitution that its efforts are most clearly felt. Thus, while the actual role

of the Governor-General in the selection of Prime Minister may not have markedly altered, an increased emphasis upon vice-regal reserve powers may encourage a reappraisal of the office.

More significantly, the advent of MMP may have had the effect of encouraging further political change, either because of a desire to avoid the uncertainty inherent in coalition governments, or because of a feeling that reform may not have gone far enough. For it might be said that with increased awareness of the office, so the Governor-General has come some way to overcoming the lack of conviction about the free will of the Governor-General. In this it may be seen as continuing the process exemplified by the Constitution Act 1986, which brought the position of the Sovereign more

fully within the constitutional apparatus of New Zealand.

In the short term the advent of MMP has not had a marked effect on the office; in the longer term it may strengthen it, if only because it may have strengthened the emphasis upon the office of Governor-General as part of the constitutional framework.



In this it may have achieved what the 1975 crisis in Australia did, focussing attention upon the constitution

and the role of the Governor-General.

Professor Noel Cox

News in Brief

Princess Anne's visit

The Princess Royal was in New Zealand 14th to 18th November, to represent the Duke of Edinburgh at the 23rd Commonwealth Agricultural Conference, held in Christchurch.



The princess spent all four days of her New Zealand visit in Canterbury. During the Princesses' whirlwind four-day visit she took part in 11 events and talked to hundreds of people.

On the 15th she presented the New

Zealand Cup at Riccarton Park Racecourse, at the 145th running of the cup. Princess Anne will attend the New Zealand Cup Day following her visit to the A&P Royal NZ Show on Friday 14th, part of New Zealand Cup and Show Week.

The Princess also visited the Christchurch Riding for the Disabled (she has been President of Riding for the Disabled since 1970). Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker hosted a civic reception for the Princess on the 16th.

The Queen's Christmas Broadcast to The Commonwealth 2008

The following is the full text of Her Majesty The Queen's 2008 Christmas Broadcast to the Commonwealth:

Christmas is a time for celebration, but this year it is a more sombre occasion for many. Some of those things which could once have been taken for granted suddenly seem less certain and, naturally, give rise to feelings of insecurity.

People are touched by events which have their roots far across the world. Whether it is the global economy or violence in a distant land, the effects can be keenly felt at home.

Once again, many of our service men and women are serving on operations in common cause to bring peace and security to troubled places.

In this 90th year since the end of the First World War, the last survivors recently commemorated the service and enormous sacrifice of their own generation.

Their successors in theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan are still to be found in harm's way in the service of others. For their loved ones, the worry will never cease until they are safely home.

In such times as these we can all learn something from the past. We might begin to see things in a new perspective. And certainly, we begin to ask ourselves where it is that we can find lasting happiness.

Over the years those who have seemed to me to be the most happy, contented and fulfilled have always been the people who have lived the most outgoing and unselfish lives; the kind of people who are generous with their talents or their time.

There are those who use their prosperity or good fortune for the benefit of others whether they number among the great philanthropists or are people who, with whatever they have, simply have a desire to help those less fortunate than themselves.

What they offer comes in the form of what can easily be recognised as service to the nation or service to the wider community.

As often as not however, their unselfishness is a simply taken for granted part of the life of their family or neighbourhood.

They tend to have some sense that life itself is full of blessings, and is a precious gift for which we should be thankful.

When life seems hard the courageous do not lie down and accept defeat; instead they are all the more determined to struggle for a better future.

I think we have a huge amount to learn from individuals such as these. And what I believe many of us share with them is a source of strength and peace of mind in our families and friends.

Indeed, Prince Philip and I can reflect on the blessing, comfort and support we have gained from our own family in this special year for our son, the Prince of Wales.

Sixty years ago, he was baptised here in the Music Room at Buckingham Palace. As parents and grandparents, we feel great pride in seeing our family make their own unique contributions to society.

Through his charities, the Prince of Wales has worked to support young people and other causes for the benefit of the wider community.

At Christmas, we feel very fortunate to have our family around us. But for many of you, this Christmas will mean separation from loved ones and perhaps reflection on the memories of those no longer with us.

I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life. Countless millions of people around the world continue to celebrate his birthday at Christmas, inspired by his teaching.

He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.

We can surely be grateful that, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, so many of us are able to draw inspiration from his life and message, and to find in him a source of strength and courage.

I hope that the Christmas message will encourage and sustain you too, now and in the coming year.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Elizabeth II

New Year's Honours List

In the December 2008 royal honours list there was one new Principal Companion (PCNZM) of the New Zealand Order of Merit appointed. This was Professor Ngatata Love, QSO JP. There were four new Distinguished Companions (DCNZM) appointed: Treaty of Waitangi historian Dr Claudia Orange, OBE, medical school Professor David Skegg, OBE, sports and businessman Murray Wells, and the retired Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Margaret Wilson.

The 13 new Companions of the Order (CNZM) included Brian Corban, QSO of the winemaking dynasty, High Court Judge the Hon John Laurenson, QC, former State Services Commissioner, Dr Mark Prebble, and politician the Hon Steve Maharey, and former South Australian Premier the Hon Michael Ram. There were 26 new Officers (ONZN) and 52 Members of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM), including Salvation Army Commissioner Gareth McKenzie.

The 15 awards of the Queen's Service Order included politicians the Hon Clement Simich and the Hon Paul Swain. There were 77 Queen Service

Medals awarded, and four Distinguished Service Decorations.

In the United Kingdom, The Queen's New Year's Honours List included science fiction writer Terry Pratchett, OBE, who received a knighthood. Lord O'Neill, former Lord Lieutenant of Antrim, Sir John Buchanan-Riddell, Bt CVO, Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland and former Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Devonshire, Her Majesty's Representative at Ascot, were made KCVOs. Lord Slyn of Hadley, former Chairman of the International Law Association, was made a GBE.

Elsewhere, in Antigua and Barbuda, Colonel Trevor Thomas, was made a CMG for services to the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force.

Commonwealth Day

The annual Commonwealth Day Service in Auckland will be held at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell. The Service will be at 5 pm, on Sunday the 8th March. The Auckland Girls' Choir will be providing the choral backing for the service.

Local members are urged to attend the service, to show their support for the ideals for which the Commonwealth, under the leadership of The Queen, stands. The Commonwealth Day Message from Her Majesty The Queen will be read.

There will be Commonwealth Day services in Wellington and other centres throughout New Zealand and the Commonwealth.

Royal News

The Prince of Wales at 60

During her visit to the Prince's Trust Headquarters on 12th November 2008, The Queen took the opportunity to comment on the contribution of the Prince of Wales to public life, on the eve of his 60th birthday. The charity has an annual turnover of more than £50 million [NZ\$130m] and almost 8,000 volunteers and staff, and is probably the Prince of Wales's greatest single contribution.

The following is the text of The Queen's speech:

Prince Philip and I have greatly enjoyed meeting you all today and hearing more about the vital work you are doing to help change young lives for the better. Since the foundation of the Prince's Trust more than thirty years ago, the principle at the core of what is done here has remained unchanged: that, when trusted to take on real responsibility for themselves – sometimes for the first time – young people can develop the skills, confidence and motivation to achieve great things. As a result, many thousands of young people have been supported and equipped to overcome great challenges and disadvantages.

As we celebrate the many extraordinary achievements of the Prince's Trust today, so too I should like briefly to reflect on the role of The Prince of Wales who has given enduring inspiration to it. In public life, highlighting the success of individuals can be a hazardous and invidious occupation. But as The Prince of Wales, our son, approaches his own sixtieth birthday, may I say that we are both enormously proud to have been reminded here today of his personal contribution to this remarkable organisation.

Countless lives have been transformed by The Prince's Trust to which The Prince of Wales has brought vision and conviction. For Prince Philip and me, there can be no greater pleasure or comfort than to know that into his care are safely-entrusted the guiding principles of public service and duty to others.

I wish you all every continued success for the future.

Several key points stand out. "[H]ighlighting the success of individuals can be a hazardous and invidious occupation" is course referring to The Queen herself extolling the virtues of the Prince. The success of the Prince's Trust, and indeed its very existence, is due to the efforts on the Prince of Wales. The Queen was not shying away from making that clear to her audience (which was not, of course, limited to those at the Headquarters).

While celebrating the success of the Trust, Her Majesty also made a broader observation that "into

his care are safely-entrusted the guiding principles of public service and duty to others". This is clearly an endorsement of the Prince's efforts to maintain the high standard of "public service and duty to others" set by The Queen herself.

The media have speculated on the nature of the relationship between Queen and Prince. We cannot know the real nature of the personal relationship; but the Queen's approval of the Prince's handling of his public role is clear.

League News

The Queen's Birthday Service

For a decade the Monarchist League has sponsored an annual service at St Peter's Church, Takapuna, to mark The Queen's official birthday in June. While this will remain as our primary focus, we invite members and readers to encourage their local churches and other community groups to mark The Queen's Birthday. This need not be an elaborate occasion; anything which celebrates The Queen's official birthday is welcome.

Launch of new website

The revamped website of the League was launched by Hon Dr Richard Worth, OBE VRD MP, Minister of Internal Affairs, prior to a 14th November Reception for the Prince of Wales' 60th birthday.

The address of the new website is <http://www.monarchy.org.nz/>.

Coinage commemorates Prince Charles' 60th Birthday

His Royal Highness Prince Charles Philip Arthur George was born at Buckingham Palace on 14th November 1948, the first child of Princess Elizabeth (as his mother then was) and Prince Philip, Duke of

Edinburgh. Prince Charles became heir apparent on the accession of the Queen in 1952. He was bestowed the title Prince of Wales when he was nine years old (the title does not come automatically) but he was almost 21 years old before his investiture took place at Caernarfon Castle in 1969.

As well as supporting the Queen by performing many official engagements (both in the United Kingdom and overseas), Prince Charles supports a wide range of charities. He is President of 19 charities called "The Prince's Charities". These organisations are active across a broad range of areas, including opportunity and enterprise, education, health, responsible business, the arts, the build environment and the natural environment. Perhaps the best known of the charities is the Prince's Trust which he personally established in 1976 with the goal of assisting young people (especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds) to reach their full potential.

In order to mark Prince Charles' 60th birthday on 14th November 2008, both the United Kingdom and Australian governments have authorised the production (by the Royal Mint and the Perth Mint respectively) of legal tender commemorative coins which can be viewed at (and ordered from) the respective websites viz:
<www.royalmint.com/theprince> and

<www.pert
hmint.com.
au>.



The United Kingdom coins are all £5-denomination and are struck in

22-carat gold, sterling (92.5%) silver and cupro-nickel with the precious metal coins being proofs and the base metal coin being in brilliant uncirculated format. Maximum mintages are 1,500, 20,000 and 500,000 respectively. The precious metal coins are provided in plush presentation cases whereas the base metal coin is contained within an illustrated folder.

The Australian coin is of \$1-denomination, contains one troy ounce of 99.9% silver and is of proof quality. Mintage limit is 12,500 coins. The reverse of the coin features a portrait of the Prince and also his Coat of Arms – both in colour. Each coin is housed in a blue presentation case.

The obverse of both the United Kingdom and Australian coins feature Ian Rank-Broadley's effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II – the same effigy as on the current New Zealand coinage.

Potential purchasers should note that the prices quoted on the websites include United Kingdom VAT and Australian GST (neither of which is paid by New Zealand-domiciled purchasers) but exclude international postage/courier costs. The Royal Mint's standard international delivery charge is £7.

Shamefully, the New Zealand government did not follow the lead of their United Kingdom and Australian counterparts in marking Prince Charles' 60th birthday with a special coin issue. Considering the then-government's hostility towards our constitutional monarchy and its related traditions (such as knighthoods and appeals to the Privy Council), that omission must have been deliberate.

Stephen Brewster

New Royal Marines Band CDs Released

Military music specialists Eastney Collection was formed in 1998. Their principal mission is to oversee the preservation, restoration and marketing of the Royal Marines Historical Society's substantial collection of historically significant recordings by the various bands and orchestras of Her Majesty's Royal Marines. Many of these decades-old recordings on vinyl (including 78rpm records) have now been re-issued as digitally-remastered CDs, and modern recording technology has produced a product of consistent high quality.

The following CDs have recently been released:

1. On the Square – The Band and Bugles of HM Royal Marines School of Music [Conductor: Major Paul Neville, MVO ARAM RM].



This is a re-issue of material originally recorded at EMI's Abbey Road Studio in 1970

and 1971 and at the time, was welcomed by both music critics and the public. Tracks include *The Little Bugler*, *The Mad Major*, *Fanfare and Sunset* and *Thunderbirds* (the theme from the then-popular TV series). The conductor Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) Paul Neville was Principal Director of Music Royal Marines from 1968 until his retirement in 1978.

2. Mountbatten Festival of Music 2008 – The Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines [Principal Conductor: Lt.-Col. C. J. Davis, OBE BA(Hons) MMus DMA LRAM RM].



The Mountbatten Festival of Music is an annual concert held at the Royal Albert Hall, London in honour of the late Admiral of the Fleet Lord Mountbatten (1900-79). A wide range of music is played at the festival, ranging from traditional military marches and

fanfares to classical overtures and familiar scores from both stage and screen. Tracks include *Supreme Command* (composed by the late Lt.-Col. Sir Vivian Dunn in honour of His Lordship), *West Side Story*, *Prelude and Sunset* and theme from *Rocky*. Lt.-Col. Davis is the current Principal Director of Music Royal Marines.



3. A Night at the West End – The Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland [Conductor: Captain Richard Harvey, BMus(Hons) LRSM AMusTCL RM].

This new recording features music from the giants of stage and screen such as Leonard Bernstein, John Williams and Lord Lloyd Webber. Tracks include *Whistle Down the Wind*, *Resplendent Glory* and the theme from *Star Wars*.

The Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland is based at the Royal Navy Support Establishment HMS *Caledonia* in Rosyth. The band travels extensively throughout Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England, as well as internationally. Like all Marine

musicians, the men and women of the band also undertake a variety of roles on active service, both at sea and on land.

Each CD costs £12-00 (including postage and packing) and may be ordered online at www.eastneycollection.com. Eastney Collection's contact details are:

Address: 60 Mayford Road, London SW12 8SN
E-mail: eastneycol@aol.com
Phone: +44-20-8673-6157
Fax: +44-20-8772-9545

Anyone who has purchased previous CDs (and/or who has attended a Royal Marines Band concert – such as the one held at the Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna, Auckland in February 2008) will be in no doubt as to the world-class skill and professionalism of Marine musicians. The above CDs will certainly enhance that exemplary reputation.

Stephen Brewster

Royal Marine awarded George Cross

On 23rd of July of last year, the UK Ministry of Defence announced that Royal Marine ("RM") Reservist Lance Corporal Matthew Croucher was to be awarded the George Cross ("GC") for an act of "extraordinary bravery, self-sacrifice and devotion to duty"¹ whilst on active service in Afghanistan. L/Cpl Croucher threw himself on a live grenade in order to save the lives of his comrades. Amazingly, he not only emerged virtually unscathed, he also then participated in a fire-fight with the Taliban who later arrived (no doubt expecting to eliminate the wounded) killing one enemy fighter.

L/Cpl Croucher was aged 24 at the time of the award. He served with the regular RMs between November 2000 and September 2005 and has been a reservist ever since. As well as his 2007-08 deployment to Afghanistan, he has also completed three operational tours of duty in Iraq.

On 9th February 2008, L/Cpl Croucher was serving in Helmand Province with the Commando

¹ As stated by UK Chief of Defence Staff Air Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup at the award announcement ceremony.

Reconnaissance Force. His unit was tasked to investigate a compound which was suspected of being a Taliban “bomb factory”. On entering the compound (without incident), the suspicions were confirmed – equipment used to make Improvised Explosive Devices was found. As the marines prepared to return to base, L/Cpl Croucher (leading his section) felt a wire go tight against his legs. This wire was connected to a grenade booby-trap designed to kill or maim intruders to the compound. The (now armed) grenade fell on the ground beside him. He immediately shouted “Grenade” to warn his comrades and then, with complete disregard for his own safety, threw himself on top of the grenade, pinning it between his rucksack and the ground. In his own words:

“It was one of those situations where I had a split second to decide what to do. I had a quick look around and realised that there was no real place to take cover. There were two guys initially right behind me and a third just a bit further back, so I felt a bit guilty for setting the device off. I thought that the best course of action for everyone including myself was to lie right next to the grenade, point my body armour towards it with my day [ruck] sack and take the brunt of the explosion and see what happens from there”.²

What happened “from there” was that the grenade exploded – L/Cpl Croucher’s rucksack was ripped from his back and destroyed; and his body armour and helmet were pitted with shrapnel. But as his equipment and protective clothing absorbed most of the effects of the blast, he suffered only minor injuries and disorientation (including temporary deafness). The only other injury suffered was a minor shrapnel wound to the Team Commander’s face.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, was undoubtedly correct in describing L/Cpl Croucher’s action as “an exceptional act of outstanding bravery that undoubtedly saved the lives of his fellow marines.”³

L/Cpl Croucher was presented with his GC by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at an investiture ceremony held at Buckingham Palace. The award continues a proud history of conspicuous gallantry

by military reservists. Of the eight people⁴ who have been awarded both the GC and the George Medal (the second-tier award), seven have been reservists in either the Royal Navy or the Royal Australian Navy.

Stephen Brewster

The George Cross

Readers of the previous article may well be asking themselves: “Why was L/Cpl Croucher’s outstanding act of conspicuous gallantry not recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross (“VC”)? After all, his escape from death or grievous injury was nothing short of miraculous and the action occurred during operational military service. The answer is that the VC can only be awarded for acts of supreme gallantry in the face of the enemy and on this occasion, the “in the face of the enemy” requirement was not met. Since he was adjudged to be ineligible to receive the VC, L/Cpl Croucher was awarded the highest decoration he was eligible for – the George Cross (“GC”).⁵

Historical Background

The institution of the GC on 24th of September 1940 was (like that of the VC⁶) prompted by a concern that there was a gap in the then-current honours system. At the time, during the height of The Blitz, there was concern that outstanding medal-worthy acts of gallantry by both civilians (such as firemen) and

⁴ And of those eight, two were also awarded a bar to the George Medal.

⁵ At the time, some commentators were of the opinion that the “in the face of the enemy” requirement was met (an engagement with the enemy occurred shortly after the grenade exploded). For example, Conservative Party Deputy Chairman Lord Ashcroft (author of the book *Victoria Cross Heroes*) wrote an article entitled “Why Lance Corporal Matthew Croucher deserves a Victoria Cross” – this was published in the *Telegraph* newspaper on 18th April 2008. With reference to footnote 1 in the previous article, ACM Stirrup also stated that L/Cpl Croucher was “...deserving of the nation’s highest recognition” – emphasis added. As the VC outranks the GC in order of precedence, the “highest recognition” would be the VC. It is submitted that this is an example of the importance of retaining the rarity of VC awards – i.e. if there is doubt as to whether a medal-worthy act warrants the VC or a lesser decoration, the lesser decoration will be awarded.

⁶ See Brewster, Stephen: “The Victoria Cross: 150 Glorious Years”, *Monarchy New Zealand* (August 2006) pp. 6-10.

² *Warships – International Fleet Review* (January 2009) p38.

³ Also stated at the award announcement ceremony – see footnote 1.

military personnel not “in the face of the enemy”⁷ – such as those involved in mine and/or bomb-disposal) were not being recognised and rewarded. The Royal Warrant establishing both the GC and the George Medal (“GM”⁸) was signed by His Majesty King George VI on 24th January 1941 backdated to the date mentioned above. The Warrant was published in the *London Gazette* on 31st January 1941.

The GC was also intended to replace the Empire Gallantry Medal (“EGM”), the Albert Medal (“AM”) and the Edward Medal (“EM”). Recipients of the EGM were required to exchange their medal for a GC and it was intended that holders of the AM and EM would be invited to exchange their medals for a GC – i.e. exchange was voluntary for holders of the AM or EM. Due to an oversight, the substitution invitation was not extended to AM and EM holders and this was not finally rectified until 1971. Even then, the invitation was declined by 15 of the 64 surviving AM holders and by 9 of the 68 surviving EM holders.

Design of the GC

The medal, designed by Mr Percy Metcalfe, CVO RDI (1895-1970), is in the form of a silver cross. All GCs have been manufactured by the Royal Mint. The medal is suspended from a 38mm-wide dark blue ribbon attached to a silver bar decorated with laurel leaves. The obverse (i.e. front) of the medal features a central medallion showing St. George and the Dragon surrounded by the words “FOR GALLANTRY” with the Royal Cypher “GVI” in each limb. The reverse of the coin engraved with the recipient’s title or rank, name of unit (if applicable) and the date the award was gazetted.

⁷ See footnote 6 at page 8 (penultimate bullet point). The fact that between 1858 and 1881, 6 VCs were awarded for actions taken “under extreme danger” but not “in the face of the enemy” is an example of the gap in the honours system. Also, it should borne in mind that in earlier times, there were far fewer types of medal available to be awarded.

⁸ The GM was established for the same purposes as the GC but ranks after the GC. The GM was therefore awarded more frequently than the GC but the standard was still very high – all recipients undoubtedly showed bravery beyond the call of duty. The GC/GM (where the former outranks the latter) are therefore different from awards such as the DSO/DSM, DFC/DFM etc which are equivalent decorations where the “Cross” is/was awarded to officers and the “Medal” to non-commissioned personnel..

Second or subsequent awards (none to date) are recognised by a bar to the original decoration. The bar would also be engraved with the recipient’s details.

The GC is worn on the left breast before all other orders and decorations.⁹ Ladies not in uniform wear the medal suspended from a wide bow of the same dark blue as the ribbon. In common with the VC, when the medal ribbon alone is worn, a miniature replica of the GC is affixed to the centre of the ribbon. This distinction applies only to these two decorations.

Award of the GC

To date, there have been 404 awards which include 244 eligible exchanges¹⁰ and 160 direct awards. Of the direct awards, 86 awards were made posthumously. As with the VC, the very high standard required means that most recipients did not survive the action that led to the GC being awarded.

The first investiture of the GC was held at Buckingham Palace and included civilian recipients as well as those from all three of the Armed Services. At that ceremony, the first direct recipient was Mr Thomas Hopper Alderson who was a Detachment Leader in the Air Raid Patrol in Bridlington, Yorkshire. During The Blitz in September 1940, Mr Alderson and other members of his section rescued many people trapped in bomb-destroyed houses. In one incident, he rescued 6 people trapped in the cellar underneath two totally-destroyed 5-storey buildings by tunnelling for more than 3 hours through 13 feet of wreckage.

On presenting Mr Alderson with his GC, His Majesty King George VI stated:

“You are the first recipient of the George Cross. It gives me great pleasure to hand it to you.”

An example of a military GC was that awarded posthumously to Lieutenant Commander R.J.H. Ryan of the Royal Navy. The award was gazetted on 20th December 1940 (the co-author of this article is the son of the late Lt Cdr Ryan GC). Lt Cdr Ryan was a torpedo and anti-submarine (the latter included mines) specialist and had considerable experience in the extremely-hazardous job of defusing mines. At the time, the enemy were dropping magnetic mines

⁹ Except the VC. To date, no-one has been awarded both a VC and a GC.

¹⁰ But as previously mentioned, some AM and EM holders declined to exchange their decorations for a GC.

over land and dealing with these was a high priority for the Admiralty. The recovery of an unexploded mine in April 1940 from a crashed enemy aircraft provided an opportunity to study how the mines worked and Lt Cdr Ryan and his assistant Chief Petty Officer Hollingsworth were able to render many mines safe. On one occasion, this was done whilst working waist-deep in water and thick mud that made escape impossible – the mines were normally timed to explode after 22 seconds.

In September 1940, Lt Cdr Ryan and CPO Hollingsworth were both killed when a parachute mine they were trying to defuse exploded. According to his colleague Lieutenant Moore RN (also a GC recipient and who survived the war), it is likely that the mine was hanging by its parachute cord which meant it was difficult to render safe and impossible to escape once the countdown began.

Two collective awards have also been made – to the island of Malta in 1942 and to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (“RUC” – now the Police Service of Northern Ireland) in 1999. Both awards were made at the express instruction of the Sovereign. The Malta GC is woven into the Flag of Malta and can thus be seen whenever the Flag is flown. The RUC GC was presented to the organisation by Her Majesty personally at Hillsborough Castle, County Down, Northern Ireland.

Some interesting facts concerning the GC

- To date, no-one has been awarded both a VC and a GC.
- To date, no-one has been awarded a bar to his/her GC.
- There is one instance of the GC and VC being awarded to brothers – both awards were posthumous. The brothers were Lieutenant Colonel Derek Seagrim VC of the 7th Battalion, The Howards and Major Hugh Seagrim GC DSO MBE of the 19th Hyderabad Regiment, the Indian Army.
- There is one instance of brothers being awarded GCs. Messrs David & Samuel Brooker were both originally awarded the EM for rescue work at Littleton Colliery, South Staffordshire on 14th May 1937.
- The most recent military GC award was to Royal Marine Lance Corporal Matthew Croucher as detailed in the previous article.
- The most recent civilian GC was the posthumous award to Sergeant Stewart Guthrie of the New Zealand Police for attempting to arrest a gunman at Aramoana

(near Dunedin) on 13th November 1990. The award was gazetted on 15th February 1992.¹¹

- The youngest direct GC recipient was Mr John Bamford aged 15 years and 7 months – award gazetted 16th December 1952.
- The oldest direct recipient was Lieutenant William Foster of the Home Guard aged 61 – award gazetted 27th November 1942.
- The most GCs awarded in one incident were the 10 awarded for rescue work following an earthquake in Quetta, Baluchistan, India on 31st May 1935. Seven EGM holders and three AM holders became GC holders in 1940 and 1971 respectively.
- Women have always been eligible for the GC and both military and civilian awards have been made. The most recent award was made posthumously to BOAC Air Stewardess Barbara Harrison for rescuing passengers following an onboard fire at Heathrow Airport on 8th April 1968.

Further Information

Readers interested in obtaining further information should consult the GC database at www.gc-database.co.uk.

Stephen Brewster (ex-CPO Royal NZ Naval Volunteer Reserve) & Lt Cdr Dick Ryan RN (Rtd)

Contact details for provincial representatives

Provincial Representative, Waikato: Professor Peter Spiller, tel: (07) 855-0565; e-mail: pspiller@waikato.ac.nz

Provincial Representative, Thames-Coromandel: Merv Tilsley, 200b Baillie Street, THAMES 3500 ph: (07) 868-7947.

¹¹ In NZ, the GC was replaced by the “New Zealand Cross” (“NZC”) in 1999. In the authors’ opinion, this is another example of a prestigious and widely-recognised decoration being replaced by a little-known less prestigious decoration (although the NZC has the same dark blue ribbon).