



The Lord Ashcroft Gallery Press Information:

Facts and figures about the Victoria Cross and George Cross

Victoria Cross

- The Victoria Cross was created on 29 January 1856.
- The Victoria Cross recognises acts of extreme bravery carried out under direct enemy fire.
- Since 1856 1,354 people have been awarded the Victoria Cross (although awarded 1,358 times).
- The Victoria Cross is hand-made, traditionally using bronze taken from a gun captured in the Crimean War.
- The Victoria Cross was deliberately intended to have little actual value. Its value lies in what it stands for and what people do to earn it: be extremely brave.
- The inscription on the Victoria Cross is “For Valour”, a traditional word for bravery. It was personally chosen by Queen Victoria, after whom the medal was named. The Queen turned down the first suggestion, “For the Brave”, explaining that all her soldiers were brave.
- A Victoria Cross or George Cross act has to be seen by several witnesses. After being carefully considered, it is sent for approval by the monarch.
- The two youngest recipients of the Victoria Cross were Thomas Flinn in 1857 and Andrew Fitzgibbon in 1860. Both were 15 years and 3 months.
- The oldest recipient of the Victoria Cross was 69 year old William Raynor who defended an ammunition store in Delhi for five hours in 1857.
- Three fathers and sons have earned the Victoria Cross, including Major Charles Gough in 1857 and his son Major John Gough in 1903.
- Four pairs of brothers have earned the Victoria Cross, including Major Charles Gough and his brother Lieutenant Hugh Gough in 1858. *The medals of Charles Gough form part of the Lord Ashcroft Collection and are displayed in this gallery.*
- Only three people have received the Victoria Cross twice:
 - Surgeon Captain Arthur Martin-Leake in 1902 and 1914
 - Captain Noel Chavasse in 1916 and 1917. *The medals of Noel Chavasse form part of the Lord Ashcroft Collection and are displayed in this gallery.*
 - Captain Charles Upham in 1941 and 1942. *The medals of Charles Upham form part of the Imperial War Museum collection but are on long term display in New Zealand.*
- Only one set of brothers have each received a Victoria Cross and a George Cross:
 - Captain Derek Seagrim VC in 1943
 - Major Hugh Seagrim GC in 1944 *The medals of these two brothers are on loan to the Imperial War Museum and are displayed in this gallery.*
- It was only in 1902 that the Victoria Cross started to be awarded ‘posthumously’ (to people who died while carrying out their brave act). Since then there have been 295 ‘posthumous’ Victoria Crosses.
- The Victoria Cross has been awarded to three soldiers for their recent bravery in Afghanistan:
 - posthumously to Corporal Bryan Budd of the 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment in 2006
 - Corporal Willia Apiata of the New Zealand SAS in 2007
 - Trooper Mark Donaldson of the Australian SAS in 2009

George Cross

- The George Cross was created on 24 September 1940.
- The George Cross recognises acts of extreme bravery carried out in peacetime when facing the perils of ordinary life and in wartime away from the heat of battle.
- Since 1940, 406 people have received the George Cross:
 - 161 GCs have been awarded directly (86 posthumously) (including collective awards to Malta and the RUC)
 - 245 other awards have been translated to GC (EGM 112 in 1941, AM 65 and EM 68 in 1971). All EGMs translated 1941, AM & EMs translated October 1971.
- Of the total GCs awarded 143 (35%) have been to civilians (excludes Policemen)
- Living George Cross holders: 14 in UK; 7 overseas.
- The George Cross is made from solid silver by the Royal Mint.
- The inscription on the George Cross is "For Gallantry", a traditional word for bravery. The words surround an image of St George slaying the dragon.
- Many details on the George Cross were personally designed by King George VI, after whom the medal was named.
- The youngest direct recipient of the George Cross was 15-year old John Bamford who rescued his brothers from a house fire in 1952.
- The oldest recipient of the George Cross was John Axon, a British Rail engine driver, who, in 1957, died trying to stop a runaway train aged 57.
- The Albert Medal was created in 1866. Named after Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, it was awarded for great bravery while saving someone else's life either at sea or on land. 570 Albert Medals had been awarded by 1971 when it was decided to change all Albert Medals into George Crosses.
- The Edward Medal was created in 1907. Named after King Edward VII, it was awarded to people who risked their own lives in order to help or save others caught in serious industrial accidents, particularly in coal mines. 584 Edward Medals had been awarded by 1971 when it was decided to change all Edward Medals into George Crosses.
- To recognise people who showed great bravery when facing danger in ordinary life, the Empire Gallantry Medal was created in 1922. In 1941 all Empire Gallantry Medals were changed into this new award.
- 11 women have received the George Cross, four directly and seven after being changed from either the Albert Medal or Empire Gallantry Medal.
- The most recent woman to receive the GC was Barbara Harrison, an air stewardess who died rescuing passengers after an air crash at Heathrow in 1968.
- The George Cross has been awarded to four soldiers for their recent bravery in Afghanistan:
 - posthumously to Corporal Mark Wright of the 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment in 2006
 - Lance Corporal Matthew Croucher of 40 Commando, Royal Marines in 2008
 - Staff Sergeant Kim Hughes of Royal Logistic Corps in 2010
 - posthumously to Staff Sergeant Olaf Schmid of Royal Logistic Corps in 2010
 - *The medals of Lance Corporal Croucher and the late Staff Sergeant Schmid are both on display in Lord Ashcroft Gallery.*

Ends

For more information please contact the IWM London Press Office on 020 7416 5311 or email efarrell@iwm.org.uk