



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

DINNER HELD TO COMMEMORATE HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT FREEMASONS AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS DURING WORLD WAR I

The Provincial Grand Master, Mike Wilks, recently hosted a dinner at the Royal Green Jacket's Museum in Winchester to commemorate those Hampshire and Isle of Wight Freemasons who were awarded the Victoria Cross during World War I. Guests included The Lords Lieutenant of Hampshire and of the Isle of Wight, the ruling Masters of the Lodges of which the recipients were members, ruling Masters of other Military Lodges and members of the Provincial Executive.

The Recipients



Harry Daniels, born 1884, died 1953
Aldershot Camp Lodge No. 1331.

Harry Daniels was the 13th child of 16 born to a baker in Wymondham, Norfolk. He joined the army at a young age and served abroad in India.

He was 30 years old, and a Company Sergeant-Major in the 2nd Battalion of The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own), British Army during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 12 March 1915 at Neuve Chapelle, France, his unit was ordered into an advance on the German trenches across no-man's land which was covered by machine guns and strewn with barbed wire.

Daniels and another man, Cecil Reginald Noble, voluntarily rushed in front with cutters and attacked the wires. They were both wounded at once, Noble dying later of his wounds. For further activities on the Western Front he was awarded the Military Cross and later achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel.

He represented Britain in boxing at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp and attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 despite having a heart attack a few days before. His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Royal Green Jackets Museum at Winchester, England.



William Robert Fountaine Addison, born 1883, died 1962
Aldershot Camp Lodge, No. 1331.

The Reverend William Addison attended Sarum College, was ordained in 1913 and became curate of St Edmund's Church, Salisbury (now closed). During the First World War, he was a Temporary Chaplain of the Forces, 4th Class in the Army Chaplain's Department, British Army, when the following deed took place on 9 April 1916 at Sanna-i-Yat, Mesopotamia, for which he was awarded the VC "for most conspicuous bravery."

He carried a wounded man to the cover of a trench, and assisted several others to the same cover, after binding up their wounds under heavy rifle and machine gun fire. In

addition to these unaided efforts, by his splendid example and utter disregard of personal danger, he encouraged the stretcher-bearers to go forward under heavy fire and collect the wounded.

After the war, Addison continued as an army chaplain and served at Malta, Khartoum and Shanghai and at army bases in England.



Spencer John Bent, born 1891, died 1977
Aldershot Camp Lodge, No. 1331.

Spencer Brent was 23 years old, and a drummer in the 1st Battalion, The East Lancashire Regiment, British Army during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On the night of 1/2 November 1914 near Le Gheer, Belgium, when his officer, the platoon sergeant and a number of men had been struck down, Drummer Bent took command of the platoon and with great presence of mind and coolness succeeded in holding the position. He had previously distinguished himself on two occasions, on 22 and 24 October by bringing up ammunition under heavy shell and rifle fire. Again, on 3 November, he brought into cover some wounded men who were lying, exposed to enemy fire, in the open.

He later achieved the rank of Regimental Sergeant-Major. He survived the war and died on 3 May 1977. Bent was cremated at West Norwood Cemetery, London. Bent's VC, along with his Military Medal and Russian Cross of St. George was sold at auction in June 2000 for £80,000. His VC is on display in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum, London.



Thomas Edward Rendle, born 1884, died 1945
The Needles Lodge.

Thomas Rendle was born in Bristol and died aged 61 in Cape Town, South Africa.

He was 29 years old, and a bandsman in the 1st Battalion, The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, British Army, during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 20 November 1914 near Wulverghem, Belgium, Bandsman Rendle attended to the wounded under very heavy rifle and shell fire and rescued men from the trenches in which they had been buried from the blowing in of the parapets by the fire of the enemy's heavy howitzers.



Norman Augustus Fitch, born 1890, died 1966
The Lodge of Hope, No. 2153.

Norman Finch was born in Bristol and died aged 76 in Portsmouth. He was 28 years old when the following deed took place, for which he was awarded the VC by ballot.

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

Mole until the foretop received another direct hit, putting the remainder of the armament completely out of action.

The Victoria Cross may be awarded by a ballot among comrades when units performed an act of collective gallantry where all are deemed to be equally brave, the number of awards being dictated by the size of the unit involved.



Ernest Herbert Pritcher, born 1888, died 1946
United Service Lodge, No. 1428.

Ernest Herbert Pritcher was born on the 31st December 1888 in Mullion in Cornwall.

On the 8th August 1917 H.M.S. Dunraven, under the command of Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., R.N., sighted an enemy submarine on the horizon. In her role of an armed British merchant ship, the Dunraven took sustained shelling, with fire braking out on the aft.

The aft machine gun magazine exploded throwing the gun and gun crew into the air. Petty Officer Pitcher was captain of the 4-inch gun crew, but Pitcher and another man landed on mock railway trucks made of wood and canvas, which cushioned their falls and saved their lives. His VC was awarded by ballot of the gun crew. Pitcher also received the Distinguished Service Medal, Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire.

In 1920 Pitcher was promoted to Chief Petty Officer. In 1927 he retired from the Royal Navy and lived in Dorset, where he taught woodwork in a boys' school in Swanage and also ran a pub, the "Royal Oak" in Herston. On the outbreak of the Second World War he rejoined the Navy and served on shore in the south of England.

After the war, his health deteriorated and he died of tuberculosis on 10th February 1946. His body was brought back to Swanage, where he is buried in Northbrook Cemetery.





Left to right: Steven Ohm, Adrian Hirons, Mike Wilks, Nigel Atkinson Esq., Adrian George

The PGM was especially pleased to welcome Nigel Atkinson Esq., Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Maj Gen Martin White CB CBE, Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, and the ruling Master or his representative, of the recipient Lodges, WBro. Adrian Hirons, WM of Aldershot Camp Lodge No. 1331, WBro. Steven Ohm, WM of United Service Lodge No. 1428, WBro. Peter Close, DC of Lodge of Hope No. 2153 and WBro. Christopher Jarman, WM of The Needles Lodge No. 2838

The Victoria Cross was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1856 and is Britain's highest award for gallantry in action. Queen Victoria was intimately involved in the design which bears her crest in the centre and each VC is cast from the gunmetal of two Chinese cannons captured from the Russians at the Siege of Sebastopol (Crimean War).

628 VCs were awarded during the 1914-1918 War, of these, 63 of the recipients were Freemasons and who were honoured with special commemorative stones laid outside Freemason's Hall. The memorial flagstones were unveiled by The Grand Master, HRH The Duke of Kent.



Left to right, Christopher Jarman, Mike Wilks, Maj Gen Martin White CB CBE



This commemorative dinner for the six Masons of this Province who were awarded the VC for their single acts of gallantry in the face of the enemy, reminds us of the debt we owe to those who give their all for their Sovereign, Country, friends and family.

