

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

VICTORIA R.

Whereas, We, taking into Our Royal consideration that there exists no means of adequately rewarding the individual gallant services either of Officers of the lower grades in Our Naval and Military Service, or of Warrant and Petty Officers, Seamen, and Marines, in our Navy, and Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers in Our Army; and whereas the Third Class of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath is limited, except in very rare cases, to the higher ranks of both Services, and the granting of medals, both in our Navy and Army, is only awarded for long service or meritorious conduct, rather than in bravery in action or distinction before an enemy, such cases alone excepted where a general medal is granted for a particular action or campaign, or a clasp added to the medal for some especial engagement, in both of which cases all share equally in the boon, and those who by their valour have particularly signalled themselves remain undistinguished from their comrades. Now, for the purpose of attaining an end so desirable as that of rewarding individual instances of merit and valour, We have instituted and created, and by these presents, for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, institute and create a New Naval and Military Decoration, which We are desirous should be highly prized and eagerly sought after by the Officers and Men of Our Naval and Military Services, and are graciously pleased to make, ordain, and establish the following rules and ordinances for the government of the same, which shall from henceforth be inviolably observed and kept.

Firstly.—It is ordained that the distinction should be styled and designated “the Victoria Cross,” and shall consist of a Maltese Cross of Bronze, with our Royal Crest in the centre, and underneath which an escroll bearing this inscription “For Valour.”

Secondly.—It is ordained that the Cross shall be suspended from the left breast by a blue riband for the Navy, and by a red riband for the Army.

Thirdly.—It is ordained, that the names of those upon whom We may be pleased to confer the Decoration shall be published in the “London Gazette,” and a registry thereof kept in the office of Our Secretary of State for War.

Fourthly.—It is ordained, that anyone who, after having received the Cross, shall again perform an act of bravery, which, if he had not received such Cross, would have entitled him to it, such further act shall be recorded by a Bar attached to the riband by which the Cross is suspended, and for every additional act of bravery an additional Bar may be added.

Fifthly.—It is ordained, that the Cross shall only be awarded to those Officers or men who have served Us in the presence of the enemy, and shall have then performed some signal act of valour, or devotion to their country.

Sixthly.—It is ordained, with a view to place all persons on a perfectly equal footing in relation to eligibility for the Decoration, that neither rank, nor long service, nor wounds, nor any other circumstance or condition whatsoever, save the merit of conspicuous bravery, shall be held to establish a sufficient claim to the honour.

Seventhly.—It is ordained, that the Decoration may be conferred on the spot where the act to be rewarded by the grant of such Decoration has been performed, under the following circumstances:—

I. When the Fleet or Army, in which such act has been performed is under the eye and command of any Admiral or General Officer commanding the Forces.

II. Where the Naval or Military force is under the eye and command of an Admiral or Commodore commanding a squadron or detached naval force, or of a General commanding a corps, or division or brigade on a distant and detached service, when such Admiral, Commodore, or General Officer shall have the power of conferring the Decoration on the spot, subject to confirmation by Us.

Eighthly.—It is ordained, where such act shall not have been performed in sight of a Commanding Officer as aforesaid, then the claimant for the honour shall prove the act to the satisfaction of the Captain or Officer commanding his ship, or to the Officer commanding the regiment to which the claimant belongs, and such Captain or such Commanding Officer shall report the same through the usual channel to the Admiral or Commodore commanding the force employed on the service, or to the Officer commanding the forces in the field, who shall call for such description and attestation of the act as he may think requisite, and on approval shall recommend the grant of the Decoration.

Ninthly.—It is ordained, that every person selected for the Cross, under rule seven, shall be publicly decorated before the Naval or Military force or body to which he belongs, and with which the act of bravery for which he is to be rewarded shall have been performed, and his name shall be recorded in a General Order, together with the cause of his especial distinction.

Tenthly.—It is ordained that every person selected under rule eight shall receive his decoration as soon as possible, and his name shall likewise appear in a General Order as above required, such General Order to be issued by the Naval or Military Commander of the Forces employed on the service.

Eleventhly.—It is ordained that the General Orders above referred to, shall from time to time be transmitted to Our Secretary of State for War, to be laid before Us, and shall be by him registered.

Twelfthly.—It is ordained that as cases may arise not falling within the rules above specified, or in which a claim, though well founded, may not have been established on the spot, We will, on the joint submission of Our Secretary of State for War and of Our Commander-in-Chief of Our Army, or on that of Our Lord High Admiral or Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in the case of the Navy, confer the Decoration, but never without conclusive proof of the performance of the act of bravery for which the claim is made.

Thirteenthly.—It is ordained that, in the event of a gallant and daring act having been performed by a squadron, ship's company, a detached body of Seamen and Marines not under fifty in number, or by a brigade, regiment, troop, or company, in which the Admiral, General, or other Officer commanding such forces, may deem that all are equally brave and distinguished, and that no special selection can be made by them; then, in such case the Admiral, General, or other Officer commanding, may direct, that for any such body of Seamen or Marines, or for every troop or company of Soldiers, one Officer shall be selected by the Officers engaged for the Decoration and in like manner one Petty Officer or Non-Commissioned Officer shall be selected by the Petty Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers engaged;

and two Seamen or Private Soldiers or Marines, shall be selected by the Seamen, or Private Soldiers, or Marines engaged respectively, for the Decoration; and the names of those selected shall be transmitted by the Senior Officer in command of the Naval force, brigade, regiment, troop, or company, to the Admiral or General Officer commanding, who shall in due manner confer the Decoration as if the acts were done under his own eye.

*Fourteenthly.—It is ordained that every Warrant Officer, Petty Officer, Seaman, or Marine, or Non-commissioned Officer or Soldier, who shall have received the Cross shall, from the date of the act by which the decoration has been gained, be entitled to a Special Pension of Ten Pounds a year, and each additional Bar conferred under rule four on such Warrant or Petty Officers, or Non-commissioned Officers or Men, shall carry with it an Additional Pension of Five Pounds per annum.

Fifteenthly.—In order to make such additional provision as shall effectually preserve pure this most honourable distinction, it is ordained, that if any person on whom such distinction shall be conferred be convicted of treason, cowardice, felony, or of any infamous crime, or if he be accused of any such offence and doth not after a reasonable time surrender himself to be tried for the same, his name shall forthwith be erased from the registry of individuals upon whom the said Decoration shall have been conferred by an especial Warrant under Our Royal Sign Manual, and the Pension conferred under rule fourteen shall cease and determine from the date of such Warrant. It is hereby further declared that We, Our Heirs and Successors, shall be the sole judges of the circumstance demanding such expulsion; moreover, We shall at all times have power to restore such persons as may at any time have been expelled, both to the enjoyment of the Decoration and Pension.

Given at our Court at Buckingham Palace this twenty-ninth of January, in the nineteenth year of Our reign and in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six.

By Her Majesty's Command,

PANMURE.

*Under Her late Majesty's Order in Council of the 2nd of February, 1899, their Lordships are authorised to increase the ordinary Victoria Cross Annuity of Ten Pounds, by a sum not exceeding Forty Pounds a year, in any case in which a Warrant Officer, Petty Officer, Seaman or Marine, who has gained the Victoria Cross, may be found by them to be, from old age or infirmity, not due to his own fault, in poor circumstances, and unable to earn a living; provided that the Annuity, together with any Pensions of which he may be in receipt from Public Funds, shall not exceed Fifty Pounds a year.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE VICTORIA CROSS.

Whereas doubts have arisen as to the qualification required for the decoration of the Victoria Cross: And whereas the description of such qualification in our warrant of 29th January 1856 is not uniform:

Our will and pleasure is that the qualification shall be "conspicuous bravery or devotion to the country in the presence of the enemy," and that our warrant of 29th January 1856 shall be read and interpreted accordingly.

It is our further will and pleasure that officers and men of our auxiliary and reserve forces (Naval and Military) shall be eligible for the decoration of the Victoria Cross under the conditions of Our said warrant, as amended by this Our warrant.

Given at Our Court at Osborne, this 23rd day of April 1881, in the 44th year of Our Reign.

By Her Majesty's Command,

HUGH C. E. CHILDEBS.