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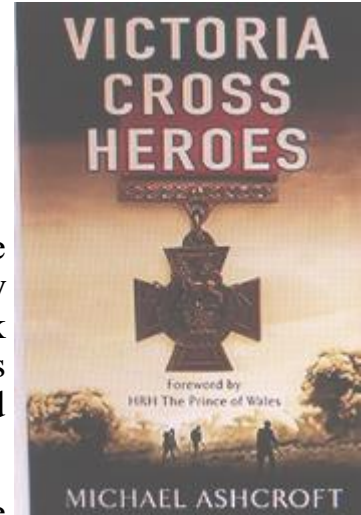


## VICTORIA CROSS HEROES

Author : Lord Michael Ashcroft

*Reviewed by Michael Grimshaw*

The inspiration to read this book came from visiting the Imperial War Museum before Remembrance Sunday 2021 with my fellow drill instructor, Rick Clarke of Suffolk FRS. The museum holds and displays all the Victoria Crosses held by the trust set up by Lord Ashcroft who is an avid collector, businessman and philanthropist.



Since its inception by Royal Warrant in January 1856 the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1,355 times with the latest being Private Johnson Beharry in 2004 for his actions in saving his crews in two ambushes. He is the only VC holder since 1965 to survive the action for which the Victoria Cross was awarded. The collection owns 142 of these medals and the majority are on display in the Imperial War Museum within its own hall.



Michael Grimshaw

The book initially outlines why the medal was initially struck and the need for a medal that covered all ranks. Queen Victoria herself had a part to play in the design of the medal, in particular the inscription “*For Valour*” as the government of the day wanted “*For the brave*” and Queen Victoria knew all her services were brave so it had to stand for more. The book details the background of each medal in the trust collection dating from the Crimea War of 1854 to 1856 up to the latest medal of 2004. Each of the entries is accompanied by the citation in the *London Gazette* for the medal and it makes graphic reading of the valour shown by all the services to protect our freedoms and democracies since its inception.

It has been thought in recent years that the advances in today’s battlefield technologies means that it is almost impossible to demonstrate the rigid grounds for the award of a VC and therefore the medal is all but obsolete. However, the actions of Colonel H Jones and Sergeant Ian McKay in the Falklands and that of Private Beharry in Iraq prove this not to be true.