

DEFENCE 2020

Can VC winners be role models for young Australians today?



Australia's three living VC recipients: Mark Donaldson (left), Ben Roberts-Smith (centre), Keith Payne (right)

In the last three years two Australians have been awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia — the highest military award for 'valour', or bravery.

We all honour and respect these men.

But are they realistically people to whom we can look as role models for young people today? Can we really ever hope to show the bravery under fire that these men showed?

This unit explores what a role model is, and how these men may or may not be considered realistic role models.

It follows from the previous issue of *STUDIES* in which we looked at the ADF as a role model. It is worth looking at that unit and thinking about role models before exploring this unit in detail.



Your Task

Your Task is to decide if VCs are appropriate role models. To do this you need to:

- know what the VC is (page xx)
- understand the nature of Australian involvement in Afghanistan (pages xx-yy)
- analyse the official descriptions of the acts for which the two men were awarded the VCs (pages xx-yy)
- analyse other comments that they have made, and that others have made about them (pages xx-yy)
- use all this to identify their qualities and summarise these in the table on the next page.

One example of the way you complete your VC table is given to help you.

Finally, you will decide if these qualities are ones that have a place in your own life.

In working through the evidence specifically about the two men you might:

- work individually,
- OR you might work in a group and look at all the evidence for one of the men, share that with other groups, and take notes on what they have found about the other man,
- OR you might work in groups with each group responsible for a different piece of evidence, and for reporting back on it to the whole class.

Everybody in class should complete their own summary table, and consider the final questions at the end.

You may also choose to explore some aspect of Australian VC winners further (pages xx-yy).

BACKGROUND UNDERSTANDING

What is the Victoria Cross?

The Victoria Cross is the pre-eminent award for acts of bravery in wartime and is Australia's highest military honour.

It is awarded to persons who, in the presence of the enemy, display the most conspicuous gallantry; a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice; or extreme devotion to duty.

History

The Victoria Cross was created by Queen Victoria in 1856 and made retrospective to 1854 to cover the period of the Crimea War.

Until the Victoria Cross for Australia was created in 1991, Australians were eligible for the Victoria Cross and other awards under the Imperial system of honours.

The Imperial Victoria Cross has been awarded to ninety six Australians. Ninety-one received the Victoria Cross while serving with Australian forces and five Australians received the award while serving with South African and British units.

Australians have been awarded the Victoria Cross in the following conflicts:

- 6 in the Boer War 1899-1902
- 64 in World War I 1914-1918
- 2 in North Russia 1919
- 20 in World War II 1939-1945
- 4 in Vietnam 1962-1972

Nine of the crosses awarded in World War I were for Australians at Gallipoli

Victoria Cross for Australia

The Victoria Cross for Australia was instituted in the Australian honours system on 15 January 1991. It replaced the British or Imperial Victoria Cross. Corporal Mark Donaldson was awarded the first Victoria Cross for Australia in 2008. Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith was the second recipient of the award, in 2010. Both were awarded the medals for their actions in Afghanistan.

How it is awarded

The Governor-General awards the Victoria Cross, with the approval of the Sovereign, on the recommendation of the Minister for Defence.

The Victoria Cross may be awarded posthumously.

A subsequent award of the Victoria Cross to the same person is made as a bar to the Cross.



The Victoria Cross is designed in the form of the Maltese Cross: in the centre of the medal is a lion guardant standing upon the Royal Crown.

The words "For valour" are inscribed below. The Victoria Cross is suspended from a bar by a crimson ribbon. On the reverse of the cross the date of the act of bravery is inscribed, along with the name, rank, and unit of the recipient.

The ribbon worn in place of the medal includes a miniature VC on it.

BACKGROUND UNDERSTANDING

What is Australia's involvement in Afghanistan?

Australian forces are deployed to Afghanistan at the invitation of the Afghan government, under a United Nations mandate from Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001) which "calls upon Member States to contribute personnel, equipment and other resources to the International Security Assistance Force".

The Australian government's aims in committing Australian troops to Afghanistan are:

- the strategic denial of Afghanistan as a training ground and operating base for global terrorist organisations;
- stabilisation of the Afghan state through a combination of military, police and civilian effort; and

- to make this contribution in Uruzgan Province in partnership with our allies, to prepare Afghan National Army and police forces and enhance provincial administration in order to hand over responsibility for the province.

Australia's commitment is known as 'Operation Slipper'.

Today there are about one thousand five hundred and fifty Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen and women working in pursuit of these objectives in Afghanistan as part of an international coalition.

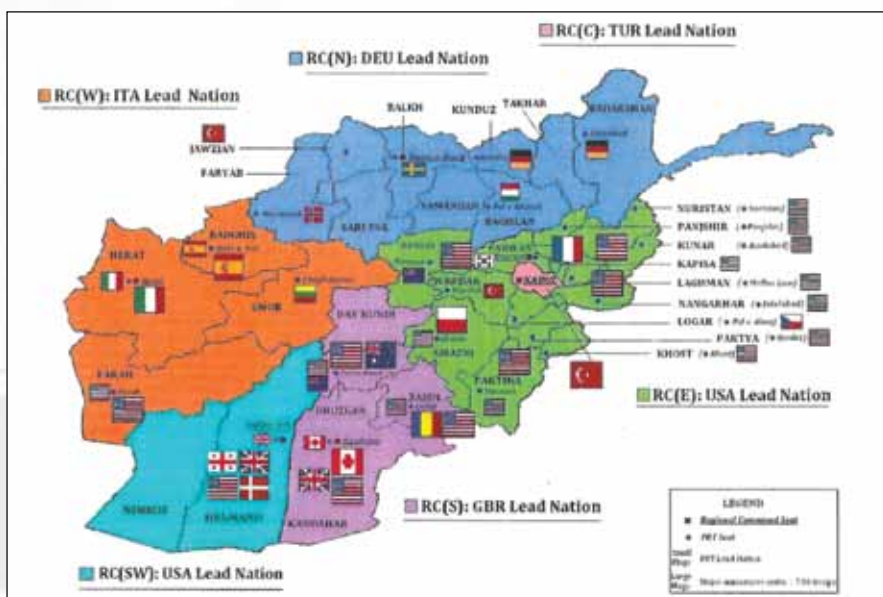


Who are the ADF fighting?

Armed opposition to the Afghan government comes from three main groupings:

- the Taliban, the Afghani-Pakistani Islamic movement that formed the government overthrown by the US in late 2001;
- Al Qaeda-Afghanistan, the network of militant Islamic groups that carried out the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, and subsequently reformed after the US invasion of Afghanistan; and
- a range of Afghan warlords and militia groups, most prominently the former US ally Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hizb-i-Islami (Islamic Party).

Australia's military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is deployed under Operation SLIPPER. Australia's military contribution includes an annual average of 1550 Australian Defence Force personnel deployed within Afghanistan. These numbers vary depending on operational requirements and shifting seasonal conditions.



www.defence.gov.au/defencenews/articles/1017/files/1_ISAF%20Fact%20Sheet%201.pdf

BACKGROUND UNDERSTANDING

Australia's substantial military, civilian and development assistance focuses on:

- Training and mentoring the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade in Uruzgan province to allow transition of lead security responsibility for the province.
- Building the capacity of the Afghan National Police to assist with civil policing functions in Uruzgan;
- Helping improve the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver core services and generate economic opportunities for its people; and
- Operations to disrupt insurgent operations and supply routes utilising the Special Operations Task Group.

It does this through:

- combat troops, including members of the Special Air Services and the Australian Army 1st and 2nd Commando Regiments,
- engineers,
- supply troops,
- artillery troops,
- transport troops,
- communications specialists,
- aerial support and reconnaissance personnel, and
- medical specialists.

Tasks completed by the force, other than combat operations and training of local personnel, include:

- food storage cellars in Chorah,
- the Tarin Kot Waste Management facility,
- the Malalai Girl's School in Tarin Kot,
- the Tarin Kot Ministry of Energy and Water Compound Redevelopment,
- the Rosie Khan Mosque in Shar Sheklayi (constructed in memory of Rosie Khan who was accidentally killed by the SOTG in 2008),
- the Sorkh Morghab Mosque Madrassa in East Dorafshan,
- the Chorah Comprehensive Health Centre extension,
- the Tarin Kot Boy's High School Upgrade which included the construction of a new 21-classroom building, administration building and bookstore,
- the Tarin Kot Boy's Primary School Redevelopment which involved a new 35-classroom building and an administration building,
- the construction of the Kowtwal Crossing — a 116 metre long, all-weather crossing over the Tiri Rud (river),

- the Dorafshan Basic Health Centre development that included building separate male and female clinics and staff accommodation,
- the Sorgh Morghab Bazaar Development which involved construction of 30 shops,
- the Talani river crossing,
- Sorkh Morghab Bazaar well, with a new bore being drilled with the local windmill relocated over the new well,
- construction of a Women's Park,
- a Veterinary Shelter and Holding Yard,
- an all-weather crossing in the Baluchi pass,
- Afghan National Army Patrol Base,
- a Police sub station,
- Sajawal School redevelopment, over-bridging operations on Highway One in the Ghanzi and Zabol provinces,
- the Baluchi Health Complex,
- Eastern Causeway — a 68m reinforced concrete structure that provides all weather access across the the Garmab Mandah,
- Tarin Kot Hospital redevelopment,
- National Directorate of Security Headquarters in Tarin Kot,
- Yaklengah Comprehensive Health Centre — provided with an extension and renovation to the building, along with staff accommodation,
- Tarin Kowt Afghan Health and Development Services Training Facility — renovation included the provision of training facilities, medical storage and accommodation,
- Talani Boy's School redevelopment.

The ADF also works closely with officers from other Australian government agencies, including the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This cooperation ensures comprehensive support and assistance to the ISAF campaign and the people of Uruzgan Province.

Casualties

Between 2002 and September 2011 the operations have resulted in 29 deaths and 201 casualties.

Between January and September 2011 8 soldiers died and 36 suffered wounds as a result of battle: 18 soldiers were involved in improvised explosive device attacks, 7 were wounded during contact with the enemy, 5 were wounded during the conduct of operations, and 1 was accidentally wounded while conducting clearance operations. Five aircrew were wounded in a helicopter incident.

Within these battle casualty figures, 4 soldiers have suffered fractures, 5 sustained gun shot wounds, 4 suffered hearing loss, 7 suffered lacerations, 2 suffered multiple injuries, 9 suffered other injuries, and 5 soldiers have suffered mild traumatic brain injury.

www.defence.gov.au/op/afghanistan/info/factsheet.htm

Now look at the official and additional accounts of the men's actions for which they were awarded the VCs, and answer the questions that follow the documents.



WHY WERE TROOPER DONALDSON AND CORPORAL ROBERTS-SMITH AWARDED THE VC?

1 Official Citation for Corporal Mark Gregor Strang Donaldson, VC

For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in a circumstance of great peril in Afghanistan as part of the Special Operations Task Group during Operation SLIPPER, Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

Corporal Mark Gregor Strang Donaldson enlisted into the Australian Army on 18 June 2002. After completing Recruit and Initial and Employment Training he was posted to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. Having successfully completed the Special Air Service Selection Course in April 2004, Corporal Donaldson was posted to Special Air Service Regiment in May 2004.

On 2 September 2008, during the conduct of a fighting patrol, Corporal (then Trooper) Donaldson was travelling in a combined Afghan, US and Australian vehicle convoy that was engaged by a numerically superior, entrenched and coordinated enemy ambush.

The ambush was initiated by a high volume of sustained machine gun fire coupled with the effective use of rocket propelled grenades. Such was the effect of the initiation that the combined patrol suffered numerous casualties, completely lost the initiative and became immediately suppressed. It was over two hours before the convoy was able to establish a clean break and move to an area free of enemy fire.

In the early stages of the ambush, Corporal Donaldson reacted spontaneously to regain the initiative. He moved rapidly between alternate positions of cover engaging the enemy with 66mm and 84mm anti-armour weapons as well as his M4 rifle. During an early stage of the enemy ambush, he deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire in order to draw attention to himself and thus away from wounded soldiers. This selfless act alone bought enough time for those wounded to be moved to relative safety.

As the enemy had employed the tactic of a rolling ambush, the patrol was forced to conduct numerous vehicle manoeuvres, under intense enemy fire, over a distance of approximately four kilometres to extract the convoy from the engagement area. Compounding the extraction was the fact that casualties had consumed all available space within the vehicles. Those who had not been wounded, including Corporal Donaldson, were left with no option but to run beside the vehicles throughout. During the conduct of this vehicle manoeuvre to extract the convoy from the engagement area, a severely wounded coalition force interpreter was inadvertently left behind. Of his own volition and displaying complete disregard for his own safety, Corporal Donaldson moved alone, on foot, across



approximately 80 metres of exposed ground to recover the wounded interpreter. His movement, once identified by the enemy, drew intense and accurate machine gun fire from entrenched positions. Upon reaching the wounded coalition force interpreter, Corporal Donaldson picked him up and carried him back to the relative safety of the vehicles then provided immediate first aid before returning to the fight.

On subsequent occasions during the battle, Corporal Donaldson administered medical care to other wounded soldiers, whilst continually engaging the enemy.

Corporal Donaldson's acts of exceptional gallantry in the face of accurate and sustained enemy fire ultimately saved the life of a coalition force interpreter and ensured the safety of the other members of the combined Afghan, US and Australian force. Corporal Donaldson's actions on this day displayed exceptional courage in circumstances of great peril. His actions are of the highest accord and are in keeping with the finest traditions of the Special Operations Command, the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

www.defence.gov.au/special_events/TPR_markDonaldson.htm

1 In your own words, explain what Corporal Donaldson did.

2 He showed great bravery. Why do you think he was prepared and able to do this?

3 What qualities did he show? Add these to your Summary Table.

4 If you could ask Corporal Donaldson some questions, what would you ask?

SERIES
2011

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Official Citation for Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith, VC

For the most conspicuous gallantry in action in circumstances of extreme peril as Patrol Second-in-Command, Special Operations Task Group on Operation SLIPPER.

Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 1996. After completing the requisite courses, he was posted to the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment where he saw active service in East Timor. In January 2003, he successfully completed the Australian Special Air Service Regiment Selection Course.

During his tenure with the Regiment, he deployed on Operation VALIANT, SLATE, SLIPPER, CATALYST and SLIPPER II. Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions in Afghanistan in 2006.

On the 11th June 2010, a troop of the Special Operations Task Group conducted a helicopter assault into Tizak, Kandahar Province, in order to capture or kill a senior Taliban commander.

Immediately upon the helicopter insertion, the troop was engaged by machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire from multiple, dominating positions. Two soldiers were wounded in action and the troop was pinned down by fire from three machine guns in an elevated fortified position to the south of the village. Under the cover of close air support, suppressive small arms and machine gun fire, Corporal Roberts-Smith and his patrol manoeuvred to within 70 metres of the enemy position in order to neutralise the enemy machine gun positions and regain the initiative.

Upon commencement of the assault, the patrol drew very heavy, intense, effective and sustained fire from the enemy position. Corporal Roberts-Smith and his patrol members fought towards the enemy position until, at a range of 40 metres, the weight of fire prevented further movement forward. At this point, he identified the opportunity to exploit some cover provided by a small structure.

As he approached the structure, Corporal Roberts-Smith identified an insurgent grenadier in the throes of engaging his patrol. Corporal Roberts-Smith instinctively engaged the insurgent at point-blank range resulting in the death of the insurgent. With the members of his patrol still pinned down by the three enemy machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, which enabled them to bring fire to bear against the enemy. His actions enabled his Patrol Commander to throw a grenade and silence one of the machine guns. Seizing the advantage, and demonstrating extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry, Corporal Roberts-Smith, with a total disregard for his own safety, stormed the enemy position killing the two remaining machine gunners.



His act of valour enabled his patrol to break-in to the enemy position and to lift the weight of fire from the remainder of the troop who had been pinned down by the machine gun fire. On seizing the fortified gun position, Corporal Roberts-Smith then took the initiative again and continued to assault enemy positions in depth during which he and another patrol member engaged and killed further enemy. His acts of selfless valour directly enabled his troop to go on and clear the village of Tizak of Taliban. This decisive engagement subsequently caused the remainder of the Taliban in Shah Wali Kot District to retreat from the area.

Corporal Roberts-Smith's most conspicuous gallantry in a circumstance of extreme peril was instrumental to the seizure of the initiative and the success of the troop against a numerically superior enemy force. His valour was an inspiration to the soldiers with whom he fought alongside and is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

http://defence.gov.au/special_events/Roberts-Smith/index.htm

5 In your own words, explain what Corporal Roberts-Smith did.

6 He showed great bravery. Why do you think he was prepared and able to do this?

7 What qualities did he show? Add these to your Summary Table.

8 If you could ask Corporal Roberts-Smith some questions, what would you ask?

Other information on Corporal Mark Donaldson, VC

A With enemy fire whizzing and thudding all around, Trooper Mark Donaldson was faced with a choice: to save himself or to risk his life to save his wounded comrade.

Caught in a Taliban ambush of rockets and machine guns, "Donno" Donaldson had already deliberately put himself in the firing line to draw enemy fire away from the wounded.

But as he and his SAS mates instigated a fighting withdrawal, he realised a badly wounded Afghan interpreter had been left behind.

What he did next won him the Victoria Cross — the first awarded to an Australian for nearly 40 years.

Still recovering from wounds received in an earlier battle in Afghanistan, Trooper Donaldson turned around and dashed across open ground to collect the man and bring him home. It was the longest 80m of his life. Bullets flew around him and the dust kicked up with explosions, but the 29-year-old father said dying didn't even cross his mind.

"I didn't really have time to think about it," he said. "I was too busy worrying about getting back to my mates and getting us all through it."

After carrying the man on his back, he went back out into the field and continued fighting for the two hours it took for the convoy to escape.

As Trooper Donaldson was yesterday presented with the first ever "VC for Australia", replacing the old Imperial award for most conspicuous acts of gallantry, the young man from Newcastle was unsure what to make of the hero tag.

"It's very humbling and really makes you sit back and take a look at yourself," he said. "I'm a soldier, I am trained to fight and that's what we do, it is instinct and it is natural. You don't think about it at the time, you just do what you've got to do."

Yesterday he stood in the drawing room of Government House, his wife Emma at his side, and was saluted by the nation's political and military leaders as a genuine hero.

Mrs Donaldson said she was 100 per cent behind her husband and his dangerous career choice.

"He married the army before he married me," she said. "It has its moments, but I know what he's like as a person and I

know the guys he works with and they train ridiculously hard all the time. So I have the utmost faith that they will all get back in some form or another."

His survival without so much as a scratch stunned his most recent predecessor Keith Payne, who won his VC in Vietnam in May 1969.



The 75-year-old veteran saw the investiture by Governor General Quentin Bryce. Ms Bryce told the soldier, his wife Emma and two-year-old daughter Kaylee that the VC for Australia was reserved for the "incomparable and unsurpassed".

"You have cradled life in your arms, and opened your heart to its meaning," Ms Bryce said. "You are the finest example and inspiration."

Defence Chief Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said as the Chief (of the Defence Force) he did not usually salute anyone. That is until yesterday when he donned his cap, marched over to the elite Trooper and offered a solemn and respectful salute.

"It will be my great honour from this day forth to salute Trooper Mark Donaldson VC," ACM Houston said.

www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/come-inside-trooper-mark-donaldsons-afghanistan-fight/story-e6freuy9-1111118586130

9 What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.

B MARK BANNERMAN, PRESENTER: His name is Mark Donaldson, he's a trooper in the Australian Defence Force and in winning the Victoria Cross he is now a member of a very exclusive club.

So who is Trooper Mark Donaldson and what did he do that day in September last year to join the ranks of Australian war heroes?

MICHAEL VINCENT, REPORTER: In the mountains and flood plains of Afghanistan, Australian soldiers are continuing to battle the Taliban; one of the ADF's longest deployments in a theatre of war, second only to Vietnam.

MARK DONALDSON: Honestly it's overwhelming; it's a great honour to have received such a high, or the highest military award possible.

It's very humbling and really makes you sit back and take a look at yourself and, you know, I'm still Mark Donaldson and, you know, we'll keep going from day to day and we'll see how we go.

NICK FLETCHER, AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL: It's always the spirit of self sacrifice; the idea that the needs of the group are greater than the needs of the individual.

KEVIN RUDD, PRIME MINISTER: In the early stages of the ambush, Trooper Donaldson reacted spontaneously to regain the initiative.

He moved rapidly between alternate positions of cover, engaging the enemy with 66 millimetre and 84 millimetre anti-armour weapons as well as his M4 rifle.

During an early stage of the enemy ambush he deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire in order to draw attention to himself and thus away from wounded soldiers.

This selfless act alone bought enough time for those wounded to be moved to relative safety.

MICHAEL VINCENT: As the convoy moved to escape the enemy fire, Trooper Donaldson saw an Afghani interpreter lying on the ground 80 metres away.

His recollection of those events is far briefer.

MARK DONALDSON: Pretty simply it was just, I just saw him there, I ran over there and got him, that was it. Simple as that.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON, CHIEF OF DEFENCE: This young man performed an extraordinary act of supreme valour.

As we honour this soldier today I ask you to truly contemplate his selfless and courageous act of mateship and loyalty, not only to his fellow Aussie comrades but to the Afghani interpreter whose life he undoubtedly saved.

MARK DONALDSON: I'm a soldier and I'm trained to be a soldier. I'm trained to fight and that's what we do, it's instinct and it's natural and that's what you do.

You don't really think about it at the time, you just do what you've got to do, do your job.

Like all my other mates and all my other colleagues that were there that day, they did their job and they did it very well.

MICHAEL VINCENT: Those are the words of a humble man, for whom the nation's leaders gathered today in Canberra.

ANGUS HOUSTON: As the highest ranking member of the Australian Defence Force, there has been no current serving member that I salute, until now.

Though there is no statutory requirement, tradition holds that even the most senior officer will salute a Victoria Cross recipient as a mark of the utmost respect for their act of valour.

It will be my great honour from this moment forth to salute Trooper Mark Donaldson, VC.

www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2468124.htm

- 10** What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.

4

Other information on Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, VC

C Ben Roberts-Smith's heroic actions took place in anonymity on the battlefield in Afghanistan. Being a member of the elite Special Air Service Regiment, the missions this Perth soldier and his colleagues embarked on were conducted in secret.

That all changed in January when Cpl Roberts-Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross, the 98th Australian soldier to receive this ultimate recognition of bravery.

This is the first year the 32-year-old father of twin daughters has been a well-known public face on Anzac Day.

"Big Ben" is still uneasy about all the attention. He declined an invitation to lead tomorrow's Anzac Day march in Sydney because he didn't want to be in the spotlight. But his giant frame will be easily recognisable as he falls in line with the SAS Association.

Cpl Roberts-Smith has used his new profile today to call on all Australians to remember the faceless troops in Afghanistan and to respect the huge sacrifices they are making to eradicate terrorism.

"A lot of Australians forget that we've lost 88 of our countrymen in Bali in the bombing in 2002," he told *The Sunday Times*.

"It is a fact that the people who instigated the bombing were trained in Afghanistan. That is not political rhetoric. It is just a fact. That is why we are there."

His deeds are now well known but Cpl Roberts-Smith's long family history of serving in Australia's defence forces is remarkable. Indeed, collectively his may be Australia's greatest fighting family.

In the past four generations, 10 male and female members have served their country, going back to the Boer War. Ninety-seven years ago tomorrow, Cpl Roberts-Smith's great-grandfather, a great-uncle and his great-great-uncle landed at Gallipoli and subsequently returned.

His grandfather fought in World War II and returned. Another great-uncle was on the HMAS Australia when it sank in the Philippines in World War II.

His great-uncle Robert, one of the legendary Rats of Tobruk, was one of 3000 Australians who died during the siege in the Libyan port.

Tomorrow, Cpl Roberts-Smith will rightly be recognised as a national hero. But his moments of reflection will be very personal. A silent remembrance to the brave relatives who have preceded him and also the mates he has seen killed while serving.

"When I was growing up, Anzac Day was always important. Hearing *The Last Post* stirs emotions in me of pride and respect," Cpl Roberts-Smith said.

"Nowadays it's a bit more powerful, and rightly so, because I have lost mates in Afghanistan."

Cpl Roberts-Smith is about to return to the battlefield, leaving his wife and young family behind in Perth. Emma Roberts-Smith has already waved her husband off to war five times.

As Australia approaches the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, it's worth pausing to reflect on the enormous sacrifice our modern-day Anzacs and their families are making on a daily basis.

Whatever your political persuasion or private views, the men and women who wear a uniform of our armed forces deserve our utmost respect and absolute support. Lest we forget.

www.perthnow.com.au/opinion/editorial-sacrifice-deserves-deepest-respect/story-e6frg41u-1226043822219

- 11** What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.

D THE wife of WA war hero and Victoria Cross recipient Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith has told of the agony of never knowing if her husband will come home alive.

But Emma Roberts-Smith, 35 one of the extraordinary band of Australian women who shoulder the uncertainty and fear when their SAS husbands and partners go to war says worrying only "gives you wrinkles".

"I learnt a long time ago that worry only makes your hair go grey and gives you wrinkles," the mother of two told *The Sunday Times*. On January 23, she looked on as her husband of eight years received the country's 98th Victoria Cross medal at Swanbourne's Campbell Barracks for "conspicuous

gallantry in action in circumstances of extreme peril", making him the most highly decorated soldier in the country. Cpl Roberts-Smith tore through Taliban bullet fire in the Kandahar village of Tizak, putting himself in the line of fire to protect his fellow soldiers and take several Taliban strongholds.

At the time, his wife was two months off giving birth to twin girls, Eve and Elizabeth, now seven months old, who were conceived after five years of IVF treatment.

"He's been there (Afghanistan) five times now. When you say goodbye, you do think for a brief second that you may not see him again, but you don't think about that for too long because you wouldn't have a very fulfilled life," Mrs Roberts-Smith said.

www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/wifes-agony-of-not-knowing-if-vc-winning-husband-is-alive/story-e6frg13u-1226040153678

- 12** What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.

E DAVID WEBER: Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith said he was wearing his Victoria Cross for his unit. He said the real heroes were the ones who'd given their lives.

BEN ROBERTS-SMITH: You know, I hear the word 'hero' a lot. To me, and the Australian public, heroes are Matt Locke, Jason Brown, Sean McCarthy, Andy Russell. These are the guys that put their hand up willingly and they didn't come back. They're our mates and their families live with that every day. So I'd really urge the public to remember that they are the heroes. They're the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

BEN ROBERTS-SMITH: And every single bloke in that troop at some stage fighting for their life, every single person there showed gallantry. You know, the decisions I saw made were heroic. Just watching some of my mates who had been wounded by frag (shrapnel), just keep firing, just ignoring the fact that they were drawing fire to themselves. It was certainly an amazing squadron effort and a good result. You know, we are always hearing these stories about ambushes or things, you know, losing good Australians but we won. You know, we won and we hurt the insurgency and it was an enduring effect so I am very proud to be part of that.

DAVID WEBER: Speaking about the gallantry of your colleagues or your comrades, how does it feel to be singled out?

BEN ROBERTS-SMITH: Yeah, look as I said before I am extremely humbled but as I know my colleagues will be recognised for their bravery. You know, there are a number of other awards that will be released in due course and I am looking forward to sharing that with them, mate.

DAVID WEBER: Has the VC changed the way that your comrades relate to you?

BEN ROBERTS-SMITH: Nah, not at all. In fact quite the opposite. It has just given them a lot of ammunition to stir me up, give me a hard time.

DAVID WEBER: Corporal Roberts-Smith is the father of five-month-old twins - he was away for the whole of his wife's pregnancy. He's said that he serves because he wants to protect his children's future.

BEN ROBERTS-SMITH: So I want my children to be able to live as everyone does now without the fear of getting on a bus and having it blow up. So, you know, I'm just very proud to do my job I do so that my kids will grow up and know that.

www.abc.net.au/am/content/2011/s3119463.htm

13 What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.

F WA'S Victoria Cross winner Ben Roberts-Smith returned to where it all began this week, urging students from his old school to 'have a crack fellas'.

Perth-based SAS Corporal Roberts-Smith was a surprise guest at Hale School's opening assembly on Tuesday, where he presented badges to the school's 15 prefects for 2011. This week, he urged the next generation of students to strive for the "pursuit of excellence, integrity and team".

"We are representatives of Australia in all we do and must represent these values," he told students.

"Remember, it is not a single act, not the grand final that you win or lose, not the exam that you pass or fail and not the Victoria Cross which defines you.

"It's who you are all the time that matters. You need to give 100 per cent always, however daunting it may seem and, to coin a phrase, 'Have a crack fellas'."

Hale School headmaster Stuart Meade said Cpl Roberts-Smith's "humility was obvious" and the school was "enormously proud" to call him a former student.

"He didn't speak about his own actions in Afghanistan - he actually spoke about a friend of his," he said.

"The story is just so powerful and so positive, it was a great way to start the year."

Hale School prefects, Preston Sudlow and Brendon Lim, said they were inspired "by the honest words of a true leader".

"It was an absolute privilege and honour to be inducted into our prefect role by the ultimate example of true character, humility and leadership in VC recipient, Cpl Ben Roberts-Smith," Preston said

www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/vc-hero-ben-roberts-smith-urges-students-to-strive-for-excellence/story-e6frg13u-1226000137559

14 What extra information does this account give about Corporal Donaldson's actions, and his qualities? Add any new aspects or insights to your summary table.



SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER

16 Having now studied the two VC recipients do you think they are appropriate role models for young Australians today? Justify your answer.

17 Many people believe that there are other members of Australian forces in the past who ought to have been awarded the VC, but were not.

The Australian Government is currently considering the claims of 13 people for these awards. Look at the list. Divide the names among the class, research each, and report back to the class to explain why the claims are made.

- Gunner Albert Neil (Neale) Cleary
– Army (East Geelong, VIC)
- Midshipman Robert Ian Davies
– Navy (Greenwich, Sydney, NSW)
- Leading Cook Francis Bassett Emms
– Navy (Launceston, TAS)
- Lieutenant David John Hamer
– Navy (Melbourne, VIC)
- Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick
– Army (Shield, County Durham, UK.)
- Lieutenant Commander Robert William Rankin
– Navy (Cobar, NSW)
- Able Seaman Dalmorton Joseph Owendale Rudd
– Navy (Sydney, NSW)
- Ordinary Seaman Edward Sheean
– Navy (Barrington, Devonport, TAS)
- Leading Aircrewman Noel Ervin Shipp
– Navy (Julia Creek, North QLD)
- Lieutenant Commander Francis Edward Smith
– Navy (Lismore, NSW)
- Lieutenant Commander Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre Stoker
– Navy (Dublin, Ireland)
- Leading Seaman Ronald Taylor
– Navy (Carlton, VIC)
- Captain Hector Macdonald Laws Waller
– Navy (Benalla, VIC)

18 How do we commemorate those who have been awarded the VC? The Australian War Memorial has a special gallery containing most of the VCs awarded to Australians on permanent and special display. The two photographs below, taken straight after the engagement, are in the AWM.

One shows the bloodied sneakers he wore on the day, the other has been censored so as not to show the body of one of the Afghan enemy he killed during the engagement.



Look at the following summary of arguments for and against the way the images have been presented. Identify the main arguments for and against the idea that the photographs should have been censored in this way, and decide on your own opinion.

CORPORAL Ben Roberts-Smith wore running shoes the day he earned a Victoria Cross in Afghanistan. But a photo of his bloodied sneakers is the only graphic image taken by Australian soldiers during the operation that has not been heavily censored by the Defence Department.

Another photo of Corporal Roberts-Smith in action – armed and pensive, having already earned the nation’s highest military honour – hangs in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. But even it has been cropped by Defence to hide at least one dead insurgent in the foreground.

Official photos and video are now routinely taken on the front line and yet, despite the deaths of 27 Australian soldiers and an ongoing debate about the war in Afghanistan, Defence continues to censor its official account of the conflict.

A Defence spokesman said last night that Corporal Roberts-Smith, who was scout for the operation, wore running shoes “in an attempt to enable rapid, stealthy movement”.

“The shoes became stained while carrying out battle damage assessment,” the spokesman said.

[A Defence representative explained] that the photos were taken for intelligence purposes and to identify insurgents killed during the battle. [He] advised that not only is this information still currently of classified intelligence value, and would directly compromise the conduct of current (Australian Defence Force) operations, but if released it would form the basis of campaigns to target not only ADF personnel, but Australian nationals more broadly by international terrorist organisations.

[But a] historian from the University of Melbourne, said the photos should be released uncensored.

“The problem with war in Australia is it’s sanitised or obscured so much that we don’t have any comprehension of what our soldiers are doing and, in effect, we don’t think of them as being wounded or killed until we get the numbers; or the other thing, we don’t think of our soldiers doing the killing. I don’t particularly like seeing dead bodies in newspapers, but if we are sending young men and women off to war, then we should see what it is that they are involved in.”

Vietnam VC-winner Keith Payne defended the censorship, saying certain details should “remain under wraps”, especially if there was a risk of inciting further acts of violence or terrorism.

www.theaustralian.com.au/news/investigations/grim-reality-of-vcs-guts-and-glory-obscured-by-military-censors/story-fn8r0e18-1226075945494



FURTHER RESEARCH

Here is a list of Australian VC winners.

Boer War 1899-1902

BELL FW	MAYGAR LC
BISDEE JH	ROGERS J
HOWSE NR	WYLLY GG

Russia 1919

PEARSE SG
SULLIVAN AP

World War 1 1914-1918

Note: VCs earned at Gallipoli are identified by *

AXFORD TL	JOYNT WD
BEATHAM RM	KENNY TJB
BIRKS F	KEYSOR LM*
BLACKBURN AS	LEAK J
BORELLA A	LOWERSON AD
BROWN WE	MACTIER R
BUCKLEY AH	MAXWELL J
BUCKLEY MV	McCARTHY LD
BUGDEN PJ	McDOUGALL SR
BURTON AS*	McGEE L
CARROL J	McNAMARA FH
CARTWRIGHT G	MOON RV
CASTLETON CC	MURRAY HW
CHERRY PH	NEWLAND JE
COOKE T	O'MEARA M
CURREY WM	PEELER W
DALZIEL H	POPE C
DARTNELL WT	RUTHVEN W
DAVEY P	RYAN J
DUNSTAN W*	SADLIER CWK
DWYER JJ	SEXTON G (AKA BUCKLEY MV)
GABY AE	SHOUT AJ*
GORDON BS	STATTON PC
GRIEVE RC	STORKEY PV
HALL AC	SYMONS WJ*
HAMILTON JP*	THROSSELL HVH*
HOWELL GJ	TOWNER ET
INGRAM GM	TUBB FH*
INWOOD RR	WARK BA
JACKA A*	WEATHERS LC
JACKSON JWA	WHITTLE JW
JEFFRIES CS	WOODS JP
JENSEN JC	

World War 2 1939-1945

ANDERSON CGW	KELLIHER R
CHOWNE A	KENNA E
CUTLER AR	KIBBY WH
DERRICK TC	KINGSBURY BS
EDMONDSON JH	MACKEY JB
EDWARDS HI	MIDDLETON RH
FRENCH JA	NEWTON WE
GORDON JH	PARTRIDGE FJ
GRATWICK PE	RATTEY RR
GURNEY AS	STARCEVICH LT

Vietnam War 1965-1972

BADCOE PJ
PAYNE K
SIMPSON RS
WHEATLEY KA

Afghanistan War 2002 – Present

DONALDSON MG
ROBERTS-SMITH B

Further information sources:

- www.anzacday.org.au/education/medals/vc/austlist.html
- www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/vic_cross.asp
- www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/vc/biography.html
- www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/07/05/3261887.htm
- www.remembrancedriveway.org.au/vc-citations/default.asp
- www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bn/fads/VC/VCbyElectorate.pdf