

## **GALLANTRY REWARDED AT BRISTOL ROAD STATION**

**by Ian Tindall**

Brave acts are often committed by ordinary people doing their usual jobs in extraordinary circumstances. One such incident occurred at Stonehouse late on a dark February night in 1963.

### **THE INCIDENT**

Whilst attempting to board the moving 10.55pm train to Gloucester at Stonehouse (Bristol Road) Railway Station on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1963, Mr George Baker slipped, and his foot was caught on the train. He was then dragged along the platform before being pulled underneath the train. The train was stopped, and an ambulance summoned.

Area Superintendent Reginald Chapman of Gloucestershire County Ambulance Service arrived and took charge of the incident. In total darkness he crawled under the stationary train where he found Mr Baker seriously injured, rolled into a ball with his limbs and clothes wrapped around his body. His injuries were such that the train had to be moved to release him. Mr Chapman tied the casualty's limbs together and then held him against the platform wall whilst, despite the doubts expressed by railway staff, the train was rolled slowly forward, the wheels just inches from the two men. Once the casualty was clear, he was placed in the ambulance and conveyed to hospital in Gloucester where he later died as a result of his injuries.

Mr Chapman displayed great bravery by deliberately placing himself, without thought for his own safety, in a situation where he knowingly faced the possibility of death or serious injury. He was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct (QCBC) which was announced in the London Gazette of 17<sup>th</sup> April 1964.

At the subsequent inquest, it was found that Mr George Hugh Baker, who lived at Monckton Combe, near Bath had been to Bristol. There was no logical reason why Mr Baker was at Stonehouse that night and it was assumed that he must have boarded the wrong train that evening. He alighted briefly at Stonehouse station and on realising his mistake he tried to reboard the train, and on catching his foot was dragged to his death beneath the wheels.

### **THE AWARD**

British gallantry awards are arranged in four tiers according to the degree of risk and likelihood of death.

Level 1 death.	George Cross	90% to 100% chance of
Level 2	George Medal	50 % to 90% chance of death.
Level 3	Queen's Gallantry Medal	20% to 50% chance of death.
Level 4	Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct	Up to 20% chance of death.

For civilians, awards are most often generated by the local Chief Constable and passed to the Home Office for review. Recommendations are then passed to the Treasury where they are considered by what is colloquially known as The George Cross Committee. They consider all aspects of the recommendation and decide which award should be awarded, and this is then passed to the Monarch for approval. Awards are also generated by all Government Offices such as the Department of Health, Department of Trade etc. in the same manner.

There are several other awards in levels two and three, such as the Queen's Police Medal for Gallantry and although now mostly phased out, they were considered in the same manner. Prior to 1974, the different levels of the Order of the British Empire (CBE, OBE, MBE & BEM) were awarded as the level three award, and after 1956 these gallantry awards were distinguished by an oak leaf cluster worn on the ribbon. These awards ceased on the creation of the Queen's Gallantry Medal. Prior to 1977, only level one and level four awards could be awarded posthumously. This led to the situation where people who died whilst performing their courageous act, and had they lived, they would most likely have received a level two or three award. However, unless their act merited the level one George Cross, they would only receive the level four QCBC. After 1977, all British gallantry awards may be awarded posthumously.

The King's Commendation for Brave Conduct (KCBC) was introduced in 1939 and was intended for members of the various Civil Defence services and the Merchant Navy, however it was also available to members of the Armed Forces for non-warlike gallantry, which generally entailed brave acts not in the face of the enemy. Without going into the intricacies of the award in too much detail, by the end of the war the award was represented by a certificate and a silver laurel leaf which was either worn on the ribbon of the Defence Medal or was worn directly after any other medal ribbons. Members of the Armed Forces received the same bronze oak leaf as awarded for a Mention in Despatches (MiD) making these two awards indistinguishable from each other. In 1952, the award became the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct (QCBC). In the 1994 review of honours and awards, the QCBC became the Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB). Although technically a different award, there is little difference for civilian awards, and the change was mainly brought about to bring the armed forces into line, and they now wear the same laurel leaf. Since the accession of King Charles, the award is now known as the King's Commendation for Bravery (KCB).

**SOURCES:**

**Gloucester Citizen – 12 Feb 1963**

**Stroud News & Journal – 15 Feb 1963**

**Western Daily Post – 06 Jun 1964**

**Stonehouse History Group**

**Stroud Local History Group**