

11 September 1990



The Royal Mail will issue five 20p stamps (inland first class and EEC basic rate) on 11 September illustrating Gallantry awards. The stamps are being issued to mark the 50th anniversaries of the announcement of the institution of the George Cross and Medal. The George Cross and the Victoria Cross are featured on two vertical-format stamps with three horizontal stamps showing the Distinguished Service Cross and Medal; Military Cross and Medal; and Distinguished Flying Cross and Medal.

The five stamps, showing the Crosses and Medals with their ribbons, are a fitting tribute to all those who have won gallantry awards in the service of their country. In particular we will remember those killed or injured during the Second World War.



The **Victoria Cross** (VC) is the highest British decoration for valour and is open to all ranks of the armed services for outstanding gallantry in the face of an enemy. To date some 1,354 VCs have been awarded, many posthumously. The award was instituted in January 1856 and made retrospective to 1854 to cover the period of the Crimean War. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert chose the motto "For Valour". The bronze cross is made from guns captured at Sebastopol.

The **George Cross** (GC) was announced in a broadcast by King George VI on 23 September 1940; the King stated "Many and glorious are

the deeds of gallantry done during these perilous but famous days. In order that they should be worthily and promptly recognised, I have decided to create at once a new mark of honour for men and women of all walks of life." The GC is awarded to civilians although it can be bestowed on military personnel for acts for which military decorations are not usually awarded. A total of 152 GCs have been awarded, excluding those exchanged for the Empire Gallantry Medal (which it superseded), Albert Medal and Edward Medal. As a result of exchanges, 396 names appear on the GC roll of honour, including that of Malta in recognition of the gallantry of its inhabitants in 1942. A number of Maltese stamps have featured the GC and the 1956 3d definitive (SG 272) depicts the document signed by George VI awarding the GC to the island.

The **Distinguished Service Cross** was instituted, as the Conspicuous Service Cross in 1901 and given its present title in 1914. It is given to officers of the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and fishing fleets for gallantry, but can also be granted to RAF and Army officers while serving at sea. This silver cross has been awarded on more than 7,000 occasions. The **Distinguished Service Medal** (DSM) was instituted in 1914 for non-commissioned ranks; this circular silver medal has been awarded on some 13,000 occasions.

The **Military Cross** (MC) was instituted in 1914 and is granted for gallantry by Army warrant and commissioned officers, although it can also be awarded to Royal Marine and RAF officers for services on land. Some 51,000 of these silver crosses have been awarded, no fewer than 40,000 during the First World War — testimony to the appalling conditions of trench warfare. The Military Medal (MM) awarded to other ranks, was instituted in 1916. This comprises a silver circular medal inscribed "For bravery in the field" on the reverse. Some 136,000 have been awarded, of these 120,000 were granted during the last years of the First World War.

The **Distinguished Flying Cross** (DFC) was introduced in 1918 to honour the gallantry

of warrant and commissioned officers of the newly-formed RAF. Officers of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Army are also eligible for the award while flying in action against the enemy. Of the 23,000 DFCs awarded, most were granted during the Second World War. The **Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM)** was also instituted in 1918 for award to other ranks. This oval-shaped silver medal has, on the reverse, the figure of Athena Nike sitting on an aeroplane with a hawk and the legend "For Courage". Some 7,000 have been granted.

which area the headquarters of the George Cross Association is located).

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the stamps cancelled with the requested postmark. Application forms, available from the Bureau and main post offices, should be returned not later than 11 September.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the first day of



Technical Details

The Gallantry stamps were designed by John Gibbs and illustrated by John Harwood; printed by Harrison & Sons Limited in photogravure on phosphor-coated paper. They are of vertical and horizontal format, 30 x 41mm or 41 x 30mm, printed in sheets of 100 with PVA Dextrin gum. Perforation measures 14 x 15 (vertical stamps), 15 x 14 (horizontal). Please note that the five stamps are printed in separate sheets and thus do not exist in se-tenant formats.

Presentation Pack

The presentation pack (No. 211) will cost £1.25; it was designed by John Gibbs with text by Mike Barden and printed by Moore & Matthes (Printers) Limited.

Royal Mail Stamp Cards

Royal Mail Stamp Cards, featuring enlargements of the stamp designs, will be available approximately two weeks before the stamp issue, price 18p each. They are numbered 129A-E.

First Day Cover

The Royal Mail first day cover will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, philatelic counters and main post offices approximately two weeks before 11 September, price 18p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service — one for the British Philatelic Bureau, the other for London SW1 (in

issue a stamped envelope under an outer cover endorsed "Special First Day of Issue handstamp" to:

British Philatelic Bureau 20 Brandon Street
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

London SW1

London South Special Handstamp Centre
SW London LDO
53 Nine Elms Lane
LONDON SW8 5BB

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for those collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps.

A pictorial First Day postmark, showing the arms of the City of London, will be used at the London North Special Handstamp Centre, City of London LDO, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1AA. Durham Post Office will be using a pictorial First Day handstamp showing the cathedral. Items for this postmark should be sent to: Pictorial First Day of Issue Postmark Duty, Durham Post Office, 33 Silver Street, DURHAM DH1 3RE.

Souvenir Cover

A souvenir cover, of similar design to the first day cover, will be available from all philatelic counters from 12 September, price 18p. This will be on sale for one year.

