

# Daily Telegraph

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## AWARD OF V.C. 5 YEARS AFTER BURMA DEATH

### CITATION WAS LOST WITH GEN. WINGATE

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER  
Sitting in front of the fire,  
listening to the wireless, in her  
Sicup, Kent, home on Dec. 10  
last year a young war-widow  
heard an account of the bravery  
and death of her husband, Lt.  
George A. Cairns, in the Burma  
jungle. It concluded with these  
words:

"The 'Old Man' recommended  
him for the V.C. and the citation  
was sent home by air with Gen.  
Wingate. You know what hap-  
pened, the plane crashed and  
was lost. So was the citation.  
And they couldn't find the three  
witnesses you have to have for a  
V.C.; they were all killed or lost."

This was the first Mrs. Cairns  
had heard of the citation and she  
decided to take steps to see that  
her husband's  
bravery should  
be acknowledged.  
Last night this  
announcement  
appeared in the  
London Gazette:



"The King has  
been graciously  
pleased to ap-  
prove the post-  
humous award of  
the Victoria  
Cross to Lt.  
George A. Cairns,  
The Somerset  
Light Infantry,  
attached South  
Staffordshire  
Regiment."

LT. G. A. CAIRNS. Then followed  
this account of

Lt. Cairns' last action:  
"On March 12, 1944, columns from  
the South Staffordshire Regiment  
and 3/6 Gurkha Rifles established a  
road and rail block across the  
Japanese lines of communication at  
Henu Block.

The Japanese counter-attacked  
this position heavily in the early  
morning of the 13th and the South  
Staffs. Regt. was ordered to attack a  
hill-top which formed the basis of  
the Japanese attack. During this  
action, in which Lt. Cairns took a  
foremost part, he was attacked by  
a Japanese officer, who, with his  
sword, hacked off Lt. Cairns' left  
arm.

"Lt. Cairns killed this officer;  
picked up the sword and continued  
to lead his men in the attack and,  
slashing left and right with the cap-  
tured sword, killed and wounded  
several Japanese before he himself  
fell to the ground. Lt. Cairns subse-  
quently died from his wounds.

"His action so inspired all his com-  
rades that, later, the Japanese were  
completely routed, a very rare occur-  
rence at that time."

Yesterday Mrs. Ena Cairns, his  
young widow, told me about her  
efforts to ensure acknowledgment of  
her husband's bravery. First men-  
tion of bravery came in 1944 in an air-  
letter from his batman, Pte. N.  
Coales, who wrote: "He died a hero."  
Lt. Cairns' commanding officer also  
paid a tribute in a letter.

Mrs. Cairns heard nothing more  
until late last year. The B.E.C. wrote  
asking for permission to use her hus-  
band's name in a broadcast on  
famous Midland regiments.

"George and I met at the bank  
where we both worked before the war.  
We were married in 1941 and only a  
year later he left for the army."

"During the broadcast I heard the  
commentator say, 'He fought like a  
man possessed . . . giving Hell to  
every Jap he could get at, until he  
dropped unconscious and there he  
died . . . We shan't forget him—ever.'

"I decided to write to my M.P."  
Mr. G. D. Wallace, Socialist M.P.  
for Chislehurst, told me that he  
approached the War Office, on Mrs.  
Cairns' behalf. "I hoped it would  
mean recognition not only for her  
husband but for herself and the grand  
fight she has put up—a fight for  
others besides herself."

At her home in Sicup I learned  
what Mr. Wallace meant. Here I  
found Mrs. Edith Duffy, Mrs. Cairns'  
mother, who said that her daughter  
had continued work in the bank to  
support herself, mother and invalid  
sister.