

Document 3

Lieutenant George Albert CAIRNS (198186)
The Somerset Light Infantry
Attached South Staffordshire Regiment

"On the 5th March 1944, 77 Independent Infantry Brigade, of which the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment formed a part, landed by glider at Broadway (Burma).

On the 12th March 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 March 1944, and the South Staffordshire Regiment was ordered to attack a hill-top which formed the basis of the Japanese attack.

During this action, in which Lieutenant Cairns took a foremost part, he was attacked by a Japanese officer, who, with his sword hacked off Lieutenant Cairns left arm. Lieutenant Cairns killed this officer; picked up the sword and continued to lead his men in the attack and slashing left and right with the captured sword killed and wounded several Japanese before he himself fell to the ground.

Lieutenant Cairns subsequently died from his wounds.

His action so inspired all his comrades that, later the Japanese were completely routed, a very rare occurrence at that time."

Date of Act of Bravery
5th March 1944

London Gazette
20th May 1949

CAIRNS George Albert

Rank:	Lieutenant
Unit/Force:	The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) attd. The South Staffordshire Regt.
Other Decorations:	-
Place/Date of Deed:	Henu Block, Burma - 13th March 1944
Place/Date of Birth:	London - 12th December 1913
Place/Date of Death:	Henu Block, Burma - 19th March 1944
Place of Memorial:	Taukkyan War Cemetery, Burma; memorials in Garrison Church, Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffs. and Brighstone Churchyard, Isle of Wight.
Town/County Connections:	London (Tooting and Fulham)
Remarks:	Last VC to be gazetted for the Second World War - the original recommendation was with General Wingate when he was killed in an air crash and the necessary information could not be obtained again until the war was over.