

Rare Victoria Cross awarded following Far East battles in Second World War at risk of leaving the UK

- Medal, along with four others, is valued at more than £660,000
- Cross was awarded posthumously to Squadron Leader A.S.K. Scarf who died after returning from a raid gravely injured

A Victoria Cross awarded to RAF Squadron Leader A.S.K. Scarf is at risk of leaving the UK after being sold abroad for more than £660,000.

The medal, along with four others – the 1939-1945 Star, Pacific Star, Defence Medal and British War Medal – was awarded posthumously to Scarf in 1946. The Victoria Cross was presented to his widow, Mrs Elizabeth Scarf, by King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

While the campaign medals within this group are relatively common and were issued to all personnel who met the qualifying criteria, the Victoria Cross is incredibly rare. Only 1,358 have been awarded since its inception in 1856 with just 181 awarded during the Second World War. Of the 22 awarded during the conflict to the RAF, this Victoria Cross is of particular interest because it is the only one awarded to the RAF for their service in the Far East.

Scarf's Victoria Cross was awarded in recognition of his bravery on a daylight raid on Singora, Malaya, on 9 December 1941. Scarf was responsible for spearheading the raid which saw all available aircraft ordered to take part. He had just taken off when enemy aircraft arrived – destroying or disabling the rest of the machines. He flew alone to Singora and, despite attacks from enemy fighter planes, completed his bombing run. On his way back his aircraft was attacked and he was severely wounded. He crash landed at Alor Star without causing any injury to his crew. He died two hours later in hospital.

Scarf's pregnant wife was a nurse and based at the Alor Star hospital but had been evacuated south. The two other crewmen on Scarf's plane were also given awards for their courage during the action. Sergeant (later Squadron Leader) Paddy Calder was awarded a Distinguished Flying Medal and Sergeant Cyril Rich, who was killed in action in 1943, was posthumously mentioned in Despatches.

Arts Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Stories like these remind us of the sacrifices those who served in the Second World War made for the freedoms we enjoy today.

This Victoria Cross and collection of medals represent not only A.S.K. Scarf's story but the stories and experiences of all those

who fought, lived and died in the conflict. I hope that a UK buyer can be found so these incredibly important objects can be displayed for future generations to see.

The minister's decision follows the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA). The committee noted the medals represented an extraordinary and highly poignant story of great personal courage from an under-researched campaign of the Second World War. As the only Victoria Cross awarded to the RAF for the Far East and wider Pacific campaign, the medals represent a unique and significant element of a particular moment in British military history.

Committee Member, Tim Pestell, said:

Famous as the ultimate symbol of bravery in combat, the Victoria Cross remains our most nationally significant military award following its establishment over 160 years ago. The example in this group of medals provides a poignant yet powerful reminder of the attributes required to win the award, in a tale that could have come straight from a Boy's Own story. Not only does Squadron Leader Scarf's award speak eloquently of the determination and bravery displayed in winning a VC, its acquisition by a UK institution would provide a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by British and Commonwealth servicemen fighting in the 'forgotten war' of the Far East.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the sets outstanding significance for the study of the British Far East campaign during the Second World War as well as the role of the RAF within this context.

The decision on the export licence application for the medal will be deferred for a period ending on 27 January 2023 inclusive. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 business days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the set of medals at the recommended price of £660,000 (plus VAT of £22,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution). The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for three months.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the medals should contact the RCEWA on 0161 934 4317.
2. Provenance: This medal set was awarded posthumously to Mrs Elizabeth 'Sallie' Scarf, the widow of the deceased Squadron Leader Arthur 'Pongo' Scarf. The Victoria Cross was presented by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 30 June 1946. It has been passed down through the family into the hands of the present owner, who is a direct descendent of Scarf.
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of

Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

4. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. ACE have set out their strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invest public money from the Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.
5. Following the [Covid-19](#) crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. ACE are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund.