

fire from posts in the corn and farther back, and also fire from an 88 mm. gun; many casualties were caused and the advance was slowed up.

Lieutenant Watkins, the only officer left, placed himself at the head of his men and under short range fire charged two posts in succession, personally killing or wounding the occupants with his Sten gun. On reaching his objective he found an anti-tank gun manned by a German soldier; his Sten gun jammed, so he threw it in the German's face and shot him with his pistol before he had time to recover.

Lieutenant Watkin's company now had only some 30 men left and was counter-attacked by 50 enemy infantry. Lieutenant Watkins directed the fire of his men and then led a bayonet charge, which resulted in the almost complete destruction of the enemy.

It was now dusk and orders were given for the battalion to withdraw. These orders were not received by Lieutenant Watkin's company as the wireless set had been destroyed. They now found themselves alone and surrounded in depleted numbers and in failing light. Lieutenant Watkins decided to rejoin his battalion by passing round the flank of the enemy position through which he had advanced but while passing through the cornfields once more, he was challenged by an enemy post at close range. He ordered his men to scatter and himself charged the post with a Bren gun and silenced it. He then led the remnants of his company back to battalion headquarters.

His superb gallantry and total disregard for his own safety during an extremely difficult period were responsible for saving the lives of his men, and had a decisive influence on the course of the battle.

*War Office, 2nd November, 1944.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous awards of the VICTORIA CROSS to:—

No. 5779898 Corporal Sidney Bates, The Royal Norfolk Regiment (London, S.E.5):

In North-West Europe on 6th August, 1944, the position held by a battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment near Sourdeval was attacked in strength by 10th S.S. Panzer Division. The attack started with a heavy and accurate artillery and mortar programme on the position which the enemy had, by this time, pin-pointed.

Half an hour later the main attack developed and heavy machine-gun and mortar fire was concentrated on the point of junction of the two forward companies.

Corporal Bates was commanding the right forward section of the left forward company which suffered some casualties; so he decided to move the remnants of his section to an alternative position whence he appreciated he could better counter the enemy thrust. However, the enemy wedge grew still deeper, until there were about 50 to 60 Germans, supported by machine-guns and mortars, in the area occupied by the section.

Seeing that the situation was becoming desperate, Corporal Bates then seized a light

machine-gun and charged the enemy, moving forward through a hail of bullets and splinters and firing the gun from his hip. He was almost immediately wounded by machine-gun fire and fell to the ground, but recovered himself quickly, got up and continued advancing towards the enemy, spraying bullets from his gun as he went. His action by now was having an effect on the enemy riflemen and machine gunners but mortar bombs continued to fall all around him.

He was then hit for the second time and much more seriously and painfully wounded. However, undaunted, he staggered once more to his feet and continued towards the enemy who were now seemingly nonplussed by their inability to check him. His constant firing continued until the enemy started to withdraw before him. At this moment, he was hit for the third time by mortar bomb splinters—a wound that was to prove mortal. He again fell to the ground but continued to fire his weapon until his strength failed him. This was not, however, until the enemy had withdrawn and the situation in this locality had been restored.

Corporal Bates died shortly afterwards of the wounds he had received, but, by his supreme gallantry and self sacrifice he had personally restored what had been a critical situation.

No. 9192 Naik Yeshwant Ghadge, 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, Indian Army.

In Italy, on 10th July, 1944, a Company of the 5th Mahratta Light Infantry attacked a position strongly defended by the enemy.

During this attack a rifle section commanded by Naik Yeshwant Ghadge came under heavy machine-gun fire at close range, which killed or wounded all members of the section except the commander. Without hesitation, and well knowing that none were left to accompany him, Naik Yeshwant Ghadge rushed the machine gun post. He first threw a grenade which knocked out the machine gun and firer, after which he shot one of the gun crew with his Tommygun. Finally, having no time to change his magazine, he grasped his gun by the barrel and beat to death the remaining two men of the gun crew. Unfortunately Naik Yeshwant Ghadge was shot in the chest and back by enemy snipers and died in the post which he had captured single handed.

The courage, determination, and devotion to duty of this Indian N.C.O. in a situation where he knew the odds against him gave little hope of survival, were outstanding.

No. 4469 Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu, Fiji Military Forces.

On June 23rd, 1944, at Mawaraka, Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands, Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu crawled forward to rescue some men who had been wounded when their platoon was ambushed and some of the leading elements had become casualties.

After two wounded men had been successfully recovered this N.C.O., who was in command of the rear section, volunteered to go on farther alone to try and rescue another one, in spite of machine gun and mortar fire, but on the way back he himself was seriously