



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Paper No. 192

Prepared & Presented by : K.R. Newman

Date : 22 August 2011.

Bro. Sergeant ERIC GEORGE BAILEY  
(14. 10. 1906 - 12. 1. 1945)  
POLICE OFFICER.

Eric George Bailey was born on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1906 at Wagga Wagga N.S.W. to Arthur Peter and Elizabeth Jane (Bush) Bailey.

He attended the local school at Wagga Wagga. At the age of 16 years, he was employed as a junior officer with the P.M.G.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1927 he joined the N.S.W. Police Force and was stationed at the Phillip Street Police Station. In 1928 he was transferred to The Rock, a small town about 20 miles from Wagga Wagga. In May 1929, he was transferred to Gundagai until 1932 when he was transferred to Narrandera, then serving short periods at Deniliquin and Balranald.

Eric married Florence May O'Connor in 1928 at the Mt. Carmel Church, Waterloo and commenced a family with the birth of a son, John George Bailey who later became a Police Officer. They later had a daughter who they named Doreen.

In April 1938, he was promoted to Constable 1<sup>st</sup> Class and moved to Moruya. Whilst at Moruya he was highly commended for his part in the rescue of survivors from the fishing trawler, 'Dureenbee' which had been attacked by a Japanese submarine on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1942. He was finally transferred to Blayney just eight days before his death.

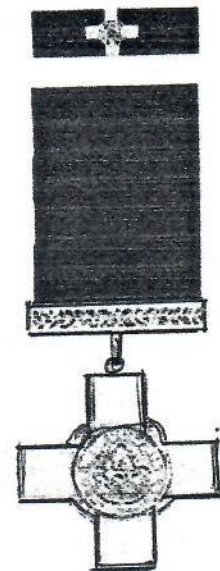
At about 8.30 pm on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1945, Constable Bailey, whilst on duty in Adelaide Street, Blayney had occasion to speak to a man whose movements were suspicious. During the questioning, the man pulled a revolver from his pocket and fired a shot which struck Bailey in the stomach. The Constable immediately closed with his assailant who fired two more shots. Although succumbing to his injuries and suffering from the effects of shock and haemorrhage, Bailey continued the struggle with the offender and held him on the ground until assistance arrived. Shortly afterwards, Bailey died. The fortitude and courage manifested by this Police Officer, in spite of the mortal injuries sustained by him at the outset of the encounter constituted bravery and devotion to duty of the highest order.

Evidence given at the Central Criminal Court in Sydney that the man who fired the shots, killing Eric Bailey, had arrived at Blayney earlier on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1945 and displayed a revolver at a hotel leading up to the shooting, leaving no doubt about the sequence of events for those who would ultimately investigate the murder.

The assailant was arrested when assistance arrived. Bailey died shortly afterwards in hospital though not before he had dictated a dying deposition to a Justice of the Peace, knowing that he was about to die. In sentencing the murderer to death, Mr Justice Maxwell commended Bailey's conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. The recommendation from Justice Maxwell was forwarded to the Governor General.

On Bailey's death, as he had already passed his examination to the rank of Sergeant, the Commissioner immediately conferred the rank of Sergeant upon him.

The London Gazette dated September 10, 1947 reports that the King awarded Sergeant Eric George Bailey with the highest civilian award, posthumously, being the George Cross. In 1947, his widow, Florence, attended a ceremony in Sydney where the Governor General officially presented her with Eric's George Cross.



George Cross and its  
ribbon bar



Prior to 1905 the highest Bravery Medal was known as the 'Albert Medal'. This was then deleted and replaced with the George Cross. In Australia, there were only 72 Albert Medals awarded. None to Police Officers in New South Wales. This is the only George Cross awarded to a N.S.W. Police Officer. Further awards for courage were the George Medal of which there have only been five recipients in N.S.W. Later the awards were changed by Queen Elizabeth II to the 'Queens Commendation for Bravery'. In 1972, when Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister, he abolished all imperial awards, introducing lesser titles for Australian acts of bravery.

Brother Bailey was survived by his wife, Florence, daughter Doreen and son, John.

*Greater love hath no man than this,  
that a man lay down his life  
for his friends.*

John 15, verse 13.

---

**MASONIC HISTORY:**

Initiated in Lodge Gundagai No. 25 on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1931.  
Passed and Raised in 1931.

Called off in Good Standing on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1935.

**INFORMATION:**

N.S.W. Police Records, B.D & M.



*Eric Bailey and son John.*