

such despatch? I may add that I am representing a large number of old Volunteers, some of whom served through the year 1867 immediately beside Mr. Wrigg, and all of whom express unfeigned surprise at this proposed decoration for an act of bravery by them unknown and unheard-of until thirty-odd years after the war.

Waiting your reply,
Sir Arthur Douglas, Defence Department, Wellington.

I remain, &c.,
W. LINGARD.

Captain PREECE to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Palmerston North, 24th March, 1898.

I have the honour to state that I have heard with surprise that it is the intention of the Government to award the decoration of the New Zealand Cross (which is the equivalent of the Victoria Cross) to one Harry Wrigg, a late cornet, for some supposed act of valour in carrying despatches between Opotiki and Tauranga in the year 1867.

I would most respectfully request that you may make every possible inquiry into this matter, and that the Government should pause before degrading this honourable military order by awarding it lightly for services which do not merit so high a distinction.

I submit that had the services rendered by this gentleman been of such a nature as to warrant any special recommendation he would have been recommended for special favour by the officers in command in their despatches to the Government at the time; also, that the Victoria Cross or the New Zealand Cross would not be recommended by any military commanding officer unless the special act of bravery took place under fire. The mere carrying of despatches where there was a possibility of being fired at by the enemy would not justify the award. If this were the case the Victoria Cross in the Imperial army would become a very common and worthless order.

Had the services of this gentleman been of the nature which would justify his being recommended for special distinction by the commanding officer his name would have been well known amongst the Colonial Forces.

There is no doubt that there are officers and men both in the New Zealand Forces and the Imperial army who have done acts of valour under fire which would justify the award of the Victoria or New Zealand Cross. I do not, however, think that there is a single instance on record of the Victoria Cross having been awarded after a lapse of thirty years.

In conclusion, I would again urge that this honourable decoration should not be rendered valueless by being given for any service except conspicuous bravery in the field, such as carrying a wounded comrade under fire, leading a forlorn hope, or some act which inspires men with confidence when wavering in an attack or covering a retreat when under fire.

I have, &c.,

G. T. PREECE, Captain, N.Z.M., N.Z.C.

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

R. SHEPHERD to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Beresford Street, Auckland, 28th March, 1898.

I have the honour to forward extracts from Order in Council, 10th day of March, 1869, re New Zealand Cross:—

“Fourthly, the distinction shall only be conferred upon those officers or men who, when serving in the presence of the enemy, shall have performed some signal act of valour or devotion to their duty, or who shall have performed any very intrepid action in the public service; and neither rank nor long service, nor wounds, nor any other circumstance or condition whatever, save merit of conspicuous bravery, shall be held to establish a sufficient claim to the honour.

“Fifthly, the distinction shall be awarded by the Governor only. It shall not be claimed by any individual on his own account, but the claim must be made in favour of the person considered to be entitled to it by the commanding officer of the Force or district to which such person belonged, and the Governor shall call for such description and attestation of the act as he may think requisite.”

I was serving in the 68th Light Infantry stationed at Tauranga at the time Mr. Wrigg is supposed to have performed some act of valour when carrying despatches from Major St. John to Colonel Harrington, and I did not then hear at that or any other time of the said claimant having done anything to entitle him to the high distinction of the New Zealand Cross.

I also served under Colonel Harrington and Major St. John in several engagements on the East Coast, and I firmly believe if Mr. Wrigg had done anything worthy of special notice both these officers would have reported it.

I have, &c.,

R. SHEPHERD, N.Z.C.,
Late Sergeant, Armed Constabulary.

The Hon. T. Thompson, Minister of Defence, Wellington.

W. J. RAVEN and OTHERS to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Wellington, 29th March, 1898.

We, the undersigned old Volunteers and Imperial service men, who took part in the Maori wars between the years 1860 and 1870, do most respectfully petition you that, before finally conferring the New Zealand Cross on Mr. Harry Wrigg, you would reconsider the matter, and further investigate his claims prior to actually presenting him with the decoration, on the following grounds:—