

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY STAR (N.Z.B.S.)

Michael John BURNE Constable, New Zealand Police

Date of action: 7 May 2009

Date of award: 2 April 2011

Citation

The first Armed Offenders Squad (AOS) members to arrive in the vicinity of Chaucer Road, Napier, on 7 May 2009 were Constable Burne, Senior Constable Symonds and Senior Constable Hurworth. They came down Chaucer Road from the intersection with Guys Hill Road. They were intent on finding and evacuating Senior Constable Snee, and Senior Constable Diver who they knew had been shot, as well as any civilians who might have been in the area. The offender, Jan Molenaar, could not be accurately located. He continually fired volleys of shots from high calibre semi automatic weaponry.

As they moved down Chaucer Road they came across the injured Senior Constable Miller who had been shot and was lying in the driveway at 47 Chaucer Road and was being attended to by others. Ascertaining that he was stable, they found Senior Constable Len Snee, also a serving member of the AOS, in front of 41 Chaucer Road (Molenaar's house). Checking Snee's condition, they found that he was deceased. Leonard Holmwood, a civilian who had been shot, was also located nearby. By now Symonds and his team were fully aware that the offender, Molenaar, possessed high calibre semi-automatic firearms, was able to accurately discharge them, was volatile, and had shot three police officers and a civilian. His location unknown, they knew they were in a very dangerous situation.

Even with this knowledge, Burne and the other two AOS officers pressed on, fully exposed to fire, looking for Senior Constable Diver. The three AOS officers thought Diver was possibly in the section at the rear of Molenaar's house. Senior Constable Symonds called out to Diver, the calls alerting Molenaar to their position. Without any warning, Molenaar fired a volley of at least 13 shots at them. The officers took cover behind a wooden fence close to Molenaar's house. The shots went through the fence above their heads.

They received advice that Diver was in 45 Chaucer Road. Burne was subsequently deployed into the Old Napier Cemetery, which was across the road from 41 Chaucer Street, and was tasked with providing observations of Molenaar's address.

Constable Burne showed outstanding bravery, not only in making the decision to enter the immediate area outside 41 Chaucer Road on 7 May 2009 at a very early stage in the incident, knowing at least one police officer had been shot and that shots were continuing to be fired by the offender, but also in remaining there after finding a colleague shot dead and a civilian wounded. He operated in an area of challenging terrain on a search and rescue mission for those shot by the offender knowing that Molenaar was volatile and not knowing his exact location. He knew that his life was in significant danger, despite being equipped with ballistic armour, as Molenaar was using high calibre semi-automatic firearms at close range.