

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

Leonard Rex HOLMWOOD

Date of action: 7 May 2009

Date of award: 2 April 2011

Citation

On the morning of 7 May 2009, Mr Leonard Holmwood called in to the house of his friend, Mr Jan Molenaar, at 41 Chaucer Road South, Napier, to have a cup of coffee. He arrived to find three Police Officers talking to Mr Molenaar's partner about some cannabis. Mr Molenaar was absent from the property at the time, walking his dog, but arrived home about five minutes later. Apparently angered by the Police presence, Mr Molenaar appeared holding a rifle and ordered everyone to leave the house. The three Police Officers, Mr Holmwood and Mr Molenaar's partner left the house as instructed. As they reached the street, Mr Molenaar fired a number of shots from the balcony of his house, hitting all three Police Officers. He then came down to the street level carrying the rifle, where he was confronted by Mr Holmwood. Mr Molenaar was facing up Chaucer Road in the direction in which two of the wounded Police Officers were attempting to retreat from the scene. Mr Holmwood was facing down the street, but could hear the voices of the wounded Officers and, briefly looking over his shoulder, could see them only a short distance up the road.

Mr Molenaar told Mr Holmwood to get out of his way and began to swing the barrel of his rifle in the direction of the Police Officers. Mr Holmwood immediately grabbed the rifle and tried to dissuade Mr Molenaar from firing it, at the same time turning it away from its intended targets. A tussle then followed between Mr Holmwood and Mr Molenaar until Mr Molenaar, the larger man, prevailed and Mr Holmwood was thrown to the ground. Mr Molenaar then fired two shots, one of which struck Mr Holmwood in the hip, inflicting a serious injury. By this time, the two Police Officers had managed to take cover away from immediate danger. Mr Molenaar then left the scene and returned to his house. Mr Holmwood managed to take cover behind one of the Police cars that were parked nearby, and beside which the third wounded Police Officer lay. Mr Holmwood tried to reach him to give first aid, but a volley of shots from Mr Molenaar forced him to take cover behind a block wall. It was from this position that Mr Holmwood was subsequently rescued by members of the Armed Offenders Squad and taken to hospital.

Mr Holmwood's outstandingly brave actions prevented Mr Molenaar from firing further shots at the wounded Police Officers, giving them valuable time in which to seek cover and relative safety. In doing so he sustained potentially life-threatening injuries. Even when wounded, he attempted to provide assistance to another wounded Police Officer who lay nearby.