



Fallen Cumbria officer wins North West regional Police Bravery award

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PC Bill Barker, an heroic officer from Cumbria who tragically died during the floods in 2009, has tonight posthumously been awarded the North West regional award for bravery at the 15th annual Police Bravery Awards in London; organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales and The Sun Newspaper.

The award was received by PC Barker's son, Simon, at a glittering award ceremony at The Dorchester Hotel which followed a reception at 10 Downing Street where the family met the Prime Minister, David Cameron and Home Secretary, Theresa May.

In November 2009 heavy rainfall swept the country, causing severe flooding and devastation in many parts of the country. Cumbria was particularly badly hit with 314mm of rain falling in 24 hours, swelling the rivers and saturating the ground.

PC Bill Barker and fellow officers responded to reports of a large hole on the approach to Northside bridge in Workington. Unconfirmed reports suggested a male was stuck in his car.

On arrival at the scene it was clear members of the public, vehicles and even single deck buses were still using the bridge putting themselves in very real danger.

Without a thought for his own welfare, PC Barker rushed to the bridge on foot and directed motorists and pedestrians to safety. Owing to the sheer force and volume of water, Northside Bridge then collapsed and, tragically, PC Barker was swept away in the torrent with the bridge masonry and flood water.

Due to his quick thinking and selfless actions nobody else was on the bridge when it collapsed. PC Barker's body was recovered on a beach north of the river Derwent several hours later. PC Barker died a hero.

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales says:

“PC Bill Barker is a true hero. He put the lives and safety of the public before his own and sadly paid the ultimate price for his sacrifice. He is a credit to the service and deserves the highest praise for his actions. We hope this award gives some comfort to his family, friends and colleagues and recognises his heroic actions.”

Editor of The Sun Newspaper Dominic Mohan says:

“PC Bill Barker showed the most incredibly bravery and tragically paid with his own life. His quick thinking and selfless actions at Northside Bridge saved the lives of others and he deserves the very highest recognition. It is a great honour for us to be able to pay tribute to such a remarkable man in this way.”

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