



## An Garda Síochána and the Scott Medal by Gerard O'Brien

This long overdue opus by Professor Gerard O'Brien charts the history of the Scott Medal from its inception. The medal was conceived by Colonel Walter Scott following a meeting he had with Eoin O'Duffy at a police conference in New York in 1923. Col. Scott, a Canadian with a lifelong interest in the police, was an admirer of Michael Collins and was keen to support the fledgling Irish police Force in a meaningful way. He put up a €1,000 gold bond, the interest of which was to pay for an 18-carat gold medal to be presented to the Garda who had performed the most heroic act of bravery in any one year.

The book details the story behind the granting of each medal from the first one awarded to Garda James Mulroy by Col. Scott himself at the Garda Depot in the Phoenix Park in 1924 up to those awarded to Gardaí Gerard Collins and Darran Kirwan on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003. The list of recipients is a grim reminder of the dangers faced by members of the Force down through the years. From the beginning guns, knives and a variety of other weapons have featured in attacks on the Garda Síochána with a sizeable number culminating in death. It is painfully obvious from Gerard O'Brien's book that the highest number of medals awarded was in those decades when the activities of the IRA and other terror groups were at their zenith. The largest number of awards was between 1971 and 1980, the worst decade ever for political violence, when 96 medals were awarded, followed closely by the period 1981 to 1990 when 88 medals were awarded. This period of heightened subversion contrasted sharply with the period 1951 to 1960 when medals were awarded to only six members of the Force.

The book is replete with stories of heroic actions and one is frequently struck by the courage displayed by so many members of the Force when faced with life and near life-threatening situations. The reader will have cause to shake his head in disbelief on reading how time and again young (and not so young) Gardaí fearlessly faced down adversaries without a thought for their own safety. The listing of actions and Garda responses gives some sense of the enormity and variety of dangers associated with the arrest of terrorists, criminals and disturbed persons, as well as the rescue of persons from burning buildings or uncertain waters.

This is the first work of its kind that gives chapter and verse of every single medal awarded during the Force's ninety-year existence. It is a book that should be on the bookshelf of every member of the Force, serving and retired. It is a wonderful source publication and one we can recommend unreservedly.

**Book Title:** *An Garda Síochána and the Scott Medal*

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**Available:** This book is available through all good local bookshops or alternatively directly through the publisher via [www.fourcourtsprtsess.ie](http://www.fourcourtsprtsess.ie). Please note that there is a 10% discount on all titles bought online.

Review by Gerard Lovett, General Secretary of the Garda Síochána Retired Members Association.