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The Victoria Cross and the NZ

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest military decoration for enemy' to members of the armed forces of Commonwealth countries. It was introduced in 1856 by Queen Victoria to honour acts of valour during the Crimean War.

There were 15 recipients of the VC for bravery during New Zealand's 19th-century wars. The first was Leading Seaman William Odgers of HMS *Niger* for his actions at Waireka (near New Plymouth) in 1860 and the last was Hugh Shaw of the 18th Regiment for bravery at Nukumarū (near Whanganui) in 1865.



Charles Heaphy

Originally the VC was not available to colonial troops, even those serving under British command. This restriction was removed in 1867 following a recommendation for recognition of the gallantry of colonial soldier Captain Charles Heaphy of the Auckland Volunteer Rifles at Waiari (near Te Awamutu) in 1864.

In 1869 the New Zealand Cross was created as a local decoration equivalent (at least in theory) to the Victoria Cross. Only 23 were awarded, all to men who served in the New Zealand Wars, making it one of the rarest military honours in the world.

Since the conclusion of the New Zealand Wars the VC has been awarded to 21 New Zealand military personnel, most recently to Corporal Willie Apiata in 2007. He was the first recipient of the Victoria Cross for New Zealand, which was instituted in 1999 to replace the British Victoria Cross.

NZ Wars-period Victoria Cross recipients

Information for each recipient listed below: name, rank, unit or service, place and date of act, *London Gazette* (date of award)

Awarded to member of New Zealand forces

- HEAPHY, Charles, Major, Auckland Rifle Volunteers, NZ Militia, [Waiari,] Waikato, New Zealand, 11 February 1864 (8 February 1867)

Awarded to members of the British forces in New Zealand 1860–66

- DOWN, John Thornton, Ensign, 57th Regiment, Poutoko, 2 October 1863 (22 September 1864)
- LUCAS, John, Colour Sergeant, 40th Regiment, Te Arei, 18 March 1861 (17 July 1861)
- MACKENNA [McKenna], Edward, Colour Sergeant, 65th Regiment, near Cameron Town, Waikato Heads, 7 September 1863 (16 January 1864)
- MANLEY, William George Nicholas, Assistant Surgeon, Royal Artillery, Tauranga, 29 April 1864 (22 September 1864)
- MCNEILL, John Carstairs, Lieutenant-Colonel, 107th Regiment, Ōhaupō, 30 March 1864 (16 August 1864)
- MITCHELL, Samuel, Captain of the Foretop, Royal Navy, Tauranga, 29 April 1864 (23 July 1864)
- MURRAY, John, Sergeant, 68th Regiment, Tauranga, 21 June 1864 (4 November 1864)
- ODGERS, William, Leading Seaman, Royal Navy, Waireka[a], 28 March 1860 (3 August 1860)
- PICKARD, Arthur Frederick, Lieutenant, Royal Artillery, Rangiriri, 20 November 1863 (22

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September 1864)

- RYAN, John, Lance-Corporal, 65th Regiment, near Cameron Town, Waikato Heads, 7 September 1863 (16 January 1864)
- SHAW, Hugh, Captain, 18th Regiment, Nukumarū, 24 January 1865 (28 November 1865)
- SMITH, Frederick Augustus, Captain, 43rd Regiment, Tauranga, 21 June 1864 (4 November 1864)
- STAGPOOLE, Dudley, DCM, Drummer, 57th Regiment, Poutoko, 2 October 1863 (22 September 1864)
- TEMPLE, William, Assistant Surgeon, Royal Artillery, Rangiriri, 20 November 1863 (22 September 1864)

New Zealand Cross recipients

Information for each recipient listed below: name, rank, unit, place and date of act, *New Zealand Gazette* (date of award)

- ADAMSON, Thomas, Private, Corps of Guides, Ahikereru, 7 May 1869 (11 May 1876)
- AUSTIN, Samuel, Sergeant, Wanganui Volunteer Contingent, Pūtahi Pā, 7 January 1866; Keteonetea, 17 October 1866 (11 May 1876)
- BIDDLE, Benjamin, Constable, 1st Division, Armed Constabulary, Ngatapa, January 1869 (25 March 1869)
- BLACK, Solomon, Constable, 1st Division, Armed Constabulary, Ngatapa, January 1869 (25 March 1869)
- CARKEEK, Arthur Wakefield, Sergeant, Armed Constabulary, Ōhinemutu, 7 February 1870 (7 July 1870)
- FEATHERSTON, Isaac Earl, CMG, Staff, Native Contingent, Otapawa Pā, 13 January 1866 (28 October 1875)
- HILL, George [Rowley], Sergeant, 1st Division, Armed Constabulary, Jerusalem Pā [Mōhaka], 10 April 1869 (26 June 1869)
- LINGARD, William, Trooper, Kai Iwi Cavalry Volunteers, Tauranga-ika, 28 December 1868 (3 June 1869)
- MACE, Francis Joseph, Captain, Taranaki Militia, Kaitikara River, 4 June 1863; Kaitake, 11 March 1864; Warea, 20 October 1865 (11 May 1876)
- MAIR, Gilbert, Captain, NZ Militia, Rotorua, [7] February 1870 (1 April 1886)
- MALING, Christopher [Louis], Sergeant, Corps of Guides, [Whanganui region,] February 1869 (11 May 1876)
- McDONNELL, Thomas, Lieutenant-Colonel, NZ Militia, Paparat[a], October[?] 1863; Pūtahi Pā, [7] January 1866 (1 April 1886)
- NORTHCROFT, Henry William, Ensign, Patea Rangers, Pungarehu, 2 October 1866; Tiro-tiro Moana, [5] November 1866 (7 July 1910)
- PREECE, George [Augustus], Sub-Inspector, Armed Constabulary, Ngatapa, 5 December 1868 (11 May 1876)
- ROBERTS, John Mackintosh, Inspector, Armed Constabulary, Moturoa, 7 November 1868 (11 May 1876)
- RODRIGUEZ [DE SARDINHA], Antonio, Trooper, Taranaki Mounted Volunteers, Poutoko, 2 October 1863; Kaitake, 11 March 1864 (11 May 1876)
- SHEPHERD, Richard, Sergeant, Armed Constabulary, Otaut[u], 13 March 1869 (11 May 1876)
- SMITH, Angus, Cornet, Bay of Plenty Cavalry Volunteers, Ōpepe, 7 June 1869 (6 November 1869)
- TE AHURURU, Henare Kepa, Constable, 1st Division, Armed Constabulary, Moturoa, 7 November 1868 (25 March 1869)
- [TE] RANGIHIWINUI, Keepa, Major, NZ Militia (Native Contingent), Moturoa, 7 November 1868; Otaut[u], 13 March 1869 (11 May 1876)

- WAHAWAHA, Rapata, Major, Native Contingent, Ngatapa, 5 December 1868 (11 May 1876)
- WALKER, Samuel, Assistant-Surgeon, Armed Constabulary, Otaut[u], 13 March 1869 (11 May 1876)
- WRIGG, Harry Charles William, Cornet, Bay of Plenty Cavalry Volunteers, [Bay of Plenty], 29 June 1867 (18 March 1898)

Sources: I. McGibbon (ed.), *Oxford companion to New Zealand military history*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 2000; *New Zealand Gazette*.

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