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NZ Victoria Cross winners

NZ VC winners

V2

MCH, 2012a

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VC for NZ

1867
British Victoria Cross awarded
to a New Zealander

Major Charles Heaphy, Auckland Rifle Volunteers, NZ Militia



[Charles Heaphy](#)

Date of action: 11 February 1864 (Waikato, New Zealand)

Date of award: 8 February 1867

Recommended for a Victoria Cross (VC) after rescuing a soldier under fire at Waiari, near Te Awamutu, in 1864, Charles Heaphy was eventually awarded the decoration in 1867. This was the only VC awarded to a member of New Zealand's colonial forces, who were supposed to be ineligible for it. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf);

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Farrier Sergeant-Major William Hardham, 4th NZ Contingent



[William Hardham](#)

Date of action: 28 January 1901 (near Naauwpoort, South Africa)

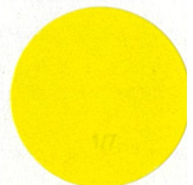
Date of award: 4 October 1901

Wellington blacksmith William Hardham was the first New Zealand-born serviceman to receive the VC. He won his award in South Africa serving with the fourth New Zealand contingent. After his unit was ambushed, Hardham rode back to pick up a wounded soldier, helping him to safety under heavy fire. His was the only VC won by a New Zealander during the South African (Boer) War. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Corporal Cyril Bassett, NZ Divisional Signals, 1NZEF

Date of action: 7 August 1915 (Gallipoli, Turkey)

Date of award: 15 October 1915





Cyril Bassett

Cyril Bassett was the first New Zealand serviceman to win a VC during the First World War. He did so for distinguished conduct during the August 1915 offensive at Gallipoli. During the ferocious battle for Chunuk Bair, he and a handful of companions laid and repaired a telephone wire to the front line in full daylight and under heavy fire. Bassett's decoration was the only VC awarded to a 1NZE soldier during the Gallipoli campaign. See also: [full citation \(pdf\)](#); [biography](#)

Sergeant Donald Brown, 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment, 1NZE



Donald Brown

Date of action: 15 September 1916 (near Flers, France)

Date of award: 14 June 1917 (posthumous award)

Donald Brown was the 1NZE's first VC winner on the Western Front. On the opening day of New Zealand's Somme campaign, 15 September 1916, Brown charged and captured key enemy machine-gun positions, helping New Zealand forces to push through German lines. He was killed just over two weeks later, during another attack on the Somme front. See also: [full citation \(pdf\)](#); [more information](#)

Lance-Corporal Samuel Frickleton, 3rd Battalion, 3rd NZ (Rifle) Brigade, 1NZE



Samuel Frickleton

Date of action: 7 June 1917 (Messines, Belgium)

Date of award: 2 August 1917

Scottish-born miner Samuel Frickleton won his VC during the attack on Messines in Belgium on 7 June 1917. With his battalion pinned down on the outskirts of the village by heavy machine-gun fire, a wounded Frickleton rushed forward and single-handedly destroyed two machine-gun posts with hand grenades. He then led his men through the village, clearing out Germans lodged in the ruins and other prepared positions. See also: [full citation \(pdf\)](#); [biography](#)

Corporal Leslie Andrew, 2nd Battalion, Wellington Infantry Regiment, 1NZE



Leslie Andrew

Date of action: 31 July 1917 (La Basseville, Belgium)

Date of award: 6 September 1917

Leslie Andrew lied about his age to serve overseas during the First World War. The 20-year-old was awarded the VC for his actions during an attack on the village of La Basseville, near Messines. Leading a section of men, Andrew captured a German machine-gun post before stalking a second position and destroying it with hand grenades. While his men were carrying back the captured guns, Andrew and another soldier discovered another machine-gun in a trench. The two men rushed this position too, throwing grenades and clearing it before finally returning to their company. See also: [full citation \(pdf\)](#); [more information](#)

Private Henry Nicholas, 1st Battalion, Canterbury Infantry Regiment, 1NZE

Date of action: 3 December 1917 (Polderhoek, Belgium)

Date of award: 11 January 1918

Henry Nicholas earned his VC during the New Zealand attack on Polderhoek Chateau on 3



Henry Nicholas

Regiment, 1NZEF



Richard Travis

December 1917. A carpenter from Christchurch, Nicholas had already won a Military Medal (MM) for bravery. During the advance, he distinguished himself by single-handedly attacking a German strongpoint. Using hand grenades and a bayonet, Nicholas overcame the enemy garrison, killing 12 Germans and capturing another four. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Sergeant Richard Travis, 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry

Date of action: 24 July 1918 (Rossignol Wood, France)

Date of award: 27 September 1918 (posthumous award)

Ōpōtiki-born Richard Travis was renowned for his daring exploits as a scout and sniper on the Western Front. After arriving in France in April 1916, Travis began conducting night-time patrols between the New Zealand and German trenches. A deadly marksman, he became known as 'The King of No Man's Land'. Travis won his VC during the 2nd Otago Battalion's attack at Rossignol Wood on 24 July 1918. He destroyed an impassable wire obstacle, captured two enemy machine guns and single-handedly fought off an enemy attempt to retake them. The following day Travis was killed by shellfire while moving between positions bolstering resistance to an imminent counter-attack. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Sergeant Samuel Forsyth, NZ Engineers, attached to 2nd Battalion, Auckland Infantry Regiment, 1NZEF



Samuel Forsyth

Date of action: 24 August 1918 (Gréville, France)

Date of award: 22 October 1918 (posthumous award)

Samuel Forsyth was awarded a posthumous VC for his actions on the Western Front in August 1918. The Wellingtonian had been serving with the New Zealand Engineers but was attached to the 2nd Battalion, Auckland Regiment when it attacked Gréville on 24 August. As his company advanced toward the town they came under heavy machine-gun fire. Despite being wounded, Forsyth reached a nearby British tank and directed its fire against several machine-gun posts. When the tank was disabled, Forsyth rallied his men and continued the attack, forcing the enemy to withdraw. 'At that moment' he was killed by a sniper. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Sergeant Reginald Judson, 1st Battalion, Auckland Infantry Regiment, 1NZEF



Reginald Judson

Date of action: 26 August 1918 (near Bapaume, France)

Date of award: 30 October 1918

Northland-born Reginald Judson was one of New Zealand's most decorated soldiers of the First World War. The Auckland boilermaker won three gallantry awards within a month in 1918. After winning the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) and Military Medal (MM), Judson was awarded the VC for his leadership of a bombing party in an attack on German positions near Bapaume. While working his way along an enemy trench-line Judson ran into a dozen German soldiers and ordered them to surrender. When they fired on him he threw a hand grenade amongst them. Two Germans were killed and the others retreated, leaving behind two machine guns. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Private James Crichton, 2nd Battalion, Auckland Infantry Regiment, 1NZEF



James Crichton

Date of action: 30 September 1918 (Crèvecoeur, France)

Date of award: 15 November 1918

Irishman James Crichton served with the Cameron Highlanders during the South African (Boer) War before moving to New Zealand. Enlisting in the 1NZEF at the outbreak of the First World War, he served as a baker on the Western Front until May 1918, when he transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Auckland Regiment. Crichton won his VC crossing the Scheldt River near the village of Crèvecoeur on 30 September 1918. Having rushed across an old stone bridge into the outskirts of the village, his platoon found themselves cut off and under heavy fire. Crichton, who was wounded in the foot, volunteered to take a message back to headquarters, swimming across the river and crossing open ground to do so. Rejoining his platoon, he defused an enemy mine attached to the bridge, before making another dash back to company headquarters to let them know the bridge was safe. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Sergeant Henry John Laurent, 2nd Battalion, 3rd NZ (Rifle) Brigade, 1NZEF



Henry Laurent

Date of action: 12 September 1918 (Gouzeaucourt Wood, France)

Date of award: 15 November 1918

Taranaki-raised Henry (Harry) Laurent arrived in France with the 3rd New Zealand (Rifle) Brigade and was wounded on the Somme in 1916. He won his VC near Gouzeaucourt Wood in September 1918 when the 12-man fighting patrol he was leading became lost behind enemy lines. In the process of extricating his men, Laurent attacked a German trench system, killing 30 enemy soldiers and capturing 112 prisoners in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. He then led his patrol back to their own lines, managing to keep all the prisoners under control while at the same time fighting a rearguard action. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Sergeant John Gildroy Grant, 1st Battalion, Wellington Infantry Regiment, 1NZEF



John Grant

Date of action: 1 September 1918 (near Bancourt, France)

Date of award: 27 November 1918

A builder from Hawera, John Grant joined the 1st Battalion, Wellington Regiment in Egypt just before it was sent to France in April 1916. He received the VC for his conduct on 1 September 1918 as the New Zealand Division advanced near Bapaume. When his battalion attacked German machine-gun positions on Bancourt Ridge, Grant and another soldier rushed the guns, leaping into the machine-gun post in the centre of the defences to destroy it. He then eliminated a nearby position in a similar fashion. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Sergeant James Allen Ward, RNZAF (attached to RAF)



James Ward

Date of action: 7 July 1941 (over The Netherlands)

Date of award: 5 August 1941

James Ward was the first New Zealand airman to win the VC. The Whanganui-born schoolteacher joined the RNZAF in July 1940 and left for Great Britain to serve with the RAF after completing his pilot

training. He won his VC while returning from a raid on the German city of Münster on 7 July 1941. When his Vickers Wellington bomber was set alight by an enemy fighter plane, Ward climbed out onto the burning wing (several thousand feet in the air) and smothered the fire. Although he was unable to block the leaking petrol pipe that was feeding it, the fire eventually burnt itself out and the badly damaged bomber limped back to base. Two months later, Ward was killed when he remained at the controls of his burning aircraft after it was hit by flak over Hamburg. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Captain Charles Hazlitt Upham, 20th Battalion, 2NZEF



[Charles Upham](#)

Date of actions: 22–30 May 1941 (Crete) and 14–15 July 1942 (North Africa)

Date of awards: 14 October 1941 and 26 September 1945

Charles Upham is probably New Zealand's most famous soldier. His actions during the Second World War led to him becoming one of only three people – and the only combat soldier – to have won the Victoria Cross twice. Upham earned his first VC in Crete in May 1941, and his Bar at Ruweisat Ridge, Egypt, in July 1942. After being severely wounded in the latter engagement, Upham was captured by the Germans. Numerous escape attempts, including an audacious attempt to scale his camp's barbed-wire fences in broad daylight, saw Upham become the only New Zealand combat officer sent to the infamous Colditz camp in 1944. See also: [first citation](#) (pdf); [second citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Sergeant Alfred Clive Hulme, 23rd Battalion, 2NZEF



[Alfred Hulme](#)

Date of action: 20–28 May 1941 (Crete)

Date of award: 14 October 1941

Dunedin-born Alfred Hulme won a Victoria Cross (VC) for a series of heroic acts on Crete. A sergeant with 23rd Battalion, he led a series of counter-attacks against German paratroops around Maleme airfield on 20–21 May 1941. Four days later he played a prominent part in the New Zealand counter-attack at Galatas, clearing a dangerous German position with hand grenades. After hearing that his younger brother had been killed, Hulme began hunting down German snipers. On occasions he disguised himself as a German to get close to his targets. Hulme was ruthlessly efficient – he is believed to have killed more than 30 enemy snipers. He also killed the crew of a heavy mortar that was threatening the withdrawal before being seriously wounded. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Sergeant John Daniel Hinton, 20th Battalion, 2NZEF

Date of action: 28–29 April 1941 (Kalamata, Greece)

Date of award: 17 October 1941



[Jack Hinton](#)

Jack Hinton won the VC while serving with 20th Battalion in Greece. In April 1941 he was amongst a large force of New Zealand and British troops awaiting evacuation from Kalamata. When the Germans attacked and a retreat was ordered, Hinton shouted, 'To hell with this! Who will come with me?', and charged two enemy field guns. After eliminating the gun crews with hand grenades he stormed two houses, bayoneting the Germans inside. Shortly afterwards he was shot in the stomach and taken prisoner. While a

prisoner of war Hinton escaped twice and made several other attempts. He was told he had been awarded the VC as he lay in hospital recovering from a beating administered to him after one of these attempts. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Sergeant Keith Elliott, 22nd Battalion, 2NZEF



[Keith Elliott](#)

Date of action: 15 July 1942 (Ruweisat Ridge, North Africa)

Date of award: 24 September 1942

Wairarapa farmer Keith Elliott was awarded a VC for his efforts at Ruweisat Ridge on 15 July 1942. Serving with 22nd Battalion, Elliott was wounded in the chest while leading his platoon in a successful break-out. Under heavy machine-gun and mortar fire he led a bayonet charge across 500 m of open ground, capturing an anti-tank gun, several machine guns, and 50 prisoners. He then single-handedly captured another machine-gun position and another 80 Germans in all, despite suffering further wounds to his thigh and knee. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Second Lieutenant Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu, 28th (Maori) Battalion, 2NZEF



[Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngārimu](#)

Date of action: 26 March 1943 (Tebaga Gap, Tunisia)

Date of award: 4 June 1943 (posthumous award)

Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngārimu was the first Māori soldier to win the VC. A second lieutenant in the 28th (Maori) Battalion's C Company, he took part in the assault at Tebaga Gap, Tunisia, in March 1943. The battalion's objective was a strategically important hill known as Point 209. The first task was to take high ground below the summit. Ngārimu led his platoon up one of these lower hills on 26 March, personally knocking out several machine-gun posts. After capturing the crest, his men repelled a number of fierce German counter-attacks during the night. Despite wounds to his shoulder and leg, Ngārimu refused to leave his position. He was killed the next morning fighting off another enemy attack. His VC was presented to his parents at a hui at Ruatōria on 6 October 1943. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Flying Officer Lloyd Allan Trigg, RNZAF (attached to RAF)



[Lloyd Trigg](#)

Date of action: 11 August 1943 (over the Atlantic)

Date of award: 2 November 1943 (posthumous award)

Lloyd Trigg is the only serviceman to have been awarded the VC on the 'recommendation' of an enemy. A salesman from Whāngārei, he joined the RNZAF in June 1941. After undertaking pilot training in Canada he was seconded to the RAF and posted to Coastal Command, flying anti-submarine patrols from West Africa. During an operational sortie on 11 August 1943, Trigg sighted U-468 on the surface. Despite being hit repeatedly by anti-aircraft fire, Trigg pressed home his attack and fatally damaged the German submarine with depth charges. His crippled Liberator then crashed into the sea with the loss of all eight crew. German survivors praised Trigg's courage after they were picked up by an Allied ship. Their evidence was instrumental in the New Zealander being awarded a posthumous VC. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [more information](#)

Squadron-Leader Leonard Henry Trent, RNZAF (attached to RAF)



Leonard Trent

Date of action: 3 May 1943 (over The Netherlands)

Date of award: 1 March 1946

Nelson-born Leonard Trent joined the RNZAF in November 1937 and gained a short-service commission in the RAF the following year. Trent was awarded the VC for his actions during a daylight bombing raid on an Amsterdam power station in May 1943. On the way to the target, Trent's formation of 11 Ventura bombers (one plane had returned to base earlier with mechanical problems) was decimated by German fighters – only two aircraft reached the target area. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire the New Zealander pressed home his attack and completed his bombing run. His aircraft was shot down immediately afterwards and the survivors, Trent and his navigator, were taken prisoner. In 1944 he took part in the 'Great Escape' from Stalag Luft III but was recaptured and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. See also: [full citation](#) (pdf); [biography](#)

Lance-Corporal Bill (Willie) Henry Apiata, NZSAS



Willie Apiata

Date of action: circa May–September 2004 (Afghanistan)

Date of award: 2 July 2007

Bill (Willie) Apiata is the first and only recipient to date of the Victoria Cross (VC) for New Zealand. Apiata was part of a New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) Troop in Afghanistan in 2004 that was attacked by about 20 enemy fighters while camped for the night in a rural area. Rocket-propelled grenades destroyed one of the troop's vehicles and immobilised another. Apiata was blown off the bonnet of the vehicle he had been sleeping on, while two other soldiers in or near the vehicle were wounded by shrapnel, one of them seriously. After finding cover and assessing the soldier's injuries, Apiata carried him across 70 m of exposed ground to reach the troop's main position. He then helped fight off the attackers. Corporal Apiata received his VC on 26 July 2007 at Government House in Wellington. See: [full citation](#); [more information](#)

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