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Pro Valore
CANADA'S VICTORIA CROSS

Revised Edition

Canada



FOREWORD

WELCOME TO THIS REVISED EDITION OF *PRO VALORE: CANADA'S VICTORIA CROSS*, a brief examination of the creation of the new Victoria Cross and the history of this decoration within the Canadian military. Response to the original edition was so favourable that we decided to issue a revised, slightly longer edition of the booklet.

The Victoria Cross, as the highest decoration for military valour in the Canadian military experience, has a long and illustrious history. Whether the subject is the eighty-one British Victoria Crosses awarded to members of the Canadian military or the creation and production of the nationalized Victoria Cross, there are many fascinating aspects to the subject.

This booklet is intricately connected to additional material found on the website of the Directorate of History and Heritage (www.forces.gc.ca) including the full citations for each award from the London Gazette for each recipient as well as images and biographical material for each recipient. The electronic version of the booklet itself is also located on our website.

Enjoy!

Serge Bernier, CD, PhD
Director of History and Heritage



INTRODUCTION

THE LINE EXTENDED FROM THE MAIN DOOR TO THE CENTRE BLOCK of the Parliament Building in Ottawa, out past the entrance to the Senate, down the inclined path and halfway along the East Block. Most of the people standing there were in uniform, the black, green, and blue of Canadian Forces' personnel, with a smattering of civilians in their midst. It was Tuesday, 9 August 2005. The skies were clear, the sun high, the weather hot. Men and women stood in line to say a personal farewell to a hero, the last living Canadian recipient of the Victoria Cross.

Sergeant Ernest Alvia "Smokey" Smith, VC, CM, OBC, CD, had died peacefully in his Vancouver home on 3 August at the age of ninety-one. After a few preliminary ceremonies in Vancouver immediately following his death, Sergeant Smith's cremated remains were flown to Ottawa. The purpose was to allow them to lie-in-state in the foyer of the House of Commons in the Centre Block of the national Parliament Building. The honour of lying-in-state in the Parliament Building had previously only been granted to a handful of

prominent Canadians – former governors-general, prime ministers, or members of parliament – with the notable exception of the Unknown Soldier in 2000. Sergeant Smith received the honour, appropriately enough, in the Year of the Veteran. As the bearer party carried the casket into the building the bell in the Peace Tower was rung, ninety-one times in total. Flags across the national capital, across Canada and on Canadian buildings abroad were lowered to half-mast. On the morning of the 9th, after dignitaries and government officials



Mourners lining up on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to pay their respects during the lying in state of Ernest “Smokey” Smith, VC, CM, OBC, CD, on 9 August 2005.

PHOTO: CANADIAN FORCES JOINT IMAGERY CENTRE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



conducted a private ceremony, Parliament's front doors were opened to the public. The long line of military personnel and civilians slowly flowed forward, signing the books of condolence, witnessing the military vigil provided, and paying respects to the man. One reporter noted that some of the visitors smiled, while others "saluted or bowed their heads in silent prayer as they stood near a casket containing Smith's ashes."

Four days later, on 13 August, an immense military funeral was held in Vancouver. The ceremony began at 1000 hours at Seaforth Armoury, where Sergeant Smith's remains had been placed under vigil the previous day. The procession itself, including hundreds of men and women in uniform, slowly moved along Burrard Street, the same route that the combat veterans of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada – Smith's wartime regiment – had followed when they returned to Canada in the fall of 1945. Thousands of mourners lined the streets, standing in the bright sunshine as Smith's casket, draped with the national flag, perched atop an old gun carriage and flanked by honorary pallbearers from the navy, army and air force, passed by. When the casket crossed the Burrard Street Bridge four CF-18 fighter jets appeared overhead, grouping themselves in the missing man formation in order to signify the "loss of a comrade". A veterans' delegation joined the funeral procession as it approached its final destination.

After a two kilometre journey, the funeral procession reached St. Andrew's Wesley United Church, the site of the funeral service. Eight bearers, all Seaforths, removed the casket from the gun carriage and carried Sergeant Smith into the church. People standing outside the packed church, wishing to pay their respects, began to clap. The funeral itself was what one would expect, mostly prayers, hymns and speeches. At the same time, the service "touched on Smith's famed irreverent side", as shown by the presence of music numbers such as one of Smith's favourites, the jazz piece "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans".

Smokey Smith's last wishes concerning his final resting place were carried out the day after the funeral service. He had asked to have his cremated remains buried at sea, specifically to have his ashes scattered over the Pacific Ocean. The "tremendous honour" to carry out this duty fell to the ship's company of HMCS *Ottawa*, one of the Canadian frigates stationed in nearby Esquimalt. On the morning of the 14th Smith's immediate family and his remains embarked onboard *Ottawa* for the brief journey. And, a little after 1030 hours, Smokey Smith's remains were scattered over the water off Point Atkinson, near Howe Sound.

The German staff car was the first enemy vehicle to cross the line of roadblocks and anti-tank mines laid out by the Seaforth's tank-hunting platoon. Somehow, the driver of the small Volkswagen avoided the mines and made it through the line unharmed. He didn't, however, see the Seaforth soldier armed with a PIAT launch his bomb at point-blank range. The driver was torn in half and the car rolled into the ditch. A senior German officer got out of the wrecked vehicle and seemed to start yelling orders. He didn't last long either.

What followed was the confirmation of the usefulness of a dedicated anti-tank platoon within the regiment. The night before, 21 October 1944, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada had launched an attack across the Savio River along the eastern coast of Italy. The weather was horrendous, downpours of rain raising the level of the river to waist height. The current was fast, making the crossing difficult. But the worst part was the effect on the far riverbank, which was both steep and, now, extremely slippery. Nevertheless, the officers and men of "D" and "B" Companies, wet and coated in mud, made their way across the river and consolidated positions along the top of the riverbank. Mortar and machine gun fire harassed the two companies as they moved forward.

"A" and "C" Companies then moved forward, through the lead companies, and deeper into enemy territory. "C" Company of the Seaforths was on the right of the advance, moving forward along a road to the village of Pieve Sestina and a bit further to a nearby church. The tank-hunting platoon, which had originally crossed the river with "B" Company was detached and moved forward with "C" Company. Unfortunately, the advance opened "A" and "C" Company personnel to attacks from all sides as, after all, they had broken through the German front line. Enemy infantry, machine gunners, tanks, and self-propelled guns were on all sides, with the exception of the tenuous connections back to "B" and "D" Companies.

Enemy fire reached out for "C" Company as it neared the church around 0400 hours. Worse, German armour could be heard moving about in the area. The Canadian soldiers quickly began to dig in. "C" Company had no anti-tank support, with the Canadian tanks and anti-tank guns still stranded east of the Savio River. Sergeant Keith Thompson, commanding the tank-hunting platoon, deployed it and had roadblocks put into place. Soldiers armed with PIATs dropped into the ditches alongside the road in preparation for the most likely advance of the enemy armour. Sergeant Thompson personally placed a string of anti-tank mines across the road and camouflaged them. The Germans soon moved out from behind some of the buildings near the church. The first victim was the staff car, but the enemy officer's words had been heard, and a 75-mm tracked self-propelled gun soon moved into view. It continued to rumble forward towards the Seaforths and their roadblock. Private K.W. Ballard took a shot at it with his PIAT, but his bomb flew over the top of the self-propelled gun. Fortunately, as the big beast continued forward it struck one of the anti-tank mines and lost a track, blocking the road in the process. The Seaforths cheered and one soldier dropped a hand grenade into the turret of the self-propelled gun, killing the crew.

One staff car destroyed. One self-propelled gun immobilized. Next came a Panther. This was a different story. It was not a soft-skinned vehicle or a thinly-armoured artillery piece. The Panther was one of the deadliest tanks in the German armoury. It rolled up behind the smoking self-propelled gun and stopped. The Seaforth tank-hunters were ready. Private Ernest Alvia





A smiling Sergeant Smokey Smith, taken some time after the award of his Victoria Cross.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

“Smokey” Smith had previously led two men and a PIAT into a position across the road in case they were needed. Before the Panther arrived, Private Smith and Private James Tennant recrossed the road and grabbed a second PIAT. As the Panther approached their position, its MG-34 machine gun opened up. German infantry on the tank also threw grenades in the direction of the Canadians. Private Tennant – he and Smith were described as “thick as thieves” – was wounded, taking shrapnel in the shoulder and arm. The Panther was now within ten metres of Smith’s position. He jumped up out of the ditch, then laid back down in a very exposed position in order to get the best possible aim with his PIAT. He fired. Many years later Smith would note that he had “barely enough time to aim.” The Panther continued forward a few yards, then stopped. Severely wounded, it began to try to back away from the Canadian position.

The Panther may have ceased to be a threat, but the anti-tank round had no effect, it would seem, on the ten or so German infantrymen that had been riding on the back of the tank. They now jumped down, armed with sub-machine guns and potato-masher grenades, and charged towards Private Smith. Completely unfazed, Smith refused to back down and instead moved out on to the road. He fired his Thompson sub-machine gun at the Germans at point blank range, killing four of them and driving the others back. Another enemy armoured vehicle nearby began to open fire in Smith’s direction and the German infantry began to regroup and move forward once again. Smith continued to hold his position, reloaded his weapon, and protected his wounded comrade until the Germans stopped and withdrew.

Again, another enemy tank began to fire in Private Smith’s direction. And again, Smith ignored the threat and took Private Tennant, now bleeding badly, to the nearby church to get him help from battalion medical staff. Smith then returned to his roadside defensive position, waiting for the enemy to give it another try. They didn’t. A Victoria Cross-winning performance had come to an end.

While Smokey Smith fought, other German tanks and self-propelled guns attempted to come at the Seaforths from around the other side of the church. They, too, failed as the tank-hunting platoon continued the fight, destroying two of the enemy weapons and killing numerous soldiers. Sergeant Thompson’s men performed splendidly, Thompson himself later receiving an immediate Distinguished Conduct Medal for his “coolness and tenacity” and his leadership. The fires from the devastated enemy tanks and guns soon lit up the sky. Dead Germans littered the ground. And, by 0600 hours, the enemy had pulled back, this part of the battle over.



At first glance, the Victoria Cross does not appear to be a particularly impressive decoration. Uniformly dark brown in colour, matte in finish, with a plain crimson ribbon, it pales in comparison to more colourful honours and awards in the British or Canadian honours systems. Yet, to reach such a conclusion would be unfortunate. Part of the esteem – even reverence – with which the Victoria Cross is held is due to its simplicity and the idea that a supreme, often fatal, act of gallantry does not require a complicated or flamboyant insignia. A simple, strong and understated design pays greater tribute.

More than 1,300 Victoria Crosses have been awarded to the sailors, soldiers and airmen of British Imperial and, later, Commonwealth nations, contributing significantly to the military heritage of these countries. In truth, the impact of the award has an even greater reach given that some of the recipients were sons of other nations who enlisted with a country in the British Empire or Commonwealth and performed an act of conspicuous bravery. Some recipients earned their award and lived to receive it, others did not and their specially marked headstones are found throughout the world in Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries and other graveyards.

In parts of the Commonwealth, the Victoria Cross remains the highest award for gallantry in the presence of the enemy. Canada, Australia and New Zealand have all adopted their own versions of the Victoria Cross. In the latter two nations, they are identical to the original award. The Canadian decoration is to be “awarded for the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty, in the presence of the enemy.” It is the latter condition, “...in the presence of the enemy”, that distinguishes the Victoria Cross from the Cross of Valour and makes them, respectively and simplistically, the highest awards for military and civilian acts of courage.

As the lying-in-state and funeral of “Smokey” Smith highlighted, the Victoria Cross still resonates with Canadians, even more than six decades after it was last awarded to a member of the Canadian military. Debates over its place within the Canadian Honours System in the 1980s and 1990s had already led to the creation of the Canadian version of the decoration in 1993. In 2006, stamps and coins celebrating the 150th anniversary of the creation of the original award joined the ever-growing collection of materials commemorating the story of the Victoria Cross and Canada. Its place at the top of the Canadian Honours System is secure.

THE CANADIAN MILITARY AND THE *Victoria Cross*

THE MOST FAMOUS BRITISH MILITARY VALOUR DECORATION was introduced in 1856. Approved by Queen Victoria as the highest British award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross was made available for award to “officers or men who have served Us [the Crown] in the presence of the enemy, and shall have then performed some signal act of valour, or devotion to their country.” This meant all military personnel regardless of rank or social stature, a significant change to previous individual awards policy. It also became possible in 1902 to award the Victoria Cross posthumously, making it one of the very few British valour decorations available to soldiers, sailors or air force personnel killed during the course of their heroic action (the others included the George Cross and the Mention-in-Despatches).

The number of Canadians awarded the Victoria Cross varies significantly on how the total is calculated. Eighty-one Victoria Crosses have been awarded to members of the Canadian military (including Newfoundland) from the South African War to the end of the Second World War. Another thirteen awards were made to men born in Canada serving in



British military units. More than a dozen others could be added to the list as being associated with Canada through emigration from the United Kingdom, service on garrison duties in Canada, or, in one case, through the heroic deed having taken place in Canada.

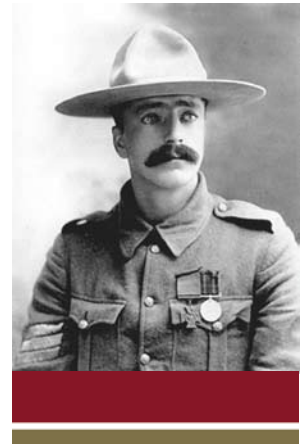
Not surprisingly, the first Victoria Crosses associated with Canada were awarded to Canadian-born officers and men of British military units in the years before the Canadian military saw active combat in overseas theatres. Lieutenant Alexander Roberts Dunn earned his Victoria Cross during the Crimean War, while Able Seaman William Hall and Surgeon Herbert Taylor Reade were awarded their crosses for gallantry during the Indian Mutiny, with Hall becoming the only Canadian recipient to hang his Victoria Cross from the dark blue ribbon used by the Royal Navy until 1918. Assistant Surgeon Campbell Mellis Douglas was the last Canadian-born recipient of this period, receiving his for saving lives at sea in 1867.

The South African War

At the outbreak of the South African War, no one serving in a Canadian military uniform had yet been awarded a Victoria Cross. That was about to change. In 1899 the Canadian government committed formed military units to an overseas conflict for the first time. The conflict revolved around major disagreements between the Boers and British colonists but Canada participated to support the motherland. Although Canada would send infantry, cavalry, artillery and medical units to fight in the South African War, as far as the Canadian military recipients were concerned, this was entirely a cavalry endeavour.

Sergeant Arthur Herbert Lindsay Richardson was the first member of the Canadian armed forces to be awarded the Victoria Cross. A member of Strathcona's Horse, Sergeant Richardson was born in Southport, England, in 1873, and later immigrated to Canada. After working on a ranch, he joined the North West Mounted Police, where he was a Corporal at the time of his enlistment. The cavalryman was present with three dozen other members of his unit at Wolve Spruit in South Africa on 5 July 1900 when they came into contact with about eighty Boers. The troops fired at one another. Then the order to pull back was given, and the Strathconas began their withdrawal. Richardson noticed one of his fellow troopers was down on the battlefield, wounded and with his horse shot out from under him. Richardson spurred on his horse, which was also wounded, and rode towards his fellow soldier less than 300 metres from the enemy riflemen. Richardson picked up the injured Canadian and brought him back to safety.

The three remaining Victoria Crosses awarded to the Canadian military during the South African War were granted to members of The Royal Canadian Dragoons. The heroic efforts of Lieutenants Hampden Zane Churchill Cockburn,



Sergeant Arthur Herbert Lindsay Richardson wearing his Victoria Cross and Queen's South Africa Medal (without bars).

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Richard Ernest William Turner and Sergeant Edward James Gibson Holland marked the only occasion when three Canadians from the same unit were awarded the Victoria Cross for the same battle.

On 7 November 1900, Canadian and British forces found themselves in a full-scale battle with the enemy near Leliefontein. As the withdrawal from the battle began, the Canadian rearguard – those protecting the main body of mounted rifles and artillery – consisted of cavalymen from The Royal Canadian Dragoons and two field guns from “D” Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery. At one point about 200 mounted Boers charged the rearguard. Sergeant Holland, born in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1878, was ready. Holland, armed with a Colt machine gun on a horse-pulled carriage, set up his weapon to protect the Canadian guns. As the Boers advanced, Holland continued to calmly fire the Colt, seemingly taking no heed of the increasing danger of his position. Then, as the Boers closed in on him, he prepared to withdraw. The horse pulling the gun’s carriage, however, had been shot and was down. Holland simply lifted the gun off the carriage, slid the hot barrel under his arm and rode off to safety on another mount.

The First World War

It was during the First World War that Canada’s military involvement overseas reached incredible proportions in terms of the numbers of Canadians serving, the staggering losses suffered and the impact the Canadian Corps had on the campaigns in which it served. The number of Victoria Crosses awarded to members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force reflected the intensity of our nation’s contribution, sixty-four being awarded to its soldiers and airmen.

Lance-Corporal Fred Fisher was the first member of the CEF awarded the Victoria Cross. The 1st Division had arrived on the continent in February 1915 and spent several weeks becoming accustomed to life in a war zone. Lance-Corporal Fisher was a member of the 13th Battalion, CEF, one of the numerous units forming the 1st Division. Born in St. Catharines, Ontario, in 1896, Fisher attended high school and university in Montreal, and joined the 5th Regiment “Royal Highlanders of Canada” when the war broke out. He was in command of a Colt machine gun crew on 23 April 1915 as the 13th Battalion played its part in the Second Battle of Ypres, in the Flanders region of Belgium. At one point in the battle, Fisher observed a Canadian artillery battery being attacked by German infantry and in danger of being captured. Fisher led his machine gun team forward, and set the Colt up in front of the battery, all the while under heavy fire. As the team cut into the ranks of the attacking Germans, four of its members were killed or wounded. Fisher moved rearward, gathered another four men to replenish his team, but lost contact with them on the way back. He returned to the Colt alone. Nonetheless, Fisher kept firing the machine gun while the artillery battery successfully withdrew. Fisher was killed, his remains never found.

Fisher was not the only Canadian awarded a Victoria Cross for his actions at Second Ypres. He was joined by Captain Francis Alexander Caron Scrimger, Lieutenant Edward Donald Bellew and Company Sergeant-Major Frederick William Hall on 24 and 25 April 1915. Two months later, on 15 June 1915, Lieutenant Frederick William Campbell earned his Victoria Cross, the last awarded to a CEF member for the next fifteen months.





The memorial plaque erected by The Womens Canadian Club of Winnipeg in 1925 renaming Pine Street “Valour Road” in Winnipeg.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

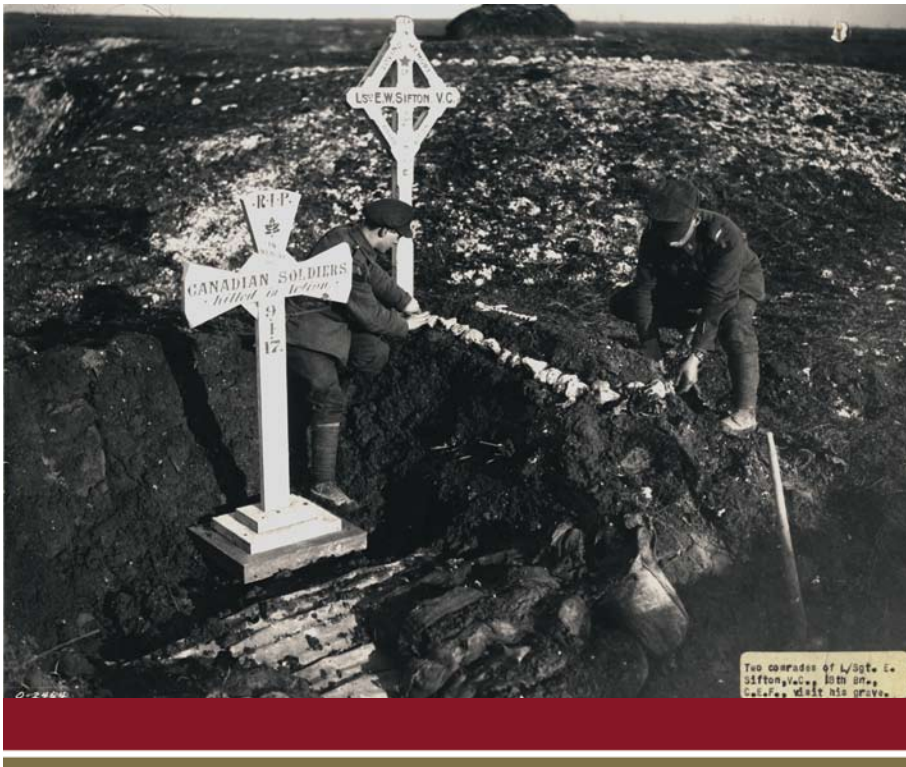
In the interim, the Canadian forces in the field continued to grow as more divisions joined the 1st Division in France and Flanders, forming the Canadian Corps. The Corps gained fighting experience in Flanders until, in the fall of 1916, it moved south to join the ongoing battle in the Somme region of France. During the next couple of months, three CEF members earned the Victoria Cross before the Canadian Corps left the Somme for the Arras region – Corporal Leo Clarke on 9 September, Private John Chipman Kerr one week later and Piper James Cleland Richardson on 8 October. Clarke’s Victoria Cross was one of three awarded to residents of Pine Street in Winnipeg, Manitoba, during the First World War (the others were Lieutenant Robert Shankland and Company Sergeant-Major Frederick William Hall). Pine Street was later renamed “Valour Road” in their honour.



Lieutenant Frederick Maurice Watson Harvey posing with a trooper and mount of The Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE





Soldiers tending the grave of Lance-Sergeant Ellis Wellwood Sifton on the Vimy Ridge battlefield.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Not all members of the CEF fighting in France and Flanders did so as members of the Canadian Corps. Some, like those in the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, fought with British formations elsewhere. In one of those units, a Canadian cavalry officer earned the Victoria Cross on 27 March 1917. Lieutenant Frederick Maurice Watson Harvey, a member of The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF, was born in Athboy, Ireland, in 1888 and later immigrated to Canada. The Strathconas were advancing on the enemy-held village of Guyencourt, France, when the cavalry started receiving withering machine gun and rifle fire from an enemy trench in front of the village. Casualties quickly began to mount in the leading troops, commanded by Lieutenant Harvey, and the men and their horses moved to a safer position. However, one German machine gun crew could still reach the new location. Harvey jumped down from his horse and began running across the open ground towards the machine gun, firing his pistol as he ran. He jumped the barbed wire strung in front of the trench, shot the machine gunner and captured the gun.



The engraving for Lieutenant Robert Grierson Combe on the Vimy Memorial, a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by several recipients of the Victoria Cross.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

The main focus of Canadian attention in this period, nevertheless, lay with the Canadian Corps' attack on Vimy Ridge on 9 April 1917. For the first time, all four Canadian divisions attacked together. Four Canadians received Victoria Crosses during the battle for Vimy Ridge, Captain Thain Wendell MacDowell and Private William Johnstone Milne earning theirs on 9 April and Private John George Pattison his the following day.

The fourth man, Lance-Sergeant Ellis Wellwood Sifton, a member of the 18th Battalion, CEF, also earned his Victoria Cross on 9 April. A farmer, Sifton was born in Wallacetown, Ontario, in 1891. During the attack on Vimy Ridge, "C" Company of the 18th Battalion was held up during its advance by German machine gunners who had survived the artillery barrage by taking refuge in concrete shelters. As the Canadians moved forward, the enemy's machine guns swept the battlefield, causing heavy casualties. Sifton saw the enemy's machine gun nest first. He jumped up, rushed forward and leapt into the trench. He then charged into the enemy gun crew and knocked the gun over before turning on the gunners with his bayonet, killing each man. More Canadians hurried forward, but not before a small German party moved down the trench towards Sifton. He used his bayonet and his rifle as a club to fight them off until help arrived. Despite these efforts, Sifton was killed during the fighting.

During the next few months, two more Victoria Crosses were awarded to members of the CEF. The first went to Lieutenant Robert Grierson Combe on 3 May 1917 and the next to Captain William Avery ("Billy") Bishop on 2 June 1917. Captain Bishop, the leading Canadian air "ace" of the war, was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps and flying with 60 Squadron at the time of his award.

By late summer 1917 the Canadian Corps had begun to push forward again, this time advancing towards the city of Lens and the heights nearby known as Hill 70. Here, six members of the Corps received the Victoria Cross for their conspicuous gallantry between 15 and 24 August – Major Okill Massey Learmonth, Company Sergeant-Major Robert Hill Hanna, Sergeant Frederick Hobson, Corporal Filip Konowal and Privates Harry Brown and Michael James O'Rourke.



From 22 to 24 August 1917 Corporal Filip Konowal, a member of the 47th Battalion, CEF, demonstrated the drive and intensity behind his Victoria Cross award. Konowal was the first member of the CEF not born in the British Empire to be awarded the Victoria Cross, an example of the diverse composition of the Canadian military during the war. Born in Kudkiv, Ukraine, in 1888, Konowal served in the Russian Army before coming to Canada in 1913. He enlisted in the 77th Battalion, CEF, later being transferred to the 47th Battalion. As his battalion fought for Hill 70, Konowal was a one-man army, leading an infantry section tasked with mopping up cellars, emptying craters and flushing out machine gun nests. He repeatedly struck at the enemy single-handedly, bayoneting three German soldiers in one cellar and killing seven others in a crater. He overcame one enemy machine gun nest by rushing forward alone, killing the gun crew and carrying the machine gun back. Konowal



*Portrait of Corporal Filip Konowal with his
Victoria Cross.*

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

attacked another enemy machine gun nest the following day, killing three of its crew and destroying the position with explosives. In three days he single-handedly killed sixteen of the enemy and stopped only when he had been severely wounded.

As summer turned to fall the Canadian Corps was on the move once again, this time back to the Ypres Salient and the muddy ground of Passchendaele. The Canadian assault on Passchendaele was a success, albeit with a tremendous number of casualties. In total, nine CEF members were awarded the Victoria Cross during the battle – Major George Randolph Pearkes, Captain Christopher Patrick John O’Kelly, Lieutenants Hugh McKenzie and Robert Shankland, Sergeant George Harry Mullin, Corporal Colin Fraser Barron and Privates Thomas William Holmes, Cecil John Kinross and James Peter Robertson.



Lieutenant Robert Shankland pictured between King George V and Queen Mary in an undated photograph.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



Heavy clouds darkened the early morning sky, threatening rain. The soldiers, assembled into their platoons, the platoons into companies, the companies into their battalion having recently moved up into position for the attack about to begin, waited. The enemy hadn't fired on them as they moved forward. However, there was little else for which to be grateful. The darkness made it difficult to see any distance ahead of the front line trenches. There were few discernible landmarks and the battalion hadn't been at this front long enough for anyone to get to know the ground about to be crossed.

"A" Company of the 4th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles (4th CMR) formed up about seventy metres behind the battalion's "D" Company on the right side of the planned avenue of attack. Each soldier was kitted out in fighting order. Most carried their Lee-Enfield rifle and more than 200 rounds of ammunition. Other soldiers bore light machine guns. Most carried hand grenades – or bombs, as they liked to call them at the time. Through some mishap behind the front, supplies of drinkable water never made their way forward in time and the soldiers of the battalion went into the fight with empty canteens.

At 5.40 a.m. – Zero hour for the attack at Passchendaele on 26 October 1917 – nearly 400 artillery pieces opened up, laying down a withering fire. As if on cue, a light rain also began to fall, continuing to turn the infamous muddy Passchendaele ground from solid to liquid. Moments later, Canadian machine guns began their supporting barrage. German artillery responded.

The officers and men of 4th CMR had already begun their advance towards the enemy's positions, not so much a solid front line but a series of short trench lines and strong points. Among the latter, the greatest fear was caused by the German pillboxes, reinforced concrete "rooms" used for shelter from artillery and as a protected firing position against advancing troops.



A smiling Private Thomas William Holmes with the Victoria Cross ribbon sewn over his left tunic pocket.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

The troops of “A” Company soon found themselves intermingled with those of “D” Company as the conditions on the ground worsened. Their combined push continued to move forward fairly well until they encountered fire from a German pillbox containing a couple of dozen riflemen and flanked by two machine gun positions. Canadian casualties quickly began to mount. As the companies closed to within forty-five metres of the pillbox, the troops went to ground, seeking cover wherever they could. Half of 4th CMR was stopped, the entire attack in this part of the front threatened.

Suddenly, one of the soldiers stood up and calmly moved forward, across the open killing field towards the pillbox. He lobbed two grenades into the trench next to the pillbox where the machine guns were located, killing or wounding the gun crews and putting the guns out of action. Incredibly, the soldier then returned to the “D” Company position, grabbed another grenade from a friend, moved back out to the pillbox, worked his way around to the back entrance, and tossed in the grenade. The enemy soldiers not killed or wounded in the blast – nineteen Germans in total – came out with their hands up, surrendering. The Canadian advance could continue.



Private Thomas William Holmes speaking to two other soldiers, the man on his left eyeing the Victoria Cross ribbon.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



Major Harold Archibald Scott – “A” Company’s commander – had sought cover with his company when the troops in the enemy pillbox opened fire. He had just witnessed the incredible heroism of one of his men and wanted to ensure he was decorated, but didn’t know who exactly had carried out the attack. Scott sent Private Herbert Hawley forward to identify the hero. Private Hawley did as ordered, but upon his return discovered that Major Scott had just been killed.

Other men had also witnessed the action and brought the soldier’s name forward for honouring. He was Private Thomas William Holmes. Born in Montreal, Quebec, in August 1898, and raised in Owen Sound, Ontario, Holmes lied about his age when he enlisted in the 147th Battalion, CEF, in December 1915. Like so many other young men eager to get overseas, he had added a year to his age in order to become the minimum eighteen years of age. Later described as “a frail, delicate youth with a contagious smile”, at the time of his enlistment Holmes was 166 centimetres tall, with fair hair and blue eyes, had no military experience, still lived at home and worked on a chicken farm. After sailing overseas with the 147th Battalion, Holmes was sent to a reserve battalion before finding a home with the 4th CMR. He was wounded during the fighting at Vimy Ridge and had only just returned to the battalion before the fighting for Passchendaele began. At the time of the award of his Victoria Cross in January 1918, Holmes was reportedly the youngest Canadian to receive the Empire’s highest military honour. He was nineteen.

Three CEF officers were awarded Victoria Crosses in late 1917 and early 1918 – Lieutenants Gordon Muriel Flowerdew and Marcus Strachan with the cavalry and Lieutenant George Burdon McKean with the infantry. Meanwhile, the Canadian Corps maintained a relatively quiet existence, particularly when compared to the British army as it attempted to defeat an all-out German assault launched in March 1918.

Only the Canadian 2nd Division saw much action during this period, fighting which resulted in one Victoria Cross being awarded. Corporal Joseph Thomas Kaeble, a member of the francophone 22nd Battalion, CEF, had already earned a Military Medal and, on 8-9 June 1918, earned the Empire’s highest award for gallantry. Kaeble, who had been born in St. Moïse, Quebec, in 1893, and was employed as a mechanic before the war, was in charge of a Lewis light machine gun section in his battalion’s front line trenches when the Germans attempted a raid. Despite the intense artillery bombardment, Kaeble stayed at his post, his Lewis gun aimed out over the parapet of the trench. About fifty Germans began moving his way when the enemy guns ceased firing. Unfortunately, the rest of Kaeble’s section had been killed or wounded. Undaunted, Kaeble jumped over the parapet, carrying his Lewis gun at the hip, and then emptied one magazine after another into the ranks of the advancing enemy troops. Despite being wounded several times by shell and grenade fragments, he kept firing. Finally, Kaeble fell backwards into his trench, mortally wounded, but having stopped the enemy advance.



Illustration of Corporal Joseph Thomas Kaeble standing at a parapet with his Lewis machine gun as drawn by artist Alfred Bastien.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



In early August 1918 the Canadian Corps launched itself as part of an overall British offensive in the area of Amiens. Although extremely costly in terms of Canadian dead and wounded, the operation was a complete triumph. Amazingly, ten members of the Canadian Corps earned Victoria Crosses between 8 and 13 August – Lieutenants Jean Brillant and James Edward Tait, Sergeants Robert Spall and Raphael Louis Zengel, Corporal Alexander Picton Brereton, Frederick George Coppins, Herman James Good and Harry Garnet Bedford Miner and Privates John Bernard Croak and Thomas Dinesen.

Although the Amiens offensive ground down after a few days, the Canadian Corps' forward momentum never ceased in the days and weeks that followed. After being repositioned slightly northward, the Corps next attacked in the Arras region, moving eastwards roughly along the Scarpe River. The Hundred Days – the culmination of the British advance on the western front – begun at Amiens on 8 August continued.

So too did the earning of Victoria Crosses by members of the CEF. Lieutenant Charles Smith Rutherford earned his on 26 August 1918, followed by Lieutenant-Colonel William Hew Clark-Kennedy during the next two days. As the Canadian Corps moved against the Drocourt-Quéant defensive line from 1 to 4 September, seven more were awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel Cyrus Wesley Peck, Captain Bellenden Seymour Hutcheson, Sergeant Arthur George Knight, Lance-Corporal William Henry Metcalf and Privates Claude Joseph Patrick Nunney, Walter Leigh Rayfield and John Francis Young.

As September 1918 ended and October began, the Canadian Corps continued its push forward, this time targeting the Canal du Nord. Its officers and men earned another six Victoria Crosses, the pace of awards matching the frenetic pace of the fighting. One of the first went to Lieutenant Samuel Lewis Honey, with the 78th Battalion, CEF. Born in Conn, Ontario, in 1894, Honey was a schoolteacher who enlisted in 1915. After joining the 78th Battalion in the field he went on to receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal before being commissioned. During his battalion's attack



A studio photograph of Lieutenant Jean Brillant, 22nd Battalion, CEF.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

on Bourlon Wood on 27 September, Honey assumed command of his company after all of the other officers had become casualties. He reorganized the company, pushed it forward and gained its objective. The company then began to suffer casualties from an enemy machine gun position. Honey located it and rushed it single-handedly, capturing the machine gun and ten prisoners. He later organized the defence of company positions against four German counter-attacks. After dark, Honey led a small party to an enemy post he had located, captured it and three machine guns, providing another example of the inspired leadership that he showed during the period. He died of wounds received on 30 September, the last day of the attack.



*Lieutenant-Colonel Cyrus Wesley Peck wearing
his Victoria Cross.*

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE





*The British Victoria Cross awarded to
Sergeant William Merrifield.*

PHOTO: BILL KENT, CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

In this same period, four officers and one other rank – Captain John MacGregor, Lieutenants Milton Fowler Gregg, George Fraser Kerr and Graham Thomson Lyall and Sergeant William Merrifield – joined Lieutenant Honey in earning a Victoria Cross.

In the second week of October 1918 the Canadian Corps was closing in on the city of Cambrai. The main obstacle here was crossing the Canal de l'Escaut to pursue the rapidly retreating Germans. Captain Coulson Norman Mitchell, with the 4th Battalion, Canadian Engineers, earned his Victoria Cross here. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1889, Mitchell was a university-educated engineer who joined the Canadian Engineers in November 1914.

On 8-9 October Mitchell, already a recipient of a Military Cross, led some engineers ahead of the infantry to examine the bridges the latter would need to cross. Upon reaching the canal they discovered one bridge had already been blown up. They crossed the collapsed bridge under heavy fire and pushed on to the main bridge over the canal. Mitchell and his men ran across the bridge in the darkness, without knowing how many Germans were on the other side. Mitchell then deployed a lookout while he and his sergeant slid under the bridge and began cutting wires leading to the demolition charges. Unfortunately, the Germans had raised the alarm and rushed the bridge in an attempt to blow the charges. Mitchell ran to his lookout, who had been wounded defending the position. Mitchell killed three Germans, captured another twelve and defended the bridgehead until reinforcements arrived. At that point Mitchell went back under the bridge and continued cutting wires and removing demolition charges until the bridge was secured.

Two days later, on 11 October 1918, Lieutenant Wallace Lloyd Algie earned his Victoria Cross, followed by Private Thomas Ricketts on 14 October 1918.

Then, two weeks later, a pilot earned the Canadian military's second Victoria Cross of the air war. Major William George Barker, a member of the CEF seconded to 201 Squadron,



*Major William George Barker in his most comfortable location,
inside an airplane.*

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



Royal Air Force, culminated an amazing flying career one morning in late October 1918. Born in Dauphin, Manitoba, in 1894, Barker was an expert rifle shot and horseman who originally joined the cavalry. He served in the trenches before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps as an observer. He later became a much-decorated pilot, earning the Distinguished Service Order and bar, the Military Cross and two bars, and one French and two Italian gallantry awards. On the morning of 27 October Barker attacked an enemy two-seat aircraft, destroying it. He was then attacked and wounded by a German biplane, but shot it down. Barker was attacked again, wounded again, but forced his way out of trouble. Unfortunately, he lost consciousness at this point and his plane started to drop. Barker awoke while being attacked yet again, regained control of his aircraft and shot down one of his attackers. He then passed out once again, again awoke under attack and again shot down another aircraft. Utterly exhausted by this point and severely wounded, Barker escaped, crashing his aircraft. During the mission he had raised his personal total of aircraft destroyed to fifty.

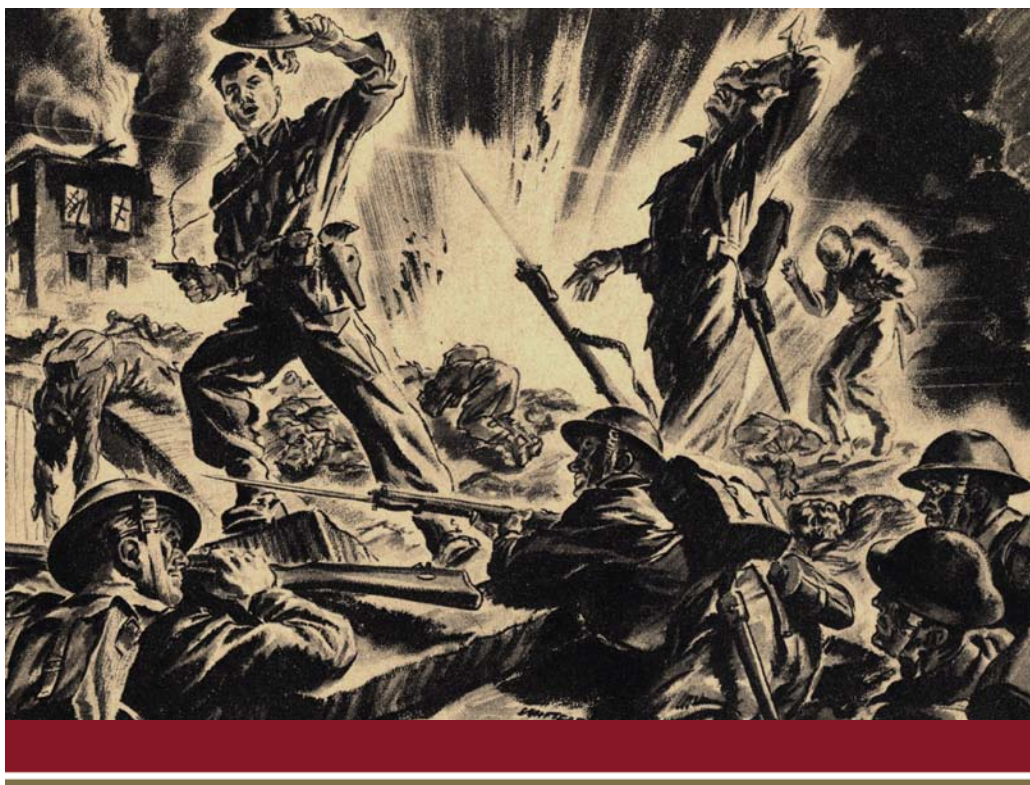
Only one more Victoria Cross was earned by a member of the CEF before the end of the war, that belonging to Sergeant Hugh Cairns, who was awarded the decoration for his heroism on 1 November 1918, just days before the end of the fighting on the Western Front.

The Second World War

Just twenty years later Canada was at war again, a significant participant in the Second World War. The nation's contribution was just as widespread as in the earlier conflict, witnessing Canadians fighting on sea, land and in the air around the globe. The Canadian military's involvement in combat would lead to the award of thirteen Victoria Crosses and thousands of other Commonwealth awards for gallantry.

Company Sergeant-Major John Robert Osborn earned his Victoria Cross in the fighting in Hong Kong on 19 December 1941. The next awards to members of the Canadian military came exactly eight months later, on 19 August 1942, during the disastrous raid on Dieppe, France. Honorary Captain John Weir Foote and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Cecil Ingersoll Merritt heroically stepped into history that fateful day.

The next man in a Canadian uniform to earn the Victoria Cross did so in Italy. Captain Paul Triquet, a company commander with the Royal 22^e Régiment, led his men and a handful of Canadian tanks against the hamlet of Casa Berardi on 14 December 1943. Casa Berardi was an enemy strong point protected by firing positions in a gully in front of the hamlet. Born in Cabano, Quebec, in 1910, Triquet was a professional soldier, a member of his regiment since 1927. As his troops moved forward they came under heavy machine gun and mortar fire and half the company was soon killed or wounded. Undaunted, Triquet reorganized the survivors, encouraged them and convinced them that the safest route was



An unknown artist's depiction of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Cecil Ingersoll Merritt's heroism at Dieppe in August 1942.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

forward to the objective. He then led them forward as they broke through the enemy's positions and destroyed four German tanks and several machine gun nests. Having reached Casa Berardi, Triquet knew the inevitable German counter-attack was coming and organized his men and the remaining tanks in a defensive perimeter. When the Germans attacked he dashed from position to position, encouraging his men and fighting where needed. The defence was successful and Triquet and his men were relieved the next day.

Major John Keefer Mahony's Victoria Cross, also earned in Italy, came on 24 May 1944. Then came the first award earned by a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, that of Pilot Officer Andrew Charles Mynarski on 13 June 1944.



Eleven days later, Flight Lieutenant David Ernest Hornell, a pilot with No. 162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron, received the RCAF's second Victoria Cross. Born in Mimico, Ontario, in 1910, Hornell joined the air force at the outbreak of the war. On 24 June 1944 he was the captain and pilot of a twin-engine Canso amphibian aircraft and a veteran of sixty operational missions. He and his crew were carrying out an anti-submarine patrol in the north Atlantic when, several hours into the patrol, they spotted a German submarine on the surface. Hornell turned to attack, but was spotted. The enemy opened up on the Canadians with its anti-aircraft gun, striking the Canso's starboard wing and setting the engine on fire. The plane continued its attack, firing its machine guns and releasing its depth charges. The submarine was sunk, but the Canso was also fatally wounded. Hornell landed it in the water, the crew bailed out and the aircraft sank out of sight. Tragically, the crew only had one functioning dinghy, so they took turns floating in the water, holding on to the sides. Two of the crew died of exposure, the rest holding on for twenty-one hours until rescued. By then, Hornell was blind and physically exhausted and died shortly after being rescued.



An undated photograph of Pilot Officer Andrew Charles Mynarski and his crew from 419 (Bomber) Squadron, RCAF.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



A step-by-step artistic recreation of the ordeal of Flight Lieutenant David Ernest Hornell and his crew on 24-25 June 1944.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

On 6 June 1944 the Canadian Army was fighting on land in North-West Europe, adding a second front to the Italian campaign. The next five Victoria Crosses earned by the Canadian military reflected the expansion of the fighting, all but one coming from the fighting in France, the Netherlands and Germany in 1944-45. These recipients were Major David Vivian Currie on 18-20 August, Sergeant Aubrey Cosens on 25-26 February, Major Frederick Albert Tilston on 1 March and Corporal Frederick George Topham on 24 March in North-West Europe and Private Ernest Alvia (“Smokey”) Smith on 21-22 October in Italy.

The final Victoria Cross awarded to a Canadian was to a member of the Royal Canadian Navy. Born in Trail, British Columbia, in 1917, Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray was attending university when he was commissioned in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1940. Gray was attached as a fighter pilot to the Fleet Air Arm, the aerial branch of the Royal Navy, and had already been awarded a Distinguished Service Cross and



Mentioned-in-Despatches by the summer of 1945. On 9 August 1945, Gray, in his Corsair aircraft, led an attack against Japanese warships in Onagawa Wan, off the island of Honshu, Japan. Gray dove to attack after spotting the vessels, his aircraft being struck by enemy anti-aircraft fire as he flew in. But Gray held his plane steady and got to within fifteen metres of the Japanese escort *Amakusa* before dropping his bombs. At least one scored a direct hit, sinking the escort. Gray's aircraft, however, was crippled and crashed into the bay. His remains were never recovered.



*The headstone for Sergeant Aubrey Cosens
in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in the
Netherlands.*

PHOTO: KEN REYNOLDS,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

THE MAKING OF CANADA'S *Victoria Cross*

LIEUTENANT GRAY'S VICTORIA CROSS WAS THE LAST AWARDED to a Canadian during the Second World War. No crosses were awarded to Canadians during the war in Korea. In the years that followed, a sense of nationalism began to make its way into thinking about honours and awards for Canadian citizens. Attempts to create a purely Canadian system of honours turned from discussion and debate in the 1950s to a fledgling reality by the late 1960s, in concert with the celebration of the nation's centennial.

The establishment of the Order of Canada in 1967 included the creation of the Medal of Courage as part of the Order. This quickly became the only bravery award available for both military and civilian acts of courage. But with no way of recognizing differing degrees of courage, the award was simply not sufficient. The Canadianization of the honours system had an effect on the ability of members of the military to earn an award for military gallantry since British military and civilian gallantry awards were no longer available to Canadians. In 1972, the situation was addressed on the civilian side through the introduction of the Canadian Bravery Decorations including the Cross of Valour, the Star of Courage





Members of the Canadian Victoria Cross contingent to the 1956 Centenary celebrations of the award, including (from left to right): Alexander Brereton, David Currie, Raphael Zengel, Charles Train, Thomas Dinesen, Filip Konowal, John Kerr, George Mullin, Coulson Mitchell, George Pearkes, William Metcalf, Thain MacDowell, Milton Gregg, John Mahony, Richard Turner, Cecil Kinross, Frederick Harvey, and Cyrus Peck.

PHOTO: DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

and the Medal of Bravery. Heroic acts performed by members of the Canadian Forces were recognized through these decorations. The Medal of Courage, which had never been awarded, was eliminated.

Eventually, a military gallantry awards system was designed to complement the civilian awards in the Canadian Honours System. Taking heed of calls from the public, veterans' groups and members of Parliament, the proposed decorations ultimately incorporated the Victoria Cross, the Star of Military Valour and the Medal of Military Valour. The three awards, known collectively as the Military Valour Decorations, were accepted by the Canadian government and formally approved by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, in letters patent issued on 31 December 1992.

Canada's Victoria Cross is only slightly different from the original award. The inscription borne on the British insignia, "FOR VALOUR", is replaced by the Latin phrase "PRO VALORE". The Victoria Cross retains the stringent award criteria established by the British version. In accordance with the 1993 regulations, the new decoration is to be "awarded for the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty, in the presence of the enemy." The definition of the "enemy" was expanded to reflect the new reality of warfare in the 1990s, the Department of National Defence noting it entailed "a hostile armed force, including armed mutineers, armed rebels, armed rioters and armed pirates. Canada does not have to be at war to acknowledge the existence of an enemy which fits this description. It is broad enough to encompass Canadian involvement in UN peacekeeping operations." Any member of the Canadian Forces or member of an allied armed force serving with the Canadian Forces on or after 1 January 1993 is eligible for the award and, like its British counterpart, the Victoria Cross can be awarded posthumously.

The Victoria Cross, to be suspended from a crimson ribbon, is "a bronze straight armed cross pattée, 38 mm across with raised edges: on the obverse (front), a lion guardant standing upon the Royal Crown, and below the Crown, a scroll bearing the inscription "PRO VALORE"; and on the reverse (back), the date of the act for which the decoration is bestowed is engraved in a raised circle. The Cross is suspended by means of a plain link from a V below a straight bar ornamented with laurel leaves, on the back of which is engraved the rank, name and unit of the recipient." Subsequent awards to an individual are to be indicated "by a plain bronze bar ornamented with laurel leaves, which bar shall be attached to the centre of the ribbon from which the Cross is suspended."

For more than a decade, the Victoria Cross existed only as artwork on paper, none of the actual decorations – or insignia, in the technical parlance – being produced. The reason for this was quite simple. As the highest decoration for military gallantry in the Canadian Honours System, it took quite some time to decide how the concept of the Victoria Cross's design and production would reflect its proper heritage. What would its composition be and how would it appear as a physical reality? Such a thorough consideration was required to ensure that the decoration's symbolic significance could be respected in its final produced form.

A committee was set up under the leadership of The Chancellery of Honours at Rideau Hall. The Victoria Cross Production Planning Group was composed of representatives from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. Members of Natural Resources Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Royal Canadian Mint subsequently joined the group during the course of its sessions.

The Victoria Cross Production Planning Group consulted many stakeholders, including active and retired military personnel and organizations, metallurgists, historians and other specialists. Several discussions led to the formulation of a proposal which contained their recommendations.





Specialist at the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency (DSDA Donnington, United Kingdom) slices a piece of gunmetal used to manufacture the British Victoria Cross.

PHOTO: CANADIAN DEFENCE LIAISON STAFF (LONDON),
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



The “slice” of gunmetal, donated to Canada by the United Kingdom and the 1867 Confederation Medal that were used to create the “metal mixture” for the new Victoria Cross.

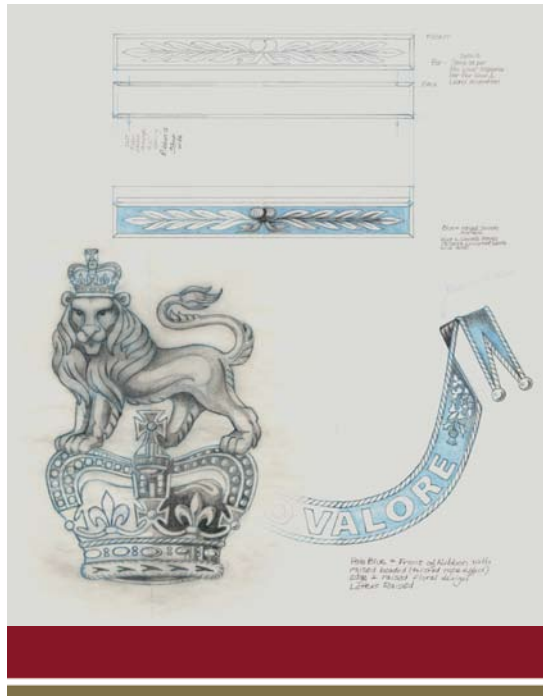
PHOTO: CATHY BURSEY-SABOURIN, CHANCELLERY OF HONOURS

Firstly, the Victoria Cross should be made in Canada. Secondly, because of the significance of the Victoria Cross to Canadians, the decoration should reflect the past, the present and the future of the country. The planning group recommended that the decoration be made from a mixture of three types of metals: the specific gunmetal used in the production of British Victoria Crosses; metal from an historically significant Canadian source, specifically an unrepresented Confederation Medal (minted in 1867 in celebration of the Confederation of Canada); and, finally, metals from all regions of Canada from coast to coast “representing the abundant natural resources of our country.”

As a first step, a “slice” of the original gunmetal was graciously donated to Canada by the United Kingdom and the various metals were gathered. At the same time, scientists from Natural Resources Canada analyzed some Victoria Crosses in the Canadian War Museum’s collection to derive a precise “formula” for the metallurgical composition they were going to create.

Although the original painting for the Victoria Cross had been made in 1992, detailed artwork was still required in order for the casting design process to be undertaken. Fleur-de-lis were added to the insignia’s scroll, alongside the traditional rose, thistle and shamrock, in keeping with the floral elements found within the Royal Arms of Canada.

In the past, the original British Victoria Cross insignia could not be struck, like most other decorations and coins, because the alloy used was too hard and brittle to make striking practical. To maintain this tradition, the Canadian Victoria Crosses were also cast. As the artwork was refined, the Royal Canadian Mint became involved in the production process which would transfer the 2D artwork to 3D engraved patterns, or “dies”. The two dies, inscribed or etched with “negative” or backwards images of the insignia – one the obverse, the other the reverse – were used to make wax reproductions which were then used to construct casting assemblages, or “trees”. A ceramic mixture was then poured around the assemblages and allowed to set. After the ceramic hardened, it was heated to allow the wax to melt and be poured away, thus leaving “positive” thin, hollow mounds of the Victoria Cross insignia within the ceramic blocks.



Artwork produced by Cathy Bursey-Sabourin providing details of the new insignia.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK HELD BY THE CANADIAN HERALDIC AUTHORITY





Example of wax “positive” impression of the Victoria Cross alongside the engraved pattern with “negative” or backwards image of the insignia.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE,
NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA



Each wax impression is checked carefully for defects and dimensional accuracy before continuing the process.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE,
NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA



Specialists from Natural Resources Canada pour molten metal into moulds to create ingots of the Canadian insignia mixture.

PHOTO: CATHY BURSEY-SABOURIN,
CHANCELLERY OF HONOURS



Upon completion of the production runs, all trimmings and other surplus alloy is returned to the furnace and re-melted. The final ingots produced bear the identifying inscription “Victoria Cross— Croix de Victoria—Canada”.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE,
NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA



The second stage of casting when the alloy was poured into the moulds to create the Victoria Cross insignia.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE,
NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA



The casting tree after demoulding with four Victoria Crosses still attached.

PHOTO: CATHY BURSEY-SABOURIN,
CHANCELLERY OF HONOURS

In December 2006, after months of planning and preparation, the first stage in the casting process began at the Materials Technology Laboratory of Natural Resources Canada. The goal was to produce ingots or bars of the desired alloy. The piece of gunmetal from the original Victoria Cross source, the Confederation Medal and the various Canadian metals were melted in an induction furnace. The mixture was then carried in a crucible (a heat-resistant container used to melt metals and other materials) and was slowly poured into moulds shaped somewhat like loaf pans. Wood shavings were placed on top of each pan to help prevent oxidization. Seven ingots of the alloy were produced to ensure that a sufficient quantity of the “metal mixture” would be available for future generations.

Later, the second stage in the casting of the insignia took place. Some of the ingots were melted, and the molten metal was then poured into the ceramic moulds. Once cooled, the ceramic was broken away to reveal four unfurnished Victoria Cross insignia from each block attached to a central stem.



The cast insignia, rough and yellow in colour, were transferred to the Royal Canadian Mint. Each incomplete insignia needed to be finished by hand and treated to provide the dark patina of a finished Victoria Cross, thus transforming it into an award worthy of presentation.

With the finishing completed and the pieces polished, all that remained was for each insignia to be mounted on the crimson ribbon and for them to be placed in leather presentation boxes – each bearing the inscription “V.C.” over “Canada” in gold letters on the cover.

The first two specimens of the Victoria Cross were sent to the United Kingdom in late January 2007 to become part of The Queen’s Royal Collection. In the letter attached to the gift the Deputy Secretary of the Chancellery wrote:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Her Majesty, as well as to senior members of the Ministry of Defence who provided most gracious and professional assistance throughout the production of the Canadian Victoria Cross. Canadians rightfully attach a great deal of importance to this honour. In granting a percentage of the bronze derived from the original gun metal, Her Majesty has helped to create a symbolic link from the past, bridging the present and into the future.

The twenty Victoria Crosses and extra ingots of the Canadian mixture are safely kept at Rideau Hall while other specimens will be added to the collections of Rideau Hall, the Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian War Museum.

The Victoria Cross was unveiled by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada, at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in May 2008.



The first Victoria Cross produced in Canada.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE, NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA



MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN MILITARY AWARDED THE *Victoria Cross*

(Note: Additional biographical material prepared by the Directorate of History and Heritage, as well as the full citations from the London Gazette, can be found on the Directorate of History and Heritage website)

ALGIE, WALLACE LLOYD *Lieutenant* 20th Battalion, CEF 11 October 1918



Wallace Lloyd Algie was born on 10 June 1891 in Alton, Ontario. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

BARKER, WILLIAM *Major* 201 Squadron, RAF 27 October 1918
GEORGE (seconded from CEF)



William George Barker was born in Dauphin, Manitoba on 3 November 1894. Barker was killed in a flying accident at Rockcliffe airport, near Ottawa, on 1 March 1930.

BARRON, COLIN FRASER *Corporal* 3rd Battalion, CEF 6 November 1917



Colin Fraser Barron was born on 20 September 1893 in Baldavie, Scotland. He died in Toronto, Ontario on 15 August 1958.

BELLEW, EDWARD DONALD *Lieutenant* 7th Battalion, CEF 24 April 1915



Edward Donald Bellew was born in Bombay, India on 28 October 1882. Bellew died in Kamloops, British Columbia on 1 February 1961.

BISHOP, WILLIAM AVERY *Captain* 60 Squadron, RFC 2 June 1917
(seconded from CEF)



William Avery Bishop was born in Owen Sound, Ontario on 8 February 1894. He died in Palm Beach, United States, on 11 September 1956.

BRERETON, ALEXANDER *Corporal* 8th Battalion, CEF 9 August 1918
PICTON



Alexander Picton Brereton was born in Oak River, Manitoba on 13 November 1892. Brereton died in Calgary, Alberta on 11 June 1976.

BRILLANT, JEAN *Lieutenant* 22nd Battalion, CEF 8-9 August 1918



Jean Brillant was born in Assemetquaghan, Quebec, on 15 March 1890. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

BROWN, HARRY *Private* 10th Battalion, CEF 16 August 1917



Harry Brown was born in Gananoque, Ontario on 11 May 1898. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

CAIRNS, HUGH *Sergeant* 46th Battalion, CEF 1 November 1918



Hugh Cairns was born in Ashington, England on 4 December 1896. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.



CAMPBELL, FREDERICK *Lieutenant* 1st Battalion, CEF 15 June 1915
WILLIAM



Frederick William Campbell was born in Mount Forest, Ontario on 15 June 1869. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

CLARK-KENNEDY, *Lieutenant-* 24th Battalion, CEF 27-28 August 1918
WILLIAM HEW *Colonel*



William Hew Clark-Kennedy was born in Dunskey, Scotland on 3 March 1880. Clark-Kennedy died in Montreal, Quebec on 25 October 1961.

CLARKE, LEO *Corporal* 2nd Battalion, CEF 9 September 1916



Leo Clarke was born in Waterdown, Ontario on 1 December 1892. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

COCKBURN, HAMPDEN *Lieutenant* The Royal Canadian 7 November 1900
ZANE CHURCHILL *Dragoons*



Hampden Zane Churchill Cockburn was born in Toronto, Ontario on 19 November 1867. Cockburn died in Grayburn, Saskatchewan, on 12 July 1913.

COMBE, ROBERT GRIERSON *Lieutenant* 27th Battalion, CEF 3 May 1917



Robert Grierson Combe was born in Aberdeen, Scotland on 5 August 1880. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

COPPINS, FREDERICK *Corporal* 8th Battalion, CEF 9 August 1918
GEORGE



Frederick George Coppins was born in San Francisco, United States on 25 October 1889. Coppins died in Livermore, California on 30 March 1963.

COSENS, AUBREY *Sergeant* The Queen's Own 25-26 February
 Rifles of Canada 1945



Aubrey Cosens was born in Latchford, Ontario on 21 May 1921. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

	CROAK, JOHN BERNARD	<i>Private</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
<p>John Bernard Croak was born in Little Bay, Newfoundland on 18 May 1892. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	CURRIE, DAVID VIVIAN	<i>Major</i>	29th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The South Alberta Regiment)	18-20 August 1944
<p>David Vivian Currie was born in Sutherland, Saskatchewan on 8 July 1912. Currie died in Ottawa, Ontario, on 24 June 1986.</p>				
	DINESEN, THOMAS	<i>Private</i>	42nd Battalion, CEF	12 August 1918
<p>Thomas Dinesen was born in Rungsted, Denmark on 9 August 1892. Dinesen died in Leerbaek, Denmark on 10 March 1979.</p>				
	FISHER, FRED	<i>Lance- Corporal</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	23 April 1915
<p>Fred Fisher was born in St. Catharine's, Ontario on 3 August 1895. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	FLOWERDEW, GORDON MURIEL	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF	30 March 1918
<p>Gordon Muriel Flowerdew was born in Billingford, England on 2 January 1885. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	FOOTE, JOHN WEIR	<i>Honorary Captain</i>	Canadian Chaplain Service	19 August 1942
<p>John Weir Foote was born in Madoc, Ontario on 5 May 1904. He died in Hamilton, Ontario on 2 May 1988.</p>				



	GOOD, HERMAN JAMES	<i>Corporal</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
Herman James Good was born in South Bathurst, New Brunswick on 29 November 1887. He died in Bathurst, New Brunswick on 18 April 1969.				
	GRAY, ROBERT HAMPTON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve	9 August 1945
Robert Hampton Gray was born in Trail, British Columbia on 2 November 1917. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.				
	GREGG, MILTON FOWLER	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Royal Canadian Regiment	27 Sep-1 Oct 1918
Milton Fowler Gregg was born in Mountain Dale, New Brunswick on 10 April 1892. Gregg died in Fredericton, New Brunswick on 13 March 1978.				
	HALL, FREDERICK WILLIAM	<i>Company Sgt-Major</i>	8th Battalion, CEF	24 April 1915
Frederick William Hall was born in Kilkenny, Ireland 21 February 1885. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.				
	HANNA, ROBERT HILL	<i>Company Sgt-Major</i>	29th Battalion, CEF	21 August 1917
Robert Hanna was born in Kilkeel, Ireland on 6 August 1886. He died in Mount Lehman, British Columbia on 15 June 1967.				
	HARVEY, FREDERICK MAURICE WATSON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF	27 March 1917
Frederick Maurice Watson Harvey was born on 1 September 1888 in Athboy, Ireland. Harvey died in Calgary, Alberta on 24 August 1980.				

	HOBSON, FREDERICK	<i>Sergeant</i>	20th Battalion, CEF	18 August 1917
<p>Frederick Hobson was born in London, England on 23 September 1873. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	HOLLAND, EDWARD JAMES GIBSON	<i>Sergeant</i>	The Royal Canadian Dragoons	7 November 1900
<p>Edward James Gibson Holland was born in Ottawa, Ontario on 2 February 1878. Holland died on 18 June 1948 in Cobalt, Ontario.</p>				
	HOLMES, THOMAS WILLIAM	<i>Private</i>	4th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, CEF	26 October 1917
<p>Thomas William Holmes was born in Montreal, Quebec on 17 August 1897. Holmes died in Toronto, Ontario on 4 January 1950.</p>				
	HONEY, SAMUEL LEWIS	<i>Lieutenant</i>	78th Battalion, CEF	27-30 September 1918
<p>Samuel Lewis Honey was born in Conn, Ontario on 9 February 1894. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	HORNELL, DAVID ERNEST	<i>Flight Lieutenant</i>	No.162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron, RCAF	24-25 June 1944
<p>David Ernest Hornell was born in Toronto, Ontario, on 26 January 1910. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.</p>				
	HUTCHESON, BELLENDEN SEYMOUR	<i>Captain</i>	Canadian Army Medical Corps	2 September 1918
<p>Bellenden Seymour Hutcheson was born in the United States at Mount Carmel on 16 December 1883. Dr Hutcheson died in Cairo, Illinois on 9 August 1954.</p>				



KAEBLE, JOSEPH THOMAS *Corporal* 22nd Battalion, CEF 8-9 June 1918



Joseph Thomas Kaeble was born in St-Moïse, Quebec on 5 May 1893. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

KERR, GEORGE FRASER *Lieutenant* 3rd Battalion, CEF 27 September 1918



George Fraser Kerr was born in Desoronto, Ontario on 8 June 1894. He died in Toronto, Ontario on 8 December 1929.

KERR, JOHN CHIPMAN *Private* 49th Battalion, CEF 16 September 1916



John Chipman Kerr was born in Fox River, Nova Scotia, on 11 January 1887. He died in Port Moody, British Columbia on 19 February 1963.

KINROSS, CECIL JOHN *Private* 49th Battalion, CEF 30 October 1917



Cecil John Kinross was born in Harefield, England on 17 February 1896. He died in Lougheed, Alberta on 21 June 1957.

KNIGHT, ARTHUR GEORGE *Sergeant* 10th Battalion, CEF 2 September 1918



Arthur George Knight was born in Haywards Heath, England on 26 June 1886. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

KONOWAL, FILIP *Corporal* 47th Battalion, CEF 22-24 August 1917



Filip Konowal was born in Kedeski, Russia on 25 March 1887. He died in Ottawa, Ontario on 3 June 1959.

LEARMONTH, OKILL
MASSEY *Major* 2nd Battalion, CEF 18 August 1917



Okill Massey Learmonth was born in Quebec City, Quebec on 20 February 1894. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

MERRIFIELD, WILLIAM	<i>Sergeant</i>	4th Battalion, CEF	1 October 1918
	William Merrifield was born in Brentwood, England on 9 October 1890. Merrifield died in Toronto, Ontario on 8 August 1943.		
MERRITT, CHARLES CECIL INGERSOLL	<i>Lieutenant- Colonel</i>	The South Saskatchewan Regiment	19 August 1942
	Charles Cecil Ingersoll Merritt was born in Vancouver, British Columbia on 10 November 1908. Merritt died in Vancouver, British Columbia on 12 July 2000.		
METCALF, WILLIAM HENRY	<i>Lance- Corporal</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	2 September 1918
	William Henry Metcalf was born in Waite Township, United States on 29 January 1885. Metcalf died in Lewiston, Maine on 8 August 1968.		
MILNE, WILLIAM JOHNSTONE	<i>Private</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	9 April 1917
	William Johnstone Milne was born in Cambusnethan, Scotland on 21 December 1892. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		
MINER, HARRY GARNET BEDFORD	<i>Corporal</i>	58th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
	Harry Garnet Bedford Miner was born in Cedar Springs, Ontario on 24 June 1891. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		
MITCHELL, COULSON NORMAN	<i>Captain</i>	4th Battalion, Canadian Engineers	2 September 1918
	Coulson Norman Mitchell was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on 11 December 1889. Mitchell died in Montreal, Quebec on 17 November 1978.		

MULLIN, GEORGE HARRY	<i>Sergeant</i>	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	30 October 1917
	George Harry Mullin was born in Portland, United States, on 15 August 1892. Mullin died in Regina, Saskatchewan on 5 April 1963.		
MYNARSKI, ANDREW CHARLES	<i>Pilot</i> <i>Officer</i>	419 (Bomber) Squadron, RCAF	12-13 June 1944
	Andrew Charles Mynarski was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on 14 October 1916. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		
NUNNEY, CLAUDE JOSEPH PATRICK	<i>Private</i>	38th Battalion, CEF	1-2 September 1918
	Claude Joseph Patrick Nunney was born in Dublin, Ireland on 24 December 1892. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		
O'KELLY, CHRISTOPHER PATRICK JOHN	<i>Captain</i>	52nd Battalion, CEF	26 October 1917
	Christopher Patrick John O'Kelly was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on 18 November 1895. On 15 November 1922, O'Kelly was drowned during a storm on Lac Seul, near Kenora, Ontario.		
O'ROURKE, MICHAEL JAMES	<i>Private</i>	7th Battalion, CEF	15-18 August 1917
	Michael James O'Rourke was born on 19 March 1878 in Limerick, Ireland. O'Rourke died in Vancouver, British Columbia on 6 December 1957.		
OSBORN, JOHN ROBERT	<i>Company</i> <i>Sgt-Major</i>	The Winnipeg Grenadiers	19 December 1941
	John Robert Osborn was born in Foulden, England on 2 January 1899. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		



PATTISON, JOHN GEORGE *Private* 50th Battalion, CEF 10 April 1917



John George Pattison was born on 8 September 1875 in Woolwich, England. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

PEARKES, GEORGE *Major* 5th Canadian 30-31 October 1917
RANDOLPH Mounted Rifles
Battalion, CEF



George Randolph Pearkes was born in Watford, England on 26 February 1883. Pearkes died on 30 May 1984 in Victoria, British Columbia.

PECK, CYRUS WESLEY *Lieutenant- Colonel* 16th Battalion, CEF 2 September 1918



Cyrus Wesley Peck was born on 26 April 1871 in Hopewell Hill, New Brunswick. Peck died in Sydney, British Columbia on 27 September 1956.

RAYFIELD, WALTER LEIGH *Private* 7th Battalion, CEF 2-4 September 1918



Walter Leigh Rayfield was born in Richmond-on-Thames, England on 7 October 1881. Rayfield died in Toronto, Ontario on 19 February 1949.

RICHARDSON, ARTHUR *Sergeant* Strathcona's Horse 5 July 1900
HERBERT LINDSAY



Arthur Herbert Lindsay Richardson was born in Southport, England on 23 September 1873. He died in Liverpool on 15 December 1932.

RICHARDSON, JAMES *Piper* 16th Battalion, CEF 8 October 1916
CLELAND



James Cleland Richardson was born in Bellshill, Scotland on 25 November 1895. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

RICKETTS, THOMAS	<i>Private</i>	The Royal Newfoundland Regiment	14 October 1918
	Thomas Ricketts was born in Middle Arm, Newfoundland on 15 April 1901. Ricketts died in St John's, Newfoundland on 10 February 1967.		
ROBERTSON, JAMES PETER	<i>Private</i>	27th Battalion, CEF	6 November 1917
	James Peter Robertson was born in Pictou County, Nova Scotia on 26 October 1883. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		
RUTHERFORD, CHARLES SMITH	<i>Lieutenant</i>	5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, CEF	26 August 1918
	Charles Smith Rutherford was born in Colborne, Ontario on 9 January 1892. Rutherford died in Ottawa, Ontario, on 11 June 1989.		
SCRIMGER, FRANCIS ALEXANDER CARON	<i>Captain</i>	Canadian Army Medical Corps	25 April 1915
	Francis Alexander Caron Scrimger was born in Montreal, Quebec, on 10 February 1881. Scrimger died in Montreal, Quebec, on 13 February 1937.		
SHANKLAND, ROBERT	<i>Lieutenant</i>	43rd Battalion, CEF	26 October 1917
	Robert Shankland was born in Ayr, Scotland, on 10 October 1887. Shankland died in Vancouver, British Columbia on 20 January 1968.		
SIFTON, ELLIS WELLWOOD	<i>Lance- Sergeant</i>	18th Battalion, CEF	9 April 1917
	Ellis Wellwood Sifton was born in Wallacetown, Ontario, 12 October 1891. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.		

SMITH, ERNEST ALVIA	<i>Private</i>	The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada	21-22 October 1944
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Ernest Alvia 'Smokey' Smith was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, on 3 May 1914. Smith died in Vancouver, British-Columbia on 3 August 2005.

SPALL, ROBERT	<i>Sergeant</i>	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	12-13 August 1918
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Robert Spall was born in Ealing, England, on 5 March 1890. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

STRACHAN, HARCUS	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Fort Garry Horse, CEF	20 November 1917
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Harcus Strachan was born in Borrowstounness, Scotland, on 7 November 1884. Strachan died in Vancouver, British Columbia, on 1 May 1982.

TAIT, JAMES EDWARD	<i>Lieutenant</i>	78th Battalion, CEF	8-11 August 1918
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James Edward Tait was born in Maxwelltown, Scotland on 27 May 1886. He was awarded his Victoria Cross posthumously.

TILSTON, FREDERICK ALBERT	<i>Major</i>	The Essex Scottish Regiment	1 March 1945
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Frederick Albert Tilston was born in Toronto, Ontario on 11 June 1906. Tilston died in Toronto, Ontario on 23 September 1992.

TOPHAM, FREDERICK GEORGE	<i>Corporal</i>	1st Canadian Parachute Battalion	24 March 1945
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Frederick George Topham was born in Toronto, Ontario, on 10 August 1917. He died in Toronto on 3 May 1974.

TRIQUET, PAUL *Captain* Royal 22e Régiment 14 December 1943



Paul Triquet was born in Cabano, Quebec on 2 April 1910. Triquet died in Quebec City, Quebec on 4 August 1980.

TURNER, RICHARD ERNEST *Lieutenant* The Royal Canadian 7 November 1900
WILLIAM Dragoons



Richard Ernest William Turner was born on 25 July 1871 in Quebec City, Quebec. Turner died in Quebec City, Quebec, on 19 June 1961.

YOUNG, JOHN FRANCIS *Private* 87th Battalion, CEF 2-4 September 1918



John Francis Young was born in Kidderminster, England on 14 January 1893. Young died in Ste-Agathe, Quebec, on 7 November 1929.

ZENGEL, RAPHAEL LOUIS *Sergeant* 5th Battalion, CEF 9 August 1918



Raphael Louis Zengel was born on 11 November 1894 in Faribault, United States. Zengel died in Vancouver, British Columbia on 22 February 1977.



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