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Pro Valore
CANADA'S VICTORIA CROSS



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INTRODUCTION

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE VICTORIA CROSS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE an impressive decoration. Uniformly dark brown in colour, matte in finish, with a plain crimson ribbon, it pales in comparison to more colourful honours or 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 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 led to the creation of the Canadian version of the decoration in 1993. The lying-in-state and funeral of the last living Canadian recipient, Ernest “Smokey” Smith, in 2005 garnered national attention and sympathy. In 2006, stamps and coins celebrating the 150th anniversary of the creation of the 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, the Victoria Cross, 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 the former 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 number of Canadians awarded the Victoria Cross varies significantly on how the total is calculated. Eighty-one Victoria Crosses were awarded to members of the Canadian military (including Newfoundland) from the South African War to the end of the Second World War. Another 13 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 of the Victoria Cross 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 80 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 awarded to members of The Royal Canadian Dragoons. The heroic efforts of Lieutenants Hampden Zane Churchill Cockburn, 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.



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



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.

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 the nation’s contribution, 64 being awarded to its soldiers and airmen.

Lance-Corporal Frederick 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 15 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

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 troop, 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.



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



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 pushing 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 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 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 16 of the enemy and stopped only when he had been severely wounded.



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



Portrait of Corporal Filip Konowal with his Victoria Cross.

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



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.

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 franco-phone 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 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



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

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 50 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. 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.

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, 10 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, Corporals 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—began 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 on Bourslon Wood on 27 September, Honey assumed



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

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



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 10 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.

In this same period, four other 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.

By 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 and 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 planted under the bridge. 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 12 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, 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, 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 50.



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

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

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 20 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 13 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 22e 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 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, so he 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.



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



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

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 60 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 that 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 21 hours until rescued. By then, Hornell was blind and physically exhausted and died shortly after being rescued.





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

PHOTO: KEN REYNOLDS,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

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 15 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 Canadian Army was already 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, Private Ernest Alvia ("Smokey") Smith on 21-22 October, Sergeant Aubrey Cosens on 25-26 February, Major Frederick Albert Tilston on 1 March and Corporal Frederick George Topham on 24 March.

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

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





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 Parkes, 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

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." 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. 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 veteran military personnel and organizations, metallurgists, historians and other specialists. Several discussions led to the formulation of a proposal which contained their recommendations.

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 a medal minted in 1867 in commemoration of the Confederation of Canada; and, finally, metals from all regions of Canada from coast to coast to coast.

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.

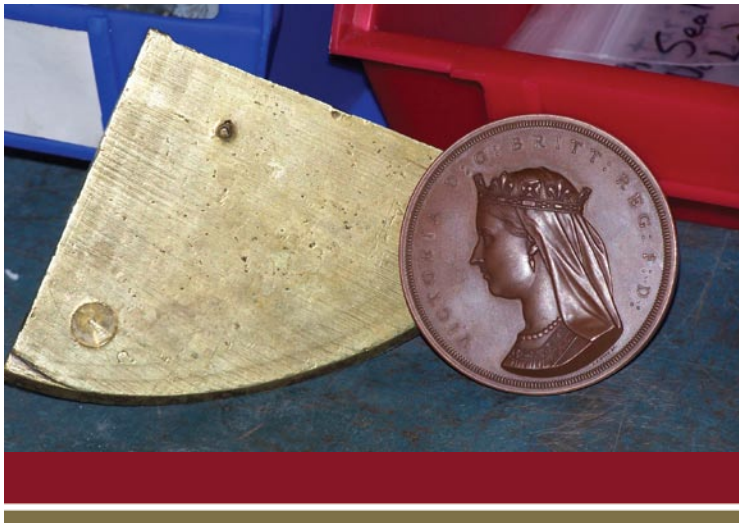
Although the original painting for the Victoria Cross had been made in 1992, detailed artwork was still required in order for the casting design process to be undertaken. Fleurs-de-lis were added to the insignia’s scroll, alongside the traditional rose, thistle and shamrock, in keeping with the floral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





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

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 moulds of the Victoria Cross insignia within the ceramic blocks.

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 unfinished 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.



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

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 20 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 Canadian 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 2008.





The first Victoria Cross produced in Canada.

PHOTO: DAVID ASHE, NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA

MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN MILITARY AWARDED THE *Victoria Cross*

*ALGIE, WALLACE LLOYD	<i>Lieutenant</i>	20th Battalion, CEF	11 October 1918
BARKER, WILLIAM GEORGE	<i>Major</i>	201 Squadron, RAF (seconded from CEF)	27 October 1918
BARRON, COLIN FRASER	<i>Corporal</i>	3rd Battalion, CEF	6 November 1917
BELLEW, EDWARD DONALD	<i>Lieutenant</i>	7th Battalion, CEF	24 April 1915
BISHOP, WILLIAM AVERY	<i>Captain</i>	60 Squadron, RFC (seconded from CEF)	2 June 1917
BRERETON, ALEXANDER PICTON	<i>Corporal</i>	8th Battalion, CEF	9 August 1918
*BRILLANT, JEAN	<i>Lieutenant</i>	22nd Battalion, CEF	8-9 August 1918
*BROWN, HARRY	<i>Private</i>	10th Battalion, CEF	16 August 1917
*CAIRNS, HUGH	<i>Sergeant</i>	46th Battalion, CEF	1 November 1918



*CAMPBELL, FREDERICK WILLIAM	<i>Lieutenant</i>	1st Battalion, CEF	15 June 1915
CLARK-KENNEDY, WILLIAM HEW	<i>Lieutenant- Colonel</i>	24th Battalion, CEF	27-28 August 1918
CLARKE, LEO	<i>Corporal</i>	2nd Battalion, CEF	9 September 1916
COCKBURN, HAMPDEN ZANE CHURCHILL	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Royal Canadian Dragoons	7 November 1900
*COMBE, ROBERT GRIERSON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	27th Battalion, CEF	3 May 1917
COPPINS, FREDERICK GEORGE	<i>Corporal</i>	8th Battalion, CEF	9 August 1918
*COSENS, AUBREY	<i>Sergeant</i>	The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada	25-26 February 1945
*CROAK, JOHN BERNARD	<i>Private</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
CURRIE, DAVID VIVIAN	<i>Major</i>	29th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The South Alberta Regiment)	18-20 August 1944
DINESEN, THOMAS	<i>Private</i>	42nd Battalion, CEF	12 August 1918
*FISHER, FREDERICK	<i>Lance- Corporal</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	23 April 1915
*FLOWERDEW, GORDON MURIEL	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF	30 March 1918
FOOTE, JOHN WEIR	<i>Honorary Captain</i>	Canadian Chaplain Service	19 August 1942
GOOD, HERMAN JAMES	<i>Corporal</i>	13th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
*GRAY, ROBERT HAMPTON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve	9 August 1945
GREGG, MILTON FOWLER	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Royal Canadian Regiment	27 Sep-1 Oct 1918
*HALL, FREDERICK WILLIAM	<i>Company Sgt-Major</i>	8th Battalion, CEF	24 April 1915
HANNA, ROBERT HILL	<i>Company Sgt-Major</i>	29th Battalion, CEF	21 August 1917

HARVEY, FREDERICK MAURICE WATSON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), CEF	27 March 1917
*HOBSON, FREDERICK	<i>Sergeant</i>	20th Battalion, CEF	18 August 1917
HOLLAND, EDWARD JAMES GIBSON	<i>Sergeant</i>	The Royal Canadian Dragoons	7 November 1900
HOLMES, THOMAS WILLIAM	<i>Private</i>	4th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, CEF	26 October 1917
*HONEY, SAMUEL LEWIS	<i>Lieutenant</i>	78th Battalion, CEF	27-30 September 1918
*HORNELL, DAVID ERNEST	<i>Flight Lieutenant</i>	No.162 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron, RCAF	24-25 June 1944
HUTCHESON, BELLENDEN SEYMOUR	<i>Captain</i>	Canadian Army Medical Corps	2 September 1918
*KAEBLE, JOSEPH THOMAS	<i>Corporal</i>	22nd Battalion, CEF	8-9 June 1918
KERR, GEORGE FRASER	<i>Lieutenant</i>	3rd Battalion, CEF	27 September 1918
KERR, JOHN CHIPMAN	<i>Private</i>	49th Battalion, CEF	16 September 1916
KINROSS, CECIL JOHN	<i>Private</i>	49th Battalion, CEF	30 October 1917
*KNIGHT, ARTHUR GEORGE	<i>Sergeant</i>	10th Battalion, CEF	2 September 1918
KONOWAL, FILIP	<i>Corporal</i>	47th Battalion, CEF	22-24 August 1917
*LEARMONTH, OKILL MASSEY	<i>Major</i>	2nd Battalion, CEF	18 August 1917
LYALL, GRAHAM THOMSON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	102nd Battalion, CEF	27 September 1918
MACDOWELL, THAIN WENDELL	<i>Captain</i>	38th Battalion, CEF	9 April 1917
MACGREGOR, JOHN	<i>Captain</i>	2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, CEF	29 Sep-3 Oct 1918
MAHONY, JOHN KEEFER	<i>Major</i>	The Westminster Regiment (Motor)	24 May 1944
McKEAN, GEORGE BURDON	<i>Lieutenant</i>	14th Battalion, CEF	27-28 April 1918
*McKENZIE, HUGH	<i>Lieutenant</i>	7th Canadian Machine Gun Company, CEF	30 October 1917
MERRIFIELD, WILLIAM	<i>Sergeant</i>	4th Battalion, CEF	1 October 1918



MERRITT, CHARLES CECIL INGERSOLL	<i>Lieutenant- Colonel</i>	The South Saskatchewan Regiment	19 August 1942
METCALF, WILLIAM HENRY	<i>Lance- Corporal</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	2 September 1918
*MILNE, WILLIAM JOHNSTONE	<i>Private</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	9 April 1917
*MINER, HARRY GARNET BEDFORD	<i>Corporal</i>	58th Battalion, CEF	8 August 1918
MITCHELL, COULSON NORMAN	<i>Captain</i>	4th Battalion, Canadian Engineers	8-9 October 1918
MULLIN, GEORGE HARRY	<i>Sergeant</i>	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	30 October 1917
*MYNARSKI, ANDREW CHARLES	<i>Pilot Officer</i>	419 (Bomber) Squadron, RCAF	12-13 June 1944
*NUNNEY, CLAUDE JOSEPH PATRICK	<i>Private</i>	38th Battalion, CEF	1-2 September 1918
O'KELLY, CHRISTOPHER PATRICK JOHN	<i>Captain</i>	52nd Battalion, CEF	26 October 1917
O'ROURKE, MICHAEL JAMES	<i>Private</i>	7th Battalion, CEF	15-18 August 1917
*OSBORN, JOHN ROBERT	<i>Company Sgt-Major</i>	The Winnipeg Grenadiers	19 December 1941
PATTISON, JOHN GEORGE	<i>Private</i>	50th Battalion, CEF	10 April 1917
PEARKES, GEORGE RANDOLPH	<i>Major</i>	5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, CEF	30-31 October 1917
PECK, CYRUS WESLEY	<i>Lieutenant- Colonel</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	2 September 1918
RAYFIELD, WALTER LEIGH	<i>Private</i>	7th Battalion, CEF	2-4 September 1918
RICHARDSON, ARTHUR HERBERT LINDSAY	<i>Sergeant</i>	Strathcona's Horse	5 July 1900
*RICHARDSON, JAMES CLELAND	<i>Piper</i>	16th Battalion, CEF	8 October 1916
RICKETTS, THOMAS	<i>Private</i>	The Royal Newfoundland Regiment	14 October 1918

*ROBERTSON, JAMES PETER	<i>Private</i>	27th Battalion, CEF	6 November 1917
RUTHERFORD, CHARLES SMITH	<i>Lieutenant</i>	5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion, CEF	26 August 1918
SCRIMGER, FRANCIS ALEXANDER CARON	<i>Captain</i>	Canadian Army Medical Corps	25 April 1915
SHANKLAND, ROBERT	<i>Lieutenant</i>	43rd Battalion, CEF	26 October 1917
*SIFTON, ELLIS WELLWOOD	<i>Lance- Sergeant</i>	18th Battalion, CEF	9 April 1917
SMITH, ERNEST ALVIA	<i>Private</i>	The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada	21-22 October 1944
*SPALL, ROBERT	<i>Sergeant</i>	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry	12-13 August 1918
STRACHAN, HARCUS	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Fort Garry Horse, CEF	20 November 1917
*TAIT, JAMES EDWARD	<i>Lieutenant</i>	78th Battalion, CEF	8-11 August 1918
TILSTON, FREDERICK ALBERT	<i>Major</i>	The Essex Scottish Regiment	1 March 1945
TOPHAM, FREDERICK GEORGE	<i>Corporal</i>	1st Canadian Parachute Battalion	24 March 1945
TRIQUET, PAUL	<i>Captain</i>	Royal 22 ^e Régiment	14 December 1943
TURNER, RICHARD ERNEST WILLIAM	<i>Lieutenant</i>	The Royal Canadian Dragoons	7 November 1900
YOUNG, JOHN FRANCIS	<i>Private</i>	87th Battalion, CEF	2-4 September 1918
ZENGEL, RAPHAEL LOUIS	<i>Sergeant</i>	5th Battalion, CEF	9 August 1918

(*") awarded posthumously)

