

= Victoria Cross =

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest award of the United Kingdom honours system . It is awarded for gallantry " in the face of the enemy " to members of the British armed forces . It may be awarded posthumously . It was previously awarded to Commonwealth countries , most of which have established their own honours systems and no longer recommend British honours . It may be awarded to a person of any military rank in any service and to civilians under military command although no civilian has received the award since 1879 . Since the first awards were presented by Queen Victoria in 1857 , two thirds of all awards have been personally presented by the British monarch . These investitures are usually held at Buckingham Palace .

The VC was introduced on 29 January 1856 by Queen Victoria to honour acts of valour during the Crimean War . Since then , the medal has been awarded 1 @, @ 358 times to 1 @, @ 355 individual recipients . Only 15 medals , 11 to members of the British Army , and four to the Australian Army , have been awarded since the Second World War . The traditional explanation of the source of the metal from which the medals are struck is that it derives from Russian cannon captured at the Siege of Sevastopol . Some research suggested a variety of origins for the material actually making up the medals themselves . Research has established that the metal for the medals came from two Chinese cannons that were captured from the Russians in 1855 .

Owing to its rarity , the VC is highly prized and the medal has fetched over £ 400 @, @ 000 at auction . A number of public and private collections are devoted to the Victoria Cross . The private collection of Lord Ashcroft , amassed since 1986 , contains over one @- @ tenth of all VCs awarded . Following a 2008 donation to the Imperial War Museum , the Ashcroft collection went on public display alongside the museum 's Victoria and George Cross collection in November 2010 .

Beginning with the Centennial of Confederation in 1967 , Canada followed in 1975 by Australia and New Zealand developed their own national honours systems , separate and independent of the British or Imperial honours system . As each country 's system evolved , operational gallantry awards were developed with the premier award of each system , the VC for Australia , the Canadian VC and the VC for New Zealand being created and named in honour of the Victoria Cross . These are unique awards of each honours system , recommended , assessed , gazetted and presented by each country .

= = Origin = =

In 1854 , after 39 years of peace , Britain found itself fighting a major war against Russia . The Crimean War was one of the first wars with modern reporting , and the dispatches of William Howard Russell described many acts of bravery and valour by British servicemen that went unrewarded .

Before the Crimean War , there was no official standardised system for recognition of gallantry within the British armed forces . Officers were eligible for an award of one of the junior grades of the Order of the Bath and brevet promotions while a Mention in Despatches existed as an alternative award for acts of lesser gallantry . This structure was very limited ; in practice awards of the Order of the Bath were confined to officers of field rank . Brevet promotions or Mentions in Despatches were largely confined to those who were under the immediate notice of the commanders in the field , generally members of the commander 's own staff .

Other European countries had awards that did not discriminate against class or rank ; France awarded the Légion d 'honneur (Legion of Honour , established 1802) and The Netherlands gave the Order of William (established in 1815) . There was a growing feeling among the public and in the Royal Court that a new award was needed to recognise incidents of gallantry that were unconnected with a man 's lengthy or meritorious service . Queen Victoria issued a Warrant under the Royal sign @- @ manual on 29 January 1856 (gazetted 5 February 1856) that officially constituted the VC . The order was backdated to 1854 to recognise acts of valour during the Crimean War .

Queen Victoria had instructed the War Office to strike a new medal that would not recognise birth or

class . The medal was meant to be a simple decoration that would be highly prized and eagerly sought after by those in the military services . To maintain its simplicity , Queen Victoria , under the guidance of Prince Albert , vetoed the suggestion that the award be called The Military Order of Victoria and instead suggested the name Victoria Cross . The original warrant stated that the Victoria Cross would only be awarded to soldiers who have served in the presence of the enemy and had performed some signal act of valour or devotion . The first ceremony was held on 26 June 1857 where Queen Victoria invested 62 of the 111 Crimean recipients in a ceremony in Hyde Park , London .

It was originally intended that the VCs would be cast from the cascabels of two cannon that were captured from the Russians at the siege of Sevastopol . In 1990 Creagh and Ashton conducted a metallurgical examination of the VCs in the custody of the Australian War Memorial . Later , the historian John Glanfield , wrote that , through the use of x @-@ ray studies of older Victoria Crosses , it was determined that the metal used for VCs is from antique Chinese guns and not of Russian origin . Theories abound . One theory is that the cannon were originally Chinese weapons but the Russians captured them and deployed them at Sevastopol . However , there had been no hostilities between Russia and China for nearly 200 years before 1855 and no ready explanation of how such cannons would come to be in Sebastopol . They are indeed Chinese cannon : Creagh noted the existence of Chinese inscriptions on the cannon which are now barely legible due to corrosion . A more likely explanation is that these cannons were taken as trophies during Britain 's military intervention in China in the 1840s and held in the Woolwich repository . Whilst it had been suggested that the new medal be made of Sebastopol cannons , the Hancocks employees who went to cut metal picked the Chinese guns instead . There is no evidence that the VC guns have ever been near Sebastopol . It was also thought that some medals made during the First World War were composed of metal captured from different Chinese guns during the Boxer Rebellion . This is not so , however . The VCs examined by Creagh and Ashton both in Australia (58) and at the QE II Army Memorial Museum in New Zealand (14) spanned the entire time during which VCs have been issued and no compositional inconsistencies were found . It was also believed that another source of metal was used between 1942 and 1945 to create five Second World War VCs when the Sevastopol metal " went missing " . Creagh accessed the Army records at MoD Donnington in 1991 and did not find any gaps in the custodial record . The composition found in the WW2 VCs , amongst them those for Edwards (Australia) and Upham (New Zealand) , is similar to that for the early WW1 medals . This is likely to be due to the reuse of material from earlier pourings , casting sprues , defective medals , etc .

The barrels of the cannon in question are on display at Firepower - The Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich . The remaining portion of the only remaining cascabel , weighing 358 oz (10 kg) , is stored in a vault maintained by 15 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps at MoD Donnington . It can only be removed under armed guard . It is estimated that approximately 80 to 85 more VCs could be cast from this source . A single company of jewellers , Hancocks of London , has been responsible for the production of every VC awarded since its inception .

= = Appearance = =

The decoration is a bronze cross pattée , 1 39 / 64 " (41 mm) high , 1 27 / 64 " (36 mm) wide , bearing the crown of Saint Edward surmounted by a lion , and the inscription FOR VALOUR . This was originally to have been FOR THE BRAVE , until it was changed on the recommendation of Queen Victoria , as it implied that not all men in battle were brave . The decoration , suspension bar and link weigh about 0 @. @ 87 troy ounces (27 g) .

The cross is suspended by a ring from a seriffed " V " to a bar ornamented with laurel leaves , through which the ribbon passes . The reverse of the suspension bar is engraved with the recipient 's name , rank , number and unit . On the reverse of the medal is a circular panel on which the date of the act for which it was awarded is engraved in the centre .

The Original Warrant Clause 1 states that the Victoria Cross " shall consist of a Maltese cross of bronze " . Nonetheless , it has always been a cross pattée ; the discrepancy with the Warrant has

never been corrected .

The ribbon is crimson , 1 1 / 2 " (38 mm) wide . The original (1856) specification for the award stated that the ribbon should be red for army recipients and dark blue for naval recipients . However the dark blue ribbon was abolished soon after the formation of the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918 . On 22 May 1920 King George V signed a warrant that stated all recipients would now receive a red ribbon and the living recipients of the naval version were required to exchange their ribbons for the new colour . Although the army warrants state the colour as being red it is defined by most commentators as being crimson or " wine @-@ red " .

= = Award process = =

The Victoria Cross is awarded for

... most conspicuous bravery , or some daring or pre @-@ eminent act of valour or self @-@ sacrifice , or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy .

A recommendation for the VC is normally issued by an officer at regimental level , or equivalent , and has to be supported by three witnesses , although this has been waived on occasion . The recommendation is then passed up the military hierarchy until it reaches the Secretary of State for Defence . The recommendation is then laid before the monarch who approves the award with his or her signature . Victoria Cross awards are always promulgated in the London Gazette with the single exception of the award to the American Unknown Soldier in 1921 . The Victoria Cross warrant makes no specific provision as to who should actually present the medals to the recipients . Queen Victoria indicated that she would like to present the medals in person and she presented 185 medals out of the 472 gazetted during her reign . Including the first 62 medals presented at a parade in Hyde Park on 26 June 1857 by Queen Victoria , nearly 900 awards have been personally presented to the recipient by the reigning British monarch . Nearly 300 awards have been presented by a member of the royal family or by a civil or military dignitary . About 150 awards were either forwarded to the recipient or next of kin by registered post or no details of the presentations are known .

The original Royal Warrant did not contain a specific clause regarding posthumous awards , although official policy was not to award the VC posthumously . Between the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and the beginning of the Second Boer War the names of six officers and men were published in the London Gazette with a memorandum stating they would have been awarded the Victoria Cross had they survived . A further three notices were published in the London Gazette in September 1900 and April 1901 for gallantry in the Second Boer War . In an exception to policy for the South Africa War 1899 ? 1902 , six posthumous Victoria Crosses , three to the officers and men mentioned in the notices in 1900 and 1901 and a further three , the first official posthumous awards , were granted on 8 August 1902 . Five years later in 1907 , the posthumous policy was reversed and medals were sent to the next of kin of the six officers and men . The awards were mentioned in notices in the Gazette dating back to the Indian Mutiny . The Victoria Cross warrant was not amended to explicitly allow posthumous awards until 1920 , but one quarter of all awards for World War I were posthumous . Although the 1920 Royal Warrant made provision for awards to women serving in the Armed Forces , no women have been awarded a VC .

In the case of a gallant and daring act being performed by a squadron , ship 's company or a detached body of men (such as marines) in which all men are deemed equally brave and deserving of the Victoria Cross then a ballot is drawn . The officers select one officer , the NCOs select one individual and the private soldiers or seamen select two individuals . In all 46 awards have been awarded by ballot with 29 of the awards during the Indian Mutiny . Four further awards were granted to Q Battery , Royal Horse Artillery at Korn Spruit on 31 March 1900 during the Second Boer War . The final ballot awards for the army were the six awards to the Lancashire Fusiliers at W Beach during the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 although three of the awards were not gazetted until 1917 . The final seven ballot awards were the only naval ballot awards with three awards to two Q @-@ Ships in 1917 and four awards for the Zeebrugge Raid in 1918 . The provision for awards by ballot is still included in the Victoria Cross warrant but there have been no

further such awards since 1918 .

Between 1858 and 1881 the Victoria Cross could be awarded for actions taken " under circumstances of extreme danger " not in the face of the enemy . Six such awards were made during this period ? five of them for a single incident during an Expedition to the Andaman Islands in 1867 . In 1881 , the criteria were changed again and the VC was only awarded for acts of valour " in the face of the enemy " . Due to this it has been suggested by many historians including Lord Ashcroft that the changing nature of warfare will result in fewer VCs being awarded .

= = = Colonial awards = = =

The Victoria Cross was extended to colonial troops in 1867 . The extension was made following a recommendation for gallantry regarding colonial soldier Major Charles Heaphy for action in the New Zealand land wars in 1864 . He was operating under British command and the VC was gazetted in 1867 . Later that year , the Government of New Zealand assumed full responsibility for operations but no further recommendations for the Victoria Cross were raised for local troops who distinguished themselves in action . Following gallant actions by three New Zealand soldiers in November 1868 and January 1869 during the New Zealand land wars , an Order in Council on 10 March 1869 created a " Distinctive Decoration " for members of the local forces without seeking permission from the Secretary of State for the Colonies . Although the governor was chided for exceeding his authority , the Order in Council was ratified by the Queen . The title " Distinctive Decoration " was later replaced by the title New Zealand Cross .

The question of whether recommendations could be made for colonial troops not serving with British troops was not asked in New Zealand , but in 1881 , the question was asked in South Africa . Surgeon John McCrea , an officer of the South African forces was recommended for gallantry during hostilities which had not been approved by British Government . He was awarded the Victoria Cross and the principle was established that gallant conduct could be rewarded independently of any political consideration of military operations . More recently , four Australian soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross in Vietnam although Britain was not involved in the conflict .

Indian troops were not originally eligible for the Victoria Cross since they had been eligible for the Indian Order of Merit since 1837 which was the oldest British gallantry award for general issue . When the Victoria Cross was created , Indian troops were still controlled by the Honourable East India Company and did not come under Crown control until 1860 . European officers and men serving with the Honourable East India Company were not eligible for the Indian Order of Merit and the Victoria Cross was extended to cover them in October 1857 . It was only at the end of the 19th century that calls for Indian troops to be awarded the Victoria Cross intensified . Indian troops became eligible for the award in 1911 . The first awards to Indian troops appeared in the London Gazette on 7 December 1914 to Darwan Sing Negi and Khudadad Khan . Negi was presented with the Victoria Cross by King George V during a visit to troops in France . The presentation occurred on 5 December 1914 and he is one of a very few soldiers presented with his award before it appeared in the London Gazette .

= = = Separate Commonwealth awards = = =

Since the Second World War , most but not all Commonwealth countries have created their own honours systems and no longer participate in the British honours system . This began soon after the Partition of India in 1947 , when the new countries of India and Pakistan introduced their own systems of awards . The VC was replaced by the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) and Nishan @-@ e @-@ Haider (NH) respectively . Most if not all new honours systems continued to permit recipients of British honours to wear their awards according to the rules of each nation 's order of wear . Sri Lanka , whose defence personnel were eligible to receive the Victoria Cross until 1972 , introduced its own equivalent , the Parama Weera Vibhushanaya medal . Three Commonwealth realms ? Australia , Canada and New Zealand ? have each introduced their own decorations for gallantry and bravery , replacing British decorations such as the Victoria Cross with their own . The only

Commonwealth countries that still can recommend the VC are the small nations , none of whose forces have ever been awarded the VC , that still participate in the British honours system .

With effect from 6 April 1952 , when the Union of South Africa instituted its own range of military decorations and medals , these new awards took precedence before all earlier British decorations and medals awarded to South Africans , with the exception of the Victoria Cross , which still took precedence before all other awards . The other older British awards continued to be worn in the order prescribed by the British Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood .

Australia was the first Commonwealth realm to create its own VC , on 15 January 1991 . Although it is a separate award , its appearance is identical to its British counterpart . Canada followed suit when in 1993 Queen Elizabeth signed Letters Patent creating the Canadian VC , which is also similar to the British version , except that the legend has been changed from FOR VALOUR to the Latin PRO VALORE This language was chosen so as to favour neither French nor English , the two official languages of Canada . New Zealand was the third country to adapt the VC into its own honours system . While the New Zealand and Australian VCs are technically separate awards , the decoration is identical to the British design , including being cast from the same Crimean War gunmetal as the British VC . The Canadian Victoria Cross also includes metal from the same cannon , along with copper and other metals from all regions of Canada .

Five of the separate VCs have so far been awarded . Willie Apiata received the Victoria Cross for New Zealand on 2 July 2007 , for his actions in the War in Afghanistan in 2004 . The Victoria Cross for Australia has been awarded four times . Mark Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia on 16 January 2009 for actions during Operation Slipper , the Australian contribution to the War in Afghanistan . Ben Roberts @-@ Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia on 23 January 2011 for actions in the Shah Wali Kot Offensive , part of the War in Afghanistan . Daniel Keighran was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia on 1 November 2012 for his actions during the Battle of Derapet in Oruzgan Province , Afghanistan , on 24 August 2010 . A posthumous award was made to Corporal Cameron Baird for actions in Afghanistan in 2013 . A Canadian version has been cast that was originally to be awarded to the Unknown Soldier at the rededication of the Vimy Memorial on 7 April 2007 . This date was chosen as it was the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge but pressure from veterans ' organisations caused the plan to be dropped .

= = Authority and privileges = =

As the highest award for valour of the United Kingdom , the Victoria Cross is always the first award to be presented at an investiture , even before knighthoods , as was shown at the investiture of Private Johnson Beharry , who received his medal before General Sir Mike Jackson received his knighthood . Owing to its status , the VC is always the first decoration worn in a row of medals and it is the first set of post @-@ nominal letters used to indicate any decoration or order . Similar acts of extreme valour that do not take place in the face of the enemy are honoured with the George Cross , which has equal precedence but is awarded second because the GC is newer .

There is a widespread though erroneous belief that it is statutory for " all ranks to salute a bearer of the Victoria Cross " . There is no official requirement that appears in the official Warrant of the VC , nor in Queen 's Regulations and Orders , but tradition dictates that this occurs and as such the Chiefs of Staff will salute a Private awarded a VC or GC .

The Victoria Cross was at first worn as the recipient fancied . It was popular to pin it on the left side of the chest over the heart , with other decorations grouped around the VC . The Queen 's Regulations for the Army of 1881 gave clear instructions on how to wear it ; the VC had to follow the badge of the Order of the Indian Empire . In 1900 it was ordained in Dress Regulations for the Army that it should be worn after the cross of a Member of the Royal Victorian Order . It was only in 1902 that King Edward VII gave the cross its present position on a bar brooch . The cross is also worn as a miniature decoration on a brooch or a chain with mess jacket , white tie or black tie . As a bearer of the VC is not a Companion in an Order of Chivalry , the VC has no place in a coat of arms .

= = = Annuity = = =

The original warrant stated that NCOs and private soldiers or seamen on the Victoria Cross Register were entitled to a £ 10 per annum annuity . In 1898 , Queen Victoria raised the pension to £ 50 for those that could not earn a livelihood , be it from old age or infirmity . Today holders of the Victoria Cross or George Cross are entitled to an annuity , the amount of which is determined by the awarding government . Since 2015 , the annuity paid by the British Government is £ 10 @, @ 000 per year . This is exempted from tax for British taxpayers by Section 638 Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003 , along with pensions or annuities from other awards for bravery . In Canada under the Gallantry Awards Order , members of the Canadian Forces or people who joined the British forces before 31 March 1949 while domiciled in Canada or Newfoundland receive Can \$ 3 @, @ 000 per year . Under Subsection 103 @. @ 4 of the Veterans ' Entitlements Act 1986 , the Australian Government provides a Victoria Cross Allowance . Until November 2005 the amount was A \$ 3 @, @ 230 per year . Since then this amount has been increased annually in line with the Australian Consumer Price Index .

= = = Forfeited awards = = =

The original Royal Warrant involved an expulsion clause that allowed for a recipient 's name to be erased from the official register in certain wholly discreditable circumstances and his pension cancelled . King George V felt very strongly that the decoration should never be forfeited and in a letter from his Private Secretary , Lord Stamfordham , on 26 July 1920 , his views are forcefully expressed :

The King feels so strongly that , no matter the crime committed by anyone on whom the VC has been conferred , the decoration should not be forfeited . Even were a VC to be sentenced to be hanged for murder , he should be allowed to wear his VC on the scaffold .

The power to cancel and restore awards is still included in the Victoria Cross warrant but none has been forfeited since 1908 .

= = = Recipients = = =

A total of 1 @, @ 358 Victoria Crosses have been awarded since 1856 to 1 @, @ 355 men . There are several statistics related to the greatest number of VCs awarded in individual battles or wars . The greatest number of Victoria Crosses won on a single day is 24 , for deeds performed on 16 November 1857 in Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny . The greatest number won by a single unit during a single action is seven , to the 2nd / 24th Foot , for the defence of Rorke 's Drift , 22 ? 23 January 1879 , during the Zulu War . The greatest number won in a single conflict is 628 , being for the First World War . There are only six living holders of the VC ? four British , one Australian , one Gurkha ? one award for the Second World War and four awards since ; in addition one New Zealander holds the Victoria Cross for New Zealand and four Australians hold the Victoria Cross for Australia . Eight of the then @- @ twelve surviving holders of the Victoria Cross attended the 150th Anniversary service of remembrance at Westminster Abbey on 26 June 2006 .

In 1921 the Victoria Cross was given to the American Unknown Soldier of the First World War (the British Unknown Warrior was reciprocally awarded the US Medal of Honor) . One VC is in existence that is not counted in any official records . In 1856 , Queen Victoria laid the first Victoria Cross beneath the foundation stone of Netley Military hospital . When the hospital was demolished in 1966 the VC , known as " The Netley VC " , was retrieved and is now on display in the Army Medical Services Museum , Mytchett , near Aldershot .

Three people have been awarded the VC and Bar , the bar representing a second award of the VC . They are : Noel Chavasse and Arthur Martin @- @ Leake , both doctors in the Royal Army Medical Corps , for rescuing wounded under fire ; and New Zealander Charles Upham , an infantryman , for combat actions . Upham remains the only combatant soldier to have received a VC and Bar . An Irishman , Surgeon General William Manley , remains the sole recipient of both the Victoria Cross and the Iron Cross . The VC was awarded for his actions during the Waikato @- @ Hauhau Maori

War , New Zealand on 29 April 1864 while the Iron Cross was awarded for tending the wounded during the Franco @-@ Prussian War of 1870 ? 71 . Royal New Zealand Air Force Flying Officer Lloyd Trigg has the distinction of being the only serviceman ever awarded a VC on evidence solely provided by the enemy , for an action in which there were no surviving Allied witnesses . The recommendation was made by the captain of the German U @-@ boat U @-@ 468 sunk by Trigg 's aircraft . Lieutenant Commander Gerard Roope was also awarded a VC on recommendation of the enemy , the captain of the Admiral Hipper , but there were also numerous surviving Allied witnesses to corroborate his actions .

The St Nazaire Raid or Operation Chariot on 28 March 1942 , a successful British amphibious attack on the heavily defended Normandie dry dock at St Nazaire in German @-@ occupied France , resulted in the award of five Victoria Crosses .

Since the end of the Second World War the original VC has been awarded 15 times : four in the Korean War , one in the Indonesia @-@ Malaysia confrontation in 1965 , four to Australians in the Vietnam War , two during the Falklands War in 1982 , one in the Iraq War in 2004 , and three in the War in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2012 . On 18 March 2005 , Lance Sergeant (then Private) Johnson Beharry of the 1st Battalion , Princess of Wales 's Royal Regiment became the first recipient of the VC since Sergeant Ian McKay in 1982 . Three VCs have been awarded since then in actions arising from the UK 's involvement in Afghanistan .

= = Public sales = =

Since 1879 , more than 300 Victoria Crosses have been publicly auctioned or advertised . Others have been privately sold . The value of the VC can be seen by the increasing sums that the medals reach at auction . In 1955 the set of medals awarded to Edmund Barron Hartley was bought at Sotheby 's for the then record price of £ 300 (approximately £ 7100 in present @-@ day terms) . In October 1966 the Middlesex Regiment paid a new record figure of £ 900 (approximately £ 15100 in present @-@ day terms) for a VC awarded after the Battle of the Somme . In January 1969 , the record reached £ 1700 (£ 25200) for the medal set of William Rennie . In April 2004 the VC awarded in 1944 to Sergeant Norman Jackson , RAF , was sold at auction for £ 235 @,@ 250 . On 24 July 2006 , an auction at Bonhams in Sydney of the VC awarded to Captain Alfred Shout fetched a world record hammer price of A \$ 1 million (approximately £ 410 @,@ 000 at then exchange rates) .

= = Thefts = =

Several VCs have been stolen and , being valuable , have been placed on the Interpol watch @-@ list for stolen items . The VC awarded to Milton Gregg , which was donated to the Royal Canadian Regiment Museum in London , Ontario Canada in 1979 , was stolen on Canada Day (1 July 1980) , when the museum was overcrowded and has been missing since . A VC awarded in 1917 to Canadian soldier Corporal Filip Konowal was stolen from the same museum in 1973 and was not recovered until 2004 .

On 2 December 2007 , nine VCs were among 100 medals stolen from locked , reinforced glass cabinets at the QEII Army Memorial Museum in Waiouru , New Zealand with a value of around NZD \$ 20 million . Charles Upham 's VC and Bar was among these . A reward of NZ \$ 300 @,@ 000 was posted for information leading to the recovery of the decorations and conviction of the thieves , although at the time there was much public debate about the need to offer reward money to retrieve the medals . On 16 February 2008 New Zealand Police announced all the medals had been recovered .

= = Collections = =

= = = Ashcroft collection = = =

The VC collection of businessman and politician Lord Ashcroft , amassed since 1986 , contains 162 medals , over one @-@ tenth of all VCs awarded . It is the largest collection of such decorations . In July 2008 it was announced that Ashcroft was to donate £ 5 million for a permanent gallery at the Imperial War Museum where the 50 VCs held by the museum will be put on display alongside his collection . The Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum opened on 12 November 2010 containing a total of 210 VCs and 31 GCs .

= = = Australian War Memorial = = =

Prior to November 2010 , the largest collection of VCs on public display was held by the Australian War Memorial , whose collection includes all nine VCs awarded to Australians at Gallipoli . Of the 100 medals awarded to Australians (96 VCs , and 4 VCs for Australia) , this collection contains around 70 medals , including 3 medals awarded to British soldiers (Grady , 1854 ; Holbrook , 1914 ; and Whirlpool , 1858) , and 3 of the VCs for Australia (Donaldson , 2008 ; Keighran , 2010 ; and Roberts @-@ Smith , 2010) .

= = = List of collections = = =

Museums with holdings of ten or more VCs include :
(note 1 = Many VCs are on loan to the museums and are owned by individuals and not owned by the museums themselves .)

= = Other = =

= = = Memorials = = =

In 2004 a national Victoria Cross and George Cross memorial was installed in Westminster Abbey close to the tomb of the Unknown Warrior . Westminster Abbey is a living monument to British history in that it contains monuments and memorials to central figures in British History including Isaac Newton , Charles Darwin and James VI & I. As such it was a significant honour for the VC to be commemorated in Westminster Abbey .

Canon William Lummis , MC , was a military historian who built up an archive on the service records and final resting places of Victoria Cross holders . This was then summarised into a pamphlet which was taken to be an authoritative source on these matters . However , Lummis was aware of short @-@ comings in his work and encouraged David Harvey to continue it . The result was Harvey 's seminal book Monuments to Courage . In 2007 the Royal Mail used material from Lummis ' archives to produce a collection of stamps commemorating Victoria Cross recipients .

It is a tradition within the Australian Army for soldiers ' recreational clubs on military bases to be named after a particular recipient of the Victoria Cross . Australia has a unique means of remembering recipients of the Victoria Cross . Remembrance Drive is a path through city streets and highways linking Sydney and Canberra . Trees were planted in February 1954 by Queen Elizabeth II in a park near Sydney Harbour and at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra , marking either end of the route , with various plantations along the roadsides in memory of the fallen . Beginning in 1995 , 23 rest stop memorials named for Australian recipients of the VC from World War II onwards have been sited along the route , providing picnic facilities and public amenities to encourage drivers to take a break on long drives . 23 of the 26 memorial sites have been dedicated , with a further three reserved for the surviving VC recipients , including two of the newer Victoria Cross for Australia awards . Edward Kenna , VC , was honoured with the most recent rest stop on 16 August 2012 , having died in 2009 .

= = = In art = = =

The subject of soldiers earning the VC has been popular with artists since the medal 's inception . In particular are the fifty paintings by Louis William Desanges that were painted in the late 1850s and early 1860s . Many of these were exhibited at the Egyptian Gallery in Piccadilly , but in 1900 , they were brought together by Lord Wantage as the Victoria Cross Gallery and exhibited in the town of Wantage , Berkshire . Later the collection was broken up and many of the paintings were sent to the various regiments depicted . Some were damaged or destroyed . A number of the acts were also portrayed in a Second World War propaganda pamphlet , and the images commissioned by the Ministry of Information are presented in an online gallery available on the website of The National Archives .