

= Victoria Cross for New Zealand =

The Victoria Cross for New Zealand ( VC ) is a military decoration awarded for valour or gallantry in the presence of the enemy to members of the New Zealand Armed Forces . It may be awarded to a person of any rank in any service and civilians under military command , and is presented to the recipient by the Governor @-@ General of New Zealand during an investiture held at Government House , Wellington . As the highest award for gallantry in New Zealand it takes precedence over all other postnominals and medals .

The Victoria Cross for New Zealand was established in 1999 when New Zealand created a new award system that replaced several Commonwealth honours with New Zealand awards . It has been awarded once , on 2 July 2007 to Corporal Willie Apiata for actions in 2004 .

The original Victoria Cross was introduced in 1856 by Queen Victoria to reward acts of valour during the Crimean War . That medal had been awarded 25 times to 24 individual military personnel from New Zealand ; Captain Charles Upham receiving a bar . Only 14 medals have been awarded since the end of the Second World War . The medal is made from the gunmetal of a weapon supposedly captured at the siege of Sevastopol , but several historians have since questioned the true origin of the gunmetal . Originally all Commonwealth recipients were issued with the same award , but over the last 50 years , Commonwealth countries have introduced separate award systems ; three of these retain " Victoria Cross " as part of the name of the highest award for gallantry .

= = Origin = =

= = = Victoria Cross = = =

The original Victoria Cross was created by Queen Victoria in 1856 to recognise incidents of gallantry that were unconnected with a man 's lengthy or meritorious service . She signed a Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856 that officially instituted the VC . The order was retroactive to 1854 to recognise acts of valour during the Crimean War .

The Australian and New Zealand Victoria Crosses are made from the same gunmetal as the originals . It was originally intended that the VCs would be cast from the bronze cascabels of two cannon that were captured from the Russians at the siege of Sevastopol . The historian John Glanfield has since shown that the metal used for VCs is in fact from Chinese cannon not Russian , and their origin is a mystery .

The barrels of the cannon in question are stationed outside the Officers ' Mess at the Royal Artillery Barracks at Woolwich . The remaining portion of the only remaining cascabel , weighing 10 kilograms ( 385 oz ) , 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 .

= = = Separate Commonwealth awards = = =

In the last 60 years several Commonwealth countries have introduced their own honours systems , separate from the British Honours System . Australia , Canada and New Zealand have each introduced their own decorations for gallantry and bravery , replacing British decorations such as the Military Cross with their own awards . Most Commonwealth countries , however , still recognise some form of the VC as their highest decoration for valour .

Australia was the first Commonwealth nation 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 . The New Zealand and Australian awards are still made by the jewellers Hancocks from the gunmetal used for the originals . The Canadian Victoria Cross also includes metal from the same cannon , along with copper and other metals from all regions of Canada .

New Zealand was the third country to create the VC as part of its own honours system . On 21 September 1999 , Prime Minister Jenny Shipley announced that the Queen had approved the formal institution of a new range of Royal awards to recognise acts of gallantry and bravery performed by New Zealanders . The awards were designed to be the final major element in the development of a distinct New Zealand Royal honours system .

The start of the process came with proposals released in 1995 by the Honours Advisory Committee that reviewed the honours system . Until May 1996 , New Zealand made recommendations for various British awards for acts of gallantry performed during military operations and acts of bravery by civilians including the Victoria Cross and George Cross . However , the British Government 's review and simplification of their awards system provided an ideal opportunity for New Zealand to also develop a unique and simplified system .

= = Appearance = =

The Victoria Cross for New Zealand is identical to the original design . The decoration is a cross pattée , 41 millimetres ( 1 @. @ 6 in ) high , 36 millimetres ( 1 @. @ 4 in ) wide , bearing a crown surmounted by a lion , and the inscription FOR VALOUR . This was originally to have been FOR BRAVERY , until it was changed on the recommendation of Queen Victoria , who thought some might erroneously consider that only the recipients of the VC were brave in battle . The decoration , suspension bar and link weigh about 27 grams ( 0 @. @ 87 troy ounces ) .

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 ribbon is crimson , 38 millimetres ( 1 @. @ 5 inches ) wide . Although the warrants state the colour as being red it is described by most commentators as being crimson or " wine @-@ red " .

= = Conferment = =

The Victoria Cross for New Zealand is awarded for

The power of awarding the medal officially resides with the Queen of New Zealand . The Royal Warrant states that the " Awards of a New Zealand Gallantry Award and of a Bar to an Award shall be made by Us , Our Heirs and Successors , only on a recommendation by Our Prime Minister of New Zealand or a Minister of the Crown acting for Our Prime Minister . " As with the original Victoria Cross any recommendations pass through the New Zealand Defence Force chain of command to the Minister of Defence .

The original Victoria Cross had been awarded to 24 New Zealanders . Thirteen of these awards were for action in the First World War . The Victoria Cross for New Zealand has been awarded once . It was officially announced on 2 July 2007 that Corporal Willie Apiata of the NZ SAS was awarded the Victoria Cross for New Zealand for his actions in saving the life of a " comrade under heavy fire from opposing forces " during the Afghanistan conflict in 2004 . Apiata received his medal from Governor @-@ General Anand Satyanand at a ceremony held at Government House , Wellington on 26 July 2007 .