

## The Royal Sussex Regiment Victoria Crosses

**Major General John McNeill, V.C.**  
**107th Regiment of Foot, later 2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment**



*Lieutenant-Colonel John Carstairs McNeill, V.C.*

"John Carstairs McNeill, Lieutenant-Colonel, 107th Regiment. Date of act of bravery: 30th March, 1864. For the valour and presence of mind which he displayed in New Zealand, 30th March 1864, which is thus described by Private Vosper, of the Colonial Defence Force. Private Vosper states that he was sent on that day with Private Gibson, of the same force, as an escort to Major (now Lieutenant-Colonel) McNeill, Aide-de-Camp to Lieutenant General Sir Duncan Cameron. Lieutenant-Colonel McNeill was proceeding to Awamutu on duty at the time. On returning from that place and about a mile on this side of Ohanpu, this officer, having seen a body of the enemy in front, sent Private Gibson back to bring up infantry from Ohanpu, and he and Private Vosper proceeded leisurely to the top of the rise to watch the enemy. Suddenly they were attacked by about fifty natives, who were concealed in the fern close at hand. Their only chance of escape was by riding for their lives and as they turned to gallop Private Vosper's

horse fell and threw him. The natives thereupon rushed forward to seize him, but Lieutenant-Colonel McNeill, on perceiving that Private Vosper was not following him, returned, caught his horse, and helped him to mount. The natives were firing sharply at them, and were so near that, according to Private Vosper's statement, it was only by galloping as hard as they could they escaped. He says he owes his life entirely to Lieutenant-Colonel McNeill's assistance, for he could not have caught his horse alone, and in a few minutes must have been killed."

- London Gazette, July 16, 1864

Major General John Carstairs McNeill, V.C. was born at Colonsay, Argyllshire on March 29, 1831. Educated at St. Andrew's and Addiscombe, McNeill served with the 107th Regiment Bengal Infantry (after 1881 the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment). During the Indian Mutiny he was Aide de Camp to Sir E. Lugard, and in the Fenian Disturbance of 1867 in Canada, he was in command of the Tipperary Flying Column. He served on the staff of Lord Wolsley during the Red River Expedition of 1870 in Canada, and in the Ashanti War of 1874. Present during the Egyptian Campaign of 1882, he commanded a brigade in Egypt in 1885, taking part in the Battles of Suakin and Tofrek. Appointed to Bath King-at-Arms, Equerry to Queen Victoria, and later ADC to King Edward VII. McNeill died at St. James' Palace on May 25, 1904.

**Sergeant Harry Wells, V.C.  
2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment**



*Sergeant Harry Wells, V.C.*

"For the most conspicuous bravery near Le Routhoire on the 25th September, 1915. When his platoon officer had been killed, he took command and led his men forward to within 15 yards of the German wire. Nearly half the platoon were killed or wounded, and the remainder very much shaken, but with the utmost coolness and bravery Sergeant Wells rallied them and led them forward. Finally when very few were left, he stood up and urged them forward once more, but while doing so he himself was killed. He gave a magnificent display of courage and determination."

- London Gazette, November 18, 1915

Sergeant Harry Wells, V.C. was born in Herne in Kent on September 19, 1888, and enlisted into the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment after service in the Kent Police Force.

Sergeant Harry Wells winning the V.C. at Loos,  
oil painting by Ernest Ibbetson

At the Battle of Loos, where Wells won his Victoria Cross, the 2nd Battalion was subjected to heavy casualties. The Second Battle of Ypres, of which the Loos Assault was a part, gained the Allies 25,000 prisoners and 150 guns, but cost them 145,000 casualties. Sergeant Wells is buried in the Dud Corner Cemetery in

France. This cemetery records the names of 20,589 officers and men who fell there, including that of Rudyard Kipling's son. The cemetery is one of those maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Wells's heroism was depicted in the 1930's oil painting by Ernest Ibbetson.



*Sergeant Harry Wells winning the V.C. at Loos, oil painting by Ernest Ibbetson*

**Lieutenant Eric McNair, V.C.  
9th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment**



*Lieutenant Eric Archibald McNair, V.C.*

"Eric Archibald McNair, Lieutenant, Royal Sussex Regiment. When the enemy exploded a mine, Lieutenant McNair and many men of two platoons were hoisted into the air, and many men were buried. But, though much shaken, he at once organised a party with a machine gun to man the near edge of the crater, and opened rapid fire on a large party of the enemy who were advancing. The enemy were driven back leaving many dead. Lieutenant McNair then ran back for reinforcements, and sent to another unit for bombs, ammunition and tools to replace those buried. The communication trench being blocked, he went across the open under heavy fire, and led up the reinforcements the same way. His prompt and plucky action undoubtedly saved the situation."

- London Gazette, March 30, 1916

Captain Eric Archibald McNair, V.C. was born in Calcutta on June 16, 1894, his father a Senior Partner in a firm of solicitors. McNair was Head of School at Charterhouse, and went up to Magdalen College Oxford, where he had a demyship (scholarship), and where he knew the Duke of Windsor. He was commissioned into The Royal Sussex Regiment in October 1914, and served in the 9th (Service) Battalion. After winning the Victoria Cross in 1916 aged only 21, he contracted chronic dysentery. His friendship with the Duke of Windsor

enabled him to obtain a staff posting, thus allowing him to stay in the Army. He was posted to the Italian Front, but was invalided to a Genoa hospital where he died on August 12, 1918. He is buried in Staglieno Cemetery, Genoa.

**Company Sergeant Major Nelson Carter, V.C.  
12th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment**



*Company Sergeant Major Nelson Victor Carter, V.C.*

"Nelson Victor Carter, Company Sergeant Major 4th Company, 12th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. Date of act of bravery; 30th June, 1916, for most conspicuous bravery. During an attack he was in command of the fourth wave of the assault. Under intense shell and machine-gun fire he penetrated, with a few men, into the enemy's second line and inflicted heavy casualties with bombs. When forced to retire to the enemy's first line, he captured a machine-gun and shot the gunner with his revolver. Finally, after carrying several wounded men into safety, he was himself mortally wounded, and died in a few minutes. His conduct throughout the day was magnificent."

- London Gazette, September 9, 1916

Company Sergeant Major Nelson Carter, V.C. was born in Eastbourne on April 9, 1887. Educated at Hailsham, he enlisted in The Royal Field Artillery in 1903 at the age of 16 under the false name of Nelson Smith, and attained the rank of Bombardier. He later re-enlisted under his own name. In 1906 he was invalided

out of the Army after a serious hernia operation. He married in 1911, and had one daughter, Jessie. Carter was a heavily tattooed man, according to his service documents, and even had a tattoo of Buffalo Bill on his back! A cinema doorman when war broke out, Carter joined the 12th Battalion (Lowther's Lambs) on October 14, 1914. He was made Corporal on the day he joined, and was later promoted to Warrent Officer Class II. He is buried in the Royal Irish Rifles Cemetery at Laventie in France.

**Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Graham Johnson, V.C., D.S.O., M.C.  
2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment**



*Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Johnson, V.C., D.S.O., M.C. (left)  
and his Runner, Sergeant Brown, D.C.M., M.M., Croix de Guerre.*

Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Johnson D.S.O., M.C., South Wales Borderers, attached 2nd Battalion Royal Sussex, for most conspicuous bravery and leadership during the forcing of the Sambre Canal on November 4th, 1918. The 2nd Infantry Brigade, of which 2nd Battalion Royal Sussex formed part, was ordered to cross the lock south of Catellon. The position was strong and before the bridge could be thrown, a steep bank leading up to the lock and a waterway about 100 yards short of the canal had to be crossed. The assaulting platoons and bridging parties Royal Engineers, on their arrival at the waterway were thrown into confusion by a heavy barrage and machine gun fire and heavy casualties were caused. At this moment Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson arrived and realising the situation at once collected men to man the bridges and assist the Royal Engineers and personally led the assault. In spite of his efforts heavy fire again broke up the assaulting and bridging parties. Without any hesitation he again organised the platoons and bridging parties and led them at the lock, this time succeeding in effecting a crossing after which all went well. During all this

time Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson was under heavy fire, which, though it nearly decimated the assaulting columns, left him untouched. His conduct was a fine example of great valour, coolness and intrepidity, which, added to his splendid leadership and offensive spirit that he had inspired in his Battalion, were entirely responsible for the successful crossing."

- London Gazette, January 6, 1919

Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Johnson, V.C., D.S.O., M.C. was born on February 13, 1884 at Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire. He joined The Royal Sussex Regiment in 1916 from The South Wales Borderers, and was the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion from March 1918 until April 1919. After the War, he served with the North Staffordshire Regiment, and later the General Staff, rising to the rank of Major General. He died on December 21, 1975 at Church Crookham in Hampshire, and is buried in the local churchyard. Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson is seen in the photograph above with his Runner, Sergeant E.J. Brown, D.C.M., M.M., Croix de Guerre.

**Captain Lionel Queripel, V.C.  
2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment, later the 10th Battalion,  
The Parachute Regiment**



*Captain Lionel Ernest Queripel, V.C*

"In Holland on the 19th September, 1944, Captain Queripel was acting as company commander of a composite company composed of three parachute battalions. At 14.00 hours on that day, his company was advancing along a main road which ran on an embankment towards Arnhem. The advance was conducted under continuous medium machine-gun fire which, at one period, became so heavy that the company became split up on either side of the road and suffered considerable losses. Captain Queripel at once proceeded to reorganise his force, crossing and recrossing the road whilst doing so, under extremely heavy and accurate fire. During this period he carried a wounded sergeant to the Regimental Aid Post under fire and was himself wounded in the face.

Having reorganised his force, Captain Queripel personally led a party of men against the strong point holding up the advance. This strong point consisted of a captured British anti-tank gun and two machine-guns. Despite the extremely heavy fire directed at him, Captain Queripel succeeded in killing the crews of the machine-guns and recapturing the anti-tank gun. As a result of this, the advance was able to continue.

Later in the same day, Captain Queripel found himself cut off with a small party of men and took up a position in a ditch. By this time he had received further wounds in both arms. Regardless of his wounds and of the heavy mortar and

Spandau fire, he continued to inspire his men to resist with hand grenades, pistols, and the few remaining rifles.



*Captain Lionel Queripel, V.C.*

As, however, the enemy pressure increased, Captain Queripel decided that it was impossible to hold the position any longer and ordered the men to withdraw. Despite their protests, he insisted on remaining behind to cover their withdrawal with his automatic pistol and a few remaining hand grenades. This is the last occasion on which he was seen.

During the whole of a period of nine hours of confused and bitter fighting Captain Queripel displayed the highest standard of gallantry under the most difficult and trying circumstances. His courage, leadership and devotion to duty were magnificent, and an inspiration to all. This officer is officially reported to be wounded and missing."

- London Gazette, February 1, 1945

Captain Lionel Ernest Queripel, V.C. was born at Winterbourne Monkton in Dorset on July 13, 1920. A member of the last term to pass out at Sandhurst at the start of the Second World War, Queripel joined the 2nd Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment. He served in the Western Desert and, after the Battle of El Alamein, volunteered for the 10th Battalion The Parachute Regiment. A fellow Officer described him thus: "Determined - rather dour, but with a quiet wit which soon endeared him to all of us, there was no stopping him once he decided to do something." Serving with the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem, Queripel died in captivity of wounds received. His memorial is in the Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery in Holland.