

[News story: Britain remembers the heroes of Passchendaele with community ceremonies](#)

Forty-three brave British soldiers will be remembered in special ceremonies, 100 years to the day after they were awarded the Victoria Cross (VC).

Starting on 31 July 2017 until 10 November 2017, these events will honour them for their acts of valour at the Battle of Passchendaele, the soldiers' name for the Third Battle of Ypres.

Fourteen VCs – the nation's highest military honour – were awarded in recognition of the action on the first day of the campaign, more than on any other single day in the First World War. On Monday 31 July 2017, communities across England, Scotland and Wales will come together to honour their home town heroes with a commemorative paving stone laid in their memory.

Comprising 8 separate battles, beginning with the Battle of Pilckem, the 3 month campaign for the control of the ridges to the south and east of Ypres, West Flanders, was to claim the lives of between 240,000-275,000 British and Allied soldiers.

Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith, said:

From private soldiers to Brigadier Generals, Passchendaele saw acts of outstanding courage displayed by exceptional men from all ranks and backgrounds.

Those fighting endured unimaginable hardship from the endless shelling to the torrential rain and mud. To simply survive what the great war poet Siegfried Sassoon described as 'hell' was heroic.

It remains vitally important that we remember their sacrifice. So these stones being laid across the country over the coming months will provide a lasting legacy to these brave men.

British soldiers did not fight alone. Together with Belgian and French forces they were joined by soldiers from Australia, Canada, India, pre-partition Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa.

A further 18 VCs were awarded to soldiers from Canada, Ireland and South Africa. Those overseas-born soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross, including at the Battle of Passchendaele are honoured with a permanent memorial at the [National Memorial Arboretum](#) in Staffordshire, which was unveiled in 2015.

The majority of the Victoria Crosses were awarded for 'offensive' acts, bold raids on fortified farms and enemy posts. However Passchendaele also saw

awards for the saving of lives.

Captain Noel Chavasse, a medical officer with the Liverpool Scottish regiment known to his comrades as the 'doc' became the most highly decorated soldier of the First World War when he received a posthumous second Victoria Cross for his actions at Wieltje, Belgium.

His citation in the London Gazette, September 1917 reads: 'By his extraordinary energy and inspiring example was instrumental in rescuing many wounded who would have otherwise undoubtedly succumbed under the bad weather conditions. This devoted and gallant officer subsequently died of his wounds'.

Not only was he awarded the Victoria Cross twice, Chavasse was also earlier awarded the Military Cross for action at Bellewaarde near Ypres, Belgium, on 16 June 1915 following his regiment's first serious battle. More than 1,000 men had died and he spent 12 hours helping to treat and rescue the injured in No Man's Land. Following his actions at Bellewaarde, in June 1916 he was later promoted to Captain.

The story of Noel Chavasse is a remarkable one. Not only did he gain a First-Class Honours degree in philosophy from Oxford, but as a young man he also ran for Great Britain alongside his identical twin brother in the 1908 Olympics. He later studied medicine, joining the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1913, going to France as a Surgeon-Lieutenant when the war broke out. He was one of the first doctors to use a new anti-tetanus serum and when the Germans began using chlorine gas for the first time he arranged for his father to send a gramophone to raise morale.

A commemorative paving stone will be unveiled at Abercromby Square, Liverpool on Tuesday 29 August 2017, followed by a re-creation of his Memorial Service at Liverpool Parish Church, a century to the day after it took place.

Noel Chavasse's Victoria Cross medals will also go on public display at the Museum of Liverpool from 31 July 2017. To mark the Passchendaele centenary, DCLG is also working with the Big Ideas Company on a new research-and-remember project for schools and communities called Passchendaele at Home. The project is a challenge to discover the graves that belong to British soldiers who were brought back to the UK for hospital treatment but went on to die of their wounds in this country.

There is no central register of their graves. Through the project, previously unknown local history will be uncovered and the lives of extraordinary soldiers will be remembered within local communities. For more information including a Passchendaele at Home 'Action Map' – an A1 Poster designed by leading graphic artist Nick Hayes giving a step-by-step guide to research and also potential funding for local research projects see: [Passchendaele at Home](#) or contact the Big Ideas Company athome@bigideascompany.org.

1. As part of the government's First World War Centenary Programme, the Department for Communities and Local Government launched the campaign to

remember and honour all those awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War with a commemorative paving stone.

2. There were 627 individuals who received the VC during the First World War, although in total 628 VC's were awarded. This is because Noel Chavasse, was awarded the VC twice during the First World War. Of these individuals, 361 were born in England, 70 were born in Scotland and 16 were born in Wales. 35 were born in pre-partition Ireland and 145 were born in other countries overseas.
3. The design of the stones was selected from a public competition and includes the name of the soldier and regiment, along with the marking of the Victoria Cross. They are made of Scoutmoor Yorkstone, a hard-wearing British stone that is quarried near Ramsbottom and are sited in locations visible to the public to inspire viewers to 'pause and remember'.
4. Although, there are no set guidelines, it is widely accepted that each VC recipient must have undergone a 90% risk of death as a result of their actions.
5. You can also follow the laying of the commemorative stones on Twitter [#VCpavingstones](#).