

# British Columbia's Victoria Crosses



The highest of British gallantry awards, the Victoria Cross (VC) was awarded to 73 Canadians during the Great War. Though British Columbia comprised less than eight percent of Canada's population in 1914, nineteen percent of the country's Great War VCs—fourteen—went to British Columbians.



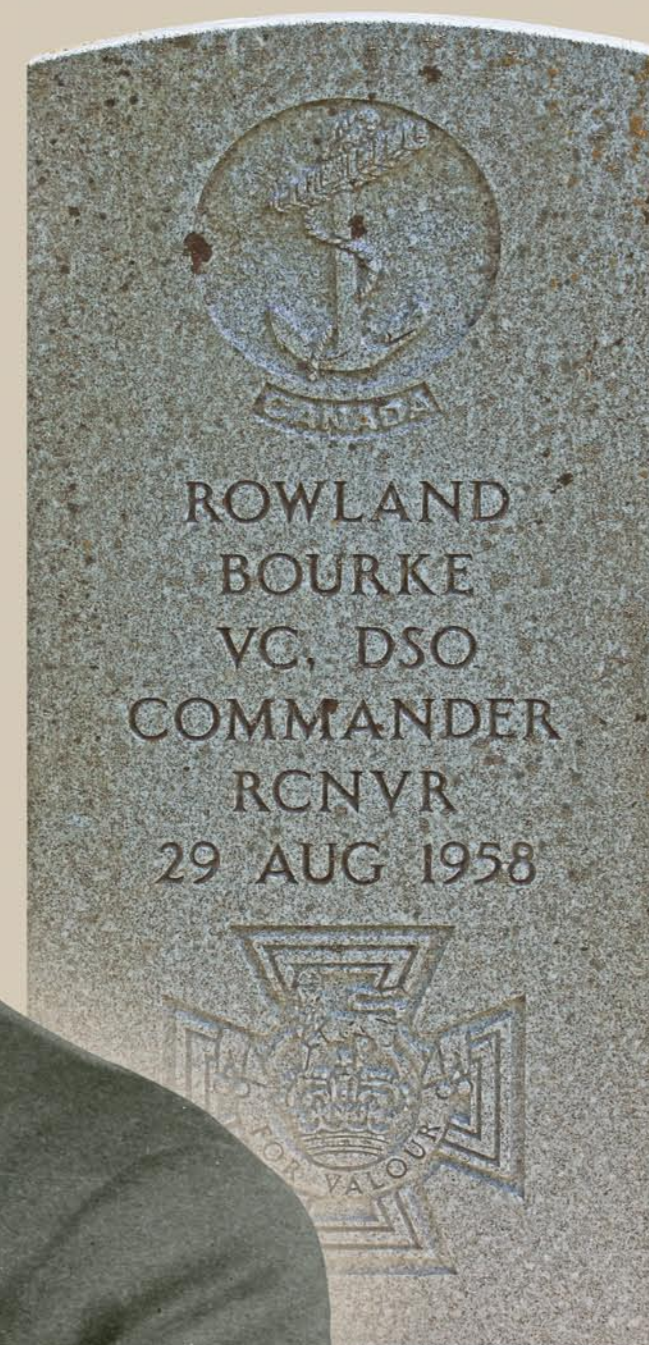
Victoria Cross Medal Set  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum  
CWM 19670076-001



Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew, VC  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum  
CWM 19940079-030



Commander Rowland Bourke, V.C.  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum  
CWM 19920085-1382



Victoria Cross on Rowland Bourke's grave at Royal Oak Burial Park, Saanich, BC  
Courtesy of Alan Livingstone MacLeod



## George Randolph Pearkes

Of the eleven British Columbians who survived to receive their Victoria Cross, the one who perhaps went on to the greatest success in life was George Randolph Pearkes. It was for his actions in the Battle of Passchendaele in October 1917 that he was awarded a Victoria Cross. Pearkes served again in the Second World War, initially as a brigade commander. After the war he was elected to Parliament in 1945 and eventually served as Minister of National Defence. He was B.C. Lieutenant-Governor from 1960 to 1968.

Major George Randolph Pearkes, V.C., M.M.  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum  
CWM 19930013-628

## Gordon Flowerdew

Gordon Flowerdew of Walhachin is one of three British Columbia VC recipients of the war who never knew of the honour awarded them. The action that earned Flowerdew a VC—and cost him his life—was a cavalry charge he led in late March 1918, an action commemorated in a famous Canadian war painting.



Charge of Flowerdew's Squadron, Alfred Munnings  
Courtesy of the Canadian War Museum, CWM  
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## Rowland Bourke

Due to poor eyesight, Rowland Bourke was rejected for service as a Canadian soldier. Determined to make a contribution to the war effort, he went to England and managed to enlist in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. It was for his actions while serving as an officer aboard HMS *Vindictive* in April 1918 at Ostend, Belgium, that Bourke was awarded his Victoria Cross, like George Pearkes he served again in WWII. He lived for many years in Esquimalt. Every November 11 Victoria's Naval Reserves conduct a ceremony beside his grave at Royal Oak Burial Park.

