

Keith Collier  
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## Railway Coastal Museum to Display Tommy Ricketts' Victoria Cross

The Railway Coastal Museum is excited to announce that Tommy Ricketts' Victoria Cross will be on display from April - November, 2008 at the Railway Coastal Museum. The medals are on loan from the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, and the display will be opened at a ceremony on April 25, 2008, the regimental birthday of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, which will be attended by representatives of the Regiment and other military officials.



### 'The Youngest VC in My Army' Tommy Ricketts and the Victoria Cross

The name Tommy Ricketts is well known in Newfoundland and Labrador. His picture is often found in museums and magazines, and on monuments and plaques. As one of the few Newfoundlanders to be awarded the Victoria Cross, the attention is hardly unwarranted.

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest honour for valour in the face of the enemy that a member of the armed forces of a British Commonwealth country can receive. In the 152 years that the VC has existed, it has been awarded just 1,356 times. Compare that

to the Medal of Honour (United States) which has been awarded 3,465 times since 1862 or the Military Medal/Military Cross (United Kingdom) which has been awarded tens of thousands of times since 1916.

Tommy Ricketts was born on April 15, 1901 in Middle Arm, White Bay. He enlisted in the 1st Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment in 1916 at the age of 15 years and 4 months, which the recruiting officer presumably overlooked.

Ricketts traveled to Europe with the Regiment to join the fighting. He was wounded at Cambrai and spent several months in hospital in London. He rejoined his comrades in April of 1918, and remained there until the end of the war.

The war had less than a month to go when Ricketts earned his VC. The following announcement appeared in *The London Gazette* on January 3, 1919.

*No. 3102 Pte. Thomas Ricketts, 1st Battalion, R. Newfoundland R.*

*For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on the 14 October 1918, during the advance from Ledegham, when the attack was temporarily held up by heavy hostile fire and the platoon to which he belonged suffered heavy casualties from the fire of a battery at point-blank range.*

*Pte. Ricketts at once volunteered to go forward with his section commander and a Lewis gun to attempt to outflank the battery. Advancing by short rushes under heavy fire from enemy machine guns with the hostile battery, their ammunition was exhausted when still 300 yards from the battery. The enemy, seeing an opportunity to get their field guns away, began to bring up their gun teams. Pte. Ricketts, at once realising the situation, doubled back 100 yards under the heaviest machine gun fire, procured further ammunition, and dashed back again to the Lewis gun, and by very accurate fire drove the enemy and the gun teams into a farm.*

*His platoon then advanced without casualties, and captured the four field guns, four machine guns, and eight prisoners.*

*A fifth field gun was subsequently intercepted by fire and captured.*

*By his presence of mind in anticipating the enemy intention and his utter disregard of personal safety, Pte. Ricketts secured the further supply of ammunition which directly resulted in these important captures and undoubtedly saved many lives.*

For his actions on October 14, 1918, Tommy Ricketts was awarded the Victoria Cross. At the age of 17, Ricketts was the youngest person to be awarded this honour.

He was presented with the award by King George V at an investiture ceremony on January, 19, 1919, at the King's Sandringham estate. The King introduced Ricketts as "the youngest VC in My army."

Ricketts returned to Newfoundland after the war, and became a pharmacist on Water Street. He lived quietly, never drawing attention to the fact that he was a military hero. He died in 1967.

**Do You Have an Interesting Story  
About the Newfoundland Railway?  
We'd Love to Hear it!**

**Send Your Story to the Railway  
Coastal Museum!**

**We Also Appreciate any Feedback  
or Questions You May Have.**

**[Echafe@railwaycoastalmuseum.ca](mailto:Echafe@railwaycoastalmuseum.ca)**

