



LORD ASHCROFT'S  
"HERO OF  
THE MONTH"

# Private George Imlach McIntosh

VC

## AGGRESSION

BOLDNESS • INITIATIVE  
LEADERSHIP • SACRIFICE  
SKILL • ENDURANCE

The many Victoria Crosses and George Crosses in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum in London are displayed under one of seven different qualities of bravery. Private George McIntosh's award is part of the collection and Lord Ashcroft feels that it falls within the category of aggression:

"For many actions killing is the means to the end. To prevail, maximum force has to be applied. Aggression is invariably fast and adrenalin fuelled. It epitomises the idea of 'hot courage', acting quickly in the mayhem of battle.."



worked on the Cluny Dock extension to Buckie harbour. As a teenager, he was a keen footballer and played for Buckie Thistle FC.

In 1913, McIntosh joined the 6th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders (Territorial Force). On the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, he was serving in Tom Jones & Son's sawmill and, despite being only 17, was quickly mobilised. He arrived with his unit in France on 10 November 1914 and went into the line on 6 December. Subsequently, he saw action at many of the major battles including Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Givenchy, Loos and the Somme.

Early on in the conflict, he suffered from trench-foot, which forced his evacuation, but he soon returned to the front line. However, it was on the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres that Private McIntosh showed such outstanding bravery that he was awarded the VC.

The citation for his decoration described the role of McIntosh, by then aged 20, in fierce fighting north of St Julien, Belgium on 31 July 1917:

"For most conspicuous bravery when, during the consolidation of a position, his Company came under machine gun fire at close range. Pte. McIntosh immediately rushed forward under heavy fire, and, reaching the emplacement, he threw a Mill's Grenade into it, killing two of the enemy and wounding a third.



ABOVE Men of the Gordon Highlanders on their way to the front in 1914. Pictured in Plymouth, the individual on horseback is Colonel William Eagleson Gordon VC, CBE. McIntosh did not arrive in France until 1916.



Subsequently, entering the dug-out, he found two light machine guns, which he carried back with him. His quick grasp of the situation and the utter fearlessness and rapidity with which he acted, undoubtedly saved many of his comrades and enabled the consolidation to proceed unhindered by machine gun fire. Throughout the day the cheerfulness and courage of Pte McIntosh was indomitable, and to his fine example, in a great measure, was due the success which attended his Company.

Hic VC was announced in *The London Gazette* on 6 September 1917. Just six days later, he returned to the UK on leave and, on 13 September, he arrived unannounced at his parents' home in Buckie. After word spread of his VC and his homecoming, he was presented with a purse of fifty gold sovereigns by his pre-war employer. Such was his new hero status that further gifts soon followed.

McIntosh received his VC from King George V in an investiture at Ibrox Park, Glasgow, on 18 September 1917. In an apparent attempt to prevent him facing further extreme danger, he was appointed as the batman to a senior field officer. However, he made it clear that he preferred to serve with

his battalion and he soon resumed his front line duties with the Gordon Highlanders.

McIntosh survived the rest of the war and, after being demobbed, returned to Buckie where he worked as a herring runner for Thomson & Brown, a local fish sales company. In July 1919, he moved back to Fraserburgh where, in the post-war depression, his jobs included working as the groundsman at Buckie bowls club.

On 27 April 1923, McIntosh got married in Elgin, Morayshire, to Alexandrina Sutherland, and the couple went on to have a son and a daughter. On 1 July 1939, McIntosh was appointed the janitor and groundsman of Buckie High School.

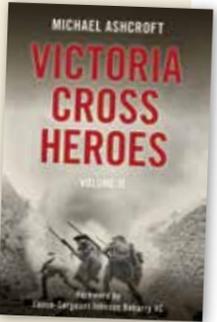
As the Second World War dawned, McIntosh tried to rejoin his old regiment but he was too old, at 42, to be accepted as an infantryman. On 26 August 1939, he was mobilised into the RAF and thus played a role in the Second World War, although this time away from the front line. From 1940-1, he served as Flight Sergeant in charge of ground defences at RAF St Eval, Cornwall.

In 1941, he was appointed as Station Warrant Officer at Reykjavik, Iceland. During this service, he was attached to HMS *Manilla*, a maintenance ship running between Iceland and Archangel, Russia. On one voyage, the ship was attacked and set on fire by enemy bombs. Although a number of crew were preparing to abandon ship, McIntosh showed both bravery and leadership in persuading them to remain at their posts and help put out the fires that threatened the petrol tanks. For his actions, he was Mentioned in Despatches.

During the Second World War, McIntosh also served at various RAF fighter stations in the UK, including Manston, Kent, and Coltishall in Norfolk. In 1945, he was demobbed at

## VICTORIA CROSS HEROES II

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is a businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His sixth book on gallantry, *Victoria Cross Heroes Volume II*, was published in November. For more information, please visit: [www.victoriacrossheroes2.com](http://www.victoriacrossheroes2.com) Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collection is on public display at Imperial War Museum, London. For more information visit: [www.iwm.org.uk/heroes](http://www.iwm.org.uk/heroes). For details about his VC collection, visit: [www.lordashcroftmedals.com](http://www.lordashcroftmedals.com) For more information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit: [www.lordashcroft.com](http://www.lordashcroft.com). Follow him on Twitter: @LordAshcroft



TOP LEFT  
George McIntosh's  
VC medal group.

LEFT  
Private McIntosh,  
'C' Company 6th  
Battalion, Gordon  
Highlanders, is  
presented with  
the Victoria Cross  
by King George V.

BELOW  
General Sir Ivor  
Maxse (GOC 18th  
Corps) presenting  
medal ribbons  
to men of the  
51st (Highland)  
Division for acts  
of gallantry  
undertaken on  
31 July. The  
ceremony took  
place at School  
Camp, St. Janster  
Biezen, on 21  
August 1917.

