

# Travis, Richard Charles Travis, 1884–1918, Horse-breaker, Soldier

Aaron P. Fox



Dickson Cornelius Savage was born at Opotiki, New Zealand, on 6 April 1884, the fifth child in a family of nine. His parents, James Savage from Ireland, a farmer and constable in the New Zealand Armed Constabulary, and Frances Theresa O'Keefe, from Sydney, Australia, married at Opotiki in 1875.

Savage attended the Opotiki and Otarā schools, leaving after Standard Four to work on the family farm. He became a capable shepherd, drover and farmhand, and excelled at horse-breaking, which appealed to the fearless, independent and quick-witted youth. After quarrelling with his father he went to the Gisborne district in 1905, where he found work as a farmhand and driver. His reputation as a horse-breaker grew. After further strife in Gisborne, 'where he is thought to have got a young woman into trouble', Savage travelled south, broke off all communication with his family, and changed his name to Richard Charles Travis.

He arrived in Winton, Southland, in 1910, claiming to come from Poverty Bay and even the United States. After working on Southland farms and threshing mills, 'Dick' Travis found employment as a general farmhand with Tom Murray of Ryal Bush. He continued to break horses, and joined an Oddfellows lodge.

On 20 August 1914 Travis enlisted with the 7th (Southland) Squadron of the Otago Mounted Rifles Regiment in Invercargill. When attested he was five feet six inches tall, weighed 133 pounds, had a fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. His stated next of kin was his fiancée, Lettie Murray, Tom Murray's daughter.

Travis sailed with the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, arriving in Egypt in December 1914. Impatient to see action, he unofficially accompanied his regiment to Gallipoli in May 1915. He was returned to Egypt and received 14 days' detention. However, he participated

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in the final weeks of the Gallipoli campaign, moving with impunity between the New Zealand and Turkish trenches on scouting patrols.

A knee injury led Travis to transfer to the 8th (Southland) Company, 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment, on 27 March 1916. He arrived in France in April 1916 and began nocturnal scouting activities in no man's land between the New Zealand and German trenches, mapping the German defences for the first New Zealand trench raids. In July 1916 he received special mention in brigade routine orders for a daylight search for wounded New Zealand raiders and the recovery of equipment, and for night-patrol duty over a six-week period.

Travis displayed 'conspicuous gallantry' on 15 September 1916, eliminating several German snipers during the 2nd Otago Battalion's advance in the Somme offensive, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He was rapidly promoted to sergeant and given command of the battalion's new sniper and observation section. 'Travis's Gang' became proficient in scouting enemy defences and capturing enemy troops for interrogation. His casual attitude towards rank and dress regulations contrasted with the careful planning, daring and resourcefulness of his anti-sniper work and lone patrols. It was said that, 'His judgement of what the enemy would do under given circumstances sometimes seemed more than human.' Travis was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre on 15 February 1918, and the Military Medal in May 1918.

On 24 July 1918 the 2nd Otago Battalion attacked the German salient at Rossignol Wood north of Hébuterne. In daylight, Travis destroyed an impassable wire block in front of the enemy lines prior to the attack. He then captured two enemy machine-guns, shooting down 11 Germans. He was killed by shellfire the following day, and was buried at Couin on 26 July.

The entire New Zealand Division mourned the loss of the 'King of No Man's Land'. For his 'most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty' on 24 July, Travis was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross on 27 September 1918.

## Lest We Forget



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# The Dick Travis VC Trophy

A Competition for Classic .303 Target Rifles

Hosted by Karori Rifle Club

A competition for .303 Range Rifles will be held on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 March 2016 on Historic Trentham Rifle Range at distances of 300, 500 and 600 yards.

Signing-in and scrutineering will be from 9.45 a.m. Saturday 19 March at Karori Rifle Club.

Competition will commence at 12.45 p.m. on Saturday 19 March. It will continue for two distances in the morning of Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March. Prize-giving will be early afternoon in the Karori Rifle Clubrooms.

Karori Rifle Club will host a spit roast meal on Saturday night at \$15 per head. The bar will be open until late for .303 Br talk! A continental breakfast on Sunday morning will be served in the Karori Rifle Club at \$5 per person.

Some accommodation will be available at the range on a first come, first served basis. There is space to pitch tents. There are shower and toilet facilities in the Provincial Club rooms. Firearms can be secured in the Karori Rifle Clubrooms.

## Conditions of Entry

All competitors intending to shoot must ensure that their rifles comply with Range Standing Orders 62(c)(1)-(3).

As part of the rules of entry competitors will be required to have their rifles inspected and certified to the appropriate standard by a local registered gunsmith.

Proof of this inspection will be provided to the Match Director in writing at scrutineering. However, for entries on the day, there will be an inspection by a match official at scrutineering in the Karori Rifle Clubrooms.

The rifles must be in sound condition. They should be accurised and have wind and elevation adjustable rear sights. A suitable sling must be fitted and used. The rifles must be zeroed for the distances to be shot prior to entry in accordance with Range Standing Order 62(c)(5).

Cloth badges for 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> places

**FIRST PRIZE- \$500 & DTVC Trophy**

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**ENTRY FORM**

Name

Address

Phone number(s)

Email Address

Firearms Licence Number

I wish to compete in the competition for the Dick Travis VC Trophy. I agree to abide by all relevant laws, rules and regulations and follow the directions of the Match Director and Range Officer.....  \$70.00

I wish to book accommodation in the Provincial Club rooms.....  TBA

I wish to book a camping space.....  \$10.00

I wish to book an evening meal.....  \$15.00

I would like a continental breakfast.....  \$ 5.00

TOTAL..... \$

Cheques to be made payable to: Karori Rifle Club.

Signed

Contact: Duncan McKee  
47 Hohiria Rd  
Hataitai  
Wellington  
le303@xtra.co.nz  
(04) 386-3253

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## PROGRAMME

**Saturday 19 March, 09:45 – 11:00 a.m.**

Sign In and Scrutineering.

Gunsmith on hand to inspect and approve rifles.

### Course of Fire

**Saturday 19 March, 12:45 p.m.**

300 yards

2 matches of 10 shots with 2 convertible sighters.

**Sunday 20 March, 8:30 a.m.**

500 yards

2 matches of 10 shots with 2 convertible sighters.

600 yards

2 matches of 10 shots with 2 convertible sighters.

Payment

Scrutineering

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## **RULES OF COMPETITION**

- The current shooting rules and regulations of the National Rifle Association of New Zealand Inc and Trentham Camp, Seddon Range Standing Orders will apply during this meeting. Copies of these documents will be available in the Karori Rifle Club rooms. They can be forwarded upon request.
- The competition is open to .303in Target Rifles only. A .303in Target Rifles is defined as a service rifle regulated and modified to increase the rifles accuracy potential to meet target rifle performance.
- The rifle must be improved by the owner or a professional Gunsmith or Armourer to increase its accuracy potential.
- The rifle must have vernier calibrated aperture target sights. The original “Battle Sights” are not permitted.
- Magazines are to be used as a loading platform only.
- Obsolete .303in Service Ammunition is not recommended for use on Seddon Range. The use of match ammunition is encouraged.
- Any rifle presented on the range must be “pre-zeroed” for 300, 500 and 600 yards prior to use.
- The position will be prone and slung.
- Bolts must only be closed when the rifle is on the shoulder.
- Bolts must be removed at all times except when on the mound.
- NRA black bull targets will be used in accordance with Standing Order 67. The mid range target will be used at 300 yards with long range target used at 500 and 600 yards.
- Each match will consist of two convertible sighting shots with ten scoring shots in total. All shots will be indicated.
- Each distance will be shot twice.
- A time limit for each match may be imposed depending on the number of entrants and will be decided on the day.
- In the advent of a tie for total score the count back rules will apply.
- The Match Director may change the course of fire on the day to suit range and weather conditions.

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### **Supplementary Rules for Rifle:**

- The rifle must be fully stocked. Half stocked rifles will not be permitted unless the match director can be persuaded that the rifle was used in this configuration by an NRA shooter in the past.
- New manufacture barrels are permitted but must not be stainless (or seen to be stainless)
- Improved and match chambers are permitted.
- Ammunition must be of good quality and comply with Standing Order 62(c)(4) and Standing Order 65(d). Ball ammunition is allowed. Match ammunition in hollow point is recommended.
- Magazines may be present in the rifle but may only be used as a loading platform in accordance with Standing Order 62(c)(3).
- An aperture rear sight is required. Adjustable peep size, filters and dioptres are optional. The front sight may be a blade but a tunnel with interchangeable elements is recommended.
- Improved triggers are encouraged but must not be below the NRA minimum weight of 500 grams.

### **Supplementary rules for Equipment:**

- Shooting mats are recommended.
- Shooting jackets are optional as are gloves.
- Spotting scopes will be needed.
- A sling must be fitted and used. It can be double point or single point.
- Shooting glasses are optional.
- Shooting hats are optional but recommended.
- Ear protection is compulsory.

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