

**Mention in Despatches (m.i.d.)
William George Doherty**

43551. Private.
Royal NZ Infantry Regiment
Victor Four Company

NZ Gazette Number 56 dated 17 September 1970

Citation

Private Doherty joined the Regular Army as an infantryman in May 1968. He served in Malaysia from November 1968 until **May 1969** when he arrived in the Republic of Vietnam as a machine gunner in Victor Four Company.

On the evening of 17th June 1969¹, Private Doherty opened fire on a superior force attempting to penetrate his platoon position. By skilful and determined use of claymores, grenades and fire of his own machine gun, he killed at least three of the enemy. The enemy immediately counter-attacked and for the next four hours Private Doherty steadfastly maintained his post using his machine gun to such good effect that all enemy attempts to penetrate the position in his sector were defeated.

On 25th September 1969², Private Doherty had just sited his machine gun to cover members of his platoon taking a water resupply when he observed a group of at least twelve enemy approaching. He immediately engaged the enemy and despite heavy and accurate return fire he succeeded in killing three of the enemy and in putting the remainder to flight.

On both occasions Private Doherty showed great initiative and resolution. His skill at arms is attested by the casualties he inflicted on the enemy. His personal courage and coolness under fire were revealed in his willingness to initiate contact with larger enemy forces, and, having revealed his position, to maintain it in the face of determined enemy counter-attack.

Throughout his tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam Private Doherty consistently displayed personal and infantry skills of the highest order and his conduct deserves formal recognition.

¹ 17/6/69 Pte Williams JS, KIA.

² 25/9/69 Nil casualties

Additional Notes to the Citation:

Late in the afternoon of 17th June 1969³, 2 PI (Lt Hall) was in the process of setting an ambush when four VC approached the platoon along a track and were seen by one of the sentries, Pte J C Tocher. The four enemy were between Halls recon party and the main body of the platoon.

The ambush, although not ready, was opened and Pte Tocher killed one of the VC, who appeared to be a Main Force soldier. The other three fled back around a corner. A section commanded by Cpl W M Mathews was still getting into (ambush) position when the three fleeing VC came into view in single file.

Cpl Mathews opened fire, killing one VC and the other two dropped out of sight. Mathews was joined by the PI Sgt S V Smith, and a machine gunner, Pte M T Hotene, who kept up fire on the area to prevent the enemy moving away. A sweep of the area later found three dead VC, in addition the one killed by Tocher. Two AK47's and a SKS rifle were recovered.

The platoon then completed setting the ambush, and were rewarded when four hours later, Pte W G Doherty saw movement on the track only ten metres from the ambush. A large party was moving along the track, and when the maximum number of enemy had entered the killing area, Doherty sprang the ambush using Claymores, only two of which operated correctly.

The VC retaliated sharply and then commenced a series of probes of the 2 PI position from all flanks.

Once it was realised that the VC were quite aggressive, in spite of the supporting artillery fire, "Spooky" was called. This ground attack aircraft was unable to identify the platoon's position as the strobe light could not be seen through the tree canopy. Sgt Smith crawled out onto the track with the strobe light, which was still operating, and placed it in the open. When the air support ceased, Sgt Smith crawled out again to recover the strobe light. The enemy probes continued sporadically, and movement outside the position finally ceased around midnight, after four hours of contact, during which Lt Hall had directed the fire of his platoon and close support by both artillery and ground attack aircraft.

A sweep the next morning located four dead VC, of which at least three had been killed by Doherty, who remained steadfast in his position, using his machine gun to such good effect that all enemy attempts to penetrate had been defeated. The search of the area also located three AK47's and an American .45 pistol.

The enemy were identified as 1st Bn, 274 VC Regt. For his leadership in the Victor Company contacts on 1st June and on this occasion, Lt Hall was awarded the Military Cross.

³ "We too were ANZAC's" – Regimental History for 6RAR (ANZAC) Bn. Lt Col Brian Avery p.109

On 25th September 1969⁴, Victor Four Company searched south through AO Stuart to the Suoi Le on the southern boundary, finding a lot more recent sign of VC activity and movement.

On 25 September, Victor Four Company had one of the largest contacts of the operation when, at about 1000 hours, a group of about 12 NVA approached 2 PI while it was collecting water in a creek bed. They were apparently about to do the same thing.

A fire fight developed when the sentry on the machine gun, Pte WG Doherty, opened fire at a range of 15 metres. In spite of heavy and accurate return fire, Pte Doherty succeeded in killing three of the enemy, and forced the enemy to withdraw under cover of fire from their rear elements, carrying one body with them but leaving three others dead in the contact area. Some weapons and ammunition, plus a considerable quantity of equipment and documents were recovered.

The documents identified 724B NVA Infiltration Group, while one of those killed was the Executive officer of 74 NVA Artillery regiment.

For his actions on 17 June on Operation Lavarack and in this contact, Pte Doherty was Mentioned in Despatches.

⁴ "We too were ANZAC's" – Regimental History for 6RAR (ANZAC) Bn. Lt Col Brian Avery, pages 156/157.