

Member of the Order of British Empire (MBE)

Whakahuihui Vercoe

215325. Chaplain Class Three.
Royal NZ Chaplains' Department
4th Battalion, The Royal Australian
Regiment/New Zealand (ANZAC)

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CITATION

Chaplain Vercoe was appointed chaplain to the New Zealand troops in South Vietnam in May 1968. He worked and lived with 4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (ANZAC) Battalion in the 1st Australian Task Force at Nui Dat. He was also responsible in pastoral duties for the members of 161 Battery Royal New Zealand Artillery, personnel of Headquarters New Zealand Vietnam Force, Saigon, members of the New Zealand Services Medical Team at Qui Nhon and members of the New Zealand Civilian Aid Team.

Chaplain Vercoe was extremely popular not only with New Zealand soldiers but also with Australian members of the battalion. His engaging personality, personal integrity, sincerity and wisdom encouraged soldiers to confide in him and many solved their problems with his help.

In the wide field of welfare he also displayed his outstanding qualities. He organised and directed two very successful battalion concerts. He was also the leader of the battalion's Maori concert party. His wholehearted and enthusiastic participation in many social activities further endeared him to all ranks.

He took an active part in operations and was many times under enemy fire. During these actions he actively encouraged and maintained the morale of the soldiers. His comfort to the wounded was exemplary. Company commanders, both Australians and New Zealanders, welcomed and vied for Chaplain Vercoe's presence in their company during operations such was the high esteem in which he was held by all ranks.

Throughout his service in South Vietnam, Chaplain Vercoe won the admiration and respect of all members of the battalion by his outstanding example, zeal and dedication to his work. He was an inspiration to all with whom he came in contact. He played a prime role in maintaining the morale of the battalion at an extremely high level.

Chaplain Vercoe was an excellent example of an Army chaplain in a war zone. His devotion to duty, demeanour, robustness and compassion reflect great credit on himself and the New Zealand Army