

Victoria Cross Presentations

Victoria Cross Online
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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the August edition of the Victoria Cross Online magazine. This month's edition is embellished as always, by insightful articles from keen followers of my work.

The feature article is from Anthony Staunton, who writes about Victoria Cross presentations and the 51 Indian Mutiny awards where this information is not known.

Then there is an article from regular contributor, Richard Pursehouse, whose piece this month is entitled "The Bogus VCs" regarding men from the Great War who claimed to be holders of the VC.

Thirdly, there is a piece on the recent renovation of 8 Victoria Cross Graves in Highland Road Cemetery in Portsmouth by Steve Davies – a truly magnificent effort.



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VC Presentations

[Indian Mutiny VCs: presentation details required for 51 awards](#)

By Anthony Staunton
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“*Victoria Cross Presentations and Locations*” published in 2000, by the late Dennis Pillinger and I is out of print, but I am working on updating and extending the presentations section under the title *Victoria Cross Presentations*. The new publication will be more than a list and will include more details than in 2000. As well as including the four presentations this century, I will separately include a brief note as to how Australia has presented five Victoria Cross for Australia (VCfA) awards which are unique Australian awards separate and independent of British honours.

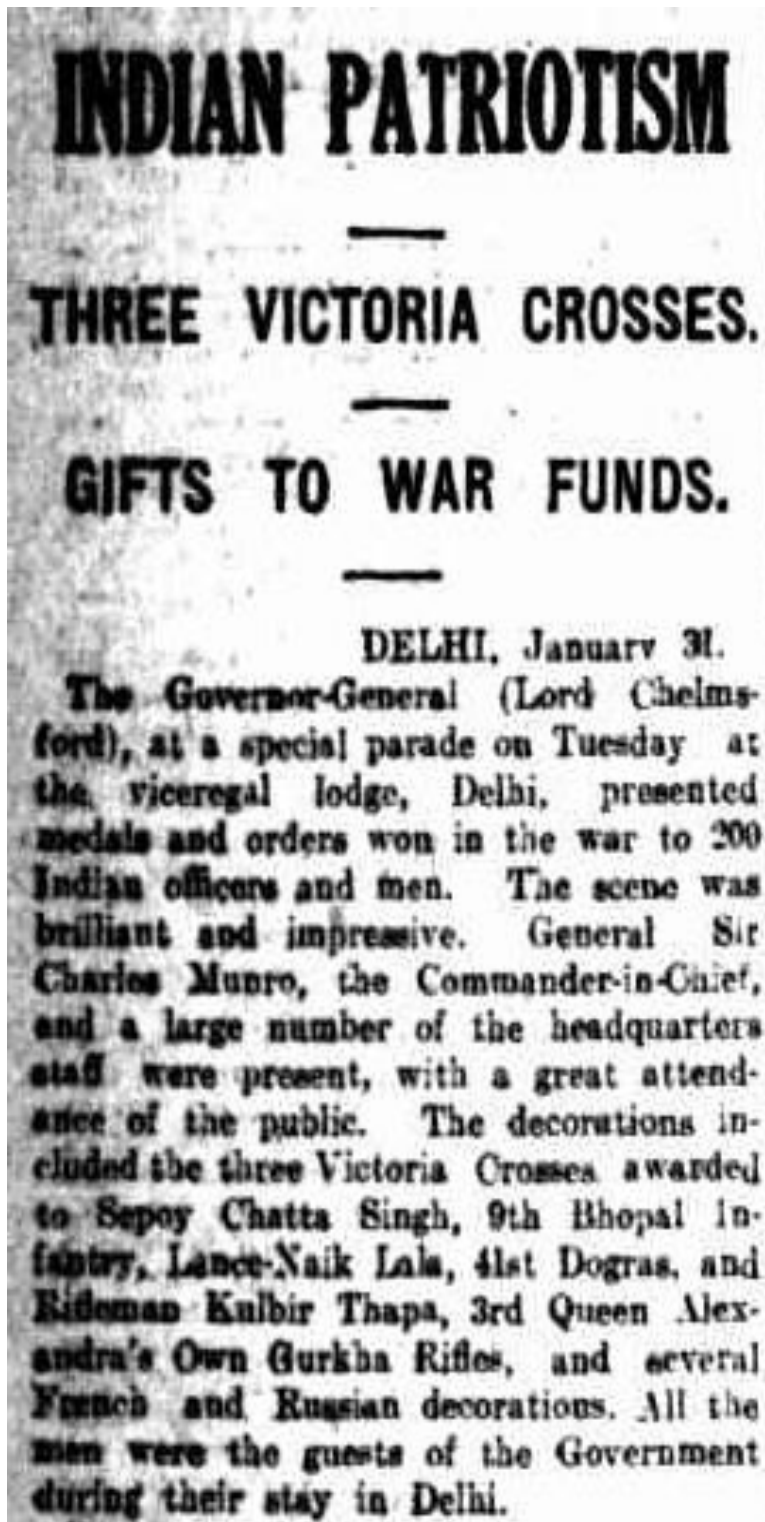
The new publication will include corrections including the investiture of Guy Gibson who was the only recipient ever to be presented with the VC by a monarch’s consort, Queen Elizabeth, the wife of King George VI. Since the 2000 edition, some of the missing presentation information has been located but there are 69 presentations where the available information is vague and it not known if the medal was personally presented or received by post. All 69 presentations, including the 51 Indian Mutiny and one Crimean War presentations listed at the end of this article were 19th century awards.

The remaining 17 presentations, where information is vague and it is not known if the medal was personally presented or received by post, range from the Crimean War to the attack on the Nilt Forts in India in 1892. These will be addressed with other issues in a later article. However, it is only two years ago that presentation details for three Indian First World War soldiers including the first Gurkha VC, Kulbir Thapa, was located.

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[Indian Mutiny VCs: presentation details required for 51 awards](#)

By Anthony Staunton
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In 2021, searching online Australian newspapers, my query 'Kulbir Thapa' struck pay dirt:

It was an unexpected find. My wife Anna and I live in Queensland, and it ironic that the only reference I have found to the presentation of Victoria Crosses to Sepoy Chatta Singh, 9th Bhopal Infantry, Lance-Naik Lala, 41st Dogras, and Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, 2/3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, was in a South Australian newspaper article and that Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India had previously been [Governor of Queensland](#) (1905 to 1909) and [Governor of New South Wales](#) (1909 to 1913). He was [Viceroy of India](#) from 1916 to 1921.

VC Presentations

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The British monarch creates awards, approves awards, and personally presents many awards. For the Victoria Cross, the monarch has presented to recipients and next of kin, two thirds of all VCs, 908 of 1358 awards (66.8%).

On 26 June 1857, Queen Victoria, mounted on a horse at Hyde Park, in the first VC investiture, presented 63 of the 111 Crimean War VC awards. In her last investiture, at Windsor Castle on 15 December 1900, five VCs were presented for gallantry in the South African War 1899-1902.

Between 25 February 1857 and 18 January 1901, four days prior to the Queen's death, 472 VC awards were gazetted, and the Queen personally presented 185 awards. Until 1916, all posthumous awards were sent to next of kin by registered post. During the reign of the Queen, 14 posthumous awards including three Indian Mutiny memoranda cases and seven awards where the recipient had died after being gazetted but before being invested with the award, were sent to next of kin.

King Edward VII presented 26 VCs during his reign, twelve gazetted during the reign of Queen Victoria and 14 of the 50 gazetted during his reign. Twelve medals were sent to next of during the King's reign including the first three official posthumous awards in 1902 and at the same time VCs were sent to next of kin of three 'memoranda' case for the South African War. In 1907, medals were sent to the next of kin of the six memoranda cases prior to the South Africa War dating back to the Indian Mutiny.

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M J Crook in *the Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, noted it was originally thought in 1906 when the change in policy for posthumous VCs were being considered, that there were nine memoranda cases. It was not appreciated at first that the next of kin of Duncan Charles Home, Philip Salkeld and William George Hawtry Bankes had received VCs shortly after memoranda was published stating VCs were not being awarded. Unlike 1902 and 1907, when notices were published in the *London Gazette* advising medals were now being sent to next of kin, no similar notice had been published during the Indian Mutiny. It was not until 1920, when the War Office published a list of VC recipients prior to 1914, that it was officially confirmed that the next of kin of three officers who died of wounds during the Indian Mutiny had received the VCs.

King George V, having presented 13 VCs as the Duke of York and Cornwall in 1901 in South Africa and Canada and four as Prince of Wales in 1902 in England when the King was ill. As King, he presented 559 VCs including one bar. In 1916, the first posthumous VC was presented by a monarch when the King personally presented the VC to the widow of a deceased recipient. In the next four years, the King personally presented a further 140 VCs to next of kin. During the King's reign, 639 VCs were awarded between 1914 and 1935, 634 for the First World War including five North Russia awards in 1919. There were five awards for Mesopotamia and India between the two world wars.

There were 633 awards gazetted for the First World War including the first two bars to the VC. The VC to the American Unknown Soldier, was not gazetted in line with the usual practice that awards to foreign soldiers were not gazetted.

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King Edward VIII, as Prince of Wales presented a posthumous VC in Canada in 1919, two VCs to living recipients in Australia in 1920 and one VC in India in 1921. Fifteen years later as King, he presented to the widow of Captain Godfrey Meynell, Indian Army, the posthumous VC that had been the last VC gazetted during the reign of King George V.

King George VI presented 125 of the 184 VC awards gazetted during his reign, 182 for World War 2 including one bar and two of the four awards for Korea. The King presented the VC to Charles Upham but the Governor-of New Zealand presented the bar. In 1943, while the King was visiting troops in North Africa, Queen Elizabeth presented awards to the Dambusters including the VC to Guy Gibson, the only occasion in which the VC was presented by the monarch's consort.

Queen Elizabeth II presented 12 of the 15 post war VCs which included the presentation to Bill Speakman whose award was approved by King George VI. The three post-war awards the Queen did not present were the first award for Korea which was presented by King George VI and the two posthumous awards to the Australian Army for Vietnam. In 1970, during the Royal Tour of Australia, Ray Simpson in Sydney and Keith Payne in Brisbane received their medals from the Queen.

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VC presentations summary

908 - monarchs

22 - one by the monarch's consort and 21 by heirs to the throne

101 - monarch's representatives: Governor-Generals, Governors, and
Lieutenant Governors etc

179 - Military commanders

79 - medals sent by registered post to a few living recipients but mostly
to next of kin

69 - available information is vague, may have been personally presented
or received by post

Indian Mutiny – no record of more than a quarter of all Indian Mutiny awards

Little information is available for more than a quarter of Indian Mutiny VC presentations. For 51 of the 182 awards for the Indian Mutiny, the only confirmed fact is that the recipient received his medal. It is assumed the awards were received in India, the presentation year or date is not confirmed nor whether the medal was personally received or received by post. The list below includes two references, the 2013 three volume work by the VC & GC Association and Mark Green's www.victoriacrossonline.co.uk website.

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The page numbers from Volume 1 of the VC & GC Association work and links to victoriacrossonline.co.uk are included for the 51 Indian Mutiny recipients listed.

The last category of 69 awards, in *Victoria Cross Presentations and Locations*, is listed as 'details sought'. The number of 'details sought' was larger in 2000, and in the years since further details have been found but of the 69 current 'details sought', 51 of the 182 awards for the Indian Mutiny are in that category. I have also included a 52nd award for Henry Thomas Sylvester VC, whose award for the Crimea was gazetted in November 1857 and sent to India for presentation.

Name Date VC & GC
VICTORIACROSSONLINE link

Bambrick, Valentine 1859 Vol 1, p. 278
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/valentine-bambrick-vc/>

Brennan, Joseph 20 Apr 1860 Vol 1, p. 265
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/joseph-charles-brennan-vc/>

Cafe, William Martin Dec 1860 Vol 1, p. 276
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-martin-cafe-vc/>

Carlin, Patrick Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 269
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/patrick-carlin-vc/>

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Champion, James 1859 Vol 1, p. 287
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/james-champion-vc/>

Connolly, William Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 147
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-connolly-vc/>

Cook, Walter 1860 Vol 1, p. 299
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/walter-cook-vc/>

Crowe, Joseph Petrus Hendrik 1859 Vol 1, p. 163
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/joseph-petrus-hendrik-crowe-vc/>

Diamond, Bernard 1858 Vol 1, p. 205
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/bernard-diamond-vc/>

Ffrench, Alfred Kirke 1859 Vol 1, p. 222
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/alfred-kirke-ffrench-vc/>

Fitzgerald, Richard 1858 Vol 1, p. 206
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/richard-fitzgerald-vc/>

Gardner, William Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 277
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-gardner-vc-dcm/>

Gill, Peter Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 129
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/peter-gill-vc/>

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Gough, Sir Hugh 1859 Vol 1, p. 214
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-hugh-henry-gough-vc-gcb/>

Graham, Patrick 1859 Vol 1, p. 236
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/patrick-graham-vc/>

Green, Patrick Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 170
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/patrick-green-vc/>

Guise, Sir John Christopher 1859 Vol 1, p. 233
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-christopher-guise-vc-cb/>

Hawthorne, Robert 1859 Vol 1, p. 173
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/robert-hawthorne-vc/>

Hill, Samuel 1859 Vol 1, p. 234
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/samuel-hill-vc/>

Irwin, Charles 1859 Vol 1, p. 223
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-irwin-vc/>

Jarrett, Hanson Chambers Taylor 1860 Vol 1, p. 293
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/hanson-chambers-taylor-jarrett-vc/>

Jennings, Edward 1859 Vol 1, p. 219
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/edward-jennings-vc/>

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Kells, Robert 1860 Vol 1, p. 203

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/robert-william-kells-vc/>

Kenny, James 1859 Vol 1, p. 223

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/james-kenny-vc/>

Lambert, George 1859 Vol 1, p. 159

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/george-lambert-vc/>

Laughnan, Thomas 1859 Vol 1, p. 220

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/thomas-laughnan-vc/>

Lyster, Harry Hammon 1860 Vol 1, p. 279

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/harry-hammon-lyster-vc-cb/>

Maude, Francis Cornwallis 1858 Vol 1, p. 187

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/francis-cornwallis-maude-vc/>

McGovern, John 10 Jul 1860 Vol 1, p. 139

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-mcgovern-vc/>

McInnes, Hugh 1859 Vol 1, p. 220

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/hugh-mcinnis-vc/>

Miller, James 1862 Vol 1, p. 212

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/james-william-miller-vc/>

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Napier, William 1859 Vol 1, p. 268
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-napier-vc/>

Nash, William 1859 Vol 1, p. 255
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-nash-vc/>

Pye, Charles 1859 Vol 1, p. 235
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/charles-pye-vc/>

Raynor, William 1858 Vol 1, p. 124
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-raynor-vc/>

Rennie, William 1859 Vol 1, p. 184
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-rennie-vc/>

Richardson, George 1860 Vol 1, p. 301
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/george-richardson-vc/>

Rodgers, George 11 Apr 1860 Vol 1, p. 281
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/george-rodgers-vc/>

Rosamund, Matthew Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 130
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/matthew-rosamund-vc/>

Ryan, Miles 1859 Vol 1, p. 178
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/miles-ryan-vc/>

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Shaw, Same Feb 1859 Vol 1, p. 280
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/same-john-shaw-vc/>

Sleavon, Michael 1860 Vol 1, p. 264
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/michael-sleavon-vc/>

Smith, Henry 1860 Vol 1, p. 180
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/henry-smith-vc/>

Smith, Private J (John Thomas) 1859 Vol 1, p. 227
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-thomas-smith-private-vc/>

Smith, John 1859 Vol 1, p. 176
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-smith-sergeant-vc/>

Sylvester, Henry Thomas* 1858 Vol 1, p. 105
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-henry-thomas-sylvester-vc/>

* Sylvester, Henry Thomas VC, gazetted November 1857 for Crimea was sent to India for presentation

Tombs, Sir Henry 1858 Vol 1, p. 151
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-henry-tombs-vc-kcb/>

Turner, Samuel Dec 1860 Vol 1, p. 138
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/samuel-turner-vc/>

Tytler, John Adam 1858 Vol 1, p. 247
<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-adam-tytler-vc-cb/>

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Wadeson, Richard 1859 Vol 1, p. 157

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/richard-wadeson-vc/>

Ward, Henry 1858 Vol 1, p. 193

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/henry-ward-vc/>

Wilmot, Sir Henry 1859 Vol 1, p. 254

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-henry-wilmot-vc-kcb-2/>

Editor's Note –

Many thanks to Anthony for this informative update on the details of all the Victoria Cross presentations from 1857 to the present day.

If any reader can support Anthony with his research this would be very much appreciated. You can contact Anthony on the email address at the top of every page of this article or alternatively email me on markandvickygreen@hotmail.com and I will pass the information on.

Mark.

The Bogus VCs

By Richard Pursehouse



In February 1915, Lancelot Dickinson Chapman, aged 31 and a trumpeter in the Royal Field Artillery, was charged with being a deserter and obtaining various small sums of money by false pretences including from Mr. William Gilder, coffee shop keeper and father of a woman Chapman began to court. He also obtained money from Gilder's son and other members of the public. Mr. Gilder had initially opposed the relationship between his daughter and Chapman but his concerns were assuaged when he watched Chapman's interaction with soldiers who came to the coffee shop.



Chapman's photograph had appeared in illustrated papers and he had taken part in a music-hall tableau. He had also attempted to obtain money from Messrs. Gaumont Company Ltd during a visit to their studio where he discussed the company making a film; he asked for a fee of £1,000 but agreed to £500, although only an advance of five Guineas was paid.

On 14 December 1899 Chapman joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, at Middlesbrough.

The Bogus VCs

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Chapman was discharged in December 1911, and he claimed he had completed the whole of his service. In fact, his record read: 'Services no longer required; dirty, inefficient.' Major Lord Athumley (pictured left) of the War Office, who was the Assistant Provost Marshal of London District, stated The Army Council took a serious view of this offence, which was calculated to bring contempt upon his Majesty's uniform.

After he left the army, Chapman worked in different shipyards around Sunderland, but made no mention of his military service to his fellow workers. When war broke out, he re-enlisted.

Detective Sergeant Hancock was the first to quiz Chapman about his medals. He had seen him outside the Coliseum in London, wearing medals and in uniform. Chapman was involved in a 'patriotic spectacle' at the Coliseum on the Wednesday afternoon, 3 February 1915, and Hancock requested Chapman come outside with him.

He began by asking Chapman: *'Where did you get the Victoria Cross you are wearing?'*

Chapman replied: *'I won it at Mons, in France.'*

The Bogus VCs

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Hancock then asked '*Who presented it to you?*

'The King, in France,' was the reply from Chapman.

Hancock then accused Chapman of being a deserter, although he denied the claim, stating he was on leave. Eventually he did admit that he had deserted on 13 November 1914.

The court was advised two of his medals were engraved by Mr. Alfred Chamberlain, engraver, on 12 December 1914, one with the initials 'L.C' and another, a French medal 'For Valour, Lille, 1914, L. Chapman.' Chapman claimed the 'Lille' medal was for rescuing two wounded French officers, and the Belgian Order of Leopold for rescuing a Belgian officer.

The Weekly Dispatch on Sunday 7 February 1915 listed the Chapman's exploits and the medals he claimed he had been awarded but he had in fact purchased over the counter in a curiosity shop.

BOUGHT AND WORE:-

Victoria Cross.

Distinguished Conduct Medal.

French Medaille Militaire

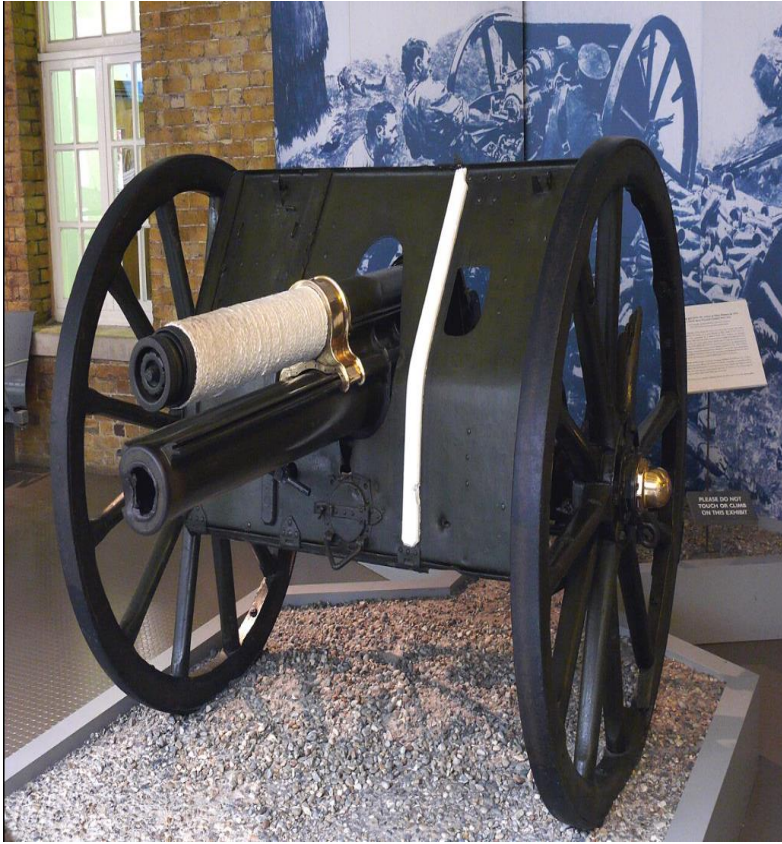
Legion of Honour Ribbon.

Belgian Order of Leopold.

Appeared in music-hall as V.C. hero. It had been suggested to the Mayor of Camberwell that he should be feted as the central figure in a reception.

The Bogus VCs

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The Nery Gun of "L" Battery at the IWM

Such were the allegations made against Lancelot Dickinson Chapman, when he was charged at Bow Street police station with being a deserter from the Royal Field Artillery.

Two framed photographs and a drawing, which were hung outside Mr. Gilder's house in Camberwell Road where Chapman was living, were produced in court by Detective Inspector Gough of Scotland Yard.

One was a large photograph with the words 'L. Chapman, V.C.,' on it in blue pencil. Another was a photograph of the 'L' Battery of the R.F.A. entitled 'The Last Gunner' and again across the face of the glass were the words 'L. Chapman, V.C.'

'L' Battery fought at Néry on 1 September 1914 and three of the gun crew were awarded the Victoria Cross (one posthumously). The 13-pounder gun was brought back to Woolwich Arsenal in December 1914 and is on display at the Imperial War Museum in London (as are the three Victoria Crosses awarded for the action).

The drawing was done 'in colours of a Dreadnought', and below was written 'Drawn by L. Chapman, V.C., L.O.H.'

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After his arrest, Inspector Gough said Chapman made the following statement:

'The truth is I am not entitled to the Victoria Cross. The one I have been wearing I bought out of a curiosity shop for 30 shillings about a fortnight ago. I also bought the other medals in a similar way at a different time; 7s. 6d for one and the other 12s. 6d.

'I entered the Royal Field Artillery and was attached to the 148th Battery, stationed at Ewshott, near Aldershot, from where I deserted on November 13, 1914. I have never been in France, and the statement made by me that I was presented the Victoria Cross by King George in France is untrue.

'It is also untrue that I was decorated with the Legion of Honour, the Order of Leopold, and the Medaille Militaire. I came to London when I deserted, and I have been here ever since.'

Chapman represented himself and was sentenced to ten months' hard labour, six months for being a deserter, and four months for obtaining money under false pretences, to run consecutively. Although he was not entitled to the medals, this offence was seemingly not punished.

In October 1920 Chapman was back to his old tricks, claiming he had his father's will which entitled him to thousands of pounds – which turned out to be a bogus one.

He had been keeping company with a waitress, Elizabeth McGill, who worked at Lockhart's Café in Grainger Street in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and claimed he was a detective with Scotland Yard. He told her his father had been an officer in the British Army, had died, and had left in his will £1,000 to him and his two siblings plus an estate in Scotland.

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He asked McGill for a loan while he waited for his overdue police salary cheque from Scotland Yard. She gave him £15 and entrusted him with £50 to bank for her. He had spoken of marriage and even bought an engagement ring for her. In reality he was a miner at a colliery near Chester-le-Street. Chapman was arrested before he could get away, pleaded guilty at Newcastle Police Court, and was again imprisoned for ten months.

In 1922 Chapman was arrested for a third time, this time in Sunderland, and fined £10 for street betting. He had asked for more time to pay his debt as he was getting married the following week. However, his fiancée could not provide the surety and he was jailed for a month.



Incredibly, in July 1920, there was a copy-cat case. Jack Kendall, from Coventry, who posed as Sergeant Frederick Luke, V.C., of 'L' Battery, R.G.A., (seen left recuperating at Todmorden) was sentenced to two months' hard labour at Grimsby for 'wearing the V.C. and other ribbons to which he was not entitled'.

Another bogus claimant, Second Lieutenant Robert W. Gunter in the Army Service Corps was Court Martialled on 19 December 1914 and dismissed from His Majesty's Service. Several charges of 'conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline' were brought against Gunter. Earlier in the year he had turned up at Hendon claiming he was in the artillery branch of the Army Special Reserve, and as a practical joke he pretended to be Lord Stanton Hope.

The Bogus VCs

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He was in the company of a friend who claimed to be the 'Crown Prince of Württemberg', and the two of them were treated to a flight, a spiral glide and were guests at a tea party.

Lord Cowdray (see left) gave evidence in the court that in early 1915, Gunter had been his guest at Carlton House Terrace in London (just off The Mall) and he had claimed he was going to Buckingham Palace to receive his Victoria Cross from the King. Lord Cowdray's footman described how, when he conveyed a telephone message to Gunter purportedly from the War Office, he responded '*Damn it, that's my VC.*'

When subsequently asked to show the Victoria Cross, he claimed that he had put his medal in a bank. When arrested he had his arm in a sling although the police surgeon found that there was nothing wrong with it.

Lord Cowdray stated said he received instructions to look out for Gunter and bring him before Colonel Roy at the War Office. He saw the accused at the Four Hundred Club, in Bond Street, on 30 November 1914, when he was wearing the ribbon of the D.S.O. Witness asked him if he had a right to it, and Lieutenant Gunter replied that he had.

It was also alleged by an officer of the Royal Irish Fusiliers that Gunter had worn the ribbon of a V.C. at the Four Hundred Club and the Distinguished Service Order and had worn the uniform and cap of a staff officer. Gunter claimed the Victoria Cross was awarded for his part in the capture of a trench near Ypres in 1914.

The Bogus VCs

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Three days later Major Lord Athumley saw Gunter at the town-residence of Lord Cowdrey, challenged Gunter to explain himself and took him to the War Office where Colonel Roy arrested him.

At the court case Gunter attempted to explain his actions were due to loss of blood when he wounded in France and used the phrase 'self-glorification'. He also mitigated his actions by claiming he had not harmed anyone.

In April 1915 Robert William Gunter, of 43 Drayton Gardens, London, 'of gentlemanly and military bearing' according to the London Evening Standard, was acquitted at Rochester of a charge of having falsely represented himself to be a military officer in the Royal Horse Artillery at The Bull Hotel, Rochester – it was claimed he had attempted to impersonate Captain Sir James Cadogan DSO. He had been recognised by a naval officer, Lieutenant Alexander Brown, who had met him in Malta six years previously. Gunter advised Brown that he had come into a title and changed his name, and also that he was about to take up a position on the General Staff in France. He gave Brown descriptions of the conditions at the front which Brown considered consistent – in fact Gunter had been in France between early August 1914 and 21 October 1914, and his counsel claimed he had been wounded.

Gunter subsequently visited Chatham Royal Navy Hospital with two naval officers where, after Metropolitan police officers had arrested him, he was questioned about his identity by Rochester's Chief Constable A. S. Arnold. Crucially, Gunter was not wearing a uniform during his visit. When Arnold asked if he was Captain Sir James Cadogan, Gunter replied '*If you say so, yes.*'

The Bogus VCs

By Richard Pursehouse

During the case, Chief Constable Arnold was quizzed if he knew of the music hall review 'Violet and Pink' ('No') – which had a character named Sir James Cadogan. Gunter's counsel also asked if Arnold was aware that Gunter was spending his weekend in Rochester with a lady from the company that was performing 'Violet and Pink' ('No').

Perhaps the court decided that being dismissed from the British Army was punishment enough. Gunter walked from Rochester court a free man, having been told he was 'flying very close to the wind' by the Magistrate, who did accept that Gunter had done nothing wrong under Section 42 of the Army Act, had been arrested wearing 'plain clothes' not a uniform, and in effect - albeit reluctantly - accepting his counsel's claim he was merely 'swanking about' for a practical joke.

The witnesses admitted Gunter had not attempted to make money out of them. As he left the court Gunter was accompanied by a woman, believed to be his mother, although some newspapers speculated that she was the lady from the company performing in 'Violet and Pink'.

While recovering from wounds in a Liverpool Hospital in early December 1916, Private John Hope Sheriff wore a strip of crimson ribbon pinned on his pyjamas, claiming when interviewed by a reporter it was for the Victoria Cross he would be receiving from the King when he was well enough to travel. He stated he had been wounded on 1 July 1916, and when ordered to return to the British trenches he came upon a wounded officer who turned out to be his Commanding Officer.

He stated he managed to pick up his C.O. and shuffle him onto his back. Awaiting an operation on his injured knee, as word got round the hospital a meal and concert were arranged in his honour and he was 'accorded a bumper ovation.'

The Bogus VCs

By Richard Pursehouse

He had four brothers serving in the army (one wounded at the time of the interview) – Uriah, Isiah in the Sherwood Foresters (both wounded in the Dardanelles) and Tom (Lancashire Fusiliers, missing since 1 July 1916).

However, in late June 1917 a warrant was issued for the arrest of Private John Hope Sheriff, of no fixed abode, late of the Sherwood Foresters another 'Bogus VC'. He failed to put in an appearance when his name was called at the Chesterfield County Police Court, to answer a charge of wearing a V.C. ribbon and three gold wounded stripes without authority.

Sheriff had attended the court three weeks previously wearing the V.C. ribbon and four gold stripes on his sleeve, and was ordered by the Chairman (Alderman C. P. Markham) to remove them, whilst the police were instructed to make inquiries. He was in court for assaulting a fellow soldier, Frederick Charles Stanley, as Stanley had not yet seen action. The prosecution responded that had nothing to do with Sheriff and asked why he was wearing the 'dark red ribbon' of the Victoria Cross on a clasp. Sheriff claimed he had been sent the ribbon while in hospital and he was waiting to be summonsed to receive the medal. He was ordered by the Chairman of the court to remove the ribbon as his name was not published in the London Gazette. Crucially, Sheriff stated the letter written by his Commanding Officer had been destroyed and the officer had subsequently died. Sheriff was fined £1 for the assault and had his V.C. ribbon and various items of paperwork including his discharge papers confiscated.

The court was busy that day (5 May 1917) with Sheriff's relatives, well known in the Chesterfield area as 'hawkers and general dealers' in some newspapers, Gypsies in others. His brother Isiah was accused of bigamy.

The Bogus VCs

By Richard Pursehouse

His mother Trunette was accused of assaulting her daughter-in-law, Mary Elizabeth Hurst, married to Isiah, who had left their home after being told he was already married under the name Matthew Booth and his first wife Matilda Booth was drawing the separation allowance. After their wedding at Newbold Church in July 1915, the couple had lived with his parents for two weeks before Isiah returned to Brocton Camp on Cannock Chase.

The assault was initially over a skirt Hurst had taken 'because it is mine' from the Sheriff's house, resulting in Matilda Booth hitting her across the face, biting her ear and her hair pulled out. The hair and a bloodied handkerchief were provided as evidence. When the mother joined in the assault and the two assaulters chased after Mary Hurst, soldier Frederick Charles Stanley witnessed the assault and gave evidence at the court case, which may have been the real reason John Hope Sheriff assaulted him. Stanley's wife Jane was also threatened with assault if she gave evidence in court. Mrs. Trunette Sheriff and Matilda Booth (first daughter-in-law) were fined thirty shillings for assaulting the second daughter-in-law Mary Elizabeth Hurst.

The issue of John Hope Sheriff and the Victoria Cross ribbon continued three weeks later. At the next sitting of the Bench in early June a letter was read from the War Office which confirmed that Sheriff had no right to the V.C. ribbon nor to the three or the four gold stripes, as he had been wounded only once. He did not appear at the court and Acting Chief Constable Faulkner applied for a warrant for his arrest, which was granted. Eventually he was traced (he came from a family of Gypsies) and was brought to court 'in mufti having been discharged from the Sherwood Foresters'.

The Bogus VCs

By Richard Pursehouse

Acting-Chief Constable Faulkner read out a letter he had received from the War Office:-

”In reply to your letter I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that No. 121192 Private John Hope Sheriff, late 2nd Battalion Sherwood Foresters, has not been awarded the Victoria Cross, or any other military decoration. It would appear that by wearing the ribbon of the Victoria Cross, to which he is not entitled, he is liable to prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Regulation No. 41. Private Sheriff received a gunshot wound in the left knee in France on January 25th, 1916. There is no record of any other wound, and he is only entitled to wear one stripe.”

Faulkner mentioned that Sheriff had received a communication from the Infantry Record Office, Lichfield, dated June 4th, that in January last Sheriff was sentenced to 84 days' imprisonment with hard labour for previously wearing the Victoria Cross ribbon to which he was not entitled. Fifty-six days of the sentence were remitted.

The court was not impressed at Sheriff's actions and handed out a custodial sentence of a further six months with hard labour. Sheriff appealed to the Bench to assist him in getting back into the Army. In 1911 Sheriff (then aged 17) had been convicted and fined £2 for stealing a bicycle from outside the Drill Hall in Chesterfield.

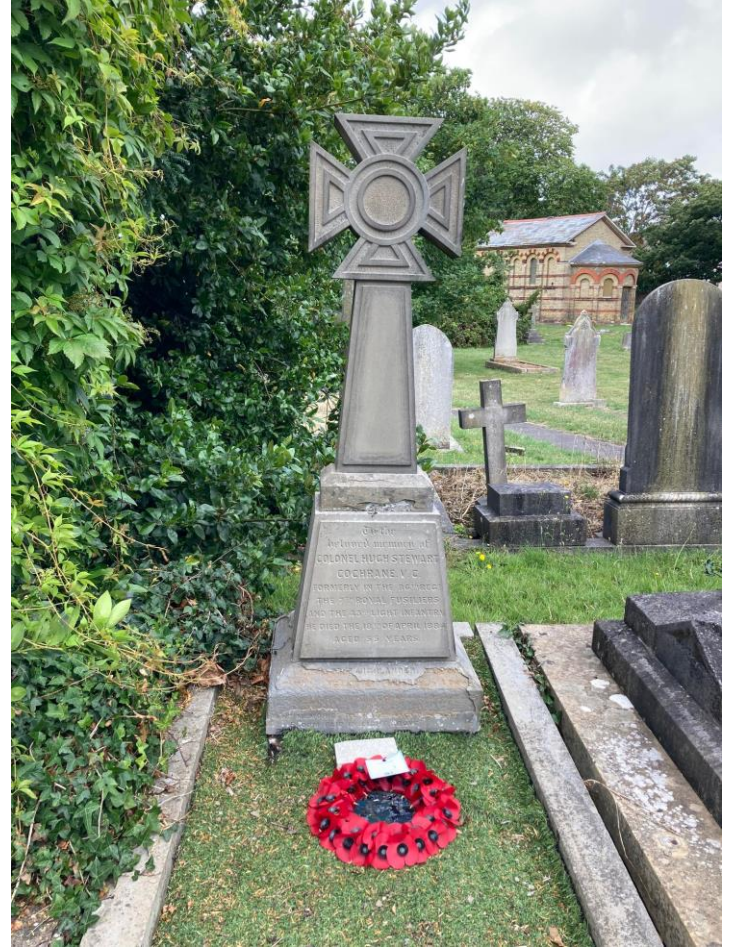
Highland Road Cemetery

Over the course of three days in July, Military Grave Restorer Steve Davies, with a team of willing volunteers, and following his appearance on “BBC Breakfast News” began work on 8 of the Victoria Cross Graves in Highland Road Cemetery in Portsmouth, Hampshire. Over the course of the next few pages will be a before and after picture of the grave renovation, plus a citation of the recipient, a link to his page to read more at www.victoriacrossonline.co.uk and on the last page there will be a link to Steve’s Just Giving page to make donations to support the fabulous work that he does around the United Kingdom.

Image from The Daily Mail



Highland Road Cemetery



Hugh Stewart Cochrane VC

It was at Jhansi on the 1st April 1858 that he would be awarded the VC. No 1 Company was ordered to take a gun, and he dashed forward at a gallop, under heavy fire, and drove the enemy from the gun. He then held the gun until the rest of the Company caught up to him.

Cochrane later served during Battle of Gowlowlee and the capture of Gwalior. He was Second in Command of Meade's Horse, Central India, from 1858 to 1859 and commanded the Irregular Cavalry under Sir Robert Napier in the pursuit of Tantia Topi.

He later served in the Umbeyla Campaign and had been promoted to Major in 1871. He was given command of the 43rd Light Infantry in India 1878-1881, and given the brevet of Colonel 7th January 1881. He was forced to retire due to ill health on 27th July 1881, and moved to the south coast of England. He died on 23rd April 1884 in Southsea, Hampshire, and was buried in Highland Road Cemetery. <https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/hugh-stewart-cochrane-vc/>

Highland Road Cemetery



William Goate VC

On the 6th March 1858, at Lucknow, Goate would be awarded the VC for the following action which he describes in his own words: "It was on the 6th March that I won the Cross in action at Lucknow, having dismounted in the presence of the enemy and taken up the body of Major Percy Smith, 2nd Dragoon Guards, which I attempted to bring off the field, and after being obliged to relinquish it, being surrounded by the enemy's cavalry, going a second time, under a heavy fire, to recover the body, for which I received the Victoria Cross."

In May 1900, he left Tyneside and took up residence at 22 Leopold Street, Southsea, Hampshire to be close to his son and young family. Within a year, William contracted gastric cancer and died at his home on 26th October 1901. He was buried in a pauper's grave in Highland Road Cemetery in Southsea.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-goate-vc/>

Highland Road Cemetery



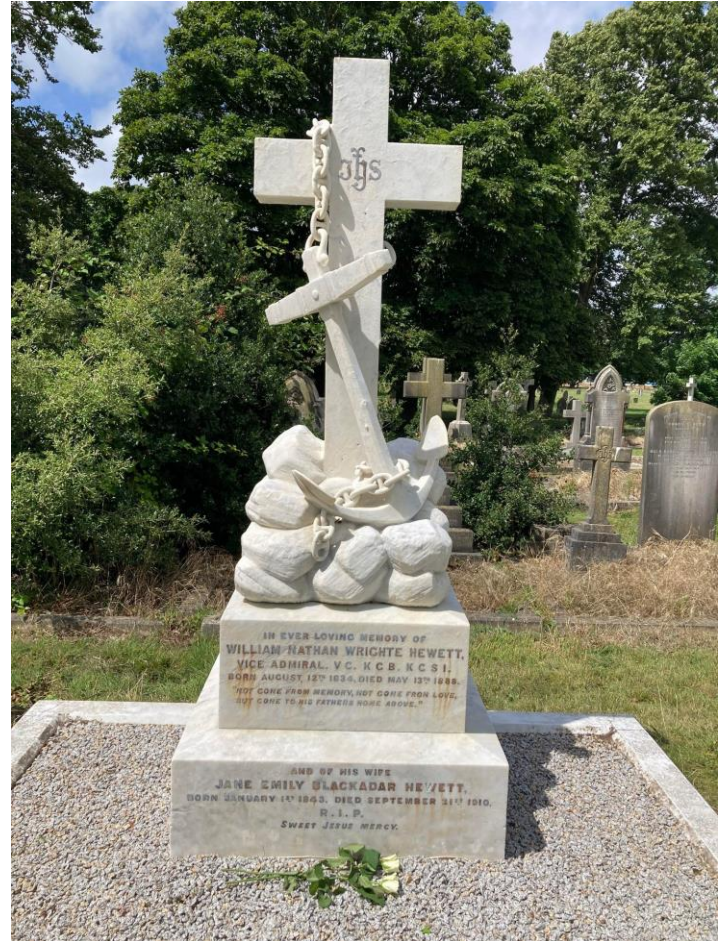
Israel Harding VC

On 11 July 1882 at Alexandria, Egypt, HMS Alexandra, with other ships, was bombarding the forts of the city and suffering damage and casualties from the enemy's guns. During the engagement a 10-inch shell passed through the ship's side and lodged on the main deck. Gunner Harding, hearing a shout that there was a live shell just above the hatchway (which led to the magazine) rushed up from below, picked it up and flung it into a tub of water. Had the shell burst it would probably have caused many deaths.

Harding was gazetted for the VC on 15th September 1882. He was presented with his medal by the Commander in Chief Malta, Lord Alcester on 14th November 1882. Israel Harding died at his daughter's house, Silkstead House, Billingham, Sussex on the 22nd May 1917, aged 83, and was buried four days later in the Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/israel-harding-vc/>

Highland Road Cemetery



Sir William Nathan Wrichte Hewett VC

On the 26th October 1854, Sir De Lacy Evans' Division were repelling a sortie of Russians, whilst Acting Mate Hewett was in charge of the Right Lancaster Battery before Sebastopol. The advance of the Russians placed the gun in great jeopardy, their Skirmishers advancing within 300 yards from the Battery, and pouring in a sharp fire from their Minie rifles. By some misapprehension the word was passed to spike his gun and retreat; but Hewett taking it upon himself the responsibility of disregarding the order, replied that "such an order did not come from Captain Lushington, and he would not do it till it did." Hewett then pulled down the parapet of the Battery, and, with the assistance of some soldiers, got the gun round and poured a devastating fire upon the advancing Russians.

He was moved into the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar where he died on 13th May 1888. On the 17th May 1888, he was laid to rest in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth. He was given a full military funeral.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/sir-william-nathan-wrichte-hewett-vc-kcb-kcsi/>

Highland Road Cemetery



Henry Raby VC

As Second in Command of a ladder party during the assault on the Redan on 18th June 1855, he would later be awarded the VC, which would be announced on 24th February 1857. During the assault on the Redan, a soldier of the 57th Regiment of Foot was seen calling for assistance having been shot through both legs. Climbing over the breastwork of the advanced sap, Commander Raby and two seamen (Henry Curtis and John Taylor) proceeded over 70 yards of open space towards the salient angle of the Redan, and, in spite of the heavy fire, succeeded in taking the wounded man to a place of safety. All three men were recommended for the award by Captain Stephen Lushington.

Admiral Raby spent his latter days in Southsea, Hampshire, where he took a great interest in the Royal Seamen and Marines' Orphanage, the Royal Sailors' Home, and in various other philanthropic institutions in the town. He died on the morning of 13th February 1907 at his residence, 8 Clarence Parade, Southsea.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/henry-james-raby-vc-cb/>

Highland Road Cemetery



John Robarts VC

On 29th May 1855, in the Sea of Azov, Crimea, Gunner Robarts of HMS Ardent, volunteered alongside two Lieutenants, Cecil Buckley and Hugh Burgoyne, to land on a beach where the Russian Army were at strength. They were out of covering gunshot range of the ships offshore and met considerable enemy opposition, but managed to set fire to corn stores and ammunition dumps and destroy enemy equipment before embarking again.

Robarts then served on a number of ships, HMS Asia (1864-66), HMS Revenge (1868-69), HMS Royal Alfred (1869-71) and was promoted to Chief Gunner whilst on the Royal Alfred. Robarts died of heart disease, aged 68, at his home, Providence House, 4 Park Lane, Southsea, Hampshire on 17th October 1888. Robarts was buried in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth, where one of his pall bearers was Israel Harding VC.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/john-robarts-vc/>

Highland Road Cemetery



Hugh Shaw VC

On 24th January 1865, Captain Shaw went out, with four privates of his regiment who had volunteered to join him, under heavy fire. They moved forward to within thirty yards of the enemy positions in the bush, in order to retrieve a wounded man. They succeeded in taking the man to safety. Shaw was gazetted for the VC on 28th November 1865, and he was presented with his medal in New Zealand sometime in 1866.

In September 1881 he attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and subsequently served in the Sudan Expedition to the Nile, Sarras and Korti. He was made Colonel in September 1885 and was in command of a battalion by May 1887. He retired from the active list as a Major-General later that year, and moved to the south coast. He lived in retirement at "St Lanner", 5 Victoria Grove, Southsea. He died on 25th August 1904 aged 65, and was buried in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth.

<https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/hugh-shaw-vc-cb/>

Highland Road Cemetery



William Temple VC

Temple had gone forward to treat the wounds of a Gunner who informed him that Captain Mercer of the Royal artillery was also wounded and had in fact been shot through the jaw and tongue. Temple observed Mercer crawling towards the gate of the earthworks, every man who attempted to cross this gate was wounded. Along with Lt Arthur Frederick Pickford, Royal Artillery, Temple rendered assistance to the wounded, including Mercer, by dressing their wounds and providing water.

Following the award of the Victoria Cross, he became a Surgeon in the Army Medical Department from 1868 to 1873. He was then promoted to Surgeon Major and was stationed in Portsmouth and in charge of the Station Hospital in Southsea. He returned to England on retirement, and died on 13th February 1919 at Tunbridge Wells, Kent. He was buried five days later in Highland Road Cemetery, Southsea. <https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/william-temple-vc/>

Highland Road Cemetery

Hello! I'm Steve. A former Soldier, 3rd Battalion The Royal Green Jackets. In my spare time I clean, and where needed renovate, forgotten military graves.

Three years ago I was attending a family christening in Sandhurst and wandered outside. There was a dirty overgrown war grave of an 18 year old Rifleman in the Rifle brigade (my antecedent regiment), killed six weeks before the Armistice. I came back the next day and sorted it out. The rest is history.

I have to date cleaned and renovated 12 Victoria Cross graves in the South East and helped put a headstone on a George Cross recipient's grave, unmarked since 1949. I have cleaned and renovated over 60 non-Commonwealth War Graves Commission military graves in the area including raising funds for a headstone for a forgotten WW1 soldier who did not qualify for a CWGC one.

Check out my website at

<https://www.militarygraverestorer.org.uk/>

Please visit Steve's Just Giving page which has currently raised over £9,000 towards a £10,000 target to renovate military graves.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/military-grave-restorer?fbclid=IwAR3wZpsYSvGJ1YjxxtOnhGoiqMSNRuO5ZFaZYQzkXMzCYKbOmqTUYPQkGUY>

Auction Sales



On Wednesday 26th July, at Noonan's Auction House in London, the VC and DCM medal group of Arnold Loosemore was sold. The estimate was set at between £180,000 and £220,000. The hammer went down at £220,000 (£283,000 with fees) and the purchaser has yet to be revealed.

Auction Sales



On Friday July 29th, at Noble Numismatics Auction in Sydney, Australia, the posthumous VC medal group of John Alexander “Jack” French VC was sold. In the sale, the final hammer price was \$AUS1.46 million (around £755,000). The family had chosen to sell the medal group due to the huge responsibility in safeguarding it.

The successful bidder was an anonymous one, and the hope is the medal group will end up on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Image courtesy of Aubrey Bairstow