

VC Centenary 1956

V.C. CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

PARADE

in

HYDE PARK

on

TUESDAY, 26th JUNE, 1956

at 11 a.m.

Lounge suit or uniform

Ticket-holders must be
in their seats by 11 a.m.

BLOCK		H
ENTRANCE		6
ROW		A
SEAT	8	

Victoria Cross Online
Issue 4 January 2023

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the New Year edition of the Victoria Cross Online magazine. Happy New Year to all subscribers!

The opening two articles for this issue is very unique in that the first comes from Andy Stuart-Hill, who is one of few people alive who attended the 1956 VC Centenary Parade in Hyde Park. The ticket on the front cover is of Albert Halton VC (courtesy of the Kings Own Royal Regiment Museum). The second is from Ann Page, (grand-daughter of Jack Williams VC DCM MM and Bar), whose father attended in 1956.

There is also the first in a series of three articles on the missing, stolen and destroyed VCs completed by yours truly.

I am also indebted again to Richard Pursehouse and Ned Malet de Carteret who have supplied fascinating articles on "The Druid VC" and "Chard VC"



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Victoria Cross Parade

By Andy Stuart-Hill

I had the unique experience on June 26, 1956 of witnessing a Parade of some 300 living recipients of the Victoria Cross.

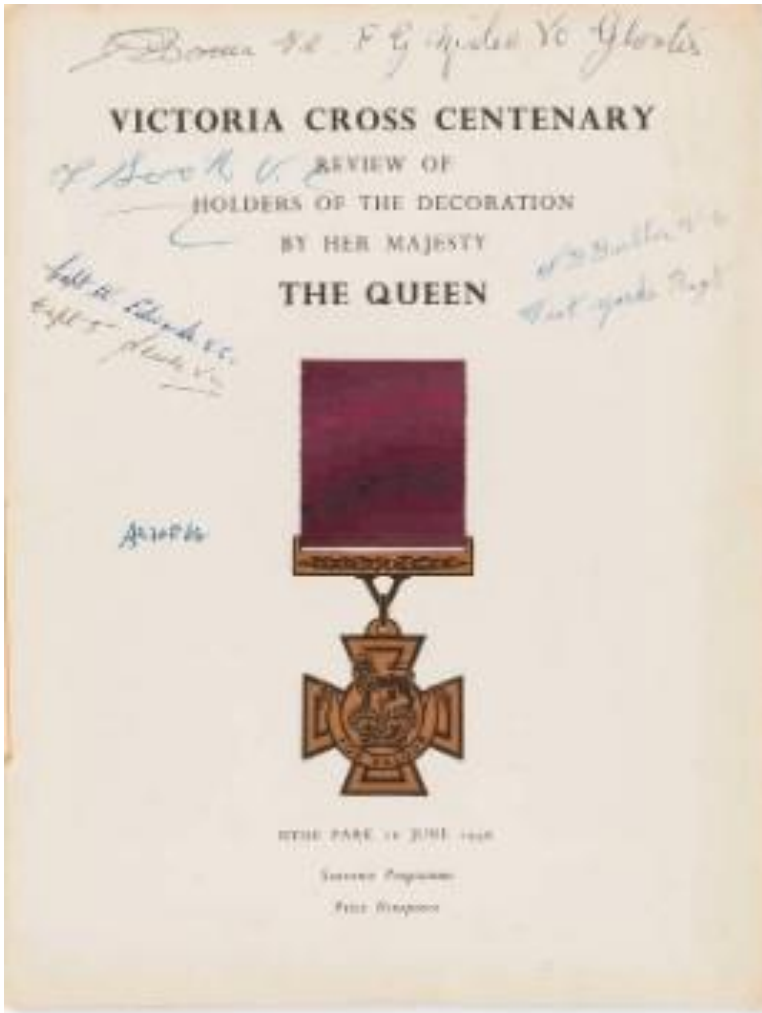
As a visitor from South Africa, I was living in the UK at the time, I used to collect my mail from South Africa House in London. and became friends with the delightful young lady Receptionist who worked there. One morning she asked if I was interested in Military matters. As my answer was "Yes" she indicated there were two 'unclaimed' tickets available for some sort of forthcoming 'Military Parade' and promptly gave me one of the tickets. This became one of the most amazing experiences of my young life - I was 22 years of age at the time.

The parade turned out to be the Victoria Cross Centenary Parade with a review of the VC recipients by HM Queen Elizabeth II in Hyde Park.

HM Queen Elizabeth II inspecting the recipients of the Victoria Cross at the VC Centenary Parade on 26th June 1956. Captain Frederick Charles Booth VC DCM is on the right of the picture (Source – The Times)



Victoria Cross Parade



This review was exactly 100 years to the day when Queen Victoria arrived in the same carriage at the same spot - same day, time, place - when she presided over the inaugural presentation of the VC to the first awardees of the new Victoria Cross instituted in 1856.

When I took my place the visitors stands, prior to the Parade, I saw Winston Churchill along with other dignitaries in the prime Reviewing Stand. My Souvenir Programme cost me 9 pence.

The overall event lasted over 2 hours - c/w appropriate Fanfares; Music and Salutes, etc. Many VC's in wheelchairs; using walking sticks; the blind with guides; Oxygen respirators having been gassed in WW1; Every single one proudly passing by their Queen. Not many dry eyes - I was in total awe throughout of what I had just seen - and very aware of a historical occasion, possibly never to again be repeated. These past 66 years I have taken the time to reflect on the actions, deeds and bravery of each of the men that I saw in front of me as they marched past. Using the seven pages of the names of the holders on Parade (in my copy of the programme) I looked up each individual 'online' in the Victoria Cross web page. And to think I saw each one of them whilst they were still living and only a few feet away.

Victoria Cross Parade

I have donated my original copy of the Souvenir programme to the VCGC Museum in Horse Guards, London. (with my dedication “a privileged witness to this Review, with my respect for all the courageous VC holders I saw on Parade that day”)

I am now approaching my 90th Birthday and probably one of the few remaining witnesses of this very Historical event still living.

Andrew W. Stuart-Hill.

Canadian Rockies, British Columbia, Canada

November 2022

Editor's Notes

The Parade was attended by 192 VC recipients whose names are listed at <http://www.victoriacross.org.uk/ppheader.htm> in alphabetical order. The Commander of the Parade was Lieutenant-General the Lord Freyberg VC, GCMG, KCB, KBE, DSO, LLD, DCL. There are also three photographs of the event on the above webpage link.

Alongside the VC Centenary Parade in Hyde Park, an exhibition of VC Medal Groups was held in Marlborough House from 15th June to 7th July 1956. Following requests from the exhibition organisers, 199 VC groups were placed on display. Many of the groups were loaned by Regimental Museums or by family members of the recipients themselves. A list of the medal groups which were displayed can be found at

<http://www.victoriacross.org.uk/kkheader.htm>

VC Centenary 1856-1956

My grandfather, JOHN (JACK) HENRY WILLIAMS VC, DCM, MM & Bar, Médaille Militaire, is the most decorated Welsh Non-Commissioned Officer of all time. He served in the South Wales Borderers during WW1. Quoting from the Citation he was awarded the VC for 'most conspicuous bravery, initiative and devotion to duty on the night of 7/8th October 1918 during the attack on Villers-Outréaux.....by his 'gallant action and total disregard of personal danger, he was the means of enabling not only his own company, but also those on the flanks, to advance.'

The Villagers of Villers-Outréaux credit him with saving their village from destruction. Sadly Jack died in 1953, just 3 years before these momentous events but his third son, my father, Henry (aka Harry) and my mother, Ada, were invited. My father also served in the South Wales Borderers, 1933-1946 including on the North West Frontier of India 1935-1939.

I am pleased to still have the invitations and programmes shown here. What an occasion this must have been with so many brave men present.

ANN PAGE

PROUD GRANDDAUGHTER OF JACK WILLIAMS VC DCM MM*

12 January 2023

1856



1956

*Her Majesty's Government
in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
request the honour of the company of*

Mr and Mrs. H. Williams.

*at the Celebrations
to be held in London on the 25th and 26th June 1956
to mark the Centenary of the institution of
the Victoria Cross*



1st photo: Main invitation; Jack; Harry & Ada. My mother loved to tell the 'tale of the hat'. They visited Trafalgar Square before making their way home. My father bought the hat for the VC events but did not like wearing it so he tried to leave it several times. To his dismay, people would notice and return it to him. He eventually took it home never to be worn again.

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
 IN THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
 REQUEST THE HONOUR OF THE COMPANY OF

Mr. and Mrs. G. Williams.

AT A GARDEN PARTY
 TO BE HELD AT MARLBOROUGH HOUSE ON TUESDAY 26th JUNE, 1956.
 FROM 4.0 P.M. TO 6.0 P.M. TO MARK THE CENTENARY
 OF THE VICTORIA CROSS.

V.C. CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

PARADE
 in
 HYDE PARK
 on
 TUESDAY, 26th JUNE, 1956
 at 11 a.m.

Lounge suit or uniform	BLOCK	K
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	ROW	A
	SEAT	12

NORTH NAVE

Westminster Abbey

SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION
 to mark
 the Centenary of the Institution of
 THE VICTORIA CROSS

MONDAY, 25th JUNE 1956, at 3 p.m.

ENTRANCE:
 NORTH NAVE DOOR.

ALAN C. DON,
 DEAN.

Ticket Holders are requested to be seated by not later than 2.45 p.m.



Windsor Castle

Please admit Bearer
 to the
 State Apartments
 27th June, 1956.
 on the occasion of the visit of those attending the
 Celebration of the Centenary of the Inauguration of
 the Victoria Cross

Scarborough
 Lord Chamberlain

2nd photo: Tickets for various events.

VICTORIA CROSS CENTENARY

REVIEW OF

Paul Bennett VC VC

Bernard Fry HOLDERS OF THE DECORATION

R. Knowlton VC

BY HER MAJESTY

A. Breeton VC Canada

John Ross VC

THE QUEEN

S. W. B. 1914

*P. H. Wright VC
Midstream Guards*

*A. W. Smith VC
2nd Bn Gen Gds*

Walter Watkins

Herbert Cheslin

*Sahabuddin Thapa
J. M. Aggarwal
G. J. Lalaha*

Chandrasena



HYDE PARK 26 JUNE 1956

Souvenir Programme

Price Ninepence

*To Mr. H. W. A. S.
100 High Street
9 x 15 Ashton
Champanon 1927
Worley*

3rd photo: Main Programme for event at Hyde Park. My father was so proud to have attended on behalf of his father and to have met so many brave VC holders.

I have tried to identify them from their signatures:-

Lt Gen Lord Bernard Freyberg VC
Captain (T/Lt.Col) Royal West Surrey Regt

Mr R Inwood VC Pte. 1
0th Btn. Australian Imperial Force

Mr Ivor Rees VC Sgt
11th Btn. South Wales Borderers

Mr P H Wright VC
WO II Coldstream Guards

H Nicholls VC
3rd Btn. Grenadier Guards

Major Tasker Watkins VC
Lieut. The Welsh Regt

Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC
W/Command RAFVR

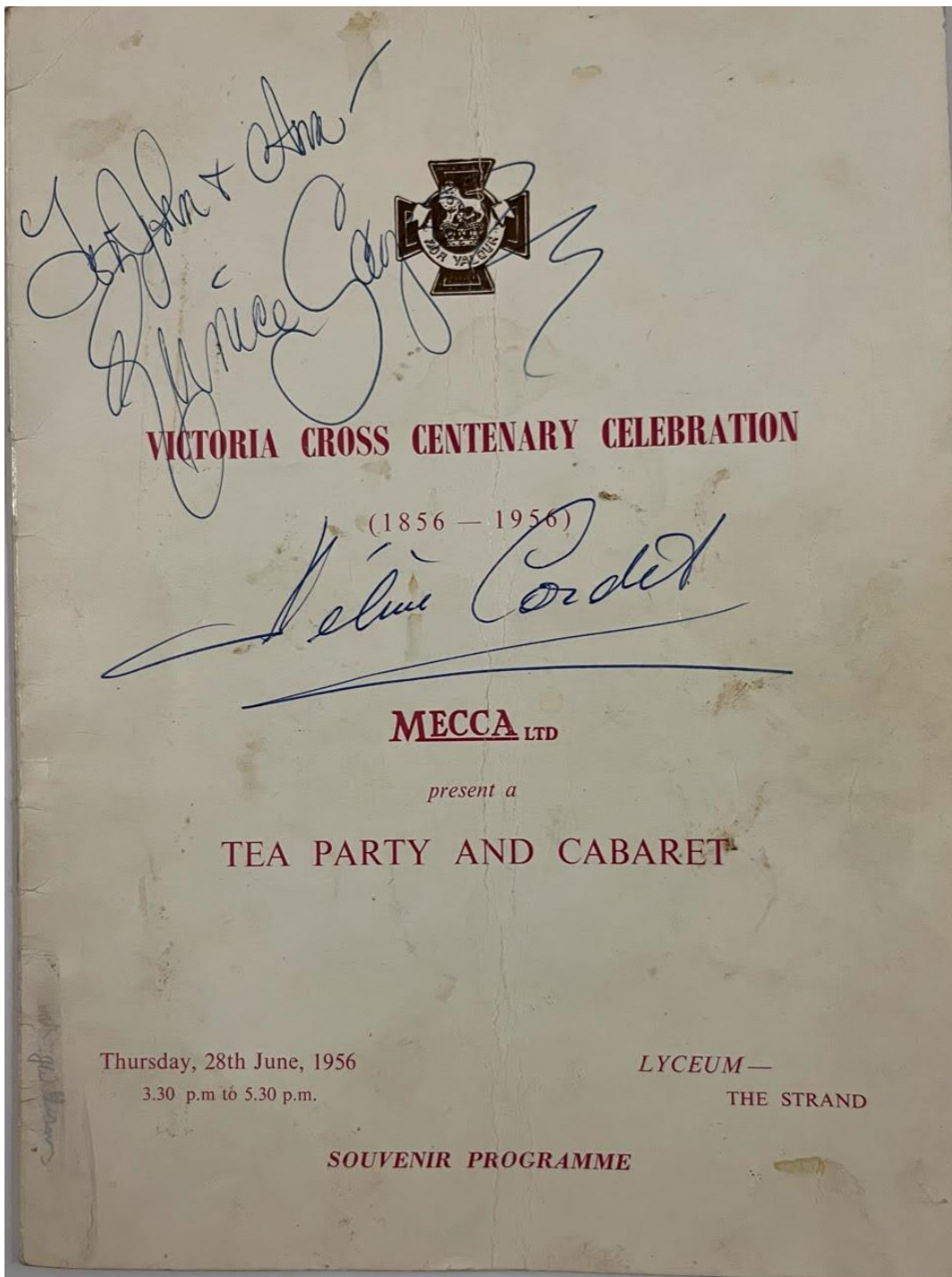
Subedar Lalbahadur Thapa VC
Subedar 2 Gurkha Rifles

Havildar Agansing Rai VC
Rifleman 2/5 Royal Gurkha Rifles (FF)

Bhanbhaghta Gurung VC
Rifleman 2 Gurkha Rifles

Captain E Paul Bennett VC
T/Lieut 2nd Btn. Worcestershire Regt

Mr A P Brereton VC
Pte (A/Cpl) 8th Btn. Manitoba Regt. Canada



This was signed 'To John (my brother) & Ann' by Eunice Gayson who was an English actress best known for playing Sylvia Trench, James Bond's love interest in the first two Bond films and is thus considered to have been the first "Bond girl".

**VICTORIA CROSS
CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS**
(1856 - 1956)



JUNE 1956. V.C. WEEK.



6th photo:

1. Teddy Baldock behind Harry on the left.
2. Harry, Ada, Teddy Baldock.
3. A chef at the VC Celebrations.

Teddy Baldock was World Bantamweight Champion 1927.

McBean VC Grave



Earlier this month, Military Grave Restorer Steve Davies was in Scotland to meet with Project Nova, regarding to future grave restoration projects, when he came across the grave of William McBean VC in the Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh. With only the basic equipment with him, Steve cleaned the grave and is planning to return in the Spring of 2023 to finish the job completely. McBean was awarded the VC for his actions at Lucknow on 11th March 1858 and his medals are held in Stirling Castle (Image courtesy of Andy Wright). If you wish to find out more about William McBean VC visit

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=10347



The Missing VCs

In the first of three articles in the next three issues of VCO magazine, I am going to feature the stories of the Victoria Cross medals which have been either stolen, gone missing in mysterious circumstances or been destroyed in some way. In the first, I am going to concentrate on the six men whose Victoria Cross has gone missing and not seen since.

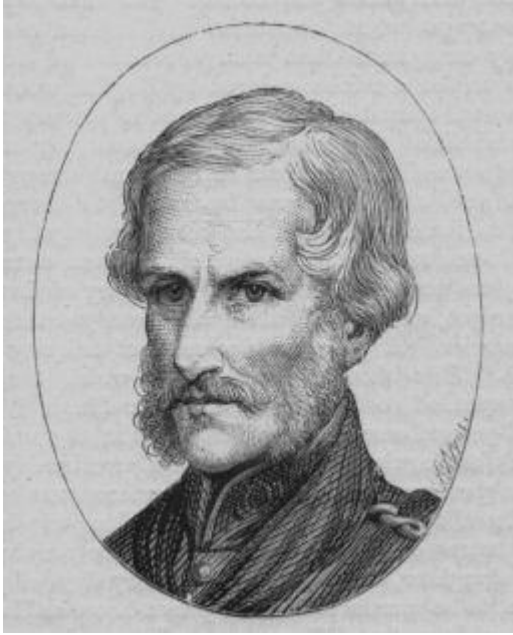


The recipient of the first Victoria Cross (by date of action) and the fourth man to receive the medal from Queen Victoria at the first investiture, was Charles Davis Lucas. On 21 June 1854 in the Baltic, HMS Hecla, with two other ships, was bombarding Bomarsund, a fort in the Åland Islands off Finland. At the height of the action a live shell landed on Hecla's upper deck, with its fuse still hissing. All hands were ordered to fling themselves flat on the deck, but Lucas with great presence of mind ran forward and hurled the shell into the sea, where it exploded with a tremendous roar before it hit the water.

Following one of his trips from London to Scotland, before March 1879, Charles Lucas discovered he had left his Victoria Cross medal set in a train carriage. Why Charles Lucas would carry his VC medal group with him on one of his regular journeys between London and Scotland is a mystery. Intriguingly, Lucas never applied for an official replacement VC. The medals have never been recovered but there is a poor 'copy' VC held by the National Maritime Museum.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=9615

The Missing VCs



During the First Battle of Cawnpore on 16th July 1857, the British attack had begun to falter and casualties were high from a well mounted gun. At this point Henry "Harry" Havelock (later Havelock-Allan) led the charge on the gun, with bayonets fixed, causing the mutineers to flee.

It is believed that the Victoria Cross awarded to Havelock-Allan went missing sometime during his lifetime possibly lost after leaving India. For the remainder of his life he held many positions at home and abroad wearing a copy VC.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=6983

On 14th September 1857, during the assault on Delhi, Robert Shebbeare's Regiment was tasked with taking the Lahore Gate. Shebbeare twice charged beneath a wall of the loopholed serai and found it impossible due to heavy fire. He reorganised his men but lost 1/3 of them and the attempt failed. He then conducted a rear guard action to cover the retreat across the canal successfully. For these actions he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

In 1949, Shebbeare's VC was loaned to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. On the run up to the 1956 VC Centenary, his family asked the RMA for the return of the medal but it could not be found.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=14211



The Missing VCs



On 29th September 1915, in the “Big Willie” Trench near the Hohenzollern Redoubt, during a heavy bombing attack, more bombs were needed. Private Samuel Harvey volunteered to fetch more supplies. The communication trench was blocked with wounded and reinforcements and he went backwards and forwards across open ground under intense fire and succeeded in bringing up 30 boxes before being wounded in the head.

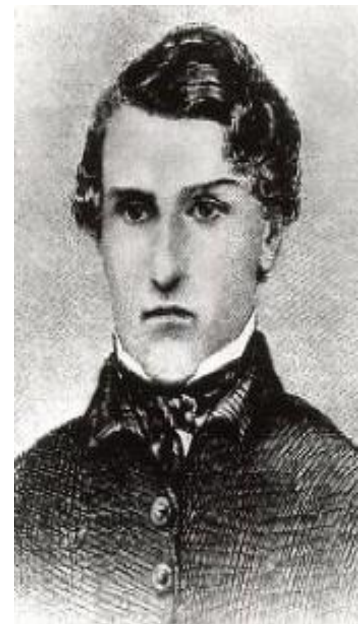
There are a few stories around why Samuel Harvey’s VC went missing in the 1920s. One theory is that he swapped it for a beer in a pub, second that he lost it in a wood near Ipswich whilst walking back from a pub, or thirdly, he sold the VC privately. There has been no sign of it since.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=6970

Between 20th August and 20th September 1857, during the assault on Delhi, on two separate occasions, Duncan Home led explosion parties to blow open the doors into key gates of the city including the Kashmir Gate. Sadly, Home was killed in action on 1st October 1857.

It is believed that Duncan Home’s VC went missing during the 1920s when children took the medal outside to play soldiers with it. It was then lost and has never been found.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=7484



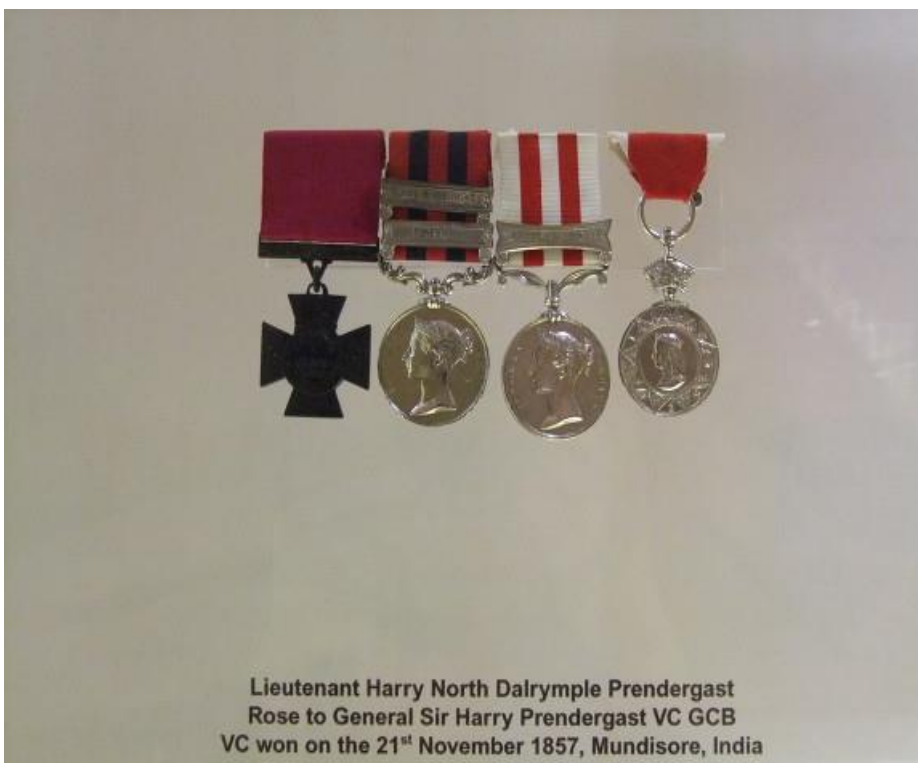
The Missing VCs



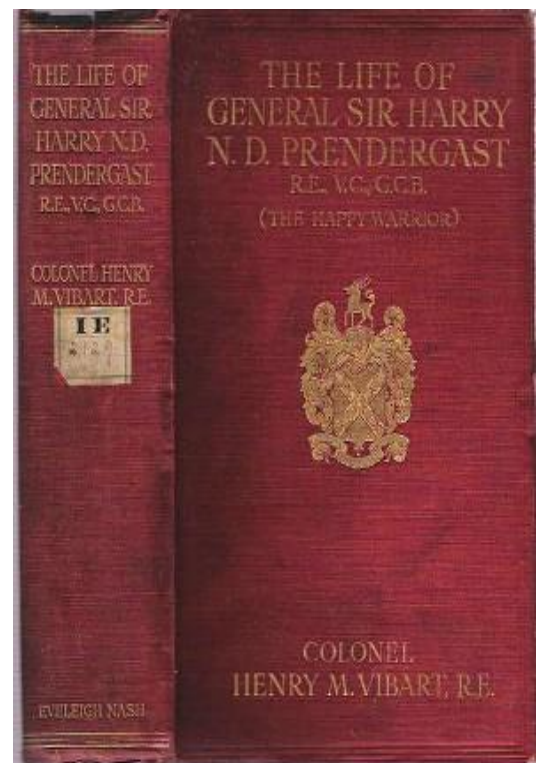
On 21st November 1857, 300 cavalry accompanied by Lieutenant Harry Prendergast reconnoitred country in advance of the column. The detachment was under orders not to engage but came under fire and the small British force counter-attacked. At this point Lt George Dew was about to be attacked by a rebel. Prendergast shouted a warning and rode at the rebel. The rebel turned and fired his musket at Prendergast hitting him near the heart. Prendergast survived his wound and was awarded the VC.

Prendergast's GCB and campaign medals are held by the Royal Engineers Museum alongside a replica VC. The whereabouts of his original VC are a mystery.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=12625



Lieutenant Harry North Dalrymple Prendergast
Rose to General Sir Harry Prendergast VC GCB
VC won on the 21st November 1857, Mundisore, India



The Druid VC

By Richard Pursehouse and Ben Cunliffe



William Waring was awarded the 1,083rd Victoria Cross and also has the distinction of being the only recipient of the VC to be a Druid. He was a member of the Order of Druids; many prominent Welsh speakers become members of The Druid Circle. So who was William Waring (later VC MM)?

William was born in 1885 to Richard and Annie Waring and he had five siblings. Richard was a nail maker, and later a fishmonger. The family lived in Raven Street Welshpool and later at 21 Rock Terrace. After his schooling, William was a labourer on the project to construct large reservoir dams in the Elan Valley, which provided water mainly for Birmingham. He played for local football clubs.



He had two brothers older than him (John and Charles) and one younger (Frederick).

The Druid VC

William joined the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry in 1904 and was promoted to Lance Sergeant before the Great War. He served for almost the entire duration of the war, remaining with the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry until it became the 25th Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, and was Acting Staff Quartermaster Serjeant (Army Number 355014) with 25th Battalion (Montgomery Yeomanry and Welsh Horse) Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

William was awarded the Military Medal in 1917 for his courage during an attack on Turkish positions near Gaza.

In 1918 his battalion was moved to the Western Front in France. The 25th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers was part of 231st Infantry Brigade, 74th (Yeomanry) Division (the C.O. was Major General E.S. Girdwood), XIII Corps, Fifth Army. At Ronssoy, in the Somme region, he took part in the last big push to oust the Germans from the area, where previous attacks had cost so many Allied lives. The battalion War Diary also states Waring's battalion moved to the line of deployment at 3.30am before the attack began on 18 September. The battalion in total captured 100 prisoners and about twenty machine-guns.



Mr. and Mrs. Richard Waring.



· THE TOWN ·

WARING WM H. V.C., M.M.
WATKIN GRIFFITH LL.
WEAVER MAURICE E.
WILKINSON WILLIAM
WILLIAMS BEN
WILLIAMS EDWARD
WILLIAMS HARRY
WILLIAMS JOHN
WILLIAMS RICHARD E.
WILLIAMS THOMAS
WILLIAMS WILLIAM
WILSON FRANCIS G.
YEARSLEY C. P. P.
ARNOLD I. V.
STEPHENS LIZZIE DORA
SMITH R.
RIMMER J.

The Druid VC

In November 1918 the initial list of medal awards in the War Diary makes no mention of Waring (but does mention others received a second Bar to a DSO, two Military Crosses and two DCMs). However, on 22 January 1919 the War Diary states:

His Majesty the King has awarded the Victoria Cross to u/w mentioned NCO for gallantry in action on 18th September 1918. 355014 Sgt Waring W, MM (since died of wounds).

The London Gazette reported on 19 January 1919 the act performed by Waring. During the fighting on 18 September: "He led an attack against enemy machine guns and, in face of devastating fire from both flank and front, rushed a strong point single handed, bayonetting four of the garrison and capturing twenty others with their guns; then still under heavy shell and machine gun fire, he re-organized his men, and inspired them to push ahead another 400 yards, when he fell mortally wounded."

William was wounded and evacuated to a hospital in Le Havre, where he died on 8 October 1918, aged 32. He is buried at Sainte Marie Cemetery, Le Havre. He is commemorated on the family gravestone at Christ Church, Welshpool.

The award of the Victoria Cross was 'Gazetted' (in the London Gazette) on 31 January 1919. His medal was presented to his parents Richard and Annie on 8 March 1919 by King George V at Buckingham Palace, London.

The Druid VC



His medals are held by Welshpool Town Council. A replica group of his medals is displayed in the Court Room in the Town Council building in Welshpool.



The Druid VC



Please note the images of William Herbert Waring VC MM, the 2 images of William Waring's parents attending his posthumous investiture at Buckingham Palace and the images of the VC Stone in Welshpool, and Waring's name on the Welshpool War Memorial all courtesy of Richard Pursehouse.

The images of the Waring VC MM Medal Group and the Waring VC grave in Le Havre both courtesy of Mark Green.

https://victoriacrossonline.co.uk/?page_id=18282

Chard VC



In my teenage years in the 1970's we used to go to a friend's house for New Year's Eve parties, where I once saw Zulu spears and shields little realising that they had come from Isandlwana. I sadly never spoke about them with their owner the late Major Michael Barthorp , a prominent military historian and author of the Zulu Wars.

I was to equally to learn perhaps 20 years ago that another friend's late father, Beau Mason, whom I sadly never met, equally had spears from the Isandlwana which he too had picked up from the battlefield.



The film Zulu (1964) depicts the engagement at Rorke's Drift with Stanley Baker co-producing and starring as John Rouse Merriott Chard. Chard was at Rorke's Drift on the 22nd January 1879 to build a bridge when the news came of the disastrous defeat at Isandlwana.

A force of some 4,000 Zulus attacked the post, defended by some 139 troops of, B Company, 24th Regiment of Foot, over a course of 12 hours. Some of the defenders were hospitalised and about 89 guns could be brought to bear. The hospital wing was destroyed by fire during the battle.

Some 400/500 Zulus were killed for a loss of 17 defenders and 50 wounded.

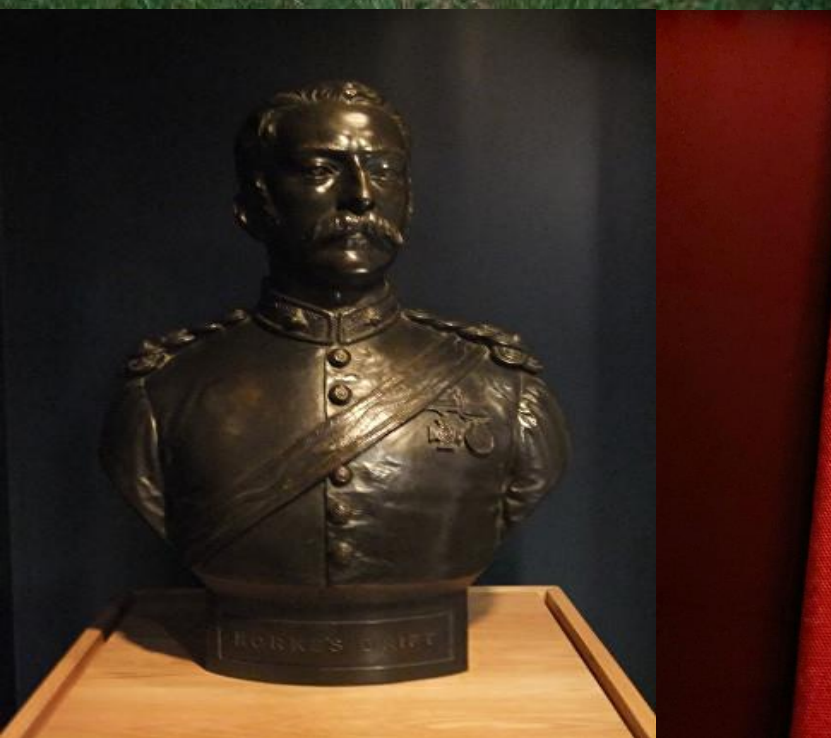
Chard VC



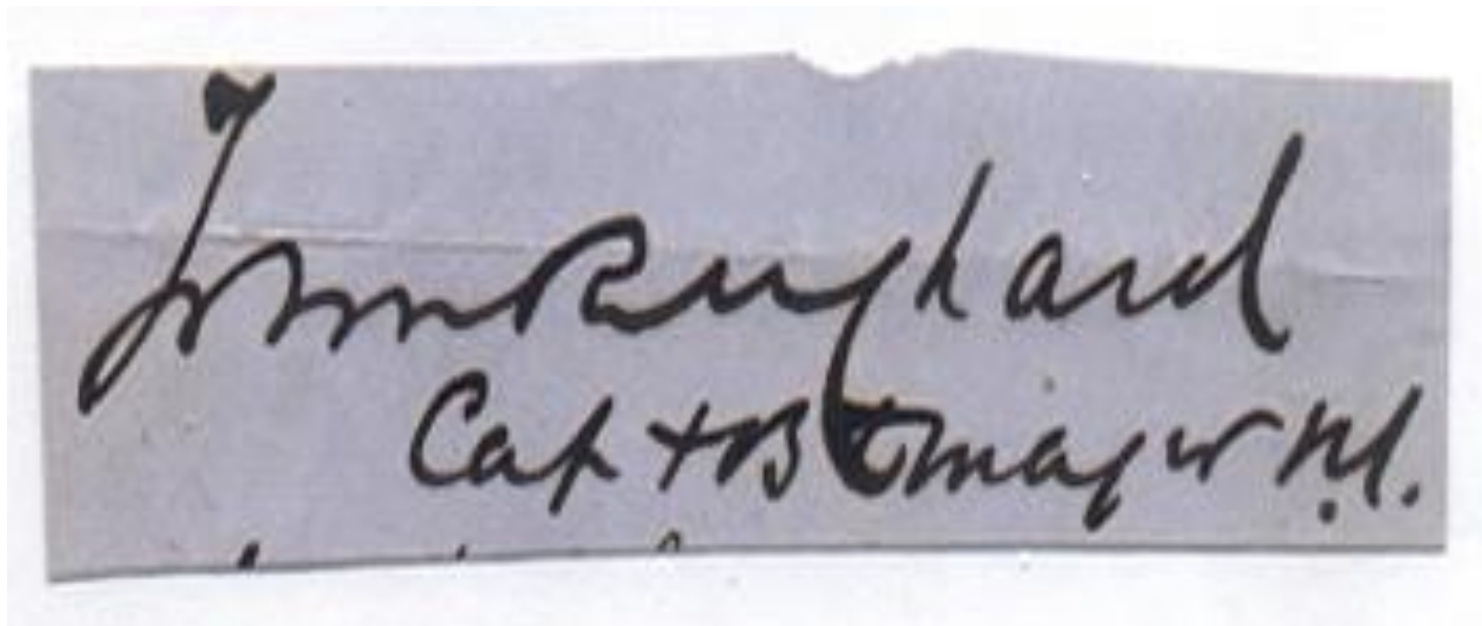
As stated at the end of the film “Zulu” of the 1,344 VCs awarded (as of 1964), 11 were awarded for Rorke’s Drift including to Chard.

Chard would also be present at the final battle with the Zulus at Ulundi on 4th July 1879. He would later dine with Queen Victoria at Balmoral and she was impressed by his unassuming and modest demeanour. His superiors Evelyn Wood VC and Sir Garnet Wolseley were less impressed calling him “dull”.

Chard would retire from the Army as a Lt Colonel in August 1897.



Chard VC



Unfortunately soon after his retirement, Chard had contracted cancer of the tongue. This led to an operation to remove it, and he moved in with his brother Charles at his rectory in Hatch Beauchamp, Somerset to recuperate. Sadly, Chard died there on 1st November 1897 and was buried in churchyard at St John the Baptist. Queen Victoria sent a laurel wreath to his funeral. There is a memorial window at the church in his memory.

Stanley Baker bought what was badged as “a copy” of John Chard’s Victoria Cross in 1972 for £ 2,700. His widow Lady Ellen Baker sold it for £5,500 to defray debts. In 1996 the medal was authenticated by Hancocks and bought by Lord Ashcroft, the first of his now three Rorke’s Drift VCs.

I viewed Chard’s medal again recently in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery in the IWM this May, I think my 3rd visit. RIP John Chard and your fellow Rorke’s Drift Victoria Cross comrades.

Ned Malet de Carteret

January, 2023

St Helier, Jersey.