

## Victoria Crosses

### **635 Private Samuel Parkes, V.C.**

Born in Winnington Tamworth, Staffordshire, in 1813 the son of Thomas and Lydia Parkes, Samuel was baptised at St Ethrida's Church, Tamworth on 24th December 1815. Parkes enlisted into the 4th Queen's Own Light Dragoons at his home town on 28th July 1831, when he was described as aged 18, 6 feet 2 inches tall with light brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion. Prior to military service, he was described as being a labourer.

He served with the Regiment in India for 9 years and 5 months, leaving Bombay on 28th December 1841. Three months later, he disembarked from the "Repulse" with the Regiment on its way to quarters in Canterbury. Their red uniforms were replaced with blue ones in 1842, and it was in this uniform that the Regiment marched to South and West Wales to keep civil order during the so-called "Rebecca Riots". The turnpike roads which commanded a toll were deeply unpopular, and an organisation known as "Rebecca and her daughters" grew up. Disguised in women's clothing, they preached violence, creating unrest by destroying buildings and toll gates. One of the Troops was thanked by the Duke of Wellington for saving the workhouse at Carmarthen. After service in Ireland, once again keeping civil Order.

On 25th October 1854 at Balaklava, Parkes was acting as Orderly to Lord George Paget, the Commanding Officer of the 4th Queen's Own Light Dragoons, who referred to him as "a fine specimen of an Englishman". In this role, Parkes needed to stay close to both Paget and Trumpeter Hugh Crawford who relayed the Commanding Officer's orders to the troops. During the Charge of the Light Brigade, the 4th Light Dragoons reached the Russian guns where savage hand to hand fighting was taking place. Parkes rode past his Colonel shouting anxiously "Where's my chief? Who's seen the Colonel?" Paget replied "here I am, my boy, I'm all right" Parkes then rejoined his Colonel and the Trumpeter.

Returning back to the Allied lines, Crawford's horse collapsed from exhaustion and the Trumpeter fell, losing his sword; shortly afterwards, Parkes' own horse was shot, leaving him to try to get back to safety on foot. Parkes saw Crawford about to be attacked by two mounted Russian cossacks. Parkes ran to Crawford and, standing in front of him, managed to drive off the two attackers. They then set off on foot joined by Private John Eddon (also of the 4th LD) whose horse had been shot. They came across Major John Halkett who was severely wounded and who asked them to take his belt into which was sewn some money "for the married women at home". Attacked by more cossacks, Halkett told the three Dragoons to save themselves but to place his sword in his hand. Parkes turned

to face the Russians whilst his two comrades tried to lift Halkett. Crawford placed Halkett over Parkes' shoulder, but was soon forced to lay down the Officer.

A Russian Officer called upon Parkes in English to surrender "Give yourself up, and you won't be hurt." Parkes refused and a Russian fired a pistol which wounded him in the right hand. The Canadian-born Crawford, Parkes and Eddon (who, like Parkes was from Tamworth) again ran back to the British lines. Eddon managed to escape, but Parkes and Crawford were captured - seeing the body of Halkett stripped naked except for his jacket as they were escorted back to the Russian lines. The two men were taken in front of General Liprandi who, noting the 6 foot 2inch Parkes, commented "If you are a Light Dragoon, what sort of men are your Heavy Dragoons?". He saw to it that both prisoners were given food and drink before they were marched into the Russian interior.

After almost exactly 12 months in captivity, Parkes rejoined his Regiment at Balaklava from Odessa on 26th October 1855 (Crawford returned on 1st December 1855). It is interesting to note that following his return from captivity, Parkes was subject to a Court-Martial at Scutari on 6th November 1855 in accordance with the 30th clause of the Mutiny Act "having been assembled and been duly sworn proceeded to enquire into the cause of absence of No 635 Pte Samuel Parkes of the 4th Light Dragoons taken prisoner near Balaklava on or about 25th October 1854, and who did not return until 26th October 1855, when he was exchanged". The Court found that Parkes "was not taken prisoner by the enemy, through wilful neglect of duty on his part and that he returned as soon as regularly exchanged and therefore recommended that the said Prisoner No 635 Sameul Parkes of the 4th Light Dragoons receive the whole of the arrears of pay that may be due to him."

The citation for the Victoria Cross appeared in the London Gazette of 27th February 1857. It reads :- (referring to Trumpeter Crawford) "His horse fell and dismounted him and he lost his sword; he was attacked by two cossacks, when Pte Samuel Parkes, whose horse had been shot, saved his life by placing himself between them and the Trumpet Major (by the date of the citation, Crawford had been promoted) and drove them away with his sword. In attempting to follow the Light Cavalry in the retreat they were attacked by six Russians whom Parkes kept at bay, and retreated, fighting and defending the Trumpet Major until deprived of his sword by a cut". Parkes was personally presented with his award by Queen Victoria at an open-air ceremony in Hyde Park on 26th June 1857.

On 1st December 1857, Parkes was discharged from the Army at Aldershot "Free, at his own request after 24 years service" aged 44. In total, he had served 26 years, 121 days - including 9 years and 5 months in India. On discharge, he was described as "a good soldier", even though he was tried by a Regimental

Court Martial on 21st November 1848 and sentenced to 56 days imprisonment. By November 1857, he had been awarded four Good Conduct badges.

After discharge, he was awarded a pension of 1 shilling and 1 penny per day and, although stating he was returning to Tamworth, he moved to London where he lived for the rest of his life. In late 1857, he was sworn in as a Local At some point, Parkes reported the loss of his Victoria Cross, and was issued with a replacement. His Ghuznee Medal, the Crimea Medal with clasps for Alma, Balaklava & Sebastopol and his Turkish Crimea Medal together with both the original and replacement Victoria Crosses are now in the possession of the Regiment.

On 13th February 1858, he married Ann Jeffry at St George's Church, Hanover Square London. At the time of his death, his occupation is shown as "Inspector of Hyde Park Constabulary". He died at Stanhope Gate, Hyde Park, London on 15th November 1864 aged 49. The cause of death is given as "Apoplexy", and he was buried 4 days later in an unmarked grave in Brompton Cemetery. In May 1999, as a result of efforts by his great-great nephew, Peter Elkin, a new marble gravestone rededicating the grave was unveiled. Present were members of Parkes' family, The Queen's Royal Hussars and its forebear Regiments as well as Parkes' medals.

## **Captain Clement Walker Heneage, V.C.**

Born in Compton Bassett, Wiltshire 6th March 1831, Clement Walker Heneage was the son of George Heneage Walker-Heneage (the Member of Parliament for Devizes) and his wife Harriet. Educated at Eton and Christchurch College Oxford, he was gazetted into the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars as a Cornet on 10th August 1851. On 3rd September 1854, he became a Lieutenant, with which rank he rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade. He served throughout the Crimean War, being present at the Battles of Alma, Inkerman and Tchernaya, as well as the action at Mackenzie's Farm, the siege of Sebastopol and the Kenteh Expedition.

Heneage was a man of strong opinions. Writing after the Crimean War about the recriminations and accusations concerning the loss of the Light Brigade, he had little doubt where the blame lay, observing "It is wonderful to observe the way that fool the "British public" kicks a man directly he is down, as in the instance of unlucky Lucan. I always hated him, and so did the whole Cavalry Division, but for heaven's sake let a man have fair play - here is this unfortunate man catching it over the head and ears, merely because he obeyed an order given by the thick-headed Raglan through his still more stupid Q.M. (quartermaster) General Airey, who is about the worst of the whole headquarters staff".

After his return from the Crimea he was promoted to Captain on 12th May 1857, and once more set out on campaign, this time sailing for India with the Regiment from Cork on the S.S. Great Britain in October 1857. With the rebel leader, the Rhani of Jhansi, safe within the stronghold of Gwalior, the opposing force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose took up position on the plain below the town. Heneage commanded a squadron of 8th Hussars who surprised the enemy with a flanking attack, catching them unawares. "There was no pretence of resistance any longer except from a slight, fully-armed figure that was helplessly whirled along in this cataract of men and horses. Again and again this one leader, gesticulating and vociferating, attempted to stem the torrent of routed rebels, but all in vain. There was no possibility of holding up the broken Mahrattas, and at last a chance shot struck down, across his horse's neck, this one champion of the retreating force. A moment later the swaying figure was overtaken, and one stroke from a Hussar's sabre ended the whole matter. There was no time to halt, for the victory had to be pressed home; but as the Squadron returned, it was discovered that it was the Rhani of Jhansi herself who had thus ended her meteoric career".

The citation for the Victoria Cross appeared in the London Gazette of 26th January 1859. It reads :- "Selected for the Victoria Cross by their companions. In the gallant charge made by a Squadron of the Regiment at Gwalior on 17th June 1858, when supported by a division of the Bombay Horse Artillery, and Her

Majesty's 95th Regiment, they routed the enemy, who were advancing against Brigadier Smith's position, charged through the rebel camp into two batteries, capturing and bringing fire from the fort and town." (Field Force Orders by Major General Sir Hugh Henry Rose, G.C.B. Commanding Central India Field Force, dated Camp Gwalior 28th June 1858).

He took the rank of Brevet-Major on 20th July 1858, and on 16th November 1860, purchased the rank of Major in place of Major Edward Phillips who retired by sale of Commission. He retired from the Army by the sale of his own Commission on 20th July 1868.

On 7th December 1865, at St Paul's Church Sketty, South Wales, he married Henrietta Letitia Victoria Vivian the daughter of the MP for Swansea. Their children were Godfrey Clement Walker (born 17th May 1868) later Major Grenadier Guards, D.S.O., M.V.O.; John Vivian Walker (born 27th May 1869); Algernon Walker (born 4th February 1871) later Rear-Admiral, Royal Navy C.B., M.V.O.; Claud Walker (born 24th April 1875) later Barrister at Law; Aline Dulcie Walker (born 18th August 1877). Clement Walker Heneage, V.C. died at Compton Bassett House, Compton Bassett, Wiltshire on 9th December 1901 aged 70 years, 9 months.

Besides his Victoria Cross, Heneage was awarded the Crimea Medal with clasps for Alma, Balaklava, Inkerman and Sebastopol; the Turkish Crimea Medal and the Indian Mutiny Medal with the clasp for Central India.

## **1298 Farrier George Hollis, V.C.**

Born in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire, most probably in September 1833., the son of a servant named Edward Hollis and his wife Ruth. He was christened at Chipping Sodbury by the Curate, Thomas Smith on 22nd Spetember 1833. Hollis enlisted into the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars at Exeter on 28th April 1854, when he was described as aged 20 years, 6 months, 5feet 7 inches tall with brown hair, hazel eyes and a fresh complexion. Prior to military service, his trade was described as being a smith.

He joined the Regiment in the Crimea in late September 1855, before returning in April 1856 to Portsmouth where they were inspected by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. On 8th October 1857, twenty-eight Officers and 489 Other Ranks including Hollis embarked for India aboard Brunel's S.S. Great Britain.

As part of the Central India Field Force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose, the 8th Hussars approached the town of Gwalior which had been captured by the rebels under their warrior princess, the Rhani of Jhansi. The rebel army was attacked on the plain outside the town. In the battle that followed, the Rhani was killed by an 8th Hussar, and the rebel army routed.

During the charge at Gwalior, Farrier Hollis was wounded in the hand, making further service in the Regiment impossible. Hollis returned to England and was discharged from the Army at Chatham Invalid Depot on 1st November 1859, described as having a "gun shot wound of right hand necessitating the amputation of middle and ring fingers. Wound received in action with the enemy on the 19th of June 1858 at Gwalior. Not the result of vice or intemperance". He was aged 26 on discharge, his papers record of his character show "it is good", with one Good Conduct badge. He served 4 years 332 days, although a footnote on his discharge paper shows a further 221 days service.

Elected by his comrades for the highest honour, the citation for the Victoria Cross appeared in the London Gazette of 26th January 1859. It reads :-  
"Selected for the Victoria Cross by their companions. In the gallant charge made by a Squadron of the Regiment at Gwalior on 17th June 1858, when supported by a division of the Bombay Horse Artillery, and Her Majesty's 95th Regiment, they routed the enemy, who were advancing against Brigadier Smith's position, charged through the rebel camp into two batteries, capturing and bringing fire from the fort and town." P (Field Force Orders by Major General Sir Hugh Henry Rose, G.C.B. Commanding Central India Field Force, dated Camp Gwalior 28th June 1858).

Following his discharge from the Army, Hollis was employed by Messers Snow and Company, Wine Merchants. His death certificate records that he died at 85

Cowick Street, St Thomas, Devon on 16th May 1879 in the presence of his sister, Mrs Eliza Burnett. The cause of death is shown as "congestion of the lungs", and his occupation at the time was shown as "Pensioner".

Besides his Victoria Cross, Hollis was awarded the Indian Mutiny Medal with the Central India clasp. He had arrived in the Crimea too late to qualify for the award of the Crimea Medal.

### **Private John Pearson, V.C.**

Born at the Parish of Seacroft in Leeds, Yorkshire on 19th January 1825, Pearson enlisted into the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars at Leeds on 11th January 1844, aged 18 years and 11 months. At his enlistment, he gave his trade as Gardener, and is described as being 5ft 10inches in height, of fair complexion with grey eyes and light brown hair. He embarked for the Crimea with his Regiment aboard the Horse Transport "Wilson Kennedy" on 2nd May 1854.

Pearson served throughout the Crimean War, and was awarded the Crimea Medal with clasps for Alma, Balaklava and Sebastopol as well as the Turkish Crimea Medal.

Following the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, the Regiment embarked for India from Cork aboard the SS "Great Britain" on 8th October 1857.

On 17th June 1858, a force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose, including the 8th Hussars, attacked the rebels on the plain outside Gwalior in Central India. A Squadron of the 8th Hussars, including Private John Pearson, charged and helped rout the enemy. During this action, he was wounded with a sword cut to the right shoulder. For his bravery he was elected by his comrades and awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation from the London Gazette 29th January 1859 reads:-

"Selected for the Victoria Cross by their companions. In the gallant charge made by a Squadron of the Regiment at Gwalior, on the 17th June, 1858, when, supported by a division of the Bombay Horse Artillery, and Her Majesty's 95th Regiment, they routed the enemy, who were advancing against Brigadier Smith's position, charged through the rebel camp into two batteries, capturing and bringing into their camp two of the enemy's guns, under a heavy and converging fire from the fort and town". (Field Force Orders by Major General Sir Hugh Henry Rose, G.C.B. Commanding Central India Field Force dated Camp Gwalior 28th June, 1858).

Pearson was decorated with the Victoria Cross in India by Lieutenant General Sir H. Somerset.

He was promoted from Private to Corporal on 22nd July 1859. He transferred to the 19th Hussars as a Private on 1st November 1863 (his Regimental Number was 668). Promoted to Corporal on 1st December 1863, and to Sergeant on 6th August 1865. He was invalided to England from Meerut in India on 8th November 1867.

He was discharged from the Army at the Royal Hospital, Netley on 9th June 1868 described as "Unfit for further service. Asthenia {a debilitating weakness}. Has no actual disease but is weak and unequal to the active duties of a soldier. Can contribute towards own maintainance. Not aggravated by vice or misconduct". On his discharge, he went to live in Halifax, Yorkshire.

Of his total service of 23 years, 295 days, Pearson spent 1 year, 10 months in Turkey and the Crimea and 8 years, 11 months in India. His conduct was described as exemplary, and when promoted to Sergeant, he held 4 Good Conduct badges. He was entered twice in the Regimental Defaulters Book, but was never tried by Court-Martial.

He was entitled to the Crimea Medal with clasps Alma, Balaklava, Sebastopol, the Indian Mutiny Medal with clasp Central India, Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (awarded with a gratuity of £5 on 22nd September 1865) and the Turkish Crimea Medal. On 3rd September 1867, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal with an annuity of £15.

On 6th April 1851, he married Selina at Trowbridge in Wiltshire. The India Office records show a son, Stephen Edward, dying of cholera at Meerut on 1st August 1861 aged 4 years, and another son, Edward, being born there on 7th October 1862 and being baptised on 6th November that year.

He emigrated to Canada with his family in 1880, and by 1888 had a farm near Little Pike Bay about 9 miles west of Lion's Head, Bruce Peninsular, Ontario. He died on 18th April 1892, with his V.C. pension awarded to his widow. A plaque was erected to his memory in the National Park at Lion's Head which is inscribed "John Pearson. V.C. 1825-1892. Born in England, Pearson served in the Crimean War and won his decoration for outstanding gallantry during the Indian Mutiny. He later emigrated to Canada and settled near Lion's Head".

## **Sergeant Joseph Ward, V.C.**

Born at Kinsale , County Cork in Ireland in 1832, Joseph Ward enlisted into the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars at London on 27th November 1854. At his enlistment, he gave his trade as Clerk, and is described as being 5ft 7inches in height. He joined his Regiment in the Crimea on 14th July 1855, and was promoted from Private to Corporal on 4th December that year. 14 days later, he was appointed Probationary Orderly Room Clerk.

Following the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, the Regiment embarked for India from Cork aboard the SS "Great Britain" on 8th October 1857. Ward was promoted once more, this time ranking as a Sergeant on 1st May 1858.

A force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose, including the 8th Hussars, operated against the Rebels in Central India where they took part in numerous battles and skirmishes. The rebel stronghold of Jhansi was captured on 5th April 1858 after a short seige. The Rebel leaders, who included the fearsome warrior princess, the Rhani of Jhansi, captured the town of Gwalior.

On 17th June 1858, Rose attacked the Rebels on the plain outside Gwalior. A Squadron of the 8th Hussars charged and helped rout the enemy. During this charge, Joseph Ward was wounded, but for his bravery he was elected by his comrades and awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation from the London Gazette 29th January 1859 reads:-

"Selected for the Victoria Cross by their companions. In the gallant charge made by a Squadron of the Regiment at Gwalior, on the 17th June, 1858, when, supported by a division of the Bombay Horse Artillery, and Her Majesty's 95th Regiment, they routed the enemy, who were advancing against Brigadier Smith's position, charged through the rebel camp into two batteries, capturing and bringing into their camp two of the enemy's guns, under a heavy and converging fire from the fort and town". (Field Force Orders by Major General Sir Hugh Henry Rose, G.C.B. Commanding Central India Field Force dated Camp Gwalior 28th June, 1858).

Ward was confirmed as Sergeant from 6th April 1860, and was appointed to the local rank of Troop Sergeant Major. For an unknown offence, he was reduced to the rank of Private by a Regimental Court-Martial on 26th March 1862. He re-enlisted for a further 12 years service at Birmingham on 19th January 1866, and was once more promoted to Corporal on 6th June that year. He was confined over 17-19th June, and was reduced again to Private by a Regimental Court-Martial on 20th June 1866.

At the time of his death at the age of 40 at Longford, Ireland on 23rd November 1872, his next of kin is given as his father Thomas Ward living in Norwich Barracks, Norfolk. Although he left no will, he is shown as having £13/5s/7d in his credits.

## **Regimental Sergeant Major James Champion, V.C.**

Born in Hammersmith, London, in 1832, he enlisted into the 8th King's Royal Irish Light Dragoons on 15th September 1851, when he was described as aged 19, 5 feet 8 and a half inches tall. Two days later, he received the "intermediate approval" and was paid £1. On 24th September, he received the "final approval" and was given the balance of his enlistment bounty - £6 15 shillings and sixpence. He was sent to the Regiment at Hounslow where he received his riding training. At this time his daily pay was 1 shilling and threepence. Prior to military service, he was described as being a Servant.

He embarked for the Crimea at Devonport on the Horse Transport "Shooting Star" on 25th April 1854, landing there some months later. He took part in the Battle of Alma on 20th September, but did not take part in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava or the Battle of Inkerman. On 5th October he was sent to hospital, and did not rejoin the 8th Hussars until the 23rd November. On 15th December 1854 he was promoted to Corporal, and two months later to Sergeant. This rapid promotion was, in part, due to the heavy casualties the Regiment suffered at Balaklava. Over the next few months he is shown as being on both "letter duty" (presumably Regimental Post Orderly) and with his Troop forming Lord Raglan's escort. He remained with the Regiment until it sailed for the UK in April 1856.

Champion was promoted to Troop Sergeant Major with an increase in pay to 8 shillings 7 pence a day. It was with this rank that he served in Ireland, first at Dundalk then at Queenstown from where they embarked for India in October 1857. A month later on 11th November, TSM Champion was placed on the married establishment of the Regiment.

The citation for the Victoria Cross appeared in the London Gazette of 20th January 1860. It reads :- "For distinguished bravery at Beejapore, on the 9th of September 1858, when both the Officers attached to the troop were disabled, and himself severely wounded at the commencement of the action by a ball through his body, in having continued at his duty forward throughout the pursuit, and disabled several of the enemy with his pistol, also recommended for distinguished conduct at Gwalior".

A rather more colourful account of Champion's bravery in D.H. Parry's book "the V.C. - Its Heroes and Their Valour" writes of Acting Regimental Sergeant Major Champion "... when both his Officers were wounded, and he himself badly hit in the chest by a bullet, he led the troop in hot pursuit of the rebels at Beejapore for three hours, on a fine bay Herat horse, 16 hands high; killing 450 of them with his forty men!

Faint from loss of blood, he brought his party in, and had lost only one man killed and eight wounded. They lifted him reeling off his horse, and laid him under a banyan tree, where the surgeon, finding that the ball had gone clean through his chest and out the back, dressed the wounds with the Sergeant Major's own shirt tail, as there were no bandages to be had.

"Never mind, sir", said Champion to his Major, who came to commiserate with him, "we've given them a good doing!" And so thought Colonel Robertson who recommended him at once for the V.C., saying "There never was a better little action fought and you shall have the order of merit".

After a further seven years in India, the Regiment returned for England, landing at Portsmouth in April/May 1864 before marching to Brighton. The previous year, Champion re-engaged to complete his 21 years service, and for the next ten years he served in various garrisons in England Scotland and Ireland.

On 23rd December 1873 at Longford in Ireland, James Champion was discharged from the Army , completing 22 years with the colours at the end of his second period of engagement. With a daily pension of 2 shillings and sixpence, he was given a warrant to travel via Dublin to Gloucester with his wife Sarah and their four children. Whilst living in Gloucester, he enlisted into yeomanry, and was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Cheltenham Troop of the the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars from 1873-83. He died at 37 Dewhurst Road, South Hammersmith, London on 4th May 1902 aged 71, and was buried in Hammersmith Cemetary.



*1194 Regimental Sergeant Major James Champion, V.C.*