

## HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



### SIR GEORGE WHITE VC: Soldier “Hero of Ladysmith”

George Stuart White was born in Portstewart but the family lived in Broughshane for many years.

White first achieved distinction in the Afghan War of 1878-80. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his heroism in the Battle of Charasia in India in 1879 and was knighted in 1886 for his military service in Burma. As commander in chief in India (1893-98), he was an instrument of Great Britain's "forward" policy of combating any Russian advance toward India by aggressive campaigns, military and diplomatic, in the borderlands. His greatest fame came in the South African War when he defended Ladysmith against a 118-day siege by the Boers (1899-1900). He became governor of Gibraltar (1900-1904) and was made field marshal in 1903.

He was 44 years old when the following deeds took place in Afghanistan for which he was awarded the VC:

*For conspicuous bravery during the engagement at Charasiah on the 6th October, 1879, when, finding that the artillery and rifle fire failed to dislodge the enemy from a fortified hill which it was necessary to capture, Major White led an attack upon it in person. Advancing with two companies of his regiment; and climbing from one steep ledge to another, he came upon a body of the enemy, strongly posted, and outnumbering his force by about 8 to 1. His men being much exhausted, and immediate action being necessary, Major White took a rifle, and, going on by himself, shot the leader of the enemy. This act so intimidated the rest that they fled round the side of the hill, and the position was won. Again, on the 1st September, 1880, at the battle of Candahar, Major White, in leading the final charge, under a heavy fire from the enemy, who held a strong position and were supported by two guns, rode straight up to within a few yards of them, and seeing the guns, dashed forward and secured one, immediately after which the enemy retired.*

The story of the *Seige of Ladysmith Four Months Beseiged* is available on Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16466/16466-h/16466-h.htm>

There is a memorial in the Broughshane churchyard where he was buried.

**Patrick Devlin**