

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



COLOUR SERJEANT JOHN LUCAS VC

John Lucas was born in Clashganny, Myshall Parish, Bagnalstown, Co. Carlow, Ireland, in 1826.

In 1861 he was about 35 years old and serving in New Zealand as a Colour Sergeant in the 40th (2nd Somersetshire) Regiment of Foot, later to become the 1st Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment. The Regiment was engaged in the First Taranaki War, against the Maori, at Waitara on the North Island.

On March 18 he was acting as Sergeant of a party employed as skirmishers to the right of No. 7, Redoubt, and close to the Huirangi Bush, facing the left of the positions occupied by the Maori. According to the citation for his Victoria Cross:

At about 4 o'clock, a very heavy and well-directed fire was suddenly opened upon them from the Bush, and the high ground on the left. Three men being wounded simultaneously, two of them mortally, assistance was called for in order to have them carried to the rear: a file was immediately sent, but had scarcely arrived, when one of them fell, and Lieutenant Rees was wounded at the same time. Colour-Serjeant Lucas, under heavy fire from Maori warriors, who were not more than thirty yards distant, immediately ran up to the assistance of this Officer, and sent one man with him to the rear. He then took charge of the arms belonging to the killed and wounded men, and maintained his position until the arrival of supports under Lieutenants Gibson and Whelan.

As a result of his action, John Lucas received the first Victoria Cross to be awarded to the Regiment which became the South Lancashire Regiment.

By then promoted to Sergeant Major, he was invested with the VC at a full parade of all British troops in the area, at Ellerslie Racecourse, Auckland, New Zealand, on October 2, 1862.

John Lucas died at his home in Dublin on February 29, 1892, aged 66. He is buried there in St. James churchyard, James Street. Sadly his grave is no longer marked. The headstone was allegedly destroyed by the IRA during the Easter Uprising in 1916.

His Victoria Cross is in possession of the Lancashire Infantry Museum.