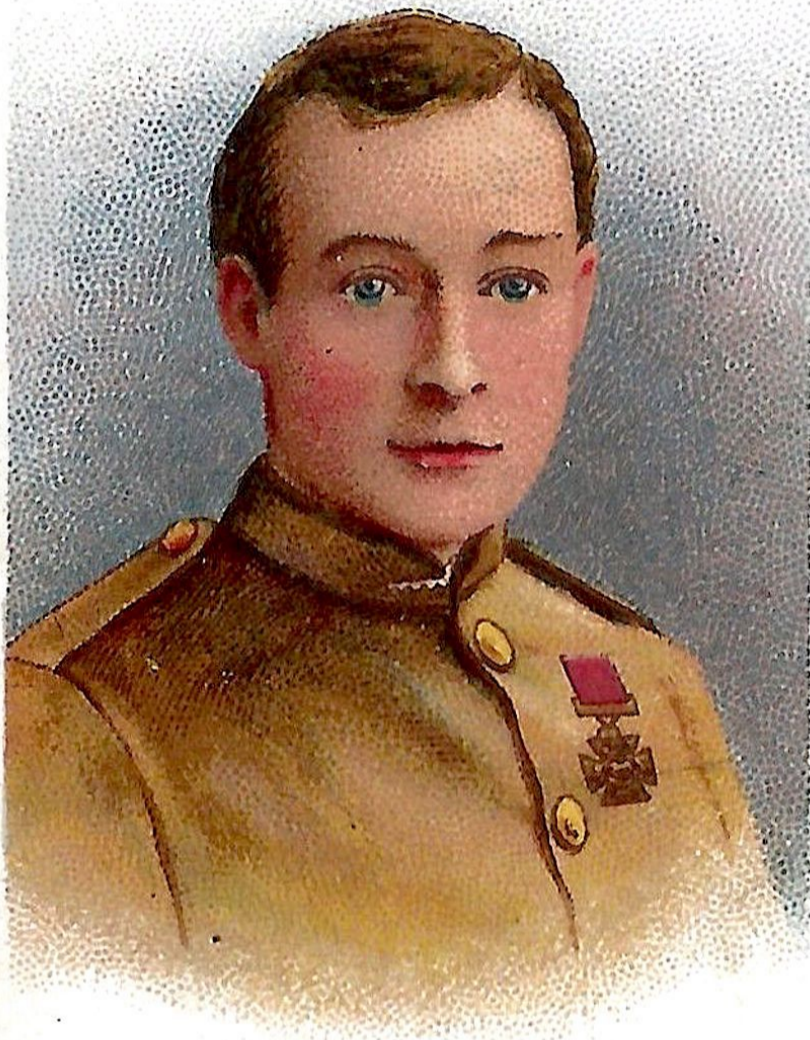


# Charles Burley Ward VC

## A Whitchurch Mystery

V. C. HEROES - BOER WAR.  
Nº 69.



Private C. Ward, V.C.  
of the Kings Own Yorkshire Light infantry  
awarded the Victoria Cross for carrying a  
message under a hail of bullets, securing  
reinforcements which saved the post at Lindley,  
June 26, 1900.

PHOTO BY JACOBS, SANDGATE



Researched by Ceri Stennett & Nigel Lewis. Awen @ The Library

## Introduction



Within the churchyard at St Mary, Whitchurch, in north Cardiff, can be found the grave of an old soldier. One of many servicemen who have their last resting place in the quiet surroundings of a village church setting, surrounded by houses, a school and shops.

This serviceman is however, different from the those of the First and Second World Wars who share the same churchyard, along with the hundreds of other civilian graves and memorials of local people.

What sets him apart is the fact that he was a holder of Britain's highest award for gallantry - the Victoria Cross - won on the battlefields of South Africa in 1900. By a quirk of fate, he was also the last serviceman to be invested with the award by Queen Victoria.

Charles Burley Ward was a Yorkshireman who moved to Cardiff for work and stayed.

Here, we look at his life and connection with the area through contemporary newspaper reports, our own research and those of others. References to these can be found towards the end of this booklet.

## Early Years

Charles was born on 10th July 1876 at 5, Tulip Street in Hunslet, a working class area of Leeds in Yorkshire. Like so many of his time, he was born into poverty, his unmarried parents being Londoner, George Burley, a labourer and fitter's helper (aged 27) and mother, Ann Elizabeth Ward, a native of Leeds, who was 22 years old at the time of his birth. George and Ann never married, even after George, a second son, arrived in early 1881.

1876 Nov. 5 <sup>th</sup> Baptised July 10 <sup>th</sup> No. 1256 1876	Charles Burley	Ann Ward	Tulip St.	Single Woman	Arthur Holland Vicar
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Charles was baptised at St Thomas in Leeds on 5th November 1876, with only his mother being named as a parent and tellingly, her occupation being given as 'single woman'. The shame and stigma attached to illegitimate children was all too obvious. Interestingly however, there seems to have been something of a convention in these circumstances where the father was recorded, through the child taking his surname as a middle name.

The 1881 census return shows Ann and her two children living at 9, Pendulum Street in Leeds (below). Ann was working as a nail cutter - a worker in the process of manufacturing nails for use in building.

9	9	D.	D.	1	Ann. Ward.	Head.	Unm.	20	Nail cutter.	D.	D.
					Charles B. D.	Son.	4		- Scholar.	D.	D.
					George B. D.	Son.	3m			D.	D.



# Teenage Years

By 1891, the full family of four can be found at 9, Flax Street, Hunslet, all under the surname of Burley, with George and Ann being described as 'married', though as mentioned earlier, this was not the case.

231	Flax Street	1	George	Burley	Wid	121	39		X	Widow	Wid.
			Ann	de	Wife	121	37		X	Yorkshire	Wid.
			Charles	de	Son		14		X	de	de
			George	de	Son		10			de	de

Charles would no doubt have left school at fourteen (around 1890) and appears to have found work as a nail maker like his mother, as well as a general labourer. However, he clearly had a yearning for the military and joined the 4th (Militia) Battalion, Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment), often known just as 'the Yorkshire Regiment', a reserve battalion. He then attested for the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) as a regular soldier in Leeds on 29th April 1897. Interestingly, he gives his age as 19 years 10 months, when actually he was almost a year older. He joined on a standard short service engagement of seven years with the regiment, followed by five years in the army reserve, which in practice meant returning to civilian life after the seven years, plus attending drills and annual training camps when required.

# Army Life

Joining the army or navy was a common route out of poverty for young men from all over the country. During the latter part of the 19th century, Britain had had a century of involvement in hostilities around the globe: the Peninsula War with France which had ended on the battlefield of Waterloo in Belgium in 1815, endless skirmishes with tribal leaders in India, Afghanistan and East and West Africa, as well as in China (1842 & 1857), the Crimean War (1854-1856), the Indian Mutiny (1857), the Zulu War (1877-1879) and Egypt and Sudan (1882-1889).

Recruits were always needed, so Charles knew that it was a chance to be fed regularly, clothed, trained, get paid and probably see some of the world. At his medical his measurements were:

**SHORT SERVICE.**

No. 3824 Name: Charles Ward Corps: Yorkshire L.I.

I, Charles Ward do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Signature of Recruit: Charles Ward  
Signature of Witness: J. Hall

**OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.**

I, Charles Ward do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to Her Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

**CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.**

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at Leeds on this 29th day of April 1897.

Signature of the Justice: [Signature]



height: 5'6", weight: 123 lbs, chest measurement: 33" (minimum), 34 1/2" (expanded). His complexion was sallow, he had blue eyes and light brown hair. Religion was given as Church of England. Several scars were noted, one on his chest and another on the back of his head, but he was passed as fit to join the army as a Private and given the regimental number 5480. His next of kin was noted as his father, George, living at 14,

Gisburn Yard, Hunslet.

Charles would then have undergone a period of training with the regiment before being considered fit for active service and garrison duties, which often were in Yorkshire, or in this case, Ireland. Later that summer he attained the army 3rd class certificate of education. The 1st Battalion of the KOYLI was serving in Mullingar, Ireland, in August 1897 and Charles joined them in May 1899, before being posted to the 2nd Battalion.

## Charles Becomes A Hero - The Boer War (1899-1902)

There had long been tension between British forces and the Boer farmers of South Africa over British control in the area but the discovery of gold in the South African Republic upped the ante. Although there were some attempts at negotiations, the Boer forces felt that Britain was unlikely to soften their stance and they decided to move first. In early October 1899, the South African Republic demanded the withdrawal of British troops from their borders. This was rejected by the British, and the



Second Boer War broke out later that month. Thousands of British and Australian troops, as well as the Royal Navy, were soon headed for the Cape and quickly thrown into action against very resourceful opponents. It soon became apparent that this would be a stern test for the Imperial forces. Young Private Ward was amongst them with the KOYLI.

In June 1900, he was part of a group of KOYLI soldiers who were surrounded by Boer fighters at Lindley, a small town on the banks of the Vals River, in the Orange Free State.

There were many casualties in the ranks and with the officers. Charles volunteered to run from their position to a signal station and take a message asking for reinforcements. It would be under very heavy fire. The officers felt that he was certain to be killed, but Charles insisted. He went, delivered the message, and even returned to confirm that reinforcements were on their way, despite having been shot in the arm.

For the act, he was recommended for the VC and it was granted. His citation: 'On the 26th June, 1900, at Lindley, a picquet of the Yorkshire Light Infantry was surrounded on three sides by about 500 Boers, at close quarters. The two officers were wounded and all but six of their men were killed or wounded. Private Ward then volunteered to take a message asking for reinforcements to the Signalling Station about 150 yards in the rear of the post.

His offer was at first refused owing to the practical certainty of his being shot; but, on his insisting, he was allowed to go. He got across untouched through a storm of shots from each flank, and, having delivered his message, he voluntarily returned from a place of absolute safety, and recrossed the fire-swept ground to assure his commanding officer that the message had been sent.

On this occasion he was severely wounded. But for this gallant action the post would certainly have been captured.'

The award was announced in the London Gazette of 28th September 1900. He was the first soldier from the regiment to be awarded the highest honour for bravery. His jacket, complete with bullet hole in the left arm, is now part of the KOYLI Regimental Museum collection (right). He was the 475th man to receive the VC.



## The Homecoming



When Charles returned to Hunslet, in December 1900, he was given a hero's welcome. Greeted by hundreds of people at the train station, including the Lord Mayor, councillors and his family, Charles seemed overwhelmed by the attention. After travelling through crowds, with music provided by the KOYLI band, Charles arrived at the Grove Hotel for a celebratory luncheon. The Leeds Mercury newspaper reported that Charles was asked to say a few words, which was interrupted by a round of singing 'For he's a jolly good fellow'.

He said "I am highly honoured by your flattering reception.." and with a 'shy laugh' said "I have only done my duty." Charles was awarded a specially struck gold medal by Mr William Owen of Leeds and a cheque for £600, equivalent to over £77,000 today. The Leeds Mercury published a poem that had been specially written for Charles, titled 'A Welcome from T'Leeds Loiner' - loiner being a slang name for someone from Leeds. This is reproduced at the end of the booklet.



The medal was awarded by Queen Victoria herself on 15th December 1900 at Windsor Castle only weeks before she died, making his the last VC to be awarded during her reign. He further received the Queen's South Africa Medal with two clasps - Cape Colony and Orange Free State (above). The wounds from the action meant he was declared unfit for service by 4th January 1901 and discharged. At the time of the 1901 census at the end of March, he was still being treated at Leeds Infirmary.

11 Charles Ward . . . S ~~X3~~ Invalided Soldiers - Leeds

His fame spread further after he was filmed being interviewed by Ralph Pringle for a silent piece for Mitchell and Kenyon, pioneering film-makers, done in the back yard of a pub. It was shown in many cinemas (see image in introduction). Remarkably, a copy of the footage was rediscovered only a few years ago and fully restored.

## A Civilian Once Again

Back in 'civvie street', Charles used some of his money to open a newsagents and tobacconist shop at 1, Church Street, Hunslet. This he ran between 1902 and 1908.

On 10th October 1904 at St Mary the Virgin, his local church, he married Emily Kaye from Leeds who was 21. His profession was given as 'drill-instructor'. The couple would go on to have four children: Lilian (1905-1994); Edith (1906-1996); Charles Llewellyn (1908-1932) and Dorothy (1910-1980).

1904 . . . Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church of <i>Hunslet</i> in the Parish of <i>Hunslet</i> in the County of <i>Leeds</i>								
Column No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
275	<i>Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 1904</i>	<i>Charles Ward V.C</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Beckler</i>	<i>Drill-Instructor</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Church St</i>	<i>George Ward</i>	<i>Labourer</i>
		<i>Emily Kaye</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>1<sup>st</sup> Church St</i>	<i>George Allen Kaye</i>	<i>Painter</i>
Married in the <i>Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <i>Established Church</i> by <i>John Croucher Spurr</i> as after <i>Deamus</i> by me, <i>R. Mann</i>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>Charles Ward</i>	in the Presence of us,		<i>Polly Longbottom</i>			

A job opportunity arose for him in South Wales and the family (including his widowed father, George) came to live at 58, Elm Street, Roath, Cardiff, in the spring of 1908, then moving to 55, Allensbank Road, Heath, and finally to 3, Soberton Avenue, Gabalfa, by the time of the 1911 census. Charles became a teacher of physical education for the Glamorgan County Education Committee, a position he held until 1914. During that time he worked at the Grammar School in Bridgend and the County School in Barry.

Number of Schedule **251**  
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

**CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.**

*Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.*

*The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.*

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.					PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.			BIRTHPLACE of every Person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.	LANGUAGE SPOKEN.
		For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.	Write "Single," "Married," "Widowed," or "Widow," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Completed years the present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year, write "under one."	Total Children Born Alive.	Children still Living.	Children who have Died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.				
1. <i>George Ward</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>60</i>		<i>Widowed</i>					<i>Retired. Victoria helper 350</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>Leeds, Yorkshire</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>English</i>
2. <i>Charles Ward</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>34</i>		<i>Married</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Physical Instructor 000</i>	<i>Glamorgan County Education Committee</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
3. <i>Emily Ward</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>28</i>		<i>Married</i>								<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
4. <i>Lillian Ward</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>5</i>		<i>—</i>								<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
5. <i>Edith Ward</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>4</i>		<i>—</i>								<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
6. <i>Charles Lewellyn Ward</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>3 yrs</i>		<i>—</i>								<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>
7. <i>Dorothy Ward</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>8 months</i>		<i>—</i>								<i>Barbly, Glamorgan</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—			Total		
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.	Males	Females	Persons		
(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>		
(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on this Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.					

Initials of Enumerator *H. J. W.*

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature *Charles Ward*

Postal Address *3 Soberton Avenue, Gabalfa, Cardiff.*

*Seven*

In 1913, he took his first step into Freemasonry. From their records, he was listed as a 36 year old Physical Instructor, resident in Cardiff. Above his occupation, in brackets, was recorded 'Victoria Cross.' In March, 1914 he became a master mason and was presented with his Grand Lodge Certificate on 5th May 1914.

## The First World War (1914-1918)

With the outbreak of the First World War, he re-enlisted into the KOYLI as 2581, Private, on 10th September 1914 and was promoted to Corporal and posted to the 8th battalion a few days later. Shortly after that he was promoted to Sergeant, then Colour Sergeant. In November he transferred to the Army Gymnastic Staff as Company Sergeant Major Instructor. He spent most of the war with the Training Reserve on duties at various camps including Pontefract and Ripon as well as in Bristol. In addition, he was a regular speaker at recruiting and fund raising events.

A final transfer came to the Duke of Wellington's (9/West Riding) Regiment in 1918 (No: 35893) and he eventually made it to France in the last few months of the war in charge of a party from Clipstone Camp, near Mansfield. He was discharged on 21st November 1918 as

Warrant Officer Class II, Company Sergeant Major, having served for four years and 73 days. He was discharged under King's Regulation Para 392 (xvi). His war pension began immediately, it being stated that synovitis to his right knee was the cause of his disability, which was attributed to his military service. More sinister was the mention of 'Mania' being another disability, though one of the pension cards notes that this was 'non-attributable to or aggravated by military service' (below).

Form No. S.B. 36.

WARD (VC) Christian) Charles Regional No. 5/MW/594

Surname (in block letters) Unit and Regiment or Corps. West Riding Regt. No. 35893 Rank C. Sgt Major

Date of Discharge: 21. 11. 18. Year of Birth: 1877 Marital Status S. = Single W. = Widower M. = Married Married

Address: 2 Selston Avenue Cardiff Date of commencement of Pension: 22. 11. 18.

Disability: Synovitis Rt Knee 1. 2. Mania 3. 4. State whether attributable to or aggravated by Service or non-attributable: 1. Attrib 2. non attrib or agg.

Particulars of Awards for previous Service (if any)

POST-AWARD CORRESPONDENCE. Checked 11/22/18

Date of Letter.	ACTION TAKEN. NOTE.—In this column are to be entered particulars of action taken before a definite reply is given, e.g., date of acknowledgment, date of reference to Local Committee or to Records, and date of their reply.	Date of final Disposal.	REMARKS.
	Pensioners Deceased	29/10/21	

OTHER ACTION.

19-1-21  
27-1-21  
7/2/21  
16/3/21  
21/1/22  
2/2/22  
4/3/22



It seems likely that the army decided that it would be best to use Charles in a non-fighting role, given his status as a VC holder. Clearly his abilities as a drill instructor meant that he could be put to good use in the training of soldiers, whilst also being available for recruiting and 'flag waving' exercises - particularly in his native Yorkshire. No doubt Charles would have been well aware of this, but would not have been in a position to change the situation. In addition, he was already 38 when the war started. He received the British War and Victory Medals (right) plus Silver War Badge (No. B93245, above) for his services.



## Troubled Times

Around 1918, the relationship between Charles and wife Emily seems to have become permanently fractured. It is believed she had begun a relationship with an army sergeant (Sergeant Major Downes) in Cardiff and had gone back to Yorkshire for six weeks. In May 1918 she wrote to Charles stating: "I am leaving your house for ever, and I never wish to see you again. I know I have done wrong, and you can take what action you like".

Emily had been seen drinking regularly at public houses near their home and their domestic problems soon became public knowledge in the area. She left the family home and lodged for nine months in nearby Manor Street in Cathays from the middle of the year. After attempts at a reconciliation and asking her to go back to Leeds, Charles filed divorce proceedings against Emily in October.

For a period of time after his return from the army in late 1918, Charles lodged in Porth in the Rhondda whilst working as a drill instructor. He also fulfilled the role at Cardiff Barracks in Cathays and the University College. He sent the children back to Yorkshire to be cared for whilst proceedings took their course. On occasions when he met his wife in public, harsh words were spoken accordingly to a witness.

Tragedy then struck in the spring of 1919 when Emily took her own life, committing suicide at a railway level crossing near Monachty Farm (now Mynachdy estate) in Gabalfa. Her body being discovered on Friday 28th February. At the subsequent inquest, details of the breakdown of their marriage were recorded, as well as Emily's difficulties with drinking and

relationship with another man.

Witnesses attested to often seeing Emily in a poor state and one claimed that she was sleeping outdoors and had tried to take her life previously using salts of lemon - only a few days before she went to the Taff Vale Railway crossing.

A verdict of 'Suicide during temporary insanity' was returned, very much in keeping with the custom and practice of the time. No details were published regarding the mental state of Charles after his return from four years military service, and in all respects he appears to have been considered as the innocent party.

### **WIFE OF V.C.: DEAD BODY ON TAFF VALE LINE.**

**A terrible tragedy occurred on the Taff Vale Railway on Friday, the mutilated body of a woman being found near a level crossing leading from Monachty Farm, Gabalfa.**

**Later the victim was identified as Mrs. Ward, of Soberton-avenue, Gabalfa, the wife of ex-Sergeant-major Charles Ward, V.C., who formerly resided with his wife at 55, Allensbank-road, Cardiff.**

**There is a sad story connected with the tragedy. Mrs. Ward, it is said, had been separated from her husband owing to her conduct, and the V.C. hero went to reside at Porth, but is now back at Cardiff.**

**Sergeant-major Ward won his V.C. in 1900 when a private in the Yorkshire Light Infantry during the Boer War, and he had later acted as drill instructor at Cardiff University College. He is now engaged at Cardiff Barracks.**

**Inspector Bennett took charge of the body, which was discovered by an engine-driver.**

## His Final Years

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, Charles was left with many issues to resolve, not least the welfare of his four children and the need to continue to earn a wage to feed them, and supplement his war pension. The pension paid him 10 shillings 8 pence per week and an additional 5 shillings per week for each child. In addition, his elderly father, George, was still living with them.

In q3.1919 he married for a second time, to a cousin, Annie Elizabeth McNally from Leeds, and she moved into the home in Soberton Avenue. In March 1920, they had a son, Eric Burley. As time went on however, it became clear that Charles was struggling with his mental health and he was admitted to the Glamorgan County Asylum in Bridgend. He died there on 29th December 1921 'after a prolonged illness', an announcement being given in the Western Mail the following day. It is interesting to wonder why he was admitted to a hospital in Bridgend, when there was a facility in Whitchurch, much closer to his home.

A military funeral was held on 3rd January 1922, with the route lined by people from his home to the churchyard of St Mary, Whitchurch. The service was conducted by the vicar of Gabalfa, Rev. R.W.Evans and the vicar of Whitchurch, Rev. Henry Williams. There was a firing party from the Welch Regiment, the band of the Royal Engineers (Signals) and his regiment, the KOYLI were also represented amongst many others. A newspaper account states that the 'parting volleys and the Last Post ended an impressive ceremony'. The family mourners included his wife, the four older children and his father, George. Other representatives came from Barry County School, the Loyal Lodge of Freemasons - Cardiff, the Park & Roath Conservative Clubs and many civic and military dignitaries, including Sgt. Sam Vickery VC. His plot is: Area B, Row 2, Grave 4.

### **CARDIFF V.C. DEAD.**

### **BRAVE DEED IN S. AFRICA RECALLED.**

Mr. Charles Burley Ward, V.C., of 3, Soberton-avenue, Heath, Cardiff, who has just passed away, served as a private in the 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry during the South African War, and at Lindley, on June 26, 1900, when a picket was surrounded on three sides by 500 Boers, Private Ward insisted on carrying a message to the signalling station for reinforcements. He delivered his message, and in returning to his comrades, he was severely wounded. His gallant conduct saved the picket from capture. In the Great War Mr. Ward served in the 2nd Battalion King's Own Light Infantry, and was a drill instructor in Kitchener's Army, stationed in Bristol.



Pte. C. Ward, V.C.

1922  
B  
Row  
2  
p.4

NAME.	Abode.	When Buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
Charles Burley Ward V.C.	Hepperton County Asylum Bradford	Jan 3	45 7/8	R.W. Wain vicar of St. Michael's

No. 537

In his will, Charles left effects of £765 (around £46,000 today). The military authorities decided that Annie was not eligible for war pension support as she married Charles after his military service had ended. According to a letter in the pension records, Annie had been notified that her pension claim had been rejected, but the letter was 'incorrectly worded' and she was 'not informed that she was not eligible for pension'. The decision was made on 19th May 1922, and the reason given was 'Soldier died of a disability neither attributable nor aggravated by military service.' A harsh way to treat the widow of a VC.

Initially, his grave was marked by a simple wooden cross, but there was no move to erect a headstone. Widow Annie, the children and father George, moved back to Yorkshire later in 1922 and the grave became neglected, the wooden cross lost, and the final resting place of Charles Burley Ward VC was forgotten.

## Posthumous Recognition

In November 1951, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, was present at a ceremonial parade outside the Civic Hall, Leeds, for the 1st Battalion, KOYLI. Two special guests were Wilfred Edwards VC, who had won the honour with the regiment during the First World War and Charles Ward's widow, Annie, who proudly wore her husband's medals for the day.

Charles is also commemorated on a plaque outside the City Art Gallery, Leeds, that lists the VC winners from the area.

## Proud wearers of the V.C.



*Mr. Wilfred Edwards, V.C., of Wortley, Leeds, and Mrs. A. E. Ward, widow of Sergeant Major Charles Bailey Ward, V.C., outside Leeds Civic Hall yesterday. They were guests at the ceremonial parade of the 1st Battalion, K.O.Y.L.I. More pictures of the parade and a description by Joe Illingworth are on Page 8.*



It was not until 1986 that a local Whitchurch resident, journalist John O'Sullivan, set about trying to discover the whereabouts of the grave in the churchyard (left). He had first been told of a 'VC buried in the village' as far back as 1963 by local youth leader, Albert Bridle, but in pre-internet days, research into such matters was a long process of visits to libraries and venues such as the Imperial War Museum in London.

A chance conversation with David Clark, a parishioner of the church and member of the Glamorgan Family History Society (GFHS), led to the grave details being found, but with the churchyard plans incomplete, a definitive location was still proving elusive. Searches were made and pieces of the jigsaw came together, especially when local resident and researcher, Betty Evans came forward, and presented a rough sketch of the likely location.

With the GFHS undertaking a mapping of all the graves within the churchyard, the grave was finally located. John was also able to contact members of the Ward family in Leeds, Welwyn Garden City and far away Australia, through the help of the Ministry of Defence. The family readily gave their permission for a headstone to be sited.

Sadly, Albert Brindle died in 1985 before a memorial to Charles could be unveiled. However, with the assistance of the Royal British Legion, a suitably inscribed headstone, in the Commonwealth War Graves style, was placed at the head of his grave, as well as a specially commissioned portrait by artist Ray Chick in the Earl Haig Club just across the road from the churchyard. Monies were also raised from sponsors and advertisers in a commemorative booklet (right). The dedication ceremony took place on 20th September 1986, eighty-six years to the week that the award of the VC was published in the London Gazette, the official government publication. Many civic dignitaries and service representatives attended the moving event. A fitting tribute indeed.



**THE LOST GRAVE**



CHARLES BURLEY WARD, V.C.

**QUEEN VICTORIA'S  
LAST HERO**

## The Mystery

A brave man, a proud Yorkshireman and an honorary 'Taff' - Charles Burley Ward was all those things. The one thing that he was not however, was a resident of Whitchurch, so why was his final resting place chosen to be the churchyard at St Mary? His home at Soberton Avenue, in the Gabalfa / Heath area of the city, was much closer to the huge council-owned Cathays Cemetery, which was the final resting place for many hundreds of servicemen as well as thousands of other Cardiffians.

Neither is there any evidence that Charles worshipped at St Mary. Indeed, St Mark's church in Gabalfa was much closer to his home (especially prior to the demolishing of the original church to make way for a new road and flyover in the late 1960s). It is interesting that at his funeral in 1922, the service was shared between the vicars from Gabalfa and Whitchurch, though it is the vicar from Gabalfa, Rev. R.W.Evans, who is listed as performing the actual burial ceremony. It is probable that we will never know the reason for the location, but as we mark the centenary year of his burial in 2022, people may rest assured that the parishioners of Whitchurch are proud that Charles Burley Ward VC rests amongst them.

## Houses That The Ward Family Lived In (as they looked in 2021)



58, Elm Street,  
Roath.



55, Allensbank Road,  
Heath.



3, Soberton Avenue,  
Gabalfa.

## Where Is The VC?

It is believed that the Victoria Cross itself, presumably with the Queen's South Africa medal and the two First World War medals, is in the hands of a private individual (not a family member) and are not part of a recognised regimental museum or services collection.



An example of a reverse is shown here (left).

The prototype VC, along with the first 111 crosses awarded, were made by the London jewellers Hancocks & Co and cast from the bronze of guns captured from the Russians in the Crimea. There is, however, a possibility that the bronze cannon used was in fact Chinese, having been captured during the First China War (1839-42) and stored at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. The decoration takes the form of a cross pattée, 1.375 inches (35mm) wide, bearing a crown surmounted by a lion, with the inscription 'FOR VALOUR'. The reverse has the recipient's details as well as the date of the act of valour. An

## Reference Sources

The compilers of this booklet are pleased to acknowledge the information found during their research from the following sources: Ancestry.co.uk - genealogy website, British Film Institute - silent footage by Mitchell & Kenyon, Find My Past.co.uk - genealogy website, Heritage Doncaster - Military Monday Episode 5 - website, Leeds Mercury newspaper - poem, Masonic Great War Project - website, Memorials to Valour - VC website, Nigel Lewis - talk given at St Mary, The Lost Grave - booklet produced for the 1986 headstone dedication, The Secret Library - Leeds Libraries Heritage website, Western Front Association - website, Western Mail newspaper - various articles & Yorkshire Evening Post newspaper - various articles.

**A LEEDS HERO**  
Private C. WARD, V.C.,  
OF HUNSLET.

**HOW HE WON THE VICTORIA CROSS.**  
PRIVATE C. WARD, of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, has been awarded the V.C. On June 26th, at Lindley, a picket of the Yorkshire Light Infantry was surrounded on three sides by about 500 Boers at close quarters. The two officers were wounded, and all but six of their men were killed or wounded. Private Ward then volunteered to take a message asking for reinforcements to the signalling station about one hundred and fifty yards in the rear of the post. His offer was at first refused owing to the practical certainty of his being shot; but on his insisting he was allowed to go. He got across untouched through a storm of bullets from each flank, and delivered his message. He voluntarily returned from a place of absolute safety and recrossed the fire-swept ground to assure his commanding officer that the message had been sent. On this occasion he was severely wounded. But for this gallant action the post would certainly have been captured.—*Graphic*.

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# A Welcome From T'Leeds Loiner - Leeds Mercury, December 1900

Good day to thee, Charles Ward, VC., reight glad to see tha' here.  
On t'scroll o'fame tha's carved thi' name, dost' hear wer Yorkshire cheer?

Tha's fowt through thick, tha's fowt through thin- dog of a feightin soart-  
Bin praised bi FM. General "Bobs," bin praised bi t'Queen and Court.

And now tha sees owd Leeds agean, wi' this long-range veldt-trained ee:  
But tha'll noan hev far to look, mi lad, for t'friends 'ais waatin' thee.

Tha comes to us through Paareberg, ower t'veldt for monny a mile;  
We're cheerin' thee through Meanwood Spruit to t'Kopjes up Belle Isle.

Tha's heard the roar o' Brition and Boer, Australia's wild "Coo-ee."  
But that'll be nowt to t'Parksides showt, at Hunslet hez for thee.  
Tha'll miss thi Pom-pom's rat-tat-tat, tha'll miss owd 4 point 7,  
But tha'll see a blaze through Taylor Foarge goa roaorin up to Heaven.

An' warm and breet, in t'deep o'nest, tha'll mark its cheerin' glow,  
Like monny a heart that's warmed for thee while tha's bin feightin' t'foe.

Soa here's to thee, Charles Ward, VC. She's pinned it on thi' breats-  
Tha's stood thi corner, fowt thi feight, Ttha's fowt it- ay wi' t'best  
Then lift it, lads, wi a three times three, a welcome hoam for Ward, VC,  
For hoam, sweet hoam - and rest.



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