

A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS CARTES DE VISITE OF LIEUTENANT MARK SEVER BELL WHO WAS AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR BRAVE ACTIONS DURING THE FIRST ASHANTI EXPEDITION AT THE BATTLE OF ORDASHU, IN WHICH HE WAS ALWAYS IN THE FRONT URGING ON FELLOW SOLDIERS.



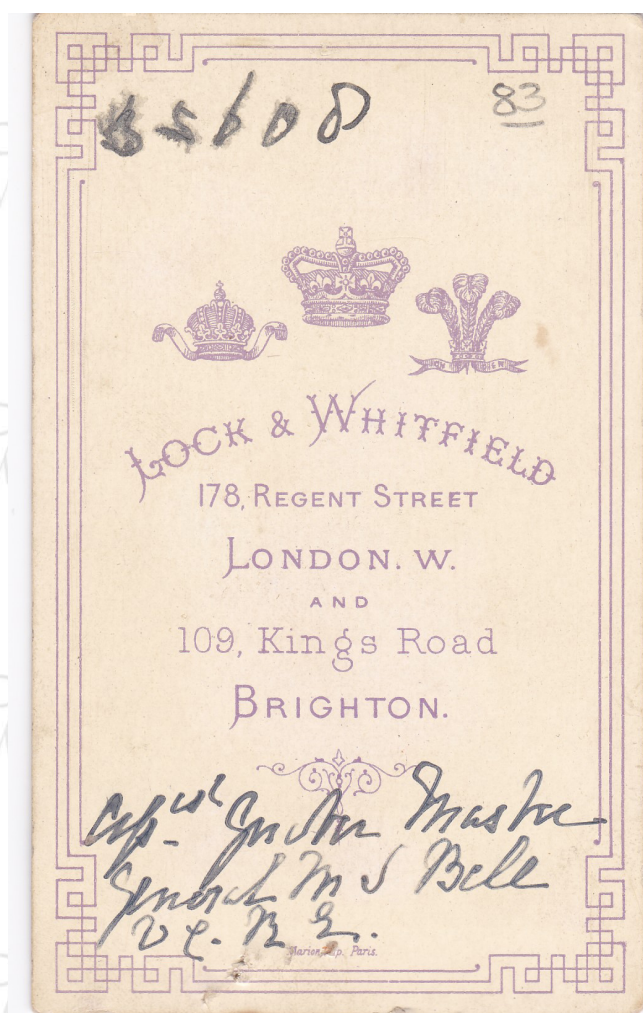
"For his distinguished bravery, and zealous, resolute, and self-devoted conduct at the battle of Ordahsu, on the 4th February, 1874, whilst serving under the immediate orders of Colonel Sir John Chetham McLeod, K.C.B., of the 42nd Regiment, who commanded the Advanced Guard. Sir John McLeod was an eye witness of his gallant and distinguished conduct on the occasion, and considers that this Officer's fearless and resolute bearing, being always in the front, urging on and encouraging an unarmed working party of Fantee labourers, who were exposed not only to the fire of the Enemy, but to the wild and irregular fire of the Native Troops in the rear, contributed very materially to the success of the day. By his example, he made these men do what no European party was ever required to do in warfare, namely, to work under fire in the face of the Enemy without a covering party."

Mark Sever Bell (1843-1903) was born in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia on 15th May 1843, the second son of the late Hutchinson Bell, who originally came from Yorkshire. He

was educated privately and at King's College, London (where in later life he was made a Fellow in 1890), and he entered the Royal Engineers in 1862.

He served in the Bhutan Field Force, commanding the Royal Engineers and Bengal Sappers and Miners 1865-1866 (gaining the Campaign medal and clasp). He then commanded the Royal Engineers as Assistant Field Engineer in the Hazara Expedition, 1868, being mentioned in despatches for his forced march of 600 miles. During the Ashanti War of 1873-1874, he was Adjutant to the Royal Engineers, Brigade and Special Service Officer. He received the campaign medal, and was mentioned in despatches for several acts of gallantry notwithstanding the action which led to the award of the Victoria Cross (London Gazette, 20th November 1874).

At the Battle of Ordashu on 4th February 1874, whilst serving under the command of Colonel Sir John Chetham McLeod of the 42nd Regiment of Foot, Mark Bell distinguished himself. McLeod observed Bell's actions and stated that he saw Bell always at the front, urging on and encouraging an unarmed party of Fantee labourers, who were exposed to heavy fire from not just the enemy, but also from the wild and erratic fire from the Native Troops in the rear. Bell's actions were vital to the success of the day.



Following the announcement of his award, he was presented with his medal just six days later, on 26th November 1874 by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. In 1875, he married his first wife, Angelina Helen, daughter of Captain Dickenson of the 15th Regiment of Foot.

Sadly, Angelina died just four years later, leaving Mark a widower. He was promoted to Major in 1882, and was Intelligence Officer during the Burma Campaign of 1886-1887.

He had been promoted to Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel in 1883 and Brevet Colonel in 1887. He was then appointed Aide de Camp to Queen Victoria in 1887. He re-married in 1890 to Nora Margaret, daughter of Hext Roger of Inceworth, Devon. In 1893, he was created Companion of Bath and in 1898 was placed on half-pay on account of ill health. He was well known as a great traveller of the East, and traversed over 12,000 miles over uncharted territory of Central Asia, China and the Far East.

Colonel Bell died at Earlywood Lodge, Sunninghill, Windlesham, Surrey on the 26th June 1906, aged 63. His eldest son, Anthony Harley Mark Bell served in the Great War in the 3rd Hussars, earning the Military Cross, and being mentioned in despatches. His youngest son, Robert, would be killed in action in September 1916. Mark Bell was buried in All Soul's Churchyard, South Ascot, Berkshire. His medals are held by the Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham, Kent.

LOCATION OF MEDAL: ROYAL ENGINEERS MUSEUM, CHATHAM, KENT.
BURIAL PLACE: ALL SOUL'S CHURCHYARD, SOUTH ASCOT, BERKSHIRE.

The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/mark-sever-bell-vc/4585969430.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC CDV