

A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS CARTES DE VISITE OF REVEREND JAMES WILLIAM ADAMS WHO WAS AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR ACTIONS DURING THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR IN WHICH HE SAVED FALLEN SOLDIERS THAT HAD BEEN TRAPPED DOWN A DITCH, RISKING HIS LIFE AND SAVING THEIRS. THIS ACT OF GALLANTRY MADE HIM THE FIRST CLERGYMAN TO RECEIVE A VICTORIA CROSS

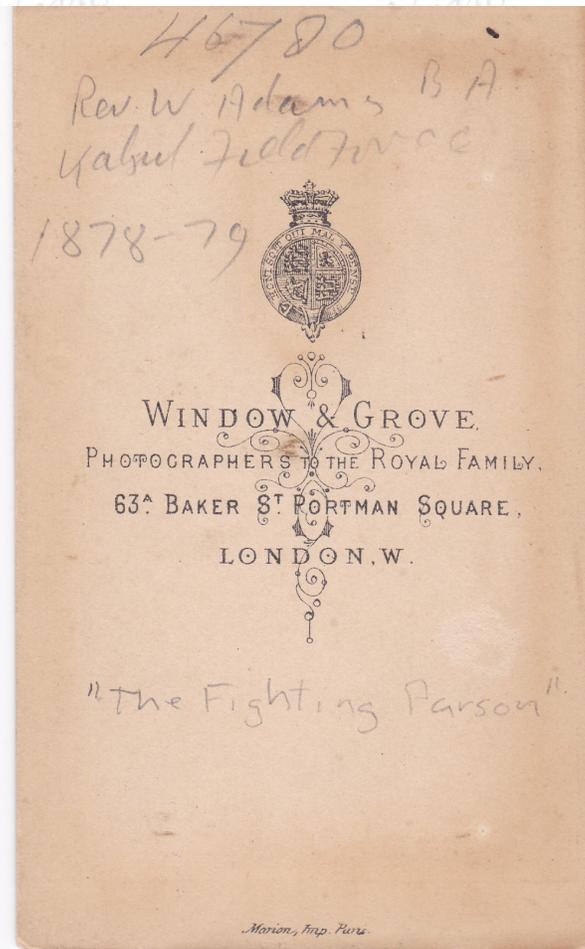


“Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment, late Chaplain to the Kabul Field Force, The Reverend J. W. Adams During the action at Killa Kazi, on the 11th December, 1879, some men of the 9th Lancers having fallen, with their horses, into a wide and deep “nullah” or ditch, and the enemy being close upon them, the Reverend J. W. Adams rushed into the water (which filled the ditch), dragged the horses from off the men upon whom they were lying, and extricated them, he being at the time under a heavy fire, and up to his waist in water. At this time the Afghans were pressing on very rapidly, the leading men getting within a few yards of Mr. Adams, who having let go his horse in order to render more effectual assistance, had eventually to escape on foot”

James William Adams (1839-1903) was born in Cork, Ireland on 24th November 1839, the son of Thomas O'Brion Adams, JP, and Elizabeth Williams, who hailed from Scotland. He was educated at Hamlin and Porter's School, Cork, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he took his Bachelor of Arts degree. He was a keen sportsman in athletics and gymnastics, and also a fine horseman.

He was ordained as a deacon in 1863 and a priest in 1864, and was curate to the Reverend Warren at Hyde, Hampshire until 1866. He then decided that he wanted to travel to India, where he became the Chaplain of the Bengal Establishment, under Bishop Millman, in October 1866, based in Calcutta. Shortly afterwards, Adams contracted a fever and was sent to Ceylon to recuperate. On his recovery, he was posted to Peshawar, and he began to work with the troops stationed there, and on the frontier. He did a great deal of work during the cholera epidemics that regularly broke out in the camps. He then transferred to Allahabad in 1870, and was later sent to Kashmir on special duty in 1874.

In January 1876, he was appointed to Meerut, and in December that year, given charge of the Cavalry and Artillery Camp for the Delhi Durbar assemblage, on the occasion of Prince of Wales' visit. In November 1877, he was summoned to join the Khurram Field Force, and accompanied the Kabul Field Force under Sir Donald Stewart and Sir Frederick Roberts VC. He took part in the march from Kabul to Kandahar, and was present at several major engagements.



On 11th December 1879, during the action at Killa Kazi, some of the men of the 9th Lancers had come off their horses into a wide ditch or nullah, and the enemy were fast approaching. At this moment, the Reverend Adams jumped into the water filled nullah and dragged the horses off the men, and pulled the men out. At the time of the action, he was waist deep in water, and under heavy fire from the enemy.

For this action, Sir Frederick Roberts VC recommended him for the Victoria Cross, but it was pronounced that it was impossible to award him the VC, as it was a decoration for the Army and Navy only. But, on the 24th August 1881, in the London Gazette, it was announced that Queen Victoria was pleased by the Royal Warrant to award the Victoria Cross to members of the ecclesiastical establishment who might be qualified. Therefore, Reverend Adams was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was presented with his medal by the Queen herself at Windsor Castle on 1st December 1881.

He had married a few months earlier, on 16th August 1881, at Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire to Alice Mary, the daughter of General Sir Thomas Willshire GCB, District Commissioner of British East Africa. On returning to India, Adams was appointed to Lucknow, and remained there a year, where his only child, Edith Juliet Mary was born. In February 1883, he was sent up to Naini Tal, a two years appointment. Soon afterwards, he was requested by the now Lord Roberts VC to accompany the Field Force to Burma. In 1886, at the end of his 20 years' service in India, he returned to England, and became a priest in Postwick near Norwich. He remained there until 1894, when he was forced to resign due to ill-health and went to live in Jersey for two years. He then spent a time working in Wimbotsham, near Downham Market, Norfolk, when in 1902, he resigned and moved to Ashwell (now in Rutland).

Adams was appointed an honorary chaplain to the Prince of Wales on 7 May 1900, and following the Prince's accession as King Edward VII he was confirmed in the post of Honorary chaplain to the King on 23 July 1901.

Sadly, his health failed him, and he died of neuritis on 20th October 1903, and was buried in St Mary's Churchyard, Ashwell. His medals are held by the Ashcroft Trust.

LOCATION OF MEDAL: ASHCROFT GALLERY, IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON.

BURIAL PLACE: ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD, ASHWELL, RUTLAND.

The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/james-william-adams-vc/4585906641.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC CDV