

A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS CARTES DE VISITE PORTRAYING VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM HEWETT, AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR ACTIONS DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR



Sir William Nathan Wrighte Hewett (1834-1888) was born on 12th August 1834 in Brighton, Sussex, the son of Dr William Wrighte Hewett, who was Surgeon and Physician to King William IV. His mother was Susan Moore, the daughter of the Reverend John Maddy Moore, Prebendary of Ely and Chaplain to King William IV. Hewett, despite the religious and medical backgrounds of his parents, chose a career in the Navy.

He entered the Royal Navy on 26th March 1847 at the age of 12, when he was appointed a Cadet on HMS Ocean. Just two years later, he had risen to the rank of Acting Mate on HMS Impregnable. He then served in the Anglo-Burmese War of 1851 as a Midshipman, and with the Naval Brigade in China. He then served on a number of other ships prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War. Whilst in the Crimea, he was posted to the HMS Beagle as Acting Mate.

On the 26th October 1854, Sir De Lacy Evans' Division were repelling a sortie of Russians, whilst Acting Mate Hewett was in charge of the Right Lancaster Battery before Sebastopol. The advance of the Russians placed the gun in great jeopardy, their Skirmishers advancing within 300 yards from the Battery, and pouring in a sharp fire from their Minie rifles. By some misapprehension the word was passed to spike his gun and retreat; but Hewett taking it upon himself the responsibility of disregarding the order, replied that "such an order did not come from Captain Lushington, and he would not do it till it did." Hewett then pulled down the parapet of the Battery, and, with the assistance of some soldiers, got the gun round and poured a devastating fire upon the advancing Russians.

Due to his gallantry in this action, he was promoted to Lieutenant, and a month later, on 5th November 1854 at the Battle of Inkerman, Captain Lushington again brought before the Commander in Chief the services of Hewett, saying "I have much pleasure in bringing Mr Hewett's conduct to your notice." Hewett was awarded the Victoria Cross (London Gazette, 24th February 1857) and was decorated by Queen Victoria at the first investiture at Hyde Park on 26th June 1857. Hewett was the fifth man in the line to receive the medal. Hewett was newly married, having married Jane Emily Blackadder the month before. They would have six children: Hugh, William Warrington, Edward Watson, Charles Byng, Jane and Evelyn. He was then appointed to the Royal Yacht, from which he was promoted to Commander on 13th September 1858.



He then took command of the Viper on the west coast of Africa, and the Rinaldo on the North American and West Indian station. He was made Captain on 24th November 1862, and

afterwards commanded the Basilisk on the China station from 1865-1869. He was then Flag Captain to Sir H Kellett in the Ocean on the China station from 1870-1872, and from 1873 to 1876. He was then a Commodore and Commander in Chief on the west coast of Africa during the Ashanti War. For his service in this campaign, he was given the KCB on 31st March 1874 and the Ashanti Medal. In May 1877, he was appointed to the Achilles and commanded her in the Mediterranean and Sea of Marmara under Sir G Hornby. In 1882, he became Commander in Chief in the East Indies.

He was placed in command of defending the Suez Canal in the Egyptian War. He was promoted to Vice Admiral in 1884. He led the defence of Suakim on 6th February 1884, and was present at the Second Battle of El Teb. In March 1886, he was given command of the Channel Squadron, and his naval career ended on the Northumberland on 17th April 1888, with his health failing. After his retirement his health worsened and he returned to his residence in Southsea.

He was moved into the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar where he died on 13th May 1888. On the 17th May 1888, he was laid to rest in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth. He was given a full military funeral. Amongst the mourners were Admiral Commerell VC and Lord Charles Beresford MP. Also in attendance was Mr Chiddle, the last survivor of the Lancaster gun battery manned by Hewett in his VC action.

CDV approx 10.5 x 6.3cm. The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/william-n-w-hewett-vc/4586971602.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC CDV