

THOMAS GRADY VC

After his return to England, Thomas Grady, wounded in his left arm, was stationed at various places during 1856 and 1857, including time in the Invalid Depot, Chatham, in hospital, or serving on light duties.⁶

On 22nd September, 1856, at the Proceedings of a Regimental Board held at Camp Aldersholt, Thomas Grady was to be discharged in consequence of "unfitness for further service". His general character was shown as "good".

A final description of Private Thomas Grady of the 4th Regiment of Foot when discharged from the service at Chatham on 28th October, 1856 –

Age 21 years.

Height 5 feet 5 1/8 inches

Hair Dark Brown

Eyes Blue

Complexion Fresh

Trade Labourer

Marks or Scars, whether on the Face, or other parts of the Body None.⁷

Thomas Grady was admitted to Out-Pension as a Chelsea Pensioner on 28th October, 1856, Pension Number 3382.⁸

Recommendation was made for Thomas Grady to receive the decoration of the Victoria Cross by "Her Majesty's Hand." Various correspondence was exchanged between the Office of Horse Guards and various Palace dignitaries and a list of those to receive the Award was sent on 19th June 1857 – two Officers, one Non-commissioned Officer and two Private Soldiers, together with a statement of the particular act of Valor for which they had been recommended for the Honorable Distinction.⁹ That official list contained the name of Thomas Grady and his Citation.

It has been quoted that "after the Cross had been pinned on the heart of Grady by the Queen he was offered the position of Ranger at Windsor Castle, but preferred to remain in "arms" and was made a Colour-Sergeant. He, however, received only a private's pension."¹⁰

In a Short History of the 4th Regiment of Foot compiled by Ron Sutton, member of the Enrolled Pensioner Guard, Special Interest Group, information on the Siege of Sevastopol mentions:

"The Russians pulled back to Sevastopol where reinforcements were already starting to arrive.

The allies, deciding not attack Sevastopol from the North, marched south east skirting the city towards Balaklava harbour which was captured without bloodshed. The British established themselves in their new base at Balaclava on the 25th September 1856 using the port to establish supply lines. The siege commenced on the 17th October 1854 with the Russians making repeated attempts to disrupt the siege.

The British forces had pushed forward a British Left Attack force consisting of the 3rd Division and a British Right Attack force and attempted to probe the enemy positions with the assistance from Artillery Batteries. It was during the initial stages of the Left Attack's attempt to breach the enemy defences on the 18th October 1854 that Private Thomas Grady of the 4th Regiment of Foot was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry. On the 22nd November 1854 he was further cited for refusing to leave the front when severely wounded during the repulse of a Russian Attack. His example encouraged the weak force which was engaging the enemy to maintain their position."¹¹

The recommendation for the Award was made by Captain Lushington, Royal Navy.¹²

⁶ National Archives, London WO 12/2236; 2237;2238;2239

⁷ National Archives, London WO 97/1395

⁸ Australian Archives – letter dated 18 March 1981

⁹ National Archives, London WO 32/7304

¹⁰ "Age" 22 May 1891 and "The Herald" 21.5.1891 copy from Neil Ward, Qld.

¹¹ 4th Regiment of Foot a Short History compiled by Ron Sutton.

¹² Correspondence Australian War Memorial 10.8.2004

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Officers under whom Thomas Grady served included Colonel Cobb, Colonel Sadler and Colonel Jeffrey, all of the 4th Regiment of Foot. (Noted in a letter from Australian Archives, March 1891)Copy from Neil Ward Qld.)

The history of the Victoria Cross is in itself interesting - it was founded by Royal Warrant in January 1856, Queen Victoria maintaining it was not an Order, offering no Knighthood, no religious significance and contained no ranks within itself. It was purely won by an act of conspicuous bravery, and could be conferred by the Sovereign alone. The actual Cross was made of bronze and cast from metal melted down from the cannons captured at Sebastopol in the Crimean War. In the form of a Maltese Cross with the Royal Crest and a scroll inscribed simply "For Valour". The Cross is suspended from a bar engraved with laurel leaves. The recipient's name is engraved on the back of the bar, and the date of the deed for which the honour was awarded is engraved on the back of the cross itself.

The Victoria Cross is a valued and highly regarded Award for Bravery.

The London Gazette published the date of Thomas Grady's Award on 23rd June 1857.¹³

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After the death of Thomas Grady VC in 1891, Melbourne newspapers of the time covered the life and funeral of the VC winner, reporting that in spite of pain 'he did not complain however, but died peacefully and like a brave soldier'²⁴

The "Daily Telegraph" 2nd May 1891, reported it was most unusual for the funeral of a retired private soldier to be attended with military honors. It appears that came about by the interest in the death of an old pensioner soldier by Major-General Sir Alexander Bruce Tulloch, KCB, CMG of the Welsh Regiment. His position as Major-General Commanding the Victorian Military Forces from September 1889 until 1894 brought him into contact with many of the old ex-British soldiers from past campaigns. Tulloch had served with distinction in the Crimea, India and China, and when he learned that a Victoria Cross hero of Crimea had been found in a miserable way in a laneway in Fitzroy, he ordered the venerable old campaigner be given a Military Funeral.²⁵

After assembly on the parade ground at the Barracks, "the procession left accompanied by a shooting party of field artillery men, with reversed arms. Then came a gun-carriage drawn by two black horses, in which rested the coffin, covered with the Union Jack. O'Grady's rifle, helmet, and accoutrements, with the medals he had worn during his lifetime with so much just pride, were laid on the top of the coffin. Then came the band under Bandmaster Riley of the 1st Regiment, playing the solemn strains of "The Dead March in Saul".²⁶

PEACEFULLY LAID TO REST
THOMAS GRADY VICTORIA CROSS
DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL
CRIMEAN MEDAL with
SEVASTAPOL BAR, INKERMAN BAR, ALMA BAR AND TURKISH MEDAL

¹³ London Gazette 23 June 1857

²⁴ "The Herald" 19 May 1891 – copy from Neil Ward, Qld.

²⁵ The United Service Home, Drysdale (The Romance of a Worthy Achievement) by R.H. Peacock read before the Victorian Historical Society 28.11.1938. – correspondence from Anthony Staunton, 17.3.2005.

²⁶ "Daily Telegraph" 2.5.1891 Copy from Neil Ward. Qld.

THOMAS AND CATHERINE O'GRADY (GRADY)

THOMAS O'GRADY born 18th September 1835 Claddagh (Cheddah) Ireland
Son of James and Ellen O'Grady
Married 1856 Liverpool, England
Catherine Devaney born c 1829
Daughter of Francis and Mary Devaney,
Galway, Ireland.
Died 18th May 1891 aged 65 South Melbourne, Victoria
Buried Melbourne General Cemetery
Plaque at Springvale Garden of
Remembrance, Victoria.²⁷

CATHERINE GRADY (O'Grady)

Died 12th October 1891 aged 62 years
Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor,
Northcote, Victoria.
Buried Melbourne General Cemetery.²⁸

CHILDREN OF THOMAS AND CATHERINE GRADY (O'GRADY)

MARY ELLEN born c 1857 Liverpool, England
Note: Came to Western Australia with her parents in 1862
Married 1. aged 18 Victoria to Henry Kenworthy,
Son of George Pixton and Caroline Kenworthy.
Henry Kenworthy died 16th June 1881 aged 26
Melbourne, Victoria.²⁹
Married 2, aged 26 Melbourne, Victoria to
Daniel Coakley.
Died 15th December 1930 aged 73 (78)? Years.
Melbourne, Victoria
Buried Melbourne General Cemetery.³⁰

MARTIN born Liverpool, England ?
Died 30th April 1890 aged 28 years
Hospital, Melbourne
Resident Victoria, 21 years.
Buried General Cemetery, Melbourne.³¹

Note Other possible children (Listed in the Will of Thomas O'Grady)

*Thomas
Frederick
John Francis
Charles Augustine
William Henry*³²

²⁷ Death Certificate – Copy from Neil Ward Qld.

²⁸ Death Certificate – Copy from Neil Ward Qld.

²⁹ Death Certificate – Copy from Neil Ward Qld.

³⁰ Death Certificate – Copy from Neil Ward Qld.

³¹ Death Certificate – Copy from Neil Ward Qld.

³² Information from Neil Ward, Qld.

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