

The Crimean War



The Crimean War was fought between 1853 and 1856.

It was fought in the Crimea, an area mostly in the south of Russia at the time (now part of Ukraine). On one side were Britain, France, and Turkey, and on the other side was Russia.

Among the regiments involved with the British was the 23rd Regiment of Foot, the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

The regiment took part in both of the great assaults on the Alma, Sevastopol, and at Inkerman.

The campaign took a heavy toll on the 23rd, seeing it lose 754 officers and men - 530 of them through disease.



The Crimean War



The Crimean War took place from October 1853 until February 1856. It marked the forging of an alliance of France, Britain, Turkey and Sardinia against Russia, and was originally brought about because of a clash of interests involving the right of Christians in the Holy Land.

The war is often seen as the first 'modern' war, involving such pioneering sciences as railways and telegraph communication. It also became famous for the pioneering work in medicine which was mainly due to the efforts of nurses such as Florence Nightingale, Betsi Cadwaladr and Mary Seacole.

The war was widely publicised in period newspapers and books, and gripped the people of Britain.



The Crimean War



War erupted in the Black Sea between Russia and the Ottoman Empire over Russia's rights to protect Orthodox Christians.

The Russians destroyed the Ottoman fleet at the port of Sinope, and to stop Russia gaining further supremacy over the ailing Ottoman Empire, France and Britain entered the war in March 1854.

Most of the fighting took place for control of the Black Sea, with battles on the Crimean peninsula in southern Russia, one such famously being the ill fated Charge of the Light Brigade.

The Russians held their great fortress at Sevastopol for over a year, and repelled several attacks before it fell, leading to peace in March 1856

The Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava," an 1855 painting by William Simpson.



The Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1809 - 1892

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.



<https://youtu.be/2b2nmliORMc>

https://youtu.be/IFIGCvp_aj8

The Crimean War



The 23rd Regiment embarked for the Crimea aboard the Steam Ship Trent in April 1854, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Harry George Chester. Chester was killed during the Battle of the Alma on 20 September 1854, and command devolved onto Major (later General) Daniel Lysons. He commanded the Regiment throughout the remainder of the campaign, becoming wounded himself during the storming of the Redan on 18 June 1855.



This grave in Crimea contains the remains of Lt. Col. Harry George Chester plus other officers.



National Army Museum Copyright

This jacket was worn by Lieutenant-Colonel Harry George Chester of the 23rd Regiment of Foot (Royal Welch Fusiliers) which he joined as an ensign on 26 October 1830.

Chester was killed in 1854 leading his regiment at the Battle of the Alma in the Crimea. Lieutenant-General Sir George Brown (1790-1865) wrote of him afterwards, 'The army & his Country did not contain a more gallant soldier or more accomplished gentleman.'



The Alma



The Battle of the Alma was a battle in the Crimean War between an allied expeditionary force made up of French, British, and Turkish forces and Russian forces defending the Crimean Peninsula on 20 September 1854.

The allies had made a surprise landing in Crimea on 14th September. They marched toward the strategically important port city of Sevastapol, 45 km (28 mi) away.

Russian commander Prince Alexander Sergeyevich Menshikov rushed his available forces to the last natural defensive position before the city, the Alma Heights, south of the Alma River.

The allies made a series of disjointed attacks. The French attacked up cliffs that the Russians had considered unscalable.

The British twice unsuccessfully assaulted the Russians' main position on their right. Eventually, superior British rifle fire forced the Russians to retreat. With both flanks turned, the Russian position collapsed and they fled.



Luke O'Connor



The 23rd Regiment (RWF) and the allies were threatened by a Russian force drawn up on high ground behind the River Alma, with the 'Great Redoubt' containing fourteen heavy guns, in the centre.

On 20th September, as the 23rd surged up the steep slope towards the redoubt, the Ensigns carrying the Colours were killed.

Sergeant Luke O'Connor, already badly wounded, seized the Queen's colour and dashing forward succeeded in planting it on the redoubt.



Sergeant Luke O'Connor Winning the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Alma (1854). Oil painting by Louis William

Luke O'Connor



The Victoria Cross did not exist at that time, but when it was created in 1856 O'Connor was one of the 62 Crimean veterans invested with it during a ceremony in Hyde Park.

He was presented his medal by Queen Victoria.

He was the first recipient from the Army.

He later achieved the rank of major-general and was appointed Colonel of his old regiment on 3 June 1914.



His Victoria Cross is displayed at our Museum in Caernarfon.

Captain Edward Bell



In the confusion of the Battle of Alma, Captain Edward Bell captured a Russian gun almost single-handed and took it back to the British lines.

A Russian counter attack drove the Light Division from the redoubt but, with reinforcements, they succeeded in recapturing it.

The 23rd sustained over 200 casualties in the battle.

Captain Bell was awarded the Victoria Cross, The gun can be seen at our Museum in Caernarfon.



The Alma



This is all that remains of the Regimental Colour which was carried at the Battle of the Alma in the Crimean War.

Some of the battle honours are missing.

After the ensign to the colour, J. H. Butle, was killed, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Chester, carried it himself.

He too was killed.

It was then carried by Sergeant Henry Smith. The colours would have been the focus of enemy fire. This was pierced by 16 cannon balls.

The severely damaged colour continued to be used until 1880.

The Alma



Aftermath

The battle cost the French 1,600 casualties, the British 2,000, and the Russians some 5,000.

Only the British took two days to clear the battlefield of their wounded. Without any medical supplies, they had to requisition carts to remove the wounded from the battlefield.

As the Russian army had to abandon its wounded on the battlefield, many of the injured limped back to Sevastopol over the course of the next days. Of those who could not, some 1600 had to wait several days until being sailed to the Scutari's hospitals in Constantinople.

The allied commanders had no idea of the heavy losses on the Russian side. The necessity to collect equipment scattered though the battlefield delayed the pursuit, and the lack of cavalry ruled out any possibility of an immediate chase of the Russians.



Removing the Dead and Wounded after the Battle of the Alma during the Crimean War, 20 September 1854 by George Bryant Campion on display at the V&A Museum.

Battle of Inkerman



The Battle of Inkerman was fought on 5th November 1854.

The Battle saw fierce fighting hampered by thick fog, resulting in poor communication between the troops. The fog affected every phase of the battle.

The Russians aimed to push back the British and French forces and the morning fog gave them complete surprise, the Russian divisions appearing without warning out of the murk. But although they had some successes, the attacking forces failed to take advantage of their gains.



The lack of visibility turned Inkerman into a series of close-quarter fights. British regiments marched towards the sound of gunfire and engaged the enemy wherever they found them.

The fog also prevented both sides from seeing the other's strength. Had the Russians realised their force was more than twice as large as that of the Allies, they might not have lost heart when their initial assault failed.

As the attack wavered, the British and French counter-attacked, and the Russian army started to retreat.

The conditions prevented the victory from being a decisive one. The Allies did not convert the retreat into a rout, choosing not to rush forward blindly, and watched the Russians disappear back into the mist.



"Inkerman" by Robert Alexander Hillingford

Siege of Sevastopol



Siege of Sevastopol by Franz Roubaud

Moving from their base at Balaklava at the start of October 1854, French and British engineers began to direct the building of siege lines to the south of Sevastopol. The troops prepared redoubts, gun batteries, and trenches.

The Allied guns were not strong enough to batter down Sevastopol's defences quickly, and so they were forced to dig in for the winter with almost no winter provisions

The Russians began by scuttling their ships to protect the harbour, then used their naval cannon as additional artillery and the ships' crews as marines.

By mid-October, the Allies had some 120 guns ready to fire on Sevastopol; the Russians had about three times as many.

They believed the city would fall in a matter of weeks, but following a series of bloody Russian counterattacks at the Battles of Balaklava and Inkerman, the war settled into a stalemate.

Both sides dug extensive trench lines around Sevastopol. Soldiers were forced to suffer through a brutal Russian winter, and many fell victim to "trench madness," or shell shock, from the constant artillery bombardments and threat of enemy raids. It would eventually take 11 months before a French assault forced the Russians to evacuate Sevastopol.

The siege of Sevastopol lasted from October 1854 until September 1855.

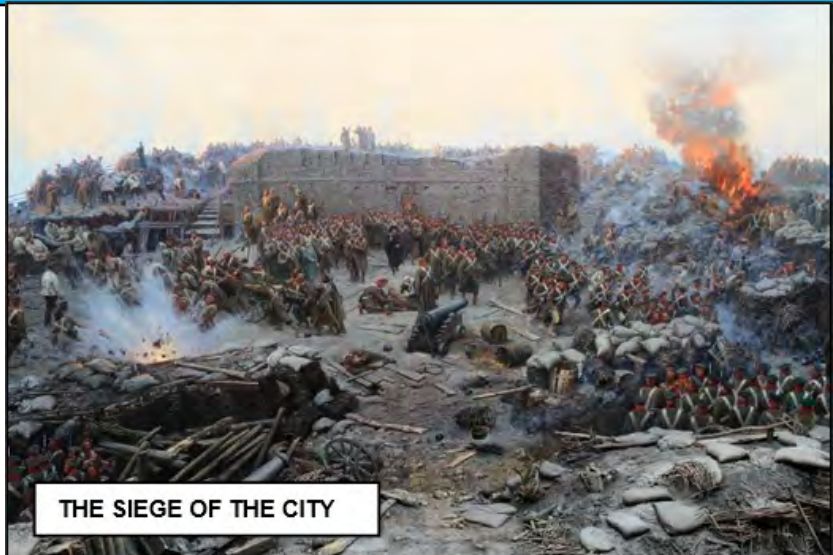
Siege of Sevastapol



Conditions got from bad to worse, especially for the Allies. On November 14th, 'the Great Storm' struck Sevastopol. The Allies were woefully underprepared. The winter was a time when horses were worked to death, men huddled in shabby tents for warmth, filthy like pigs wallowing in muck, unable to even close their tent doors. Men starved and froze to death where they lay. The trenches began to flood.

It rained and snowed constantly, and the men began falling to diseases like Cholera and Dysentery, a common occurrence in warfare, especially sieges.

The lucky ones found their way to a little-known woman at the time, Florence Nightingale, who became known as the Lady with the Lamp for her nighttime rounds of the field hospital in Scutari in Constantinople.



At midday on September 8th, 1855, over 345 days since the siege started, the Allies launched an all-out assault against Malakhov and threatening the city.

It was a bloody, brutal engagement, claiming 13,000 Russian, 7,500 French, and 2,300 British lives, as well as numerous commanders and generals on all sides.

The Russians abandoned the city employing a scorched earth policy, blew up fortifications, their own ships in the harbour (to stop them being used and allied ships landing), and evacuated the city.

The allies did not pursue them, likely too exhausted. The Siege of Sevastopol ended on September 11th, 1855, an allied victory and one that ultimately paved the way for Russian defeat, but at a terrible cost.



Siege of Sevastopol



The siege of Sevastopol, began in November, and was sustained throughout the terrible Russian winter during which the soldiers suffered appalling hardships, and continued until it fell on the 8th September 1855. The 23rd took part in the final assault on the Redan which, although it ended in failure, earned the Regiment two more Victoria Crosses. They were won by Assistant Surgeon Sylvester and Corporal Shields who, under heavy fire, brought in the mortally wounded Adjutant. Casualties in the assault totalled 263.



Following his service in the Crimea, Corporal Robert Shields served in India during the Mutiny, and on leaving the Army he chose to remain in the country. He died on 23rd December 1864, aged just 37 in Bombay (now Mumbai), and was buried in an unmarked grave in St Thomas' Cathedral in Bombay.



On 8 September 1855, at Sebastopol, Crimea, near the Redan, Assistant Surgeon Sylvester went to the aid of an officer who was mortally wounded and remained with him, dressing his wounds, in a most dangerous and exposed situation.

Siege of Sevastopol



'Charge of the 23rd at the assault of the Redan, 8 September 1855'

Pen and ink drawing by Lieutenant Herbert Delmé Radcliffe, 23rd Regiment of Foot (Royal Welch Fusiliers).

The attack against the Redan had already stalled when, as a last desperate throw of the dice, Major-General Sir William Codrington sent forward a wing of the 23rd (Royal Welch Fusiliers) Regiment.

It was hoped that the 23rd might be able enter the Redan by its right face and get behind the Russian defenders, but when this attempt failed the rout of the British troops desperately trying to cling on inside the salient angle and along the outer slope of the Redan became inevitable.

Among the wounded who managed to make their way back to the British trenches was the artist of this sketch, Lieutenant Delmé Radcliffe.

The Crimean War



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE IN THE MILITARY HOSPITAL AT SCUTARI.

Scutari. Night, when that excellent & benevolent young lady is going her round, among the brave wounded & sick soldiers, to see that their wants have been properly administered to.

News soon reached home of soldiers dying from battle wounds, cold, hunger and sickness, with no real medical care or nurses to treat them. Help was needed fast, and the Minister for War - called Sidney Herbert - knew just the person...

He asked Florence to lead a team of nurses to the Crimea!

When they arrived, the nurses found the Army hospital in Scutari (the area where wounded soldiers were sent) in a terrible state. It was overcrowded and filthy, with blocked drains, broken toilets and rats running everywhere. There weren't enough medical supplies or equipment, and wounded soldiers had to sleep on the dirty floor, without blankets to keep warm, clean water to drink or fresh food to eat. Disease spread quickly and most of the soldiers died from infection.

The Crimean War



Betsi Cadwaladr was moved by an article in *The Times* telling of conditions facing those injured in the Battle of the Alma. She decided to train as a nurse in London, and she joined the military nursing service.

Florence Nightingale, who came from a privileged background, did not want the Welsh working-class Betsi Cadwaladr to go to the Crimea, but Betsi, who was now in her 60s, went anyway.

She was posted to the hospital being run by Florence Nightingale in Scutari in Turkey. The two nurses did not get on. Florence Nightingale felt that strict rules and regulations should be in place, where as Betsi believed in a more instinctive and intuitive approach to caring for the sick.

Betsi Cadwaladr was moved to Balacalava. She worked twenty-hour days and made massive improvements to the hospital. Even Florence Nightingale was impressed by Betsi's work in Balacalava.

Betsi Cadwaladr was forced to return to London in 1855. She had cholera and was suffering from dysentery. She died in 1860.

In 2009 the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board was named in honour of the Welsh nurse.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

The Crimean War



Mary Seacole also arrived at the Crimea to find terrible conditions. Many of the soldiers were cold, dirty and hungry, and those that were sick and wounded were not being cared for.

Mary decided something had to be done and so, with her loyal friend Thomas, she opened a "British Hotel" near to the battlefields. It was basically a hut made of metal sheets, where soldiers could rest and buy hot food, drinks and equipment.

A lot of nurses did invaluable work looking after the soldiers in the Crimean War, but Mary went a step further, when she rode on horseback into the battlefields, even when under fire, to nurse wounded men from both sides of the war.

After the Crimean War ended in, Mary returned to London with very little money and in poor health. But her hard work did not go unrecognised - many of the soldiers wrote to the newspapers about all she had done for them, and 80,000 people attended a charity gala in 1857 to raise money for her.

She also received a number of medals for her bravery from governments in different countries.



The Crimean War



Sergeant John Gamble, 23rd Regiment (Royal Welch Fusiliers)..

He is wearing Crimean War Medal with clasps for Alma, Inkerman and Sevastopol and the Turkish Crimean Medal.

That means the photograph was probably taken at the end of his military career in November 1856, when he was discharged at Chatham.



Lieutenant Edward Bulwer was present at the battle of Alma and was promoted to captain on 21st September 1854.

He was also present at the Battle of Inkerman and at the siege of Sevastopol, which entitled him to the Crimea medal with clasps 'Alma', 'Inkermann' and 'Sebvstopol' and the Turkish Crimea medal.

He served on the staff for the significant part of his remaining career. Bulwer was appointed Colonel of the Regiment in March 1898. He served in this role until December 1910.



The Crimean War



Crimean War Veterans James William Randall 4172 is second standing from the right and Edwin Lambert 4812 is 4th Man from the right standing. Royal Welsh Fusilier Edwin Lambert 4812 Born Dorset 1835 died 1915 age 80.

Crimean war commemoration mug at the RWF Museum



The Crimean War



This type of coat would have been worn by soldiers in the British Army.

It would have been his fighting uniform as well as his dress uniform.

Disease was rife during the Crimean War and to prevent the spread of disease, soldiers burnt their uniforms before returning to Britain. As a result, only a few of these survive to the present day.

Scarlet tunics ceased to be general issue upon British mobilisation in August 1914 at the start of World War One.



End of the Crimean War



On 30th March 1856, the Crimean War was formally brought to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

Russia accepted a humiliating defeat against the alliance of Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and Sardinia.

The Crimean War which had begun in October 1853 lasted eighteen months and in that time had escalated into a series of fragmented battles and sieges, causing huge loss of life and highlighting wider issues such as failures in leadership, military intervention, loss of life and medicine.

The Crimean War is sometimes called the first "modern" war, since the weapons and tactics used had never been seen before and affected all other wars after it.

It was also the first war where a telegraph was used to quickly give information to a newspaper. The coverage of the war in newspapers, particularly in Britain allowed the general public to experience the horrors of war in a new way, thanks to reporting by, for example, the Times newspaper.

This overseas reporting combined with information from significant figures such as Florence Nightingale, would paint an extremely unfavourable picture leading to demands for reforms.



The Crimean War



The Daily Mirror

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE

No. 2,128.

Registered at the G. P. O.
as a Newspaper.

MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 1910

One Halfpenny.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE LAID TO REST IN A WILTSHIRE VILLAGE: CRIMEAN VETERAN'S LAST TRIBUTE TO THE "LADY WITH THE LAMP."



Although the nation longed to give her an Abbey funeral, Florence Nightingale, one of history's most noble heroines, was laid quietly and simply to rest on Saturday in the churchyard at East Wellow, near Romsey, Wiltshire, where she spent many of the happiest days of her girlhood. It was one of her last wishes, and so it was respected. An impressive memorial service was held at St. Paul's Cathedral, and attended by representatives of the Empire's might and power, who did last honours to the great

founder of nursing. But at East Wellow all was simplicity. As the body was borne to the grave everyone noticed the trembling and pathetic figure of an old Welsh Fusilier, named John Kneller, who fought at Sebastopol, and was one of those who in Scutari Hospital the "Lady with the Lamp" personally attended and helped to restore to health and activity. Above, Kneller is seen after the interment, sorrowing over the grave where Miss Nightingale lies beside her father and mother.

Royal Welch Fusilier - Crimea veteran - pays his respects to Florence Nightingale.



Depiction of the battle of Alma, by Richard Caton Woodville, Jr.