

Belfast Newsletter

Wednesday, 2nd January 1889

THE LATE COLONEL CONOLLY, V.C., R.M.

IN Colonel John Conolly, V.C., R.M., who died at the Curragh last week, we lose a link which connected our little wars of the present period with the struggle in front of Sebastopol. Kinglake tells us how, on the 26th of October, the Russians advanced in force on the Second Division, and had actually driven in our pickets, when Lieutenant Conolly of the 49th Regiment, who was in command of one of these pickets, rallied a few men, and, throwing off his grey greatcoat that all might distinguish him from the enemy, flung himself on a party of Russians, and cut one man down with his sword, felling another with his field-glass. For this heroism, at a most critical moment, he gained the Victoria Cross, and was translated to the Coldstream Guards. After serving as adjutant to the Donegal and Derbyshire Militia, he was made Commissioner of Police in Dublin, and afterwards a resident magistrate at the Curragh Camp. His brother, the well-known Tom Connolly, of Castletown, represented Donegal for many sessions. One of his ancestors was Speaker of the Irish House of Commons in the reign of Queen Anne.

Lieutenant JOHN CONOLLY
SEBASTOPOL 26th October 1854

He was 24 years old and serving in the 49th Regiment of Foot (Princess Charlotte of Wales's). When his company was being attacked by the Russians, Conolly mounted frequent short, sharp charges, and engaged several Russians in hand-to-hand combat. He ultimately fell badly wounded and had to be carried from the field, having lost so much blood.

He died on 23rd December 1888.
Curragh Camp





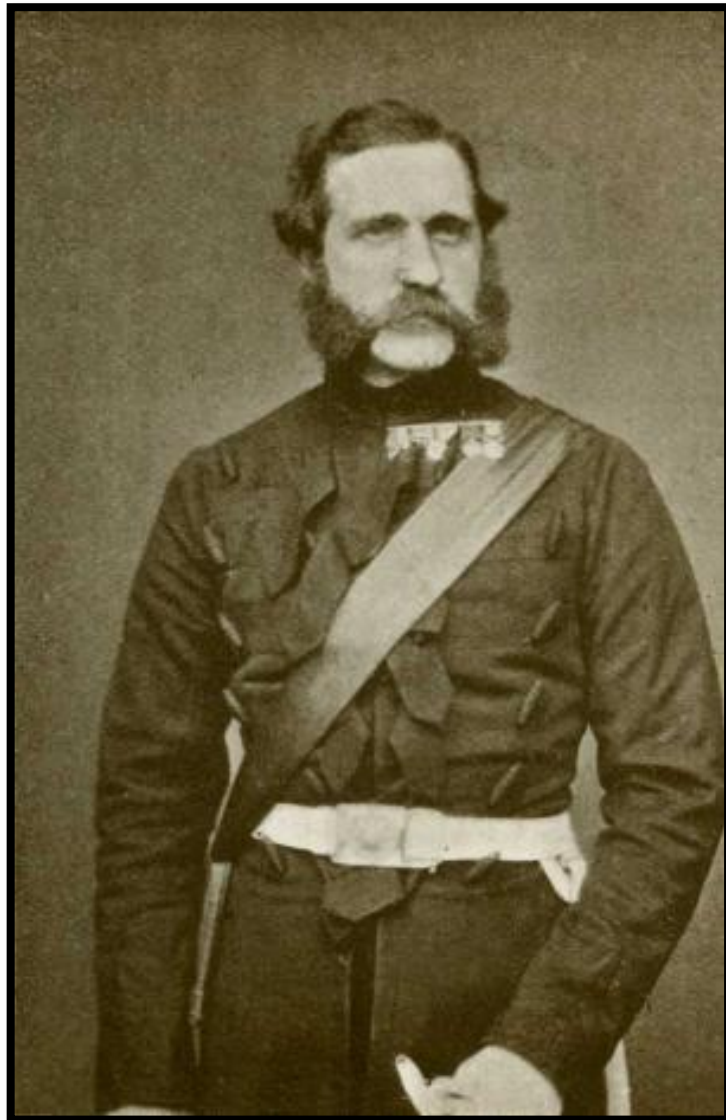
Depiction of the Siege of Sebastopol

John Augustus Conolly (1829-1888) was born on 30th May 1829 in Celbridge, Ireland, the son of Edward Michael Conolly of Castletown, and the Lieutenant Colonel of the Donegal Militia. His mother was Catherine Jane, daughter of Chambre Brabazon Ponsonby-Barker.

John Conolly joined the 49th (now Royal Berkshire) Regiment of Foot and served in the Eastern Campaign of 1854, and was present at the Battles of Alma, the Siege of Sebastopol, and also at the repulse of a powerful enemy sortie on 26th October 1854, where he was dangerously wounded, being shot through the chest, and gallantly distinguished himself. On this occasion, the Russians attacked Shell Hill, and were met by heavy fire from Allied guns which speedily repulsed them. Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood VC noted in later life that the Russians “fell back and our infantry pursued them, being led most gallantly by Lieutenant Conolly”.

For this gallantry, Conolly was awarded the Victoria Cross, and by the time his award was gazetted on 5th May 1857, he had transferred to the Coldstream Guards. Conolly received his medal as one of the 62 men who assembled for the first investiture at Hyde Park on 26th June 1857. He married on 4th August 1864 to Ida Charlotte Burnaby who hailed from Baggrave Hall, Leicestershire. She sadly died in 1886, having borne him 5 children: John Richard Arthur, Alice Geta Katherine, Conagh Edwina, Louisa Augusta and Irene Beatrice.

Major Conolly was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and retired from the Army in 1863 and became a Sub-Commissioner in the Dublin Metropolitan Police, and later Resident Magistrate for the Curragh of Kildare. He died on 23rd December 1888 in Curragh, Ireland and was laid to rest at Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.



Lieut. Colonel John Conolly V.C.

