

Unveiling of memorial to John Henry Harding – 13th Light Dragoons

Thank you to John Farnhill, Friends of Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff, for drawing our attention to this item

On 23rd November 2021, a special memorial marking the burial place of John Henry Harding, a survivor of the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' was unveiled at Cathays Cemetery. The event was attended by more than 70 people, including many veterans of Harding's descendant regiment – The Light Dragoons.

Wreaths were laid by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff; the Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan; Regimental Associations, and descendants of John Henry Harding.

John Henry Harding was born in 1831 in the parish of St. John's, Glastonbury, the eldest of nine siblings. He enlisted into the 13th Light Dragoons at Bath, aged 19, on 15th December 1850. The 13th Light Dragoons were part of the British forces that took part in the Crimean War and were one of the cavalry regiments that formed the Light Brigade. He took part in all four of the main battles in the Crimea, against the Russian forces, and was a proven rider in the famous, but ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade on 25th October 1854.



*Mayor placing a wreath
Photograph courtesy of the
Friends of Cathays Cemetery*

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Harding was issued with the Crimea Medal with four clasps for Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman, and Sebastopol. On the regiment's return from the Crimea, he continued service with them, firstly in Ireland, and then latterly in Scotland. While in Ireland, based at the Island Bridge Barracks in Dublin, he married his wife Elizabeth on 14th August 1858. He was discharged from the army in 1863, having served 12 years and 53 days. His conduct was given as 'Good' and he was in possession of one Good Conduct Badge.



*John Henry Harding memorial
Photograph courtesy of the
Friends of Cathays Cemetery*

On leaving the 13th Light Dragoons, he settled in Cardiff where his father and brother, both called Robert, were living. Initially he joined his father as a local manager for the London and Lancashire Fire Insurance Company, and by 1872 he had become the licensee of the Gardeners Arms Inn, No.1 Plucca Lane (now known as City Road), which he renamed the Military Canteen, possibly to take advantage of the proximity of the army barracks at Longcross Street.

Harding had left the Military Canteen by 1880, and in 1886 he was keeping an establishment called the Alexandria at 37 Upper George Street (now known as Wyverne Road).

John Henry Harding died 3rd September 1886, five months after his wife, and at the time of death he was virtually destitute. Two factors that may have contributed to this: firstly, the army barracks had moved from Longcross Street to Maindy Barracks on Whitchurch Road, two miles away, and secondly, the passing of the Welsh Licensing Act 1881, which introduced Sunday closing and the emergence of many small drinking clubs.