



## A NEW BOOK WRITTEN AT CROWLE

**A Human Interest  
story with a military  
flavour added for  
taste!**

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*FROM IRISH ORPHAN*

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TO

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*VICTORIA CROSS HERO*

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### THE TRUE STORY OF MAJOR GENERAL SIR LUKE O'CONNOR

Eight year old Luke O'Connor stood on a Quebec Quay side with his five orphaned siblings, having disembarked the ship which brought his family on their voyage from Ireland to escape the Great Famine of the early 1840s. They had suffered dreadful conditions on board a disease infested 'coffin ship', and on Grosse Isle, the Canadian Island used to quarantine the dying, where over 6,000 of their countrymen had, and were to die. Their Dad had died before reaching Canadian waters and was buried at sea. No sooner had they reached Quebec, than their mother with a babe in arms also died.

Their intended destination was over 1,000 miles away on the virgin plains of North America, now, Wisconsin State. But here they now were, six children, thankfully two of them were old enough to lead them to safety. The youngest was only 5. Not only had they lost their parents, but they were in a strange, largely French speaking, foreign country.

Luke was so traumatised and homesick that before they started their mammoth trek, he was repatriated to Ireland to be cared for by an uncle whom Luke grew no to care for. He was employed as a boot boy in his uncle's hotel so he flooded the beer cellar by turning on all the barrel taps and escaped to another uncle in London. In 1849, with his uncle's help and a suspected manipulation of his age, he was recruited into the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot. (The Welsh Fusiliers.)

Only 5 years later, he was the Colour Sergeant guarding the regiment's colour party at the Battle of the Alma, in the Crimean War. As they marched forward with the Russians defended in redoubts ahead and on high ground, the army of the Alliance faced almost certain death. The Queens colour bearer was shot dead and at the same time, Luke was felled, being shot in

the chest breaking two ribs. With showers of munitions pouring down on them and being severely injured, he recovered the colour and with it, encouraged the troops behind him to follow his example to forge ahead.

The Victoria Cross had yet to be instituted but his actions were witnessed by two generals – his commanders who ensured that he was rewarded by becoming the first soldier to win one. He was also later awarded a commission and went on to display courage and bravery on the attacks on the forts at Sebastopol which brought an end to the war. Again, he was so seriously injured that he was shipped to Scutari, Turkey to be nursed by Florence Nightingale.

Having recovered and attended the first VC medal presentation, he went on to play a prominent part in the reliefs of Lucknow and Cawnpore communities in the Indian Mutiny and also in the Ashanti War in West Africa.

Promotions followed and being a VC celebrity, he was often invited to the gatherings of the royal family and the aristocracy of London. Having developed a friendship with The Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward 7<sup>th</sup>., he was knighted and on his retirement was promoted to the honorary rank of Major General to command the regiment he had joined as a boy and had never left.

But the human interest which dominates the story, especially the question of his separation from his five siblings all of whom, had made their own successful lives in North America. Indeed, a brother Daniel recruited his own Company 'D' of an Illinois volunteer regiment in the US Civil War and was left for dead at Missionary Ridge. He too was a hero. (Subject of a separate book in the pipeline)

This is a remarkable military and human interest journey of sadness and success of a gentleman who was loved by all who met him including both junior and senior ranking soldiers – and in the face of adversity. No stone has been left unturned.

The book can be found on Amazon Books for £12.95 at –

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08T6BTJNQ?ref=pe\\_3052080\\_397514860](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08T6BTJNQ?ref=pe_3052080_397514860)

Or go to Amazon Books – search the title – 'From Irish Orphan to VC Hero' and it will appear.

There is a synopsis and also click on 'Look Inside' at the top of the book image and you can read the first 40 pages which includes the Introduction and why I wrote it and more.

Treat yourself to a good story and hold back the tears girls about his visit to America to join up with his long separated siblings.

Brian