

= John Brunt =

Captain John Henry Cound Brunt VC , MC (6 December 1922 ? 10 December 1944) was an English recipient of the Victoria Cross , the highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces . He served in Italy during the Second World War and was twice decorated for bravery in action before he was killed by mortar fire .

= = Early life = =

John Henry Cound Brunt was born on 6 December 1922 , on a farm in Priest Weston , near Chirbury , Shropshire to Thomas Henry Brunt and Nesta Mary Brunt (née Cound) , and began his education at Chirbury village school . He had an elder sister named Dorothy (born 13 May 1920) and a younger sister Isobel (born 5 October 1923) . When Dorothy was eight , the family moved to a farm near Whittington , Shropshire , where John grew up . As he became older , his fearless nature became more apparent ; every week , he read the comic " Tiny Tots " , which featured instructions on " How to teach yourself to swim " . One day , he asked Dorothy to take him to the Shropshire Canal , which went through their farmland . Before his sister could stop him , Brunt had taken off all his clothes and jumped into the canal . When they finally arrived home , their mother wanted to know why he had no clothes on , and John responded that he had been teaching himself to swim . As he got older , his daredevil attitude became even more serious ; on one occasion , he was found swinging himself along the guttering of a dutch barn sixty feet above the farmyard .

When old enough , Brunt was enrolled at Ellesmere College , where his mischievous streak became quickly apparent through pranks and dares ; once , while in the sanatorium with mumps , he slipped a laxative into the matron 's tea . Nevertheless , he is fondly remembered at the school . It was while he was at Ellesmere that he contracted measles , resulting in his need to wear glasses . An enthusiastic sportsman , Brunt played cricket , hockey , rugby , water polo and wrestling . He was the only pupil at the school to tackle the headmaster while playing rugby , injuring the older man 's knee in the process .

In 1934 , the Brunt family moved to Paddock Wood in Kent and , in his school holidays , " Young John " (as he was known in the village) would come home . Although he was still a reckless individual , he was thought of very highly , and helped train the Paddock Wood Home Guard between 1940 and 1943 , assisted by his father . He spent his last days in Paddock Wood helping with the hop harvest .

= = Military career = =

Brunt joined the British Army when he left school , training as a private with the Queen 's Own Royal West Kent Regiment in 1941 . He received a commission as a second lieutenant on 2 January 1943 , and was posted to North Africa . Although he was commissioned in the Sherwood Foresters , he never served with them , instead being posted to the 6th Battalion , Royal Lincolnshire Regiment , having become friendly with Captain Alan Money , an officer in the Lincolns , on the boat to Africa .

On 9 September 1943 , Brunt 's regiment landed at Salerno in Italy and Lieutenant Brunt was given command of No.9 Platoon in A Company . The unit subsequently moved south @-@ east to establish a base in a farm near the river Asa .

= = = Military Cross = = =

Between December 1943 and January 1944 , Brunt commanded a battle patrol and saw near @-@ constant action . In the early hours of 15 December , they received orders to destroy an enemy post based in some houses 200 yards (180 m) north of the River Peccia . In efforts to break the enemy line , he crossed and re @-@ crossed the river so many times that the troops took to calling it " Brunt 's Brook " . After an intense five @-@ minute bombardment , Brunt led a section into an

assault . The first two houses contained two enemy soldiers , but it was the third house that provided the most resistance . Using grenades and Tommy guns , they managed to kill eight enemy troops outside the house , as well as those inside , all belonging to the 1st Battalion , 2nd Herman Goering Panzer Grenadier Regiment . After thirty minutes of intense fighting , the patrol withdrew , having had one man killed and six wounded . While the rest of the section pulled back , Brunt remained behind with his sergeant and a private to retrieve a wounded soldier . For his actions , he was awarded the Military Cross .

On 5 January 1944 , Brunt was in a sick bed in a rear hospital . He pleaded with doctors to be allowed to leave to take part in an attack , and was given permission , leading his patrol under heavy fire . He was back in the hospital twenty @-@ four hours later with concussion after a piece of shrapnel almost split his helmet , but would have carried on fighting if it had not been for an non @-@ commissioned officer , who forcibly led him away from the front line . At the end of the campaign , Brunt is said to have commented to his friends , " I 've won the M.C. , now for the V.C. ! "

= = = Victoria Cross = = =

After resting in Syria and Egypt , Brunt returned to Italy on 3 July 1944 , having been promoted to temporary captain and appointed second in command of " D " Company . By early December 1944 , the regiment was operating near Ravenna , fighting German troops who were retreating north through Italy . On the night of 3 December , the regiment began their attack on the town of Faenza . By the evening of 6 December , they had taken the village of Ragazzina near Faenza , and after heavy fighting the Lincolns established defensive positions in Faenza itself . For his actions during the engagement , Brunt was awarded the Victoria Cross . The full citation for the award appeared in a supplement to the London Gazette of 6 February 1945 , reading :

The next morning , having won the battle and the acclaim of his regiment , Captain Brunt was as eager to return to the offensive , keeping alert for more trouble as breakfast was being prepared for the men , their first meal in 48 hours . He was standing in the doorway of the platoon headquarters , having a mug of tea and chatting with friends , when a stray German mortar bomb landed at his feet , killing him outright . He had celebrated his 22nd birthday just four days before .

John Brunt is buried at Faenza War Cemetery in Italy under a Commonwealth War Grave headstone ; his Victoria Cross was announced posthumously in February 1945 .

= = Victoria Cross presentation = =

On 18 December 1945 , King George VI presented Brunt 's Victoria Cross and Military Cross to his parents at Buckingham Palace . Brunt 's father met Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander , the 15th Army Group commander for most of the Italian Campaign , at the ceremony and said to him " I expect that you know many men who should have been awarded this medal " , to which Alexander replied " No , because there is always only one who will do the unexpected and that day it was your son . "

= = Legacy = =

In 1946 , John Brunt 's sister Dorothy gave birth to a boy which she named John Brunt Miller , in honour of his heroic uncle .

On 3 September 1947 the Kent Arms public house in Paddock Wood , Kent , was named the John Brunt V.C. in his honour . In 1997 , the pub changed its name to The Hopping Hooden Horse ; after local outrage the original name was restored in 2001 . Behind the pub a small housing development called John Brunt VC Court was built .

During his military career , Brunt was awarded the Victoria Cross , Military Cross , 1939 @-@ 45 Star , Africa Star , Italy Star and the British War Medal 1939 ? 1945 , all of which are on display in Royal Lincolnshire Regiment and Lincolnshire Yeomanry Collections in the Museum of Lincolnshire

Life in Lincoln . In 1951 an altar rail in the Soldiers ' Chapel of St George in Lincoln Cathedral was dedicated to his memory by the regiment .

On 17 July 1965 The Victor comic featured a cover story named Brunt V.C. , a two @-@ page strip based on the actions that won Brunt the VC .

A John Brunt Memorial Cricket Pavilion was opened at Ellesmere College in 1970 , after funds were raised for it since 1945 . The College 's Ante Chapel holds a photograph of Brunt with a copy of his VC citation displayed below .

In May 2004 an outdoor plaque to his memory was unveiled in Priestweston .