

**3870 Sergeant Instructor of Musketry**  
**WILLIAM CALVERT**  
**59<sup>TH</sup> Regiment of Foot**

by  
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Unless otherwise noted, the details supplied in this narrative were extracted from the soldier's service papers and muster roll search obtained from original documents housed in the Public Record Office at Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

Research on William Calvert shows the following general information, dates of rank, campaign service, and army appointments related to his 21 years 268 days (1855-1877) service in the British Army:<sup>1</sup>

**2. EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY INFORMATION**

**Birth:** William Calvert was born in the Parish of Tullylish, near the Town of Gilford, in the County of Armagh, Ireland in 1837<sup>2</sup>.

**1881 Census Family information:**

William Calvert's family information was found to have been badly mis-scribed under the spelling "Calvint":<sup>3</sup>

<b>Dwelling:</b> Balgom St.						
<b>Census Place:</b> Campbeltown, Argyll, Scotland						
<b>Source:</b> FHL Film 0203555 GRO Ref Volume 507 EnumDist 19 Page 18						
<b>Name and Occupation</b>	<b>Relation</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	
William CALVINT (CALVERT), Sergeant Instructor of Volunteers	Head	M	42	M	Ireland (1839)	
Jane CALVINT (CALVERT), (Pensioner) Wife	Wife	M	42	F	England (1839)	
Edith Mary CALVINT (CALVERT), Scholar	Daur	U	13	F	Ireland <sup>4</sup> (1868)	
Annie CALVINT (CALVERT), Scholar	Daur	U	7	F	East Indies <sup>5</sup> (1874)	
Elizabeth Jane CALVINT (CALVERT), Scholar	Daur	U	5	F	East Indies <sup>6</sup> (1876)	
Rose Augusta CALVINT (CALVERT), Infant	Daur	U	3	F	Lochdilphead, Argyll, Scotland (1878)	

<sup>1</sup> The details of William Calvert's services are compiled from his Soldiers Documents: PRO : WO97/1907.

<sup>2</sup> The 1881 census shows his birth year as 1839.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Kevin Asplin who's tenacity using wildcard searches discovered William Calvert's census information.

<sup>4</sup> Hart's Army List shows the 59<sup>th</sup> at Athlone, Ireland prior to shipping out to Ceylon on 15 Sept. 1867.

<sup>5</sup> William Calvert's medical records list him in Agra, on 13 Jan. 1874 and the Hart's Army List shows the 59<sup>th</sup> at Agra, Bengal for all of 1874.

<sup>6</sup> The Hart's Army List shows the 59<sup>th</sup> in Ceylon all of 1868.

### 3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1860 at the age of 22<sup>7</sup> William Calvert's medical records show that he was 5 feet 7 7/8 inches tall, and weighed 148 pounds, and had a chest measurement of 33 3/4 inches. His hair colour was listed as "Brown". His trade was listed as a "Weaver".

At the time of his discharge his physical description shows that he was 39 and 8/12<sup>th</sup> years of age, 5 feet 7 inches tall, had a "Fresh" complexion, "Hazel" eyes, and "Dark Brown" hair. His trade is listed as a "Weaver". His religious denomination was not listed.

### 4. ENLISTMENT AND TRAINING

At the age 18 years, William Calvert enlisted in the 59<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot at Portadown, Ireland on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1855. He was assigned the regimental number 3870 which he retained throughout his period of service.

### 5. PROMOTIONS AND CONDUCT

**Promotions:** Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert received the following promotions during his time in service:

Date of Promotion or Appointment	Rank or Position
13 June 1855 to 31 January 1859	Private (3 years 233 days)
1 February 1859 to 18 October 1860	Corporal (1 year 261 days)
19 October 1860 to 22 June 1862	Sergeant (1 year 247 days)
23 June 1862 to 6 March 1877	Sergeant Instructor of Musketry (14 years 11 days)

**Statement of Conduct:** Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert received the following Good Conduct Badges during his time in service:

Good Conduct Badge	Date of Award	Total Time in Service
Enlisted	13 June 1855	Starting date of service
1st Award at 1 <sup>d</sup>	13 June 1860	5 years
2nd Award at 2 <sup>d</sup>	13 June 1863	8 years
Entitled to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Award at 3 <sup>d</sup>	13 June 1868	13 years
Entitled to 4 <sup>th</sup> Award at 4 <sup>d</sup>	13 June 1873	18 years
Entitled to 5 <sup>th</sup> Award at 5 <sup>d</sup>	13 June 1876	21 years

Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert was never entered in the Regimental Defaulters Book and he was never tried by Court Martial during his service. His medical records note that his habits were "very temperate". His general conduct during his service was stated to be "Very Good." This statement made in typical British understatement. Clearly William Calvert was an outstanding soldier having reached the rank of Sergeant, without a Certificate of Education in 5 years 129 days. It was very unusual for a man to achieve promotion during this time without a Certificate of Education. He must have been well schooled before he joined the army. Another point of significant note is that William Calvert held the appointment of Sergeant

<sup>7</sup> The 1881 census shows his birth year as 1839 which would have made him 20 years of age at enlistment.

Instructor of Musketry of the 59<sup>th</sup> Foot for 14 years and 11 days. This would suggest that he was exceptional at his craft. He served through the a period of a number of rapidly changing patterns in British service firearms. He saw service as a S.I.M. with the last muzzle loading Enfield Rifle, on to the introduction of the first breech loading Snider-Enfield rifles and on to finish with several patterns of the Martini-Henry breach loading rifle before his discharge in 1877. Besides a VR Long Service and Good Conduct, S.I.M. William Calvert would received a EdVII Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) with a £10 annuity on 18 November 1909 after a wait of 32 years for a vacancy on the MSM roll. This medal is representative of the exceptional services, skills, and leadership given by a soldier throughout his military enlistment.

The senior NCO's were the men who took on the responsibilities of the day-to-day running of the British Army. Officers may have given the orders but it was the senior non-commissioned officers who saw that things got done. They knew how to assess the skills of the men under them in order to get the most from them. These men were proud of the regiments in which they served and considered it an honour to be members of that regimental family.

It is interesting that through much of the Victorian British Army there was little incentive for a man to pursue a career in the Army short of the ideals just discussed. Most men had little desire to accept the added responsibilities of promotion. Promotion could, at least initially, involve financial loss because of the additional expense of being a non-commissioned officer. Sergeants had very little free time due to extra training burdens placed on them by the short-service army. Sergeants paid the regulation stoppages expected of them. They also often paid men to clean their equipment and to take on various routine tasks for them because they did not have enough of their own time to do everything that was expected of them. In addition, all Sergeants (including Lance Sergeants) were expected to join the Sergeants Mess and to meet their share of the mess expenses.<sup>8</sup> The British non-commissioned officer filled a vital role in the training, discipline, and internal functioning of every military unit as well as serving as an indispensable link between the officer and the rank and file. Men who took on this responsibility did so largely for the prestige and honour of these positions within the traditions of their own regiments.

## 7. EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

**Education:** Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert did not earn any Certificates of Education during his time in service. This is unusual as a man was normally required to possess at least a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Certificate of Education for promotion to Sergeant.

**Qualifications:** Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert earned the following qualifications during his time in service.

Date	Qualification
?	Musketry Certificate

<sup>8</sup> Spiers, Edward M., *The late Victorian army 1868-1902*, Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1992, p.135 & 137.

## **8. ASSIGNMENTS AND CAMPAIGN SERVICE**

### **Home and Overseas Service:**

The table below shows the services of Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert.

Home or Overseas	From:	To:	Years	Days
Home	12 June 1855			
China			2	201
Cape of Good Hope			2	339
Home				
Ceylon	5 September 1867		1	199
East Indies			7	189
Home				
<b>Total Overseas Service:</b>			<b>14 Yrs</b>	<b>77 Days</b>
Total Service:			21 Yrs	268 Days

Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert joined his regiment in Hong Kong and was with them as the only British Foot regiment to be employed in 2<sup>nd</sup> China War operations around Canton, including the storming and capture of that city in 1857. The regiment would also serve in the expedition to the White Cloud Mountains, and in the capture of the city of Nantow in 1858.<sup>9</sup> William Calvert would receive the medal for China 1860 with the clasp for "Canton 1857" for his services with the regiment. In the following year the regiment was sent to the Cape of Good Hope, and in 1861 to Natal, on the occasion of a Zulu "scare" after which it returned home.

After a few years' home service on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1867 the 59<sup>th</sup> proceeded to the Straits Settlements and Ceylon, then on to Bombay in 1869. The regiment was in India when S.I.M. William Calvert was sent home for discharge.

## **9. MEDICAL INFORMATION**

The following medical information was taken from Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert's service records during his time in service:

Location	Date of Admission	Ailment	Period of Hospitalization, or Treatment, or Result
Cape Town	1860		
Dover	14 December 1861		
Aldershot	26 May 1863		
Ayr	6 March 1865		
Birr	30 December 1865		
Athlone	1 June 1866		
Curragh	29 May 1867		
Ship <i>Peeres</i>	5 September 1867		
Colombo	14 December 1867		
Ship <i>Malabar</i>	23 March 1869		
Poona	30 March 1869		

<sup>9</sup> China Despatches related to the 59<sup>th</sup> Foot are in Appendix 1.

?	25 January 1872		
Agra	13 January 1874		
Agra	3 March 1875	Revaccinated	Result modified
<b>H.M.S. Crocodile</b>	7 November 1876		
Netley	9 December 1876		
Discharged	6 March 1877		

It is remarkable that his medical records show none of the often found complaints of a Victorian period service men. These complaints would normally include such things as fevers, contusions, and venereal disease. He was not wounded during his service.

## 10. DISCHARGE

Sergeant Instructor of Musketry William Calvert was discharged from the Army at Netley on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1877 on the termination of his second period of limited engagement. His total service was reckoned as shown in the tables below:

Location	Total Period of Service
Home Service	7 Years 191 Days
Service Abroad	14 Years 77 Days
<b>Total Service</b>	<b>21 Years 268 Days</b>

## 12. POST SERVICE LIFE

On his discharge William Calvert's intended place of residence is listed as Glasgow, Scotland.