

**No. 1040 Quartermaster Sergeant and Orderly Room Sergeant  
William Martin Delany (Delaney)  
20<sup>th</sup> Hussars  
20<sup>th</sup> September 1872 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1895 (23 yrs. 11 days)**

**By Fred B. Larimore  
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Unless otherwise noted, the details in this narrative were extracted from the soldier's service papers and muster roll extracts obtained in the National Archives London at Kew, Richmond, Surrey and from original documents (the Delany Archive) in the collection of Fred Larimore.

No. 1040 Quartermaster Sergeant (QMS) and Orderly Room Sergeant (ORSgt) William Martin Delany (Delaney)<sup>1</sup> received the following medals for his campaign and Long Service. It is very interesting to note that the naming on his medals reflect the two different spellings found in the various records used to compile this account:

(a) Egypt and Sudan 1882-89, undated reverse, no clasp medal for the Battle of Ginnis, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1885 with engraved naming " 1040 Q.M.S. & O.R.C. W.M. DELANEY. 20<sup>TH</sup> HUS<sup>RS</sup> ."

(b) Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, 3<sup>rd</sup> Type (VR) with engraved naming " 1040 Q.M.SGT. W.M. DELANY. 20/HUSS. ."

(c) Khedive's Star 1884-86 with impressed naming " 20 H 1040 ."

Research on QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany shows the following general information, dates of rank, campaign service, and army appointments related to his 23 years and 11 days (1872-1895) in the British Army:<sup>2</sup>

**2. EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY INFORMATION**

**Birth:** William Martin Delany was born in Guernsey on the 20<sup>th</sup> August of 1853. The in the letters of the Delany Archive it is stated that his father (Patrick Delany) was in the Royal Artillery<sup>3</sup>. In 1853, 2<sup>nd</sup> Company 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion was stationed at Fort George on Guernsey from January to August of 1853. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1853 they were replaced by 4<sup>th</sup> Company 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion who were to be on Guernsey until 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1854. It is very likely that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Artillery was the unit that Patrick Delany was serving with at the time of William's birth. His mother's name was Mary. She was born at Woolwich in 1832 and was probably the daughter of a soldier.

A search of records in Guernsey<sup>4</sup> found, "William Marin Delany, born 20<sup>th</sup> August 1853, baptized 26<sup>th</sup> August at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in St. Peter's Port." His Godfather was listed as "David Wray" and his Godmother was "Eleona Fitzgerald."

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<sup>1</sup> Both forms of the surname appear in documents and letters. The form appearing most often in the 19<sup>th</sup> century seems to be 'Delaney' but the family is now using Delany. Transcriptions of the documents will reflect the form of the name used.

<sup>2</sup> The details of William Martin Delany services were compiled from his Soldiers Documents: National Archives, London : WO97/2653, original official documents, letters, and photographs in the collection of Fred Larimore, and by e-mail contact (toni@stevebuckman.plus.com) with his great great granddaughter Toni Buckman.

<sup>3</sup> See letter from Lt. Col. Hume at the bottom of page 2 of this account.

<sup>4</sup> This Guernsey information is from Toni Buckman.

**Family Information and Early Life:** William Delany grew up in the army. His father, Patrick Delany was in the Royal Artillery and apparently died on active service in the early 1860's. As was often the case in the Victorian Army his mother Mary remarried quickly after Patrick's death to Paymaster Sergeant William Durgan<sup>5</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot.

There are a number of interesting and revealing letters related to William's education and character. Initially, these letters appear to have been collected with no specific purpose other than to maintain a record of written character references. These letters would ultimately be used for the purpose of gaining admission and employment as a pupil teacher at the Royal Military Asylum<sup>6</sup>, Chelsea. There is clear physical evidence that these letters and the official documents related to the application to the Royal Military Asylum were once all pinned together. This pinning was either done by William Delany or possibly officially when the documents were returned to William Delany by the Military Education Division of the War Office. These letters will be presented chronologically:

The first letter is from P. Mills, Army Schoolmaster, 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment, dated Chukrata, (India), 1<sup>st</sup> November 1869. William Delany was just over 16 years 2 months of age at the time this letter was written:

"William Delaney has been under my tuition for nearly 7 years during which period I ever found him very obedient, intelligent, attentive to his work in school, and remarkably truthful.

He is well acquainted with English History, English Grammar, General Geography, Arithmetic, including Decimal and Vulgar Fractions, and Algebra as far as the solution of simple equations.

I consider him to be one of the most promising pupils that I have ever had under my care."

The next letter is from Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hume, CB<sup>7</sup>, commanding officer of the 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, dated Chakrata, East Indies, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1869.

"William Delaney, stepson of Paymaster Sergt. Durgan 55<sup>th</sup> Regt. Has been with his stepfather in the Regt. since 1862. He is a very well conducted boy and very well reported on by the regimental schoolmaster. His father was in the artillery. His stepfather, Paymaster Sergeant Durgan is a most deserving Non Commissioned Officer and should be glad on his account that the boy should get on well and be assisted by those to whom Sergt. Durgan may apply on his account."

There is a letter from Thomas G. Bell of the Senior School at Wesleyan Training College Westminster<sup>8</sup>, SW. It is dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1871.

"William Delaney has attended my school since September last. I am glad to certify that his conduct has been very good and his attention to studies commendable."

The next letter, on War Office stationary, is from D. Greentree, Secretary of the Military Education Division of the War Office, dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1872 and is addressed to Mr. W. Delaney.

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<sup>5</sup> WO102/1 the LS&GC Roll of the 55<sup>th</sup> Foot lists "2528 Paymr. Sergt. Wm. Durgan" as being recommended for the medal with a 15 pound gratuity by the Officer Commanding the Regiment (Lt. Col. Robert Hume, see footnote 6 below) on 27 September 1870. The medal was sent to him in West London and was received on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1870. This fact suggests that he had been pensioned by this date

<sup>6</sup> The Royal Military Asylum was established by the Army to provide a home and education for the children (ages 6 months to 14 years) of deceased soldiers. From 1803 to 1892 over 11,000 children passed through the doors of the Asylum.

<sup>7</sup> Lt. Col. Robert Hume, CB served in the Crimea 1854-55, including the Battles of Alma and Inkerman (severely wounded), siege and fall of Sebastopol, repulse of the sortie of 26<sup>th</sup> Oct., and assaults of the Redan on the 18<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> Sept. (severely wounded, Mentioned in Despatches, Brevet Major, Medal with 3 clasps, Knight of the Legion of Honour, 5<sup>th</sup> Class of the Medjidie, and Turkish Crimea). Commanded the 55<sup>th</sup> Regt. in the Bhootan Exp. including the attack and recapture of Dewangiri in 1865.

<sup>8</sup> Note Westminster is where William was recruited on 19 September 1872. It was a notorious recruiting site for the cavalry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On any given day Sergeants and senior N.C.O.'s, usually Troop or Squadron Sergeant Majors, from a number of cavalry regiments could be seen. The Dragoons, Dragoon Guards, Lancers and Hussars would all be represented.

"I am desired by the Director General of Military Education to annex a Return shewing (showing) the number of marks you gained at the recent Examination of Candidates for admission to the Royal Military Asylum; and to state that if you desire to compete again, you must renew your application in July next, and transmit at the same time a Certificate of good conduct up to that time."

The second part of this letter is the report on William's examination. It is signed by secretary D. Greentree.

"Extract from the Report on the Examination of the undermentioned Candidate for admission into the Model School of the Royal Military asylum as a Pupil Teacher<sup>9</sup>."

Order of Merit	Name	Arithmetic	Scripture	E. History	Geography	Grammar	Total	Remarks
6	Full Marks	70	70	70	70	70	350	Qualified but no further Vacancy.
	Delaney, W.	35	38	36	40	30	179	

"D. Greentree"

"Military Education Division,  
War Office.  
15<sup>th</sup> March 1872."

William Delany apparently reapplied for admission to the Royal Military Asylum. The final letter is a character letter from John Welch, No. 3 King's Bench Walk, Temple, dated May 13<sup>th</sup> 1872.

"Mr. W. M. Delaney has been in my service as a clerk from the beginning of August last up to the present time & I have much pleasure in certifying that his conduct has been uniformly good."

There is a notation on the back of this letter: "Note and inform him when the examination takes place." This remark is initialed "D.G." (D. Greentree) and dated 15/5/72. William was apparently again refused admission. He enlisted in the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars just over 4 months later on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1872.

It is clear that from an early age William Delany was a man of good character with a desire to become well educated and possessing a conscientious sense of responsibility. He had goals in life and set about obtaining them.

**British Census Family Information:**

1871 Census: Household of William Durgan, William Delany's stepfather:

<b>Dwelling: Cromwell House, Cromwell Street,</b>					
<b>Census Place: Westminster, London</b>					
<b>Source: Folio No. 18 Page No. 27 Entry 21</b>					
<b>Name and Occupation</b>	<b>Relation</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>
William Durgan	Head	M	40	M	India
Mary Durgan	Wife	M	39	F	Woolwich, Kent

<sup>9</sup> It has not been determined what this position entailed. William was over the age of 14 so it appears that this was some type of staff position.

William Delany	Stepson	U	17	M	Guernsey
Joseph Durgan	Son	U	7	M	Portsmouth
Helen Durgan	Daur	U	3	F	Lucknow, India
David Durgan	Son	U	1	M	India

### 1891 Census: Household of William Delany

<b>Dwelling: 20<sup>th</sup> Regiment Cavalry Barracks</b>					
<b>Census Place: Aldershot, Hampshire</b>					
<b>Source: RG12/567 Folio 6 Page 9</b>					
<b>Name and Occupation</b>	<b>Relation</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>
William Delaney	Head	M	37	M	Guernsey, Channel Islands
Elizabeth Delaney	Wife	M	33	F	Manchester, Lancashire
William Delaney	Son	U	3	M	Woolwich, Middlesex
Rose Delaney	Daur	U	6	F	Aldershot, Hampshire
Mary Delaney	Daur	U	1	F	Norwich, Norfolk

### 3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The following is a description of William Martin Delany at the time he enlisted in the Army on 19 September 1872:

He was 19 years old 5 feet 7 7/8 inches tall, had a fresh complexion, hazel eyes, and brown hair. He weighed 129 pounds, had a chest measurement of 33 inches and his muscular development was slight. His religious denomination was not listed in his WO/97 documents but his personal soldiers book lists him as Roman Catholic. His trade was listed as a 'clerk'. Distinctive marks included: "Birth Stain right breast and two scars outside left knee." He was vaccinated in infancy and did not have any small pox marks.

The following is a description<sup>10</sup> of QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany at the time he was discharged from the Army at Colchester on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1895:

He was 42 years 1 month old 5 feet 9 ½ inches tall, had a fresh complexion, hazel eyes, and brown grey hair. His trade was listed as a 'clerk'. His distinctive marks are the same as on enlistment.

### 4. ENLISTMENT AND ATTESTATION

At the age 19 years William Martin Delany enlisted<sup>11</sup> in the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars at Westminster, London on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1872. He was given the Attestation Oath at Westminster on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1872 at 2:50 PM. He was assigned the regimental number 1040. He listed his next of kin as his mother Mary, step brother Joseph James Grant, 55<sup>th</sup> Foot and step sister Helen Catherine. In 1880 his wife Elizabeth became his next of kin.

He passed his full medical examination by Surgeon N. A. Halleram at the Cavalry Depot at Canterbury on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1872. He almost certainly underwent his recruit training at Canterbury.

"The cavalry recruit receives his first training with his regiment, or at the depot, if the regiment is in garrison outside the United Kingdom. Before he is allowed to get on a horse he is drilled on foot, and he is taught gymnastics, stable work, and the use of arms on foot. The recruits are taught drill by the adjutant of the regiment, fencing (about 70 lessons) by the sergeant instructor in fencing, gymnastics (1 hour a day), and stable work by the officers of the squadron. These branches of training require about two months, and then commences riding drill, which requires 90 to 120 hours. In combination with

<sup>10</sup> From the Parchment Discharge Documents given to a soldier on his discharge as proof of his service.

<sup>11</sup> His enlistment was for a term of twelve years, the first seven in regular army service and the remaining five years in the 1<sup>st</sup> Class Army Reserve. There was an interesting clause in this enlistment that if you were serving overseas on the termination of your first seven years your term of regular army service changed to eight years with four years in the 1<sup>st</sup> class Army Reserve.

this training the recruits are instructed in stable work, saddling, packing, and the use of arms on horseback. Drill on foot is given in the afternoon, and oral instruction in the evening.”<sup>12</sup>

**QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany's Regiment,  
Nobody's Own, The 20<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons (later redesignated the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars):**

The history and origins of a regiment have always been used as a recruiting tool. William Delany would have heard some of the details below presented in glorious fashion on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1872.

Four British Cavalry regiments have been numbered in succession as the Twentieth:

1. The 20<sup>th</sup> Light Inniskilling Dragoons were raised in Ireland in 1759 from the “light” troop of the 6<sup>th</sup> Inniskilling Dragoons and volunteers from other corps. The regiment was disbanded in Ireland at the peace of 1763.
2. The 20<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons were raised in 1779 out of the “light” troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoon Guards, the 6<sup>th</sup> Inniskillings and the 11<sup>th</sup> Dragoons. After a few years of home service it was disbanded at the peace of 1783.
3. The Jamaica Light Dragoons were raised in England in 1791 for special service in the island of Jamaica. From 1794 to 1802 the regiment appeared in the Army List as the 20<sup>th</sup> or Jamaica Light Dragoons. The regiment was paid out of the colonial revenues from its formation until its return to England from its service in Jamaica. They were under the command of a distinguished soldier, Robert Rollo Gillespie, when the colonial title was dropped from their name in 1802. During its service in Jamaica it was employed in the Maroon War of 1795-6.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons subsequently performed much varied and gallant service. Part of the regiment was present at the capture of the Cape of Good Hope in 1806, and was subsequently employed in South America at Monte Video and Buenos Ayres. These troops went to Portugal in 1808 where they were highly distinguished at Vimiera. The conduct of this detachment elicited the warmest praise from Sir Arthur Wellesley in his despatches from the Peninsula. The rest of the regiment, had in the meantime, served in Naples in 1805, and in Sicily in 1806. One troop took part in the descent on Calabria, and was present at the battle of Maida. The regiment was employed in the luckless expedition to Egypt in 1807, to Sicily in 1808-12, on the East Coast of Spain in 1812-13. They were at the capture of Genoa in 1814, at the occupation of Marseilles, and also at Naples in 1815. During its service in Sicily detachments were employed on remount duties in Egypt and elsewhere. A non-commissioned officer's party accompanied Sir Robert Wilson, the British Military Commissioner, to Constantinople in 1811, and afterwards proceeded with him overland to Russia. Together with Sir Robert Wilson, who held the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the regiment, these men, some of whom received the Russian Cross of St. George, were present with the Russian Army throughout the Moscow Retreat of 1812. Afterwards they served in the campaigns in Germany, including the battles of Lutzen, Bautzen, Dresden, and the great fight, the “Battle of the Nations,” as German writers call it, before Leipzig in 1813. The regiment was disbanded in 1819.

4. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to 1859 direct responsibility for the government of India was assumed by the Crown, whose representatives took it for granted that H.E.I.C. European regiments would accept transfer to the Queen's service without demur. In fact the Europeans, jealous of their privileged rates of pay and conditions of service, objected very strongly to the idea and staged the series of violent demonstrations which became known as the White Mutiny. Fortunately, commonsense prevailed and reasonable concessions were offered to those willing to transfer, while those who were not were provided with a discharge and a free passage home; ironically, many of the latter enlisted anyway, being unable to settle in civilian life.

On the transfer of the late H.E.I. Company's Army to the Crown in 1860, the number 20<sup>th</sup> again re-appeared in the British Army List under the title of H.M. 20<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons after an absence of forty-one years. On 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1861, the regiment

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<sup>12</sup> Grierson, J.M., *Scarlet Into Khaki: The British Army on the Eve of the Boer War*. Greenhill Books, London, 1988, pp. 178-9.

was raised at Muttra, Bengal by volunteers from the late H.E.I.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bengal European Light Cavalry, then about 250 strong. Later they were brought up to strength with drafts of men who preferred to remain in India rather than return home with their own regiments, including a substantial number of veterans from the 14<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons. The officers were not finally parted from the H.E.I.C. nor was the regiment finally transferred from the Indian Government to the Horse Guards until 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1862, when it received the designation of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars. Their principal uniform distinctions would be a crimson busby bag and yellow plume. Initially, of course, hussar uniform was not available for issue and the Company's silver-grey light cavalry uniform was worn in its place. An interesting contemporary photograph shows a group of the Regiment's officers, many of them sporting fashionable mutton-chop whiskers. The differences that existed between the Queen's and Company officers, in time these differences would disappear, although the Regiment always maintained a jaunty independence that is reflected in its self-conferred nickname – Nobody's Own. To the rest of the Army the 20<sup>th</sup> was known as the Xs, because of its Roman numeral badge.

The Regiment was mobilised for service on the North West Frontier during the Ambeyla campaign of 1863 and again during the Hazara campaign of 1867-8, but on both occasions it was employed on line-of-communication duties. It embarked for England in 1872 and two years later was officially recognised as the heir to the old 20<sup>th</sup> that had served throughout the Napoleonic Wars. This immediately entitled it to the 'Peninsula' battle honour, although for some reason it had to wait until 1890 before it was credited with 'Vimiera' as well.

## **5. PROMOTIONS AND CONDUCT**

**Promotions and Appointments:** QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany rose through the ranks at first at a fairly standard pace until his promotion to Lance Corporal. After his promotion to Lance Corporal on 14 November 1877 it took him less than two years to advance through the rank of Corporal to the rank of Sergeant on 26 March 1879 and in just over four years to be promoted to Troop Sergeant Major. This was a very rapid advance in rank. He received the following promotions and appointments during his time in the service:

<b>Date of Promotion or Appointment</b>	<b>Rank or Appointment and Time in each Grade</b>
20 September 1872 to 13 November 1877:	Private (5 years 55 days)
14 November 1877 to 10 August 1878:	Promoted Lance Corporal (270 days)
11 August 1878 to 25 March 1879:	Promoted Corporal (227 days)
26 March 1879 to 25 March 1882:	Promoted Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk (1 year)
26 March 1882 to 6 May 1882:	Promoted Troop Sergeant Major (42 days)
7 May 1882 to 9 May 1882:	In Confinement (3 days)
10 May 1882:	Tried and reduced to Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk (1 day)
11 May 1882 to 28 February 1883:	Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk (294 days)
1 March 1883 to 3 September 1884:	Promoted Troop Sergeant Major (1 year 187 days)
4 September 1884 to 15 April 1885:	Appointed Orderly Room Sergeant (Troop Sergeant Major) (224 days)
16 April 1885 to 10 May 1885:	Reverted to Orderly Room Sergeant (Sergeant) (25 days)
11 May 1885 to 11 August 1885:	Promoted Troop Sergeant Major (93 days)
12 August 1885 to 30 November 1885:	Appointed Quartermaster Sergeant (111 days)
1 December 1885 to 6 September 1893:	Appointed Orderly Room Sergeant and Quartermaster Sergeant (7 yrs 280 days)
7 September 1893 to 30 September 1895:	Allowed to continue Army Service beyond 21 years by Order Lt. Gen. In Command of the Division. Continued Orderly Room Sergeant and Quartermaster (2 years 24 days)

**Duties and Responsibilities:** By the middle of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century new technology and advancements had complicated almost every facet of life and added a lot of additional responsibilities and educational requirements to becoming a senior N.C.O. in the British Army. No longer was it simply enough to have leadership skills and be able to write but now a high level of comprehension, understanding, and retention were necessary. Finally, it was an absolute necessity that a senior N.C.O. be able to teach and communicate both the information and skills necessary for running the army to junior N.C.O.'s and Private soldiers.

### **The Orderly Room Sergeant**

This was a position of appointment usually made by the Regimental Adjutant since the Orderly Room Sergeant served under the direction of the Adjutant. William Delany was appointed ORSgt on 26 March 1879 and he would hold this appointment until his discharge on 30 September 1895. The ORSgt was responsible for the day to day operation of the Orderly Room. He would have a number of Orderly Room Clerks that worked under his direction. The Orderly Room was the office (or tent when in the field) that maintained all of the official records accounts and documents of the regiment. He was to see that no book or document was removed from the office without the permission of the Adjutant. The secrecy of all the work of himself and his assistants was his direct responsibility and the smallest of breaches would cause his immediate removal. Sometimes this could be very difficult especially for the assistants because the men always wanted to have the scoop on what was going on in the regiment. The Orderly Room was often the first place of contact that inspectors or visitors would have with the regiment so it was important that all who worked in the office be in uniform that was strictly in accordance with regulations. The ORSgt was also responsible to see that this happened.

### **The Troop Sergeant Major**

William Delany held the rank of Troop Sergeant Major even though he did not serve in a Troop as the Troop Sergeant Major. He held this rank as the Orderly Room Sergeant. This also is an indication of the complexities in the operation of a regiment. Earlier in the century the ORSgt was a capable Sergeant now the position required the higher level of skill achieved by a Troop Sergeant Major.

### **The Quartermaster Sergeant**

This position was by appointment made by the Commanding Officer of the Regiment. William Delany was appointed Quartermaster Sergeant on 12 August 1885 by Lieutenant Colonel Cecil Mangles, CB<sup>13</sup>. The Quartermaster Sergeant is in charge of all the regimental stores, and he should see that every article in the store is in the best possible condition. The working necessities of the regiment are issued through him under the direction of the Commanding Officer or the commissioned Regimental Quartermaster. He is responsible for supply of all arms, harnesses and saddles, accoutrements, barrack room and stable equipment, bedding and utensils, and clothing of the regiment. He keeps strict records as to what is missing or broken. He attends to the delivery of bread, meat and vegetables and sees to it they are good and of full weight. He makes sure that all uniforms are strictly according to regimental pattern. He sees to it that the area occupied by the regiments barracks and stables are kept orderly and clean. He occasionally visits the lodgings of men allowed to reside out of barracks to make sure all is in good order. He also attends all inspections with his officers.

### **QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany and the Regimental Appointments**

It is clear from his letters of character that William Delany was highly valued and respected for the duties he performed for the regiment while holding these appointments. Usually the appointments of Orderly Room Sergeant and Quartermaster were filled by two different men. On a few occasions, I have seen a man appointed to both as is the case here. In all the observed cases the reward for good accurate and high quality work was more work with these men being appointed to both positions in the regiment. William Delany served six different Commanding Officers and six different Adjutants as Orderly Room Sergeant and he served four of these Commanding Officers and Adjutants as both Orderly Room Sergeant and Quartermaster. The fact that he was able to perform his duties to the satisfaction of all these regimental officers is a tribute to his tact and his level of skill in these appointments.

### **Statement of Conduct:**

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<sup>13</sup> Lt. Col. Mangles was the Commanding Officer of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars from February 1883 to July 1884. He commanded the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars in Egypt and the Sudan. He retired with the rank of Major General.

**a. Disciplinary Actions:** QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany was once tried by Court Martial. The details of the breach of army discipline are unknown. He was held in confinement for three days from 7 to 9 May 1882. He was tried on 10 May and reduced from Troop Sergeant Major to Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk. His importance to the smooth operation of the Orderly Room can be seen by the fact that he was left in charge of the orderly room with the rank of Sergeant. While the details of this incident are unknown it is significant to note that in spite of this breach of military discipline he still received his Long Service and Good Conduct medal<sup>14</sup> after 22 years of service. However, the fact that a court martial was taken seriously, irregardless of the severity or circumstances of the discipline breach, is seen here by the fact that had William Delany left the service at the end of his 21 years he may not have received his Long Service and Good Conduct medal.

It is unknown if he was ever listed in the Regimental Defaulters Book during his military service.

**b. Good Conduct Badges and the Long Service Good Conduct Medal:** He received regular good conduct pay awards throughout his service. Had he not been promoted he would have been entitled to his fifth Good Conduct<sup>15</sup> pay at the time of his discharge. He received or was entitled to the following Good Conduct Badges during his time in service:

Good Conduct Badge	Date of Award	Total Time in Service
Enlisted	20 September 1872	Starting date of service
1 <sup>st</sup> Award at 1 <sup>d</sup>	20 September 1874	2 years
2 <sup>nd</sup> Award at 2 <sup>d</sup>	20 September 1878	6 years
Deprived 1 <sup>d</sup> Good Conduct Pay	7 May 1882	No time penalty was given
Entitled to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Award at 3 <sup>d</sup>	20 September 1884	12 years
Entitled to 4 <sup>th</sup> Award at 4 <sup>d</sup>	20 September 1890	16 years

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1890, when he completed 18 years of service with the Colours, QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany was eligible for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. According to his Soldier's Documents he did not receive his medal until 1894<sup>16</sup> after 22 years of service. It is possible that his extension of service beyond 21 years was a factor that influenced his Commanding Officer to overlook his court martial and recommend him for the medal. Unfortunately the Long Service Good Conduct Medal roll<sup>17</sup> is not in very good condition and a page of the roll missing. The roll lists two men in 1894 and then jumps to 1899. William Delany is not on the roll and would have been on the missing page. He was recommended for the medal by his Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Miles Stapleton, Lord Beaumont. Lord Beaumont took command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars in 1891 after having served as a Regimental Officer in the regiment. He served on detached service with the Volunteer Mounted troops in the Bechuanaland Expedition under Sir Charles Warren in 1884-85 and then served with the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars in Egyptian Frontier Field Force 1885-86 and at the Battle of Ginnis on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1885. The fact the he had served with QMS and ORSgt Delany on campaign and at home and would have directly witnessed his day to day services under a wide range of conditions may also have played a role in his recommendation. It is unknown if he received a long service gratuity when he left the service.

<sup>14</sup> The original award of 1830 was for soldiers of "exemplary conduct" for 21 years in the infantry and corps and 24 years in the cavalry. In the Royal Warrant of 11 Nov. 1867 this period was reduced to 18 years for all soldiers. This was done partially so that the medal would be worn by a soldier before his retirement to show off his example of 'exemplary' service to the other men of his unit and the army as a whole.

<sup>15</sup> During his service he would have come under 3 sets of Good Conduct rules. The 1870 rules awarding badges at 2, 6, 12, 18, 23, & 28 years; the 1876 rules awarding badges at 2, 5, 12, 16, 18, 21, & 26 years; and the 1885 rules awarding badges at 2, 6, 12, 18, 23, & 28 years.

<sup>16</sup> Published in Army Order 150 of 1894.

<sup>17</sup> WO102/7

## 6. EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

**Education:** QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany earned the following Certificates of Education during his time in service:

Date	Certificate of Education
1878	2nd Class Certificate of Education <sup>18</sup>

**Qualifications:** QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany earned the following qualifications during his time in service.

Date	Qualification
1875-1876	Military Equitation at Canterbury

## 7. POSTINGS AND CAMPAIGN SERVICE

**Home and Overseas Service:** The table below shows the services of QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany:

Duty Station	From:	To:	Years Days
Home	20 September 1872	1 June 1885	12 years 255 days
At Sea to Egypt on S.S. <i>Oregon</i> <sup>19</sup>	2 June 1885	14 June 1885	12 days at sea
Egypt	2 June 1885	18 November 1887	2 years 170 days
At sea to England on Ship <i>Tanfar</i> <sup>20</sup>	1 November 1887	19 November 1887	18 days at sea
Home	19 November 1887	30 September 1895	7 years 316 days
<b>Total Overseas Service:</b>			<b>2 Years 170 Days</b>
<b>Total Service:</b>			<b>23 Years 11 Days</b>

**Services while Stationed at Aldershot:** The 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars were stationed at Aldershot from the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1873 to the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1875 when they moved to Hounslow. Aldershot was the main camp and training centre of the British Army in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was the Headquarters of the Brigade of Cavalry.

Privates Delany and Anderson were assigned to the Office of the Brigade of Cavalry as Orderlies to Captain John W. Hozier<sup>21</sup>, the Brigade Major of Cavalry. At the end of their service Captain Hozier wrote a letter of commendation to the Adjutant<sup>22</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars on official British Army stationery:

From the Brigade Major of Cavalry  
To the Adjutant 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars

<sup>18</sup> In 1861 the Army devised an inducement towards learning that were known as Certificates of Education. These certificates were linked to promotion in the ranks. A second-class certificate was necessary for promotion to sergeant. It entailed writing and dictation from a more difficult work, familiarity with all forms of regimental accounting, and an understanding of proportions, interest, fractions and averages.

<sup>19</sup> S.S. *Oregon* was built for the Guion Line by John Elder & Co., Glasgow. Launched 23 June 1883. Her steel and wood hull was 518 ft. long, her beam 54 ft., her tonnage was 7,375, and she was driven by a three cylinder steam engine producing 13,575 H.P. at 64 R.P.M. She was bought by Cunard on 7 June 1884. During the crisis in Egypt and the Sudan she was commissioned by the Admiralty. She was sunk off of Long Island, New York on 14 March 1886 after being struck by the schooner *Charles H. Morse*.

<sup>20</sup> No information has been found on this ship.

<sup>21</sup> John Wallace Hozier, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys); Cornet <sup>P</sup>17 Dec. 1858, Lieutenant <sup>P</sup>17 Nov. 1863, Captain <sup>P</sup>30 Jun. 1869, Major 31 Jan 1878. He passed the Staff College and served in a number of important administrative postings in the cavalry. He finished his service as 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command of the Royal Scots Greys and retired a Colonel 21 Jun. 1880 after 22 years service. The symbol "P" designates a rank as being purchased.

<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant Horace Hilton Perkin was the Adjutant of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars. He was with the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards at Meerut at the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny on 10 May 1857 and served with the regiment in subsequent operations in 1857-8 (Indian Mutiny Medal, no clasp).

Cavalry Brigade Office  
Aldershot  
30<sup>th</sup> July 1875

Sir,

I have the honour to request that you will bring to the notice of the Officer Commanding the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars the extreme satisfaction which Privates Delaney and Anderson gave me in the performance of their duties while recently employed as Orderlies at this Office. Both men proved themselves most steady, and showed the greatest attention to their work, and always turned out very clean and smart.

Private Delaney was constantly employed at this office almost from the time of the regiments arriving at Aldershot, and his intelligence and good education made him most useful to me.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your most obedient servant,  
John W. Hosier, Capt.  
Brigade Major of Cavalry

From this letter it is clear that William Delany made quite an impression on Captain Hosier. It was not common for such letters to have been written commending the services of Private soldiers.

**Campaign Service:** QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany received the following medals for his campaign and Long Service:

- (a) Egypt and Sudan 1882-89, undated reverse, no clasp medal for the Battle of Ginnis, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1885 with engraved naming "( 1040 Q.M.S. & O.R.C. W.M. DELANEY. 20<sup>TH</sup> HUS<sup>RS</sup> )."
- (b) Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, 3<sup>rd</sup> Type (VR) with engraved naming "( 1040 Q.M.SGT. W.M. DELANY. 20/HUSS. )."
- (c) Khedive's Star 1884-86 with impressed naming "(20 H 1040)."

QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany served with the Egyptian Frontier Field Force 1885-1886 and he was present at the Battle of Ginnis. The men of a regiment holding regimental appointments were still soldiers first and fought with

Service in England	
Canterbury	24 Sept 1872
Colchester	22 Oct 1872
Aldershot	6 Aug 1873
Hounslow	26 July 1875
Brighton	22 July 1876
Aldershot	23 June 1877
Brighton	25 July 1877
Leeds	27 June 1878
Manchester	22 Mar 1879
Service in Ireland	
Newbridge	8 Nov 1879
Cahir	19 Feb 1881
Ballincollog	31 Oct 1883
Regiment Returns to England	
Aldershot	10 Sept 1884
S.S. Oregon	2 June 1885
Egypt	14 June 1885

regiment. The 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars entered Egypt and the Sudan in bits and pieces during 1884-85. The result was that the regiment qualified for a variety of Egypt medals with and without clasps. There were 80 medals without a clasp. All of these men (including QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany) were at the Battle of Ginnis. Other men qualified for one or multiple clasps with 'The Nile 1884-5', 'Suakin 1885', 'Tofrik', 'Gemaizah', and 'Toski'.

**Home Service:** William Martin Delany would spend his first years of service at home. His first station was at the Cavalry Depot at Canterbury where he arrived on 24 September 1872. On 22 October 1872 the regiment moved to Colchester. He would receive his recruit training while the regiment was at Canterbury and Colchester. The regiment next moved to Aldershot arriving there on 6 August 1873. On 26 July 1875 the regiment moved to Hounslow. While the regiment was here Private Delany attended the course in Military Equitation at Canterbury over an unspecified period of time during 1875-1876. On 22 July 1876 the regiment moved to Brighton, then on 23 June 1877 they moved to Aldershot, then on 25 July 1877 they moved back to Brighton, then on 27 June

1878 they moved to Leeds and then on 22 March 1879 to Manchester. Sometime during the period of the regiments second stay at Brighton and their stay at Leeds in 1878 as either a Lance Corporal or a Corporal he passed his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Certificate of Education.

The Regiment then moved to Ireland. The station assignments can be seen in the table above. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1879, Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk William Delany married Elizabeth at Naas, Ireland. The Regiment returned to Aldershot on 10 September 1884. Soon after this they were ordered to prepare for service in Egypt and the Sudan. The Regiment was sent to Egypt and the Sudan in bits and pieces. Troop Sergeant Major and Orderly Room Sergeant William Delany sailed in the S.S. *Oregon* with his part of the regiment and arrived in Egypt 12 days later.

### **Background Information on Egypt and the Sudan**

In 1879 the wild extravagance of Ismail Pasha, who then ruled Egypt, had brought the country to the verge of complete financial collapse. This was a serious matter for Great Britain, whose government was naturally deeply concerned for the safety of the new Suez Canal, and it was decided that it was necessary to take over the complete administration of the country. The French, who were also involved initially, soon pulled out (what a surprise, a bit like modern times I think) leaving the British to put things right, and at first things went well. A rather half hearted rising by the Egyptian Army under a fervent nationalist, Colonel Arabi Pasha, was soon put down in 1882, but it then became clear that much more serious trouble was brewing further south.

“When Allah made the Sudan,” goes the bitter Arab proverb, “He laughed.” This cruel land was actually a province of Egypt but had been so corruptly administered that a religious fanatic named Mohammed Ahmed Ibn Al-Sayed Abdullah found no difficulty in having himself proclaimed Mahdi (Messiah) and in waging an extremely successful Holy War against the hated Turks, as the Egyptians were known. Every attempt to put down the rising ended in the massacre of the troops involved and, since at that period Egypt itself was virtually a protectorate of the British their involvement became inevitable. General Charles Gordon was sent to the Sudan to co-ordinate the withdrawal of the surviving Egyptian garrisons, but in 1884 he decided to disobey his orders and hold Khartoum against the Mahdi’s dervish army. Gordon was a popular figure at home and, much against its will, the government was forced to mount a relief expedition to rescue him. This included a Camel Corps, for services in which two officers and forty-three men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars volunteered. The expedition fought its way through to Khartoum in January 1885, only to find that the city had fallen days earlier and that Gordon was dead.

The dervishes were formidable opponents who were possessed of religious fervour and did not care whether they lived or died. Particularly formidable were the Beja hill tribes, who were better known as Fuzzy Wuzzies because of their high-crowned hairstyle. Kipling immortalised the Fuzzy Wuzzy in his poem of the same name, describing him as, “An injia-rubber idiot on the spree,” but expressing sincere admiration for the one man on Earth who had broken a British square. As a young journalist in India, Kipling spent much of his spare time in the company of soldiers, and he knew how they thought and talked. They had fought Afghans, Zulus and Boers, but never anyone like Fuzzy Wuzzy, who ignored the disciplined rifle volleys that had dropped lesser men in their tracks, and emerged from the smoke yelling and waving his fearful two-handed sword around his head. Nor was he the least frightened of cavalry. One of his weapons was a heavy, weighted stick which he would throw at a horse’s legs, bringing it down, the stunned rider being promptly despatched with sword or spear. Possessed of tremendous agility, he would bob around a horse’s head ‘like a rubber ball,’ dodging sabre cuts but being dangerously quick with his return stroke. If ridden down he would remain on the ground, beyond reach of the curved sabre, and hamstring or stab upwards. The experience contributed much to the adoption by the cavalry of the straight sword and also demonstrated that against such opponents the lance was a better weapon at close quarters.

### **The 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars at Suakin and the Battle of Hasheen**

So startling were the dervish successes that an invasion of Egypt seemed a distinct possibility. The British government

therefore contributed troops to the defence of the Nile frontier at Wadi Haifa and also provided a garrison for the port of Suakin, which lay on the Red Sea inside the Sudan. The latter included two squadrons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars which arrived in March 1885. It had been hoped to link Suakin with Berber on the Nile by means of a strategic railway. Unfortunately the Hadendowa Beja under their Emir, Osman Digna, otherwise known as The Ugly, controlled the hinterland. Their hold on the area would have to be broken before the work could proceed. With this object in mind the garrison, led by its cavalry (the 2 squadrons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars and the 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers), marched in square to Hasin Wells where a series of ferocious engagements were fought culminating the Battle of Hasheen. The results of were inconclusive in spite of the dervishes suffering by far the heavier loss. Osman, a devout man who had once threatened British troops with extermination unless they instantly embraced Islam, did not take part in the fighting, but contributed a number of prayers from a suitable distance. The result of these actions was that it now became clear that the Berber railway was not a practical proposition and the garrison retired to Suakin. For the time being, Osman left Suakin alone<sup>23</sup>.

### **Egyptian Frontier Field Force 1885-1886**

S.S. Oregon	2 June 1885
Egypt	14 June 1885
Abbassiyeh	14 June 1885
Assauan	2 Aug 1885
Abbassiyeh	5 Feb 1887
Ship <i>Tanfar</i>	1 Nov 1887
Woolwich	19 Nov 1887

Following Hasheen, the two squadrons returned to Egypt by sea and, after concentrating at Cairo, the entire Regiment moved up the Nile to Wadi Haifa. Here it joined the Egyptian Frontier Field Force, which consisted of one British Brigade (including QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany) and one Egyptian brigade commanded by General Sir Frederick Stephenson.

### **The Battle of Ginnis, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1885**

The dervishes had gradually built up their strength on the frontier and by December seemed to be on the point of launching their planned invasion of Egypt. General Stephenson did not wait for their attack and marched out to meet them. A pitched battle took place at Ginnis on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December. The infantry was deployed in line with squadrons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussar (110 men) (including QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany) covering each of their flanks. The enemy moved first but their attack stalled under concentrated long-range musketry fire from the British and the Egyptians and they broke altogether. At this point the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars charged, turning the dervish retreat into a rout; a detachment of one officer and fifty men maintained the pursuit as far as Absarat, fifty miles up-stream. At Ginnis the enemy sustained 800 casualties, the British and Egyptians only forty-one. The battle removed the immediate threat to Egypt. It was the last occasion on which the British infantry fought in their traditional scarlet tunics. The 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars wore khaki drill throughout the campaign.

The Regiment remained on the frontier for the next two years, and then began returning home. By the end of 1887 most of the regiment (including QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany) had returned to England except for one squadron which remained in the Sudan until rejoining the Regiment at Aldershot in 1890, The 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars' service in the Sudan was recognized by the award of the battle honour 'Suakin 1885'. In 1895, the year of QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany's discharge, the Regiment sailed for India, where it remained until 1901.

### **Home Service:**

Woolwich	19 Nov 1887
Norwich	26 Apr 1888
Aldershot	27 June 1890
Colchester	22 Sept 1893

QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany would spend his last years of service at home. After returning from Egypt and the Sudan the regiment was first stationed at Woolwich arriving there on 19 November 1887. On 26 April 1888 the regiment moved to Norwich, then on 27 June 1890 they moved to Aldershot and then on 22 September 1893 moved to Colchester and on 30 September 1895 William Delany took his discharge from the Army.

<sup>23</sup> Osman Digna was a former slave trader who hated the British for ruining his business. His precise antecedents remain obscure, but one interesting rumour had it that he was really a Frenchman named George Vinet!

## 8. MEDICAL INFORMATION

Medical records are useful beyond the medical information as a list of duty stations during a soldier's service. The following medical information was taken from Medical History records recorded during QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany's time in service:

Location or Ship	Date of Arrival	Ailment Date of Admission	# of days	Treatment, Observations, & Inducing Circumstances and Date of Discharge
Canterbury	24 Sept 1872	Bronchial Catarrh <sup>24</sup> 17 Oct 1872	5	Expectorants 21 Oct 1872
	11 Nov 1872	Revaccinated Result Failure		
Colchester	22 Oct 1872	No Admission		
Aldershot	6 Aug 1873	Revaccinated Result Failure		
		Catarrh 8 Mar 1875	17	Expectorants 25 Mar 1875
Hounslow	26 July 1875	Tonsillitis 24 Aug 1875	4	Gargles etc. 28 Aug 1875
Brighton	22 July 1876	In grown toe nail	2	Poultices etc.
	4 May 1877	Revaccinated Result Modified		
Aldershot	23 June 1877	No Admission		
Brighton	25 July 1877	No Admission		
Leeds	27 June 1878	No Admission		
Manchester	22 Mar 1879	No Admission		
Newbridge	8 Nov 1879	No Admission		
Cahir	19 Feb 1881	No Admission		
Ballincollig	31 Oct 1883	No Admission		
Aldershot	10 Sept 1884	No Admission		
S.S. Oregon	2 June 1885	No Admission		
Egypt	14 June 1885	No Admission		
Abbassiyeh	14 June 1885	No Admission		
Assauan	2 Aug 1885	No Admission		
Abbassiyeh	5 Feb 1887	No Admission		
Ship <i>Tanfar</i>	1 Nov 1887	No Admission		
Woolwich	19 Nov 1887	No Admission		
Norwich	26 Apr 1888	No Admission		
Aldershot	27 June 1890	No Admission		
Colchester	22 Sept 1893	No Admission		
<b>Total number of days in Hospital:</b>			<b>28</b>	

His medical record shows a minor list of the often found complaints of Victorian period service men. Treatment for his various medical conditions involved a total of 28 days during his period of military service. It is worth noting that as a young soldier his most common problems were respiratory disease and the eventual cause of his death on 17 December 1897 as a still relatively young man at the age of 44 was pneumonia.

## 9. MARRIAGE AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1879, Sergeant and Orderly Room Clerk William Delany married Elizabeth at Naas, Ireland. Elizabeth was born in Manchester, Lancashire in 1858.

They were to have six children. All were born while William was serving in the Army:

Children Born While in the Army			
Name	Place of Birth	Date of Birth	Date Died & Place
Rose Delaney	Aldershot, Hampshire	1885	

<sup>24</sup> Catarrh is a serious respiratory disease.

Children Born While in the Army			
Name	Place of Birth	Date of Birth	Date Died & Place
William Delaney	Woolwich, Middlesex	1888	
Mary Delaney	Norwich, Norfolk	1890	
Kathleen Delany	Aldershot, Hampshire	1893	
Francis Delany	Colchester, Essex	1895	
Norah Delany <sup>25</sup>	Camberwell, London	1890 or 1900	

## 10. DISCHARGE

A Regimental Board convened at Colchester on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1895 to consider QMS and ORSgt William Martin Delany's discharge which had been claimed by him, "after three months notice." His trade was listed as a clerk. His total service was reckoned as shown in the table below:

Duty Station	From:	To:	Years	Days
Home	20 September 1872	1 June 1885	12 years	255 days
Egypt	2 June 1885	18 November 1887	2 years	170 days
Home	19 November 1887	30 September 1895	7 years	316 days
<b>Total Overseas Service:</b>			<b>2 Years</b>	<b>170 Days</b>
<b>Total Service:</b>			<b>23 Years</b>	<b>11 Days</b>

## 11. POST SERVICE LIFE

On his discharge William Delany listed his intended place of residence as 39 Holmby Street, Albany Road, Camberwell.

### Letters of Character and Ability:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century great stock was placed on the value of letters of character and ability written for senior Non-Commissioned officers and Warrant officers by officers that they had served under during their service. Since William Delany made a habit of collecting these letters from an early age, and carefully kept all of them throughout his service, it is thought that he probably received early counseling on the value of these letters in obtaining a good employment position after the completion of his service. This counseling could have come from his stepfather Paymaster Sergeant William Durgan, 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot or from his mother both of whom were wise to the workings of the Army and its relation to civilian life. It is a smart man who thinks of his future and that of his family.

As will be seen the collection of letters reads like a who's who of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussar and the British Army. These letters speak for themselves as to the character and abilities of William Delany and provide us a unique insight into the man himself. These letters will be presented chronologically:

The first letter, on British Army stationery, is from Lieutenant Colonel George Manners Onslow<sup>26</sup>, Inspector of Gymnasia and late 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Colonel of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated Aldershot, 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1885:

"I have known Segt. Major Delany (Orderlyroom Clerk) 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars for a period of thirteen years, during which time I have always found him steady & attentive to his duties. He is a clear-headed intelligent man, & has fulfilled the duty of

<sup>25</sup> The family is not sure of the date of birth of Norah, as on the 1901 census it puts her down as 11, but she does not appear of the 1891 census and William Delany died in 1897, so I presume she was not 11 months.

<sup>26</sup> Lt. Col. Onslow served as a regimental officer with the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars until 1885 when he was appointed Inspector of Gymnasia on the Gymnastics Staff. This was a forerunner of what became the Corps of Physical Training. Lt. Col. Onslow enticed Sergeant Harry Beedon, 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, an excellent swordsman, to a position as 1<sup>st</sup> Class Sergeant Instructor of Fencing on the Gymnastics Staff. Sergeant Beedon's medals are in the Larimore Collection.

Orderlyroom Clerk to the satisfaction of all who have had anything to do with him & I can recommend him for any position of trust.”

The next letter, on 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars stationary, is from Captain Edward Reginald Courtenay<sup>27</sup>, (late Adjutant) 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated Staff College, Camberley, Hants, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1889:

“I have known Qr. Mr. Sergt. Delaney (O.R.C. 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars) for 15 ½ years, during 5 ½ of which I was Adjutant and he was O.R.C. --- I found him then and since, a first rate man in an office, very hardworking, punctual & exact --- with a quite exceptional knowledge of army orders and military law. I knew him to be sober and thoroughly honest & trustworthy. He is a good accountant & bookkeeper, and possessed of tact in dealing with N.C.O.'s and men.”

This next letter is the most glowing of them all. It is from Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Watson Blake<sup>28</sup>, the Commanding Officer of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated Norwich, 26 August 1889:

“Before giving over command of the Regiment I have been asked to write a few lines privately, on behalf of my Orderly-Room Clerk Quarter Master Sergeant Delaney.

It affords me great pleasure to do so.

During the 4 years of my command, Quarter Master Sergeant Delaney's services have simply been invaluable & in common with my predecessors in command have the highest opinion of him in every way, he is quite out of the common, has a perfect knowledge of the difficult, complicated, & onerous duties of his Department, can be perfectly trusted, is extremely conscientious & has often acted, in times of difficulty with the greatest judgment, tact and ability. He is far and away, the best Orderly Room Clerk, that has been in the Regiment during the 23 years I have been with it. I will not insult him by talking about honesty, sobriety etc, as he is, in every way, above suspicion. It will be a calamity when he leaves the Regt. But I trust he will not do (so) for years to come.

Had there been a vacancy now for a Quarter Master I should have recommended him for it, so highly do I appreciate his character & services to the Regiment.”

The next letter, on 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars stationary, is from Captain Norton Legge<sup>29</sup>, (late Adjutant), 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated Colchester, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1894:

“Quarter Master Sergeant (O.R.C.) W. M. Delaney was my orderly room clerk during the 4 years in which I held the appointment of adjutant of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars. His services were most invaluable in every way, during that time.”

This letter, on British Army stationary, is from Lieutenant Colonel Miles Stapleton, Lord Beaumont, Commanding Officer, 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated \_\_?\_\_ \_\_?\_\_, \_\_?\_\_, Yorkshire, 7 September 1895:

“I enclose a letter for the C.O. of the Commissionaires and if necessary; I will come up & see him; as I am most anxious that you should get some employment as you have always performed your duty most faithfully and loyally.”

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<sup>27</sup> Capt. Courtenay served in the Zulu War as Staff Officer of the mounted troops of the Lower Tugela Column. He was at the engagement at Inyezane, the action at Gingindhlovu, and the relief of Ekowe (Mentioned in Despatches and Medal with clasp). Served throughout the Nile Expedition 1884-5 in command of the troop of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars attached to the Light Camel Regiment. Was present during operations of the Desert Column including the attack of 14 February and the Battle of Abu Klea wells on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February (Medal with ‘Nile 1884-5’ and Khedive’s Star). Served with the Egyptian Frontier Field Force in 1885-6, as Adjutant to the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars and as Staff Officer to the Mounted Troops, and was present at the Battle of Ginnis.

<sup>28</sup> Col. Blake served with the Egyptian Frontier Field Force 1885-86 in command of Mounted Troops and was present at the at the Battle of Ginnis (Medal with no clasp and Khedive’s Star).

<sup>29</sup> Capt. Legge served with the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars at the Battle of Hasheen, the attack on the convoy 24 March and at the destruction of Tammai. He was in Egyptian Frontier Field Force 1885-86 and was present at the investment of Kosheh, the relief of Ambigole and at the Battle of Ginnis (Medal with ‘Suakin 1885’ and Khedive’s Star).

The last letter is from Captain Henry Graham<sup>30</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars, dated Colchester, 10 September 1895:

“S. M. (Sergeant Major) Delaney has been in the regiment for twenty three years. I have known him personally for the last fifteen years. He was senior Orderly Room Clerk for a great number of years. I can highly recommend him as a man who could be placed in a situation of trust. He has an excellent hand writing, is punctual at his duties & straight forward. I should be very glad to answer any question about him if a further character is required. I am sure all the Commanding Officers he has served with would give him the highest references.”

William Delany's death certificate lists his occupation as “Commissionaire (an Army Pensioner).” He apparently used his letters of character to obtain a position as a Commissionaire after completing his army service.

### **The Death of a Soldier**

William Delany's life was to end prematurely at the age of 44 on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1897 by pneumonia. He died at his residence at 39 Holmby Street, Albany Road, Camberwell. His stepbrother Joseph James Grant Durgan was present when he died. At the time of his enlistment William had listed him as a soldier in the 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

There is a Cemetery Card among the papers that lists his grave:

“Camberwell Cemetery, Forest Hill Road, SE

21 December 1897

William M. Delaney was interred in Grave No. 15700, Square 2.”

D. J. Robinson

Superintendent and Registrar of Burials.

So ended the life of a professional soldier of the British Army. A senior Non-Commissioned Officer who formed the backbone that was the essential glue that had built the British Army of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These men were educated, hard working, conscientious, and devoted to duty and the Army that they served but never blindly. It would be interesting to ask him what he actually thought of his long service in the British Army.

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<sup>30</sup> Capt. Graham served in the Sudan Campaign of 1885 and was present at the for operations around Suakin, the Battles of Tofrek, Gemaizah and Toski. (Egypt Medal with clasps ‘Suakin 1885’, ‘Tofrek’, ‘Gemaziah’ and ‘Toski’).