



Lionel Victor George Calver

788510 Gunner, 98 (The Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry) Regiment, Royal Artillery

He died on 30th May 1940 in Dunkirk, aged 35

Lionel is buried at Dunkirk Town Cemetery, France

Also remembered

Herbert Charles Calver

7037 Private, 1st Battalion Norfolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 20th November 1914 in Flanders, aged 27

Herbert is commemorated at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

Lionel Victor George Calver was baptised in 1905, one of the younger sons of a largish family, 9 children born in 16 years of marriage between James Frederick and Mary Ann Calver nee Huxham who slightly exotically came from St Heliers, Jersey. The couple married in Fulham in 1894 where I suspect she may have been working as a servant. Whilst Mary Ann may have been born in the Channel Islands, (and that is where the family were living in 1881) her father was from Devon and her mother from London.

Wortwell was full of Calvers/Carvers (36 in 1871, only a handful working away: 42 in 1881)

It is most likely that James Frederick Calver was the James Calver who we find as a 19 years old Driver in the Royal Artillery Garrison in Woolwich in 1891. Dashing young military types were notorious for courting servant girls; this is perhaps the start of their relationship.

Army Form D. 459.

SECTION D OF 1st CLASS ARMY RESERVE.

ATTESTATION of No. 1779 Name James Frederick Calver.

QUESTIONS to be put to the Man before Enlistment into Section D of the 1st Class Army Reserve.

(1) What is your name? ... (1) James Frederick Calver.

(2) Do you now belong to the Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Royal Navy, the Volunteers, the Yeomanry, the Army Reserve, or the Naval Reserve Force? If so, to what Corps? ... (2) No

(3) Have you been discharged within the last two years, on completing your first period of engagement, from the Regular Army, or from the 1st Class Army Reserve? ... (3) No

(4) What character did you receive on discharge from the Regular Army; or last transfer to the Reserve? ... (4) Exemplary

(5) Are you willing to be attested to serve in the Royal Reserve of Artillery? ... (5) No

(6) Are you aware that you will be liable to be called out on permanent service, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, in case of imminent national danger, or of great emergency, notwithstanding that directions have not been given for calling out the whole of the First Division of the 1st Class Army Reserve on such service? ... (6) No

(7) Are you aware that, if so called out, you will be liable to be detained in Army Service for the unexpired portion of your term of service in the 1st Class Army Reserve and for a further period not exceeding 12 months if so directed by the competent Military Authority? ... (7) No

*If so, the man should be required to produce his Puchment Discharge Certificate and Certificate of Character, which should be returned to him.

† Here insert —

In the case of a man who last served
 In the Cavalry, "as an Officer's Groom or as a Driver either in the Cavalry or in any other arm of the Service."
 In the Infantry, "in General Service Infantry."
 In the Royal Artillery, "in the Royal Artillery."
 In the Royal Engineers, "in the Royal Engineers."
 In the Army Service Corps, "in the Army Service Corps."
 In the Royal Army Medical Corps, "in the Royal Army Medical Corps."
 In the Army Ordnance Corps, "in the Army Ordnance Corps."

‡ In the case of a man engaging before being discharged from the Army, the four years' service commences on the day after his discharge from the Army.

I, James Frederick Calver, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

James Frederick Calver SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
A. K. Bak Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY THE MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, James Frederick Calver, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty, King Edward the Seventh, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL OFFICER.

I certify that I have carefully examined this man, and in my opinion he does not suffer from any disability or ailment likely to interfere with the efficient performance of his duties either at Home or Abroad.

(Place) Stourhead Signature of Medical Officer.
 (Date) 18 December 1902.

CERTIFICATE OF THE MAN'S COMMANDING OFFICER

I certify that I have examined the documents of the above-named man, and that he is eligible for enlistment in Section D, 1st Class Army Reserve: His Army Engagement expires on the 30th August 1907.

(Place) Stourhead Signature of Commanding Officer.
 (Date) 18 Dec 1902.

CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER.

The above questions were read to the man named above in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered, replied to, and the man has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at Stourhead on this 18th day of December 1902.

Signature of Attesting Officer Edmund ...

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It is frustratingly difficult to find James in the 1901 census; for some reason Mary Ann was visiting the Sheldrake family in Alburgh with her two, then, youngest children, Edward 3, and Elizabeth (Sarah) 1, both claiming birth in Wortwell. Edward was baptised in the village and his father was then described as being a labourer so we can assume he had left the army by then. This is a tad confusing as James Frederick Calver, birthplace Wortwell, signed up for the Army Reserve in December 1902, having left the Royal Artillery on the 30th of April 1902 – his conduct having been exemplary!

And then – going back to Ruth Walton's excellent book 'We Will Remember' we discover that in fact James had already left the Army once and had been called up from the Reserves to go and serve in South Africa in 1900, this later Attestation dates from his return and subsequent discharge back into civvy street!

Anyway, putting all that confusion to one side; also in 1901, in the nearby village of Wortwell, James' parents William and Sarah Calver Jnr seem to be running a sort of home from home for waifs and strays: A 13 years old girl from Islington; a 2 years old

boy from Kent and a 7 years old James E M Calver born in London. This turns out to be James Edward M Calver baptised in Brentford who I did hope might be another of James and Mary Ann's children but perhaps grandson was a courtesy term as the closest match I can find in the next census is a James Calver, aged 16, claiming birth in Wortwell but living in a Dr Bernardo's Home in Stepney in 1911. The fact he was in Barnardo's does not preclude him from being James's son, he would not have been the only local lad from a large family to wind up in care.

In 1911, little Elizabeth Calver, older sister of our Hero Lionel, who had been with her mother 10 years previously, was living with the now widowed Sarah Calver although, by then, Sarah and Elizabeth had moved to Redenhall; good old grandma!

In the 1911 census it was stated that there were 9 children in the family; 6 were 'at home', a 7th would be Elizabeth, living in with granny, an 8th might be James E Calver up in the Barnardo's home, it is just possible the 9th was William Frank C(u/a)lver who was baptised in Woolwich (which would have tied in with James being in the Royal Artillery) in late 1894. However, I have not been able to track this lad down so it remains a bit of a mystery; the 1911 census did clearly state that all 9 children were living. It is a bit of stretch but in 1901 a William Culver of the right age, was living in a Cottage Home on the Isle of Thanet, he could have been another of the lads.

I suspect, and there is no hard proof of this, but for some reason, around the 1901 census the family seem to be struggling. James' conduct was described as exemplary, so I doubt it was the usual causes of booze, theft or illness. It may have been the simple fact that a soldier's life was a tough one and a soldier's family's life even tougher. This was the time of the Boer War; whilst James was

abroad it would have made sense for his wife and children to stay with his family. These Wortwell in-laws would have been easier to visit than the Jersey grandparents! If two of the older sons (with more scope for becoming a little wayward with father away) had wound up in care this would not be that unusual at that time, foster homes were not just for the urban poor.

Anyway, at least one more child was baptised after the 1911 census: 1913, Margery, child number 10. Whatever the details, I think we can safely assume that this large family would have had a job to make ends meet on the wages of a shepherd. In 1911 this household of 8 were living in a 4-room house (that is four rooms in total, not 4 bedrooms). James died not long after the 1911 census, he was buried at Redenhall in 1916, aged only 45, leaving behind 7 children aged 18 or under, the youngest only 3, this in addition to the 3 older children, the whereabouts of two of whom was a little vague.

HARLESTON PETTY SESSIONS.—FRIDAY.
Before Messrs. A. Taylor (chairman), W. R. Smith, H. J. Yallop, and E. Lee Warner.
Mrs. Mary Calver, of Wortwell, shopkeeper, was charged by Albert Robinson, Inspector of Food and Drugs for Norfolk, with selling to the prejudice of the purchaser treacle adulterated with 47 per cent. of glucose.—Inspector Robinson spoke to the purchase of a pound of treacle, which on analysis by the County Analyst was found to be composed of 47 per cent. of glucose.—Defendant stated that she knew nothing of the adulteration. She sold the article as she bought it from the wholesalers.—W. B. Twiddy, a traveller for the wholesalers, who sold the treacle to Mrs. Calver, said what he sold was "household syrup" which admittedly contained glucose.—The Chairman said, in fining defendant 14/11 to include expenses, that it was a case which in the opinion of the Bench should be met by the wholesalers.

This was a family that had struggled to make ends meet previously, James' death would have made things far worse. Hopefully, the three Norfolk based children, who would have been 14 or over at the time of their father's death, were able to help bring some money into the household; it would have been unlikely that they would have expected their education to continue beyond the age of 14.

In order to support herself and her family, mother Mary Ann took up shop keeping; a Mary Ann Calver appearing as such at Wortwell in the 1925 Kelly's directory. In 1919, the unfortunate lady was fined 14s 10d for selling treacle that was almost half

glucose; this proved to be the fault of the rep who had sold her the product which she had bought, in all good faith, as being treacle. The magistrate suggested that the company should pay her fine! I wonder if they did?

So, having established that Lionel was one of the sons of a large family, headed by a former soldier, teetering on the edge of poverty but managing better than some with all 9 of their children alive in 1911, and that Lionel's grandparents also came from Wortwell, what was the earlier history of this family?

When Lionel's father, James, first appeared in the 1871 census, he was the 3-months-old youngest child of 7. James' father William Calver Jnr was a 'dealer' which tends to set the alarm bells ringing; this tended to be a job slightly on the shady side of Victorian Society! Indeed, there was a horse dealer at the time, William Calver from Wortwell who was known as Sharper Calver – hmmm,

This 1871 census also reveals that Lionel's grandmother, Sarah nee Reeve, must have been his grandfather William's second wife as, at age 24, she was only 11 years older than William's oldest child still at home. Slightly surprisingly, bearing in mind Sarah Jnr was only 24 when James was born, no more children followed. Sarah Jnr was the daughter of a Bricklayer from Pulham; 10 years earlier (in 1861) she was a leather glove maker, living at home with her widowed father.

William Jnr and his first wife Elizabeth baptised two of their daughters in March 1863, mother Elizabeth died late the next year. With a clutch of young children to care for, William remarried rapidly after, in 1865, to 18 years old Sarah Reeve, literally half his age. This young lass inherited 3 children and proceeded to have 3 of her own in the next few years.

Sarah's husband, grandfather William Calver Jnr, was baptised at Redenhall in May 1830, the son of William Calver Snr and his wife Sarah Calver Snr. This William Calver Snr looks to have been the son of Robert Calver Snr and wife Mary/Maria nee Ludbrook. In brief this is a family whose roots in Wortwell go back a long way in time.

The Calvers were quite prolific in and around Wortwell in the mid to late 19th Century, some members more respectable than others. Whilst this branch of the Calvers may have been poor, they seem to be largely exemplary citizens, not like another branch of the Wortwell Calvers who, along with the Seaman and Oakley families kept Harleston Magistrate's court in almost constant employment during the mid to late 19th Century.

There is however one small glitch in Lionel's otherwise quiet life occurred when he and a Pearce (another Wortwell Family) got carried away at a football match. Mind you to be fair their slightly excessive utterances seem to have been provoked by an attack by the linesman on a school lad – one of the previously notorious Skinner clan who were, by then, well on to the road to respectability themselves.

In essence a local linesman took exception to the excessive enthusiasm of a young spectator at a football match and (I suspect provoked by some sass) shook this young Skinner and threw him to the floor. At this point Lionel and his mate, who would have known the Skinners very well, appear to have waded in verbally, they then encourage the lad to puncture the linesman's bike tyres, more swearing etc etc etc.

Young Skinner was bound over and the case against Lionel Carver and Pearce for damaging the bike was dismissed, The reverse happened with the charge of obscene language, the school boy was let off, Lionel (who did not attend court) and Pearce were fined 10s each.

Mother Phoebe Jane Skinner then put in a counter claim against the linesman for assaulting her son, claiming he had been in a bad temper; this case was dismissed.

HARLESTON PETTY SESSIONS.—FRIDAY.

Before Mr. H. J. Yallop (chairman), and other magistrates.

William Pearce and Lionel Calver, both of Wortwell, labourers, and a schoolboy aged 11, were jointly charged by Mr John Jas. Davey, of the same place, with committing damage to his bicycle, on the 21st ult.—Mr P. J. Sprake (Bungay) appeared for the schoolboy, for whom a plea of guilty was recorded. Defendant Calver did not attend. Pearce pleaded not guilty.—Mr Davey stated that at a football match at Wortwell on the date in question he tried to quell a disturbance. His bicycle was badly knocked about and the defendants used threatening language. He was acting as linesman and a clod of earth was thrown at him. When Calver was accused he used very bad language. Subsequently, complainant found his bicycle had been punctured. He had to mend it in eleven places.—Mr Sprake told the Bench that complainant shook the schoolboy about like a rat. The damage was about 3/- or 4/-.—Police-constable Amies gave evidence of interviewing defendants. Pearce denied touching the bicycle, but said that the schoolboy took a tie pin and punctured the tyres. The schoolboy admitted having done so in six or seven places, and said the two older defendants had told him to do so.—The schoolboy, in his evidence, said he had been shouting at the football match when Mr Davey came and got hold of his throat, shook, and threw him down. He would not have punctured the bicycle if he had not been told to do so.—The Bench bound the boy over with his father in the sum of £2 to be of good behaviour for twelve months, and dismissed the case with regard to the other defendants.

A further charge was brought by Superintendent Fuller against the same three defendants for using obscene language at the same time and place.—Mr Sprake again appeared for the schoolboy.—Mr J. J. Davey said there were several people at the match and he had occasion to speak to the defendants in consequence of their bad behaviour. Pearce used very bad language. Calver threatened him. Several ladies were on the ground.—Wm. Jas. Lancaster gave evidence of the filthy language used.—The Bench fined the defendants Calver and Pearce 10/- each and dismissed the case against the schoolboy.

Mrs Phoebe Jane Skinner, of Wortwell, summoned John Jas. Davey, the above named complainant, for assaulting her son, aged 11 years, on the same occasion.—Mr Sprake appeared on complainant's behalf.—The boy said he and others were shouting at the football match. He did not use any bad language. Mr Davey came and got hold of him by the throat, shook him and threw him down. Mr Davey was in a temper. Witness was laid out on the ground and could not get his breath for some time. Witness admitted having punctured Mr Davey's bicycle after that, but he did not swear at Mr Davey prior to the alleged assault.—Defendant pleaded not guilty, and the Bench dismissed the case.

So overheated tempers at local football matches are nothing new then!

It appears that Lionel Victor George Calver may have simplified his name somewhat as it is believed he is the 'George Calver' who died during the evacuation of Dunkirk, and that his death occurred on the 30th of May, when he would have been 35 (33 according to the CWGC). It was three years after the war ended, in August 1948 that George, having previously been unidentified, was finally laid to rest in the Dunkirk Town Cemetary with the name under which he had enlisted. Calver, from the Royal Artillery, had left a wife behind, a Mrs H Claver, not too surprisingly of Woolwich, London although I have not been able to find any further details of this lady, nor of their marriage.

Wortwell

Relatives of the fallen attended the unveiling of the Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell memorial tablet at Harleston on Sunday and afterwards Mrs. Duffy and Mrs. Love (widows) Messrs. Love, Loombe, Farrow and Calver (parents) placed floral tributes on the memorial. Mr. W. Foster (chairman) and Messrs. J. Hadingham and H. Jordon, parish councillors, represented the people of Wortwell at this solemn ceremony.

Not wishing to dilute the importance of George (Lionel Victor)'s contribution, but I would like to briefly mention another Calver, who fell in WW1 and who had links with Harleston. Herbert Charles Calver was a Brockdish lad born in 1886 but by the time he was 15, he was boarding with the

Buckingham family on Bullock Fair Yard. It seems that he was being trained up to be a carpenter; that was Alfred Buckingham's trade and the trade Herbert also claimed. Alfred's wife, Mary Ann, was Herbert's older sister, 10 years his senior. There was one more child between Mary Ann and her little brother but she died in 1883, aged just 5.

In contrast to Lionel, Herbert was the tail end Charley of his family. It may be that part of the reason Herbert had been boarded out was the ill health of his mother; she died in the Union Workhouse in May 1908, this indicating a long term health condition rather than a sudden death. She was only 55. A year later Herbert's father, Charles, married Alice Louise Barber, he was 51, she was 27; they had moved to Bungay by 1911, by which time they already had one child. However by this time Herbert was 6 years in the Army having enlisted in the Norfolk's, on 1st August 1905. By 1911 he was out in India, in November 1914 he was one of the early casualities, dying in Ypres. He may well have had a marked grave when he first fell; as battles raged over the fiercely contested ground many such graves were destroyed and lost. Herbert is one of almost 55,000 such men, whose lives are commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Two men, sharing a common surname and from the same area whose deaths in two world wars were barely a quarter of a century apart.