

# THE FOUR CLASP CRIMEAN WAR CAMPAIGN MEDAL CORPORAL WILLIAM ALFRED TROLLOPE, BRITISH ROYAL ARTILLERY, 11TH BATTALION, THE CRIMEA WAR 1854-1855

by Matt Sears

## A brief Crimea War overview

The Crimean War (October, 1853 – February, 1856) was between the alliance of England, France, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Sardinia against Russia, who eventually lost the conflict. Politics and power positioning fueled the conflict between the belligerents. Queen Victoria and the English government wanted an independent Turkey for the security of the eastern Mediterranean, Emperor Napoleon III of France wanted to secure his domestic position and Tsar Nicholas I of Russia wanted a subservient Turkey for the sake of Russian security. The medal shown in Figure 1 was a campaign medal for this conflict.

A big part of the war was control over the warm water Black Sea and Russia's naval base at Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula. England especially was concerned about Russia's expansionism at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and creating a balance of power in Europe. Keeping Russia out of the Bosphorus was, therefore, the root cause. The Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia in October of 1853. England and France entered the War on 28 March 1854.

As shown in Figure 2, there were four major land battles and one sea battle:

- Battle of Alma - 20 September 1854
- Siege of Sevastopol – 25 September 1854  
(Lasted a year, until 8 September 1855)
- Battle of Balaclava – 25 October 1854  
(Charge of the Light Brigade)
- Battle of Inkerman – 5 November 1854
- Sea Battle of Azoff – 25 May 1855

In this conflict, there were about 1,000,000 alliance troops (400,000 French, 300,000 Turks and 250,000 English) versus 700,000 Russians. Losses were significant, 375,000 for the alliance and 400,000 for the Russians. The English lost approximately 21,000 men, although surprisingly, about 16,000 died of disease, which was rampant, and exposure to the severe Ukrainian weather on the Crimean Peninsula.

## The Crimean Campaign Medal

The campaign medal has a higher status than a general service medal and it was the first medal awarded while a country was still actively at war. The medal was approved by Queen Victoria on the 15th of December, 1854. The Queen presented the first of these medals at a ceremony of the Horse Guards Parade on the 18th of May, 1855, in London.

The silver medal is 36mm (1.4") in diameter with a pale blue and yellow ribbon of 27mm (1.1"; Figure 1). It was struck by the Royal Mint and its subcontractors were Hunt & Roskell. The obverse features a diademed head of Queen Victoria with the inscription Victoria Regina and 1854. The reverse has a standing Roman

Legionary with a flying figure of Victory and the inscription of Crimea. The unique design of this medal includes clasps symbolizing oak leaves with acorns at their ends. The design was never used again. The bars are always displayed in order of the dates they represent. A maximum of four clasps or bars were authorized for attachment to the ribbon to be awarded to any one man. Crimea Campaign medals with all four clasps are fairly rare and when named, are highly sought after by collectors. There is, however, a five-clasp version with the additional Royal Navy's Azoff bar in the Royal Collection in London. This particular campaign medal example in Figures 1 was issued to Corporal Trollope and has distinctive pattern one style clasps. These were made by Hunt & Roskell and not assembled by the Royal Mint.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1. Obverse and reverse of the Trollope Crimea Campaign Medal. Matt Sears collection and photographs.

According to the excellent definitive book on these medals, *By Order of Her Majesty, the Crimea Medal*,<sup>1</sup> the initial order of 70,000 in March of 1855 was increased by another 200,000 in May. The authors further estimate that a total of about 381,000 medals were struck by the Royal Mint until 1862. During the war years, these "plain" medals without inscriptions, with a mixture of

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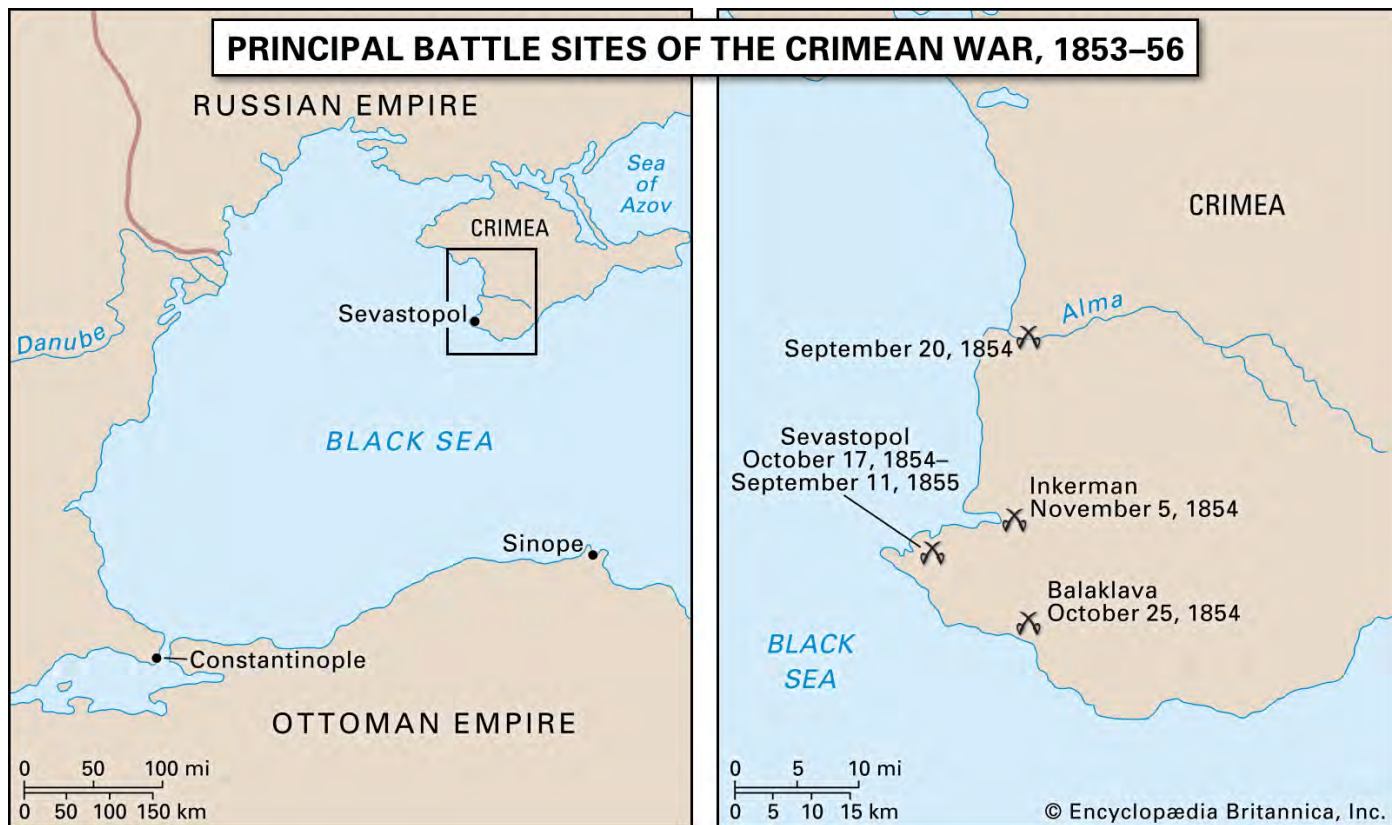


Figure 2. Map of the major battle sites. Courtesy of Encyclopædia Britannica, UK.

clasps, were shipped by steamer to the Crimea for distribution to the troops.

British Crimean War Campaign Medals are usually inscribed around the perimeter with the recipient's rank, name and unit, or in the case of the Royal Navy, the ship. Queen Victoria was in a rush to award medals to her troops, so they went out without the inscriptions, which were added later. Three variations of inscriptions can be commonly found. The first, "Officially Impressed", were done at the Royal Mint. The second variety, "Depot Impressed",

were field inscriptions done in the Crimea and often quite crude in execution. The third, "Privately Impressed", were done post-war by jewelers in London. Most likely the Trollope medal was engraved after the war when Trollope was a pensioner, as shown in Figure 3.

The Crimean War was the first conflict to have photographs taken in the field. Most were done by the famed photographer, Roger Fenton, although there are few surviving photographs that depict Royal Artillery soldiers. To illustrate what a Royal Artilleryman



Figures 3. The impression on the side of Trollope's medal. The "Dr" stands for driver in the Royal Artillery, the driver of the gun carriage. Note also that "Trollop" is missing the "e" at the end, as miss-spellings were common on medals of the day. Matt Sears collection and photographs.

would have looked like, the following two images, Figures 4 and 5, are posed artillerymen in dress uniform with captured cannon. Note that the soldier in Figure 4 is wearing a Crimea Campaign Medal. Their dress uniforms feature double rows of tunic buttons, an example of which can be seen in Figure 6. The button has three rows of cannons under a crown and over the word “Ubique”. Ubique, meaning “everywhere” in Latin, is the motto of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers. It was given to them by King William IV in 1832 and in 1833 it was further granted as a battle honor to the Royal Artillery in place of all former and later battle honors they could receive. An encampment of Royal Artillery in Crimea can be seen in Figure 7.



Figure 4. A typical Royal Artilleryman during the Crimean War. This is Sergeant William Rupel, 5th Battalion of Royal Artillery, posing with a captured Russian cannon. Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, UK.

### William Alfred Trollope

William Trollope was born in Chedgrave, Norfolk, England in 1830. He attested for the Royal Regiment of Artillery on 9 January 1847, at Norwich near London. His Regimental service number was 227 in the 11th Battalion. He was only seventeen years old and was listed as a “servant”. Trollope stood 5’ 9-3/4” tall with dark brown hair and dark eyes. He entered the Royal Artillery service as a “gunner driver”, essentially the rank of a private.

Trollope’s name was never recorded in the regimental defaulters’ book, and he was in possession of one good conduct badge for “exemplary service”. He earned the rank of “Bombardier” while serving in the Crimea in January 1855, and was promoted to “Corporal” in July of the same year. He was acknowledged to have served in the Eastern Campaign of the Crimean War, earning the campaign medal with the clasps for the battles of Alma, Balaclava and Inkermann. He received his 4th clasp for Sebastopol, as a pensioner in February of 1856. Corporal Trollope received his discharge from the Royal Regiment of Artillery on 23 January 1856, being credited for 8 years, 34 days service. His time served

as an underage soldier was not credited to his pension. The reason for his discharge was given as “no longer being fit for military service”.



Figure 5. Royal artillerymen in dress uniform posing with a captured Russian cannon from Sebastopol in the Crimean War. Courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust, UK.

The medical officer who recommended his discharge, wrote this in his notations:

*“Paralysis and loss of Ring Finger of Right Hand. While in the Crimea in October last, several sores, about the size of a shilling appeared on both his legs, which compelled him to go into hospital, and keep his bed for some then six weeks.*

*When healed he found a weakness in his hands and feet, and inability to stand which he’s continued up to the present time. He has also lost the ring finger of his right hand, which was removed in consequence of an amputation after a wound received in the trenches. Disability caused by his military service.*

Signed, W. Braybrook, Staff Surgeon.”

The opinion of the Principal Medical Officer at Woolwich Barracks 8 January 1856, who wrote:

*“After a complete examination. I am of the opinion that Wm Trollope is unfit for service and likely to be permanently disqualified for military duty. The bruise received while working his gun in the trenches, which rendered the amputation of the finger necessary”.*

The following four documents (Figure 8) are from the Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Soldier Service Records 1760-1913, in the National Archives of the UK.

*“The Royal Hospital Chelsea was the administrative office for the British army and has been responsible for distributing pension payments to British soldiers since the 1680s. While some*

pensioners surrendered their pension to the hospital and lived within the premises, many more lived outside the confines and received their pensions elsewhere. The attestation and discharge documents constitute the most detailed record of a soldier's service. These records usually give particulars of age, birthplace, service (including any decorations), information about physical description, previous occupation on enlistment and the reason given for discharge to pension. After 1883, most soldiers will appear in these records if they survived their service."

Interestingly, Trollope simply marked an "X" by his name in this paperwork (Figure 8), indicating he could neither read nor write. After his discharge from the army, William Trollope married Sarah Ann Reynolds in 1859. The 1871 UK census, shows them living in the Pender's Lane Police Station, Alford, Lincolnshire, where William's occupation is shown as Inspector of Police. William Alfred Trollope died in April of 1871, in Spilsby, England, at the age of 41.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 6. Royal Artillery tunic button. Matt Sears collection and photograph.

### Some further salient aspects of the Crimean War

The Battle of Balaclava produced two famous events in English history. The English 93rd Highlanders, clad in iconic feather bonnets and kilts while commanded by Sir Colin Campbell, held out against a vastly superior Russian Hussar Force of 400 and were immortalized. This conflict is commonly referred to as "The Thin Red Line". Campbell is said to have told his men "There is no retreat from here, men. You must die where you stand"<sup>3</sup>. Sir Colin's aide John Scott is said to have replied, "Aye, Sir Colin. If needs be, we'll do that". Campbell formed the 93rd into a line two deep – "The Thin Red Line"; convention dictated that the line should be four deep.

On the 25th of October, 1854, Major General James Brudenell, 7th Earl of Cardigan, commanded the ill-fated cavalry "Charge of the Light Brigade" up the valley of death into heavy Russian artillery. During this Battle of Balaklava, 113 men were killed and 247 badly wounded of the 673 who started the charge based on an

ambiguous order from Lord Raglan, overall British commander. In addition, 475 horses were killed. The charge prompted Alfred Lord Tennyson to write his famous poem.

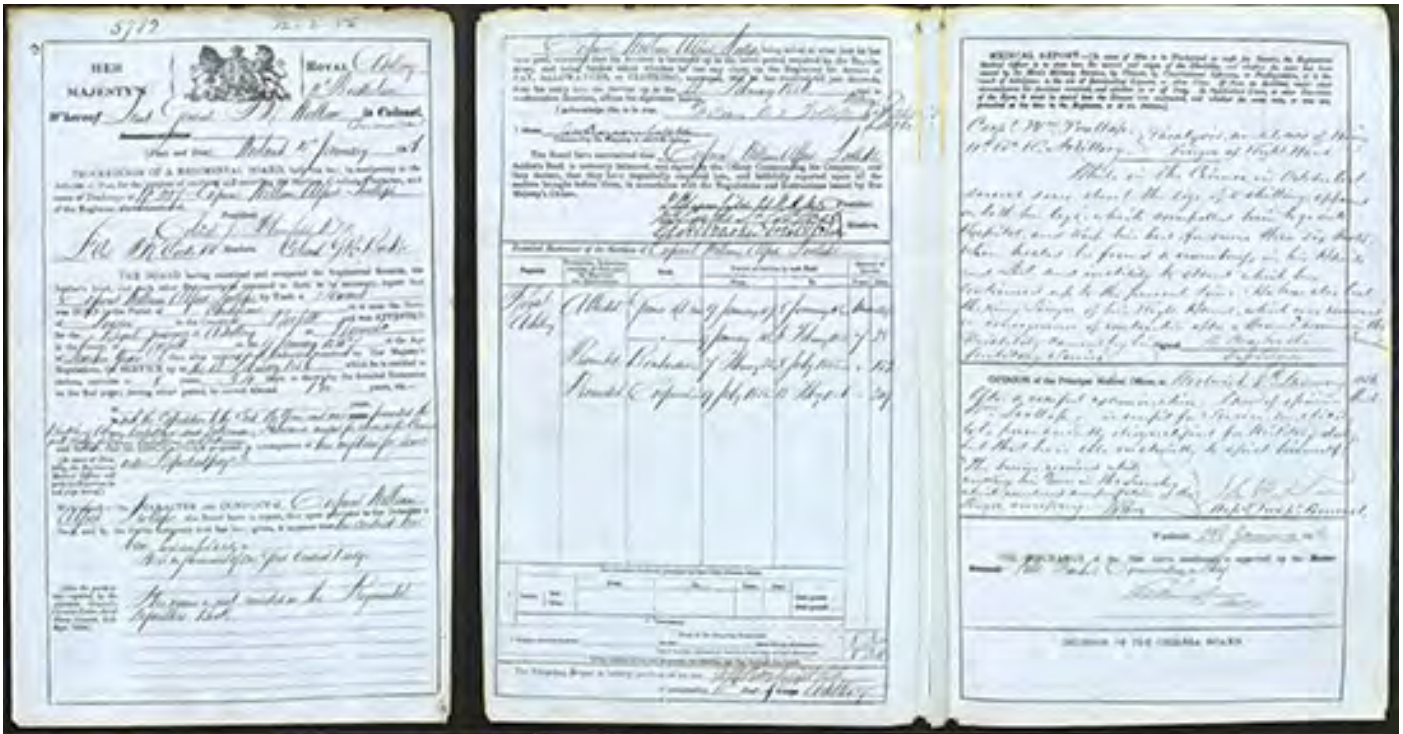


Figure 7. The English artillery encampment. Photo by Roger Fenton 1855. Courtesy of Encyclopedia Britannica, UK.

### Important facts about the Crimean War:

- It was the only war fought by the British against a European power from 1815-1914.
- It was the first use of trenches for tactical warfare during a siege.
- Florence Nightingale pioneered modern nursing by improving hygiene and reducing the mortality rate after arriving on the peninsula in November 1854.
- The first Daguerreotype photographs of the battle environment and systemic record of a military campaign. As made by Roger Fenton, James Robertson and Carol Popp de Szathmari.
- Telegraphs and writing by William Russell for "The Times" of London, gave instant coverage for the English public at home.
- It was the first use of the new pattern 1853 Enfield rifle in .577 caliber with rifled barrels replacing the old smoothbore rifles.
- The Charge of the Light Brigade led to redefining orders and communications within the army command.
- The War led to the creation of the "Victoria Cross", England's first universal award for valor.
- Leadership issues caused the revision of the English system of purchased commissions for officers.

Peace was signed at the Treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856. Russia was allowed to keep their ports in the Crimea but could not have a naval presence there and the Ottoman Empire regained its territories.



Figures 8. Corporal Trollope's discharge papers 15 January 1856; promotion records 15 January 1856, medical report 23 January 1856 and Corporal Trollope's description 12 February 1856. Courtesy of the National Archives, UK.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Martin, Tony, Pickering, William, and Satterley, Arthur. *'By Order of Her Majesty', the Crimea Medal. Institution, Manufacture, Naming and Distribution*. ORMS Orders and Medals Research Society, Leamington SPA, Warwickshire, UK, 2017. Pages 1-6, 27-30, 161-169.

<sup>2</sup> Ancestry.com

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia.com – “The Thin Red Line-Battle of Balaclava”

