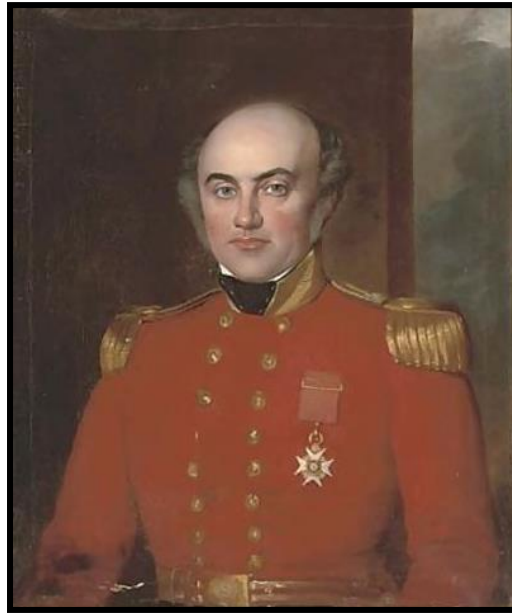


## **Colonel John Colvin CB (1795-1871)**



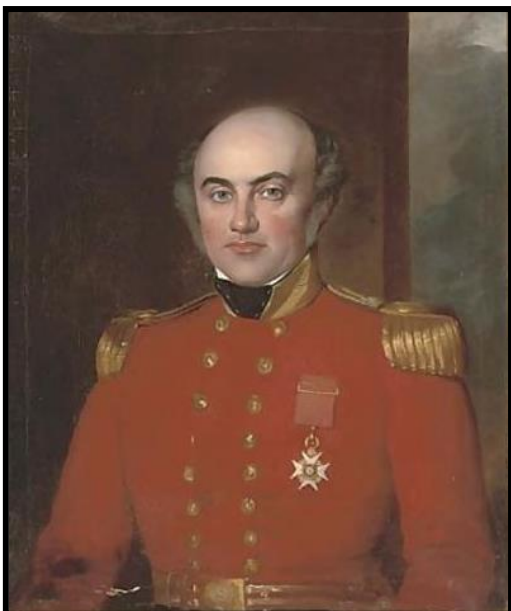
Born: Glasgow 1795  
Died: Leintwardine 27 April 1871

## Colonel John Colvin CB (1795-1871)

### 1. Introduction

John Colvin was a member of a Linlithgow based family having substantial connections with India. His two uncles, Alexander Colvin (1756-1818) and James Colvin (1768-1847) founded the firms of *Colvin & Co. of Colvin's Ghat, Calcutta* and *Colvin, Bazett & Co. of London and Calcutta*. One of five children, John Colvin was raised by Thomas and Helen Colvin in Linlithgow and Glasgow. He entered the East India Company's military college in January 1809. After graduation he sailed for India arriving in Calcutta on the 20th August 1810 where he was commissioned as an ensign in the Bengal Engineers. The next sixteen years were spent as a civil engineer in India having responsibility for the development of a system of irrigation canals, he became known as 'The father of Irrigation'. He was also involved as an engineer in two military excursions the first against the Maharatta princes in 1818 and the second in support of the prince of Burtpore in 1825. In 1826 he was joined by Lieutenant William Erskine Baker of Ludlow later to be his fellow collector of Siwalik fossils – and his brother-in-law.

(There exists 'A Statement of Service of the late Colonel John Colvin CB Bengal Engineers' published in 1871 but this has not been accessed.)



Colvin returned to England on furlough in 1837 having reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He decided to retire from the army settling first in Ludlow where he married William Baker's sister Josephine Puget Baker at St Leonard's on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1838. He initially resided at 29 Broad Street, Ludlow with his in-law family but then moved to Elton Hall – a house previously occupied by horticulturalist Thomas Andrew Knight - and finally took possession of Leintwardine House in Herefordshire where he lived for the rest of his life. The couple had four children the Reverend John William Colvin (1839-1917) and three daughters, Elisabeth Baker, Josephine Helen and Helen Frances Colvin all three taking a clerical husband.

*Colonel John Colvin* (English School)

John Colvin immersed himself in the local and social life of the Ludlow area as a JP, a member of the Board of Guardians for Ludlow Workhouse, a member of both the Ludlow Natural History Society and the Woolhope Field Club, as vice-chairman of the Mechanics Institute and a trustee of the new Leintwardine School. He was also an exhibitor at local horticultural shows and a member of the Leintwardine Fishing Club. Although his military career was over he was promoted to 'honorary' full Colonel in November 1854.

### 2. Colvin and the Ludlow Natural History Society.

John Colvin became a member of the Society in 1844 just at the time of its recovery – he was present at the 'Resuscitation Meeting' of January 1844 and was immediately invited to join the Committee. He served as Treasurer and Secretary from 1848 until his death in 1871. To John Colvin therefore must be given the plaudits of guiding the Society through what was probably its most formative years, a period when, in particular, the fossil collection was substantially reinforced and catalogued.

Colvin was of course well acquainted with fossils - William Baker had collected specimens of Siwalik mammalian fossils while in India, a collection donated to the Ludlow Museum which remains in its possession today - Colvin arranged for plaster casts to be made by the East India Company. Colvin also donated a few specimens of local fossils – obviously there remained a little time in a very busy life to continue his fossil hunting interests albeit that they were found very much at his back door.

The specimens donated were:

#### **Silurian**

D/d/7	Dendroid graptolites	Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/17	(Protaster) Lapworthura miltoni Salter	Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/41	Palaeodiscus ferox Salter	Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/104	Cunularia bifasciata Salter	Church Hill, Leintwardine
D/d/166	(Pt) Eurypterus punctatus Salter	?

*fig Huxley & Salter Monogr. I Mem. Geol. Survey U.K. Pl. XI, fig. 1, p.101*

(The identification is that of the 1928 La Touche catalogue)

### **3. Death and Family**

Colonel John Colvin died on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1871 at Leintwardine, Josephine followed him on the 25 February 1878. Colvin's will, as transcribed for probate in Bengal, is available on line (Findmypast). His son John William graduated MA at Corpus Christi, Cambridge and became vicar of Lakenham in Norfolk prior to taking the living at Leintwardine. He married Alice Cecelia Keith at Ludlow in 1878 and lived on to 1917.

Of the daughters, Elizabeth Baker Colvin married the Reverend William Thomas Harrison at Leintwardine in 1870 – he initially took the living at Thorpe Morieux in Suffolk and was then at Christ Church, Luton followed by Bury St Edmunds prior to becoming the third Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway from 1888 to 1903. Harrison died in 1920, Elizabeth Baker died at Leyden, Essex in 1934. Josephine Helen Colvin married the Reverend Thomas Crump at Leintwardine in 1875 who took up the living at Corfe in Dorset followed by that at East Pennard, Bruton in Somerset. Josephine Helen was living as a widow in Bruton in 1911, she died at Wincanton in 1923. Finally Helen Frances Colvin married the Reverend Frank Edward Hopwood in Congleton in 1873 who became vicar of Badsworth in Yorkshires then rector of Bury. Helen Frances was living as a widow in Salcombe, Sidmouth in 1911, she died at Honiton in 1934.

Dr J. A. Gosling  
July 2018

## Sources

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Colvin J (1871) *Statement of Service of the late Colonel John Colvin CB Bengal Engineers* (Available at Mersea Books, Norwich 2018).

La Touche T H D (1928) *Catalogue of the Palaeozoic Fossils in the Museum of the Ludlow Natural History Society* Typescript, Ludlow Museum Resource Centre.

Rolfe-Smith B (2013) *Colonel John Colvin 1794-1871* Stoneybrook Publishing, Downton on the Rock, Ludlow.

Wikipedia *John Colvin Engineer*

Findmypast [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk)

## Appendix 1: The Colvin Family

Alexander Colvin m. Elizabeth Kennedy *Glasgow* 29.12.1749  
 1718-1791 1714-1795  
 b. 30.06.1718, d. *Dunipace, Stirling* b. *Dunipace, Stirling*

Alexander Colvin 1756-1818 b. 03.04.1756 <i>Linlithgow</i> d. 15.12.1818 <i>Calcutta</i> <i>Founder Colvin &amp; Co., Colvin's Ghat, Calcutta</i> m. Maria Margareta Paterson <i>Calcutta</i> 27.01.1786	Thomas Colvin 1757-1812 b. 03.09.1757 d. <i>India</i> - - m. Helen Renny 1764-1832 <i>Glasgow</i> 12.02.1786	James Colvin RN 1768-1847 b. 05.03.1768 <i>Linlithgow</i> d. 29.05.1847 <i>Westminster</i> <i>Founder Colvin, Bazett &amp; Co. London &amp; Calcutta</i> m. Maria Jackson 1778-1834 <i>Calcutta</i> 26.04.1802	
Alexander 1787-1864 b. <i>Glasgow?</i> d. 22.01.1864 <i>Leatherhead</i> m. Elizabeth Jackson Colvin 1803-1856 <i>Calcutta</i> 17.06.1822	Jane/Jean? 1789- b. <i>Glasgow</i>	John 1794-1871 b. 20.08.1794 <i>Glasgow ?</i> d. 27.04.1871 <i>Leintwardine.</i> m. Josephine Puget Baker 1805-1878 <i>Ludlow</i> 27.02.1838 b. <i>Stapleton Glos</i> d. 25.02.1878 <i>Leintwardine</i>	Elizabeth ? Margaret 1796- b. <i>Glasgow</i>
Rev. John William 1839-1917 b. 30.07.1839 <i>Ludlow</i> c. 29.08.1839 <i>Ludlow</i> d. <i>Ludlow</i>	Elizabeth Baker 1841-1938 b. 14.06.1841 <i>Ludlow</i> c. 15.07.1841 <i>Leintwardine</i> d. <i>Leyden, Essex</i>	Josephine Helen 1846-1923 b. 25.05.1846 <i>Leintwardine</i> - - d. <i>Wincanton</i>	Helen Frances 1848-1934 b. 25.05.1848 <i>Leintwardine</i> - - d. <i>Honiton</i>
m. Alice Cecelia Keith 1878 <i>Norwich</i>	m. Rev. William Thomas Harrison 05.05.1870 <i>Leintwardine</i>	m. Rev. Thomas Crump 20.05.1875 <i>Leintwardine</i>	m. Rev. Frank E Hopwood 29.05.1873 <i>Congleton</i>

### Note

Josephine Baker's father was Capt Joseph Baker RN (1768-1817) who sailed with George Vancouver to the North West American coast 1791-1795. He is the father of Admiral James Vashon Baker (1798-1875) of Broad Street, Ludlow.

Jane Colvin married Charles George Blagrove civil servant, Fort William, Bengal 26.01.1809. Margaret Colvin married William Ainslie, asst surgeon, Fort William, Bengal 19.06.1817. Elizabeth Colvin married Edward Oakes, mariner, Fort William, Bengal 20.02.1826

