

## *The Class of 1853*

As emphasised in previous issues of the EPG Gazette (see 'The Class of 1851' in the, July 2012 issue and 'The Class of 1852', October 2012) many pensioner guards became involved in the creation and stabilisation of the WA Police in the course of the 1850s. During 1851 and 1852 it seems obvious that the colonial authorities made discrete efforts to recruit a proportion of fresh recruits from the EPF on an annual basis. Army veterans from outside the pensioner guard ranks were also targeted.

When a unified Police Force was formally established under a 'chief of police' - called a Superintendent at first and later a Commissioner - the tendency probably reached its peak in 1853. The first Commissioner, John Augustus Conroy, was a former military man himself, not to mention being the son of an army officer and the nephew of another. Thus he was not unwilling to continue the trend after taking office on March 13 of that year.

The following men listed as pensioner guards in F. H. Broomhall's book became members of the new WA Police Force in some month of the year 1853:

**Patrick Bannon**, a former sergeant in an uncertain regiment who worked as a warder in the Convict Establishment from 1852 and was also sworn in as a constable on 23/4/1853 – he combined both functions and was

assertive in doing so. That led to trouble – he lost his position as constable and gaoler on 1/3/1854 and resigned from the Establishment as well on 16/1/1855 (WA Police Record of Service of Patrick Bannon and Barker, D.J. *Warders and Gaolers*, Western Australian Genealogical Society Inc 2000, p10);

**John Law Davis**, former private in an East India Company regiment, served briefly as a mounted constable in Perth from 2/5/1853 (SRO CSR 274, Conroy to Colonial Secretary, 24/5/1853 and our article 'John Law Davis and his Family', *EPG Gazette*, Vol.8, No.1, January 2008, pp5-6);

**David Ditch**, former sergeant in the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, a WA police constable from May 1853 who worked as a warder from August 1853 (Bentley, M. *Grandfather was a Policeman*, Hesperian Press, WA 1993, p40 and Barker, pp52-53);

**William Hardman**, former private in the Royal Horse Artillery, served as a constable at Fremantle and Guildford in turn from 28/4/1853 (WA Police Record of Service of William Hardman);

**John Kearney**, former private in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot, joined as a constable in Perth on 4/1/1853. His entry into the WA Police was delayed because of sectarian squabbles (WA Police Record of Service of John Kearney and Broomhall, B153);

**James Jackson**, former private in the 48<sup>th</sup> Regiment, appointed as a mounted constable on 5/4/1853, but then dismissed for refusing a transfer

to Champion Bay, 14/5/1853. (Pashley, A.R. *Policing our State*, Educant, WA 2000, p217);

**Stephen Oliver**, former sergeant in the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Dragoons, he was placed in charge of the Fremantle police in March 1853 but lost the position in October because of issues with alcohol (WA Police Record of Service of Stephen Oliver and Bentley, pp23, 36, 41)

**Michael Throssell**, former private in the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Dragoons, sergeant in charge of the Perth police from 16/1/1853 until his untimely death in April 1855 (WA Police Record of Service of George Michael Throssell).

In addition to the above members of the EPF, four other men require inclusion as individuals who owed their entry into the WA Police to former army service in one way or another. The Police Commissioner himself was among them:

**John Augustus Conroy**, an aristocrat by descent, a former officer in the East India Company's Bengal Army, an official in the Convict Establishment and the first Commissioner of the WA Police (WA Police Record of Service of John Augustus Conroy and Conole, P. 'Western Australia's first Police Commissioner', *Irish Scene*, Vol.11, No.5, July-August 2009, pp48-49);

**Charles Frederick Elderton**, Deputy Superintendent of Police and Secretary of the Board of Education from March 14, 1853 - a very obscure official indeed, but probably a former

East India Company man (like Conroy) and identifiable as a newly commissioned lieutenant in the Bombay Army back in 1819 (his background and career is the subject of ongoing research);

**Thomas Emery**, former soldier in the 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot but not an EPF man – he served as a Perth gaoler and then as a constable from February 1853 until his death in 1856 (Barker, p66);

**John Kenny**, former sergeant in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot who settled in WA, but not an EPF man. He joined the WA Police as a constable on 1/3/1853 and gave reliable service in Perth until resigning on 21/9/1864 (see our article 'John Kenny of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment', *EPG Gazette*, Vol.12, No.3, July 2011, pp5-6, which cleared up potential confusion re the identity of two veterans of the same name);

**Christopher Markey**, a conditional pensioner and formerly a private in the 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, he had a brief and calamitous police career during April 1853. The demon drink was one of his problems (see our article 'The Hashemy Men, Part I', *EPG Gazette*, Vol.11, No.4, October 2010, pp4-5).

A total of 29 new appointees took the oath of office and became part and parcel of the WA Police establishment in 1853. Of them, 13 were former soldiers, nearly 45% in percentage terms. Even though it includes both of the most senior police officers, the numbers are impressive and reveal a determined effort on the part of the



colonial establishment to bring in a good proportion of military men.

Those in leadership positions doubtless expected some of them to show the way forward by accepting a disciplined working environment. Despite this, it is worth noting that only about 30% of the new men had an actual EPF background, which was not much of an increase over 1852.

Performance results were also very varied. Sergeant Oliver and Constables Bannon, Ditch, Jackson and Markey left the Force under regrettable circumstances. They were not orphans, for Commissioner Conroy gave up his position and left WA in 1856 after severe quarrels with other officials, as had his deputy Charles Elderton before him.

But notwithstanding such turmoil arising from political interference in the management of the Force, the colony now had a workable policing system. By the year 1857 some 56 officers were based in the 19 stations scattered around the colony. As a magistrate and acting chief-of-police Alfred Hawes Stone wrote that the Force was now "in a most efficient state...composed of excellent material" (Bentley, p56). The words were not just for private consumption and will have been much appreciated had they been made known to current and past army men who played a part in building the organisation.

***Peter Conole, Police Historian  
Jean McDonald, Enrolled  
Pensioner Guards Special Interest  
Group***