

DID YOUR ENROLLED PENSIONER GUARD ANCESTOR SERVE IN THE WEST AUSTRALIAN POLICE?

The answer in many cases is likely to be yes. So far we have identified scores of Enrolled Pensioner Guards who became police officers – and countless others had police descendants. When the first male convicts arrived in WA the Prison Warders who came with them were not sufficient in number to supervise all work parties of convicts engaged in building and construction activities. The number of police in the colony was also rather low and an organised Police Force under a Superintendent or Commissioner did not yet exist.

The arrival of Enrolled Pensioner Guards helped solve two problems. First, many of them served as warders. Second, many others joined the police. They were a mixed bunch in every sense, but those former British army men in receipt of army pensions, often earned through hard service in various campaigns, were disciplined and able to work in challenging situations.

Among the first Enrolled Pensioners to become constables were John Kirwan, Michael Reddin, Michael Throssell and James Caldwell, who all arrived on the 'Scindian' in 1850 (1). In response to an almost inevitable extra law enforcement problem – the escape of four convicts by sea in 1851 – the Perth Gazette called for the forming of a water constabulary (2).

The Government soon appointed George Clifton – a Royal Navy veteran and the descendant of a famous British baronial family - to take charge of a force of water police at Fremantle (3). As one would expect, an Enrolled Pensioner was among the first water policemen appointed – in this case John Kenny, another 'Scindian' man (4).

So began the long line of Enrolled Pensioners who gave great service to the fledgling Swan River Colony: whether as the backbone of the colonial defence establishment, or as warders, or as police officers, or as farmers and workers, they were a vital element in the building of a civil society. We are engaged in continuing research and envisage being able to give a solid picture not only of Enrolled Pensioners who were active in the WA police, but also indicate where in many cases sons and other descendants gave documented service to our police.

A unified Police Force was finally formed in WA in March 1853, although earlier in 1849 a Police Ordinance was issued outlining the powers and duties of constables. The newly minted Force had an elaborate rank structure, with a member of the colonial gentry as our first Chief of Police (5). Of course, the rank and file were mostly working men or former service personnel, especially Enrolled Pensioners.

There are pitfalls in tracking down who they were, and to assist and perhaps enlighten readers here are a handful of examples.

The name **Sullivan** was not uncommon. There were three **John Sullivans** active in law enforcement at around the same time – there has been some confusion in identifying them and this will clarify the issue. A Constable **John Sullivan** served on-and-off from 1856 until 1878; he was not an Enrolled Pensioner (6). Another **John Sullivan** was an Assistant warder from 1866 till 1870 – neither was he an Enrolled Pensioner (7). But Constable **John Sullivan** who served as a constable from 1851 until about 1855 WAS an Enrolled Pensioner (8). This is just one example of a few cases of mistaken identity we have encountered.

Another classic problem relates to alternative spelling of names and sometimes even just poor handwriting in colonial records. One of our favourites relates to Constable **Farracy** of Albany. He never existed. The handwriting in a Resident Magistrate's letter was the problem. His real name was Peter **Fallasey** – he was an Enrolled Pensioner who arrived on the 'Pyrenees' in 1853 and is attested as a constable at Albany in 1857. So Mr **Farracy** really was a **fallacy**! Another interesting and not uncommon problem is that **Peter Fallasey** is listed neither as an Enrolled Pensioner or a police officer in any published or widely used source (9).

Then there is loose use of titles, another possible source of confusion. Sergeant **Patrick Bannon** of the Enrolled Pensioner Force was never a police officer, although he is mentioned as one in a notable work. He was simply in charge of the York gaol and lock-up (10).

Finally, simple spelling errors or variations can cause pain. One example is in Broomhall's book. Enrolled Pensioner **John Houlahan**, the father of two police officers (one a famous figure in WA policing history) is listed under the name **Hullehan** (11).

It would be much appreciated if anybody with known Enrolled Pensioner ancestors who also served as police officers, or who left police descendants, contacted us.

- (1) Bentley, M. *Grandfather was a Policeman* (1993), p19
- (2) *Perth Gazette*, 10 January, 1851
- (3) McKeough, M. *Rescues, Rogues and Rough Seas* (2001), pp12-13
- (4) Bentley, op.cit., p20
- (5) Conole, P. *Protect and Serve: a History of Policing in Western Australia* (2003), Chapter1, *passim*
- (6) Stonehouse, T. 'A Forlorn Character' in Morling, L.A. *Family Reflections* (2005), pp132-137
- (7) Barker, D.J. *Warders and Gaolers* (2000), p197
- (8) F.H. Broomhall. *The Veterans a History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force 1850-1880*. Hesperian Press. 1989 B269

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