

EPG Soldiers Account Book - Going to Pension...

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From 1783 to 1806 for the men who volunteered to serve in the British Army the period of enlistment was for life, from 1806 to 1829 the term of enlistment was reduced to seven years in the infantry and ten in the cavalry and twelve for sappers and gunners but in 1829 it reverted back to life until 1847 when it was formalized by nominating the period of enlistment as 21 years for infantry and 24 for cavalry. Short service was introduced in 1870 whereby the period of enlistment was 12 years.ⁱ

In these days of pensions, funded either by superannuation or Social Security, being a right for the aged or the disabled it is easy to forget that in the 19th century pensions did not exist for the working class who worked until they dropped, were supported by their families or ended their days in the county workhouse. For men who had enlisted in the British Army for 'life' there was no need to provide pensions although the establishment of Royal Chelsea Hospital recognised the need for ongoing care. Soldiers going to pension, even after lengthy service, were required to have a medical examination and to appear before a medical board to prove they were indeed incapacitated or worn out. The pension ended with the death of the pensioner often leaving their families destitute.

The War Office recognised that some serving soldiers who had established families in the colonies might be reluctant to leave when their regiments were posted to other countries and accordingly they could actually 'buy' their way out.

A man wounded or injured in the service of the Army and had served less than a prescribed period was entitled to a temporary pension for a limited time. (There were some amongst our pensioner guards.) Men who were desperate to leave the army and inflicted injury upon their person were Court Martialled and suffered severe punishments.

Amongst the treasures deposited in the Battye Library is a group of items that had been issued to John Flynn who served with the 49th regiment of foot from his enlistment on 10 March 1845 to when he was discharged to pension on 17 March

1857.ⁱⁱ John Flynn came to Western Australia as a Pensioner Guard on the convict ship *Norwood*.ⁱⁱⁱ

One of the items is a Soldiers Account Book, I do not know when these books were introduced but the date when this book was printed 1854 although I have seen a reference to 'the Soldiers Book' on a man who went to pension in 1837. The book is divided into two parts, an Account Book and a book entitled Monthly Settlements. There is also a list of the 'terms on which Cottages and Allotments are held by Enrolled Pensioners', photocopy of a pouch, a list of 'Instructions for the Guidance of the Pensioner in Drawing his Pension' and sundry private letters of John Flynn including references as to his character.

The first twelve pages of the book details the entitlements due to a soldier from enlistment, through to when he went to pension, as well as the Articles of War and the procedure for lodging complaints. The remaining pages are the personal records of John Flynn.

For us it gives a better understanding of the meaning and advantages of the terms Good Conduct badges, Gratuities, Temporary Pensions, and the reason for the different rates of pension the individual pensioners received.

Here is a summary of what it covers that relate to our Pensioner Guards:

Item 1 Account Book

Page 1 Cover Page

Page 2 General Observations

'The principal objects for which a Soldier is required to be in possession of this Book, are, to secure to him, whilst in the Army, a proper settlement of his pay, Allowances and Clothing; and that he may have a record, establishing his claim to any benefits to which he may be entitled under Her majesty's Regulations for granting Pensions, Allowances, and Gratuities to discharged soldiers who have performed good and faithful Service.

It is therefore the Soldier's interest to take care that his Book is at all times correctly and completely kept. When a Soldier is discharged, he is to take his Book away with him: in the event of a Soldier dying in the Service, his book will be forwarded to his relatives. If they desire it; and, if

it contains a record of wounds received in action, or of distinguished acts of Bravery, it will remain an honourable memorial to his character and conduct.'

Page 3 Rewards for Good Conduct

'In order to make the distinction between deserving and undeserving Soldiers, the following rewards are granted...'

They covered the different rates and marks available for Corporals, Drummers, Trumpeters and Privates.

The table listed ranges from Good Conduct pay of 1d per day plus 1 Distinguishing Mark for 'having served five years and not having been in the Regimental Defaulters Book during the last two years' to 6d per day for 'after 30 years service and in the last two years in uninterrupted enjoyment of the 5d a day'.

Pensions

'...an abstract of some of the benefits conferred on a deserving soldier by Her Majesty's Pension regulations.'

Pages 4 & 5 Pensions [continued]

The different rates of pensions that apply for different circumstances for soldiers who enlisted after 1st March 1833.

1. If discharged as a result of being incapacitated by wounds or injuries received in action and rendered incapable of further service.

Privates 8d – 2/- for life

Corporals 1/- – 2/4 for life

Sergeants 1/3 – 3/- for life

2. If discharged for blindness as a result of injury or Military Service

Private 1d – 1/- a day

Corporal 1/- – 1/3 a day After having served seven years as such

Sergeant 1/3 – 2/- a day After 10 years as a non commissioned officer and not less than five years as a Sergeant.

3. If discharged previous to completing 21 years in the Infantry or 24 years in the Cavalry for disability contracted in and by the Service.

Sergeant, Corporal or Private a temporary pension of 6d a day for a period varying. Service under seven years: from one to 18 months. Service above seven years and under 10 years: from one to two years service above 10 but under 14 years in the Infantry of under 17 years in the cavalry: two to three years.

4. If discharged after completing 21 years (Infantry) or 24 years (Cavalry) at their own request or for Public Services.

Privates 8d – 1s a day with an additional ½ d per day for every year after 21 years in the Infantry and 24 in the Cavalry.

5. Pensions to 'Soldiers discharged after 21 years (Infantry) 24 years (Cavalry) for disabilities contracted in and by the service which not only made them unfit for the ordinary duties of Soldiers, but which rendered them incapable of earning a livelihood a temporary increase of pension may be granted according to the following rates':

Private 3d per day

Corporal 4d per day

Sergeant 5d (6d?) per day

Not to exceed 1/3 for a Private, 1/6 for a

Corporal & 2/- for a Sergeant.

Granted for 1 year then to be reviewed and if still unable to earn a livelihood to be renewed.

Page 5

Gratuities with Pensions to Meritorious Soldiers.

Gratuity for Good Conduct in addition to the ordinary pension to men who have served 21 years in the Infantry or 24 years in the cavalry.

Sergeant who had served 10 years as such £15

Corporal who had served seven years as such £10, Private £5

Commanding Officers could recommend individuals who have served 21 years in the Infantry and 24 years in the cavalry to receive future gratuities and the issue of a silver medal inscribed "For Long Service and Good Conduct" the reverse to carry the Coat of Arms and the name and rank of the soldier to be presented at a parade by the Commanding Officer. The soldier permitted to wear the medal during the remainder of his service

Page 6 Good Conduct Pay with Pension

Private soldiers who shall have been in uninterrupted possession of Good Conduct pay, with one or more distinguishing marks, for six months immediately preceding their discharge, shall have the full rate of pension, whether temporary or permanent, to which they are otherwise entitled but the maximum shall not exceed 1s 3d and for Corporals 1s 6d.

Discharge by Purchase

Free discharge with claims to different pensions – and for soldiers settling in the Colonies with gratuities, long and detailed list.

The rates range from:

Men with under seven years active service and no Distinguishing Marks - £20 Infantry, £30 Cavalry

To: men with more than 16 years active service and no Distinguishing Marks - Free

Page 7

Re-enlistment

Terms for re-enlistment within three years of discharge and effect on pension entitlements.

Page 8

Forfeiture of Good Conduct Pay and Distinguishing Marks.

Page 9

Regimental Savings Bank

‘To encourage habits of temperance and economy and to enable the Soldiers to make a further provision for his comfort on quitting the Service...’ Established 1st July 1848 Covers deposits, withdrawals, interest rate, general information regarding death and discharge.

Page 9, 10, & 11

Articles of War: OBEDIANCE IS THE FIRST DUTY OF A SOLDIER

The punishments are spelled out for the various offences – from imprisonment with or without hard labour, loss of pension, transportation to death. It covers a wide range of offences ranging from being drunk while on duty to dereliction of duty, desertion, going AWOL, being made prisoner by neglect, malingering, to selling, loosing or mistreating his horse, mutiny.

Page 12 Complaints

Steps a soldier must observe when making a complaint.

Page 13 Soldier’s name and description, regulations covering marriage, use of Regimental Number, signature and marks.

Page 14

Amount of any Bounty received, details of Services Abroad, Promotions & Reductions and Date of Marriage and Christian name of wife.

Page 15

Name date and place of birth of any children, wounds, areas where he may have distinguished himself, cause and date of becoming non-effective

Page 16

Name of next-of-kin (living), last known address including Parish & County.

Information regarding making a will and the distribution of effects in the event of a soldier dying intestate.

Item 2

Monthly Settlements

Clothing account

On 1 April 1855 John Flynn was issued one pr trowsers [sic] and 1 pr boots

29 April 1856 he received a tunic, trowsers and one pr boots

He had no entries for a savings account.

Item 3 Extracts of a birth certificate for his son William James Flynn.

Item 4 Parchment Certificate of discharge from the Army and particulars of marching money.

Item 5 Reference

Item 6 reference

Item 7 Terms on which Cottages and Allotments are held by Enrolled Pensioners’.

Certificate from B.H. Burke Captain, Staff Officer regarding John Flynn’s entitlement to Perth location V119.

Item 8 Certificate signed 25 July 1876 re and increase in pension.

Instructions for the Guidance of the Pensioner in Drawing his Pension

Item 9 Letters

Item 10 Photocopy of a pouch.

ⁱ Mr. Kipling’s Army, Byron Farwell, W.W. Norton & Company Inc, New York, page 81

ⁱⁱ SLWA, MN 640, Acc 2590A

ⁱⁱⁱ The Veterans, F H Broomhall, Hesperian Press 1989, page B99