

John Kenny

Of the 19th Regiment

This soldier was born in about 1815 and served as a private in the 19th Regiment of Foot. Sorting out his various career moves in WA has at time been problematic. There are some indications of confusion between his life details and those of two other soldiers of the same name - both active in the colony from the 1850s onwards - which this piece will hopefully clarify.

One of the other men was an older John Kenny (1808-1883), a former sergeant in the 63rd Regiment of Foot who is described as a military pensioner but had no known direct connection with the Enrolled Pensioner Force. He joined the Police Force of the day and worked as a foot constable in Perth from 1853 to 1864 (1). The other was John Kenny (1821-1874) of the Royal Sappers and Miners, who worked for many years as a warder in the Convict Establishment (2).

John Kenny of the 19th arrived in the colony as a member of the EPF in 1850 or 1851. He may have been born in Ireland; his wife's name was Margaret Corbett. Kenny was on duty in Fremantle when he attracted the attention of Superintendent George Clifton, the first officer-in-charge of the Imperial Water Police. Clifton needed '*steady and able*' recruits for the Water Police and Kenny the Enrolled Pensioner made the grade according to his assessment: '*accustomed to boating and bears the very highest character*' (3).

John Kenny only served in the Water Police from January 9 until May 19, 1851. He then moved sideways to work as a night warder in the Convict Establishment. He became a gatekeeper on May 20, 1851 and continued in the position until resigning on February 2, 1852 (4).

He had conducted himself well and seems to have remained on the EPF strength in Fremantle for several years. Kenny was among the members sent north to settle at Greenough Flats in April 1858. He died at Greenough on August, 17 1864 and his John received the former soldier's land allotment of 33 acres in his place when grants were made in 1868 (5).

John Kenny the Younger (1852-1875), the first son of John the soldier and his wife Margaret Corbett, became a school teacher at Greenough, but died at a young age, as did several other male members of this particular Kenny family. The second son, Henry Edward Kenny, became a highly successful colonist, although one early career move proved to be a regrettable false start. Henry was born in Fremantle in March, 1853 and joined the Police Force as a probationary constable in March, 1874. He remained one for a full year before finally being sworn in as a fully fledged constable in Perth in March, 1875. This delay may be an indication of disciplinary problems, which ended in his dismissal from the police on June 18, 1875 (6).

Henry Kenny fell on his feet and moved north closer to Greenough – he worked as a warder at Geraldton Gaol from 1875 until 1877, then for the firm of Gale and Son. Additional reports show that he worked as a store assistant and draper and later as a stock and station agent.

He became a man of influence in the community and was an early joint proprietor of the 'Geraldton Express' newspaper. Henry Kenny finally entered politics and served as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for North Murchison from May 1897 until his death on August 25, 1899. Henry's son by his wife Albinia Tregoning died young, at the age of nine (7).

Notes

(1) *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol.3, K-Z, p1726 – with incomplete dates; WA Police Record of Service of John Kenny (1808-1883). He is not in Broomhall, F.H. *The Veterans* (Hesperian Press, WA, 1989)

- (2) Bicentennial Dictionary, *ibid*; Barker, D.J. *Warders and Gaolers* (Western Australian Genealogical Society, Inc, 2000), pp118-119
- (3) SROWA, CSO Acc 221, Clifton to Colonial Secretary, 27/1/1851
- (4) McKeough, M. *Rescues, Rogues and Rough Seas* (Western Australia Water Police and the Police Historical Society, 2001), p222
- (5) Broomhall (1989), pp97 and B158
- (6) WA Police Record of Service of Henry Edward Kenny
- (7) The Bicentennial Dictionary, Vol.3, K-Z, p1726 has the key data on both the Kenny brothers

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Special Interest