

*Pensioner William Lennox,  
late of the  
77<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot*

**By Diane Oldman and Peter Conole**

William Lennox was born on February 2, 1829 at Castle Dawson (Aratrea Parish) in County Derry, Ireland. As a youngster he worked as a weaver and joined the 77<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot of the British Army on November 11, 1846, regimental number 2098. His place of enlistment was Ballymena, County Antrim. The army record describes him as being five feet, five inches tall, with a fresh complexion, hazel eyes and dark brown hair (1).

At the time the 77<sup>th</sup> (later the East Middlesex Regiment) was on garrison duty at Halifax in Nova Scotia. We do not know if William went there and it is probably unlikely; as an under-age soldier he had to wait until his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1847 before receiving full pay and the range of duties that implied. The 77<sup>th</sup> returned from Canada in 1848 and spent the next six years on home duty at various depots around Britain (2).

When the Crimean War broke out the 77<sup>th</sup> was included in the Light Division commanded by Lieutenant General Sir George Brown and arrived at the Scutari base in Turkey on April 15, 1854. Active service soon followed. The regiment plunged into the Battle of the Alma on September 20, 1854 and made a promising start, but due to a command blunder was largely left inactive in square formation on the left during the fight for the Great Redoubt (3). The battle of Inkerman on November 5, 1854 turned out to be a stellar day for the regiment, which played a key role in fending off three Russian attacks. In one startling episode a mere four of its companies routed four Russian battalions and recaptured several pieces of artillery (4).

Private Lennox impressed his officers – he was promoted to Corporal on the first day of 1855. Service in the siege of Sebastopol followed, but

William blotted his copy book during an elaborate military ‘tattoo’ in July 1855. He got drunk, failed to turn up for the big event and was reduced to private after a regimental court martial on July 31, 1855.

The 77th Regiment moved into forward positions during the siege, in general terms a tedious, deadly business of spade and engineering work punctuated by sniping and constant skirmishing with the Russians in the forward lines. William Lennox was badly wounded in one such trench fight on August 15, 1855; a bullet took off most of two fingers on his right hand. Injury to his thumb was another side effect, plus probable periodic infections for many years afterwards.

William returned to England on December 12, 1855. A Chelsea medical board ruled him out as being unfit for further service and he was discharged as a Military Pensioner on January 15, 1856. He received the usual Crimean War array of medals and clasps. His next moves are not exactly known, but he married Mary McCormack and began to raise a family. The religious denomination of the couple was Church of England. Their first child – a daughter named Eliza - was born no later than July or August 1857 (5).

In an unknown month – and on an uncertain ship – William Lennox and his family arrived in Western Australia, in late 1857 or in January 1858 at the very latest. He is not on record as ever being a member of the Enrolled Pensioner Force but he was certainly a ‘pensioner guard’. He worked as a Convict Guard in the colony from January 26, 1858 until November of the same year. Then he moved sideways and took the oath of a Constable in the Western Australia Police on November 8, 1858 (6).

The move into the blue police uniform comes as no surprise; readers will be aware of the high degree of interchange between military and police personnel in WA during this era. William served as a constable in Fremantle and Busselton in turn, with exemplary results, which culminated in a special cash reward of two pounds he received on March 22, 1861 for above-the-average services (7).

Unfortunately for the police, William's fine record attracted attention elsewhere and he resigned on December 1, 1862, possibly because he had received a good offer from the Convict Establishment. He was employed as an Assistant Warder by the Establishment from January 16, 1863. His early period of service was promising and William received higher levels of responsibility as a result.

In October 1863 William moved east to take charge of a road party, one involving construction work between Guildford and York. Something went wrong in November 1863. The York Resident Magistrate and the police went to the 24-mile party on November 30 to enquire into disorderly conduct among the convicts and complaints by some against William Lennox (9).

With that incident as a distressing background, he resigned on the first day of 1864 and left for London with his family on the 'Robert Morrison', January 10, 1864 (10).

The subsequent movements of William and Mary Lennox and their family are not easy to trace. They seem to have resided in Ireland for some years, during which they became the parents of three more children – Margaret, Mary and William John (11). They moved to Scotland where son Alexander was born in 1871 (12).

Some years later service-related health issues caught up with former soldier William Lennox. In 1886 he returned to Ireland and became an out-patient of Kilmainham, the Dublin establishment which was the equivalent of the famous London Chelsea Hospital for former soldiers.

William was recognised as being of good character and received appropriate attention and treatment. In his last days he may well have required permanent in-house medical care. Veteran William Lennox died at Kilmainham on April 9, 1898 and his passing was recorded in the South Dublin Registration District (13).

## Notes

(1) The particulars of his military service are in his army file: WO97-1617-081-009.

(2) Wikipedia entry: 77<sup>th</sup> (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot.

(3) I.Fletcher and N.Ishchenko, *The Battle of the Alma, 1854* (Pen and Sword Military, Great Britain, 2008, pp134-138.

(4) Fortescue, Hon.J.W. *A History of the British Army* (McMillan, London, 1930 edition), pp120-121, 132, 134.

(5) See the War Office record of William Lennox in Note One above for his injury and discharge reports, plus WA Death Certificate 1252 of 1859 for the death of his daughter. Note also Ericson. R. *Biographical Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol.3, p493.

(6) Barker, D.J. *Warders and Gaolers* (Western Australian Genealogical Society, 2000), p126; Western Australia Police Record of Service of William Lennox.

(7) Western Australia Police of Service of William Lennox.

(8) Barker (2000), p126 and *Biographical Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol.3, p493.

(9)The children of William and Mary Lennox born in WA included:Thomas,WA Birth Certificate Perth 4775/1859; Eliza, Busselton 6046/1861 and John, Guildford 7314/1863.

(10) *Biographical Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol.3, p493.

(11) Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes, 1845-1958.

(12) 1871 Census of Scotland, Reels 1-191. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh gives the data on the family.

(13) The last years of William Lennox are covered in his War Office record of service - see Note One above. The record also mentions his death.



Source: [https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcR-3nxZFxZGMS4KpJPDGGLeW3yrFCBaZ2fh\\_S95AXouYU8nn9mA](https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcR-3nxZFxZGMS4KpJPDGGLeW3yrFCBaZ2fh_S95AXouYU8nn9mA)  
1854 Battle of Alma