

A PROFILE OF COLOUR SERGEANT THOMAS MINORGAN MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL PENSIONER FORCE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

(This is a revised profile written in October 2020 following additional research which revealed that there were some errors in the family historical knowledge)

Thomas Minorgan was born in St James, Dublin, Ireland on 19 March 1832 to Thomas Snr and Jane (Young) Minorgan. Thomas was educated at Trinity College in Dublin

At age 19 in 1851, Thomas enlisted in the British Army, with his brother Robert John, who was ten years older, for duty with the 10th Foot Regiment. He transferred to the 24th regiment on 1 January 1852 and then to the 4th Foot Regiment on 14 February 1854 before returning to the 24th on 1 September 1856.

Promotions:

- Private on enlistment 20 Nov 1851
- Private to Corporal 1 Jan 1855
- Corporal to Sergeant 16 Jun 1856
- Sergeant to Private 1 Sept 1856 on transfer to 24th Foot
- Private to Corporal 2 Jan 1857
- Corporal to Sergeant 15 Sept 1857
- Sergeant to Colour Sergeant 27 Jun 1866 at age 34 years

Thomas served in the Crimea War for 2 years and 4 months and saw service in the battles of Alma, Sevastopol and Inkerman. Thomas was stationed for seven months in Malta before his service in Crimea. There was a thought that Thomas also spent some service time in Gibraltar after Crimea but this cannot be substantiated.

- Medals, Clasps and Badges awarded:
- Crimean War Medal clasps Alma, Inkermann, Sebastopol
- Turkish Crimea Medal
- One Good Conduct Badge
- Meritorious Service Medal (annuity) 1899

In 1858 at age 26 years Thomas, as a bachelor and in the 24th Foot Regiment, married Alice Power, who at time was 18 years old and a spinster. A son Robert John was born to Thomas and Alice in December 1858 in Killarney, Ireland. It appears that Alice must have died very soon after her son's birth, no actual record of the death can be located, as it is recorded that Thomas married Annie Meeghan on 13 August 1859. On the marriage register Thomas is noted as being a widower of "full age" while Annie a spinster and a "minor". On the 1861 England Census Thomas and Annie are registered as living at Chatham Barracks, 1st Depot Battalion in Kent, England. Also noted as living at the barracks is Thomas' brother Robert and his wife Catherine.

Annie unfortunately died in November 1869 in Dublin at age 28 years. There is no record that Annie and Thomas had any children. Then in July 1870 Thomas remarries, marrying Catherine Flynn and they subsequently had eight children over the next seventeen years. At the time of the marriage to Catherine Flynn, who is noted as a spinster, Thomas a widower was residing at 2 North King Street, Dublin, occupation Staff Sergeant.

On the 17th December 1867 at age 35 Thomas Minorgan received his discharge from the British Army in Sheffield with the reason for discharge being Chronic Rheumatism. His discharge papers also state that Thomas "had never been wounded, never been before a Defaulters Board or before a Court Martial. After serving for 16 years he returned to Ireland intending to reside at 28 Henrietta Street, Dublin.

Then on 5th February 1868 Thomas enlisted in the Royal Dublin City Militia for a term of 5 years. Thomas' enrolment form states that "Thomas Minorgan is about 40 years 11 months of age, is 5 feet 9½ inches in height, dark brown hair, blue eyes, fresh complexion and by trade or occupation a labourer".

Thomas was discharged from the Royal Dublin City Militia on 21st October 1873, at "his own request and by purchase, as he was about to immigrate to Australia to fill a Government situation", this was stated on his discharge papers.

Thomas and his family immigrated to Western Australian arriving at Fremantle on board the ship "Navel Brigade" on the 18th February 1874 at age 42 years, this was not a convict transport voyage. (see note at end) Thomas was accompanied to WA by his third wife Catherine and his three children (Robert James, Thomas Jnr and Annie). On arrival in Fremantle Thomas joined the Enrolled Pensioner Force (EPF), retaining his rank of Colour Sergeant. The EPF, which was part of the Convict Establishment under the command of Lt. Col. Edward Douglas Harvest, became the colony's Enrolled Guards (EG) under the command of the Superintendent of Police Matthew Skinner Smith, who was also a Crimean Veteran.

During Thomas' service with the EPF and the EG he served both in Perth and Fremantle, living in the Pensioner Barracks. Thomas saw service in the force as a Staff Sergeant at the Perth Barracks, Inspector of Pensioner Cottages and he became the Imperial Paymaster for the pensioner force in the colony. In June 1897 Thomas was stationed in Perth.

During his time with the EPF in Perth, Thomas also served as a Drill Instructor to the Metropolitan Rifle Volunteer Corps (MRVC) for a term of nearly six years. This role was a voluntary one and only ceased when Thomas was transferred to Fremantle with the EPF. In appreciation of his services to the MRVC Thomas was presented with a purse containing ten sovereigns. *(A sovereign was a gold coin of the UK with a nominal value of one pound Sterling worth about A\$500 each today)* In making the presentation, AJ Hillman, Captain Commanding MR Volunteers, commented that Thomas Minorgan had held the appointment "with great credit to himself and with great advantage to this Corps for a term of nearly six years. I have much satisfaction in bearing testimony to your soldierly good conduct during this time, as well as your capacity for instructing the recruit, and encouraging and enforcing habits of discipline".

In 1881 at age 49 years Thomas received a grant of land known as 21 John Street, West Perth, where he and his family lived for many years. In 1899 Thomas was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal with Annuity. In 1889 Staff Sergeant Minorgan made application for employment with the Civil Service. He resigned his positions (discharged) in 1903 at age 71 years having served in the colony for twenty nine years.

Thomas and Catherine had six other children born in Perth. James Christopher; Alice Mary; Catherine Mary; Evelyn Mary; Edward Patrick and a second daughter named Alice Mary.

Thomas Minorgan died on the 1 December 1911 aged 79 years. Thomas was awarded a full military funeral and is buried in the Anglican portion at Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth in a now identified historical grave, Section DA 0267A.

NOTE:

There was a suggestion that Thomas Minorgan and his family came out to WA in 1867 on board the convict ship "Norwood" which left Portland, England in April 1867 and arrived in Fremantle on 13 July of that year. The same source also comments that Thomas returned "to Ireland and returned to WA circa 1871". Both of these suggestion have been proved to be incorrect.

The facts:

1. In 1867 Thomas was serving with the British Military and was not discharged from that service until 17th December 1867 with the rank of Colour Sergeant.
2. In 1871 Thomas Minorgan was still serving in the Royal Dublin City Militia which he joined in February 1868 and from which he took an early discharge in 1873 intending to migrate to WA, which he then did in early 1874.

It therefore is not possible that Thomas was on the Norwood travelling to WA in mid 1867 and that he also could not have returned to WA in 1871, as well as he was serving with the Royal Dublin City Militia at that time.

References:

Form WO 83 No. 82970 British Army - Discharge Paper - The National Archives, London, England
Form for Discharge of Non-Commissioned Officers Royal Dublin City Regiment of Militia - The National Archives, London, England
Diane Oldman, author/publisher website - <http://crimeanvetswa.wags.org.au/> Perth, Western Australia
Gillian O'Mara (Historian) Perth, Western Australia

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THOMAS MINORGAN AND HIS DESCENDANTS

Thomas Minorgan

DOB: 19/3/1832 in Dublin, Ireland

DOD: 1/12/1911 in Perth, WA

Marriages: 1st Alice Power 2 February 1858 YOB: 1840 YOD: not known
2nd Annie Meeghan 28 November 1859 YOB: 1841 YOD: 1869
3rd Catherine Flynn 11 July 1870 YOB: 1848 YOD 1930

One child of first marriage

Robert John Minorgan

DOB: 29/12/1858 in Killarney, Ireland

DOD: 6/11/1917 in Cottesloe, WA

Marriage: Catherine Mack in 1884 Perth, WA

Children of third marriage

Thomas Minorgan Jnr

DOB: 19/5/1871 in Dublin, Ireland

DOD: 6/5/1915 in Perth, WA

Marriage: Mary Geary in 1893 Perth, WA

Annie Minorgan (did not marry)

DOB: 11/1/1873 in Dublin, Ireland

DOD: 2/6/1976 in Como, WA

James Christopher Minorgan (did not marry)

DOB: 8/3/1875 in Perth, WA

DOD: 30/3/1927 in West Perth, WA

Alice Mary Minorgan

DOB: 28/4/1877 in Perth, WA

DOD: in 12/1877 in infancy in Perth, WA

Catherine Mary Minorgan (did not marry)

DOB: 1/12/1878 in Perth, WA

DOD: 9/6/1968 in Como, WA

Evelyn Mary Minorgan

DOB: 29/12/1880 in Perth, WA

DOD: in 10/1881 at age 9/12 in Fremantle, WA

Edward Patrick Minorgan

DOB: in 1882 in Perth, WA

DOD: 5/6/1948 in West Perth, WA

Marriage: Margaret Brown in 1918 Perth, WA

Alice Mary Minorgan

DOB: 8/12/1887 in Perth, WA

DOD: 17/4/1973 in West Leederville, WA

Marriage: James Brown (no record of actual marriage located)