

To be or not to be an Enrolled Pensioner Guard (EPG)? On average an EPG waited 5 years after their army discharge before making the journey to WA, however:

- A “baker’s dozen” waited more than 20 years
- 150 waited only a year or so
- Some did not make it to WA - the EPG Group knows of at least 7 who died on the voyage out
- There were some who were due to come to WA but did not set sail!

The most infamous such case occurred on a Sunday, June 1st 1856 aboard the Runnymede whilst it lay in Plymouth Sound loading convicts, its EPGs being mostly recruited from Dartmoor Prison.

Murder on the Runnymede! EPG-to-be Corporal William Nevin murdered Runnymede’s Sgt Major Ben Robinson who died that same Sunday.

At an inquest next day aboard the Runnymede Nevin pleaded "not guilty, it happened by accident". This plea falling on deaf ears, two months later, a contrite and by then confessed 44-year-old Nevin was hung in front of 5,000 people on August 11. It was one of 17 English hangings that year - he was buried at Cornwall’s Bodmin prison.

Ben Robinson did not die immediately, the bullet taking off a finger before entering his stomach – he cried out “I am shot”. As he lay dying in the arms of his subordinate Fenton Kinniard (Kenna), asking Kenna not to hold so tight.

Ben was buried 4th June 30 miles away at Stoke Damerel in Devon where there was a large military hospital. Patients and/or bodies could be brought directly to the hospital by boat and dropped off on the landing point, which seems to have been Ben’s fate. In any event, the Runnymede sailed the next day ... (no mucking about back then).

Tragically, Ben and Nevin were both married with 5 and 4 children respectively.

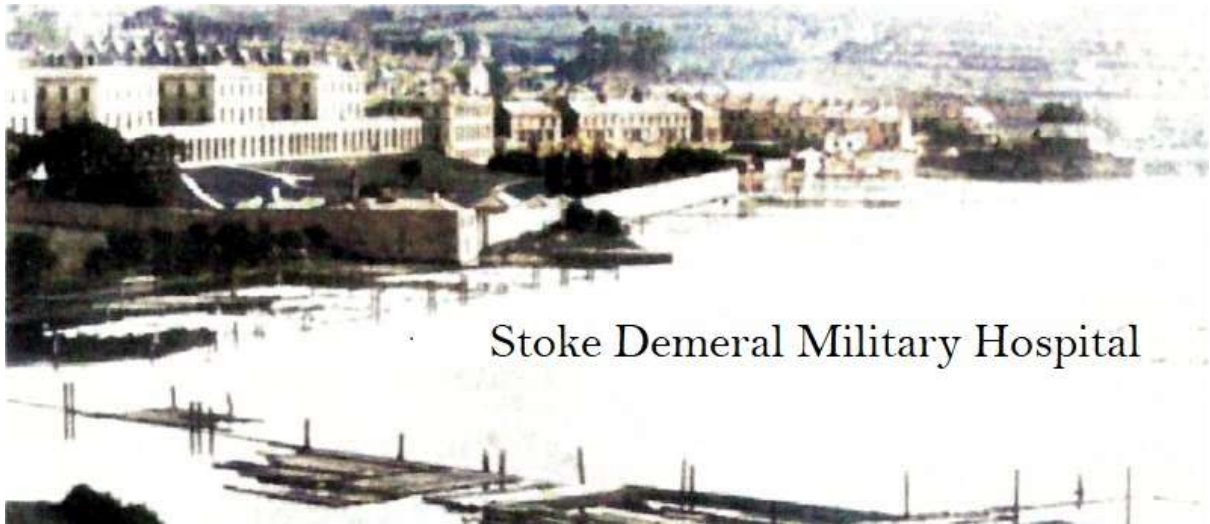
Four EPGs-to-be were required at Nevin’s trial and did not travel to Fremantle 1856 - Fenton Kinniard (Kenna), William Comer, Joseph and Daniel Sullivan – the latter three then came to WA aboard the 1857 Clara.

Three Sergeants sailed on the Runnymede although which, if any, were a replacement for Robinson is not clear ... check the Runnymede out:

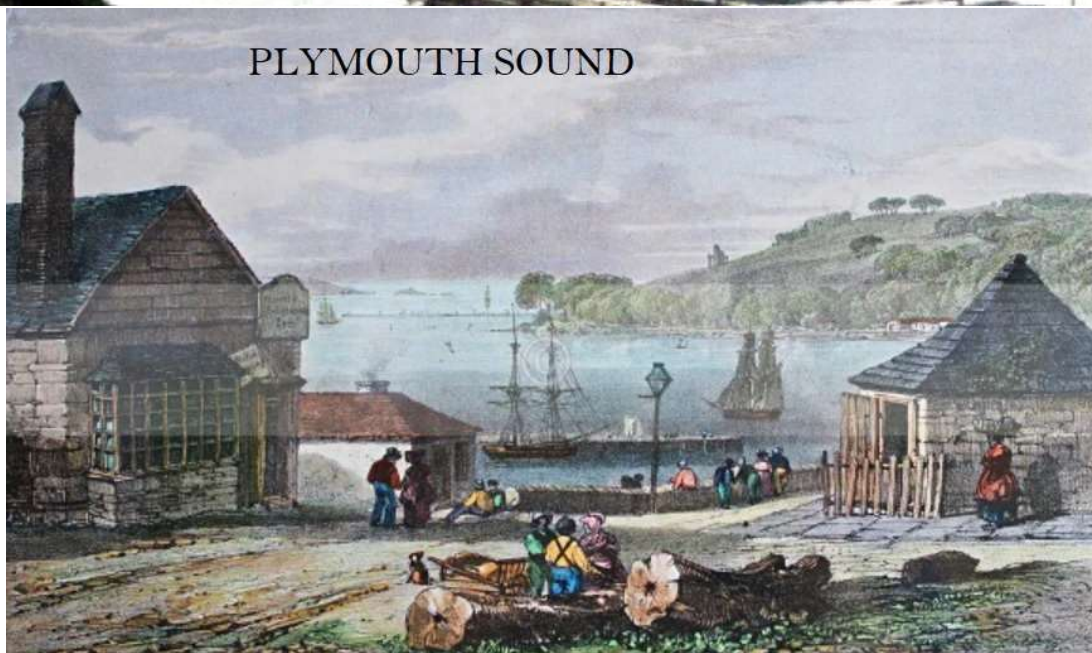
<https://enrolledpensionerforcewa.org.au/ships/runnymede/>

[Page 92]

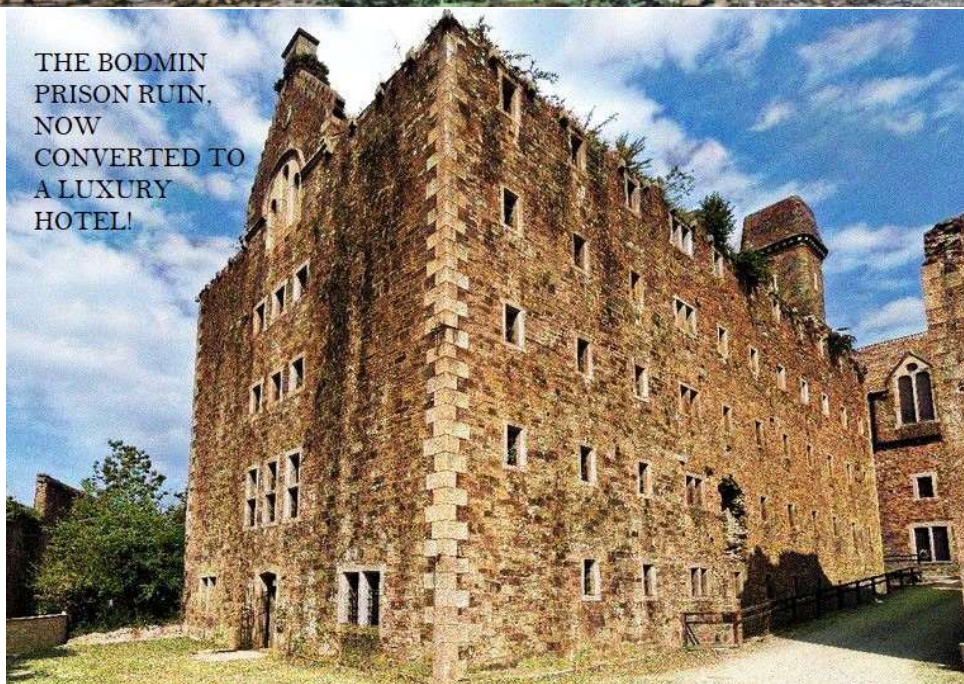
BURIALS in the Parish of Stoke Damerel, in the County of Devon, in the Year 1856					
Name.	Abode.	Died.	When Buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
Benjamin Robinson No. 727	44m Convict Ship Runnymede		June 4		Wm. H. Gault Curate



Stoke Demeral Military Hospital



PLYMOUTH SOUND



THE BODMIN
PRISON RUIN,
NOW
CONVERTED TO
A LUXURY
HOTEL!

THE LATE MURDER IN PLYMOUTH SOUND.

PLYMOUTH, TUESDAY.

An inquest was held yesterday on board the Runnymede convict ship, lying in the Sound, on the body of Sergeant-major Benjamin Robinson, a brief account of whose death was noticed in the *Morning Post* of Monday.

The jury was selected from the crew of the vessel, and after a brief charge from Mr. W. Rundle, the coroner of Saltash, they proceeded to view the body. On their return into Court the following evidence was adduced:—

Fenton Kenner said—I am a pensioner of the 56th Foot, doing duty as guard on board the Runnymede convict-ship. About three o'clock on Sunday afternoon I was sitting on the main deck, when I heard the deceased (Sergeant-major Robinson) call out for Corporal Nevin. On Nevin approaching, I heard deceased say, "Bring that man up for parade," referring to a man named Sullivan. I saw Nevin go to the gangway, and he called for Sullivan, who, in about a minute afterwards, came on the quarter-deck. Sullivan held up his firelock in both hands, and then wheeling about went up the ladder to the sergeant-major. The deceased took the firelock out of Sullivan's hands and proceeded to examine it. Nevin walked up the ladder after Sullivan with his musket in his hand. When he got to the head of the ladder, I saw him take a pace forwards, and stooped his body on one side. I immediately heard the report of a gun, and I saw smoke about Sergeant-major Robinson, who exclaimed, "Oh, God! I'm shot!" He fell on the deck, and I then heard him again exclaim, "Oh! my God! I'm dead." Upon this I ran across the quarter-deck, and seized the prisoner as he came to the ladder. I caught him by the neck and arm. He said to me, "Kenner, let me go; don't take such hold of me. I've done it, but I've been drove to it." Nevin was about four yards from the deceased when I heard the report of the gun. The deceased did not say who shot him, but that he had been shot. I have been doing duty with Nevin and the deceased at Dartmoor prison; there was a bad feeling existing between them. I was on parade at Dartmoor one day, about five months ago, when Nevin was late for inspection, and he fell in at my left. The deceased was inspecting us, and he told Nevin that he was dirty, that he had not his appointments, and that he was not to come on parade like it again. He told him that he was more like a militiaman coming on parade than like a soldier. On Nevin's return to his barrack room, about five minutes after, he said, "The next time he (Robinson) finds fault with me, I'll put a ball in my piece, and blow it through him." I have not heard Nevin use any threats since that time. I reported what Nevin had said to the deceased, about a week afterwards; Nevin was present when I did so. He denied that he said anything of the kind, and the matter then dropped. Since I have been on board this ship, I have heard the prisoner complain that he was put upon, and drove about. He did not make use of Robinson's name in complaining.

In cross-examination, the witness acknowledged that both he and Nevin appeared together before the sergeant-major, when at Dartmoor, to complain of each other. Nevin also put questions to the witness, in the endeavour to show that his gun exploded accidentally, in consequence of the lock catching in a hen-coop that was lying on the deck; but he failed in showing such to be the case. At the conclusion of this witness's evidence, the jury proceeded to the quarter-deck to examine the spot where the prisoner had stood when the gun was fired, and they expressed themselves satisfied that the gun could not have touched the hen-coop.

Several other witnesses were examined in corroboration of Fenton's evidence. Sullivan, the man who was showing his firelock to the sergeant-major at the time the fatal shot was fired, stated that the bullet passed close to his head, shattered the stock of his gun, carried away one of Robinson's fingers, and entered his (Robinson's) body.

After hearing the medical evidence the jury retired, and after a brief deliberation, returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against Nevin. The prisoner was then committed, on the coroner's warrant, to Bodmin gaol, to take his trial at the ensuing assizes for the county of Cornwall.

Robinson, who was about 46 years of age, has left a wife and five children. The prisoner is also married, and has four children.

EXECUTION OF NEVAN AT BODMIN

WILLIAM NEVAN, convicted at the Cornwall Assizes, on the 30th ult., of the wilful murder of Benjamin Robinson, on board the convict ship, "Runnymede," in Plymouth Sound, within the jurisdiction of Saltash, underwent the extreme penalty of the law, on the drop, in front of the County Gaol, at Bodmin, on Monday last. The prisoner after the two first days of his condemnation gave up all hopes or desire of a reprieve, and began to prepare for his awful fate. He discarded his plea of accident, but stated on several occasions that he had been driven to the commission of the crime, by the harsh and imperious conduct of his victim. He appeared truly penitent, and bore the prospect of his execution with calm resignation. Nevan, as we stated last week, was a Roman Catholic, and the constant attention of the Rev. Mr. Shortland, the Roman Catholic Priest, of the Cornwall Mission, at Bodmin, appeared to have considerable effect on him. Several hours daily, he attended in the condemned cell, and joined in fervent prayer and conversation with the murderer. Monday last, (in accordance with the custom of this County,) being the day following the second Sunday after sentence, was the day fixed for the execution. And early in the morning, the convict's cell was unlocked, and the benefit of his priest afforded him, and the Roman Catholic ceremony of extreme unction was administered.

It being the desire of the culprit to address the multitude when he came on the drop, arrangements were made and the funeral procession in consequence was formed a few minutes earlier than usual. At 10 minutes to 12, the procession was formed at the condemned cell in the following order.

Javelin Men.	Priest and Prisoner.	Javelin Men.
	Undersheriff & Governor.	
	Surgeon.	
	Javelin Men.	
	Turnkeys, &c.	

The executioner Calcraft having previously proceeded to the cell and pinioned the prisoner, in accordance with his final instructions received from the Under Sheriff, (C. L. Radcliffe, Esq.) the prisoner, on passing to the scaffold, was heard to say, "to day has been a very trying day; Satan has been very powerful, but thank God he has not been able to conquer." The procession in the above order proceeded on its way through the lines of assembled prisoners who were placed on either side, the females occupying the upper court, and the male prisoners the lower. They all appeared seriously impressed by the awful solemnity they witnessed, with the exception of Jose, who it will be remembered, was tried at the last Assizes for wilful murder, but convicted only of the crime of manslaughter; he did not betray the slightest emotion or appear in the least affected, and bore the same stolid demeanour as he presented throughout the trial. The procession at length arrived at the steps leading to the press-room, which the prisoner ascended unsupported, and as he had done all the way from the cell, walked with remarkable firmness. On arriving in the press-room the prisoner again said, "Three minutes before I did it, I had not a thought of doing so. I turned around and saw him smile, and thought I would shoot him, and I did so." At 3 minutes to 12 he made his appearance on the drop, dressed in the same regimental clothes he wore at his trial, and around his neck the crucifix. The executioner soon made his appearance, and the priest read the burial service amidst the tolling of the chapel bell. The prisoner ejaculated a short prayer. Calcraft nimbly placed on the white cap as usual, adjusted the rope, and shook hands with him, to which the prisoner replied "God bless you," and began to address the multitude below in the following terms:—"I acknowledge the justice of my sentence. Three minutes before I did it I had no thought of doing so. I hope my death will be a satisfaction to my country. Pray take warning by my unhappy fate. Oh may the Lord have mercy on my soul! Holy mother of God, and all the saints, intercede for me! Before a few minutes I hope to be in happiness." The priest continued reading the burial service, and as he came to the words "Jesus receive his soul" the prisoner said "Amen; may the Lord preserve my soul." The bolt was then drawn, and the drop immediately fell, and the wretched man, struggling convulsively for two minutes, during which time he drew up his body four times, ceased to exist.

The execution was witnessed by at least 5,000 persons, a much smaller number than was present at the execution of Holman in April, 1854. The greater portion appeared to bear a respectable appearance, and comprised both sexes and all ages. The town, at the time of the execution, was perfectly quiet; but before and after, the streets presented the appearance of a Whitsun-fair-day, and we observed stationed on the Mount-folly a show! The Inns were filled to excess; but, with the exception of one fight, in which one of the parties was captured and put to the lock-up, everything passed off without any disturbance. The conduct of the assemblage at the time of the execution was orderly and quiet. The roadway immediately in front of the gaol was not barricaded, as at the last execution, but for a distance of 80 yards, barriers were erected, and a full supply of javelin men stationed to keep back the crowd. The body, after hanging the usual time, was taken into the press-room. An incident occurred at this stage of the proceeding—that the sexton Evans on removing the cap, cut off several handfuls of hair, perhaps with the object of selling it, as the rope &c. at the execution of Ellison. The body was placed in a coffin and buried in a waste place within the walls of the prison.