A Typical Toll Gate and House of the late 1800s

James Lampier – Soldier & Toll Collector

Any person travelling from Bath to Salisbury might notice at the turnpike gate at Semington near Trowbridge, the hale old man, the toll collector, who, to use his own words, is "a leetle over eighty". This old man, James Lampier, was born at Rudge, Wilts in 1789 and enlisted into the 59th Foot in 1809 for foreign service absolutely; each two years abroad to count as three.

His regiment embarked for Mauritius and assisted in the capture of that island the following year, the British troops being under the command of General Abercrombie, son of the gallant but ill-fated General who was killed in action a few years before whilst fighting against Napoleon I in Egypt. On the 4th August following, the 59th regiment landed at Java and was present at the storming of Fort de Carta, which was desperately defended by the Dutch. After some twelve years abroad, Lampier was discharged, then holding the rank of Sergeant. The old man says there are only two living besides himself who were present at the capture of Java, viz Admiral Montague of Seend, near Devizes, who was then serving on board a ship in the fleet; and Mr George Sylvester, the veteran coroner for North Wilts, at Trowbridge (84 years if age), who was surgeon on board one of the ships of the fleet. These three veterans, who represent half a century of our country's history, often meet each other at the turnpike gate at Semington, and "fight their battles o'er again", and each of them is as active, and more so, than many men half their age.

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