



Chelsea Pensioners

1808-1828

Swindon



Until the 17th century the state made no specific provision for old and injured soldiers.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I it was recognised that provision needed to be made for poor, sick and disabled soldiers. This led to an Act of Parliament, passed in 1593, that levied a weekly tax on parishes for the relief of soldiers and sailors.

By 1673 it was becoming increasingly apparent that some soldiers were no longer fit for service. In 1681, King Charles issued a Royal Warrant authorising the building of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to care for those 'broken by age or war'.

Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to design and erect the building. Sir Stephen Fox was commissioned to secure the funds necessary to progress the build.

The chosen site, set adjacent to the River Thames in the countryside of Chelsea contained the uncompleted building of the former 'Chelsey College'.

During the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II, the Royal Hospital was still under construction, so they introduced a system for distribution of army pensions in 1689. The pension was to be made available to all former soldiers who had been injured in service, or who had served for more than 20 years.

In 1692 work was finally completed and the first Chelsea Pensioners were admitted in February 1692 and by the end of March the full complement of 476 were in residence. However there were more pensioners than places available in the Hospital. Eligible ex-soldiers who could not be housed in the Hospital were termed out-pensioners, receiving their pension from the Royal Hospital but living outside it. In-pensioners, by contrast, surrendered their army pension and lived within the Royal Hospital.

In 1703, there were only 51 out-pensioners. By 1815 this figure had risen to 36,757. This was due to Napoleonic War Service

The Royal Hospital remained responsible for distributing army pensions until 1955, following which the phrase "out-pensioner" became less common, and "Chelsea pensioner" was used largely to refer to "in-pensioners".

To qualify for a Pension or a place within the hospital you had to satisfy one of two criteria. 1. Be injured whilst on active service. 2. To have served more than 20 years in the service of the country.

In 2009 the first women were admitted to the hospital following a decision in 2007 to modernise the facilities for both men and women use.

For More information about the Chelsea Hospital please visit – [Origins and History](#)

Surname	Adams
Given Name	Thomas
Year of Admission	1819
Date of Admission	26-Aug
Age	41
Years of Service	23yrs 8mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Reduction
Description	Height - 5' 6" Hair - dark Eyes - haze Complexion - swarthy

Surname	Beasley
Given Name	James
Year of Admission	1827
Date of Admission	17-Jan
Age	37
Years of Service	20yrs 1mth in the 41st Regt. Of Foot; Awarded the Military General Service Medal in 1848; Awarded the Army of India Medal in 1851
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Wounded groin at Rangoon
Description	Height - Hair - brown Eyes - hazel Complexion - dark

Surname	Knight
Given Name	Richard
Year of Admission	1828
Date of Admission	16-Apr

Age	38
Years of Service	Corporal; 22yrs 1mth in the 41st Regt. Of Foot; Awarded the Military General Service Medal in 1848; Awarded the Army of India Medal in 1851
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Deafness
Description	Height - 5' 8" Hair - dark brown Eyes - hazel Complexion - dark