



Chelsea Pensioners

1855 - 76

Atworth



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](#)

Given Name	Neate
Given Name	William
Regiment	58th Foot
Year of Examination	1861
Date of Examination	24-Dec
Age	24, says 26
Place of Birth	Atworth
Years of Service	Rifle Brigade 1 month; 58th Foot, 7 years 5 months. 5 years 1 month; desertion, hence pensionable service, 2 years 4 months; Foreign Service - Australia, 2 years
Occupation on Enlistment	Labourer
Doctor's report of Examination	Fracture of tibia of left leg from a fall on the ice, the bones have never united; is very lame. Incurred while on furlough. Unfit. Lameness of left leg, fracture of both bones.
Character Report	Latterly good.
Pension Awarded	6d. for 9 months
Description	Height – 5ft 8in Hair - light brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fresh