



Chelsea Pensioners

1808 - 1828

Chippenham



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	Catchmie
Given Name	John
Year of Admission	1822
Date of Admission	1st May
Age	41
Years of Service	17yrs in the 41st Regt. of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Old, worn out and wounded hip
Description	Height 5' 6" Hair - brown Eyes - hazel Complexion - dark

Surname	Hart
Given Name	William
Year of Admission	1817
Date of Admission	10th December
Age	55
Years of Service	28yrs 11mths in the 66th Regt. of Foot; Includes 8yrs 6mths in the Marines
Occupation	Shearman
Reason for Pension	Reduction
Description	Height 5' 2" Hair - dark Eyes - grey Complexion - dark

Surname	Humphries
Given Name	Edward
Year of Admission	1817
Date of Admission	10th December
Age	35
Years of Service	22yrs in the 66th Regt. of Foot; Includes 1yr 7mths in the 2nd Veteran Battalion

Occupation	Weaver
Reason for Pension	Reduction and debility
Description	Height 5' 4" Hair - dark Eyes - grey Complexion - sallow

Surname	Wiltshire
Given Name	John
Year of Admission	1815
Date of Admission	8th August
Age	19
Years of Service	3yrs in the 41st Regt. of Foot; No service inserted on discharge papers since under age.
Occupation	Whitesmith
Reason for Pension	Lost his left arm above the elbow at Black Rock
Description	Height 5' 3" Hair - light brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fresh

Surname	Winkworth
Given Name	John
Year of Admission	1818
Date of Admission	25th November
Age	50
Years of Service	17yrs 3mths in the 21st & 23rd Light Dragoons; Corporal; Includes 3yrs 2mths as Private and 2mths as Corporal in the Cape Garrison Company; Received a pension of 5d a day
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Rheumatism
Description	Height 5' 6" Hair - dark brown Eyes - grey Complexion - dark