



Chelsea Pensioners

1808-1828

Wilton



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](#)

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surname | Bowles |
| Given Name | Thomas |
| Year of Admission | 1825 |
| Date of Admission | 12th October |
| Age | 41 |
| Years of Service | Sergeant 20yrs 5mths in the 21st Light Dragoons; Includes 3yrs 3mths as Private, 2 yrs 3mths a Corporal and 1yr 8mths a Serjeant in the Cape Cavalry; Received a pension of 9d a day. |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Dyspnoea and debility |
| Description | Height - 5' 3" Hair - light brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fair |

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|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surname | Cole |
| Given Name | Thomas |
| Year of Admission | 1819 |
| Date of Admission | 26th August |
| Age | 34 |
| Years of Service | Sergeant 16yrs 3mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot; Includes 9 months in the 4th Veteran Battalion |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Reduction, wounded over the left eye and ruptured |
| Description | Height - 5' 8" Hair - brown Eyes - hazel Complexion - fresh |

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surname | Hibberd |
| Given Name | Walter |
| Year of Admission | 1818 |
| Date of Admission | 19th May |
| Age | 34 |
| Years of Service | Sergeant 15yrs 8mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot; His conduct appears to have been very good whilst in service |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Reduction and health much impaired by dysentery and lost his left eye |
| Description | Height - 5' 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ " Hair - light brown Eyes - hazel Complexion - fair |

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surname | Kerby |
| Given Name | Richard |
| Year of Admission | 1822 |
| Date of Admission | 1st May |
| Age | 44 |
| Years of Service | Colour Sergeant 25yrs 5mths in the 41st Regt. Of Foot; |
| Occupation | Weaver |
| Reason for Pension | Old and worn out |
| Description | Height - 5' 8" Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fresh |

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surname | Kirby |
| Given Name | John |
| Year of Admission | 1822 |
| Date of Admission | 25th September |
| Age | 47 |
| Years of Service | Sergeant 23yrs 8mths in the 41st Regt. Of Foot; |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Worn out from service |
| Description | Height - 5' 6" Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fair |

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| Surname | Spreadbury |
| Given Name | John |
| Year of Admission | 1826 |
| Date of Admission | 19th July |
| Age | 39 ³ / ₄ |
| Years of Service | Sergeant 21yrs 9mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot; |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Worn out |
| Description | Height - 5' 8 ¹ / ₄ " Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fair |

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| Surname | Viney |
| Given Name | Francis |
| Year of Admission | 1821 |
| Date of Admission | 25th July |
| Age | 34 |
| Years of Service | 18yrs in the 66th Regt. Of Foot; |
| Occupation | Labourer |
| Reason for Pension | Shortening of the right leg from a fracture |
| Description | Height - 5' 4¼" Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - brown |