

EPG GAZETTE

April, 2008 Vol 9 No 2



ENROLLED

PENSIONER

GUARDS

A special Interest Group of the

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.**

Unit 6/48 May Street
Bayswater 6053

[www.wags.org.au/groups/
sigepg.html](http://www.wags.org.au/groups/sigepg.html)

Quarterly Newsletter
ISSN 1443-945X

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CONVENORS REPORT

Our General Meeting held at WAGS on 23rd February was well attended and interesting.

The speaker, Dr. Leo Laden, of Antique Arms & Armour gave a sometimes graphic demonstration of some of the weapons relevant to the Pensioner Guards- those ex-British Army soldiers who served in Great Britain's various theatres of war.



The collection included the Brown Bess Rifle, the Snider and Enfield Rifles and also smaller firearms, revolvers and examples of ammunition and firing mechanisms. Leo's demonstration of the actual arming and firing of the weapons gave members an insight into just how time consuming and on occasions a case of 'hit-and-miss' or 'hit-and run' would have been

during field battle between two opposing enemies. The smoke sent up by some of the rifles when fired would have made accuracy somewhat dubious.

My delight was in having a hands on experience with a Rifle actually stamped "**EPG**" and with its original number still visible!

Your Group has now procured copies of those maps relevant to the allocations of land to EPG's. Some of those lots were not taken up for various reasons, but it is all part of the resources available to researchers. Your Committee has voted to donate \$150.00 to WAGS towards the acquisition of a Steel Map Hanging Cabinet to preserve those maps. Negotiations are underway with the Librarian, Edwina Shooter in the hope of obtaining a good second-hand cabinet. *[Offers of monetary assistance would be gratefully accepted.]*

Your Group can be proud of the interest and input by members in our Group to research and promote the importance of the arrival in Western Australia of the Enrolled Pensioners to act as guards for the convicts arriving in Western Australia.

Jean McDonald

An Unfortunate Life

Ron Sutton

When reading about the history of our Pensioner Guards we sometimes find a statement that is intriguing and requires further investigation. This is true when we look at the various ways our brave soldiers met their maker. We have the Guard that got drunk and on the way home fell into a puddle of water and drowned, another came to grief when a horse harnessed to a sulky bolted. This story follows the circumstances of one of our own who was killed by a Sikh.¹

The Background

The Mararajah of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh established and built up the powerful Sikh Army, the “Khalsa” over the twenty years of his reign. It had taken his towering personality to control the turbulent “Khalsa” he had established. Until the death of Ranjit Singh, relations between the Sikhs and the British East India Company had been harmonious. Ranjit Singh co-operated with the British during the First Afghan War and the Sind War. However, Ranjit Singh’s death in 1839 triggered acrimonious disputes within his family and with the powerful “Khalsa”, an institution motivated by aggressive antipathy to the British. Six years later, this built up aggression led to the war that broke out in 1845.

The core of the “Khalsa” was its body of infantry regiments modeled, equipped and trained as Europeans troops even wearing red jackets and blue trousers. The traditional weapon of the Sikh warrior is the “Kirpan”, a

curved sword kept razor sharp. In battle, at the first opportunity the Sikh warriors would abandon their muskets and engage in hand-to-hand combat with sword and shield. Horrific cutting wounds, severing limbs and heads, were a frightful feature of the Sikh Wars in which neither side gave quarter to the enemy.

On the 11th December 1845, the Sikh Army crossed the Sutlej River to attack the British garrisons in the towns of Ferozehore, Ludhiana and Ambala. The first Sikh War had begun.

The Commander

The Commander of the British forces was General Sir Hugh Gough, an Irishman. Hugh Gough was born in Woodstown, County Limerick on the 3rd November 1779. After obtaining his commission in the Army he served with the 78th (Highlanders) at the Cape of Good Hope and then with the 87th (Royal Irish Fusiliers) in the West Indies. In 1809 he served with Wellington in the Peninsular Wars where he was severely wounded having his horse shot from under him. He was again wounded at the battle of Nivelle. After some years away from active service, he was promoted Major General in 1830 and in 1837 was sent to India to take command of the Mysore division of the Army. The China War intervened and he was dispatched to China as Commander in Chief of the British Forces. For his numerous achievements and victories including the capture of the Canton forts he was created a baronet.

He returned to India in 1843 as Commander in Chief of the British

¹ The Veteran’s, a history of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia, 1850-1880, Broomhall, FH, Hesperian Press, pB262.

forces. Gough was immensely popular with his troops for whose welfare he was constantly solicitous. The troops admired his bravery, in action wearing a conspicuous white coat he would draw fire away from his soldiers. In response to the Sikh threat, Gough mobilized a combined strength of British and Bengal force of 12,000 troops and 42 guns. He designated this force the "Army of Sutlej". The Sikhs had 10,000 Cavalry 4000 infantry and 22 guns under the command of Lal Singh.

On the 18th December 1845 after a long day's march, the Army of the Sutlej approached the small town of Moodkee. The combatants met at nightfall on the south bank of the Sutlej River. Gough's tactics were based on launching headlong attacks and, as a consequence, his casualties were high. He commanded the British/Indian army at 6 of the 7 major battles of the First Sikh war with his final battle at Goojerat decisively winning the war. He again commanded the British forces in the 1848 war and subsequently his peerage was raised to that of Viscount and promoted to Field Marshall. He died on the 2nd March 1869.

The Regiment

The 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment was originally raised as the 52nd Regiment of Foot, but was renumbered in 1757 following the disbandment of the existing 50th and 51st Regiments. It spent most of the Seven Years War in England, raiding the French coast in 1757 and fighting in Germany in 1760. The regiment was deployed to Jamaica in 1772 and then to New York in 1776. At this point, troops were transferred to

other regiments so that a new regiment could be raised in England therefore; the unit in name did not see action in the American Revolutionary War. In 1782 the unit became the 50th (West Kent) Regiment of Foot. During the Napoleonic Wars, the regiment saw action in Egypt, Denmark and the Peninsular War, including the Battle of Corunna. After a battle in the Peninsular War the regiment was nicknamed the Dirty Half – Hundred: the regiment had worn uniform with black facings and when they wiped their faces the dye stained their skin. In 1827 the unit became the 50th (Duke of Clarence's) Regiment of Foot and then in 1831 as the 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot in honour of King William the Fourth's wife Queen Adelaide. The unit escorted convicts to Australia in the 1830's and then was deployed to India in 1841. The regiment was garrisoned at Dum Dum in the Punjab district and fought with distinction in the Gwalior campaign in 1843.

In 1845 the regiment was placed under command of General Hugh Gough in his Army of the Sutlej. The unit was allocated to the 2nd Brigade under Colonel Wheeler with the 42nd Regiment of Foot and the 48th Bengal Native Infantry. The brigade was in the 1st Infantry Division under Command Major General Sir Harry Smith. At the commencement of hostilities at Moodkee the regiment was in the thick of the battle. As the infantry advanced on the Sikh positions, Wheeler's Brigade on the right of the line was threatened by a mass of Sikh cavalry forcing the Brigade to form squares. With the Sikhs driven off, the order was then

given to form line and continue the advance; only the 50th complied leaving the other two regiments in square. The Divisional Commander, General Harry Smith seized one of the 50th's colours and led the regiment into the Sikh lines. The infantry attack drove the Sikhs from their positions after savage hand to hand fighting. The 50th suffered 109 casualties. Reinforcements arrived and the 50th again saw action at Ferozeshah on the 21st-23rd December 1845, Aliwal on the 28th January 1846 and Sobranan on the 10th February 1846. The four battles earned the regiment Battle Honours for each battle. The regiment returned to England and after a short stint in Malta were soon in the thick of battle again in the Crimea at Alma, Inkerman and Sevastopol. In 1860 they were back in Australia and in 1864 in New Zealand fighting the Maori Wars. In 1881 the unit amalgamated with the 97th (Earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot to form the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment). The present unit, The Princess of Wales Royal Regiment (Queens and Hampshires) named for Princess Diana can trace its origins to the 50th (Queens Own) Regiment of Foot.

The Soldier

William Smith was born in Merton, County of Surrey, England. On the 22nd May 1843 at age 19 years he enlisted in the 50th Regiment of Foot in London for a bounty of three pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence. His records show he was 5' 7¼" in height with fresh complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. He was stationed at Chatham as a reinforcement until he embarked from Gravesend for Bengal on the 9th

September 1843. He arrived in Bengal on the 17th January 1844 and joined his regiment at Dum Dum. He remained at the Dum Dum garrison for the period February – December 1844. His unit was later to join the Army of Sutlej in 1845 and on the 18th December he was in the Battle of Moodkee one of the fiercest encounters of the First Sikh War. He was wounded in battle at Moodkee. It appears he remained in India to at least October 1845 as he was noted as being at Ludhiana, India on the 8th October 1845. The 50th Regiment of Foot returned to England and their home base was at Maidstone, County Kent. William's daughter Elizabeth was born in Maidstone in 1850.

He was subsequently discharged and awarded a military pension. In 1859 he joined the Enrolled Pensioner Guard Force and joined the convict ship "**Sultana**" arriving in the Swan River Colony with his wife and daughter on the 19th August 1859. He was granted a block of land at Butler's Swamp, Claremont and became friends with fellow Enrolled Guard John Atkinson. More bad luck was to follow William as his wife died in Dongara when his daughter was about fifteen years old.

He then left Western Australia after about five or six years to try his luck on the Victorian Goldfields at Benalla.

The statement in the "Veteran's" that William was killed by a Sikh is viewed with some scepticism by William's descendants. William was not the most law abiding of citizens and he did spend some time incarcerated in Perth. It appears he also ran into trouble with the law in

Victoria. It is believed he returned to India for a period of time then back to Western Australia where his trail runs cold.

His daughter subsequently married and William's destiny was fulfilled with the many descendants now living in Western Australia.

Footnote: William Smith would have qualified for the award of the Sutlej Campaign Medal 1845-46. The medal would have the first battle ("Moodkee 1845") engraved on the reverse side and if by chance he did participate in the other three battles they would have been on clasps attached to the ribbon.

Acknowledgment

Many thanks to Mrs Caroline Tupling, a descendant of William Smith, for contributing information for this article.

SUBSCRIPTION 2008/2009

Please send to:
Enrolled Pensioner Guards
Western Australian Genealogical
Society
Unit 6/48 May Street
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Please make cheques or money
orders payable to:
WAGS Enrolled Pensioner Guards

The \$10.00 Subscription was due on
the 31st March.

THE BENEVOLENCE OF ENROLLED PENSIONERS

As a follow on to Ron Sutton's interesting article in the July 2007 EPG Newsletter on the 'Florence Nightingale Fund', it seems fitting to record the ongoing culture of 'helping your ex-army mates' when they need monetary or practical assistance.

Readers and users of Frank Broomhall's *The Veterans. A History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia 1850-1880* would have noted references to individual Enrolled Pensioner Guards who subscribed not only to the "**Florence Nightingale Fund**" but also to the "**Pensioners Benevolent Fund**"; the "**Indian Relief Fund**", the "**Lancashire Relief Fund**" and also the "**Greenough Fire Fund**."

In the case of the disastrous fire that swept through the Greenough area in 1863, big areas of crops were destroyed. The financial loss to many local farmers was in the thousands of pounds, which took many years to recoup. Local citizens formed groups to raise funds to assist the victims of the fire. Among those contributing to the fund were 180 Pensioners – the average donation was equal to two days pay. Local Pensioner farmers were among those who benefited from the Fund. (1).

To add to the already difficult early years experienced in the Greenough area and the later years recovering from the disastrous fires, those Pensioners who were attempting to re-establish themselves were faced with another disaster of mammoth proportions – the **Greenough River flood**.

In 1888 the Greenough River overflowed its banks without any warning during the night of 4th February 1888 (120 years ago this year).

The morning scene revealed the river rushing seawards carrying with it animals, haystacks, debris from homesteads and shrubs and small trees. The homes that had been inundated with water were in many cases wrecked by the force of the rushing water. (2)

A vivid description of the scene, the rescue attempts and the resulting disaster to homes and property is well covered in Mary Albertus Bain's *Ancient Landmarks*. The courageous efforts by a few brave men to save many settlers in the lower lying farms highlights the ability of some men to

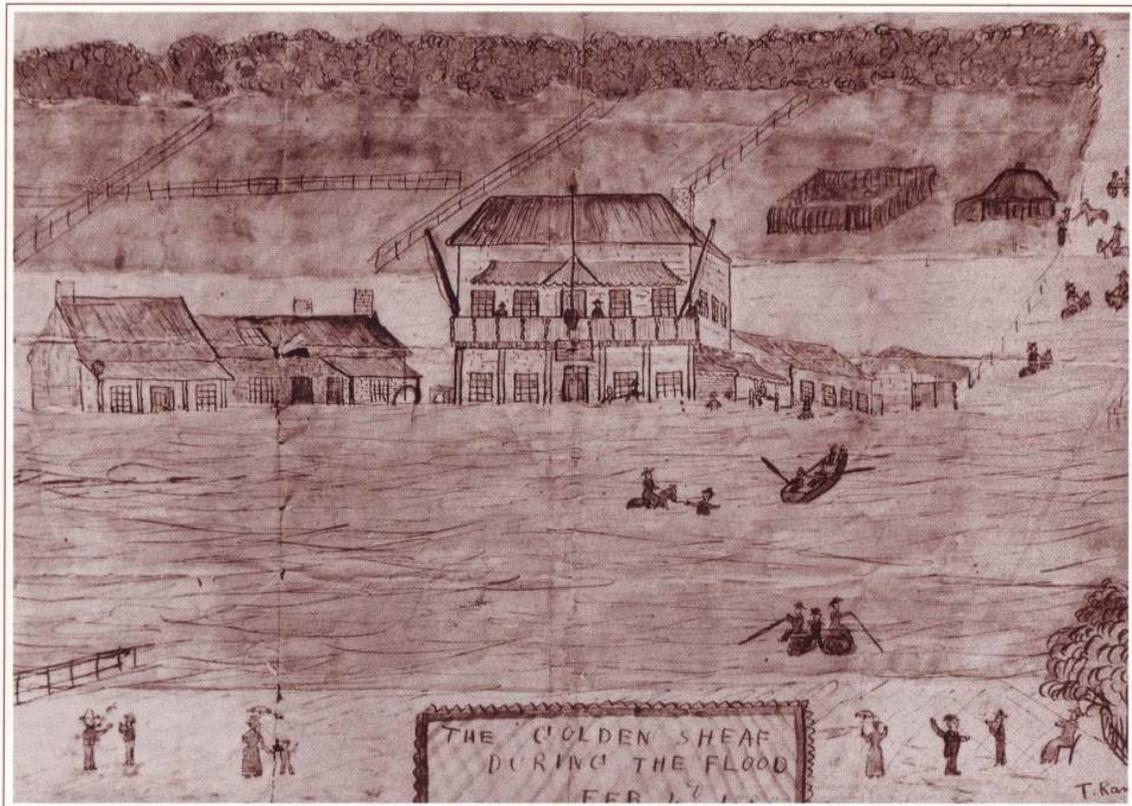
distinguish themselves in times of need. Again the ex-Army Pensioners were in the forefront of the willing to help their neighbours, as were local members of the Police Force.

Money was collected as soon as news of the disaster reached Perth.

A **Greenough Relief Concert** was organized in Fremantle along with a charity cricket match. Funds were also suggested to buy wheat seed. A total of One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Pounds was collected by public donation.

A survey was also commissioned to assess the losses in potential crops, stock, wells, fences, houses and their contents etc. The estimate was in the range of Eleven Thousand Seven Hundred Pounds.

In some fiscal quarters however, the



*Golden Sheaf Hotel, North Greenough during the floods of 1888, watercolour, artist unknown.
Many popular entertainments were held in the Hotel's large ballroom. Photograph courtesy of R P Duncan.*

estimated figure was felt to be a little high – “to wit ‘stubble feed’ 5/- an acre”. The stubble in February is very little value and the grass and stuff that will now rapidly spring up should be much better for the stock ...”

It is recorded that settlers who lost homes, stock etc. received one seventh of their losses in cash. It is also noted that many received less. e.g. one settler received Ten Pounds against his great loss – crops, buildings, tools and another received just over thirty-six pounds where he believed he had lost Two hundred and seventy pounds. (3) (4)

Another example of Pensioner Guards’ benevolence is apparent in individual donations to another project set up to assist people in need - the **Lancashire Relief Fund** in the north of England.

In the *Inquirer* of 25th February 1863, Lieut. Colonel John Bruce, Commanding Officer of the Enrolled Pensioner Force, acknowledges the donations made by citizens of Western Australia to the Lancashire Relief Fund. A list published in *The Inquirer & Commercial News* nominates members of the general community who have donated various amounts. Donations gathered by Reverend Richard Alderson, who was Chaplain for the Fremantle Convict Establishment, included money donated by members of the Enrolled Pensioner Force.

The Resident Magistrate of Fremantle also collected many donations. That list included names such as Sgt. Maj. Gorman; Sgt. James Fallon; Sergeants Graham, Conlan, Kelly and Caldwell. In

addition more than 70 members of the Enrolled Pensioner Force donated sums varying from one shilling to ten shillings. (5)

[*Note – the average pay of a private would vary from sixpence a day to more than one shilling a day depending on the length of his service in the British Army.*]

A slightly different Benefit Society was one set up officially under the auspices of Captain John Bruce, Commanding Officer of the Enrolled Pensioner Force.

The Pensioner’s Benevolent Society was set up in the 1850’s. A revised *Rules & Regulations* was published in August 1853.

Pensioners would subscribe one shilling a month. There were conditions attached to membership including good general and mental health or any disability that would prevent him from earning a living.

Loans were available to acceptable applicants who met certain criteria, with rules set out for repayment. It was also noted that subscribers were obliged to buy a copy of the *Rules*, costing one shilling.

A very interesting Statement of Receipts and Disbursements from January 1855 to June 1863 is on page 221 of Frank Broomhall’s *The Veterans*..... Lists include payments to widows and sick subscribers; loans to members etc. Receipts include loans repaid, profit on flour purchased by Col Bruce, rents received etc.

The survival of such a document provides a valuable insight into the benefits and problems existing at the time.

As in all societies there were those who would slip through the net where no financial help or support whatsoever was available. It could be said the average ex British soldier who enrolled to come as guards for the convicts and who did not succumb to the vagaries of fate in the form of serious illness, alcoholism or desertion, remained to become responsible citizens of their adopted country – a human being who would help his fellow man in their time of need.

Jean McDonald

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1. Broomhall F.H. *The Veterans A History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia 1850-1880*. Hesperian Press. Victoria Park. 1989. p 98.
2. Treadgold. C. *The Greenough Flood a Disaster of the 'Eighties*. In *Early Days. Journal and Proceedings – W.A. Historical Society*. Western Australian Historical Society (Inc) 1926. Perth. p19-20.
3. Bain, Mary Albertus. *A Social and Economic History of the Victoria District of Western Australia 1839-1894. Chapter 18* UWA Press.1975.
4. Coakley Bill and Gooding Janda. *Ring Up the Curtain" A Short History of Gilbert and Sullivan in Western Australia 1879-1892*. . Gilbert and Sullivan/A.N. Bullock Memorial Trust. n.d. p 31.
5. *The Lancashire Relief Fund. In The Inquirer and Commercial*

News. 25th February 1863.
(courtesy Jeanette Lee)

6. Pensioners Benevolent Society *Rules and Regulations* as devised by the Subscribers at General Meetings held in August 1863. Perth 1863. See Broomhall. P 122.
7. Photocopy CSR Vol. 596 pages 17-184. (courtesy Jeanette Lee).

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on **SATURDAY 19TH APRIL 1 P.M. at WAGS.**

DO YOU KNOW?

- How rewarding volunteering can be?
- How easy the 'work' is?
- How all the Committee are 'good guys and gals'?
- How we manage a 'working lunch' occasionally
- How they are all doing a really great service to our EPG ancestors by bringing to the notice of the public their importance in the early history of WA?
- How WAGS appreciates the input of the Group?
- **HOW MUCH WE NEED YOU?**

I await your phone call or email

Jean McDonald

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Email jeanmc2@bigpond.com



Pensioner Force in charge of Artillery Field Pieces C 1870 (A Stirling)

J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian History Reproduction Permit No 272B = 53318P

THANK YOU

I thank all our wonderful volunteers that have supplied many articles for the EPG newsletters, especially Ron Sutton, Jean McDonald, Peter Conole and Jeanette Lee. Without their interesting and informative contributions the newsletter would not have happened, especially with the busy year I have had.

Please remember we are always looking for articles of any length for our Newsletters.

Editor

**Wear a copy of the
badge your ancestor
wore.**

**EPG BADGES
FOR SALE**



**\$10.00 from General Meeting
or \$12.00 inc. postage &
handling.**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting is on **Saturday 19 April, 1.00pm**, at Unit 4, May St, **Bayswater**. All positions will be declared vacant. New members with new ideas are required to fill the following positions.

Convenor
Deputy Convenor
Treasurer
Secretary
Newsletter editor
Researcher
Committee Members

There are only **four** General Meetings and **four** committee meetings a year,

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Pensioner Barracks & Parade 1860 (W.A. Museum)