



Chelsea Pensioners

1808 - 1828

Wootton Bassett



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	Barnes
Given Name	James
Year of Admission	1821
Date of Admission	24th October
Age	35
Years of Service	Sergeant 23yrs 7mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Reduction
Description	Height - 5' 8½" Hair - light Eyes - grey Complexion - fair

Surname	Blake
Given Name	James
Year of Admission	1820
Date of Admission	2nd February
Age	35
Years of Service	Sergeant 21yrs 7mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Reduction
Description	Height - 5' 9½" Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fair

Surname	Frankland
Given Name	George
Year of Admission	1821
Date of Admission	25th July
Age	34
Years of Service	17yrs 4mths in the 66th Regt. Of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Hernia and general debility
Description	Height - 5' 4¼" Hair - brown Eyes - grey Complexion - fair

Surname	Trotman
Given Name	Robert
Year of Admission	1822
Date of Admission	1st May
Age	44
Years of Service	14yrs 4mths in the 41st Regt. Of Foot
Occupation	Labourer
Reason for Pension	Old and worn out
Description	Height - 5' 11½" Hair - black Eyes - hazel Complexion - dark