



ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

HOME OF THE CHELSEA PENSIONERS

Tracing ancestors and archive requests advice

The Royal Hospital Chelsea Museum Archives

The Royal Hospital Chelsea Museum Archives holds a variety of official papers, publications and books relating to the founding of the Royal Hospital and its subsequent role as the administration centre for Army pensions.

The material encompasses internally generated documents such as board meeting minutes, admission registers, contracts, leases, agreements and other correspondence. In Pensioner records are usually limited to; name, rank, regiment, date of admittance and death and in the majority of cases, place of burial. It does not however generally hold the service records of staff or In Pensioners who have been resident at the Royal Hospital. These are held at the following locations:

- Pre 1920 – National Archive, Kew, Surrey, TW9 4DU
- Post 1920 – Army Personnel Centre, Historic Disclosures, Mailpoint 400
Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow, G2 8EX

Anyone wishing to access such records should also consult the Army Museums Ogilby Trust website www.armymuseums.org.uk/ancestor.htm which provides useful advice about this subject.

How to Initiate a Research Enquiry

Please complete and submit a RHC Archive Enquiry Form (available to download from <http://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/tracing-ancestors>) with a cheque of £20 made payable to Chelsea Pensioner RH Ltd.

Museum Archive staff will not usually initiate research without a completed form providing as much of the following information as possible:

- Your name and address, telephone number and e-mail address. **
- Whether or not you are a relation of a former member of the Royal Hospital staff or residents and/or have any other Royal Hospital connections.
- As much background information about your enquiry as possible. In particular, be sure to tell us what you already know. The more information you provide the better. The less information you provide, potentially the more difficult and longer it will take to provide you with an answer – and the more costly the enquiry will become.
- Be explicit about the question(s) you want answered. “Tell me everything about...” is both unrealistic and not feasible. **
- Be advised that requests for photographs of Pensioners pre-1990 usually go unfulfilled due to a lack of identified images.
- Please bear in mind that the research fee (*it is not a results fee*) is still payable even if the work carried out on your behalf reveals little or no information.
- Cheques for £20 are to be included payable to ‘Chelsea Pensioner RH Ltd’ **

Research will not be initiated in response to enquiries that do not include items marked ** or are not accompanied by pre-payment of the fee.

In order to initiate a research enquiry submit your completed RHC Archive Enquiry Form and payment to:

The Curator/Research Assistants
The Royal Hospital Chelsea
Royal Hospital Road
London
SW3 4SR
e-mail: research@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

On receipt of an enquiry

Enquiries will be answered as soon as is possible after their receipt. Depending on the volume of enquiries or other Royal Hospital related activities this may take some weeks. However, if we feel an enquiry may take some time to answer we will endeavour to make you aware of this. Receipt of enquiries that are unlikely to be answered within three weeks will be acknowledged with a letter indicating when a response can be expected. Enquiries which, from the outset, it is clear cannot be answered or need to be referred to The National Archives or Regimental Museums, will normally result in the immediate return of the research fee.

Visits to the Royal Hospital Chelsea Museum Archive

Owing to space limitations and other operational issues, visits to study the archives will not routinely be authorised. However when they are; it will be by appointment only, will be supervised by a member of the Archives team and depending upon the scope of the research a charge may be raised based upon the rate of £20 per half day, there may also be further charges for photocopying as required.

Requests to visits to the Archives must be submitted to the Curator using the RHC Archives Enquiry form (available to download from <http://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/tracing-ancestors>) with a description of the research being undertaken, so that a determination of appropriateness can be made. Routine genealogical enquiries will not be deemed as appropriate reasons for access to the archives.

Visitors and/or researchers intending to visit the Museum Archives in search of answers to their questions are advised to telephone/email before their visit in order to make an appointment with a member of staff able to handle their enquiry.

Museum Archives contact details:

- Tel: 020 7881 5203 or 020 7881 5438
- Email: research@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk

Searching the archive

A research service is available at The Royal Hospital and all work is undertaken by In Pensioners and Museum Archive Volunteers, for which a charge is made. Research is carried out by Museum staff and experienced volunteers with considerable knowledge of the history of the Royal Hospital. The charge for conducting a search in response to an enquiry from the general public is £20 and is in line with the charges most other military museums make for similar undertakings and is non-refundable even if little or no information is found. This is based on approximately one hour's search for relevant information and the preparation of a helpful and wherever possible informative response. Please remember that an enquiry will not be initiated before payment is received.

We cannot guarantee what type or quantity of information will be returned in response to your enquiry but will provide as much detail as is available from within those sources held within the

Royal Hospital archives, our researchers will not consult other archive sources that are freely available such as the National Archives or commercially through the likes of “Ancestry” or “Find my Past” to name but two, there are many other such pay per use services available. In some instances our archive may reveal a substantial record of a subject (less so an individual) and in these cases if there is extensive material available you will be informed and there may be additional charges for copying, packaging and postal costs.

Special rates may be applied to those who wish to initiate enquiries for commercial purposes and/or for financial gain – authors, media researchers and others. To avoid any misunderstanding, such persons are requested to declare their interest and involvement at the outset of the enquiry.

Reproduction Costs

It is usually possible, within the constraints of copyright law, for individuals wanting copies of photographs or photocopies of documents for personal research use only to be provided with them. A charge will normally be raised to provide such copies of photographs and photocopies of documents. There is no set scale of fees as this will be dependent upon the nature of each task and the cost of providing it.

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