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17th Regiment of Foot (Leicestershire) 1830-1837

This dataset generates a biographical profile of each member of the 17th regiment recorded on regimental muster books and pay lists as serving in Australia 1830-1837. The records are held by the UK National Archives, Kew, London (ref: WO12/3748-3750, reels 3435-3438). They were microfilmed by the National Library of Australia's Australian Joint Copying Project and are now available for online viewing on the Trove www.trove.nla.gov.au under the 'Diaries, letters, archives' tab. The records, some faded and difficult to read on the microfilm version, were transcribed for BDA by Keith A Johnson AM and processed by BDA staff and volunteers.

Most are quarterly returns. Officers and men are divided into separate lists according to their rank, and are listed in each return in the same order except when they were promoted or demoted, in which cases they were added to their new rank list. The movement of some men caused some confusion for the clerks in their compilation of these records and there is a risk of confusion with common names.

The dataset records by name 867 individuals who came to Australia with the regiment. Two of these were boys who were probably sons of soldiers. Many junior officers were unmarried and regulations stipulated that only six out of one hundred non-commissioned officers and rank and file men were allowed to bring wives on overseas service. This proportion was sometimes exceeded and the number of wives accompanying husbands with the regiment may have exceeded fifty, with a greater number of children coming with them. Wives were not usually mentioned by name in the pay records however those who had children in the colony appear in baptism records.

Background

The 17th Regiment of Foot was an infantry regiment with a long history of participation in famous battles over 142 years prior to the decision to send it to Australia as a colonial garrison. It had been raised in and around London in 1688 and was known as the Leicestershire Regiment from 1782, giving it a focal link to that county. The regiment was mainly based on the Indian subcontinent in the years 1804-1823, during and after the Napoleonic Wars, earning it the additional titles 'Hindoostan' [Hindustan/India] and 'Royal Tiger', the latter forming part of its visual iconography.

Posting in Australia

The regiment had served in England, Scotland and Ireland during 1823-1830. In late 1829 news reached Sydney that the 17th Regiment would be transferred to the Australian colonies to relieve the 57th. The Army List for 1830 names Josiah Champagné as Colonel of the Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel Henry Despard as his deputy. Despard reached the colony on the *York* convict transport in February 1831 in command of 40 rank and file men and the regimental band. Major James William Bouverie and his wife landed in early November 1830.

On 31 August 1832 *The Australian* reported that Bouverie rode in a steeplechase across what were later Sydney's Eastern Suburbs 'over the hilly, swampy tract of country between the old bridge on the Botany Bay Road direct to Cudgee beach [Coogee Beach], and thence to the old look out post

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overlooking Waverley crescent off the South Head Road, where a group of fair visitors had assembled to give animation to the enlivening scene.'

A succession of convict transports brought groups of officers and men to the colony over several years. The Honourable Cecil Gordon, eighth son of the Earl of Aboyne, then a young lieutenant in the 17th Regiment, arrived on the *Mermaid* in May 1830. He was posted to Bathurst. Captain James Oliphant Clunie served as Commandant at Moreton Bay 1830-1835. Lieutenant (later Captain) Charles Wray Finch was fined £5 for bathing in Sydney Harbour within the town boundaries in 1834. He later served as Serjeant-at-Arms for Legislative Assembly in the New South Wales Parliament until his death in 1873.

The men and women of the 17th served in settled areas of the colonies, including Tasmania and Norfolk Island, and at a range of depots in New South Wales including Sydney, Parramatta, Liverpool, Georges River, Emu Plains, Longbottom, Wisemans Ferry, Windsor, Port Stephens, Wellington Valley, Hunter River, Fish River, Bong Bong, Mount Victoria, Springwood, Cox's River, Bathurst, Molong Plains, Brisbane Water, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay (now in Queensland but then part of New South Wales).

Like all regiments the 17th had a large musical band which, in addition to playing marching and church music, participated (with the permission and patronage of its senior officers) in the cultural life of colony at public vocal and instrumental concerts, balls, races and other public gatherings. On 22 March 1831 the *Sydney Gazette* reported that:

'The band of the 17th regiment follow the old plan of playing the bugles alternated with the drums and fifes every evening, which have a very pleasing effect.'

In March 1836 a large segment of the regiment (comprising about 346 men under the command of Major Croker) embarked on the *John Barry* at Sydney, bound for Bombay and their new posting based at Poona, India (afterwards participating in the invasion of Afghanistan). The remainder sailed for India separately over the following months. Some members of the regiment remained in Australia.

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See also references to 17th Regiment 1830-1836 in Trove Newspapers & Trove Diaries letters archives:
<https://trove.nla.gov.au>

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For of all British Regiments included in the BDA see:

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