

Section 470-6

A Note on Discharges

Terms of Engagement

When a man enlisted he signed up for a period of 12 years which, for an infantryman, was split as 7 years with the Colours and 5 years with the Reserves. To qualify a man had to be 19 years of age and of good physique. There was provision for men to join as 'boy soldiers' at age 14. They received general infantry training as well as specialised training either in a trade, or more usually as a musician. Usually boy soldiers were allowed to become full soldiers on reaching 18 years of age.

At the end of the 7 years, referred to in the records as 'Termination of the 1st period of engagement' the man would usually be automatically transferred to one of the Reserves. However some men were allowed to continue with the colours for their full 12 years. This point was known as 'Termination of second period of engagement'

In exceptional circumstances men would be allowed to continue with the Army to complete 18 or 21 years with the Colours which earned a substantially increased pension. This was however usually reserved only for senior NCOs

As an alternative however many men opted to re-enlist at the end of either their 1st or 2nd term. Whether they stayed with their old regiment or joined a new regiment they were usually renumbered as if they had just joined although they generally retained or regained their rank. This usually followed a short period in 'civvy street' when the man realised that life in the army was not so bad after all.

Reasons for Discharge

When a man left the army, the reasons for so doing were many and various, not just that he had completed his period of engagement. In the First World War the reasons were often that the man had died, been found medically unfit or been demobbed.

The reason for discharge was given on the man's papers and often shows up merely as KR392 followed by a code, ie a section of King's Regulation 392. The codes are usually a small roman numeral followed possibly by a letter.

In this section we set out the meanings of the code. (They are taken from the 1920 edition of the Regulations)

- i References on enlistment were unsatisfactory (applies only to recruits who were attested pending reference to employers etc)
- ii Having been irregularly enlisted (applies to a native soldier of a colonial corps only)
- iii Not likely to become an efficient soldier
 - iii a - rejected by both the medical and the approving officer
 - iii b - passed by the medical officer but rejected by the approving officer
 - iii c - failed medical after course of physical training, or unable to ride in the case of a mounted corps.
 - iii d - Soldier of local battalion abroad.
- iv Having been claimed as an apprentice.
- v Having claimed discharge upon payment of £1 within three months of attestation.
- vi Having made a mis-statement as to age on enlistment.
 - vi a - under 17 years at date of discharge.
 - vi b - between 17 and 18 at date of discharge
- vii Having been claimed for wife desertion
 - vii a - by the Parish Authority
 - vii b - by the wife
- viii Having made a false answer on attestation
- ix not used
- x Having been convicted of an offence by the Civil power before enlistment.
- xi For misconduct
- xii Having been sentenced to penal servitude
- xiii Having been sentenced to be discharged with ignomy
- xiv At his own request upon payment of the specified sum.
- xv Free after a specified number of years of service
 - xv a - on extreme compassionate grounds and urgency.

- xv b - within three months of termination of engagement to take up civil employment which cannot be held open.
- xv c - for the purposes of residing permanently outside the United Kingdom (only for soldiers who have completed their colour service)
- xvi No longer physically fit for war service
 - xvi a - surplus to military requirements after having suffered impairment through war service.
- xvii At his own request after 18 years service with a view to a pension.
- xix For the benefit of the public after 18 years service (applies only to NCOs)
 - xix a - For a man with less than 18 years service to take up a commission or a cadetship.
- xx Inefficiency after 18 years service with a view to taking up a pension.
- xxi After termination of period of engagement.
- xxii With less than 21 years service towards engagement but 21 or more years towards pension.
- xxiii Having claimed discharge after three months notice. (applies only to a soldier who has prolonged his period of service beyond 21 years)
- xxiv Having reached the age for discharge (applies only to a warrant officer or a re-enlisted pensioner)
- xxv His services no longer required (applies only to boys or men for whom no other category is appropriate)
 - xxv a - Surplus to military requirements but not having been impaired since entry. (applies to men in a medical category for which there are no longer suitable posts)
- xxvi At his own request after 21 years service with a view to pension (applies to men who have re-enlisted but their former term was for service only, ie not for pension)
- xxvii After 21 years and with 5 years service as a warrant officer. with a view to pension.
- xxviii On demobilization (applies only for soldiers engaged for war service or in the class Z reserve on the cessation of war)

The Reserves

The army was always very mindful that it had spent a lot of time and effort training a man, so when he was released from his time in the Colours, it was anxious to ensure that that training was not wasted. The man therefore would normally be transferred to one of the four Reserves:-

Class A - liable to be called back at almost a moments notice to deal with minor emergencies. For this he got extra pay.

Class B - liable for recall on a general mobilisation

Class C - Men released early from their service

Class D - Men whose reserve service had been extended by a further 4 years.

In addition during the War a fifth class was introduced

Class Z - Men who had signed up or been conscripted for war service only.

When men finished their reserve obligation (or were in class Z) they were transferred to the National Reserve. Their only residual obligation was to notify the authorities of any change of address.

In addition there was a further group of reservists known as the **Special Reserve**. These were men who had completed the same basic training as a regular, but who had then not moved on to service with the Colours. They had to attend an annual camp and receive 28 days training every year.