

" Ye Styan Chronicles "

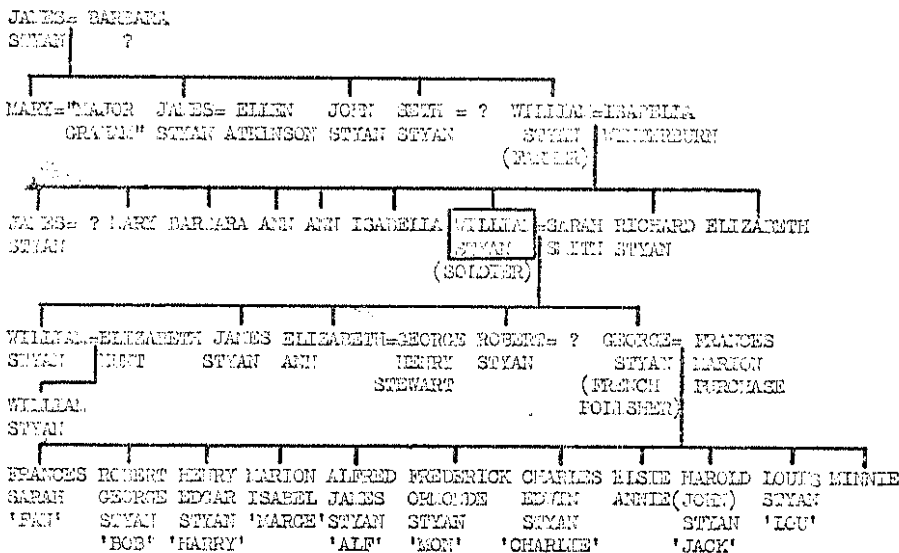
Many of my relations will have become aware that I have taken up the study of our Family History as a hobby. They will usually have become acquainted with the fact by being subjected to a grilling about some distant cousin or remote great-aunt whom they would probably have preferred to have forgotten.

As a rather doubtful reward to my victims I hope to circulate from time to time items of general interest to people with Styan roots or connections. Each item will be as complete as I can make it but this is always limited by the information that has come to hand at the time of writing and it will usually be out of date by the time it is read.

As a first attempt I have selected "William Styan (Regular Soldier)". This is for several reasons. Firstly he forms the link between the group of families that grew up in London and their Yorkshire ancestors.

Secondly he is sufficiently recent for most people to understand their own relationship to him and thirdly because the events involved are sufficiently remote for any human weaknesses that may be revealed to cause no embarrassment to anybody now living by they themselves being involved or anybody that they knew personally.

As an aid to comprehension a part of our Family Tree appears below.



The female lines have been omitted for clarity and not as a manifestation of male chauvinism!

There is a tradition that the Styans came from Yorkshire and we have known for some years that a clan of Styans lived for centuries in the village of Whixley, near Wetherby not far from the City of York.

There has however, been no evidence until recently to connect 'our' Styans with the Whixley Styans. In fact nobody was even sure where my grandfather (George Styan) came from, let alone his father (William Styan). However it was understood that William had been in the Household Cavalry and was reputed to be 'the tallest man in the Regiment'.

Reference to Parish Records, War Office Records, Census Returns, Gravestones, Regimental Histories and the General Register at St. Catherine's House in Aldwich have now revealed part of the story, but this is by no means complete yet. In writing this little story nothing is stated as fact which cannot be properly authenticated.

William Styan was born in Whixley, the seventh of nine children of a William and Isabella Styan. At the time of William (junior)'s birth his father was a 51 year old farmer and his mother was 34. Her maiden name was Winterburn and both parents came from families who had lived in Whixley for generations. William (junior) was baptised on 22nd February 1807 so there is a good chance that he was born in that year.

At the time of his birth there was one elder brother James who was 12 and his sisters Mary, Barbara, Ann, and Isabella were 11, 8, 5, and 2 respectively. Another sister - between Barbara and Ann - and also named Ann had died as a baby. He was to be followed by another brother Richard (born 1810) and a sister Elizabeth (1814).

Of this family Barbara, Isabella, Richard and Elizabeth were destined never to marry and James seems to have gone to live in Leeds. What happened to Mary and Ann has yet to be discovered.

When William was born the Napoleonic Wars had been going on for years and he was 8 at the time of Waterloo. In his youth he followed the family tradition of farming (perhaps working on his father's farm) and he grew exceptionally tall. However on 23 November 1827 at the age of 20 he enlisted at York in the Second Life Guards. He was sworn in by a local Magistrate for 'unlimited service' which we can take to mean 'for life' and he is described as being 6'3 1/2" tall, having brown hair, brown eyes and a fair complexion. His occupation is described as 'farmer'. One wonders what the effect of his departure from the farm was on the family. Was he a key man in running the place - remember that James at 31 had probably left home by now, Richard was only 17 and his father was now 71. Perhaps they were glad to see him go.

It would be interesting to know how the army got their recruit from York to London where the Life Guards were based because the railways had not yet been completed. Did he have to walk? Did the army let this untrained recruit ride a horse? Probably he travelled with the recruiting party by stage coach. Whichever way he came it was fairly standard procedure because the majority of troopers in the Regiment came from the Northern Counties and the average size was over 6'00".

Each of the two Regiments of Life Guards had an establishment of 35 Officers and 404 Men mounted on horses of about 16 hands. William was given the Service Number 322. His rank is described sometimes as 'Trooper' and sometimes as 'Private'. Anyway George IV was on the throne by this time and he had a passion for designing exotic uniforms which he frequently inflicted on the Household troops. The uniform of the 2nd Life Guards was thus very pretty with an extremely cumbersome helmet - bigger than is worn today - and the whole ensemble was completely impractical for fighting. Fortunately for William this did not matter because throughout his service of 24 years and 6 months there were no wars for him to fight and he spent the whole of the time in England. The nearest he came to Active Service came in December 1830

when the Regiment was deployed in detachments in various parts of the Home Counties to suppress riots. They were constantly on the move and were said to

have acquitted themselves well. Which riots they were supposed to be suppressing I do not know. Apart from this and a spell earlier in the same year when they were stationed at Brighton shortly before the King's death William's army career took him no farther from London than occasional duties at Windsor. Most of the time he was based at Regent's Park and sometimes at Hyde Park. With the death of George IV, the comparatively short reign of William IV and the accession and marriage of Queen Victoria there were plenty of ceremonial duties with Royal Funerals and Coronations to occupy the Life Guards.

Behind all the show was the sordid side of a soldier's life. Troops were at that time housed in barracks which were cold, damp and without sanitation. The effects of these conditions were to manifest themselves later in William's life. A typical meal was raw salt beef and flogging was the standard punishment for all serious offences. The death rate from sickness in the army was many times higher than that of the civilian population despite the fact that the soldiers were all supposed to be fit young men when they joined the Service whereas the civilian population included the old, the deprived and babies.

This was despite the work done by the old Duke of York (the one who 'had ten thousand men') to improve conditions in the army. He died in 1829 and in the early 1830's the monument at the top of the Duke of York's steps off the Mall was erected by 'the whole army' in appreciation of his efforts. One can well imagine the enthusiasm with which William and his mates made their 'voluntary' contributions to the monument fund!

How well did William get on in the army? He never got promotion and it took him until May 1839 to earn 'one distinguishing mark for Good Conduct'. He forfeited it in August for being 'absent without leave from 18th to 20th August 1839'. What he was up to during his absence we shall never know but in 1840 Sarah Smith became the mother of a boy called William at 'Brompton' and William married her on 1st April 1841 at Holy Trinity, Brompton. Sarah was born in 1812 in the village of Nayland, Suffolk, the daughter of a carpenter called Robert Smith.

So, at the time of their marriage William was 34 and Sarah was 29. From now on they seem to have 'lived out' in the vicinity of Regent's Park and their next three children were born there. At the time of the marriage William's parents still lived at the farm with two grandchildren John and Eliza, who were probably children of James, Barbara, Isabella and Elizabeth had all died aged 21 or 22 and Richard had temporarily disappeared from the scene.

On 9th October 1842 William's father died and it seems that the tenancy of the farm was probably terminated because when we next meet Richard in the 1851 Census- his occupation is 'Farm Labourer' and not 'Farmer' and he appears to be supporting his mother.

The three children born at Regent's Park were James (born 1844), Elizabeth Ann (25.6.1846) and Robert (20.11.1849); the actual address of Robert's birth being 18, Edward Street.

William continued to behave himself in the army regaining his 'distinguishing mark' on 19th December 1845 and an additional one on 19th December 1847. Then he lets us down again by 'being drunk on Epsom Downs on the Derby Day 24th May 1848' for which he forfeited one of his 'distinguishing marks'. Since these 'distinguishing marks' carried extra pay one can well imagine Sarah having a few words to say about it.

By this time he was suffering from rheumatism or lumbago which would eventually cause him to be invalided. On 24th May 1849 he regained his forfeited distinguishing mark and he received another one on 24th May 1851.

The family were now living at 6, Rose and Crown Yard, Knightsbridge High Road and he seems to be stationed fairly permanently at Hyde Park.

On 9th March 1852 at the age of 44 he was discharged with Chronic Rheumatism and Lumbago and he became an Out Pensioner of Chelsea Hospital with a pension of 1/-. His conduct at the time was described as Good and he was discharged at Hyde Park Barracks. On 2nd September of that year another son (George) was born at Rose and Crown Yard. At this point William disappears from the records and he is described as 'deceased' on his son William's

Marriage Certificate in 1870. No appropriate Registration of Death between 1852 and 1870 has been traced but it is hoped to find in due course when his pension at the Chelsea Hospital ceased. By the 1861 Census only one address in Rose and Crown Yard remained and that was No 16½ listed between 16a and 17 High Road, Knightsbridge!

What happened to Sarah is more of a mystery because no appropriate Registration of Death has so far been found and there are no obvious trails to follow. Perhaps if anybody can remember being told anything about her at all -no matter how trivial or vague- they could let me know.

Of William and Sarah's children the eldest (William) married in 1870, had a family and died in 1882 aged 42. One of his children was called William so we have at least 4 generations of Williams. Both of these last two Williams were bakers. James seems never to have married, became a 'trunk maker' and died in 1887 aged 44 at 31, Exeter Street where his youngest brother George and sister-in-law Frances were also living.

Robert's story has yet to be researched and he has complicated matters by changing his name to 'Tyne'. He was still called 'Styan' in 1887 according to James's Will and he was apparently still single then.

Elizabeth Ann (better known as 'Aunt Tannie') married George Henry Stewart, a coach driver in late 1894 when she was aged 48

George Styan -the baby of the family is the father, grandfather or greatgrandfather of most of today's readers and he became a French Polisher and married Frances Marion Purchase on 12th March 1876. He died on 27th May 1923.

Back at Whixley William's mother Isabella died on 17th October 1866 and the family grave in which she, her husband and three of her daughters are buried is clearly marked by a well preserved headstone in the Churchyard.

As for the story that William was 'the tallest man in the Regiment'-it may well have been true because the population of the Regiment was constantly changing with young men enlisting and older men being discharged. It is therefore quite possible that for at least one period of time a Styan really was at the top when you take into account his 6'3½", the big horses and the headgear in the accompanying illustrations.

K.G.S.

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Fig 35: Head-dress of the Life Guards, c. 1822

In about 1825 the ornamental brass plate on the front of the cuirass disappeared and the cuirass was then practically as it is today.

The head-dress is described in detail in the 1822 Dress Regulations: 'Grenadier bearskin about 20 inches deep, a large gilt plate at the bottom, with gilt raised King's Arms and regimental badge; a gold bullion tassel at the top, from which proceeds a gold plaited cord line passing over the left side of the cap behind, looping at the bottom and continuing across the front of the cap and fastened on the right side with a rich flounder and bullion tassel suspending, gilt engraved scale, a large gold embroidered grenade behind, a small gilt socket at the bottom on the left and added to all this was a white feather "about three-fourths of a yard long".'

Later a helmet was also worn, a crested version with a steel body.

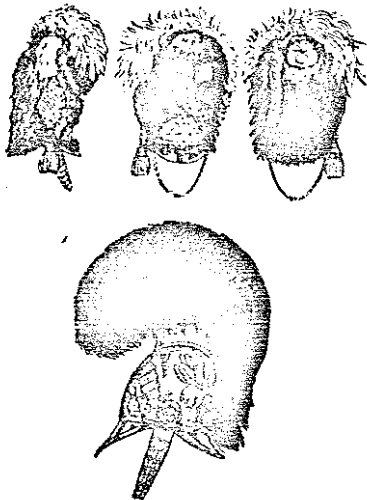


Fig 36: Helmet, 1817-1832

This helmet was introduced in 1817. It was of a polished steel, the ornamentation being gilt. The plate on the front had a Hanoverian Coat of Arms with the battle honours 'Peninsular' and 'Waterloo'. The troops had a similar helmet of a slightly different shape, being lower and squatter. The ornamentation was similar but in brass. Both had the bearskin crest.

In full dress the bearskin cap was worn.

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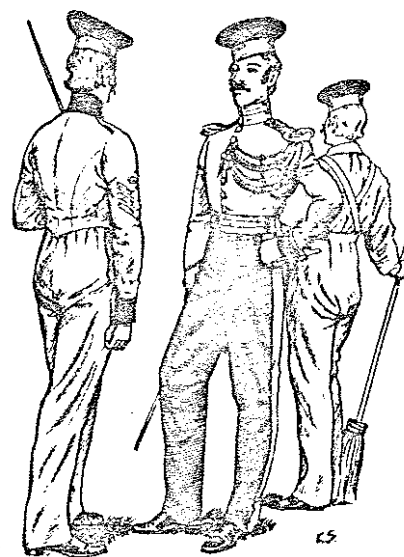


Fig 40: Corporal, stable dress, Corporal-Major, walking out dress, Trooper on fatigue, 1st Life Guards c. 1828

This shows different undress orders. The Corporal in stable order wears the forage cap of a brownish-claret colour with a gold band. His shell jacket was of scarlet cloth and had plain blue collar and cuffs, and nine gilt buttons down the front. Three gold chevrons and a Crown were worn on his right arm. (Regimental) Corporal-Majors wore a Crown above a four-bar chevron on their right arm in shell jacket. The dress is completed with white trousers and black shoes.

The Corporal-Major wears his gold aiguillettes from his left shoulder and has brass shoulder scales. (Only chevrons and Crowns were worn on the 'undress' jacket.) His coat of scarlet cloth has the blue collar laced in gold, the blue cuffs being also laced in gold. He wears a gold laced girdle. The overalls are of a claret colour with a broad scarlet stripe down the outside seams. Black boots and steel spurs complete the dress. His forage cap is the same as the Corporal's described before.

The trooper in the background on fatigue wears the forage cap with a scarlet band, and is in shirt-sleeve order and wearing the white trousers and black shoes. He wears a white shirt.

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Fig 45: Trooper, 2nd Life Guards, c. 1833



This detail is from a picture attributed to 'Alken' which shows the uniform of a trooper at this period. In general the dress agrees with the painting by Drahotet of the trooper of the 1st Life Guards, only in this case the flask cord is blue and the shabraque is blue with gold embroidered grenade and number '2'. The wide gold lace is edged with scarlet, there was a white lamb's wool saddle cover; all harness was black leather.



Fig 47: Trooper, 1st Life Guards, c. 1849

The illustration is of a trooper in the dress just prior to the Crimean War. The new 'Albert' helmet was of polished steel with brass ornaments and chin chain, and was introduced about 1842. The Garter Star was in white metal and the plume holder was of a leaf pattern. Plume was white. There was scroll work on the peak (this is shown in a print of a Corporal dated 1849 by Alfred De Dreux, on which the illustration is based. In the De Dreux print a Corporal is depicted, but he wears no aiguillette, only two gold stripes and a Crown, possibly an omission by the artist). The trooper has a gold laced collar; the coat is scarlet with short tails and blue turnbacks. White gauntlets hide the blue cuffs and gold lace. The steel cuirass is similar in pattern to the previous description. Pouch belt was white with red flask cord. A small black percussion cap pouch is on the right side of the white waist retaining cuirass strap. White breeches and black jacked boots were worn. White sheepskin edged with blue was worn with the saddle and the harness was black. A 1842 pattern percussion carbine is carried.

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