

The Abolition of Minor Cadetships

Fort William - India House Correspondence - from Court (Head Office) to Fort William, 21 Sept 1785

Item 11: We have hitherto as an indulgence to our military officers tolerated the appointment of their infant sons as minor cadets, but as we have great reason to believe this indulgence has been much abused, and we are thereby put to great expense, we have come to a determination to put a stop thereto and therefore not only direct that the pay and allowances of all those at present on your establishment be discontinued, from the receipt of these orders, but expressly forbid any such appointment in future. Whenever you wish to interest yourselves for the sons of deserving officers your recommendation of them to the Court will be properly attended to

By the time Fort William squealed in response (next page), 51 year old Colonel Samuel Hampton had died in Berhampore (where he had moved to be commander of the 2nd Brigade) on Sunday 7 May 1786 (at 6.30 pm). The lengthy response makes a couple of references to the Hampton family who, it turns out, had a big stake in the system.

A 1935 article in "Bengal Past and Present" - the Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society - states: "We find that in May, 1786, when this concession (*allowances for minor cadets*) was finally abolished, Colonel Samuel Hampton was drawing pay for six of his sons aged from eighteen months upwards, only three of whom subsequently entered H.E.I.C. Military Service."

Back to the lengthy response from Fort William to Head Office which would have been dated mid 1786

325. In your General Letter of the 21st September 1785 Par. 11 you have been pleased to direct not only that the Pay and Allowances of all the Minor Cadets at present on our Establishment be discontinued from the receipt of your Orders, but you expressly forbid any such appointment in future, observing that whenever we wish to Interest ourselves for the Sons of deserving Officers our recommendation of them to the Court will be properly attended to.

326. The Pay and Allowances of all Minor Cadets a List of whom is enclosed have been stopped agreeably to your Commands.

327. The first instance of Minors being appointed Cadets was in May 1770 during the Government of Mr. Cartier who appointed Cadets and Ensigns. The first Cadet appointed under this description was Mr. Robert Williams Son of D. Andrew Williams Surgeon Major the next were Messrs Samuel and Charles Hampton Sons of Colonel Hampton and Mr. Charles Gibson, the Son of a Person not in the Company's Service. This mode of provision for Minors Chiefly the Sons of Officers, formed itself gradually into an Institution but without any public Declaration of it for a considerable Time. The several Members of the Council from year to year concurred in recommending Children for this provision but the application of *Minor* was not annexed to the appointment until the year 1779. A Regulation passed in August 1777 respecting the mode of drawing their Pay seems to be the first record formally acknowledged but it was a most grateful Provision for the Sons of Officers and a comfortable consideration to those who had behaved gallantly in your Service. The Case of those who under the faith and Sanction of Government pledged in the above Declaration have been sent to Europe and educated solely for the Company's Military Service seem to merit your particular Attention. Two Sons of the late Coll. Hampton, Two of the late Mr. Hessman and one of Doctor Williams arrived at Calcutta in the Course of this Season and are now in Consequence of your Orders prevented from carrying Arms and entering your Service. We resolved on the 13th May 1782 that none but the legitimate Children of Officers should in future be appointed Minor Cadets.

328. The Situation of the Minor Cadets has become so unfortunate as well to themselves as to their Parents in Consequence of your late orders that we cannot help recommending to you in the strongest Terms that the Minor Cadets be provided for as Cadets before any other Persons.