Great Grandpa was a Soldier
– How can I find out more?

BY ELISABETH THORSSELL

From the late 1600s until 1901 Sweden had its very own system of recruiting soldiers. In Swedish it is called Indelningsverket, which has been translated as “The Allotment System”. In short it meant that a group of farms (a rote) hired a young man to be the soldier for them. His salary was the use of a cottage and some farming land, some victuals in kind and a small sum of money, and maybe also he could borrow a horse or a pair of oxen when he needed to. The rote farmers took care of the farming when the soldier had to go to war. If he died, his family had to move elsewhere, as the new soldier for the rote needed the cottage.

During the centuries it is estimated that almost 500,000 men served as soldiers for the various roter, which means that most families have one or more soldiers among the ancestors.

**Swedish Military Records**

The Swedish army and navy kept detailed records about their soldiers and boatsmen, but how can you access them?

The basic record is the Generalmönsterrulla (General Muster Roll, GMR), which was renewed every three years in peacetime. In the GMR you can find information on when the soldier was accepted and when he was discharged, his height, married or not, age, and from where he came. During the later 1800s his previous name is listed and also his exact birth date and parish of birth. During earlier times one only gets to know that he was an östgöte or smålänn, which is not much help, when you try to trace him. Also his patronymic is probably missing, but genealogy is not supposed to be easy, or it would not be a sport.

The GMRs and lots of other military records are microfilmed, and can be bought on microfiche from SVAR in Sweden. The Family History Library [FHL] has most of the records too.

In the FHL catalog you go to, for instance, the “Place search” and enter “ostergotland”, and then go down the page to “Military records” and Bingo! there you have the GMR for the Andra Livgrenadjärregementet.

A normal regiment in the old days consisted of 1200 men, divided into 8 companies, so do you have to read through all 1200 individuals? No, the companies were made up by soldiers from the same area, a härad [legal district] or two, and the name of the company often pointed to that area.

But that is still 150 men to look through, is there no extra help in finding great grandpa?

**What is Grill?**

Yes, there is a most useful book called Statistiskt sammandrag af svenska indelningsverket, by Claes Grill, first published in 1855-1858 in four volumes. This work, usually just called Grill, was thus printed while the system still worked, and still was not much changed from the way it was in the late 1600s.

Grill has been reprinted in two volumes during the 1970s, and again in the 1980s. When you want to use Grill, be sure to get hold of one of the reprints, as they contain a most useful parish index which is lacking in the original.

The FHL catalog has the following call number for the reprint: 948.5 H27g v. 2, but it is not available on microfilm. They do have the original on microfilm: FHL INTL Film 84652, but then you miss the parish index.

**How to use Grill**

Now, supposing your ancestor being the soldier Sven Ring from Ringarum in Östergötland, this is what you do:

**Step 1**

Find Ringarum in the parish index in the front of the first Grill volume. See next page.

A link to a good web site on the Allotment System is found on the Web Site Page.
Step 1

Ringarum has three references, and you start by looking up page 157 in the first volume.

Step 2

Here you find first the name of the härad (legal district), Hammarkind, then the parish, and within the parish the names of three rotar, and you recognise the Sven Ring lived at Fastebo, and thus had number 31. The next question is which company did he serve for? Follow the Ringarum line to the right, until you come to the number of soldiers for the parish. then follow that column upwards until you reach the company names. Sven Ring was soldier #31 of the Lif-Companiet (Life Company), which was commanded by the colonel himself.

Step 3

The first part of each regiment has a very short history of it, where you can find name changes, and changes from cavalry to infantry etc.

Step 4

Now you have your Sven Ring as soldier #31 of the Lif-Companiet of the Second Regiment of Life Grenadiers (Andra Livgrenadjärregementet). Next step is to find the GMR and follow him through his service.

When you do this, it is wise to check a Swedish history and find out which years Sweden was at war, as the rolls often are missing during wartime, and you may not find him when you expect to. Instead there is a new soldier, and sometimes there is a note that he succeeded Sven Ring, and sometimes not. The easiest way to find out when Sven Ring died is to check the Probate index for the härad (legal district) where he lived.

If you do not find the notes about your Sven under #31 in the GMR, look around under neighboring numbers, as those could have changed a little during the centuries.