

FRANK JOSEPH DIMMOCK 1870 - 1935



MAIN STREET (NOW ELDER LANE), GRIFFYDAM c.1900

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - FEB 2023

**FROM INFORMATION CONTRIBUTED BY FRANK DIMMOCK'S
G. GRANDSON GAVIN MELLOR**

PREFACE

This publication has been written on behalf of Gavin Mellor, the great grandson of Frank Joseph Dimmock.

Gavin, who lives in America, has carried out intensive research on his great grandfather's fascinating military exploits which makes for interesting reading, and includes a surprising *twist in the tale*. It mainly focuses on Frank's time defending King and Country, but also provides information on his family life, from his beginnings in Quarry Bank, Dudley to the family settling in Main Street (now Elder Lane) Griffydam.

Frank Joseph Dimmock's son Samuel (Sam), became a Japanese POW in the second World War, which is described in the book by the author entitled "*In Memory Of Three Men From Griffydam & Pegg's Green who Became Japanese POW's During The Malayan Campaign & Fall Of Singapore 1941/2*".

This book is free to download and read on the author's website samuelstewart.com under "Griffydam and Pegg's Green" / subsection - Wartime / Lest We Forget.



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FRANK JOSEPH DIMMOCK 1870 - 1935

Frank Joseph Dimmock was born in Quarry Bank, Staffordshire, a small village west of Birmingham, in 1869 or possibly 1870. His parents, Josiah and Elizabeth were living on Vine Street in 1871, just up the road from Quarry Bank and about midway between Kingswinford and Dudley, Staffordshire, along with one-year old Frank and his sister Florence. Josiah is listed as a blacksmith / chain maker, which was a common occupation, along with nail making, in this centre of the Industrial Revolution. Frank was a student in school, and apparently lived with his parents until he was almost twenty, when he embarked on adventures that would take him around the world.

Frank married Elizabeth Heritage in July 1904 in Loughborough, Leicestershire when they were aged 35 and 19 respectively. The fact that Elizabeth was much younger than Frank, perhaps explaining why she outlived him by 36 years. Their first child, Florence, was born in September of that same year in Coalville. Their next child Elizabeth (b.1906) was born in Belton suggesting they had moved around before settling in Griffydham where all the rest of their children were born - Josiah Frank (1907), Alice (1908), Frank Henry (1911), and George (1914), also known as Brom. Unfortunately, Josiah Frank only lived about a year, dying in 1908.

Frank's family life was interrupted, as explained below, and following his return to the family home, Samuel (1919) and Phyllis (1921) were born. Sadly, Phyllis, the last born, did not survive to adulthood, dying in 1930 and is buried in Griffydham Wesleyan Methodist Chapel graveyard. Interestingly her gravestone refers to her parents as Francis and Eliza, as she was known by her family, although we will refer here to them as Frank and Elizabeth.

Frank and Elizabeth came to live in Griffydham by 1907, and initially rented a 2 up 2 down cottage on Main Street (now Elder Lane - see photograph on front cover), before moving to a larger house in the same street with an acre of land, almost opposite the former Griffin Inn where Gavin's grandfather, Benjamin Stone, was the landlord from 1941 to 1961. Upstairs was a landing, originally designed to sleep the older children, off of which was the parents' bedroom, the smaller children slept in a room off that. Downstairs was a large kitchen where the family lived and carried out all the domestic chores. There was also a parlour to the right of the central door. Outside was the privy, pig sty, coal house, orchard, vegetable garden and a paddock. They kept poultry and a pig which would be fed on food waste from the neighbouring families.

The pig would be slaughtered by George Kilby who lived next door. As the butchery was a long process and there were no refrigerators, the work would be carried out once it started to get frosty. The leg and back would be salted for bacon and ham; the rest of the meat would be distributed around to helpers and friends. The fry (internal organs) would be used to make faggots. The head was made into brawn and the intestines would be turned and thoroughly cleaned to make chitterlings; nothing needed to be wasted.

Neither their great grandson or granddaughter (Gavin Mellor and Sue Smith, nee. Dimmock) knew their grand / great grandparents and apparently no photographs and few family artefacts have survived.

THE STORY OF FRANK JOSEPH DIMMOCKS

MILITARY EXPERIENCES

British Expeditionary Force, France

The Dimmock household was disrupted by World War I, which started in late July 1914. By mid-October, Frank had enlisted as a Private in the British Army Reserve at the age of forty-four (Service No. 12702). He enlisted in the Leicestershire Regiment for one year's service, but it was extended until the end of the war. This was the same regiment in which his son Sam, who became a Japanese POW, would later serve in World War II.



UNIFORMED RECRUITERS OUTSIDE LEICESTER TOWN HALL c.1914



REGIMENTAL CAP BADGE

Frank trained from October 15th 1914 until April 7th, 1915 with the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion (Bn), a training battalion, before being posted to the 2nd Bn which was in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. The 2nd Bn Leicestershire Regiment (2/Leicestershire) was a component of the 20th Garhwal Brigade of the 7th (Meerut) Division stationed in India at the outbreak of war, and was transferred to France in October 1914 as part of the Indian Expeditionary Force A, reinforcing the BEF. Frank arrived in France as a replacement on April 8th 1915 just after the 2nd Bn attack on Neuve Chapelle. During Frank's service in France, the 2/Leicestershire fought in the battles of Aubers (9th May 1915), Festubert (15th-25th May 1915) and Loos (25th September to the 8th October 1915). During this time, Frank contracted malaria, spending time in a field hospital from the 21st June 1915 to the 5th July 1915.

On the 13th August 1915, the commander of the Indian Expeditionary Force D, in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), requested one of the Indian infantry divisions in France as reinforcements for his advance on Baghdad. Coincidentally, on the same day, the Secretary of State for India told the Viceroy of India that he was anxious for the Indian infantry to be withdrawn from France before they had to endure another winter. The system for supplying drafts to the Indian Army had broken down and the Indian battalions were becoming very weak after the heavy casualties they had suffered. Additionally, it was British Army policy to staff their Indian forces with English officers. These too had taken a heavy toll in France, leaving many units without adequate leadership.

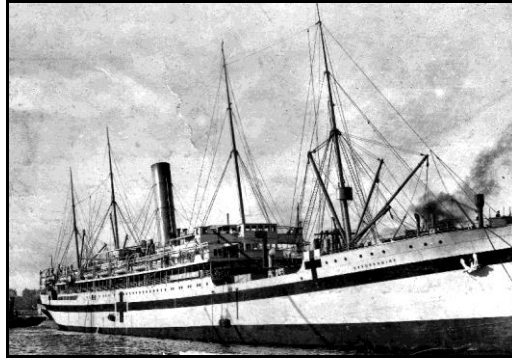
Mesopotamian Campaign

Consequently, on the 31st October 1915 orders were received to transfer the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions to Mesopotamia. The last elements were relieved by the 9th November and departed for Egypt enroute to Mesopotamia. Frank sailed with his division from Marseilles on the 10th November and arrived in Alexandria, Egypt on the 17th. He then left Port Suez on the 23rd, and arrived in Basra, Iraq on December 8th 1915. At this time, the 20th Garhwal Brigade was transferred from the Meerut Division, being replaced by the 28th Indian Brigade. The 2/Leicestershire, were transferred to this Brigade on their arrival in Alexandria. On their arrival in Basra, they were assigned to the Tigris Corps, a unit being assembled to relieve the 6th (Poona) Division at Kut. The Poona Division had been advancing to Baghdad, but were forced to withdraw by overwhelming Ottoman forces. Rather than retreat to Basra, the division commander, Major General Charles Townshend, chose to defend the town of Kut, quickly becoming surrounded on the 7th December 1915. This coincided with the arrival of the 2/Leicestershire in the theatre of war.

In the Spring of 1916, Frank and his battalion participated in several battles in an attempt to relieve the besieged Poona Division. These include the Battle of Sheikh Sa'ad, the Battle of the Wadi, the Battle of Hanna, and the Battles of Sanaaiyat. All attempts to relieve the encircled troops failed, and MG Townshend surrendered on the 29th April 1916. In Mesopotamia, Frank was hospitalized in Falahiya with gastroenteritis in May 1916 and in Basra with diarrhoea in July 1916.

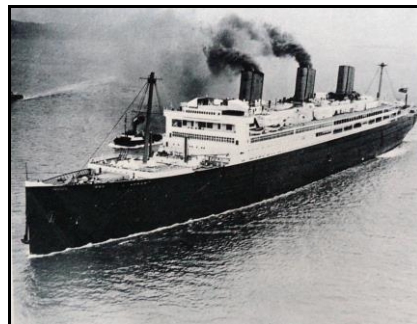
Indian Service

Frank continued to serve in the regiment until October 1916, when, after a second bout with malaria that began on 11 October 1916, he was invalided to India. He sailed on H.M.H.S. Oxfordshire on 16 October 1916. He arrived in Bombay on 22 October 1916, and was immediately hospitalized at the British Military Hospital in Poona. He was discharged on 2 November 1916 and rejoined the depot at Belgaum on 30 November 1916.



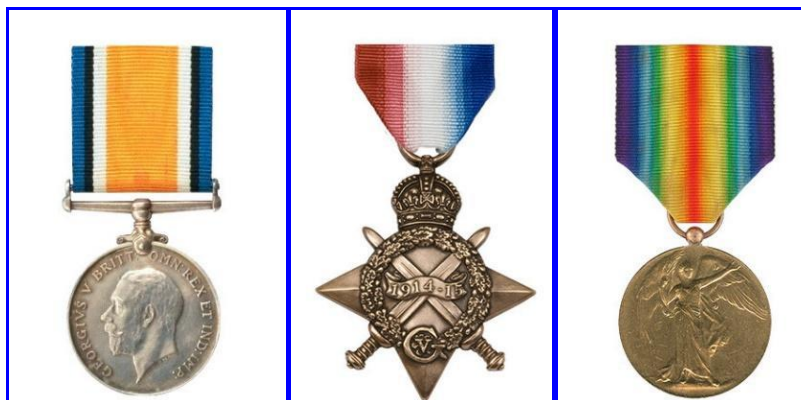
H.M.H.S. OXFORDSHIRE

On the 5th January 1917, Frank was assigned to the Garrison Police, presumably serving there until rejoining the depot at Belgaum on the 28th November of that same year. He was not in Belgaum for long, as on the 12 January 1918, the British Army decided Frank was unable to continue his active service. He sailed from Bombay back to the depot at Kantara, a major British military base on the east bank of the Suez Canal set up to service the Palestine forces, where on the 25 February 1918 he was classified B2, deemed disabled but fit for Labour Service abroad, and transferred to the 30th Sanitary Section of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) on the 24th July 1918. He served in the RAMC under a new Service Number (150265) until the 17th January 1919, at which time he embarked on H.M.H.S. Caledonia in Port Said for the trip back to the UK via Taranto, arriving in the UK in January 1919 when he was transferred to class Z, Army Reserve upon demobilization on March 7th, 1919. Clearly Frank was given leave to be with his family following his arrival in England as his son Samuel was born on 7th of September 1919.



H.M.H.S. CALEDONIA

For his service, Frank was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



THE BRITISH WAR MEDAL, 1914-1915 STAR, AND VICTORY MEDAL

A TWIST IN THE TALE
THE PRECEDING NARRATIVE WAS THOUGHT TO BE
THE EXTENT OF FRANK DIMMOCK'S MILITARY
SERVICE, OR WAS IT.....???

Frank's Letter

As part of his service record, there is an interesting letter Frank Dimmock wrote to the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI) paymaster in Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The letter was written 6th May 1933, when Frank was 64 years old. His letter requests the dates of his call up from the reserve and his dates of discharge, as he felt he was not getting a pension that included his twelve years of service during the Second Boer War. In his letter, Frank claims that he enlisted in the KSLI under the assumed name of Frank Dunn (Service Number 3258) and that he has lost his medals and paperwork, but would like to know if he was entitled to additional pension, as he was in ill health and unable to work. It should be noted that Frank Joseph Dimmock, when enlisting in 1914, did note his previous service in the KSLI on his Attestation. Using this name and service number, additional information was obtained regarding the service of Frank Dunn.

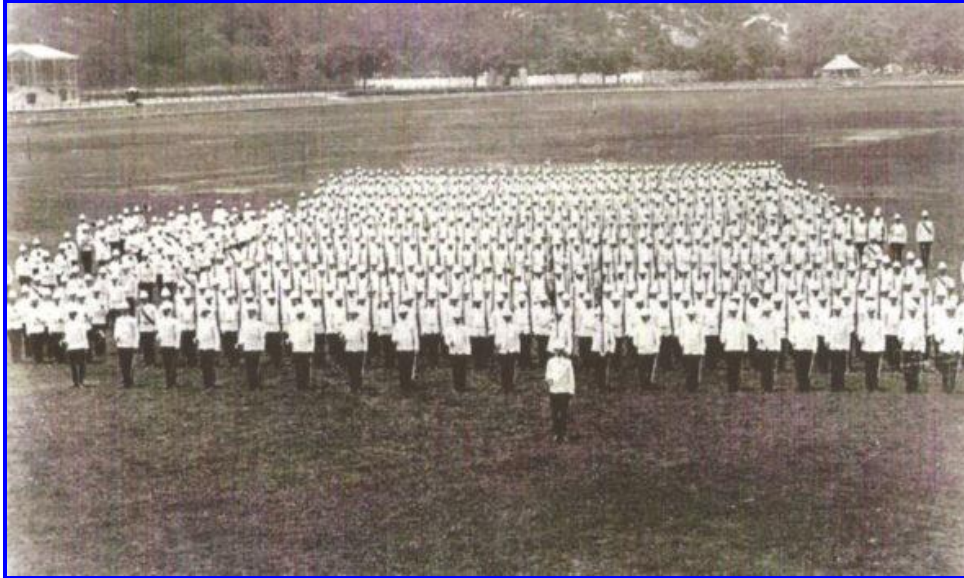
Frank Dunn enlisted as a Private in the KSLI on the 30th June 1890, one month shy of his twentieth birthday. His twelve-year enlistment period appears to have been seven years active duty, followed by five years of service in the Reserve. His Service Record provides a physical description of him, including any distinctive marks. The record notes that Frank had a tattoo of a woman on his right arm, and a flower, the initials J.D., and a flower on his left arm. Frank Dimmock's service record indicates tattoos on both arms. Frank was trained and posted to the 2nd Battalion KSLI (2/KSLI), which was on home service from 1881 to 1895.

Unfortunately for Frank, in early January 1891, he was charged with fraudulent enlistment and loss of kit, presumably because he wasn't actually Frank Dunn. He was court-martialed, found guilty on the 20th January 1891, and was sentenced to 42 days in Kilkenny Jail, Kilkenny, Ireland. He began his sentence on the 23rd January 1891 and returned to duty on the 3rd March 1891. He also forfeited his service duration prior to the 20th January 1891, as well as some pay.

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The Hong Kong Plague

On the 6th November 1891, Frank and the 1st Battalion (1/KSLI) departed for Hong Kong, spending 23 days in Egypt enroute. He arrived in Hong Kong on the 29th November 1891 and spend the next three years there, until just before Christmas 1894. The following photographs show the 1/KLSI in Hong Kong in 1894.



1 BN KSLI – ON PARADE & IN FOREIGN SERVICE UNIFORMS

During Frank's stay in Hong Kong, there was an outbreak of the bubonic plague, in Spring of 1894. Over 2,300 people died, and in an attempt to stop the plague, the KSLI was assigned to attempt to control its spread. Over 300 enlisted men, along with 8 officers, volunteered to perform house-to-house searches, isolate the infected, remove bodies, disinfect clothing and furniture and demolish contaminated residences. This team became known as the "Whitewash Brigade" due to the lime-washing of the walls of contaminated residences.



1 BN KSLI – ‘WHITEWASH BRIGADE’ DISINFECTING HOUSES

The activity was not without controversy, as the outbreak was mainly in the Chinese areas of Hong Kong, and there was a lot of distrust of Western medicine, as well as a lack of sensitivity to local Chinese customs regarding treatment of the dead. Regardless, by the winter of 1894 the plague had subsided.

The officers and men of the KSLI were among the first Europeans to be affected by the plague, with at least one soldier dying from it. The government of Hong Kong showed its appreciation to the KSLI by awarding a Hong Kong Plague medal to officers (gold) and men (silver) who had volunteered. It is unknown if Frank Dunn volunteered for the Whitewash Brigade or received a medal. The medal was not officially authorized by the British government; therefore, it is not worn while in

uniform, nor are there any British military records regarding its award. As a result, it is not known if Frank Dunn volunteered for the Whitewash Brigade or received a medal.



HONG KONG PLAGUE MEDAL

India and Home

Just before Christmas 1894, the 1/KSLI was reassigned to India, where they were to spend the next 4 years. Coincidentally, the 1/KSLI soon became involved “in aid of the civil power” again, while dealing with another serious outbreak of disease, in this case of cholera in Poona and Sitapur.

No further information regarding Frank’s service in India is available, but he was shipped home on the 19 October 1898, and transferred to the Army Reserve, per his enlistment terms, on the 31st December 1898. He had served on active duty for over 8.5 years, although he was only credited with just under 8 years due to his loss of service prior to his conviction for fraudulent enlistment on the 20th January 1891.

South Africa

Frank was serving in the Army Reserve, stationed in England, but not for very long. On the 9th October 1899, he was mobilized as part of the 2nd Bn KSLI (2/KSLI), to augment British forces fighting the Boers in South Africa. The reservists were called up to replace about 300 regular soldiers of 2/KSLI whom were found to be too young or too old to deploy. Of the reservists summoned all but 1 of the 409 called up appeared for duty and only 21 Reservists were found to be medically unfit.

The 2nd Battalion sailed for South Africa on the 7th November 1899. A total of 936 men from 2/ KSLI embarked for South Africa on the *S.S. Arawa* and the *S.S. Chicago* on 7 and 8 November, respectively, with both arriving in South Africa on 1 December 1899.

The *Arawa* (Transport #48) was built for Shaw, Saville & Albion by Wm. Denny of Dumbarton in 1884. Built for the UK – Australia – New Zealand service she served as a troop ship in the Spanish – American War in 1895, then was requisitioned by the British government as a transport for the Boer War. She was returned to her owners in 1900 and was in civilian passenger service until December 1915, when she was sunk by a German U-Boat.

S.S. Arawa left Southampton on 7 November 1899 with 29 officers and 752 men of the 2/ KSLI. She had to return to port on 10 November due to an electrical problem, departing again later that same day. She arrived in South Africa on 1 December 1899.



S.S. ARAWA (TRANSPORT #48) & MEN OF THE 1 BN. KSLI

The *Chicago* (Transport #56) was built for the Wilson Line of Hull by Furness Withy & Co Ltd., launched in 1898. She was engaged by the British Admiralty from 28 October 1899 to 24 August 1901, primarily as a cavalry transport. She was returned to her owners in 1903 and was in civilian passenger service until March 1918, when she was sunk by a German U-Boat.

S.S. *Chicago* left Southampton on 8 November 1899 with the balance of the officers and men of the 2/KSLI. She arrived in South Africa the same day as S.S. *Arawa*.



S.S. CHICAGO (TRANSPORT #56)

After their arrival, they were for about two months mainly employed on the lines of communication in Western Cape Colony, the headquarters being at Orange River Station, with a detachment at Zoutpans Drift. They were put into the 19th Brigade under Major General Smith-Dorrien, and formed part of the IXth Division under General Sir H E Colville.

One of the obstacles to campaigning in South Africa was the presence of enteric fever (typhoid). Thousands of soldiers became infected and hundreds died, including at least 5 soldiers from 2/KSLI.



The campaign in South Africa for 2/KSLI was in two parts. Firstly, by participating in the drive to crush the Boer army by capturing their capitals. There were many engagements during the British army advance but the key action for the 2/KSLI was the Battle of Paardeberg, as described later. The second part was the involvement of the 2/KSLI in anti-insurgency operations between 1900 and 1902.

Mounted Infantry

In January 1900, when traditional infantry battle tactics failed against Boer guerrillas and irregulars, who enjoyed a large advantage in mobility, Lord Roberts ordered all British regiments that arrived from Britain to provide a mounted infantry company. The order was a direct response to the shortage of mounted troops in the British army at the time. Some regiments achieved this by converting one of their eight companies and others complied by forming a 9th company.

On 24 January 1900, 103 2/KSLI men, mainly from 'D' Company, were selected to form the KSLI's company of mounted infantry. They were joined by another 26 NCOs and men from 2/KSLI on 9 February 1900. The KSLI formed the 4th Mounted Infantry Company, along with the men from 7 other regiments. Initially, these mounted infantry companies were formed into 8 Mounted Infantry Battalions and in April of 1900 two brigades were formed. The mounted infantry was comprised of men equipped and trained as infantry, armed with the infantry rifle (not the cavalry carbine), and with the mobility offered by a horse.

A company of mounted infantry consisted of 142 men, composed of four troops each of 32 men, commanded by a Major or Captain. All the ranks were mounted. Every company was provided with two wagons which carried baggage and food. Two companies of mounted infantry were attached to each cavalry brigade. The two companies amounted to 306 men, 310 horses, two machine-guns and nine vehicles.

Only about 10 percent of the company were familiar with mounted duties, the remainder having to be trained. They had only 8 days to organise their equipment and training before being deployed on 1 February 1900 and encountering their first skirmish with the Boers on 11 February near Jacobsdal. Although present at the battle of Paardeberg the company took no active part.

4th Mounted Infantry took part in the last pitched battle of the war at Belfast between 24 and 27 August 1900. The company was then deployed on anti-insurgent activity involving escorting, patrolling, raid and skirmishing for the remainder of the war.

It is not known for certain if Frank Dunn was a member of the mounted infantry, as his record indicates no transfer to another unit. However, his service record notes that he was trained as Mounted Infantry, South Africa, so it seems probable that he served in one of these units.

The Battle of Paardeberg: 18 to 27 February 1900

On 5 February 1900, 2/KSLI became part of 19th Brigade commanded by Brigadier General H L Smith Dorrien which in turn was part of the 9th Division.

The 2/KSLI arrived at the Paardeberg Drift on the Modder River at 4 a.m. on 18 February after a 66-mile march in 5 days from Ramdam, Orange Free State. 2/ KSLI at that time was made up of 8 companies lettered A to H.

Boer General Cronji leading an army of 4,500 had been retreating from the Magersfontein Hills along the Modder River to the Orange Free State. He decided to make a stand at Paardeberg on the Modder River and entrenched his position.

The British 6th Division were able to surround General Cronjis forces by 18 February. Kelly Kenny plan was to utilise the overwhelming British artillery to smash the Boer army into submission. This began on 18 February with some success.

The arrival of Lord Kitchener changed the plan and direct infantry assaults were ordered on the Boer positions. 2/KSLI were part of the British reserve and were ordered to cross the Modder River and envelop the Boer positions on the north bank. After wading waist deep through the river, Companies A, E, and G of the 2/KSLI took up positions on Gun Hill some 1000 yards from the Boer lines after having driven the

Boers off Gun Hill. Although 2/KSLI could fire on the Boer positions they were exposed to heavy Boer fire themselves. This resulted in 8 killed and 32 wounded on 18 February. Companies B and C were elsewhere, escorting a sapper telegraph company on a different task, while Companies H and F remained on the south bank of the Modder (Company D appears to have ceased to exist as an infantry unit, due to a majority of the men forming the mounted infantry company).

19 February 1900 – There was a temporary ceasefire between the armies.

20 & 21 February 1900 – 2/ KSLI continued to hold its ground under fire suffering another man killed and five wounded. When darkness fell on the evening of 21 February 2/KSLI rushed forward some 200 yards and entrenched their new forward position. 2/KSLI was then relieved by the Gordon Highlanders.

26 February 1900 – 2/KSLI provided covering fire for a successful attack on the Boer positions by the rest of 19th Brigade.

27 February 1900 – General Cronji surrendered with the British taking 4069 prisoners and capturing 6 Artillery guns.

The Boer War ended 31st May 1902, although Frank served in South Africa until the 26th August 1902. He transferred back to England and remained there until he was demobilized on the 19th January 1903. He received the Queen's South Africa Medal, with clasps for Paardeberg, Driefontein, Johannesburg, and Cape Colony. He also received the King's South Africa Medal, with clasps for South Africa 1901 and 1902. It is unknown if he received any other decorations or the Hong Kong Plague medal, as Frank acknowledges losing his medals in his 1933 letter. As his service record was never revised as a result of his fraudulent enlistment, it is assumed these medals would have been in the name of Frank Dunn and his 3258 service number.



QUEEN'S & KING'S SOUTH AFRICA MEDALS WITH CLASPS

Summary

With a total of almost seventeen years of military service, there is no doubt that Frank Dimmock/Dunn served his country, but he also leaves behind a number of questions. **Why did he enlist in the KSLI under an assumed name?** He was almost 20 years old, and certainly able to enlist without requiring parental permission. **Also, once they discovered his fraud, why was his record not corrected? Why wasn't he discharged?**

After serving over twelve years in Hong Kong, India and South Africa, why did he enlist in WW1 at the age of 44, when as an older, married family man he could have chosen not to enlist? Even by 1916, when a draft was implemented, he would have been low on the list of eligible men. Was it patriotism, believing he was obligated to serve? Or did he think enlisting for one year in the Special Reserve would not lead to active combat (if so, it was a serious error of judgement as he was in for most of the war)? Or perhaps he just enjoyed army life and/or fighting?

Another puzzling fact is that he served almost thirteen years in the KSLI as a lowly Private, never receiving a promotion. Then, when he enlists in the Special Reserve, it is once again as a Private, despite his fairly extensive military and combat experience. One would think his prior service would be valuable as at least a non-commissioned officer, such as a Corporal or Sergeant. It is unclear whether his ranks were by choice, preferring to keep a low profile, or by merit, as perhaps he wasn't deemed a particularly outstanding soldier. All interesting questions to which, at this point, we shall never know the answer.