

THE CAPE COPPER COMPANY'S MEDAL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
O'OKIEP.

THE STORY OF A DEFENDER.

by N. Bobbins.

On a recent business trip to Namaqualand I had the good fortune to meet Mr. James Thomas Dixon, the owner of the original NababEEP farm. Mr. Dixon explained that the name of the farm was derived from two words of the Namaquas; Naba, meaning shoulder and Beep, water. The water supply of the farm is a fountain on a shoulder between two hills or "koppies".

It was on this farm, which his grandfather had hired from the Old Copper Company, later becoming the property of his father, that he was born on the 6th February, 1885, and he has lived there ever since.

As a young boy he attended the old Normal College in Cape Town. In 1902 he left Cape Town by boat for Port Nolloth, where he entrained for NababEEP. On the way however, the train was stopped by despatch riders from the O'Okiep Garrison and commanded to proceed to O'Okiep, as NababEEP was in the hands of the Boer Commando, led by General Smuts. So on the 1st April, 1902, as a young lad of 16, Mr. Dixon found himself a soldier, as all males between the ages of 16 and 60 were commandeered for service, either in the O'Okiep Town Guard, or the O'Okiep Volunteers.

He became a "Volunteer" in the O'Okiep Volunteers and was issued with a Martini-Enfield carbine and given a firing point. Next to him was an older man who was to show him the ropes; this man was Willem Hollenbach, whose bronze Cape Copper Company Medal I have in my collection. Mr. Dixon related that Mr. Hollenbach sported a long handlebar moustache of which he was very proud, and on one occasion when Mr. Dixon was having a bit of trouble with his carbine, Mr. Hollenbach offered some advice and as he turned away, the gun went off and blew half of his moustache away. Needless to say he was very annoyed with the young boy!!

Later, Mr. Dixon was made an orderley to the Commanding Officer, Lt.Col. Shelton D.S.O. On one occasion he was delivering messages between the various blockhouses and having the bravado of a 16 year old, he ignored the communication trenches and strolled along their edges. When he was challenged by an officer in the trench, who asked him why he didn't use the trenches, he replied that trenches were for officers to hide in. He was sent back to the firing position!!

Mr. Dixon remembers General Maritz loading a waggon with dynamite, setting fire to it and rolling it towards the blockhouse from which he was firing. Luckily it didn't explode and the fire was extinguished.

Mr. Dixon is the proud possessor of the silver Queens South Africa Medal, inscribed: 136, Pte.J.T. Dixon, O'Okiep Volunteers and the Cape Copper Company Medal in bronze, also inscribed with his name and initials. With these two medals he also has the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal for World War I inscribed to "Sgt. J.T. Dixon, Namaqualand Commando." It is interesting to note that Mr. Dixon fought in

two wars, the first, against Smuts and Maritz, the second with Smuts in South West Africa.

Now at the age of 77, Mr. Dixon is still fit and active and likes to reminisce on the days long past.

(NOTE: The Cape Copper Company's medal is very scarce in bronze, and exceedingly rare in silver. Silver medals were apparently given to officers only, and bronze to other ranks - white and Coloured. It was not an "official" medal and could not be worn in uniform. Editor.)