

Before carrying on with my story I think it would here be the time to write something about the Regiment to which I belonged, The Kaffrarian Rifles. I have already once or twice mentioned the Regiment so, if I repeat myself now and again, please forgive me.

The parent regiment of the Kaffrarian Rifles was the old Buffalo Volunteer raised in East London in 1876 and fought in the Galka/Galeka war of 1877 then as the 1st Yeomanry at Moroses Mountain in 1879 and the Basuto war of 1880/1; as the Kaffrarian Rifles in the Langberg Campaign in 1897 and then the Anglo Boer War 1899-1902 followed by the 1914 war and then the 1939-45. So the Regiment has a very fine record. I might here mention that one of the first officers in the Buffalo Rifles was my Grandfather Captain Tom Nettelton, who also served at Moroses Mountain and the Basuto War.

I served with the Kaffrarian Rifles in South West Africa (German West) in 1914. When we were demobilised after the South West campaign in 1915 many of the men joined other Units, some Imperial and some South African with which Units they served with distinction. The Regiment in 1915 then became dormant, though still existing on paper and the head-quarters, until re-organised in 1921 under the command of Colonel Currie D.S.O. with Major V.G. Lewis M.C. as his second in command.

Training was very dull after the war, but the Regiment was kept up to strength and much valuable training was done, for in peace time the Unit has been nursery of many Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men who have in a variety of capacities and in numerous campaigns served with both honour and distinction in the Unit itself and in many other organisations. As a training ground for men in matters military, the Regiment has, apart from its own meritorious service, more than justified its existence. Had it not been for men of this stamp, trained by the Active Citizen Force, far greater difficulties would have been experienced in building up the South African Army in 1939/45. Training was carried on with annual camps from 1923 to 1930 but then during the depression 1931-1934 the Defence Vote was cut and training practically came to a standstill. With weekly meetings of the officers and N.C.Os we managed to keep things going. A certain amount of activity took place during 1934 with the visit of Prince George. The Unit was asked to supply Guards of Honour at King Williams Town and East London and to send the band to Grahamstown - at the request of that Municipality - to assist them during the visit of the Prince to that City. The following year we held the Jubilee Celebrations as already mentioned. I might mention that the Grahamstown Municipality paid the amount of £150 towards the band expenses. I went in charge of the contingent as Band President. We struck bad weather and the Railway Bus conveying the band took six hours for the return trip, the roads were water-logged.

Now I keep switching, but I well remember listening to Chamberlain on the wireless on Sunday morning the 3rd September 1939 "I am speaking to you from the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing Street. The British Ambassador in Berlin handed a note to the Germans, an ultimatum which expired at 11 a.m. today. There has been no reply and we are at war." The Admiralty at once requisitioned all British Ships and in East London the Union Castle received instructions that the Dunvegan Castle, which was in Port on her way East had to return to Cape Town. All cargo was to be discharged and passengers landed. I went to the docks and advised the Captain of the orders. Some passengers at first made a big fuss but eventually landed. Some were billeted ashore until the Cape Town Castle arrived next day to take them on. Others were berthed in the Pretoria Castle which was in Port until the Cape Town arrived.