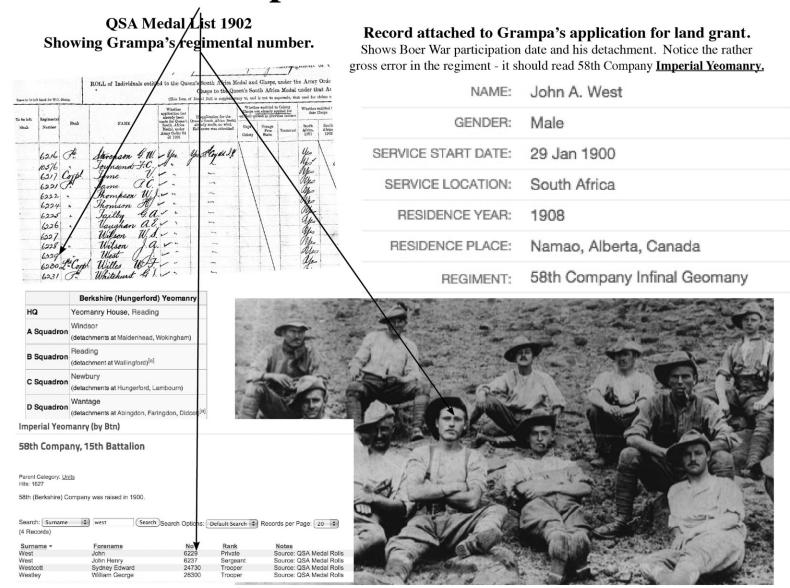
Grampa in the Boer War - 1900



Grampa in the Imperial Yeomanry (1900)

On 13 December 1899, the decision to allow volunteer forces to serve in the Second Boer War was made. Due to the string of defeats during Black Week (Boer War) in December, 1899, the British government realized they were going to need more troops than just the regular army, thus issuing a Royal Warrant on 24 December 1899. This warrant officially created the Imperial Yeomanry and from this warrant the standing Yeomanry regiments were asked to provide service companies of around 115 men each. The new Imperial Yeomanry was to be raised on a county basis (Grampa's was Berkshire), with the core being the men of the existing volunteer units, the remainder of the numbers being recruited from individuals that met the strict criteria laid down. The Royal Warrant stated: 1. Her Majesty's Government have decided to raise for active service in South Africa a mounted infantry force, to be named "The Imperial Yeomanry". 2. The force will be recruited from the (existing) Yeomanry, but Volunteers and civilians who possess the requisite qualifications will be specially enlisted in the Yeomanry for this purpose. 4. The term of enlistment for officers and men will be for one year, or not less than the period of the war. 5. Officers and men will bring their own horses, clothing, saddlery and accourtements. Arms, ammunition, camp equipment and transport will be provided by the government. 9. Qualifications are: Candidates to be from 20 to 35 years of age, and of good character. Volunteers or civilian candidates must satisfy the Colonel of the regiment through which they enlist that they are good riders and marksmen, according to the Yeomanry standard. Standards of troops raised in this manner tended to vary considerably. The laid down regulations of men being able to both ride and shoot proficiently was prone to a certain 'slippage' in some companies.

Eventually a force of 550 officers and 10,371 men formed the original contingent of the I.Y., made up of 20 battalions of 4 companies each, the 8th and 16th battalions being 3 companies strong. The I.Y. began to arrive in South Africa from early February of 1900 and this process continued until early April. Four battalions (3rd, 5th, 10th & 15th) were to head for Mafeking. In April 1900, with the Boers at last in retreat and on the defensive, the British began a major effort to relieve Mafeking. Two columns would converge on the town: one would march northwards from the British lines on the Modder River, while a second would strike south from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), in conjunction with the Rhodesian Field Force commanded by Colonel Herbert Plumer.