

**ELSIE MARION GEMMELL (née BOOKER)**



For her service during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer War, she was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal no bar inscribed:



**NURSING SISTER MRS. E. M. GEMMELL.**

and officially re-impressed as is often the case where QSA medals were awarded to nursing sisters. *Ex Kenneth G Gibbon Collection*



The "Egg Flip" Brigade  
Siege of Mafeking: Nursing Staff & Military Nurses <sup>1</sup>

Back row: Mrs. Rising, Mrs. Buchan, Lady Sarah Wilson, Miss Crawford, Mrs. Werner, Mrs. Hayes, Miss Becker, Mrs. Gemmell  
Middle Row: Nurse Parnimter, Miss Hill (Matron), Nurse Gamble  
Front row: Miss Cowlands, unknown, Miss Wyatt, Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Adams, Miss Conan, Miss Rowlands

For the record, The National Archives Data Base records the following:

The JPL Strange Collection in the Johannesburg Public Library houses the following two manuscripts:

1. Manuscript Ref: S 16.2.71 author: Mrs. Elsie Marion (Booker) Gemmell contents: unpagged Siege of Ladysmith: manuscript copy of a diary kept during the siege, 1899-1900.
2. Manuscript Ref: MSA 304 author: Mrs. Elsie Marion Gemmell contents: 21 cm. MS. Siege of Mafeking: Diary, 1899-1900.

The author has not had the opportunity of examining these manuscripts. The Siege of Mafeking ran from 16 October 1899 until 17 May 1900, and Mrs. Elsie Marion (Booker) Gemmell was documented as being there. The Siege of Ladysmith ran from 2 November 1899 until 28 February 1900 thus overlapping that of Mafeking, so the authorship must be in question.

From papers in the possession of the author, it appears that Mrs. Gemmell enrolled as a Nurse Probationer in South African Military Hospitals at the Old Court House, Durban on 30 November 1916. She worked at No.3 General Hospital, Durban until October 1917 when she was transferred to King's House. She was released from service on 31 January 1918.



For her service during the 1914 - 1918 war, she was awarded the British War Medal inscribed: NURSE. E.M. GEMMELL. on 28 December 1923.

The South African Woman's Who's Who: 1953, has the following entry:



GEMMELL, Mrs. ELCIE [sic] MARION, widow of Hugh Bernard Gemmell (died 1937). Daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Sexton. Born in Gloucestershire and educated in England and Durban, Natal. Is a well-known artist in Durban; an ardent social welfare worker, and member of the following committees: Benevolent and Child Welfare Societies; Vice-President of the Women's Institute, Durban North; President the Girl Guides' Association local branch, the women's section of the United Party Club, Natal Society of Artists. Came through the Siege of Mafeking and served in the S.A.M.N.S. during the great war and holds two medals; served in the Influenza Epidemic Huts, and was awarded the Municipal Gold Medal; member of the M.O.T.H. The late Mr. Gemmell was the first M.P.C. for Durban North-West also first City Councillor for the incorporated area of Greenwood Park in Greater Durban. He served in the Bechuana Rifles during the Siege of Mafeking, when Superintendent S.A.R., joined the S.A.E.C., retired with the rank of Major after the Great War. Favourite recreations are gardening and painting. Her address is Durban, Natal.

Mrs Gemmell's stated origins are perplexing when reflected against her Death Notice (Ref: MSCE 2109/1965) in the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository which is summarized thus: **GEMMELL, ELSIE** MARION BOOKER. BORN BOOKER. BORN IN WILTSHIRE, ENGLAND. PRSP **GEMMELL, HUGH** BERNARD.

Further, the spelling of the family name differs from document to document, thus: GEMMELL and GEMMEL

The Death Notices provide the following information:

Elsie Marion Booker Gemmel bc. March 1876 in England parents unknown  
Died Addington Hospital, Durban 19 June 1965 aged 89 years 3 months.  
Offspring stated as "none" DEATH NOTICE MSCE: 2109/1965 m. A.N.C. No. 94/1897-  
Natal Hugh Bernard Gemmel bc. October 1866 Ayre, Scotland (Father: Gavin  
Gemmell Mother: Jane Gemmel) d. 30 January 1937 aged 70 years 3 months.  
DEATH NOTICE MSCE: 24985/1937

Two offspring are noted on Hugh Bernard Gemmel's Death Notice, both addresses unknown. They are:

1. Margaret M. Gemmel - Scotland
2. Gavin Charles ("Gery") Gemmel - Australia

## GENEALOGY

At the time of the 1881 Census in England, the Booker family living at Church Farm House & Bdgs, Marston Maisey, Wiltshire, England was recorded as follows:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
George F. BOOKER	Head	M	Male	35	Marston Maisey, Wiltshire	Farmer 50 Acres
Mary M. BOOKER	Wife	M	Female	29	North Nibley, Gloucester	
Margaret M. BOOKER	Daughter		Female	7	Leigh, Wiltshire	Scholar
Elsie M. BOOKER	Daughter		Female	bc. 1877 4	Marston Maisey	Scholar
Francis C. BOOKER	Son		Male	2	Marston Maisey	
Florence S. BOOKER	Daughter		Female	2 m	Marston Maisey	
Elizabeth COLLEY	Servant		Female	14	Cricklade, Wiltshire	Domestic Servant

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**Saturday, May 27, 2006**

### REFERENCES :

1. South African Archives Repository, Cape Town
2. South African Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg
3. Mitchell, F.K. Defence of Mafeking Medal Roll Publ. Chimperie. 1962
4. The South African Woman's Who's Who, 1953
5. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints :  
<http://www.familysearch.org>

<sup>1</sup> For the record, the following:

#### HUSBANDS OF MARRIED NURSING STAFF DURING THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING

Mrs. Adams: B or W Adams, Railway Division Staff QSA bar DoM.  
 Mrs. Buchan: Lieut. J Buchan, Railway Division Staff QSA bar DoM.  
 Mrs. Gemmell: Lieut. H.B. Gemmel, D. Squadron, Bechuanaland Rifles QSA bars DoM, Tvl.  
 Mrs. Hayes: Surg. Lieut. W.A. Hayes, QSA bars DoM, OFS, Tvl.  
 Mrs. Rising: A C Rising, Railway Division Staff QSA bar DoM.  
 Mrs. Stewart: G Stewart, Railway Division Staff QSA bar DoM.  
 Mrs. Werner: C Werner was discharged from Railway Division Staff for misconduct. No award