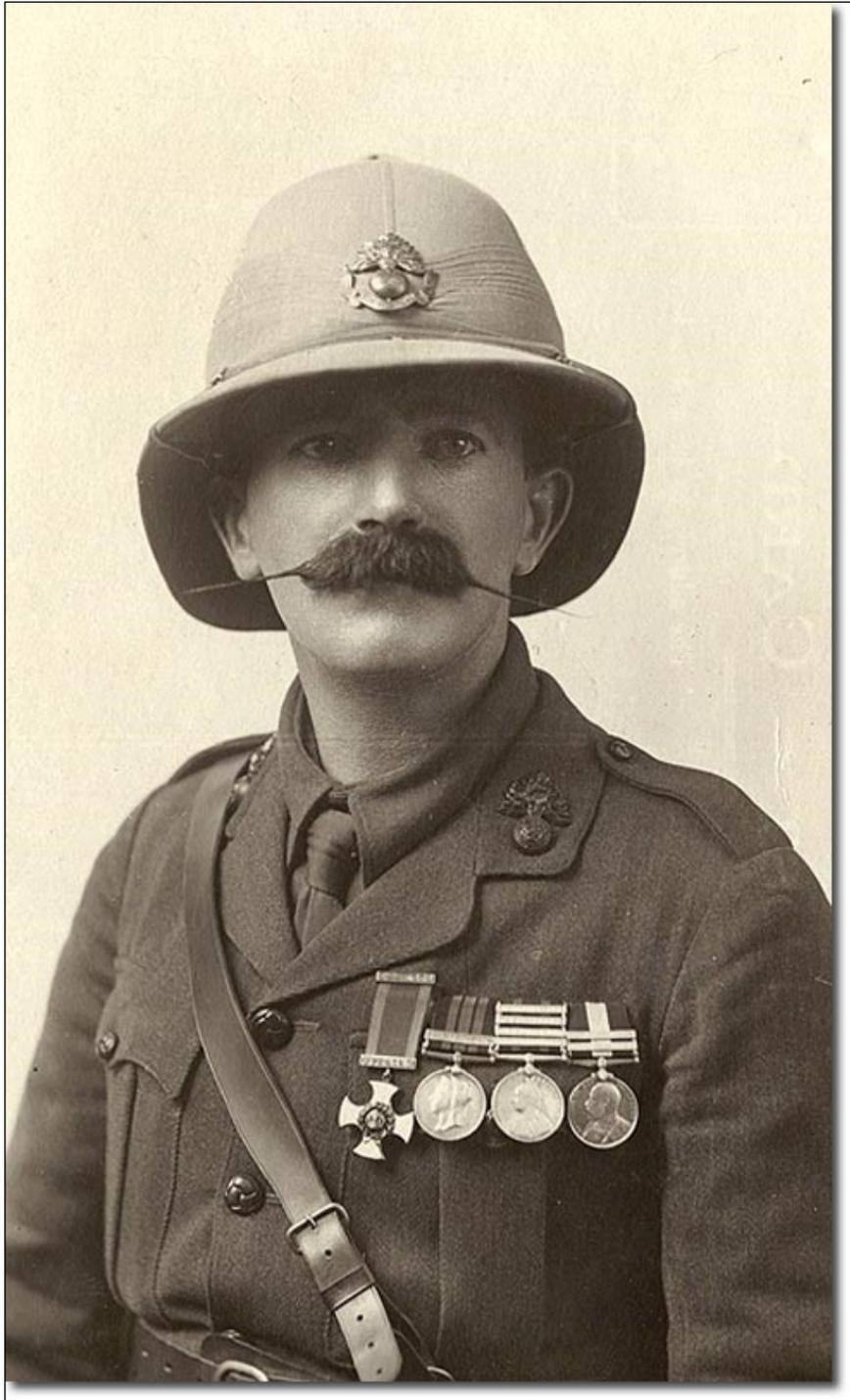


Compiled by Brian Tarpey  
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## CHARLES FUTCHER SMITH



Charles Fitcher Smith, one of the colourful characters that served in the 25th Frontiersmen Battalion, was born in Battersea, London, in February 1876, and entered the Royal Navy as a Boy 2nd Class in March 1891. Joining HMS Philomel in October 1893, aboard which ship he would gain advancement to Ordinary Seaman and to Able Seaman, he was present in operations with the Naval Brigade landed at the time of the Benin River Expedition of 1894. Shortly thereafter, however, his seagoing career came to an end when he was invalided ashore to Chatham Hospital in May 1895.

At the outbreak of the Boer War he was enrolled as a Trooper in the Frontier Mounted Rifles, and served as a scout to Captain de Montmorency VC late 21st Lancers. After the reversal at Stormberg, Smith was one of a party of 37 men surrounded at Labuschagnes Nek, near Dordrecht, but the party held out until relieved by the Cape Mounted Rifles, although the senior officer present was mortally wounded and all of their horses shot dead. Smith received the thanks of General Sir W. F. Gatacre and was advanced to Corporal, with charge of a Maxim gun, and was back in action at the capture of Dordrecht, Jamestown and Aliwal North. At the latter place, in March 1900, most of the Frontier Mounted Rifles refused to cross into the Orange Free State, but Smith was one of 60 volunteers to do so, under Captain D. P. Driscoll, thereby forming the nucleus of Driscoll's Scouts. Colonel Driscoll later became CO of the 25th Frontiersmen Battalion.

Advanced to Sergeant, he was next present at the capture of Rouxville, Zastron, Smithfield and Ladybrand, having in the interim served at the defence of Wepener in April 1900. Appointed Sergeant-Major in October of the same year, Driscoll and 15 men, Smith among them, captured Fouriesburg, thereby enabling the release of some 300 British prisoners, while in December he was promoted to Regimental Sergeant-Major and acted as a "runner" for General Sir Hector MacDonald. Smith was commissioned as a Lieutenant, gained advancement to Captain in July 1901 and was mentioned in despatches.

The injury that would lead to the loss of his left foot occurred in May 1902, when he was returning from the successful raid on Schweizer Renecke in the Transvaal. His horse took a tumble and his foot remained trapped in the stirrup iron, causing a serious internal injury.

On one occasion between Lindley and Kroonstad, at a place called Doorn Kloof, when he, with 16 men were caught in a trap, three or four were captured straight away and Smith with the remainder fought their way out whilst carrying a wounded man on a blanket who had been shot through the stomach. He saw one of his men, a huge American called Franks, lying behind a low wall and rushed back alone under a heavy fire from 50 yards range to assist him, and finding he was simply paralysed with fright, kicked and punched and cursed him till he jumped up and ran away towards his comrades. Franks was saved from being captured due to Smith's brave action. He was described as looking fierce, prone to strong language, and trigger-happy, and that he wore out 3 false limbs in the Boer War.

He joined the 25th Battalion on hearing that his Danny Driscoll was now in command of the Frontiersmen, serving in East Africa. Presumably his old friend overlooked the fact that Smith

had a prosthetic leg. He relinquished his commission on account of 'ill-health contracted on active service' - in fact malaria - in August 1918, when he was permitted to retain his rank of Captain (London Gazette 11 August 1920). And he died at Whitstable, Kent in August 1925, aged 49 year.

#### **DRISCOLL SCOUTS**

**According to Driscoll Scouts Register Smith joined the Scouts on 1 January 1901. He is shown first as a Sgt Major then a Lieut then a Captain 16 September 1901. (1) Received DSO 25 February 1901 LGG DSO C.F. SMITH OCT 31 1902 P,6908**

**(1) says in above article appointed Captain July 1901**

#### **MEDALS**

**shown on breast from left to right in photo**

**DSO,**

**East and West African Medal,**

**QUEEN`S South African Medal and**

**King`s South African medal**

**Last two medals not sure**

**Photo taken pre-World War 1.**