

Private Frank Saunders, Isle of Wight Rifles by Stephen Bull

Frank Saunders lived in Carisbrooke for most of his life, initially in No. 5 High Street, (which became No.30 after renumbering), then later in 28 High Street.

Frank Saunders was a Private in the Royal Hampshire Regiment, in the 1/8th Battalion, otherwise known as the Princess Beatrice's Isle of Wight Rifles, based at Newport. He enlisted in the Isle of Wight Rifles on 1st June 1912 and was ranked 'Private', although he was known within the regiment as 'Rifleman' Saunders. His Service Number was 8/1135, with the '8' prefix referring to the 8th Battalion.

Frank Saunders' war medals are retained by his family and are still in the golden-coloured metal tin that they had been kept in since the Great War. The tins had been given as gifts to the soldiers during Christmas 1914.

Frank Saunders served overseas, initially attached to the 163rd Brigade in the 54th East Anglian Division, as part of the reinforcements in the Battle of Gallipoli. He was then evacuated from Gallipoli and moved to Egypt, to support the defences of the Suez Canal. In 1916 he was moved to Palestine as part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force at the beginning of the 'Sinai and Palestine Campaign'.

It is unclear what happened to Frank Saunders at this point but it is likely that he sustained a severe gunshot or shrapnel wound to his elbow during this campaign in Palestine.

Due to his injury, together with likely complications owing to the harsh conditions and problems with infection, he was discharged from Service on 28th April 1916 being recorded as being "no longer physically fit for war service".

At that time Frank Saunders was awarded the Silver War Badge, which was presented to servicemen who had been honourably discharged from active service due to wounds or sickness.

We have a copy of the original War Office document (the 'Roll of Individuals Entitled to the War Badge'), which shows he was awarded the Silver War Badge. Each badge was individually numbered, and the document shows that Frank Saunders' War Badge was numbered 106,798.

We also have the document that records his medals. Frank Saunders was awarded the following Campaign Medals: 1914 – 1915 Star Medal, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. These three medals were affectionately referred to as 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' by those who received them.

Frank Saunders rarely spoke of his combat experiences; or his injury to his elbow, which we know caused him discomfort throughout his life. Even with this disability however, he still managed to run a very successful building company for many years after the war.

Frank Saunders was married to Dorothy, and was father to daughters Ena and Iris.

Frank Saunders' war record can also be viewed online at www.forces-war-records.co.uk