

## Three WWI South Africa's Heroes in Delville Wood

Shocked, shell shocked, bomb-shocked; no matter what kind of shock is experienced, shock drives different men to react differently, especially if the 'man' just turned 21 years of age.

Young William "Mannie" Faulds from Cradock, South Africa, together with his brother, Paisley, and friends from school days joined up with the South African forces to fight during World War One (WWI). He and his bosom friend and neighbour, Arthur Schooling, enlisted and went everywhere together. Together they fought under command of General Louis Botha during the South West African Campaign and then in Egypt before being deployed to fight in the Battle of the Somme in France.



During the Battle of Delville Wood, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1916, Arthur Schooling was shot and killed in No Man's Land. Mannie Faulds could do nothing to help his friend and most probably went into shock. On the same day, 16 July, Lieut. Arthur Craig (1<sup>st</sup> BN B Coy) was also shot and lay wounded close to the body of Arthur Schooling between the Allied and enemy trenches.

Three young Springboks, **Pte. Mannie Faulds, Pte. Clifford Baker and Pte. Alexander Estment**, took matters into their own hands, defied the risk and in broad daylight at 10:30, climbed the barricade and crawled to their severely wounded Lieutenant and piggy-backed (pick-a-back) him to relative safety. Private Baker was badly wounded in the attempt. Lieutenant Craig eventually landed up in the South African Military Hospital in Richmond, England, having been taken to the dressing station and then by stretcher bearers to the hospital at Abberville. The South African Hospital at Abberville was the closest to the front line.

Mannie Faulds and Alexander Estment returned to their positions and continued fighting although they were surrounded by many other casualties that were increasing every moment as a result of the intensity of the German attack. They were most probably still numbed by their horrible experiences but they reacted correctly to the orders of their seniors and officers.

Two days later Mannie once again threw caution to the wind. He rushed out, alone on this occasion, into No Man's Land to rescue another of his wounded comrades and carried him nearly half a mile to a dressing station. As a result of his repeated conspicuous courage Mannie Faulds was nominated and awarded the Victoria Cross of Valour (London Gazette 9 September 1916). He became the first born South African to be awarded the VC in the First World War. He also received the financial reward as promised by Sir Bernard Oppenheimer of diamond fame. Both young Clifford Baker and Alexander Estment had also been nominated for the VC but were awarded the Military Medal (MM).

Private Mannie Faulds soldiered on but was eventually wounded and captured by the German Forces on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1918 at the Battle of Marrieres Wood. He was released as a prisoner-of-war after the Armistice on 11 November 1918 and returned to South Africa.

Mannie became an employee of De Beers Diamond Mine in Kimberley and then at Jagersfontein. He married Miss Thelma Windell and they became the proud parents of a son and daughter. Mannie Faulds (pronounced 'falls') had a great sense of humour. When his daughter was born he expressed the wish of having her named Victoria Faulds (falls). His wife objected strongly and won the battle. She was christened "Joy".



In 1937, as one of the South African representatives, decorated Lieut. William Faulds officially attended the coronation of HRH King George VI who had also done military service during WWI.

During WWII Mannie Faulds served in Abyssinia. After the war he and his family moved to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where he worked as a government industrial inspector (U1p U4p).

In 1947 Captain William Faulds was in charge of the guard of honour during the tour of the Royal Family through Southern Africa.

Captain William 'Mannie' Faulds died on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1950 at the age of 55 years. He is buried in Salisbury (Harare, Zimbabwe).

Mannie Faulds presented his original Victoria Cross medal as well as other military memorabilia to the museum in Kimberley. All these items were transferred to the National Military Museum in Saxonworld, Johannesburg. Unfortunately his VC medal was stolen but when a Conference Centre at the same venue was built, it was proudly named in his honour.



**The Victoria Cross**

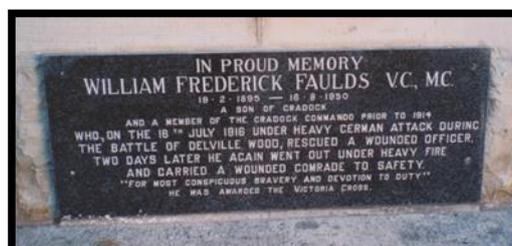


Today the home in which Mannie, his widowed mother and six brothers and sisters lived, in Market Street, Cradock, has been converted into a comfortable guest house with a wonderful atmosphere, especially if you know the 'Faulds-VC-history'.



A large plaque dedicated to Mannie William Faulds was also installed in the local church he had attended as child in Cradock.

Another plaque dedicated to telling the fate of local hero William Faulds, as well as the name of Arthur Schooling and other Cradock men who died during WWI + WWII are recorded on the Cenotaph erected by their comrades on the square to the right of the Dutch Reformed Church.





His fallen friend, **Arthur Schooling** (25 years), has no known grave but his name is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial for the Fallen in France. The 'Schooling' building in Cradock where he and his family had lived and worked is just around the corner in New Stockenstroom Street. One of the comfortable guest houses in Market Street is named in his honour.



Private **Alexander Estment**, MM survived the war, returned to South Africa, was demobbed and quietly returned to life and living proving the words of John Buchan to be correct. John Buchan, later Sir John Buchan, was commissioned by Prime Minister Louis Botha to write the official account of the South African Forces in France. He was the British Director of Information and Intelligence during WWI and had this to say about the "quality of the South Africans which deserves a special mention – I mean their curious modesty. A less boastful body of men never appeared in arms. They had a horror of any kind of advertisement".

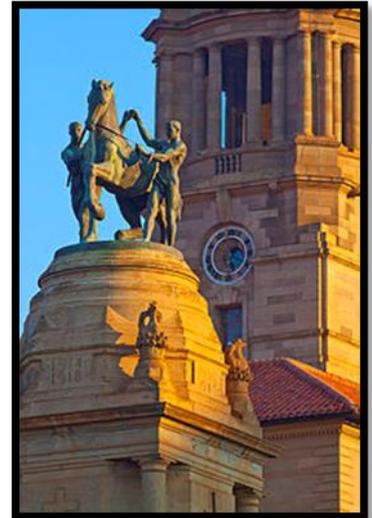
Although Alexander Estment, MM had been severely wounded in his face and eye on 18 April 1918, he quietly faded into being recorded only in military books and files. He is another forgotten hero.

Mannie's other buddy, **Clifford Baker**, MM who was severely wounded when they rescued Lieut. Crag survived only for another 14 days. He died as a result of his wounds on 30 July 1916. His parents Mr. and Mrs. Robert John Baker living on their farm Killarney, Tweespruit, South Africa, were notified of his passing. Lance Corporal Clifford Baker is buried in grave No. B 32.6, St Sever Cemetery Rouen, France. He is also remembered on the plaque attached to the gate of the Town Hall at Thaba Nchu.



This Baker family, farming at Tweespruit, were close relatives of the world renowned architect Sir Herbert Baker. Architect Herbert Baker later offered his services, free of charge, for the design of the Delville Wood memorials in France, Pretoria (in front of the Union Buildings that he had also designed) as well as the one in the Company Gardens, Cape Town, as a silent family tribute to the valour of his cousin Lance Corporal Clifford Barker, MM (23 years old). Sir Herbert also became a member of the executive of the Imperial War Graves Commission (today the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) and was known as one of the 'architects of choice'.

It is also interesting yet heart-sore to note the 2 147 soldiers with the surname Baker, died during WWI. Fourteen of them had been in South African regiments. One of the 14 South African Bakers was a nurse, Edith Agnes Baker (28 years old), who was killed on 6 November 1918, a mere 5 days before Armistice.



*Delville Wood War Memorial, Pretoria*

Another South African Baker, H. Baker (23 years old) fell on 5 November 1918, a mere week before the end of the war on 11 November 1918. He has no known grave but is 'Known unto God' and his name appears on the walls of the Memorial Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium. It is at this memorial where, to date, the 2 Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance is bugled daily. Another South African, H. Baker, had been a gunner in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Siege Battery, the very battery where one of the commanding officers had been Captain Reginald Hands. The death of South African Reginald Hands resulted in the first observance of the publically organized 2 Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance in Adderley Street, Cape Town:



*Adderley Street, Cape Town. The public observance of the Two Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance during the Peace Celebrations held on 2 August 1919.*

**One minute in remembrance for those who died;  
One minute in gratitude for those who survived.**

J. C. Abrahams (Tannie Mossie)