

Cape Colony: Boer War: Cape Copper Company / Defence of O'Okiep

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Form: Circular with ornate suspension bar pinned into the edge. The ribbon is dark brown with a narrow green central stripe.

By: ?

Date: 1902

Ref: AM: 86; Hern: 198; MYB: 157; Laidlaw: 0331;

Variations:

Size	Metal	Mass	Value
36.7 mm	Copper	26.3 gm (no suspension)	\$500 (no suspension)

Edge: Plain. Engraved with the name of the recipient.

Obverse: Copper miner in cap standing crossed legged, front, supporting shovel in right hand and left hand resting on a pit cart. M behind, right, and radiant sun on horizon, left. Legend on band above: "THE CAPE COPPER COMPANY LIMITED" and between stops: "1888".

Reverse: Across: "PRESENTED (in an arc) / TO THE / OFFICERS / NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS / AND MEN / OF THE GARRISON OF OOKIEP / IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR / GALLANT DEFENCE OF THE TOWN / UNDER LT. COL. SHELTON. D.S.O. / AGAINST A GREATLY SUPERIOR / FORCE OF BOERS / APRIL 4TH. TO MAY 4TH. 1902 (in an arc)".

Notes: The illustrated medal has had the suspension removed and is unnamed. It was probably never issued.

The medal was awarded in silver to officers and high-ranking town officials, and in bronze to other ranks and citizens who participated in the defence.

In Forsyth's roll, eighteen recipients of the silver medal are listed including one to Pay Sgt H Rodda, the only other rank to receive a silver medal. The roll indicates that 537 men qualified for the bronze medal.

Approximate values of named example complete with suspension:

Silver: \$5,500

Bronze: \$1,500

Medals with the QSA and/or KSA are worth considerably more.

Okiep (modern spelling) is a small town in Namaqualand in the Northern Cape. The area around Okiep was known for a time to be rich in copper. Mining commenced in about 1850 and the Cape Copper Company was established there in 1888.

The town was besieged in the last stages of the war from 4 April to 4 May 1902 by Boer forces under General Jan Smuts. The garrison of O'okiep, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W.A.D. Shelton DSO, consisted of some 900 men, mostly local miners, who assisted Shelton's troops. At the end of the war campaign medals (QSA, KSA) were awarded to regular troops, not to civilians. The Cape Copper Company decided to have this medal made unofficially and award it to all the people who had undertaken the defence of the town.