

Desmier

Family History Newsletter

May 1995

Issue No. 1

Introduction

This is the first of what I hope will be many editions of a newsletter linking people all over the world that are descended from **Charles Julien Desmier**. I hope that, as time goes on, others will be sufficiently encouraged by the newsletter to contribute articles or notes of interest that can be included in future copies. What is the object of the newsletter? Well I guess in each edition to produce about 10-15 minutes of interesting reading for all those people who are related to someone with the Desmier name and have a mild interest in history - particularly when it is relevant to their own family members. More selfishly, I hope that publishing the newsletter will encourage others to become actively involved in tracing the family history of the Desmiers so that I can learn more as well. The format of the newsletter is obviously flexible so if anyone has any ideas as to what or what not to include please tell me about them. Anyway here's the first edition.

Who was Charles Julien Desmier?

Charles Julien was born in Niort, a town in the department of Deux Sevres in SW France in 1757. I have a photo of his baptism registration which shows that his father was a Perruquier which in those days was a type of hairdresser who also made up and repaired wigs and applied powder to the faces of those people of the time that could afford such luxuries. So far I have established that his parents had six children although two and probably three of them died young. It is possible that he had a sister and a brother that, like him, survived into adulthood. The next information that I have of Charles is that in 1786 (29 years old) he was Assistant Surgeon at the King's Hospital in the french colony of Pondicherry. I know this because it was then that he married 15 year old Marie DaCosta whose father was a local clerk. Here the family line is a bit of guesswork as we haven't yet been able to have a good look at any records for Pondicherry. We know that the couple had at least two children, a daughter Marie (born 1787) and a son Jean who was born in 1789 but there may have been more.

At present we have assumed that all those people that have their roots in British India and bear the Desmier name are descended from Jean but as future researches bear fruit we may learn that he had brothers. With this one assumption, to date, we have been able to identify 269 descendants of Charles Julien and 129 spouses. There are, however, in addition several Desmier lines that we know of that developed in India but so far we have been unable to connect them into the main family

tree. All in good time hopefully

Profile

In each edition of the newsletter I hope to include a detailed article featuring one person in particular (living or dead) describing the person and their life. I have sufficient material for a few editions but after that my resources will start to dry up so contributions are welcome. I'll start with the story of my grandfather William Edmond Desmier.

William Edmond Desmier was the eleventh and youngest child in his family and was born in 1879. His father George Charles was in charge of the regional jail at Hyderabad, Sind (now in Pakistan). At the time of William's birth the town had a population of about 50,000 and was the regional



centre. The jail is described by Hunter in "The Imperial Gazetteer of India" (1886) as *one of the chief public buildings of the area and capable of holding up to 600 convicts.* As Governor of the jail William's father could afford to keep the family in style. William's sister Mable Maud often spoke of the horses and carriages they had and of the grooms they employed to look after them.

William grew up in the age when development of India's great railroad system was at its peak and it was understandable that, like so many other Anglo-Indians of the time, he would seek employment with one or the other of the many railway companies that were in existence at the time. We know that at the age of 23 he was working as a Fireman for the Indian and Peninsular Railway Co and was based at Rajhanwadi. It was at this time that he met and married his first wife Aileen. They were married at Ferozpur in the Punjab. Unfortunately Aileen died about 18 months after their marriage. Following her death William went to Kenya in East Africa. It is unknown whether he went with his brother Conrad or separately however both worked on the railways in Africa and both later returned to India.

By 1909 William was working as an Engine Driver and living in Calcutta. It was here that he met and married his second wife, Edith, at the time a school teacher. Over the years they had four children Eric, now living in Canada, Edith living in the States, Frederick who died in Bangalore at the age of 15 and the youngest my father, Terry, who until about 5 months ago lived in the UK but has now emigrated to South Australia where I live.

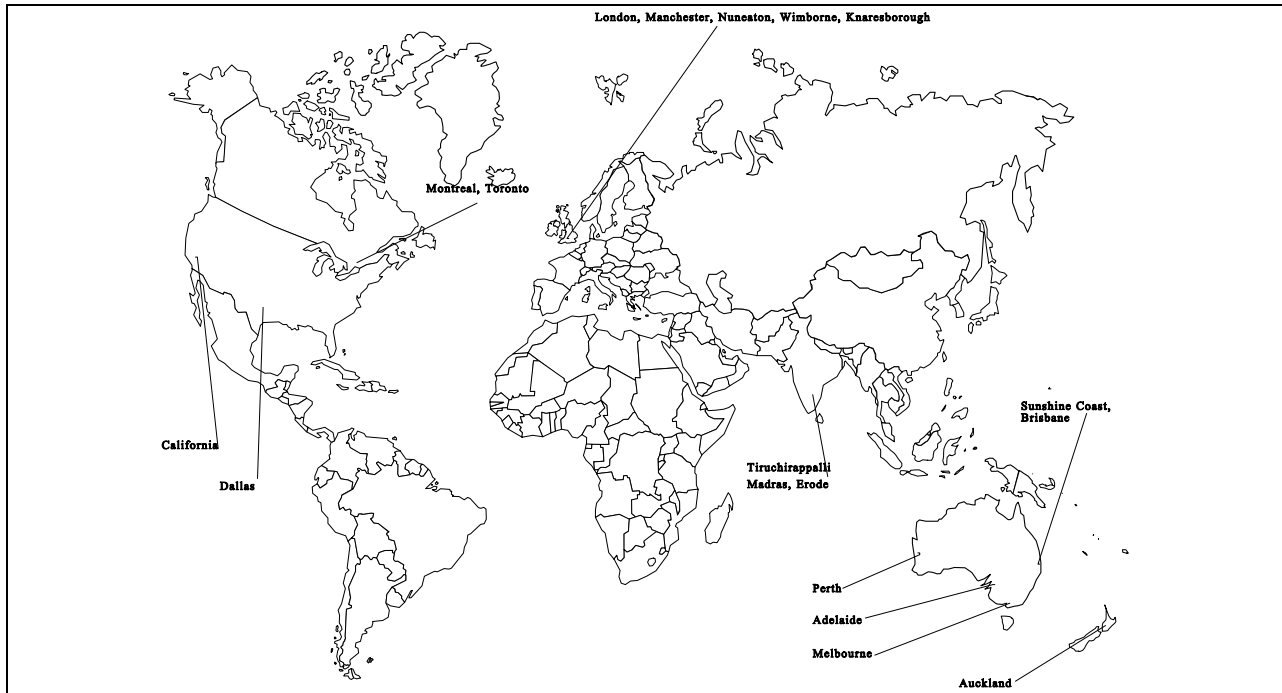
Shortly after their marriage William qualified as an engineer after studying at Calcutta. This career change was to signal the start of many moves for the family as William went from job to job. Eric remembers his mother complaining about all the moves and wonders whether his father didn't work for just about every railway company in India at the time as well as having several other jobs such as with the Public Works Department. Many of the postings were in the south of the sub-continent but he also worked at Allahabad and Agra. At Bangalore he was engineer in charge of the Loco Shed where they maintained and repaired the steam engines. Terry remembers that it was at this posting that his father was demoted. The Governor of the railway company came to Bangalore on a tour and when he was to leave the replacement engine that was to pull

his train was not ready as it had not developed sufficient head of steam. As William was ultimately responsible, it was him that had to be on the firing line. As a result the family was moved to Arsikere. It was here that William bought a plantation called Bokasagra near Kadur. Later they moved back to Bangalore where he was engineer in charge of the Loco shed again. From Bangalore they moved to Gooty and then Pakala living for about 4 years in each place. In Gooty and Pakala Terry remembers that he had his own railway carriage to take him wherever he needed to go.

William and Edith emigrated to England in September 1938 and joined Terry who had emigrated several years earlier to study wireless engineering. They found the cold and damp English winter too much to cope with and didn't like having to live without servants so they returned to India in March 1939. Back in India William built 2 bungalows in Whitefields a developing Anglo-Indian colony near Bangalore, he sold one and they lived in the other. He died in 1945 and is



buried in the catholic cemetery in Bangalore.



The family seems to have naturally divided into two groups, a *Northern Clan* that is descended from George Charles Desmier who travelled up to Hyderabad, Sind from either Pondicherry or South India and a *Southern Clan* that are descended from Frederick Desmier and have lived mainly around Trichonopoly. From these origins their descendants have now been traced to all parts of the english speaking world.

Latest Developments in the family Tree

This last year has seen a major growth in the family tree box chart that many people who will be reading this newsletter are familiar with. This has occurred in two areas. Firstly the merging of the information collected by Robert Gibbs with that of my own has resulted in a much more complete picture of the Desmier families that lived in and around Hyderabad, Sind. This also includes information about descendants of female lines as well as the male lines which are so often ignored. We now know as a result of Robert's communications with churches in Hyderabad that not only was William Edmond one of a family of eleven children but that his father George Charles Desmier was one of eleven children as well. We know that four of his brothers and sisters died in childhood but have very little information on the others other than that one of his sisters married a McLean and their son eventually married one of William Edmond's sisters. Can anyone help any further on this?

Credit for the other big advancement in the family tree goes to someone who has no Desmier ancestors. I recently joined a genealogical society in Niort, France where Charles Julien Desmier was born. Michel Maumon is one of the people responsible for publishing the society newsletter and he has been kind enough to search the local records for me. The old records in France include more information than the modern day UK ones. They include details such as the mothers maiden name on both sides of a marriage which is very useful for a genealogist although they don't seem to be very well equipped in their archive offices with equipment such as microfilm copiers.

The research that Michel has done has taken the family back another five generations to a marriage in 1661. He has transcribed all this information (in french) and sent me hand written copies as well as taken photographs of the microfilm copies of key events. One elusive bit of information, however, is the location of the marriage of the parents of Charles Julien even though we have details of their children.

Who has done the research?

It would become a very long list indeed if I was to list everyone who has provided me with information on their Desmier ancestors but if I limit it to just a few names then the following spring to mind:

Douglas Desmier It was Doug who I wrote to back in 1989 after seeing his name in a telephone directory. It was him who was able to transcribe for me information that his uncle Frank of Trichonopoly gave to him before he left India for Australia. This included Doug's ancestry back to Charles Julien and also included the names of Charles' parents in France. Doug lives in Melbourne, Australia.

Eugene Desmier I caught up with Eugene when I wrote letters to some of the Desmier names and addresses that I found by going through UK telephone directories about 2 years ago. He has been able to contribute an extensive coverage of the "Southern Clan" of Desmiers that lived in and around Trichinopoly. Eugene lives in New Malden, Surrey.

Florence Desmier together with her son Herman have provided a great amount of detail on the descendants of George Thomas Desmier of the "Northern Clan" who emigrated from Hyderabad, Sind to Burma. I contacted them at the same time and in the same way as Eugene. Florence and her husband Herbert live in Nuneaton, Warwickshire and Herman lives with his family in Wimborne, Dorset.

Winifred Desmier still lives in Tiruchirappalli (formerly Trichonopoly). I was given her name and address by Eugene. She has been able to provide a lot more detail on the "Southern Clan" and to transcribe information from headstones in cemeteries at Trichy.

Robert Gibbs Robert contacted me less than a year ago. I had replied to an interest posting in the International Genealogical Research Directory where Christina Ramage (New Zealand) was seeking information about her Desmier ancestors that lived in Kotri, Sind in about 1786. Through Christina I made contact with Joe von Ruhland (UK) who passed my name on to Robert. Robert has done a lot of research not only on the Desmiers but on other lines of his ancestry as well. Robert is a descendant of the "Northern Clan". He has unearthed a lot of record information on births, marriages and deaths that aren't available through India House because the priests did not forward their annual returns as they should have. This was achieved by writing directly to the parish churches in question in India. Robert lives in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire.

Michel Maumon Recently I joined the local genealogical society in Niort. Michel, although not related to the family has undertaken a lot of research for us in the Deux Sevres Departmental Archives and has traced Charles Julien's ancestors back as far as the mid 17th century.

This newsletter is edited by Rick Desmier. I intend to produce a new edition every six months or so. If you have any comments or contributions for future copies please send them to me at:

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If you have a relative who did not receive a copy of this newsletter and you think that they would like their own copy please let me know
