

# **Desmier**

## **Family History Newsletter**

**December 1997**

**Issue No. 6**

### **Editors Note**

This edition of the newsletter nearly didn't make it for Christmas! I have recently changed jobs and have found it harder to put myself in front of the computer to prepare the articles (even though most of the material has been written by others) I am sorry if some of the material doesn't seem up to the usual presentation standard as it has been a bit rushed. Whilst on the subject of changing my job please note for those of you that have email that my email address has also changed. The second email is one that reaches me at home which I prefer to use but I'm not sure if we will keep this for the full 12 months.

In this edition of the newsletter I am very grateful to Winifred Desmier for just about all of the material. Winifred lives in Tiruchirappalli and has spent a lot of time transcribing inscriptions from tombstones in the cemetery attached to the Roman Catholic Cathedral there. Winifred has sent me more material than I can include in this edition and so this is really just an introduction to the family groups that were based in southern India. I will include the other information in another newsletter together with other photos and material that I have been sent by Eugene Desmier who originally put me in touch with Winifred. The newsletter starts off with an article about Winifred's husband Percy.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody a merry Christmas and a healthy happy and prosperous new year.

*Rick Desmier*

*Percy was born on 13th August 1921 and baptised Percival Charles Ignatius Desmier in, S't Mary's Cathedral Trichonopoly (now known as Tiruchirappalli. he died on 16th November 1992 at the age of 71 and was buried in his grandmother's grave in the Cathedral cemetery. The following account of Percy was sent to me by Winifred his wife.*



When the British-Indian army was at war with Japan, many of our boys were serving with them including Percy. He had on his uniform with three stripes so I think that he was a Sergeant or Warrant Officer, I am not sure. Anyway he and the forces came to Burma. It was only in the last faze of the war that he came to my area (Moulamein. South Burma) with the Beach. Group. He was a Security Officer and knew all about us, our families etc. We

were under house arrest and only allowed to do some marketing and to attend Sunday Church services.

Since he was a Catholic he came to pick us up to attend Mass and to bring us home safe and sound. Here my dear mother used to cater for the boys who came to our house. She used to say "Poor boys, they must be missing their homes." and so she fed them.

A year later, towards the end of the war and the surrender of the Japanese army some 48 miles from our home at a place called Amherst, the boys would come to visit us. Percy was also in charge of the Cinema Section and when there was a good picture on he would come and pick us up. There were many families.

I was a working girl, my sisters Irene, Leonie and Mildred all knew Percy. When the war ended and he had to return home to India Percy approached my father and asked for my hand in marriage.

After arrangements on his side and mine we got engaged on my father's birthday, 10th February and then married on 27th December 1947 which is my birthday. I returned to India with Percy on 8th February 1948.

When the British left India later that year

our boys joined the Indian Armed Forces. After a course at Poona Percy passed out as a 2nd Lieutenant and subsequently joined the signal corps. He has been stationed at Calcutta, Delhi, Meerut, Jullandar, Mathura, Ranchi (where our daughter Dorothy was born in 1958) back to Julandar, Ferozepore and then Goa after it was being taken over from the Portugese.

His last post was Jabalpur. Then he was sent to Karrakudi to the N.C.C as Officer Commanding, after that he was sent back to the Signal centre at Jabalpur where he put in his resignation because aunty Kate (Mary wife of Francis Desmier) became seriously ill. After four months in hospital she expired on 22nd February 1976. Percy retired as a Senior Major.

After his retirement Percy spent his time by helping the poor and needy, writing applications for them, helping them with cash or kind. He was a friend to all. He loved gardening and spent his time watering the plants daily. He loved roses best. After 16 years of retirement he became ill and died on 16th November 1992.

I have been to many places with Percy when family accomodation was available. Family life in the Army was very enjoyable, we all lived as brothers and sisters of a family.

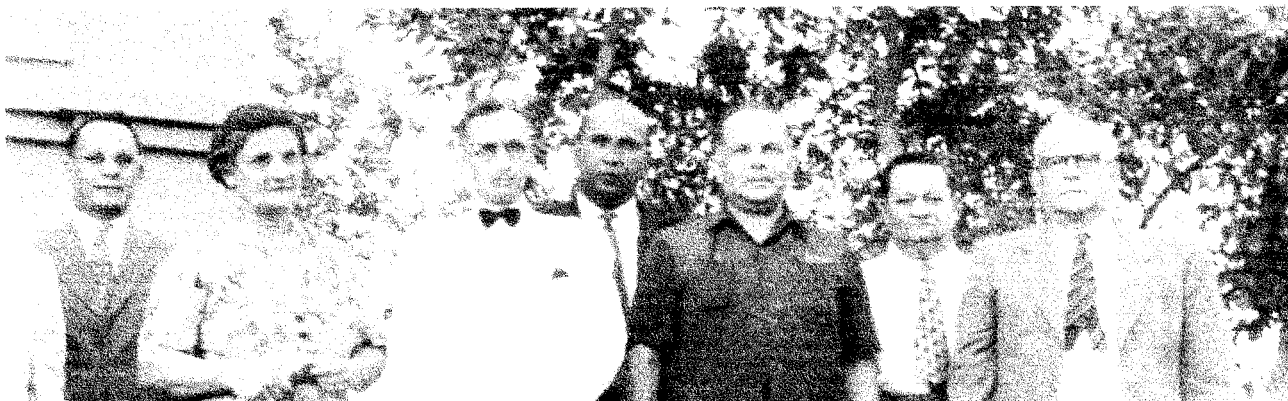


*Winifred with her daughter Dorothy and grandchildren, Joey (15 Years old) and Marie (16 \_years old). The photographs were taken about two years ago.*

*Dorothy is a doctor in Tiruchirapalli with her own clinic as well as working at the Holy Cross College Rehabilitation Centre. Joey enjoys hockey and is in the NCC navel cadets. Marie has also been in the NCC (army) and has completed a \_four year course in dancing. Dorothy was born on Winifred's birthday 27th December which was also Winifred and Percy's Wedding anniversary. it sounds as though C.hristmas must be a very busy time in this household!*

### Descendants of frederick Desmier

On this page we have an introduction to the children and grandchildren of Frederick Desmier who was the head of what I have been calling the "Southern Clan of Desmiers". I hope to go into a bit more detail on the lives of their descendants in future editions of the newsletters. A descendant chart is included on the back page to assist in establishing the relationships between the various family members.



### Descendants of brothers George Arthur Desmier and Thomas A Desmier (circa 1950)

*l~ft to right:* Frederick Desmier, unknown, unknown, unknown, Terence Edward Desmier, Cyril Desmier and Francis Charles Desmier.

#### Thomas A desmier (1867-1892)

Uncle Tom as he was known was, like the others in the family, on the railways. He was instrumental in the planning of the railway colony Golden Rock south east of Trichy, he was the organist at St Mary's Cathedral. The pipe organ is still in the Cathedral but remains unused. He married Mary Therese Fernandez and they raised a family of five boys and four girls. **Mary** Eldest daughter of Thomas married Jimmy Gallyot and emigrated to Kenya where she died.

**Bertram** and Cyril (pictured) both worked on the railways. More on their descendants in another newsletter.

**Dorothy** (1905-1981) was called Done she was a nursing sister and never married.

**Frederick** (pictured) was a guard on the SI railway. His wife Dorothy (Doris) was Matron at the General Hospital Tanjore. **Cecelia** known as Cissy married Freddy Jeremiah (driver South India Railways). They had five sons, (one died young but the other four are all employed by the railways) and three daughters. The youngest daughter Colleen married Dominic Desmier son of Patrick Vincent Desmier and grandson of Bertram Desmier.

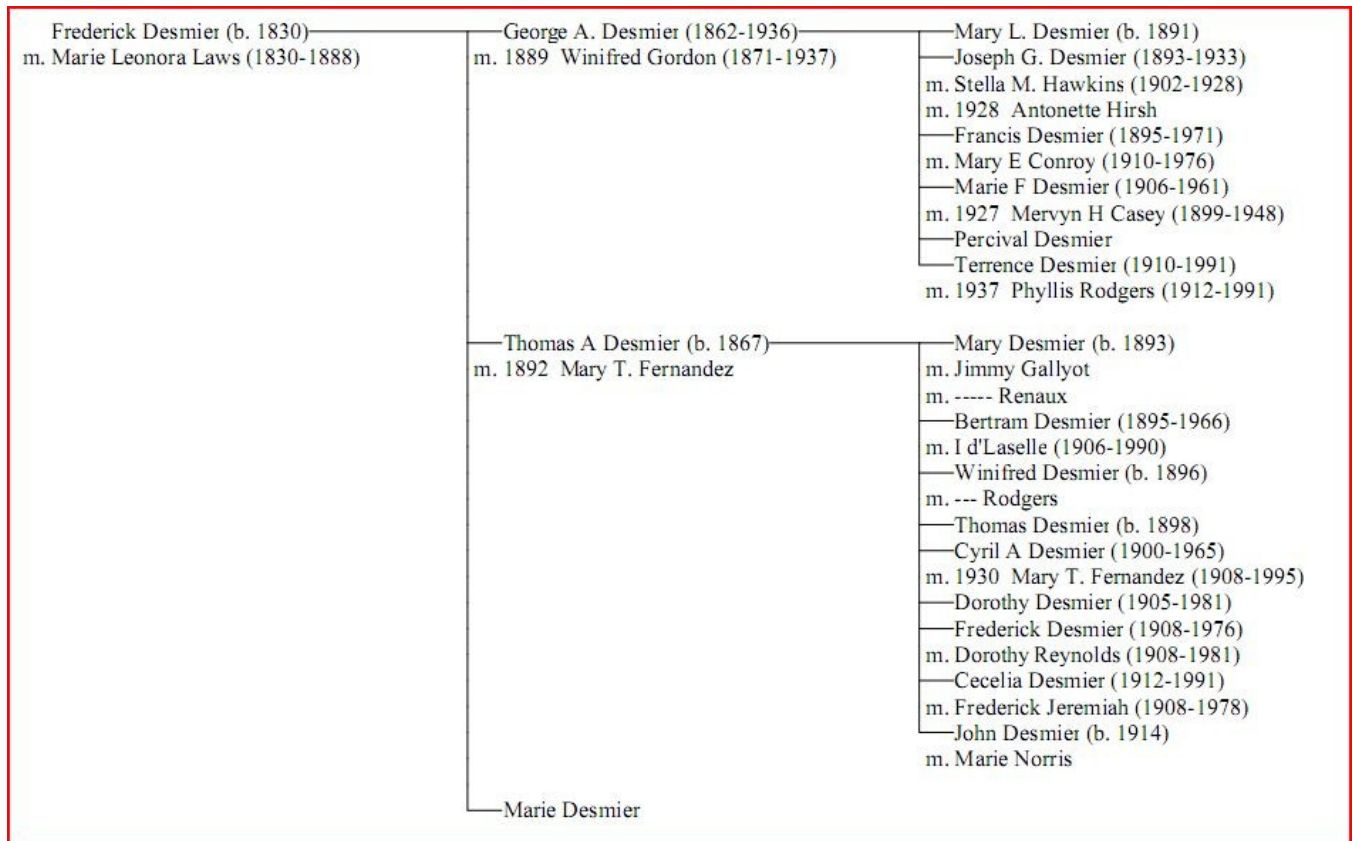
They have a daughter Cassandra.

**George Arthur Desmier (1862-1936)** married Winifred Maud Gordon and had a family of four boys and one girl.

**Joseph George** was the father of Percy featured above and also of Douglas whose obituary was in No. 3 of the newsletter. Joseph was a District Signalling Inspector at the time of his death of cerebral malaria (40 years old). Other descendants of Joseph now in Australia are son Noel and his family (northern NSW and Queensland); daughter Marie Merrit (Melbourne), In India there are George Desmier (Madras) and son Basil's children Joe, Stella, Mervyn and Vincent (Bangalore). More in another newsletter. **Francis** (pictured) Uncle Frank was the family genealogist and I have a copy of a letter that he sent to my Uncle Eric in Canada more than 35 years ago trying to establish the link between what I now call the northern and southern clans of Desmiers. They did not have any children. Marie (nickname Buddie) married Mervyn Casey **Terrence** whose family are in the UK. More in another newsletter.

**Percival** who I have no information on.

## Descendants of Frederick Desmier (3 generations)



### Here is what the Encyclopaedia Britannica has to say about Trichy:

*also called TRICHONOPOLY, city, central Tamil Nadu state, southeastern India. It is on the main road and rail routes between Madras and Trivandrum and lies at the head of the Kaveri (Cauvery) River delta. It was an important regional capital of the Pallava, Cola, and Vijayanagar dynasties from the 7th to the 19th century. Its rock fortress, dominating the city, was the scene of bitter fighting between Muslim, Maratha, British, and French troops from the 17th to the 19th century. The city is now an industrial centre that has modern heavy electrical, thermal boiler, and locomotive construction workshops, alongside traditional cotton hand-weaving and cigar-rolling cottage industries. Synthetic diamonds are manufactured as well.*

*The city is also the site of Bharathidasam University (1982). The surrounding Kaveri River valley is the best rice-growing region in the state and also produces sugarcane and betel. Pop. (1981) town, 362,045; metropolitan area, 609,548; (1991 prelim.) city, 386,628; metropolitan area, 771,120.*

