

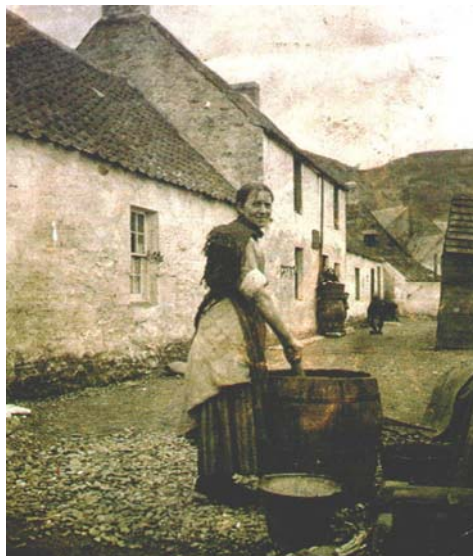
Alexander White and Elizabeth Aitchison

Sometimes a comment on the guest page or FH forum leads to fresh information which has previously been overlooked. When she asked for information about her grandfather Edward Carlyle Ann Freeman pointed out that someone else in Burnmouth bore certain similarities to Edward. This person was also a blacksmith and, like Edward Carlyle, had enlisted in the Army Service Corps. In a breakdown of the 1901 census for Ross on the Family History Forum Alexander White is listed and is the person Ann referred to. On closer examination it turns out that Eddy Carlyle's mother and Alexander's wife were cousins.

Alexander White was born in Ayton on the 6th of February 1877. He was the son of Alexander White, who was a mason, and Janet Delgaty. When he was 14 Alexander started work as an apprentice blacksmith. He married Elizabeth Ann Aitchison from Ross on the 25th of June 1897. Elizabeth was the daughter of Andrew Aitchison and Elizabeth Struthers. She was born on the 6th of November 1876. After they married they lived in Ayton. Alexander and Elizabeth's first daughter, Elizabeth, was born in Ayton on 8th December 1898 but she died in infancy. They had four more children, Alexander born 1900, Janet born 1903, Helen born 1905 and Margaret born 1908. Alexander senior was working as a blacksmith at the Bleachfield Paper Mill in Ayton but on Janet and Margaret's birth certificate he lists his occupation as a mill worker not a blacksmith so perhaps he had other duties.

There are no photos of either Alexander White or Elizabeth Aitchison. Elizabeth had 4 older brothers, a half brother and a younger sister. Her half brother James Anderson was lost off the Transcendent on 14/10/1881. He was married and at the time of his death had one daughter, Agnes. A second daughter, Jemima, was born after her father drowned. Elizabeth's brother, John, died in 1877 when he was 12 years old. On Sunday September the 30th he fell off the cliff at Lamberton and suffered a fractured skull and other injuries. His death was instantaneous.

We have a photo of Elizabeth's brother William, born 1868 [nicknamed Auld Haugh] on Burnmouth pier and one of his wife, Helen Johnston, outside their house.



Elizabeth's brother Andrew, born 1870, died when he was 18. He had a cerebral abscess. No trace can be found of the youngest of Elizabeth's brothers, Alexander, born 1874, after the 1881 census. However because of another contact with someone on the family history forum we now know that Elizabeth's younger sister, Ellen, born 1882, married Robert Proudlock Thompson. on March 10th 1907.

Although there are no photos of Elizabeth and her husband Alex White there is quite a lot of information about Alex. His army records are online. Alex was in the Territorial Army before WW1. He was in the 2nd Volunteer Brigade of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers. He enlisted as a shoeing smith on 14/12/1914 in the Army Service Corps. He was almost 38. He passed his medical at Galashiels and from his medical history we learn that he was 5ft 11, his chest measured 37½ins and he had perfect eyesight. Another document tells us he had hazel eyes. He joined the ASC at Woolwich. He was appointed Acting Farrier Corporal in 212 regiment on the 8th of July 1915. On the 26th of October of the same year he was appointed Acting Farrier Sergeant. On the 9th of November 1915 he was dealt a bitter blow. His wife Elizabeth died of TB. She was only 39.

On the 16th of August 1916 Alex was transferred to No. 1 Coy Aldershot. And on the 4th September he embarked for Egypt. His records show his sobriety was 'very good'; he was very reliable and most intelligent. He was an excellent farrier and a hard worker. He had shown special aptitude in the care and treatment of horse and he was capable, industrious and trustworthy. In answer to the question, 'Has he a good power of command and control, and is he tactful in his way of handling men?' his Commanding Officer has answered 'Yes.'

One piece of information which, but for his army records, we may not have known, is that he was a member of the Manchester Oddfellows. He was 42 when he was demobilized in July 1919.

Nothing else is known about Alexander White except that he died in Coldingham in 9th January 1938. By the time he died he was a Master Blacksmith. He was 60. His son Alexander was living in Eyemouth.



Attached to this article is a family tree showing Elisabeth White ms Aitchison's parents and siblings. Her paternal grandfather, John Aitchison, was lost off the F/V Lively 7/1/1853. Her paternal grandmother, Helen Speirs, sometimes spelled Spears, was the sister of William Speirs, 'the Kingfisher', to whom a statue was erected in Eyemouth in 1998 [see opposite].

Her maternal grandparents were William Struthers and Elizabeth Martin.

We would be interested to hear from anyone who has any family connections with Alexander White or Elisabeth Ann Aitchison.

Descendants of Andrew Speirs Aitchison

