



The Ayton Family Society

President – Pieter Cor Aitton

Convener's Letter

Welcome to the Ayton Family Society's first Newsletter for several years. Due to several factors our society has been in a dormant state for some time now but I am glad to report that we are now awake again and hope to be a flourishing society once more.

A problem we and, I think, all societies (especially small ones) have is that as the members get older and less able to participate it is constantly harder to keep any momentum going. We were lucky in our formative years to have had many interesting and faithful members, but if we are to survive we need not only this core of membership but a constant recruitment of new members, particularly younger ones, and with your help this should be possible. Please try to influence your family members to join our society.

In the past we were very lucky to have had the support of the late David Liddell-Grainger, owner of Ayton Castle and estate in Berwickshire. He always welcomed us to his home and even gave us the use of one of the castle offices to use as a small museum. Since David's death the estate and the contents of the castle have been sold. The new owners, Brian and Richard, who are based in London, are running the estate on a commercial basis, the castle being used for corporate events and weddings. We are therefore very grateful to them for allowing us to hold our revival gathering at the castle.

Our gathering, held on 29 September, although small in numbers, was I am glad to report productive. We first met in the upstairs room of a nice restaurant on the waterfront of the nearby town of Eyemouth; here we enjoyed a splendid meal and carried out the business part of our gathering before moving on to the castle. Hamish, our secretary, will report on the meeting and our visit to Ayton Castle, along with a welcome to our two new committee members.

David



Left: No direct connection with the Aytons or Eatons but it reflects the Convener's interest in classic and vintage cars. This bronze statue unveiled in Fort William in 2018 commemorates Henry Alexander's 1911 ascent of Ben Nevis in a Ford Model T.

Report of last meeting and appointment of new committee

Sunday 29 September 2018

Gathering at Oblos, Eyemouth, Berwickshire, Scotland

Present: David Eaton (Convener), Hamish Neilson (Secretary and Treasurer), Alison Eaton, Rosamond Breyer-Aiton, Luise Breyer-Aiton, Nigel Ayton, and Stephanie Robertson. Unfortunately, this number was not large enough to be quorate.

Nigel Ayton suggested that less expensive website management could be found. He also offered to liaise with Hamish Neilson with regard to the accounts and taking over Treasurer duties.

Luise Breyer-Aiton offered her experience with websites to improve and manage the Society's site and to advise on management costs. This offer was gratefully received.

Election of Office Bearers and Committee: The re-election of the existing Office Bearers and Committee was proposed by Nigel Ayton, seconded by Rosamond Breyer-Aiton, and agreed unanimously, although it was stressed that more members would be welcomed. Convener is therefore David Eaton, Secretary Hamish Neilson, and Treasurer Nigel Ayton, with the Committee member being Malcolm Ayton if he is available. A quorate AGM would need to be held to confirm elections.

Ayton Castle

Ayton Castle was sold in 2014 to Brian Parsons and Richard Syred. Unfortunately, there had been no contact about the contents of the Family Room at the time of the sale, but we had asked for information about it, and a meeting was to follow the AGM. However, the new owners live in the south of England, visiting occasionally. Our meeting



was cancelled due to Mr Parsons' illness with gallstones. However, we had been assured that Family Room contents had been boxed up and stored elsewhere in the Castle due to dry rot problems at the original location.

Those who had attended the meeting were able to enjoy a tour of the castle, where they were welcomed by Simon Jones (Factor) in the owners' absence.

Left: Ayton Castle, Berwickshire

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Date for your diary: next Gathering and AGM Saturday 12 October 2019

The next Gathering and AGM will be held in Livingston, about 15 miles west of Edinburgh, on Saturday 12 October at 11am. We will meet at the Bankton House Hotel in the southern part of the town. After the AGM and lunch we will drive about two miles to visit Murieston Castle Farm, where there is the picturesque ruin of an old tower house which was owned by Roger Aytoun W.S. of Murieston.

Roger Aytoun was born about 1760, became W.S. in 1790, and may have been factor for John, Lord Rollo, and Mary, Lady Rollo, for the estates of Duncrub, Easter Rossie and Tarnavie 1791-1806. In 1807 Roger married in Edinburgh Joanna or Joan, daughter of Charles Edward Keir of Kinmonth, andOrme. They lived at 21 Abercrombie Place, Edinburgh. He was said to be a Radical; however, before he retired he was Director of the Chancery. He died on 16 March 1843. Roger and Joan's son William Edmondstone Aytoun DCL., was born in Edinburgh on 21 June 1813. He was a poet and author, became a Writer to the Signet in 1840, Professor of Rhetoric and 'Belles Letters' at Edinburgh University 1845-65, and Sheriff of Shetland and Orkney.

At some point the ruined tower was decorated as a folly with various carved stones, including the Aytoun Rose symbol.

Hamish Neilson

Murieston Castle



Murieston Castle was one of those small tower-house fortified homes favoured by Scottish lairds during the medieval period. Built in the 16th century it had become a ruin before West Murieston was bought by John Keir in 1819. John set about 'restoring' the castle in 1824 and produced the building we see today in a style usually now described as a folly. The folly itself is now in a ruinous condition but John's restoration was maybe only intended to be an empty shell.

It is tempting for us in the twenty first century to blame John for creating this fanciful folly instead of preserving as much of the original architectural features as possible but he was a man of his time as can be seen by several other small Scottish castles which have received similar treatment. Suffice to say we must be grateful that he did not just demolish the old castle and clear the site of its stones. It is interesting that the government found the present building such an interesting example of this type of reconstruction that they had it listed, and therefore protected, as a scheduled monument as far back as 1951 with the scheduling being brought up to date in 2013.

David Eaton

Very best wishes to the Ayton Family Society's two centenarians!

Congratulations and very best wishes to the Ayton Family Society's President, Pieter Cor Aitton, and to Alison Neilson, who both celebrated their 100th birthdays in 2018.

Cor was born at Vorden, in Gelderland in the Netherlands, on 16 September 1918. He is a direct descendant of Thomas Aytoun, younger son of Alexander Aytoun, 6th Laird of Inchdairnie in Fife. Thomas went abroad to the Netherlands after the 1715 Rising. Cor was elected President of the Ayton Family Society in 2002.

Alison was born Alison Aytoun on 19 June 1918. She is the great-great-granddaughter of Roger Aytoun, 9th Laird of Inchdairnie. She celebrated her centenary by publishing her memoirs. We are delighted to be able to publish a first extract below.



Left: Alison's 100th birthday celebrations, with her family. From the left: granddaughter Sarah Beattie-Smith, grandson Duncan Kellett, granddaughter Gemma Peprah, Alison Neilson - seated, son-in-law Paul Kellett, daughter Catherine Kellett, son Hamish Neilson, and grandson-in-law Benjamin Peprah

Alison Neilson - early years

Family background



Dorothy Alison St. Clair Aytoun (known as Alison) was born on 19 June 1918, five months before the end of the First World War, in Selly Oak, about five miles south of Birmingham. She was the third daughter of Robert Alexander Aytoun and Agnes Dorothy née Henderson, known as Dorothy. Her father was the eldest son of an eldest son of a branch of the Aytoun family, with origins in Berwickshire, and which held land there, in Fifeshire and Perthshire. Her mother's family, Henderson, hailed from Orkney originally. Her father Jack Henderson was brought up firstly in Coldingham, Berwickshire (where oddly enough the Aytouns also had connections at Ayton Castle), and Paisley, where his father was a very well-known minister of Paisley Abbey Church.

Alison's mother and father had come to Woodbrooke, a Quaker college outside Birmingham, as his second job, a Presbyterian minister. He was

born in Fraserburgh in north-east Scotland, took a degree at Aberdeen University, and then went to Westminster College, Cambridge to train as a minister.

Unfortunately, a few days after Alison's birth, her mother became very ill with puerperal fever, caused by being nursed by a nurse with a septic finger. She was ill for a year.

During WWI, Robert lectured at Woodbrooke in the mornings and every afternoon he travelled by tram all over Birmingham in his capacity of chaplain to the many Scottish war-wounded soldiers. He was attending a conference in Scotland when he died of a heart attack in 1920; he is buried at Helensburgh. Dorothy was left to bring up three small girls on her own. Alison was only two years old.

Life without Father

As a strong token of their regard for her Father, her Mother was supported for years after his death by Edward and Dorothy Cadbury, and also Aunty TD (Christina) Irvine, principal of Carey Hall Missionary College. 'Uncle' Edward and 'Aunty TD' became the guardians of the three girls. Aunty TD was an aunt of the Irvine who was lost on Mount Everest with Mallory in the 1920s. The Cadbury family had all known and admired her father. Edward Cadbury (Managing Director of Cadbury's Chocolate) paid for their education, and holidays. 'Aunty' Dorothy helped with school uniforms and later gave them a dress allowance each. They arranged transport to school at Edgbaston.

If any of the girls was ill, one or other of the Cadbury's two chauffeurs, would arrive at the door with a chicken, a great treat in those days.

Alison's first memory is of Elizabeth and Joanna making her put pine needles into a flowerpot in the garden, the joke being that half the needles would fall out through the holes.

After her father's death, Uncle Edward bought for them (for £600) a semi-detached house, newly built in a garden suburb called Weoley Hill. Mrs Aytoun had to manage with just a young maid of about 17 years old. In those days even families with modest incomes had domestic servants.

Growing up in Weoley Hill

With three growing girls, the house was quite small. It was also damp and rather badly built. Alison slept in a cot in her mother's room. Elizabeth and Joanna shared another small bedroom and the maid had the tiny third bedroom. There was quite a good sized garden. At the far end there was a rough patch, for people to keep chickens. The sisters each had a small plot, and there was also room for a sand pit and swing. Beyond was a hedge and an oak tree; Alison still remembers the shape of it.

Beyond all the gardens was a field where a horse was kept. The maid often took them through the hedge to have a picnic tea. Beyond the field again was a muddy lane, with real countryside. However, Birmingham expanded steadily in the 1920s and 30s and the fields were built over.

The neighbours must have suffered terribly from the sound of the sisters practising the piano. Every Wednesday afternoon a young woman came to teach them piano. On Sunday a cake was put out, but the girls were pressed to 'keep it for Wednesday'. The other neighbours were a family called Onions. They preferred to be called 'O'Nyons', but Alison does not think it ever caught on.

Mrs Aytoun managed to make the rooms very attractive, but she always hated the way that one had to go one step up on the stairs so that the front door could open.

They never had a car while they lived there, and very few houses on the estate had garages. The main mode of transport was by tram, on Bristol Road, about five minutes' walk away. Milk was delivered each morning by horse and cart. Bread, groceries, fruit and vegetables were delivered about twice a week. For a long time a Swiss hairdresser came to the house, but eventually they went to a hairdresser in Selly Oak.

Going to the theatre or a concert was a rare occasion. When they did go into Birmingham by tram there was always a worry about missing the last tram home. The trams had hard wooden seats and no heating. For special trips to a party or to the railway station, Mr Griffiths from the Garage provided a motorbike and sidecar, but later it was a real car.

Dr Dain, the doctor, would always call at the house, at first by bicycle, later by car. Alison remembers only going to the surgery once. Of course, the doctor charged in those days. One could be a private patient i.e. a man who had health insurance paid for it out of his wages, but that didn't cover his wife and family. Doctors would treat many people for free if they were too poor to pay.

Unlike today, when patients are referred to consultants and hospitals quite often, it was almost unheard of in those days, really because there were far fewer treatments and cures then. Children had to suffer all the infectious diseases such as measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, chickenpox and so on. There were no antibiotics.

Alison can remember being wheeled up the road by her mother, with Elizabeth and Joanna too, in a 'basket' upright pram. She also remembers a fete in the garden at Carey Hall. She won a prize of a paintbox kit which involved squeezing paint onto one side of paper, then folding it to duplicate a butterfly.

When she did go to the 'Prep' school in Edgbaston she was terrified, she felt so cut off from home and wept bitterly on her first day, so Joanna was called out of her class to comfort her.

Her favourite subjects were singing, and, of course, painting. Everything was always a struggle, except sometimes English, and Art, at which she always shone, winning prizes, and was first in all England once, in the Royal Drawing Society competition.

Her mother was active in several causes in the days before the Welfare State. She weighed babies at the Child Welfare Clinic in Selly Oak. She was also Secretary of the Clinic, a charity in those days. She was very enthusiastic about the work, as she was with the Committee dealing with District Nurses; later on, she and the girls often sold flags on their flag days.

A lot of time when they were children was spent in bed with various diseases. They were kept in bed, and it was terribly boring, before the days of radio. However, she quite enjoyed chickenpox as Joanna had it at the same time, and they were side by side in bed and played lots of games. Alison remembers Joanna singing Beethoven sonatas. Alison knew every note, and she would sing along; in fact, she was always singing to herself, as she worked or played or painted.

Home life in their small 'semi' she remembers as basically happy, but she was also very aware of her mother's constant worrying about money, even though Uncle Edward and Aunty TD supported her.

Often relatives stayed with them in their tiny spare bedroom. Granny Aytoun, who lived until well into her 90s, came quite often, although Alison's mother and she were not too fond of each other. Alison can remember her sitting in the Orkney chair (which she still has), telling her endless stories about Brer Rabbit; she always smelt of lavender water.

Aunt Netty, a great-aunt from the Paisley Hendersons, came for long periods. She was unmarried and of a generation which never took a job, except to be a governess or companion. She was a companion for Alison's Mother, and helped in little ways, with mending, and with reading to the girls, although she was pretty frail.

Holidays

The Aytouns never had a family car until Ashintully, but in the 1930s a great aunt left them each £50 and Joanna bought a Morris Cowley car, rather ancient and upright. As the road at home in Birmingham was rather narrow, her mother had a hard-standing built for it in the front garden. There were also no driving tests in the early 1930s. In 1937 Joanna took a few lessons in time for a holiday to Trebarwith in North Cornwall with their mother, and several friends. It was quite an adventure; they had several punctures on the way there and back.

For all other holidays they had to have a taxi into Birmingham New Street Station to catch a train. They had to walk and travel by bus during the holiday. There were also no driving tests in the early 1930s. In those days they could send any big luggage by 'Luggage in Advance' i.e. a cart would collect it and it would be delivered at the other end. There were also porters at the stations to carry luggage and suitcases.

Weoley Hill United Reformed Church



The church started by Alison's father was initially held in a house, and later moved into an army hut on the Weoley Hill estate. It became a real focal point for the Aytouns. They regularly attended every Sunday morning, in great discomfort in the winter as it was mighty cold. There were very lengthy sermons and Alison being about three, sat on her mother's lap and usually went to sleep. Her Mother took part in efforts to raise enough money to build a proper church. By the time Alison was 16 this was achieved. Weoley Hill United Reformed Church is noted architecturally for its unusual Scottish gable. It was where Alison and her husband were married. The church was opened on 1 July 1933; she got special permission to leave St. Leonards School early to attend the event. It was built to designs by the architect J.R. Armstrong (architect to the Bournville Village Trust) and it cost £5 500.

Social Life

In the Christmas holidays there were always one or two children's parties, with great excitement whenever an invitation arrived. Alison's Mother always made them lovely party frocks, but very often, Alison, being the youngest, would have one of Elizabeth or Joanna's cast-offs. Once at the party, Alison would be desperately shy, and never really enjoyed them. They would play games and perhaps have a conjuror.

When they grew older, local families would give small parties in their homes, when they would play progressive games, and later still, they would have musical evenings, mainly with the Coates family, when they sang madrigals, which Alison loved. There were always a few dances, mostly in Birmingham. Alison adored dancing, but she always hated to have to sit out a dance; one had to be asked by the men. One summer Joanna and Alison joined Weoley Hill Tennis Club, which was great fun.

When Alison was still quite young, about seven or eight years old, they got their first crystal set radio - great excitement. There were no loudspeakers, only headphones. Later they did get a wireless, with a speaker. They enjoyed dance music, and BBC Children's Hour. Only a few people had TV before the War. Gradually, afterwards, more and more people had one, although the sets were small and the programmes were not good.

Later, while living at Ashintully in Scotland, they had one radio, but having no mains electricity, it ran on huge batteries, which were recharged in Blairgowrie, so they used it sparingly, mostly for 'Much Binding in the Marsh', and the Nine O'Clock News. Everything stopped for that. They went to, and held, barn dances i.e. Scottish Country Dancing to gramophone music.

In the War, Alison's mother welcomed bomber crews on leave, mostly U.S. or Canadian, three or four men at a time, at Ashintully, arranged through the English-Speaking Union. Joanna and Alison were often only there from London for two or three weeks of annual leave, but they often met the servicemen again in London.

To be continued.

Alison Neilson and Hamish Neilson

Alison and her family - some photos



Left: Alison's father at his desk

Middle: Alison's beautiful mother Dorothy

Right: Alison aged seven



Left: Edward and Dorothy Cadbury

Middle: Aunty TD - Christina Irvine.

Right: Alison (left) with her mother and sisters

Ashintully Castle – inherited by the Aytoun sisters

Ashintully Castle in Strathardle, Perthshire was originally built in 1583 as a fortified tower house or fortalice. Its early history was turbulent; it provided refuge for Rob Roy MacGregor and later for Jacobite insurgents whose cause the Spalding clan staunchly supported. The Spalding Barons were chiefs of the Spalding Clan and followers of the Duke of Atholl, the Chief of the Murray Clan.

The castle lies northeast of Kirkmichael; the name Ashintully is an anglicized spelling of the Gaelic Eas an Tulaichand means 'cascade of the hillock'.

In 1576, Colonel David Spalding led members of his clan to fight in Flanders for the King of Spain. After seven years, with the resulting plunder, he built Ashintully Castle, one kilometre to the southeast of Whitefield Castle, which served as a model.

David Spalding, Laird of Ashintully, was remembered much more harshly. 'He condemned and executed many most unrighteously, particularly a man of the name of Duncan, who was drowned in a sack in what is still called 'Duncan's Pool.' There are said to be three ghosts associated with the Castle.

During the early 1700s, the family followed the Jacobite cause, lost its lands, and dispersed.

Until the mid-1700s there were no roads or wheeled vehicles of any kind in this part of the Highlands, and Gaelic was spoken universally.



Ashintully's situation - from Dundee on a map, between Edinburgh and Aberdeen on the east coast. 27 km NW is Blairgowrie, and twice as far is Pitlochry. 18 km NW of Blairgowrie is the village of Kirkmichael. 2.5 km NE of Kirkmichael is Ashintully Castle, 120 m higher at an altitude of 340 m.

In the 18th century the property was owned by Daniel Spalding, who was described as 'fatuous and precognosed' i.e. unfit to hold the property. Ashintully passed, in lieu of debts, into the possession of lawyer James Rutherford and then to Roger Rutherford Aytoun. Ashintully was remodelled a number of times, notably

in 1830, gradually assuming the more genteel character of a country house as peace descended on the Highlands.

Chadwick Marriot Walker Aytoun of Purin, was born on 18th March 1787 at Inchdairnie, Fife. He was joined the army, and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant 1802, Lieutenant 1804, and Captain Royal Artillery in 1812. He married Eliza Wardlaw (sometimes recorded as Elizabeth Wilhelmina) Miller, daughter of Dr Henry Miller of Purin and Clara Rutherford of Ashintully, at Edinburgh on the 30th April 1823. He was Lieutenant for Fife, and a Justice of the Peace for Fife and Perthshire. He and his wife owned several properties around Freuchie in Fife, including three mills and the lands and woodlands of Purin. He devised a method of bringing pure water to the town of Auchterarder in 1832.

Chadwick died on 16 February 1854 at Waulkmill of Freuchie, Falkland. In 1863 in the Rollo legal case papers his name was listed as Marriot Chadwick Walker Rollo Aytoun, but this may be an error. His widow Eliza died at Biarritz in 1881 and is buried there.

Roger James Aytoun, son of Chadwick and Eliza, was born on 29 May 1824 at Edinburgh, and joined the army like his father. He was an Ensign 1843, Lieutenant 1847, and Captain in the 1st Royal Scots. In 1846 he was with the army in Barbados. He assumed the name of Rutherford Aytoun on succeeding to the estates of Ashintully and Glendevon from his great-aunt Jane/Jean/Janet Rutherford in 1850; she lived to the age of 96 (August 1772 - April 1869, and is buried at Glendevon Church graveyard). Roger was married, on 21 January 1852, to Catherine Georgina daughter of Patrick and Anna Bannerman of Elsick, Kincardineshire. Roger was listed as living at Glendevon in 1863 in the Rollo legal case papers. Roger and Catherine had four daughters. Roger died on 29 November 1871, in his forty-seventh year; on 16 November he was at Inchdairnie shooting game; he wrote to his daughter Mary calling her 'Pinky'. Catherine, Mrs Aytoun, who was one of 16 children, lived until she was 89 (87 on the death certificate) and died at Easter Bleaton, Kirkmichael, Perthshire on 13 September 1920. Her death was reported by David Lindsay-Carnegie of Ashintully, her son-in-law.

In an obituary in 1871 Roger was said to be 'retiring and unostentatious in life, and was consequently little known in connection with public affairs, but in politics he always voted on the Liberal side.....The deceased has left no male issue to inherit his property, which is entailed, but a widow and four daughters to mourn his early death. His eldest daughter will probably succeed to the property.'

(Blairgowrie Advertiser, 9 December 1871).



Kirkmichael Church, with the Aytoun graves on the right-hand side of the door.

Roger and Eliza's four daughters

Anna Maria Rutherford Aytoun, was born in 1853. In 1881 she married David Crawford Lindsay of Kinblethmont, son of Capt. Alexander Cruickshank Lindsay, 8th Hussars, by Jane, daughter of William Fullerton Lindsay-Carnegie R.A. of Kinblethmont, Forfarshire, and she died on 9 September 1922. David and Anna did not have any children. Anna was listed as living at Glendevon with her three sisters in 1863 in the Rollo legal case papers. She inherited Glendevon House in 1883, and it was sold in 1923 to John McNee. His daughter, Charlotte, still owned the property in 1975, according to an article in *Scotland's magazine*; she reported that Captain Aytoun had built a three storey extension to the (original single storey) house, but she had had it knocked down after the (Second World) War.

Eliza Clara Rutherford Aytoun, known as Lizzie, was born in 1854, and died on 13 May 1937, at Ashintully, with no issue. She was a beneficiary under Colonel A.J. Bannerman's Executry - he was presumably a brother of Eliza's mother Catherine Bannerman.

Katherine Georgina Rutherford Aytoun, was born in 1856 in Edinburgh, and died of TB, on 16 May 1905, with no issue

Mary Isabella Rutherford Aytoun, was born on 21 May 1858, and she died on 13 April 1937, at Ashintully, with no issue.

Hamish Neilson

The September armistice

The First World War campaign around Thessaloniki in Greece has been largely forgotten, overshadowed by the war in France and Belgium. Nevertheless a sizeable British contingent took part. The Allied forces in Salonika, as it was known, were of very diverse origin: British, French, Greek, Italian, Russian and Serbian, totalling some 600 000 men. Within the British and French forces were units from India, Indo-China, North and West Africa.

The Salonika Campaign began on in October 1915 when the 10th (Irish) Division and French 156th Division landed at Salonika. The Allies' plan was to deter Bulgaria from joining Germany and Austria-Hungary, but within a few days Bulgaria declared war and mobilised to attack Serbia. The Anglo-French force's attempts to support the Serbian army ended in failure and by 14 December the troops had retreated to Greek territory, falling back towards Salonika.

The Allied army lacked manpower, ammunition, equipment and supplies to maintain a campaign along a 250-mile front against Bulgarian forces and their allies, including Austro-Hungarian, German and Turkish units. Nevertheless, Allied offensives led by French and Serbian troops were launched during late 1916 and spring of 1917. The British Serbian Force took part in these operations and fought at the First Battle of Doiran (24 April - 9 May 1917) suffering more than 5 000 casualties, killed and wounded. However, the Allies failed to break Bulgarian resistance and the outcome was a stalemate along the Salonika Front.

The stalemate was eventually broken by an ambitious offensive in September 1918 when French and Serbian forces succeeded in breaking through Bulgarian positions, with support from the British Salonika Force. The Bulgarian Army was forced to retreat and was then routed. On 24 September the Bulgarian Government asked for a ceasefire and on 29 September 1918 the Armistice of Salonica was signed between Bulgaria and the Allied Powers in Thessaloniki. It came into effect on the Bulgarian front at noon on 30 September.

As the military situation became one of long periods of stalemate, the British soldiers, some of whom established farms and gardens to grow food, were nicknamed the *Gardeners of Salonika*. It was sometimes assumed at home that the army in Salonika was having an easy time. Their situation was not so unremittingly terrible as in the trenches in France and Flanders, but conditions were harsh. The soldiers on both sides faced challenging terrain and extremes of climate in summer and winter. Soldiers in the front line were usually lodged in little more than a bivouac tent or dugout. There was no home leave.

Disease, in particular malaria, proved endemic throughout the campaign as the region was one of the worst malarial areas in Europe. The British Salonika Force alone suffered more than 160 000 cases of malaria.

The 100th anniversary of the Armistice of Salonica was commemorated in Thessaloniki on 30 September 2018.

Stephanie Robertson



Private Arthur Onesimus Eaton was one of many thousands of British servicemen who served on the Salonika front and who never came home. He was in the 2nd (Garrison) Battalion, The King's (Liverpool Regiment). He died on 18 August 1917, aged 25 and now lies in the First World War cemetery in Thessaloniki in Greece.

His parents were James and Sarah Eaton, of Old St Julians, Caerleon Rd, Newport, Monmouthshire. The 1911 census reveals that his father was an oil and hardware merchant and at that time Arthur worked as a haulier, no doubt carrying out deliveries for his father.

Arthur's service record has not been found. Having come through the First Battle of Doiran, probably like many others he survived the campaign but died of disease.



Left: The 100th anniversary of the September 1918 armistice was commemorated at the Thessaloniki First World War cemetery which contains the graves of around 20 000 Serbian, French, British, Italian Russian and Greek soldiers. Here wreaths are laid at the Stone of Remembrance in the British section.

Right: 'This olive tree, a symbol of reconciliation and peace, was planted on 30.09.2018 by Bartholomaios, Ecumenical Patriarch, on the centennial of the end of the First World War.' Wreaths at the monument in memory of the Greeks killed in the First World War.



No connection with Aytons or Eatons but an interesting reminder of the role women played in the First World War. Katherine Harley was the sister of Field Marshal Sir John French. Before the war she was active in the Women's Suffrage Movement. After the outbreak of war she served as a nurse first in France and then on the Balkan Front. She was killed by shellfire in Serbia and was buried in the British section of the Thessaloniki cemetery in splendid tomb, under an inscription chosen by Serbian army officers: 'The generous English lady and great benefactress of the Serbian people: Madame Harlay. On your tomb instead of flowers the gratitude of the Serbs shall blossom there. For your wonderful acts your name shall be known from generation to generation.'