

CECIL WILLIAM FERGUSON ATKINSON

Cecil William Ferguson Atkinson (so. Frank and Margaret Atkinson) was born in Limerick, Ireland in circa 21 January 1877 and died in Wanderers, Johannesburg 5 December 1942. TAB MHG 5297/42

Atkinson was an Ulsterman and twice the Vice-Chancellor's prizeman at Trinity College, Dublin. He was a captain in the Dublin Fusiliers and emigrated to South Africa in 1902.

For a while, he was an acting-magistrate in Koffiefontein but spent most of his renowned professional life as a magistrate in Boksburg and later as Chief Magistrate of Springs. He retired in 1937. At the time of his death he occupied a war-time post as Senior Assessor of Petrol.

On 8 February 1906, a cart with four persons on board (Mrs D H Mills (35), her infant (1), Miss M Brink (17) and a black African) was swept away when crossing the Groenvleisluit at Fauresmith, Orange River Colony. Together with Harold P Wright, a sub-inspector of the South African Constabulary in Jagersfontein, Atkinson saved the women and child. The black swam to safety unaided.

At the time, Atkinson was 32 years old and was Acting-Resident Magistrate at Koffyfontein. The Royal Humane Society medal in bronze was presented to Atkinson and Wright by the Governor of the Orange River Colony, Sir Hamilton Gould-Adams, on behalf of George, Prince of Wales.

His passion when in repose was art, having a notable talent at etching and painting in both oils and watercolours. His career in this regard peaked in a final exhibition held in October 1941 in the Gainsborough Galleries and opened by the then Mayor of Johannesburg, Alderman T P Gray. His extensive travels were reflected in the subject matter of his artworks.



The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser, Friday 11 December 1942

He married, first, Edith Geraldine Strong (do. James Henry and Sarah Strong) born Dublin circa 7 August 1872 died Boksburg 8 October 1917 TAB MHG 33201 and, second, Susanna Margaret Roux, a well-known singer in her day. There were no offspring from either union.

The Royal Humane Society Bronze Medal was introduced in 1837.

The front of the medal (or obverse) shows a cherub blowing a torch in an attempt to re-light it.

The main inscription, in Latin, reads:

"Lateat scintillula forsan"

Perhaps a tiny spark lies therein

For a complete list of the Bronze Medals awarded between 1853-1976 (inclusive), go to the Life Saving Awards Research Society website : <http://www.lsars.eurobell.co.uk/rolls.htm>

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