

White, Henry Fancourt (1811, London – 1866, Blanco)

Aged about 17 years, Henry White went to New South Wales where he joined the survey department. Over the next decade or so, he became a surveyor and road builder and also bought land in the Port Macquarrie region where he was the first to plant vines. In 1839 he ran foul of the local magistrate, the two men accusing each other of corruption. As a result Henry White returned to London in 1841 to pursue his case.

It may well be that it was then that he met John Montagu who had also returned to London from van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), also for legal reasons.

In 1843 Montagu was appointed as Colonial Secretary at the Cape. With the help of Charles Michell and Andrew Bain he planned a series of roads and passes and set up the Central Road Board to supervise the program. One of the most ambitious of these passes was to become the Montagu Pass.

This was begun in 1844 and Henry White was invited to the Cape to take over the construction, which he did in 1845. The pass was completed in 1847. A year later White had also completed the new pass up the Great Brak heights.

The building of the Montagu Pass had required a construction site for men and materials and this was first named White's Village, but soon changed to Blanco [Fr. *Blanc* = *white*]. In 1849, White bought land there and a portion of the Modder River farm.

After completion of the Great Brak road, White and his men moved to the Zuurberg, near Addo, and in 1851 to Port Elizabeth, following the outbreak of the 8th Frontier War.

It was about this time that White became involved in litigation once again. This time it was with his superior Capt. George Pilkington, Colonial Civil engineer, and Pilkington's son, Woodford.

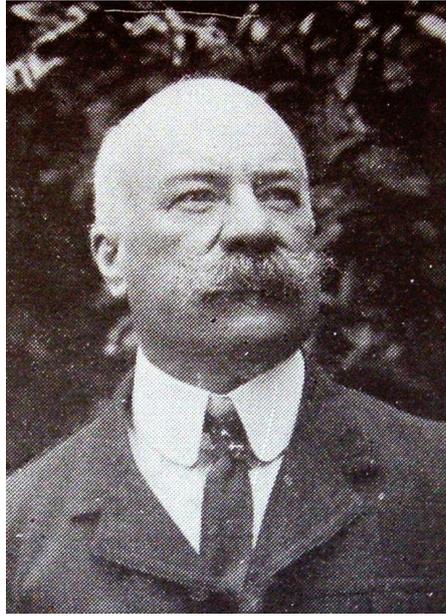
White resigned from the Roads Board and in 1854 was elected as a member of the new Cape Parliament for Port Elizabeth. He only serves one year but it is presumably at this time that he meets Sarah Bosworth, a 35-year-old widow with a daughter Elizabeth. Henry and Sarah go to England where they marry in 1856 and where their son Ernest Montagu (Monty) is born in Surbiton in 1857.

The family soon returns to the Cape where Henry, now 48, is unable to find work. They settle at Blanco where Henry builds his home "Blanco House" (later Fancourt) in 1860. Sadly, he was to lose much of his money in a local bank and was badly off when he died in 1866. He is buried at St. Mark's Cathedral in George.

White, Ernest Montagu (1857, Surbiton, England – 1916, Blanco)

Young Montagu went to school at St. Mark's Grammar School in George and then to Bishops in Cape Town. By the time of his mother's death in 1875, he was eighteen and already a magistrate's clerk in Willowmore. Two years later in Komgha, he was involved in a skirmish in the 9th Frontier War. Later, in 1886, he moved to the Transvaal, joining the civil service there and attracting sufficient notice to be appointed, in 1892, as the Transvaal's consul-general in London. He held the post until the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war and was credited with doing "valuable service in keeping Pretoria informed of political developments." With the coming of the war he was in an awkward position, having been born in England, and he moved to the United States where he is said to have raised money for the Boer cause.

The Anglo-Boer war ended officially on 31st May, 1902. Six weeks later, on 9th July, White is reported as lunching with Pres. Teddy Roosevelt at the latter's summer residence on Long Island. It was reported that this was a purely social meeting.



Monty White

Montagu White has been described as a man of resource and ability. He could speak six languages and had a wide vision. With these attributes he returned to the Southern Cape in 1903, in his mid-forties, and looked about for opportunities. One of his first acts was to buy his father's old home for £3500, partially rebuilding it and naming it "Fancourt". It remains the heart of the hotel and golf estate of that name at Blanco.

Shortly afterwards he and others floated the Wilderness Estate Company which bought the Wilderness from the Bennett family in May, 1905 for the sum of £10 000.

At about this time he married Margaret Hesse in England. Unfortunately she did not enjoy the Cape, so Monty spent the South African summers here without her. At that time his half-sister, now Mrs. Elizabeth Ham, acted as his hostess.

This period was brought to a close in 1916 by the deaths of Monty, Mrs. Ham and a friend, Mrs. Sydney Vincent in a case of mushroom poisoning at Fancourt.

Pilkington, George (1785, Dublin – 1858, Green Point)

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, George entered the Royal Engineers in 1804, leaving the service with the rank of Captain 10 years later. He spent time in West Africa, Trinidad and Spain and was active in the anti-slavery movement in the 1830s. In 1848 he came to the Cape to replace Charles Michell as Colonial Civil Engineer on the latter's retirement. Pilkington bridge in Bain's Kloof is named after him.

George Pilkington had three sons and three daughters, and his second son, Woodford, became involved in litigation with Henry White. As a result of this, Henry resigned from the Roads Board.

Pilkington, Henry Lionel Gordon (1886, Sea Point – 1968, London)

Gordon Pilkington was the grandson of George Pilkington's eldest son, George William Pilkington.

Gordon trained as a civil engineer and was articled to the firm of Herbert Baker & F.E. Masey. Later Baker drew Pilkington to Pretoria to work on the Union Buildings. After the founding of the Diocese of George in 1911, the firm of Baker & Kendall is asked to design a new chancel for the cathedral.



Gordon Pilkington

On 16th May 1913 the youngest child and only daughter of the Resident Magistrate, died. Mr. C.R.Haw, who had been appointed in 1899 and who lived in Blanco, offered to have a chapel built at his expense, as a memorial to his daughter, Alice. The architect, H.L.G. Pilkington of Pretoria, gave his services free. The little chapel was consecrated by Bishop Sidwell in June 1915 as that of St. Mary the Virgin, but it was also known as the Alice Haw Memorial Chapel.

4.



The chapel in Blanco in 2014

It is probably purely coincidental that a near neighbour of C.R. Haw, and a fellow Anglican, was Monty White. One can only speculate as to whether he and Pilkington were aware of the litigation between their families some 60 years previously.

A few years later Pilkington designed St. Aidan's chapel and rest-house at Wilderness. His name is also associated with the Durban Memorial to WW1.

Researched & Written Up by Hugo Leggatt in 2014