

BLATTENGUETTA HEROUY (1878-1938)

ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

GRAVE AT LOCKSBROOK CEMETERY, BATH

SOME NOTES

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From *The Western Morning News* of Tue 20 Sep 1938 p8:

EMPEROR'S FRIEND
Death Of the Abyssinian
Foreign Minister
From Our Own Correspondent.

BATH, Monday.
Blattengeta Herouy, the Abyssinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, died today at Fairfield, Bath, the home of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia.

Blattengeta Herouy, who was 60, had been ill for several months.

The funeral will take place tomorrow at Bath.

Herouy, whose two sons were educated in England, was a great friend of Haile Selassie, and followed him to this country when the Emperor began his exile after the Italian occupation of Abyssinia.

From *The Bath Chronicle* of Sat 24 Sep 1938:

FOREIGN MINISTER
DIED AT BATH
—
ETHIOPIAN SCHOLAR AND
HISTORIAN
—
HOLDER OF MANY
FOREIGN DECORATIONS
—

HOLDER of a very ancient Court title and known as the scholar and historian of Ethiopia, Blattengueta Herouy, Foreign Minister to Emperor Haile Selassie, died at Fairfield, Newbridge Hill, Bath, on Monday, at the age of 60 years, after a long illness.

The title Blattengueta means "Chief of the Wise Men."

Blattengueta Herouy who was the Emperor's closest friend, came to England with him in 1936.

He had visited every country in Europe, also America and Japan, either officially or semi-officially.

He started public life in Ethiopia as private secretary to the Emperor Menelik II, and was a member of the mission which came to England to represent Abyssinia at the Coronation of King George V.

After the Great War the present Emperor appointed him a member of the mission which was sent to England and America to congratulate the Allies on their victory, and also to convey Ethiopia's donation towards aiding the war victims of the two countries.

He was the First Judge of a special court in his own country to deal with affairs between Ethiopians and foreigners.

Delegate to the League

When Ethiopia was admitted to the League of Nations in 1923, Blattengueta Herouy was a member of the delegation from his country to that body, and in 1924 he accompanied the present Emperor on a grand tour of Europe.

The following year he was appointed Director-General for Foreign Affairs, and became Minister five years later.

He then went to Japan to return a visit of a special Ambassador from that country, who was the official representative at the Coronation of the Emperor Haile Selassie.

He was the author of 23 books, some being published at his own press which he had set up in Addis Ababa, and his last great work, a history of Ethiopia, was in the hands of the printers when the war with Italy broke out.

Honoured in Many Countries

He held many decorations, including the Grand Cordon of the Star of Ethiopia, and the Order of Holy Trinity, the English Order of Knight of the British Empire, the Legion d'Honneur of France, the Grand Cordon of the Polar Star of Sweden, the Order of the Phoenix, and the Grand Cordon of the Order of Saviour of the World of Greece, the Second-Class Order of Mohamed Aly of Egypt, and also decorations from Luxembourg and Portugal.

His eldest son, who was educated at Cambridge, lost his life in the fighting at Addis Ababa.

He is survived by three daughters and one son, who is secretary to the Emperor.

Poignant Scenes at Graveyard

The funeral, which took place at Locksbrook Cemetery on Tuesday, was attended by the Emperor of Abyssinia, the Empress, the elder princes, and members of the household.

The ceremony, the major portion of which was conducted by the Abba Beile, was impressive, but the prayers and readings were not understandable by the few English people who were at the graveside.

On the coffin was a large floral emblem draped with the Abyssinian colours, and the name-plate was inscribed with the, to us, unfamiliar characters of the Ethiopian language.

The priests, in black robes, wore stoles of scarlet, gold and blue.

At one stage of the ceremony tapers were lighted and handed to those immediately around the coffin.

The mourners were profoundly affected by the service, and when speaking in his own tongue, the Emperor delivered an oration at the edge of the grave his voice broke several times. The Empress, as well as many others present, was in tears.

Even those to whom the service was in a strange tongue could not help being affected by the great sorrow that was manifested among those more intimately associated with the proceedings.

At the close each of the mourners threw a small handful of earth into the grave.

It was an unadorned grave and adjoins that in which there was recently laid to rest the little child of a member of the Emperor's outdoor staff.

Royal Mourners

The chief mourners were the Emperor and Empress, Sirak W. S. Herouy (son), the Crown Prince, Princess Tengue Work, Princess Tshae, the Duke of Harar, the Legation Minister (Dr. Martin),

other members of the Legation, and the whole of the household staff at "Fairfield."

Wreaths were sent by their Majesties, by the son, by the Crown Princes, the Princesses, the Duke of Harar, the staff at "Fairfield," the headquarters of the Abyssinian Association, the local branch of that organisation and "friends in Bath and elsewhere."

Prior to the interment a service was conducted in the Emperor's private chapel by the resident priest in accordance with the rites of the Ethiopian Church.

Mr. H. Lay, of Lower Weston, was responsible for the funeral arrangements.

A Press photographer who attended the funeral was told by a cemetery official that photographs could not be taken. By whose instructions this order was given is not at present known.

The Name

The index to burials in the Walcot section of Locksbrook cemetery has the name is "Herouy Wolde Sellassie". This may seem anomalous as in the newspaper articles it is given as 'Blettenguetta Herouy'. Firstly the 'Blattenguetta' (various spellings) is the title of 'chief of pages' within the court also given as 'chief of the wise men'. However, confusingly he was born as 'Gebre Masqal' and the 'Herouy' (meaning 'precious') was a name given to him by his priest-teacher.

From *The Straits Times* of 19 Apr 1939 p19:

Italians' Women Prisoners

The private Secretary to Haile Selassie, who is also son of the of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the ex-Emperor of Abyssinia, asked in Probate Court London, for grant of letters of administration of his father's estate.

He is the second and only surviving son named in the will, Sirak Herouy.

His father, Blattengueta Herouy, otherwise Herouy Wolde Selassie, died at Fairfield, Bath, last September. He came to England in attendance on the Emperor.

The will was dated four days before he died. A father of the Ethiopian Church, Abba Haile, was also named in the will, and it was asked that he be appointed joint administrator.

The testator's widow and three daughters were said to be prisoners of the Italians, and their precise whereabouts were unknown.

Mr. Justice Langton approved the two administrators and granted the letters of administration as requested.

From *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* by John H. Spencer (2nd edition 2006) p26 "There are no family names as such except in rare instances where grandchildren of some famous man arbitrarily carry on his given name. Such is the case of the descendants of Blatengueta Herouy Wolde Sellassie who have retained the name Herouy."

Re-burial

According to 'Footsteps of the Emperor' (HTV West 1999) produced by Shawn Sobers, narrated by Benjamin Zephaniah, the body of Blattengueta Herouy was eventually returned to Ethiopia. The body was exhumed under a Home Office licence on 4 Sep 1947.

From *The Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald* of Sat 6 Sep 1947 p4:

EXHUMATION AT BATH

Body Will Be Flown To
Addis Ababa

NEGUS'S FRIEND

On the instructions from the Ethiopia Legation in London the body of Blettengueta Herouy, formerly Abyssinia's Foreign Minister and a close friend of the Emperor Haile Selassie, was exhumed on Thursday from Locksbrook Cemetery, Bath. The body was taken by road to London, pending an arrangement of transport by air to Addis Ababa, where there will be a special funeral service.

Blattengueta Herouy died at Fairfield, Newbridge Hill, Bath—where the Emperor lived during his years of exile—on September 19, 1938, after a long illness, at the age of 60 years. His title, Blattengueta, means "Chief of the Wise Men."

He was the Emperor's closest friend and came to England with him in 1936. He had visited every country in Europe, and had also served his country, either officially or semi-officially, in America and Japan. He started his public life in Ethiopia as Private Secretary to the Emperor Menelik II., and was a member of the mission which came to England to represent Abyssinia at the Coronation of King George V.

He was First Judge of a special court in Abyssinia to deal with affairs between Ethiopians and foreigners. Author of 23 books, his last great work was a history of his own country.

The funeral at Locksbrook Cemetery in 1938 was attended by the Emperor and the Empress, the elder Princes, and members of the Abyssinian royal household.





The grave is at IBB614 in the consecrated section of the Walcot part of Locksbrook cemetery. It is in the second row from the path. The cross and the upper of two plinths are now flat on the grave. On the lower plinth is text in Amharic:

ናቀር የማደሞተ ዘጎለም የሚዋር ነው
 ለታማኝ ሸገልጋም ለብጎቴን ጌታ ነሩይ
 ወታስቢያ.
 ያንተም ወልከም ሥረወታስቢያህ ሆኖ
 ዴኖረል
 ወለከረም ፲ቀን ፲፱፻፴፩ ዓ:ዋ:

Any text on the upper plinth is inaccessible. The name in Amharic is usually rendered as:

ብላቴን:ጌታ:ኅሩይ:ወልደ:ሥላሴ

ብላቴን	Be-la-tē-n
ጌታ	ge-ta
ኅሩይ	he-ru-y
ወልደ	we-lə-de
ሥላሴ	szə-la-sē

(the ‘:’ is a word separator) and this has a partial correspondence on the second line. On the last line is the year as:

፲ ፱ ፻ ፴፩ 10 100 9 30 1 ie 1931

The Ethiopian (Ge’ez) calendar has years which are 7 or 8 less than the Gregorian ones depending on the time of year.



There is a separate inscription in English on a rough granite block:

HAILE SELASSE I. EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA.
 LOVE IS ETERNAL
 IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY FAITHFUL SERVANT
 BLATAIN GUETA HEROUY,
 WHOSE WORK SHALL LIVE FOR EVER
 SEPTEMBER 19. 1938.

From the *National Probate Calendar* 1939:
 HERONY Blattengueta or SELASSIE Herony Wolde of Fairfield Newbridge Hill Bath died 19 September 1938 Administration (with Will) London 22 May to Sirak Herony private secretary to the reverend Haile Marian Gabre Meskel clerk. Effects £1333 8s. 7d. in England.

(The spelling ‘Herony’ rather than ‘Herouy’ also occurs in the death registration.)



The memorial was repaired and the restored memorial unveiled on 15-Apr-2018. The inscriptions on the plinths are now:

