

Humshaugh Churchyard Story

Names Marion Cuthill, James Cuthill, Alice Cummings, Alexander Cuthill, Peter Cummings

Grave - South of the church, not far from the south-west corner.

Text on Grave - In affectionate remembrance of

Marion, dearly beloved wife of James Cuthill, who departed this life Feb.14th 1889, aged 57 years.

Also of Alice Cummings, their daughter, who died October 16th 1878, aged 23 years.

Also of Alexander, their son, who died November 18th 1886, aged 24 years.

Also of Peter Cummings, their grandson, who died August 23rd 1878, aged 2 years and six months.

Also of the above James Cuthill, who died April 15th 1891, aged 68 years.

Marion Cuthill was born Marion Fraser, daughter of Alexander Fraser, in the Dalkeith area, south of Edinburgh. The 1851 census places her, as an outdoor servant, in the Midlothian village of Heriot, now in the Scottish Borders region. It was here, in 1852, that Marion married James Cuthill. By 1861, the couple had moved further south, to the village of Bowland, where James is described as the station keeper. Along with their four children, Marion's 60-year old mother-in-law and her own sister Jessie Fraser were living with the Cuthills. At some point in the latter half of the 1860s, James moved again, within The North British Railway company. The 1871 census shows the family at Chollerford station. They were still at Chollerford in 1881, with two of their older children and two younger ones, who had been born at Chollerford and baptised at St John Lee. Living with them in 1881 was Marion's father, the 80-year old Alexander Fraser. Marion Cuthill died at the age of 57, on 14th February 1889. Two days later on 16th February, she was buried at St Peter's, Humshaugh, with the Rev H Parminter officiating.

James Cuthill was a miller's son, born in 1825, in the village of Borthwick in Midlothian. The 1841 census shows him as a grocer's apprentice in that village. By 1851, he had made a career move and was working for the North British Railway on the Waverley Line. He was living at Heriot Station with his mother, Margaret, and is listed as a railway gate keeper. The following year, he married Marion Fraser, who worked in the nearby village. The 1861 census shows that James had moved again, advancing his status within the railway company. The family had moved south to Bowland Station, where James was the Station keeper, a title given to someone in charge of a smaller station. By 1871, James Cuthill was in England, as the station master at Chollerford. Once again, he had bettered himself, within the same company, and was now in charge of a much larger station. We know from the birth dates of his children that he made the move after 1866.

In 1881, the family were still at Chollerford Station, with two of their older children. The 15-year old Robert was a railway clerk at the station. After Marion died in 1889, Marion junior became housekeeper to the family. In 1891, Alexander Fraser, now aged 90, was still living with the Cuthills. That census also lists a visitor named Edward Brice, who would later marry Marion. On 15th April 1891, shortly after that census was taken, James Cuthill died at the age of 68. He was buried at Humshaugh on 18th April. His burial was recorded by Rev F H Waller, Curate in Charge, and he recorded that James' address, Chollerford Station, was in the parish of St Oswald. An obituary in the Newcastle Courant states that James Cuthill had worked in the service of the North British Railway for 48 years.

Also named on the headstone is Alexander Cuthill, a son of James and Marion, who died on November 18th 1886, aged 24. Alexander appears as a 9-year old boy on the 1871 census, with his family at Chollerford, but by 1881, he had returned to Scotland. He was listed as a railway guard and was living as a boarder with the family of an uncle, Robert Cuthill, also a railway worker. Like his father, Alexander was employed by the North British Railway on the Waverley Line. Alexander

Cuthill died at Chollerford Station on 18th November 1886 and was buried at Humshaugh, three days later, on 21st November. Reverend Parminter presided over the service.

Alice Cummings was the daughter of James and Marion Cuthill. Born in 1855 and baptised as Allison Paterson Cuthill, she may have changed to the English form of her name on moving to Chollerford. By 1875, Alice was working in Edinburgh, where she married Thomas Cummings. In 1876, she gave birth to their son, Peter. Sadly, Alice contracted tuberculosis and moved back to Chollerford with her son. Peter died at Chollerford on 23rd August 1878 and Alice died less than two months later, on 15th October. Her husband, Thomas Cummings was with her when she died. Both Alice and her infant son are buried at Humshaugh. The bereaved Thomas Cummings returned to Edinburgh, where he does not appear to have remarried.

James Cuthill, who died in 1891, is the last of the family to be named on the headstone, but the burial books show that there has been a sixth member of the family interred at Humshaugh. Mary Jane Cuthill, the youngest in the family, died, at the age of 20, on 15th October in the Everton district of Liverpool, where she worked as an upholsteress. Like her sister, and many others at the time, she died of tuberculosis. Her elder sister, Marion, now Mrs Brice, was with her when she died. It was obviously the family wish for her to be buried at St Peter's with her parents and other family members. Her burial took place on 19th October 1894, but her name is not inscribed on the headstone. So far, no grave has been identified as hers.

Further resources – Grateful thanks to Mr Geoff Cuthill for family information and for access to his family tree on Ancestry.co.uk.

