



WW1 Roll of Honour: Samuel Brammer Wilton M.C. (1893-1917)

Samuel Brammer Wilton was born on 25 September 1892, the only surviving son of Samuel and Mary Emmie Wilton of Liverpool Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme. His father was a well-respected Master Builder and prominent Freemason.

Wilton came up to Downing College in 1911 on a County Major Scholarship from the High School, Newcastle-under-Lyme, studying Natural Sciences and proceeding to his degree in 1914. As a keen athlete he obtained college colours for Rugby Football, captaining the side in his last two years at Downing (the photograph above shows him in the 1911-12 team) and also obtained his Hockey and Cricket colours. He was College Boat Captain and coach and often appeared in University Trial Eights. In 1913 he rowed in the Lent and May Boats and in the Clinker Four, coaching the Getting On Boat the following year.



There are many humorous but affectionate references to Wilton's somewhat imposing physique in *The Griffin*, but there can be little doubt that he was highly respected by all. The Lent 1914 issue of the College magazine included a 'Leading Lights' profile on Wilton which described him as follows:



Yes, a real, genuine, good-natured, simple, intelligent, but not intellectual fellow is Phat Bhoys. Simple, not complex: therefore you can always depend on him. Genuine and good-natured: therefore everybody likes him. Intelligent, therefore he's a good boat-captain. Not intellectual, therefore he doesn't bore you. "What more," you ask. "Why, he must be very nearly the best fellow in the world!" Well, he very nearly is!

At High School Wilton had reportedly been one of the first to join the Officers Training Corps (O.T.C.) obtaining the rank of colour-sergeant of the O.T.C and certificate A. He continued his training at Cambridge, joining the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps (C.U.O.T.C.) and obtained his certificate B. When war broke out he joined the 1/5th Battalion of the (The Prince of Wales') North Staffordshire Regiment in December 1914, obtained his commission as 2nd Lieutenant, and latterly was promoted to (Temporary) Captain of the 1/5th Battalion's Territorial Force. He was sent to the Western Front on 25 February 1915 and was wounded in September 1915 and also on 1 July 1916, returning to the front on 14 September 1916. After being reported as wounded and missing, Capt. Wilton was confirmed as killed in action at Bucquoy, Pas



de Calais on 14 March 1917, aged 24. He was engaged to be married to Madeline Lucretia Turner of Chesterton, Cambridge.



The *Cambridge Daily News* reported the words of his Commanding Officer in a letter to his parents:

'He was wounded by machine-gun fire on the 14th, whilst leading his men into action, and after taking the enemy's trench he remained with his men for nearly an hour, until his wounds overcame him. I cannot give him more praise than by saying that the battalion could hardly suffer a greater loss than by losing him. He was beloved by all, and was always so cheerful and cool that he instilled the greatest confidence in everyone.'

His Divisional Officer, writing to his parents, praised Wilton as '...one of the best Company Commanders and I personally have to deplore the loss of a valuable officer and a comrade beloved and respected by his men and all ranks of the battalion. I am glad to say that his body has been recovered and he was buried with other fallen comrades in a British cemetery.'

Wilton was posthumously awarded the Military Cross on 4 June 1917:

"This officer has consistently shewn conspicuous gallantry and coolness under fire during the past two years. He has twice been wounded, once in September, 1915, and the second time in July, 1916. He sets a wonderful example to his Company by his never-failing courage and cheerfulness in dangerous and trying positions."

S. B. Wilton M.C. citation.

Source: Meakin, 1920, p. 167

Capt. Wilton is buried in Rossignol Wood Cemetery, Hebuterne, Pas de Calais, France. His headstone is inscribed '*Nobly he lived and bravely he died*'. He is also remembered in the Memorial Hall, Newcastle-under-Lyme School and on the First World War Memorial at Downing College.

Images:

Wilton (2nd from right) in Downing College's Rugby XV, 1911-12 (DCPH/2/3/8/27)

Wilton rowing at 4 in the Lent Boat, 1913 (DCPH/2/3/2/8)

The Griffin, 'Leading Lights' profile, Lent 1914

Capt. S. B. Wilton, M.C., from Meakin, 1920 (plate XIV, p49 – full details below)

Sources

The Griffin, 1914-1917.

Casualties among Midland Officers. *The Birmingham Daily Post*, 31 March 1917.

Local casualties. *Cambridge Daily News*, 5 May 1917.

Awarded the Military Cross. *The London Gazette* (Supplement), 1917 (30111) 4 June, p. 5485.

Meakin, W. *The 5th North Staffords and the North Midland Territorials (The 46th and 59th Divisions) 1914-1919*. Longton, Staffs: Hughes & Harber, 1920. Available at:

<http://lib.militaryarchive.co.uk/library/infantry-histories/5th-North-Staffords-and-North-Midland-Territorials-46th-59th-Divs-1914-1919.asp>