



In 1881 the Reverend Alfred Wilson was living with his wife, Fanny and their two sons, Charles Edgar and Harold Alfred, at 2 Woodstock Road in Chiswick where Reverend Alfred was the vicar of St Michael and All Angels. By 1891 Charles had completed his preparatory education at 'Mr Johnson's School' in Ashted, Surrey and had just become a scholar at Charterhouse where he enjoyed the academic challenge and where his musical ability, particularly the piano, was encouraged.

Charles left Charterhouse in 1895 with the Science Leaving Exhibition and headed straight for Christ Church College, Oxford, where he obtained First Class Honours in Physiology. He joined St Thomas's Hospital, London in 1899 and after a three year course graduated with B.A. M.B. BCh. Oxon in 1902. He held several house appointments including Blackheath Cottage Hospital and The Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, before finally settling down to general practice in Petworth, West Sussex. On April 23rd 1908, during his time at Blackheath, Charles married Mary Barnes Mein in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and on February 27th 1909 their only son Richard Nicholas was born.

In Petworth the family lived in The North House, North Street and for some five years he tended to the medical needs of the people of Petworth and surrounding villages. He no doubt made regular visits to the Parish of Tillington and probably worshipped from time to time in All Hallows' Church.

It was perhaps in late summer 1914, on one of his country rounds, that Charles began to think about the war and the mounting numbers of killed and wounded soldiers. However, it was not until Autumn 1916 that he made the decision to enlist and on September 15th 1916 he was gazetted to be temporary Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps and entered the war in France on September 27th 1916. Remarkably he spent his entire service on front line duty, first with the Northumberland Fusiliers and later with the Rifle Brigade.

9868

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 13 OCTOBER, 1916.

The undermentioned to be temp.
Capts.:—
15th Sept. 1916.
Charles Edgar Andrew Wilson, M.B.



Wounded soldiers received medical treatment quickly and as near to the front line as possible. This could have been in a communication trench, a ruined house or a deep shell hole. A few hundred yards behind there was an Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) for further treatment, but the seriously wounded were taken by horse drawn or motorised ambulances to Casualty Clearing Stations some 20 kilometres behind the front line. If skilled surgery was needed men were transferred, often by rail, to a General Hospital in safe areas, often near the coast, and in the great hotels or casinos.

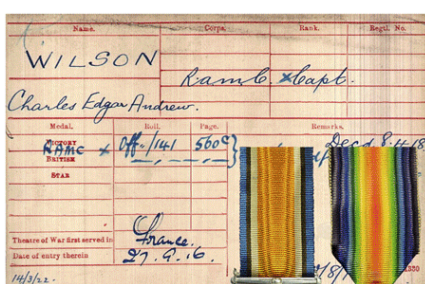
Captain Wilson's role at the front line continuously put his own life at risk and on March 28th 1918 whilst in action close to St Quentin he was seriously wounded in the spine. After local treatment he eventually reached the No1 General Hospital at Etretat on the Normandy coast close to Le Havre. This was the seaside 'L'Hotel des Roches Blanches' which, in 1914, had been converted to a one thousand bed hospital with a nursing staff of sixty-five.

It was here that, on April 8th 1918, Captain Charles Edgar Andrew Wilson died of his wounds and was laid to rest in a soldier's grave in the extension to the original churchyard.

The Colonel of the Northumberland Fusiliers to which he had been attached wrote: 'He was loved and admired by us all and I know that, personally, I have lost a great friend, one of the kindest and most sympathetic men I have known'. The Colonel of the Rifle Brigade wrote: 'He is a great loss to us all, the best doctor we ever had; we all loved him' and a medical friend speaks of him as 'a man of the highest ideals and culture, who strove for the best in everything which he undertook - a delightful companion and a staunch friend'.



No. 1 General Hospital, Etretat, France



Medal Card showing medal entitlement



Captain Wilson was recommended for the Military Cross for conspicuous courage and bravery under heavy fire, but perhaps because of his death it does not appear to have been awarded.

Although Captain Wilson came to live and work in Petworth he must have been very fond of Tillington Parish, since after the war his widow, Mary, financed a memorial to Charles in All Hallows' Church (inside main door on north wall). It reads: 'To the glorious memory of my dear husband Charles Edgar Andrew Wilson B.A. M.B. BCh. Oxon who gave his up his practice in this neighbourhood to volunteer for active service and as Temp. Capt R.A.M.C. att'd 9th Rifle Brigade died on April 8th 1918 from his wounds received near St Quentin on March 28th aged 41. He lies in a soldier's grave at Etretat, France'.

Perhaps some day the sun will shine again,
And I shall see that still the skies are blue,
And feel once more I do not live in vain,
Although I feel bereft of You.

Perhaps - Vera Brittain