

Captain Sholto Douglas Major Wilson Hampshire Regiment and Army Staff



Captain Sholto Douglas Major Wilson was awarded an MBE for his part in a little known military operation in the Western Desert of Egypt in February 1916 against rebellious Senussi tribesmen, on the Libyan border.

Sholto Wilson was born in Hartley Wintney on 25th October 1888. In 1891 his parents Isabella and Belford Wilson, who had come from Dublin, were living at 'The Cedars' in Greywell, although Sholto aged two at this time was at Deptford Cottage with Mrs Egger, a widow of 71 and her unmarried daughter Catherine.

At the 1901 census and at the age of 12 he was living with his mother, a widow aged 42 years and sister Jemima, aged 8 in The Cedars (Cedar Tree House ?), where he was still living in 1911, aged 22.

In 1914 Sholto signed papers to join the army at the Inns of Court, so it is possible he was then involved with the legal profession. He was Gazetted as 2nd Lieutenant on 16th October 1914 and in December that year was serving with 13th (Service) Battalion Hampshire Regiment on Isle of Wight. By September 1915 he was attached to the Dorset Regiment and promoted to Temporary Captain, then appears as a staff officer at the Senussi Campaign in December 1915 in Egypt.

The Sennusi Campaign, Sollum and the Engagement at Agagyir on 26th Feb 1916

During 1915 Turkey instigated a revolt against British-ruled Egypt in the North West of the country and landed German weapons by submarine. By December 1915 acts of war by the Senussi, a religious sect primarily composed of Libyan tribesmen, led to the hasty dispatch of the British Western Frontier Force to deal with the problem.

Comprising a scratch force of British, Gurkha, South African and New Zealand Infantry, Indian Camel Corps, British Yeomanry Cavalry and Australian Light Horse, the WFF advanced across the desert. Complete with armoured cars and artillery, they skirmished repeatedly with well-armed rebels equipped with machine guns and artillery.

On 26th February a decisive engagement took place at Agagyia. The South African brigade attacked and captured the entrenched Senussi position, forcing the rebels to retreat. The Dorset Yeomanry charged the retreating Senussi under heavy fire across 1,200 yards of open desert. 184 mounted yeomen charged with sabres drawn against 500 Senussi with four machine guns. The action resulted in British casualties of 5 officers and 27 men killed and 28 wounded. 200 rebels were killed and the Senussi revolt effectively fell apart. The WFF reoccupied the frontier town of Sollum, on 14 March, having defeated and disarmed the remaining Senussi.



Due to the lack of information available from the National Archives and later evidence of his somewhat reclusive nature, it was tempting for researchers to wonder if Sholto Wilson had been involved in some kind of espionage or intelligence work (perhaps a Greywell 'Lawrence of Arabia?').

However, it is probably more likely that as a staff officer with The Western Frontier Force, in the Senussi Campaign he did excellent work in organising logistics and keeping open some very stretched lines of communication during the desert campaign.

He was later to serve on the Staff at the main British supply base at El Kantara near the Suez Canal. This was the rail head and water pipeline starting point for the British Campaign in Sinai and Palestine during 1917 and 1918. Here shipping was unloaded and supplies were moved by rail, with the track laid immediately behind the advancing army.

Sholto Wilson remained at El Kantara after the armistice and did not return to Greywell until 1921.

He was awarded the Victory Medal and The British War Medal in addition to his MBE.



Sadly, research revealed little more about Sholto's service career, but after the war, he was involved in much correspondence with the War Ministry concerning a disputed over payment of some £46 to his pay account. This eventually seems to have been stopped out of his pension.

In 1942, a survey of Greywell property entitled '*invasion inventory of village resources*', puts him living alone in 'the Huts'.

By the 1960s he was remembered as living a semi reclusive life. Despite owning Cedar Tree House, he preferred to live in the same wooden shack by the River Whitewater at the rear of The Ford, a place with no electricity or water other than from the river. He did odd jobs for people, including sharpening knives and scissors.

He died on 28th September 1961 leaving his estate to an old army friend, Sidney Leman.