



Colonel The Honourable SIR LESLIE ORME WILSON
PC, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE, DSO, RM

[1 August 1876 – 29 September 1955]



Sir Leslie was Patron of the Club from 1933 to 1946

Sir Leslie was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1946.

Sir Leslie Orme Wilson (1876-1955), soldier, politician and Governor, was born on 1 August 1876 in London, son of Henry Wilson, stockbroker, and his wife Ada Alexandrina (née Orme). Educated at St Michael's School, Westgate, and St Paul's School, London, he was appointed second lieutenant in the Royal Marine Light Infantry in 1895, promoted to lieutenant in 1896 and captain in 1901.

After serving (1899-1901) in the South African War in which he was wounded, mentioned in dispatches, and awarded the Queen's Medal with five clasps and the Distinguished Service Order, he was aide-de-camp (1903-09) to Sir Harry Rawson (Governor of New South Wales).

On 10 June 1909 at Christ Church, Mayfair, London, Wilson married Winifred May, eldest daughter of Charles Smith, a Sydney merchant. While a captain of the Berkshire Royal Artillery (Territorials), Wilson ran for election in 1913, won Reading, and took his seat in the House of Commons in early 1914.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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With the outbreak of war, he was made a temporary lieutenant-colonel in the Royal Marines and given command of the Hawke Battalion of the Royal Naval Division. Following service at Gallipoli, during which he was again mentioned in dispatches, Wilson was sent to France in 1915 where, in the following November, he was severely wounded. He was appointed C.M.G. in 1916.

In late 1918 he became Parliamentary Assistant Secretary in the War Cabinet, in 1919 Chairman of the National Maritime Board, and in 1921 Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury and chief Unionist whip. Having won South Portsmouth at a by-election, he was sworn to the Privy Council in 1922 and served as chief government whip.

In 1923 he was appointed GCIE and Governor of Bombay. The uneasy system of diarchy by which India was governed, together with the serious depression of the cotton textile industry on which Bombay so largely depended, made the position of Governor no sinecure. Sir Leslie dealt with the most serious and prolonged strike in the history of the Indian manufacturing industry with firmness and goodwill. He preferred persuasion to intervention. He improved facilities for education, while his Governor's Hospital Fund (keenly supported by Lady Wilson) increased the efficiency of voluntary institutions. In 1928 he completed his office and in 1929 was appointed GCSI.

On 13 June 1932 Wilson was sworn in as Governor of Queensland. Although he had accepted a less exacting and responsible charge than Bombay, he carried out his constitutional, social and philanthropic duties with zest. A regular traveller to remote areas of the State, he was particularly interested in the welfare and progress of North Queensland. Closely associated with organisations as diverse as the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the Kennel Association of Queensland, he was the driving force behind the Bush Children's Health Scheme. In 1935 the University of Queensland awarded him an honorary LLD, and in 1937 he was appointed GCMG.

The Queensland government obtained a second quinquennial appointment for Wilson, followed by three annual extensions necessitated by the war. In all, he served fourteen years as Governor, a British gubernatorial tenure unequalled since Jonathan Duncan's term at Bombay.

Sir Leslie's affable nature, keen interest in sport and the unflinching support he and Lady Wilson gave to organisations and service functions during the war years were warmly regarded by Queenslanders. Wilson left office on 11 April 1946 and retired to England, but revisited Australia several times to see his son who had a property in Queensland.

Sir Leslie was Patron of the Club from 1933 to 1946 and was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1946. Sir Leslie died in hospital in Surrey, England, on 29 September 1955 after a road accident, survived by his wife, a son and daughter¹.

Sources included:

- Peter Cahill, 'Wilson, Sir Leslie Orme (1876–1955)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wilson-sir-leslie-orme-9143/text16133>, published first in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 2 April 2019.
- Various web pages
 - <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wilson-sir-leslie-orme-9143>
 - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_Wilson_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_Wilson_(politician))
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents

¹ Peter Leslie Orme, born 4 June 1910 in London, farmer and grazier, died 6 July 1980 aged 70 years in Queensland and buried in [Caloundra](#) cemetery; David Orme, who was killed on 30 November 1941 in North Africa during the Second World War; and daughter Marjorie.