



## Brigadier Lachlan Chisholm WILSON CB, CMG, DSO, VD

[1871 – 1947]



Lachlan Wilson, c1917

Lachlan Chisholm Wilson was born on 11 July 1871 at Yatala on the Logan River, Queensland, third child of Charles Wilson, farmer, and his wife Ann Mary, née Chisholm, both Scottish born. Educated at Coorparoo State School and Brisbane Grammar School, Wilson was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1895; he then practised at Townsville where he married Sydney-born Nellie Grant Hartley at St James's Anglican Pro-Cathedral on 27 June 1903.

He had fought in the South African War as a Corporal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queensland Mounted Infantry Contingent, serving in the advance to Johannesburg and Pretoria, the battle of Diamond Hill and other actions. Commissioned in the 15<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment in 1904, he trained with other future leaders of the Light Horse under Lieutenant-Colonel (Sir) Harry Chauvel. Promoted Major in 1911, Wilson was second-in-command of the Moreton Regiment after his return to Brisbane. There he entered into a partnership with E. K. Tully to form one of Queensland's leading law firms – Tully and Wilson.

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Joining the Australian Imperial Force as a Major on 30 September 1914, in November Wilson transferred from the 7<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment to the 5<sup>th</sup> (Queensland) Regiment of which he became second-in-command. He landed at Gallipoli in May 1915 and took charge of the 5<sup>th</sup> on 1 August after its commanding officer was killed. A Lieutenant Colonel from that date, Wilson mounted a successful raid against Bird Trenches near Gaba Tepe on 23 August. In November, after repulsing a Turkish attack, he seized positions known thereafter as Wilson's Lookout.

In April 1916 he led the advance of the Anzac Mounted Division across the Suez Canal when the Turks attacked near Romani. Wilson took part in almost all the major engagements between the battle of Romani (4-5 August 1916) and the capture of Damascus (October 1918). He introduced the Queensland spear-point pump to obtain water in the desert: it was a portable device which could raise water quickly; with canvas troughs, it simplified the watering of the horses and was a significant contributor to the mobility of mounted forces in arid terrain.

When Brigadier General John Royston returned to South Africa on the eve of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Gaza (30 October 1917), Wilson was given command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigade as Colonel and temporary Brigadier General. Short and stocky, quiet and shy, Wilson was the antithesis of his predecessor. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of the Jordan (30 April to 4 May 1918) he seized Es Salt with astonishing speed and, when the Turks counter-attacked, succeeded in withdrawing his brigade from a perilous situation.

Forty miles (64 km) behind the Turkish lines after the breakthrough at Megiddo (20 September), Wilson's brigade advanced southwards on Jenin, capturing three or four times their own number. On 1 October Wilson changed the course of the battle for Damascus by boldly directing his brigade through the city at dawn, leaving thousands of Turks cut off while his regiments pressed up the road to Homs. He called off the pursuit on 2 October after taking another 2000 Turks; in a fortnight the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade had captured over 11,000 prisoners.

While Wilson was at Moascar early in 1919 waiting to embark for Australia, a rebellion broke out against British rule in Egypt. He was ordered to Zagazig where he soon had seven regiments under his command. Clashes with rioters cost his troops about twenty casualties, but by April the violence had subsided, and repatriation was resumed. Wilson was appointed CB (1919) and CMG (1916), awarded the Distinguished Service Order (1919) and the French Croix de Guerre (1917), and mentioned in dispatches six times.

After a brief period on the unattached list, Australian Military Forces, Wilson was aide-de-camp to the Governor-General in 1923-27 and commanded the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade in 1925-29. He was commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Brigade in 1929-31, and State commandant for Queensland of the Volunteer Defence Corps in 1941-42.

Wilson's law partnership prospered, and he extended his business interests as a director of the Australian Mutual Provident Society. He was chairman of directors of Cribb & Foote and of Alexanders Pty Ltd. The welfare of ex-servicemen and women became one of his chief activities and he collaborated with Captain H. Wetherell in writing *The Fifth Light Horse Regiment 1914-1919* (Sydney, 1926).

Survived by his wife, son and a daughter, Wilson died at his New Farm home on 7 April 1947 and was buried in Toowong cemetery.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *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
- Who's Who in Australia
- A. J. Hill, 'Wilson, Lachlan Chisholm (1871-1947)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wilson-lachlan-chisholm-9142/text16131>, published first in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 18 September 2018.