

John Wilson McDonald

John Wilson McDonald (known as Wilson), born in 1896 in Kilmore, was the son of John and Annie McDonald (nee Fleming). He lived with his parents, brother Alick and sister Isabella in "Glencoe" Hamilton Street, Kilmore. He attended the nearby Kilmore State School, where he was a senior cadet for three years.

Wilson became a clerk and served part time in the citizen forces, 64th Battalion, where he reached the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. In August 1915, his parents gave their consent to him joining the army. Living in Jolimont, he enlisted in the AIF at Melbourne on January 25, 1916 and during training at Seymour was allocated to the 37th Battalion with service number 1101. He was promoted to sergeant on February 1, 1916.

On June 3, 1916, Wilson embarked on HMAT Persic for Plymouth, England. During attending a range finding course, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, 37th Battalion, on August 12, 1916.

After the battalion arrived in France in November 1916, it was first sent to the Armentières sector which was considered a "quiet" area where the newly arrived troops could gain their first experiences of trench warfare. While there, they undertook patrols into No Man's Land and minor raids on the German trenches opposite them during the winter months. Wilson was promoted to Lieutenant on December 12, 1916.

Wilson was awarded the Military Cross on April 13, 1917. "Citation - At Armentières on the night of 26/27 February 1917, on the occasion of a raid by a composite Battalion of his Brigade on the enemy trenches, Lieut McDonald was in charge of No 1 Assaulting Party of his Company. When he reached the enemy wire, leading his party, very strong opposition was met with artillery and machine gun fire, and the first party was almost decimated. Notwithstanding the hot fire sustained, Lieut McDonald made repeated attempts to enter the enemies first trenches, and at last succeeded in forcing an entry at another point, and leading his men into the enemies first line. On the occasion of a previous raid, he had successfully commanded one of the assaulting parties."

As well as receiving treatment in the field on several occasions for minor ailments, Wilson received gun shot wounds in October 1917 at Broodseinde, that later caused him to return home to Melbourne medically unfit on HT Corinthic. He was transferred to the supernumerary list in January 1918 then his appointment was terminated on September 6, 1918. His brother Alick also returned to Melbourne medically unfit in early 1918.

Wilson was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

On May 9, 1918 the Kilmore Free Press reported that “Many here, also, sympathise with the returned wounded soldier, Lieutenant Wilson McDonald, who has had his arm operated upon to save his life.” Both Wilson and Alick attended a Welcome Home ceremony at the Oddfellows’ Hall in Kilmore on May 23, 1918.

Wilson married Thelma Gertrude Pie in Calcutta in September 1920. On December 24, 1925 the Kilmore Free Press reported that “Mr Wilson McDonald, son of Mr Jno. McDonald, Kilmore, paid a visit to his native place” and is “engaged in a large tea business in Calcutta.” Later he lived in Melbourne, occupation merchant, and died in Vancouver, Canada in 1961.

Wilson is listed on the Kilmore Shire Honour Roll, the Kilmore State School Honour Roll and the Kilmore Presbyterian Church Honour Roll.