Philatelic Society of Trinidad & Tobago

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P.O. Box 596, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

Bulletin

Meetings: Second Wednesday of every month, 6:00 - 7:30pm
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WWI Soldier's Mail from Trinidad by Edward Barrow



Figure 1 – Envelope to Captain Wilson of the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force

The 1915 Red Cross Overprint stamp seen on this envelope was issued to raise money for the Trinidad & Tobago Branch of the British Red Cross Society. It was released on 'Flag Day' which commemorated the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, the famous naval battle that took place on the 21st of October 1805 and marked the end of Napoleon's plans to invade England. The holiday has faded into obscurity, even in England, eclipsed by the memory of the more recent World Wars. In truth the stamp is unnecessary as mail sent to active duty members

of the armed forces was postage free. So why use the stamp?



Figure 2 - Captain Harry Wilson

The addressee, Captain Harry Wilson, was born in 1883 in Trinidad to Sir David and Lady Wilson. His father Sir David Wilson was a senior civil servant who held various positions in the colonial government including: administering Crown Lands (his official title was a mouthful: sub-intendant and secretary to intendant) and for a brief time in 1885 acting-Governor. He also served as the second in command of the Trinidad Light Infantry Volunteers. Harry Wilson was his eldest son and followed a military career, serving in various posts in Africa and India. By the start of WWI he had risen to the rank of Captain in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers.

His battalion's first action of WWI would be as part of the infamous allied attack on the Dardanelles Peninsular of Turkey in what became known as the Gallipoli Campaign. The plan was championed by none other than Winston Churchill who at the time was First Lord of the Admiralty. Turkey, a German ally, was engaged in offensive operations against Russia, a British ally; it also held a strategic position controlling access to the Black Sea. The hope was that the Allied action would force Turkey to divert troops from Russia and optimistically might knock it out of the war. The intention was to use old pre-Dreadnought battleships, which were too out of date to be used against the modernised German Navy, to provide cover for a landing force. It was this landing force, "The British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force" that Captain Harry Wilson was part of.



Figure 3 - Map showing the Dardanelles Peninsular

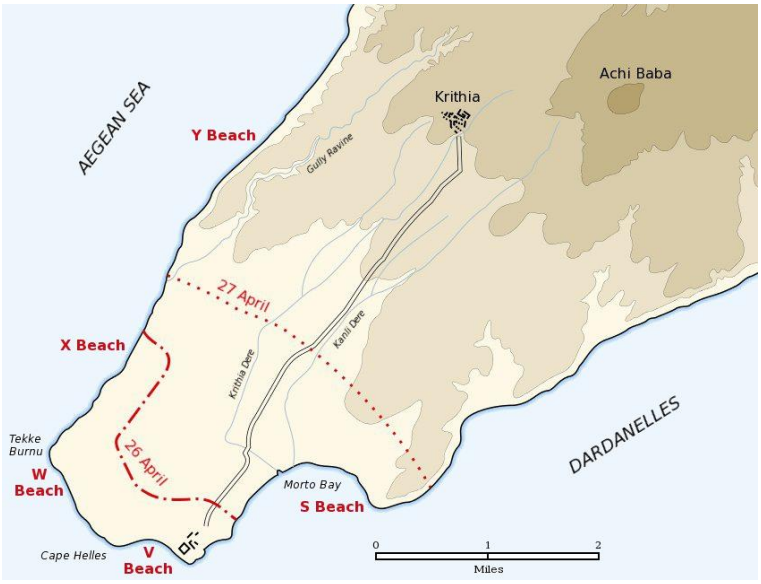


Figure 2 - Map showing the position of "V Beach"

The 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers were set to be part of the first wave, landing on the tip of the peninsular at a place designated as V-beach. On the 25th April 1915, a converted steamer, the SS River Clyde, would ferry the men close to shore where they would be taken in open row boats to the beach. The River Clyde had been modified with ports cut into her hull to allow troops to easily disembark.

So much for the plan, the reality on the ground was a completely different story. The Turkish defenders had been severely underestimated and occupied high ground above the beach. Even before they reached the shore the causalities were staggering. One eyewitness estimated that “out of the first 200 men down the gangway, 149 were killed outright and 30 were wounded”.

Captain Harry Wilson was one of the causalities wounded on board the ship before he even made it to land. He was taken along with the other wounded to hospital in Egypt. By the time this letter from Trinidad was sent in October 1915 his part in the Gallipoli Campaign was long over and judging by the “1M Hospital” notation on the front he was still recovering in hospital.

The losses were so large in the first week that the decimated remains of the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers was merged with the remains of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers to become the ‘Dubsters’ Battalion. By January of 1916, the depravations of war having taken its toll on this remnant, they were evacuated to Egypt. There Harry Wilson re-joined the battalion and was promoted to the rank of Major. But it was not long before they were heading back into harm’s way, in March 1916 they sailed for France and the Battle of the Somme was waiting for them.

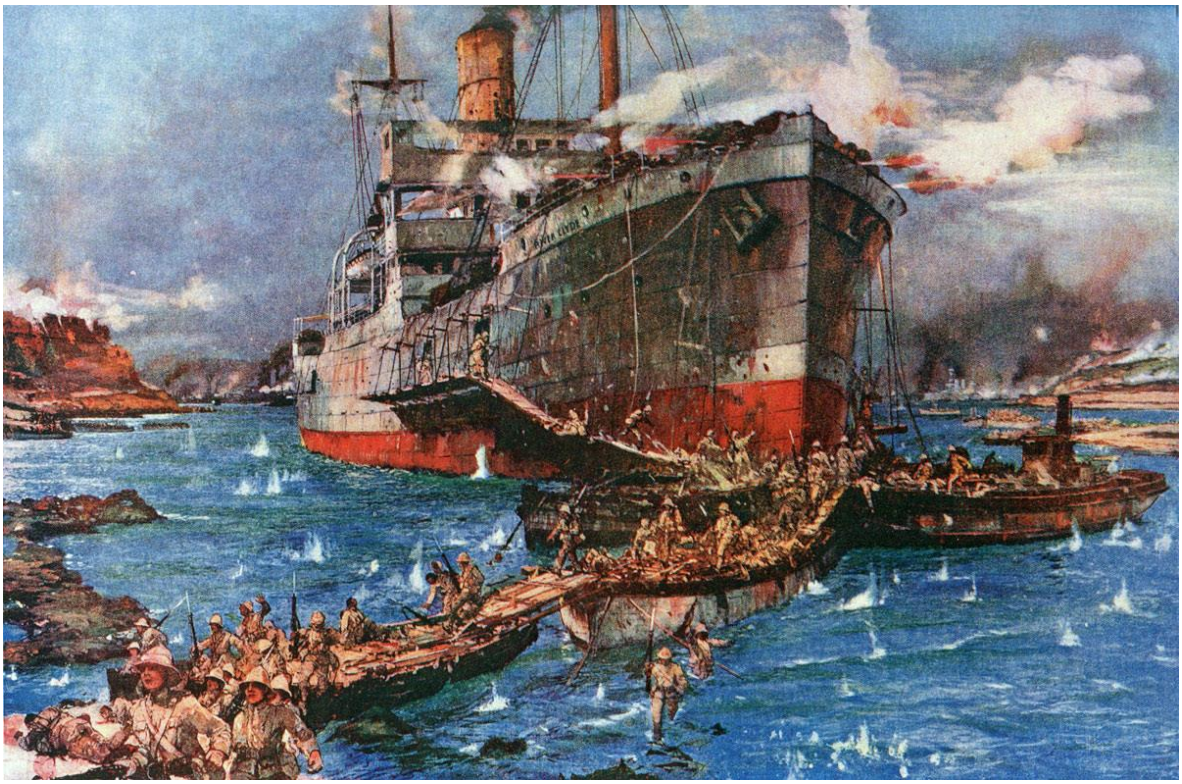


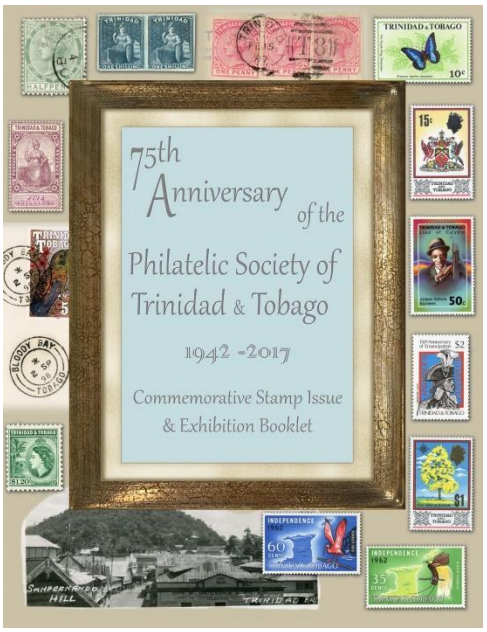
Figure 3 - Painting showing the SS River Clyde at Beach V by Charles Dixon

It was here that Major Harry Wilson would be killed, taking part in the action to capture the town of Ginchy on the 9th September 1916. He was 33 years old. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial in France and on the Cenotaph in Memorial Park, Port of Spain. Sir David and Lady Wilson had two other sons, both of who served during WWI: Lieutenant-Commander John Skinner Wilson who was killed a few months later, and Captain Eric Ronald Wilson, the sole son to survive the war. Two out of three sons were killed in action; the horrors of WWI touched all classes.

So by whom and why was this letter sent? There is no return address so it is not known. But it is my feeling that it was sent by the Red Cross Society in Trinidad to let Captain Harry Wilson know that he was remembered by those from his land of birth.

Figure 2, http://caribbeanrollofhonour-ww1-ww2.yolasite.com/resources/ArmyWW1/Wilson_HS.jpg
Figure 3, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5531109
Figure 4, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=131991

Now Available: 75th Anniversary Commemorative Stamp Issue and Exhibition Booklet



The 75th Anniversary Booklet is finally here. It runs to 50 pages in colour and covers the stamp design and exhibition. We are working on having some shipped down to Trinidad in the not too distant future so members can pick up a copy at the meetings. Price $45TT or £5 pounds per booklet.

Members abroad can either email me at e.barrow1@gmail.com or order online at westindia-co.com

<u>Trinidad & Tobago National Flower On Cuban Stamp</u> **by Albert Sydney**



The Government of the Republic of Cuba as part of its 2017 philatelic programme released a set of eight stamps featuring National Flowers of the Americas.

The National Flowers of the USA (Rose), Trinidad & Tobago (Chaconia), Dominican Republic (Hayahibe Rose), Suriname (Ixora), Jamaica (Lignum Vitae) and National Orchids of Belize (Black Orchid), Costa Rica (Purple Orchid) and Panama (Flower of the Holy Spirit Orchid) are featured on each stamp together with a map of each respective country. The stamps also exist imperforated in blocks of four. The Chaconia Flower and National Award Medal have been featured on T&T postage stamps in 1969, 1972, 1973, 1983 and in 2014.

<u>Lady McLeod On Danish Phone Card</u> by Roger Ramoutar

This recent find shows Trinidad's first stamp the Lady McLeod featured on a phone card from Denmark. It was produced by the company KTAS (circa 1993). The phone card was part of a set illustrating famous stamps from around the world. The denomination was five Danish Kroner.

