

# Personalities from the past.

## By the Editor

Among the names of past office bearers of the Hill Club on the boards that hang in the reading room is that of T. J. Wilson Esq., vice president 1931/32. He was closely associated with the building of the southern wing of the club which is half timbered, which was completed in or around 1929, and at that time called the Ladies' Annexe. This southern wing for ladies and the rest of the club house which was remodeled for the members were in fact designed by different architects!

Thomas J Wilson was a veteran planter who had served in Dolosbage on estates such as Windsor Forest and Gallemudana, and was Superintendent and V A at Oliphant Estate from 1922 onwards. He was also a keen horseman, owner and turfite and was a judge of the Ceylon Turf Club; and was also responsible for developing the grounds of the N'eliya racecourse. He together with his wife owned another estate near Bandarawela called Ella Wella. He was one of three brothers who were all planters who began their careers in Dolosbage. All were keen horsemen who kept their own riding stables on their estates.

Tom Wilson died of pneumonia in December 1932 at age 55, and is buried at Holy Trinity Church N'eliya. Attached is a photo of him as Superintendent, Oliphant Estate. His son also T J Wilson a planter, was called up for military duty in WW2 and died in action. He is commemorated in Holy Trinity N'eliya and on the war memorial in N'eliya town.



Tom Wilson on Oliphant Estate

His brother was Robert Wilson also a member of the Hill Club, who had arrived in Sri Lanka ( then Ceylon ) from England in 1887 when the club was in its early years, and his share certificate as shareholder of the Hill Club Co. is still in the possession of his grandson Robert Wilson ( jnr ). Robert Wilson began his planting career creeping on Pen Y Lan and his elder brother Charles on Doteloya both in the Dolosbage district, for the Blackett family of planters. Robert, having married into the Blackett family, remained in Dolosbage and continued as manager on Monte Cristo and Cooroondoowatte for owners such as Stephens, Aymer, and the Piachaud family, and eventually took over Maddegoda.



Robert Wilson and a family member in the Deer Park at Maddegoda Estate

Robert Wilson having been connected to the Blacketts was a close friend of Lt. Col. Walter Scott Blackett his brother in law, who had wide ranging interests in tea estates and a connection through marriage to the Scott planting family of Kandaloya Estate, Dolosbage, which made him a notable figure in the tea industry of the day. William Scott of this family joined Robert Wilson in a pioneering effort and opened an access route from Dolosbage to Gampola by cutting a pass called the "Lantern Pass"; Wilson progressing down from the upper elevation at Dolosbage and Scott going up from Gampola. Before that and in the days of coffee the produce was packed in sacks and carried on the heads of a long line of labourers going down a rough pathway. At Gampola they were loaded onto a bullock cart transport service operated by the Pelpola family, and sent on to the rail head.



Maddegoda Estate Bungalow