

The lonesome Commander





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Military history

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Without courage and determination you never can do great things, because there are dangers everywhere.

Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz,
1780 - 1831
Prussian general, Commander-in-Chief,
Army Reformer and Military Theorist

Introduction

The research on this book actually began in the late spring of 1982 when the last of Britain's small wars took place in the Falkland Islands.

Back then I was fifteen years old and of course this war was on the agenda every day, in class and at home.

But as young as I was, this war was soon left behind, when it turned out that the British forces would defeat the Argentines. And also there was the next important item on the agenda already: The football world cup 1982 in Spain.

It caught me up some years on, after having graduated from high school and having completed successfully my bankers' apprenticeship. From October 1987 until December 1988 I was serving with the German Army in my mandatory military service.

I was doing so in the then still existing German Army's 1st Mountain Division and there I also was trained in the basics of mountain winter warfare, what is known in the British armed forces to this day as "Mountain and Arctic Warfare".

In the Division's training on military tactical procedures for this particular kind of warfare we were told about examples of difficulties which happened in reality in the Falklands War and were also instructed how to cope with and how to adjust to such circumstances.

The main part of my military service time I've spent in Sonthofen, a small town in the middle of the Allgäu Alps. There was not only stationed a German Army Sports Company, but also the British Army conducted it's ski training there, so on the campuses of the still

existing three barracks we'd the chance to talk to each other from time to time – and at that time the conflict was just about six years back. Admittedly, these young British men, barely older than I, weren't Falklands War veterans at all, but they often claimed to know some.

And because I neither counted to the so-called "home sleepers" nor to the occasional "evening home drivers", I bought my first books about that war at this time. And time to read them was available widely.

Following my military time I started my civil career and again worked for the bank, but also started my holiday travels, together with my wife, and of course we'd been to the United Kingdom and Ireland, too.

I took advantage of these opportunities in buying more and more reading on this topic.

Through second-hand bookshops, I also purchased then long out of printing publications, such as Marshall Cavendish's album "THE FALKLANDS WAR The day by day record from invasion to victory" or Linda Kitson's "THE FALKLANDS WAR A Visual Diary".

Over the many years I've collected an impressive collection of some two hundred publications of this event.

But since there are estimates that so far there have been published about three thousand publications, the number of my relevant literature appears rather small again.

But, after all, I can say that I've read all the books I've bought.

In reading them I also got certain routine, I recognized repetitions, or texts at one point or another lyrically altered only slightly.

And again and again I read the same names of important people who have participated in the fighting, their names usually given at the end

of a book in the "Roll of Honour", or, tragically, in the list "Names of the fallen".

And yet – there's a big exception for one of the most senior members of the military commanders on the spot, namely Brigadier Sir Mathew John Anthony Wilson, 6th Baronet of Eshton Hall (1874), OBE (Officer of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire), MC (Military Cross).

In most publications named as "Brigadier Tony Wilson", the then commander of the 5th Infantry Brigade didn't receive any honours or titles after the cessation of the hostilities. This was in sharp contrast to all other senior commanders who were honoured without exception.

Of course this didn't went ahead in secret and so various authors have tried since to bring rather less than more light into the darkness of the question, why this was like it was.

Unfortunately, this always stuck in the approaches and as a non-British reader, I wondered about it, because just the British otherwise love to go deep into such details. And at some point I wasn't sure anymore whether this non-investigation was consciously held or whether the authors weren't actually able to find out anything, indeed.

So, it is hardly possible, indeed, to find out something about this man through internet search engines or knowledge portals, because there is virtually no information about him.

And the non-honoured contributed and still contributes to this complication by himself.

Just turned forty-seven he resigned from his post on the 31st December 1982, so only a few months after the fighting in the Falklands, and has to this date ruled any comments on the former operations – unlike many, many other soldiers who were active participants and have immortalized themselves in the most diverse literary forms.

Born on the 2nd October 1935, Wilson turned to publishing travel books under his name "Mathew Wilson" in the following years, books which were not even close to military tasks. The titles are "Taking Terrapin Home A Love Affair with a Small Catamaran" (1994), the in it's fourth edition available bestseller "The Bahamas Cruising Guide with the Turks and Caicos Islands" (1997), "The Land of War Elephants Travels Beyond the Pale Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India" (2003) and finally "Seeking Havens Travels Along a Line of Latitude 17 Degrees South in Andean Peru, Bolivia, and the South Pacific" (2006).

My book will try to explain why the promising military career of the 6th Baronet of Eshton Hall (1874), Brigadier Sir Mathew John Anthony Wilson, awarded with the "Military Cross" in 1972 and made an "Officer of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Military Division)" in 1979, ended so abruptly, short after the end of the Falklands War and without any honours or titles.

Presentation of the main character

Brigadier Sir Mathew John Anthony Wilson
6th Baronet of Eshton Hall (1874)
Officer of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Military Division, 1979)
Military Cross (1972)
born 2nd October 1935
married with two children, one son, one daughter

Educated at the elite military academy at Sandhurst, Wilson joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (K.O.Y.L.I.) on his 21st birthday on 2 October 1956 as a Second Lieutenant, and thus already represented the fourth consecutive generation of his family, servicing in this regiment.

During the next years, Wilson took an active part in combat operations in Aden, Borneo, Malaya and Cyprus, as well as – of course – in Northern Ireland.

On 2 October 1958 he was promoted to Lieutenant and on 2 October 1962 promotion to Captain followed. On 31 December 1967 he was promoted to Major and in 1971 he was awarded the honorary title of "Member of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Military Division)". Shortly afterwards, in May 1972, he received the "Military Cross for Gallant Services" for servicing in Northern Ireland.

This award, which was given to many British soldiers for their then NI tours, covered the period from 1 November 1971 to 31 January

1972. As this time saw a significant increase in the death toll, one of the key events of the brutal Northern Ireland conflict occurred on 30 January 1972, the so-called "Bloody Sunday", when paratroopers of the 1st Battalion of The Parachute Regiment shot unarmed civilians, instantly killing thirteen men and seriously injuring another thirteen, of which one died months afterwards from his gunshot wounds. This incident led to a significant escalation of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Promotion to Lieutenant Colonel followed on 30 June 1973 and after new engagements in Northern Ireland and Hong Kong his honorary title was upgraded in an "Officer of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Military Division)" in 1979.

With his promotion to Colonel on 30 June 1980, he moved to the General Staff of the Ministry of Defence in London, where on 31 December 1980 he was promoted to Brigadier (one-star general) and simultaneously took over command of the 5th Infantry Brigade, which he led during the Falklands War.

On 31 December 1982 Wilson stepped down from all his military posts and went into retirement on 31 January 1983.

From 1983 to 1985 he was managing director of the British "Wilderness Foundation United Kingdom", a non-profit organization that provides the opportunity to its seminar participants to experience nature and wilderness.

Since 1995 he can be found in the U.S. state of Florida's company register as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Florida-based company "Dolphin Voyaging Inc.", which was dissolved in 2008.

Publications from his side regarding his military service time do not exist, but there are a few publications on traveling and sailing.

With his wife Janet Mary, née Mowl, Mathew John Anthony Wilson emigrated to the United States of America shortly after the Falklands War and lives since then – largely retreated from the public – in the U.S. states of Florida and Vermont.

The Wilsons got married on 1 December 1962, they have two children, son Matthew Edward Amcotts Wilson, born on 13 October 1966, and daughter Victoria Mary Wilson Roskill, born on 31 August 1968. From their children's marriages the Wilsons are three-time grandparents.

Wilson's son was on duty as a captain in the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry of the British Army and a "Mentioned in Despatches" (this is a military award of the British armed forces for gallantry or otherwise exemplary performance of duty of a soldier) was awarded to him in May 1993 for his Northern Ireland tour.

His daughter works as a lawyer in London.