

Major William Arthur Wills

Life

William was born in 1864 to William Myers Mills and his wife Elizabeth; the second of four children.

He married Adela Wilhelmina Telfer on 6 Feb 1915 at All Souls Church, Hampstead, when he was described as a Captain of Yeomanry, residing at the Cavalry Club, Piccadilly. Adela was 23 years his junior.

(Adela appears to have used a number of variations of name: She appears on the 1891 census as Ada Maria Telfer. At marriage in 1915 she was Adela Wilhelmina Telfer, but by the time of William's death in 1937 she was known as Adela Marie Wills; as executrix of his will and in the Electoral Roll in Paddington for the same year; and stayed with this name until her death in 1961. It may be that she adapted her "Germanic" sounding names due to WW1, but why change her middle name from Maria to Wilhelmina in the first place?)

William and Adela appear to have enjoyed travelling and visited countries by ship as far afield as Valparaíso, Chile (1920); Brisbane, Australia (1934 & 36); Buenos Aires, Argentina (1935) and Yokohama, Japan (1936) as well as cruises around the Mediterranean in the intervening years. He described himself as a Retired Major and as a Director (presumably of a company).

William died aged 73 on 1 April 1937 in Paddington, having lived in London for many years. It's not clear why he is buried here in St Mary's, Mordon – the best guess is that it's to do with his connection with the Essex Yeomanry.



Above:

William's gravestone; his name can just be made out along the side.

Left:

The dates "1864-1937" inscribed on the end of the stone.

Military Service

W. A. Wills served as Honorary Paymaster General during the Second Matabele Campaign, earning the British South Africa Company Medal 1890-97 and later the British War and Victory Medals, Territorial Force War Medal, and the Territorial Decoration (unique to an officer in the Essex Yeomanry).

He founded *The African Review* in London in 1892 and was the author of *'The Downfall of Lobengula - the Cause, History, and Effect of the Matabeli War'* in 1894. He went to Rhodesia in 1896, taking part in the 2nd Matabele Campaign as a Paymaster. Commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Essex Imperial Yeomanry on 10 May 1902, he transferred as a Second Lieutenant to the Essex Yeomanry, Territorial Force, on the latter's formation on 1 April 1908, and was promoted Lieutenant on 5 June 1912, and Captain on 17 February 1915.

He served during the Great War in India, attached to the Rifle Brigade, and was promoted Major. For his services during the Great War he was awarded a Territorial Force War Medal, a unique award to an officer in the Essex Yeomanry. He was awarded the Territorial Decoration in 1930 (London Gazette 16 May 1930).



Officers of the Essex Yeomanry: taken at a recent Training.

(First Row)—The late Lieut. The Hon. Audley Blyth; 2nd Lieut. Archie Gold; Captain Guy Gold; Lieut. W. A. Wills; 2nd Lieut. Ind.
(Second Row)—Major W. S. Gosling; 2nd Lieut. R. A. Thomson; Capt. S. F. Gosling; Lieut. E. A. Ruggles-Brise; Captain A. Buxton; 2nd Lieut. R. Magor; Major H. L. M. Tritton; Lieut. Eustace Hill; Major Frank Hilder; Captain A. Roddick.
(Third Row)—Major E. Deacon; Major Calverly; Lieut.-Col. Patterson, D.S.O.; Lieut.-Col. Lermite; Colonel R. B. Colvin, C.B.; Captain Anderson (Adjutant); Major L. Pelly; Major F. H. D. C. Whitmore; Captain and Quartermaster W. Brown.



His medal group, from left to right:

British South Africa Company Medal 1890-97
British War Medal
Victory Medal
Territorial Force War Medal 1914-19
Territorial Decoration