

## EDWARD WILSON - ANTARCTIC EXPLORER STORY OF HIS STUFFED PENGUIN



Dr. Edward Wilson - the Antarctic explorer - was a member of the congregation at Shurdington. His house is at the Crippets in Shurdington.

Some years after Wilson perished with Captain R.E Scott on their return from the South Pole in 1912, his sister instigated an annual competition at the school in his memory. Pupils were required to write an essay on the life and character of Edward Wilson. The best effort was awarded a copy of *Edward Wilson of the Antarctic* by George Seaver, plus a cash prize.

In the school log of 27 June 1929 we read: "Miss Wilson - Dr. Wilson's sister - came and having read a memoir of his life presented a relic of whalebone from the Antarctic."

In 1948, the generous Miss Wilson gave a stuffed penguin to the school, which had been captured on Scott's ill-fated expedition and was returned to Britain in 1913.

The bird remained in the school until its condition required remedial attention. Estimates for its refurbishment were too high to be met by school funds. So an enquiry was made to the LEA asking if the services of a taxidermist might be engaged at the ratepayers' expense. A polite, but firm "No" was received.

Eventually the matter was resolved by presenting the penguin to Cheltenham Museum as a loan, where it was restored and can be seen today.

Adie Penguin 1993:2007 is now a permanent exhibit in Cheltenham Museum as an interesting piece of Antarctic history. It was brought to England as a stuffed specimen by Edward Wilson, returning from his first Antarctic Expedition in 1904 but for many years, he (the penguin) stood on a window ledge in Shurdington Village School. He was donated by the Wilson family, as a memento of the local hero, when he failed to return from the fatal attempt on the South Pole with Captain Scott in 1912.

Between June 2nd and June 4th 2000 the Penguin revisited the Village for a weekend of celebrations and over the three days Kev Fox performed the tracks on 'A Distant Memory of Home' under the watchful eye of the penguin himself, in the 14th century Shurdington village church of St Paul's.

Adie penguins are the smallest of the penguins living on the Antarctica continent. They are about 28 inches (70 cm) tall and weigh about 8 to 9 lbs. (4 kilogram). Adie penguins were named after the wife of a French explorer in the 1830s. These penguins nest and breed on the rocky, ice-free beaches in large colonies of ten thousands of birds. There are over 2.5 million breeding pairs living in the Antarctica region.

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**Transcript of an essay written by Cyril John TWINNING (1923-1988), in 1936 (age 13) for the Wilson Essay Competition held annually at Shurdington Primary School. He received a prize of £5 plus a book for his efforts.**

Dr Wilson, a famous artist, a tried naturalist and a scientist, writes Cherry Garrard, had charity, was unselfish and blessed with great knowledge. In the introduction Garrard say she had a nightmare and this is the nightmare; the Southern Party return back to the tent but to the horror of Garrard Evans and Oates are not amongst the party and Wilson is drawn and haggard with frost bitten feet.

Although Wilson was known as a hero he was not like other heroes, eager to win fame, but he was calm, unchangeable and kind; on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1910; 'The Terra Nova' was harboured at the south of Trinidad, and some men were fussily loading the ship with stores but, nearby, sitting on a rock was Dr. Wilson calmly eating a biscuit, no one was taking any notice of him because he was so quiet. Garrard who was on e of the crew was loved very much by Wilson and in return Garrard wrote 'Bill is a very gallant gentleman, through all the horrors and calamities Dr Wilson never did complain but once when the crew were round a fire a ball of burning blubber went into Wilson's eye, he could not help giving a stifled groan because he thought he had lost his eye, it would have made a man howl with fright. Dr Wilson kept a diary and he would put a note in every day, sometimes he would write on nature, sometimes the weather and the dangers of frost.

Dr Wilson always stuck to his job, he was loved by his comrades and they all could lean on him, even Oates leaned on Dr Wilson in his troubles because Dr Wilson had a ready smile for anyone who was in trouble, Dr Wilson would leave his job and go to the help of his comrades, Captain Scott liked Dr Wilson's company when he was in his tent.

Dr Wilson never quarrelled with his comrades, only once did he get impatient with Cherry Garrard because Garrard could not use an ice axe to climb out of an ice crack. Dr Wilson liked studying nature on the ice barriers such as the penguins and their habitats, he also enjoyed painting the ice barriers, he developed snow-blindness through peering across the snow. he also ran the risk of frost bitten hands; if he were to make a mistake he would rip the painting up no matter how beautiful it appeared to be; though Dr Wilson ran all these risks he still enjoyed painting, we have one of Dr Wilson's paintings at school, we treasure it very much.

The journey to the South Pole is known as the worst journey in the world. After Scott had sped the 'Cape Crozier Party' he returned to complete his diary, Dr Wilson also did the same; his entry was "*I am rather disappointed because I have not seen many penguins but I shall see many when we reach the "rookery" but I have seen one fine specimen, it is an Emperor Penguin - 37*"

On August 1st Scott prepared for for trek to the South Pole; that day Dr Wilson wrote a letter to his wife.

*" To my dear wife - We are all quite well out here, I hope you Mum and Dad are well, I am as well as can be, and I am as strong as a horse but I am sunburnt, the crew are starting on the trek to South pole. My dear wife I love you."*

The trek started with the ponies pulling the sledges and the crew on skis except Oates who looked after the ponies; the ponies were rather energetic and were rather hard to handle.

Dr Wilson's entry in his diary was "*Trek started, ponies pulling sledges rather energetically, Noby my pony is the fittest of all.*"

A long trek was in front of them it was the barrier region, the going was hard because the snow was soft so that the ponies sank up to their fetlocks making them frightened so that they tried to bolt, but 'Soldier' Oates handled them gallantly; night came on so they pitched their tents and tended the ponies to see if they were fit.

They erected the one ton depot and then began to trek on, whilst they started to trek a mishap occurred Christopher (*a pony*) caught his lip on Noby's harness, this ripped Christopher's lip, the pony let out a weird squeal and bolted, Noby in fright also bolted, Dr Wilson ran after Noby, and Oates ran after Christopher.

Wilson caught Noby after a three-mile chase and returned to the crew. Oates returned a little later then they started to trek.

A few days later they erected Middle Barrier Depot and prepared to reach the crevasse and ice crack region.

They ran into a blizzard and had to stay in their sleeping bags for a long time until it abated, this worried Capt. Scott because he was behind schedule time. Soon they were on the march; the party reached the ice-crack region and here they erected another depot; they then started on their trek again Oates, Evans and Dr Wilson had frost-bitten feet, but though Dr Wilson had frost-bitten feet he attended to his comrades feet while his own were getting worse.

Scott put in his diary,

*"Wilson is a plucky man I do not know what we would do without him."*

Night came on so they pitched camp and tended to the ponies; next day they encountered a blizzard so that they had to stay in camp till it abated, their sleeping bags were like coffins, and they had to sleep in pools of thawed snow. Scott felt that they would have to turn back, but he was encouraged to 'slog on' by his crew. Dr Wilson wrote a letter to his wife;

*"To My Dear wife.*

*I hope that you and the dear Smiths are well, we have encountered three terrific blizzards in the journey as yet, all the crew have got thinner, but I have lost less than anyone else here, my ace has gone thinner though. After we are out on the ice crack region eight men were to be chosen to march to the pole, I hope I am one of the men chosen, just for your sake; my dear wife God only knows how much I love you."*

Scott was a good guide, leading them away from ice cracks and crevasses, but once Titus Oates fell into an ice crack and only his sledge and harness saved him from plunging to his death. After 8 hours solid sledging they pitched camp.

After a few days marching they had passed Mill Glaciers and were away from the ice crack region, here they pitched the last depot; here Scott chose the men who had to trek to the South Pole, instead of choosing eight men he chose five men, they were Evans, Oates, Bowers, Wilson and himself, as soon as Dr Wilson could he wrote a letter to his wife, it was:

*"To my dear wife.*

*I am chosen to go to the Pole; we ought to get there in a fortnights time, and then we shall return home, home to your mails; when I get home we shall go to China and be happy. I shall not be able to write to you for another year but I shall remember you. Oh! it is a privilege to love you and Oh! a privilege to be loved by you."*

And to Cherry Garrard's mother he wrote.

*"To Mrs Garrard*

*It is a privilege to have Cherry Garrard as a companion, in all calamities Cherry turned out a trump. I do not know what we should have done without him."*

The crew who did not have to go to the Pole departed disappointedly, only five were chosen because they were on blue ice, Evans, Bowers, Wilson and Scott were on skis whilst Oates was gallantly keeping pace on foot because he had to look after the ponies; the crew covered many miles a day, this made Scott happy and a photograph was taken of Scott with his head thrown back and laughing heartily; but one thing worried Scott, Evans had a poisoned finger and Dr Wilson dressed it every day.

After many days hard tramping the crew reached the Knoll that stood 8,000 ft above sea-level, here they made an ice igloo and pitched their tent inside. The crew went to the rookery one day to study the habits of the penguin at their haunt; to get to the rookery the crew had to get past an ice-wall - this seemed impossible but Dr Wilson found a hole, it seemed as if the hole went through to the other side so Wilson said "Here goes." and he disappeared, and Oates followed, the hole did go through to the other side and the crew found themselves on a ledge, they easily climbed down the ledge and got to the penguin haunt. Dr Wilson found a nest and he took two eggs, he gave one to Bowers to take back to the tent but Bowers smashed his egg in his frozen mitts, and Dr Wilson managed to get his egg safely back to camp.

Again they started on their trek and after a few days marching Oates keen eye detected a black spot in the distance, soon the crew reached the spot and they found that it was Amundsen's tent and a Norwegian flag which was going rotten, at last the crew had reached the South Pole beaten though. For some the crew camped at the South Pole; at last they left their tent and a Union Jack half a mile away from the South Pole, after that they followed Amundsen's track, suddenly they came across a sledge runner with a Norwegian flag attached to it. For a time they followed Amundsen's track until it vanished then they had to make a bee line track to the last depot - on their way to the last depot Wilson became snow blind and Evans and Bowers had frost-bitten feet - these days were days of agony for the crew because they had to struggle blindly on, Wilson gallantly pulling a sledge was guided by the calling of a homing bird, positions were serious now. At last they reached the last depot. After a time they started on their journey, they had to go over the ice crack region.

With snow battering in their faces the crew tracked on although Evans was losing strength gradually one day he found his pipe which he had lost, this reminded Wilson of throwing his pipe in Crippetts wood. The crew passed the 'Cloudmaker' and the crew got to Lower Glacier Depot. Soon they started on their trek, and Evans became weaker and weaker until he died. The crew went on their trek, positions were very serious. Once they were out of the ice-crack region and were in the Barrier region, Oates now became scurvy and he had frost-bitten hands and feet, his strength was failing. the crew treked on whilst Oates was getting weaker. Wilson said, "Slog on! Slog on!" to Oates; but on the eve of his birthday Oates walked out to his death.

Three men were left, Bowers, Wilson and Scott but to horrors of all horrors they encountered a ten-day blizzard, they died through starvation. Bowers died first, Wilson with a New Testament in his hands was second; and Scott died last with his arm round Wilson.

Through all these horrors these men were kind to each other, and what was the simple reason? The answer is, they loved each other.

*Ed: On the last page of the 7-page essay Cyril Twinning drew a map of the Polar Journey.*

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MAP OF POLAR JOURNEY

