

THE IMPORTANT GREAT WAR PILOTS AND ARTISTS O.B.E. GROUP AWARDED TO AN OFFICER WHO SERVED IN THE BOER WAR BEFORE SERVING ON THE WESTERN FRONT WITH 4 SQUADRON R.F.C. FROM OCTOBER 1914, TRANSFERRING TO 6 SQUADRON HE FLEW AS OBSERVER TO BRITAIN'S FIRST ACE; LANOE HAWKER VC, BEFORE BECOMING A FLIGHT COMMANDER WITH 23 SQUADRON DURING THE SOMME OFFENSIVE IN 1916. FROM 1917 HE COMMANDED 102 SQUADRON, FINISHING THE WAR AS A LT COLONEL, R.A.F. HE SERVED AGAIN WITH THE R.A.F. DURING THE SECOND WAR BEFORE JOINING THE ROYAL NAVAL AND FINISHING THE WAR AS A LIEUTENANT COMMANDER, THEREFORE REMARKABLY HAVING SERVED AS AN OFFICER IN ALL THREE BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES. RETURNING TO LIFE AS A FULL-TIME ARTIST, HE BECAME WELL-KNOWN AND RESPECTED FOR HIS MARITIME WORKS. HE ALSO PRODUCED MANY PICTURES CAPTURING HIS TIME IN THE RFC. IN 1958 HE WAS APPOINTED VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF MARINE ARTISTS, CONTINUING HIS WORK AS AN ARTIST UNTIL HIS DEATH IN DECEMBER 1973. HIS FLYING LOOKBOOK AND GREAT WAR DIARIES ARE HELD IN THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM COLLECTION AND HAVE BEEN QUOTED IN MANY PUBLICATIONS ON WW1 AVIATION, HIS OUTSTANDING WW1 AVIATION WORKS HAVE ALSO GRACED VARIOUS BOOKS



THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, O.B.E. (MILITARY) OFFICER'S 1ST TYPE BREAST BADGE, SILVER-GILT, HALLMARKS FOR LONDON 1919 (2ND TYPE RIBBON), QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA 1899, 3 CLASPS TRANSVAAL, NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA 1902 'LIEUT. H. WYLLIE VOL. CO. R. WEST KENT R.', 1914 STAR WITH CONTEMPORARY TAILORS CLASP 'CAPT. H. WYLLIE HAMPS: R ATTD: R.F.C.', BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS WITH OAK LEAF 'MAJOR H. WYLLIE R.F.C.', DEFENCE MEDAL AND WAR MEDALS. MEDALS COURT MOUNTED FOR WEAR AND HOUSED WITHIN A GLAZED FRAME ALONGSIDE HIS ORIGINAL CAP BADGES FOR EACH OF THE UNITS HE SERVED IN: THE ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT, ROYAL EAST KENT REGIMENT, HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT, WILTSHIRE REGIMENT AND ROYAL FLYING



*“Marsh and myself went on reconnaissance at dawn and were told to have a look right into Wervicq, before we could say knife, a battery of guns opened on us from two sides. The shells were bursting*



*under, over and on both sides... I never could have believed it possible to under such fire and survive. The noise was deafening and the air full of smoke..”*



Serving with 4 Squadron until December 1914, Wyllie then transferred to 6 Squadron, again it seems in the main serving as an observer. Flying in BE2a's and b's on reconnaissance and sketching duties, including during the Second Battle of Ypres, the following is written of Wyllie:

*“After the main gas attack at Ypres, the line was pretty fluid. The British photo team accomplished a map of enemy trenches. It took extensive efforts, aided by Captain Wyllie (Son of the great marine artist) who took enormous risk to his own safety flying very low over the trenches in order to identify the uniforms of the occupants. A map of the German line was prepared.”*

During his time with 6 Squadron, Wyllie is also recorded as flying as observer in BE2c's with both Lanoe Hawker VC (the famous ace) and Louis Strange (DSO, OBE, MC, DFC/Bar). Hawker would write of a combat that the pair took part in on 26 April 1915:

*"Some excitement today, as doing our reconnaissance, my usual one with a passenger (Wyllie) this time we met and chased away two Germans. So far so good. A third appeared and we gally approached it and found it had a machine-gun aboard – the first German I've met that showed fight. I only had my 10b rounds and had to turn a fly – a strategic retreat we call it in the best society – but each time I loaded my rifle I turned and let him have it. He hit us but having a machine gun he soon finished his ammunition and then we had the pleasure of chasing him away as we hadn't finished ours. One of his bullets went thro the cushion on which sat my observer."*

Leaving 6 Squadron in May 1915, Wyllie's next posting is unknown, however by March 1916 he was serving as a flight commander in 23 Squadron. Here a few FE2b's on offensive patrols and reconnaissance, including at the outset of the Somme offensive. With this squadron it seems Wyllie mainly flew as a pilot and he was credited with at least one aerial victory (shared) against a Fokker on 31 May 1916. However flying with the same observer; Lieutenant A N Solly, on 1 July, piloting FE2b 5213, during a combat, Solly was wounded in action.

During his service on the Somme with 23 Squadron, Wyllie diary quoted many times in 'Somme Success: The Royal Flying Corps and the Battle of The Somme 1916' By Peter Hart.

To quote Wyllie:

*"Air full of Huns. Went on patrol – ordered by Commanding Officer to take up Corporal Porter. Could not send him with Studd, my new pilot, so had to take him myself. At 07.55 we got into hot action with five LVG's over Arras. They had been engaged and thrown into utter confusion by three de Haviland scouts. I never saw such a mix up in the air. The came down for a couple of thousand feet anyhow with the little scouts after them like angry bees. Studd and myself got into the middle of them at 9,000-9,500. Solly put in some good shooting. Unfortunately, Porter completely lost his head. He had a DCM in his pocket, and I gave him some magnificent shots, one dead nose on and the other about 200 feet under. I could not get him to fire. He sat like a sick monkey doing nothing. The air was full of lead and at last I stood up and banged him on the head and yelled, "fire you bloody fool!" He woke up then and got off a drum at a machine overhead. My god I was mad. We out to have got two machines. As it was it is a great wonder we were not shot down. A damned silly way of getting killed too."*

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ObXNDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT133&dq=%2223+Squadron+%22+Wyllie&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjahIyyqdiNAXVbSPEDHc0XCsYQ6AF6BAgFEAM#v=onepage&q=%2223%20Squadron%20%22%20Wyllie&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ObXNDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT133&dq=%2223+Squadron+%22+Wyllie&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjahIyyqdiNAXVbSPEDHc0XCsYQ6AF6BAgFEAM#v=onepage&q=%2223%20Squadron%20%22%20Wyllie&f=false)

Another experience with 23 Squadron:

Captain Harold Wylie of 23 Squadron was flying a DH2 'pusher'. Jumped by a posse of Eindeckers who had shot off Very lights to signal the charge, the attackers became wary after the first pass. One of the British flyers was shot down, another had his observer killed outright, though not before he'd fatally damaged the Fokker. Wylie's own observer, Powell, was blazing away as a German round grazed his trigger finger then glanced off into his eye. He fell back, probably already dead, breaking a leg. Wylie, now without armament, was badly shot up but somehow managed to land the plane and walk away.



Major Wyllie is quoted in a large number of books on WW1 aviation, much of which it seems is taken from diaries which are held in the Imperial War Museum collection. From some of the above quotes, it would be well worth obtaining copies of these. The museum also has Wyllie's pilots logbook which would equally be worth looking at as unusually, though a qualified pilot, due to his skills as an artist, he appears to have served in the dual roles of pilot and as observer, the latter when required :

A collection of military medals and insignia is displayed within a green frame. The items are arranged on a dark green background. At the top, there are five small medals or orders. Below them are three larger, more ornate medals or orders. In the center, there are two ribbons: one with vertical stripes of red, white, blue, and yellow, and another with horizontal stripes of red, white, blue, and yellow. Below the ribbons are several circular medals or coins. On the left and right sides of the ribbons are two large, ornate medals or orders. The entire collection is framed by a green border.

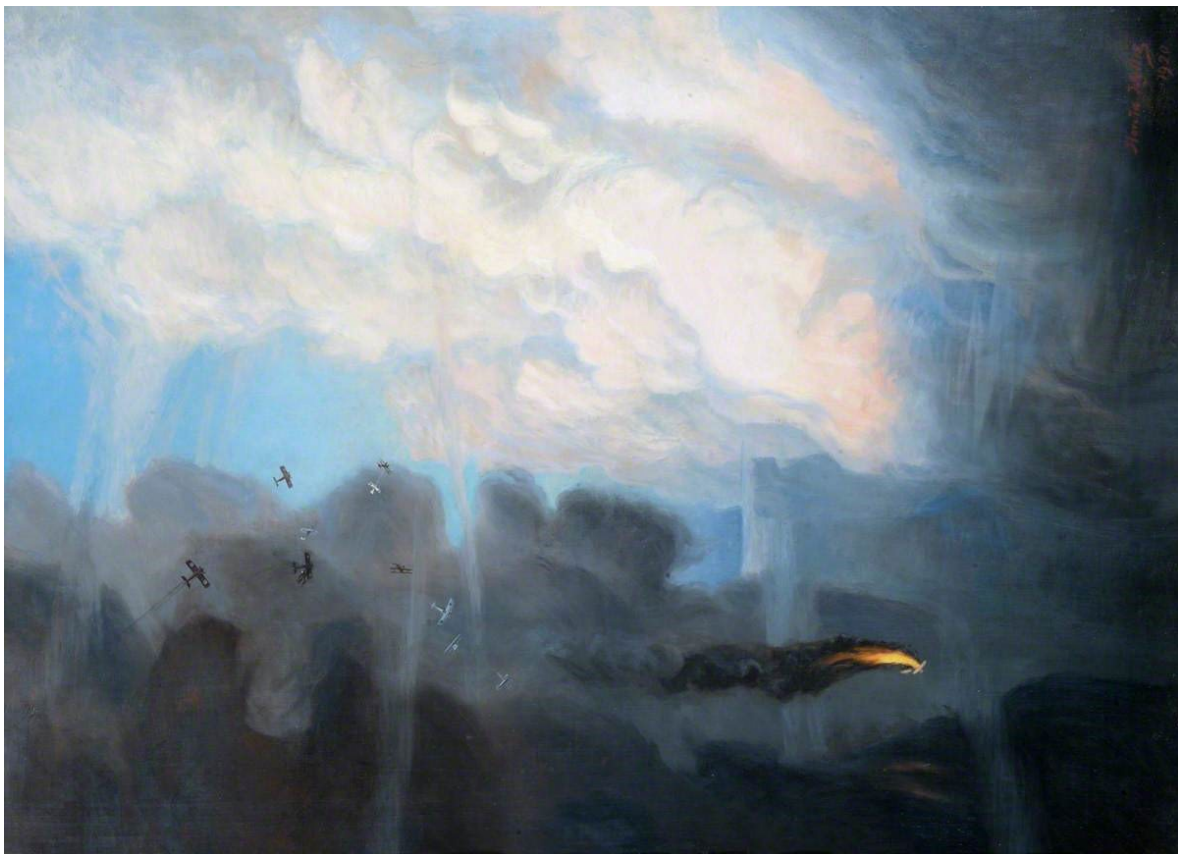
Having completed his Great War service as a temporary Lt Colonel, in January 1919, Wyllie was awarded the O.B.E. for his service and resigned his commission in the Army in 1920. In 1921 he was mentioned in the Hampshire Telegraph for an outstanding rescue of the rider of a horse who were washed away and in danger of drowning, for which he earned the Royal Humane Society's certificate for life saving.

In 1932 he was appointed in charge of HMS Implacable in Portsmouth Harbour, where she was in use as a training ship. Wyllie helped his father when HMS Victory was placed into dry dock in

Portsmouth, and he was appointed Chief Rigger of the Victory. Acknowledged as an expert on shipping matters, Wyllie was in 1932 called on to supervise restoration of the Implacable. He listed nautical research as his recreation to the end. He was made honorary marine painter to the Royal Yacht Squadron in 1934.

<https://friendsofhmstrincomalee.org.uk/Quarterdeck%20Offprints/QD025%20Lieutenant%20Colonel%20Harold%20Wyllie.pdf>

In 1939 he was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in the RAF VR and made Flying Officer in 1940. He produced pictures of aircraft some which identified the differing types of German aircraft. Circa 1941/2, Wyllie was released from the RAF at the request of the RN to be Director of Training on HMS "Foudroyant" & "Implacable" with the rank of Lieutenant (now aged 62 years) for newly entered ratings to be given instruction in communications, i.e. the "Bounty Boys". He was promoted to Lieutenant Commander at the end of the war in 1945 until the ships were decommissioned in January 1947. Thus, he held senior positions in all three services – surely an almost unique achievement.



An Air Fight, France (1917–1918): Formation of Six SE5 Machines and Six Albatross Scouts in Combat By Harold Wyllie









Night Bombers Getting Off from Trezennes Aerodrome, 1917. By Harold Wyllie

After the war Harold returned to life as a full-time artist and became well known and respected for his maritime works. He also produced many pictures capturing his time in the RFC. In 1958 he was appointed Vice President of the Society of Marine Artists and Marine painter to the Royal Yacht Squadron. Wyllie spent his later years in Dunkeld, Perthshire. He continued his work as an artist, and it is believed that at the time of his death on the 22nd of December 1973, at the age of 93, he still had a years work in hand.



The Bombing of Bissheghem Aerodrome: Night, 20 October 1917. By Harold Wyllie



<https://artuk.org/discover/artists/wyllie-harold-18801973>

Sold with a fair amount of copied research, including medal rolls, Gazettes, various articles etc. Also Wyllie's copy of Knots Splices and Fancy Work by Chas. L. Spencer; Brown, Son & Ferguson, second edition, pub. June 1935, signed and inscribed by the author, with HMS Implacable embossed stamp on half-title page, inscribed by Wyllie "The best book ever written about practical work" and featuring frequent additional pencil illustrations and notes in his hand.