

Henry George Frederick Wilson



Henry George Frederick Wilson was the first-born child of Henry John (1872-1907) and Rebecca Wilson (nee Brooks 1870-1936). Henry John was a wood sawyer from Isleworth and Rebecca was from nearby Brentford. In the 1891 census, and at the time of their marriage, she was working as a servant in Haldon House, 17 Hamilton Road, Brentford, for one of the wealthy building families in the area, the Doreys. They were married on May 6th 1894 in St Paul's Church, Brentford and went to live in 11 Gumley Gardens, St John's Road, Isleworth, where the family remained for the next twenty years or more. Rebecca stayed in Isleworth until the 1930s, when she moved to Reading.

Later in 1894, Henry George was born. He was baptised on November 4th at St John's Church, as were his five siblings. Percy John in 1897; Ernest in 1900 (who married Ivy Lilian Claridge in 1921 and was living in 8, Barrack Road, Hounslow as a lorry driver in 1939 with his family- he had joined the Navy as a boy seaman (J55363) in 1916 for 12 years); Dorothy Edith in 1902, (who married Frank Henry King in 1925 and in 1939, they were living in Reading with their family. Frank Henry was a foreman engineer for a printing machinery firm); Jessie Agnes in 1904 (who married Frank Ambridge, in 1926 and was living in Hammersmith in 1939, Frank was a licensed victualler); and George Herbert in 1906 (who was living in Linkfield Road in Isleworth, in 1939 as a brewer's labourer with his wife Ethel Warren, whom he had married in 1934, and was a cardboard box maker).

All went well until Henry John contracted tuberculosis. He died in September 1907, aged just 35. To support the family, Rebecca and the older children had to find work. Rebecca got a job as a cleaner in the Isleworth Infirmary. Ernest became an errand boy for a chemist and Henry George left home to work and live in Westminster School, the prestigious day and boarding school in Little Dean's Yard, next to Westminster Abbey. The 1911 census shows him working as a page, one of four domestic servants, the others being a nurse, a cook and a housemaid.

When war was declared, Henry George went to Shepherd's Bush Recruiting Centre to join the Royal Garrison Artillery. As the war developed, the Royal Garrison Artillery grew to be a large component of the British forces on the battlefield, being armed with heavy, large-calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power. The largest guns and howitzers were mounted on railways or on fixed concrete emplacements. The RGA Siege Batteries increased from just three in 1914 to 401 by 1918.

In May 1918 an RGA Siege Battery was supporting the Australian Army at the Battle of the Somme and it was there that Sergeant Henry George Wilson (63223) was killed in action on 27th May 1918. He was buried nearby in the Vendresse British Cemetery in Picardy. His mother, Rebecca, collected his war gratuity of £29 3s 4d. Henry received the British War and Victory medals, posthumously. He is honoured on St John's Church memorial. *See left*

His brother Percy John, a rubber tyre stripper, also enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery in November 1915, serving in France and Belgium. He was discharged in 1919, having been hospitalized with medical complications, arising from shell shock, influenza and other heart and bronchial conditions. In 1939 he was living at 16 Ellington Road, Hounslow with his wife, Clara and son Bernard; he was listed as an Omnibus Conductor for Passenger Road Transport.

