

The only information I have on Alexander Wilson is from A History of the Dunedin (New Zealand) Horticultural Society 1851 - 2001. It reads as follows:

Alexander Wilson, M.A.

Better remembered in Dunedin for his contribution to the development of the city's education, Alexander Wilson arrived in Dunedin in 1874 and became a part-time teacher at Otago Boys' High School. Between 1884 and 1895 he was rector of Otago Girls' High School before returning to Otago Boys' High School as rector until 1906. First and foremost, he was an intellectual.

Alexander Wilson was representative of the keen amateur horticulturist around the turn of the century. He had neither a great deal of time nor money to devote to what was only one of a wide range of interests. He was a keen and highly skilled gardener, who hybridised narcissi and polyanthus and was well known for his roses. Wilson advocated the educative role of botany field trips and was a member of the Dunedin Field Naturalists' Club, undertaking trips to Mount Cook and the Hooker Valley to view native plants. He delivered a paper on 'Alpines' to the 1901 Horticulturists'; and Fruit Growers' Conference and spoke at both Dunedin Horticultural Society meetings and the Otago Institute on horticultural topics, most frequently on narcissi.

Among horticulturists, Wilson was best known as 'the pioneer of narcissi culture in this most southern province of New Zealand' and 'perhaps the greatest authority on daffodils in the province'. He often exhibited at shows but did not necessarily compete. At the spring show in 1897 and 1898, Wilson displayed some 76 varieties of narcissi. In 1897 the display included a rare *Cernus plenus*, which was so rare 'at home' it was omitted from catalogues. A keen hybridiser of narcissi, Wilson received several certificates of merit for them. In 1900 he displayed a collection of nearly fifty varieties in pots, the first time they had been grown that way. At the same show he exhibited seedlings which were described as probably the first to have flowered in the colony, blooming in the sixth year after hybridisation. The horticultural society committee named one of the seedlings 'Captain Harvey' after an ex-pupil of Wilson's who had recently lost his life in South Africa, and awarded it a first-class certificate of merit.

Wilson delivered a number of papers on the topics of narcissi and hybridisation at society meetings as well as publishing a pamphlet, 'The Narcissus at the Antipodes' in 1902. A modest man, he admitted to a busy life and not having enough time to devote to the exact science of gardening, confessing to 'a rough and ready kind of hybridising of which even the busiest man may do a little'. He went on to state that 'extremely interesting results can be obtained by operating on the flowers in the ordinary borders, and at no greater expenditure of time than half an hour or twenty minutes on a still spring evening'.

A member of the foundation committee of the Dunedin (N.Z.) Horticultural Society in 1881 -82, Wilson served again in 1882 - 83 and 1885-86. Unlike some of the business elite, however, he did not have sufficient leisure time to invest in horticultural affairs. In 1902 he declined election to the committee of management of the fledgling National Horticultural Society, citing the pressures of his job. It was not until he retired to south-west England in 1906 that he found the time to fully devote himself to his garden.

The Late Mr. Alex Wilson  
Rector successively of the Otago Girls'  
And Otago Boys High Schools and a  
Respected citizen of Dunedin.

#### ALEXANDER WILSON

. . . from . . . the . . . death of a . . . time . . . citizen of Dunedin in the . . . of Mr. Alexander Wilson, M.A. Mr. Wilson was born in Nairn, Scotland, in 1849, and was educated at the Aberdeen Grammar School and the Aberdeen University. He took his degree of M.A., at the university in 1869, and then resided in Germany from 1870 to 1871. He arrived in New Zealand in 1874, and was appointed to the staff of the Boys' High School as English master in the same year. In 1883 (or 1885 ?) Mr. Wilson was appointed rector of the Girls' High School, and in 1896 was transferred to the rectorship of the Boys' High School, which position he held for 10 years. In 1907 he became editor of the New Zealand Times. The directors of the paper at this period were not a very happy family, and after a few months in the editorial chair, Mr. Wilson decided to give up the work and return to England. He lived at Bath for some years, and then made a visit to Inverness. The place appealed to him, and he decided to remain there. Mr. Wilson had been in failing health in recent years, and had occasion to seek attention in a nursing home. It was, however, in his own home, "Norwood," Inverness, that he died on May 24.

Mr. Wilson was president of the Otago Institute and the Otago Educational Institute for a period, and he occupied the position of president of the Dunedin Shakespeare Club from 1889 to 1906. He was a keen student of Shakespeare, and published a number of short studies of his works. He was a not infrequent contributor to the local newspapers, and his articles never failed to attract general attention from their culture and the able manner in which the writer made his points. When occasion required Mr. Wilson could also introduce a pretty wit into his writings. He occupied the position of president of the Otago Rugby Union in 1900.