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OBITUARY

GUTHLAC WILSON
D.Sc., S.M., M.I.C.E., M.ASCE., M.Soc.C.E.(France)

It is with the deepest regret that we record the death of Dr Guthlac Wilson, and his wife, in an air crash on the 29th March, 1953. Dr Wilson was the most distinguished of those consultants in Great Britain who combine a wide experience of civil engineering work with a detailed knowledge of soil mechanics. He had made important contributions to soil mechanics as a science and had achieved an international reputation for his bold, imaginative and successful application of the principles of that science in civil engineering design. In addition, he was a delightful companion with an exceptionally wide range of interest and accomplishment. His death is a very great loss to his friends and to the engineering profession.

Dr Wilson was born in London on the 21st May, 1902, the son of Henry Wilson, architect and sculptor. He was educated privately in Paris where his father worked for several years, and at Queen Mary College, University of London. After serving articles with Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons he joined the firm of Braithwaite & Co. in their Bombay office, and, after a period of bridge construction on the North West Frontier, was responsible for the design of a number of bridges and other works throughout India.

In 1938, at the age of 36, he decided to undertake a formal course of study in soil mechanism, and resigned from Braithwaite & Co., in order to enter Harvard University. He spent a year under Professor Terzaghi and Professor Casagrande, obtaining the S.M. degree, and was then awarded a fellowship at Harvard which he subsequently resigned at the outbreak of war in order to return to England. In the summer of 1939 he worked for a few months as a private assistant to Dr Terzaghi.

On his return Dr Wilson was engaged with the design of a Royal Ordnance Factory, on the staff of Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, and later became Director of Constructional Design for the Ministry of Works and Buildings. In 1945 he joined Mr W. L. Scott to establish the firm of Scott and Wilson, Consulting Engineers, Westminster, and became the senior partner after the death of Mr Scott in 1950. He was elected a member of Council of the Institution in 1949.

In the realm of structural engineering, perhaps his greatest achievement was the design, with his partners, W. L. Scott and E. O. Measor, of the Royal Festival Hall, London (1951). In works involving soil mechanics, Dr Wilson's most recent design was that for the new airport for Hong Kong at Kai Tak. In Nyasaland he had been responsible, during the past three years in conjunction with his partner, Mr Henry Grace, for the construction of the Blantyre–Zomba and the Blantyre–Luchenza roads, the Chileka airport, and the New Mudi dam which involved interesting features concerning the construction of an earth dam on a semi-permeable foundation. Notable works, involving foundation problems for which Dr Wilson had been responsible included the oil tanks at Coryton in 1950, the New Maelor Gas Works in 1951 and, in the same year, a large warehouse in Valetta, Malta. In the past year Dr Wilson had, together with Dr A. W. Skempton, been concerned with the problems arising from difficult soil conditions, in the design and construction of the earth dam at Sasumua for Nairobi City Council.

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