

OBITUARY

RICHARD LLOYD GWILT

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By the death of Dick Gwilt in August 1972, the Faculty has lost one of its most distinguished members. He passed the final examination in 1921 before he was twenty, having been placed first or equal first in all the examinations—in those days, successful candidates were placed in order of merit. From then until his premature retirement on account of ill-health, he served the actuarial profession actively, conscientiously and with great distinction.

Richard Lloyd Gwilt, as his name implies, came of Welsh stock on his father's side, but his mother was Scottish and he himself was born in Edinburgh and educated at George Watson's College. He entered the service of the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company in 1917 and moved to the Scottish Widows' Fund in 1922. His business career was a highly successful one, but only a brief reference thereto is possible in this note.

He attained the post of second officer in the Scottish Widows' at the early age of thirty-five and ten years later became its principal executive, a post he held for fourteen years. As a manager, he earned the respect of his colleagues by his technical and administrative ability, his sense of justice and his integrity, but it was his human qualities which gained him their loyalty and affection, in particular his readiness to give praise where it was due (sometimes indeed he gave credit to others which rightly belonged to himself) and his willingness to share the blame when mistakes were made. He took great pride in the progress of the Scottish Widows' and it was a source of much satisfaction to him that after his retirement he was able to serve as a director from 1962 until his death.

Gwilt served the Faculty in many ways and held at one time or another nearly all its principal offices. He was President from 1952 to 1954 and during his term of office was awarded the C.B.E. He was intensely interested in the Faculty's educational activities and was a strong supporter of the view that "the cobbler should stick to his last". The trend to expand the scope of the examinations further into the fields of statistics and finance, a movement which was perhaps more evident in London than in Scotland, met with his outspoken disapproval, but this was not due to any lack in his own equipment of the knowledge and skill to venture into these fields. His inaugural

address to the Faculty Students' Society in 1948 is evidence of his knowledge of statistical theory and he was closely involved in investment affairs in his own office and also as a director of the Scottish American Investment Company and as a member of various committees concerned with the investment of public and charitable funds. But he made a clear distinction between the topics appropriate to the training of actuaries and the uses which they might subsequently make of their skills in the worlds of business or finance.

His greatest actuarial interest was, however, in the field of mortality investigations. He contributed a paper to the Faculty on the census method as early as 1926 and when he was asked to prepare one of the two papers to be presented on the occasion of the Faculty Centenary in 1956, he chose as his subject a comparison of mortality trends in different countries. He was a member of the Joint Mortality Committee of the Faculty and the Institute from its inception and was for a number of years its chairman.

Gwilt also played an active and worthy part in the administrative affairs of the Faculty and in its social activities. He was well known and highly respected in actuarial circles in America and in the Scandinavian countries and was one of the select band of British actuaries who have been honoured by an invitation to lecture in Scandinavia. He and his wife were assiduous in entertaining foreign actuarial visitors to Scotland and thereby did much to enhance good relations with other actuarial bodies. He attended international congresses regularly, although he had reservations about the value of such large-scale gatherings and much preferred more intimate associations.

Among his other distinctions, Gwilt greatly valued his Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

As regards recreations, both Mr. and Mrs. Gwilt were keen mountaineers and he was an active member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. In his youth, he was a proficient golfer, but this activity was superseded by a growing interest in angling, which continued to be a source of pleasure to him even when he himself could only watch from the bank while his gillie wielded his rod.

As a man Dick Gwilt was naturally companionable. In his student days, he was fond of a "night out with the boys" and in his more mature years he always enjoyed a party or a celebration. Although much too keen on physical fitness to become a *bon viveur*, he had a keen appreciation of good food and wine and was no mean judge of claret.

But although he made and retained many friends, it is probably true to say that few people were on intimate terms with him. This

was due to a certain reserve in his nature as a result of which he did not readily show his deeper feelings. Perhaps only those who were fortunate enough to know him intimately could appreciate fully the depth of his character and the strength of his convictions.

Throughout the active period of his life and especially during his years of physical incapacity, Gwilt owed much to the devotion of his wife. They had many interests in common—travel, music, pictures and on a less elevated plane a liking for the works of P. G. Wodehouse. Gwilt was also a constant reader of the Victorian classics with a special affection for the novels of Anthony Trollope, whom he “rediscovered” long before Trollope came back into fashion during the Second World War. His taste in literature was not surprising in view of the importance he attached to clarity and accuracy both in speech and writing. But, unlike the great Victorians, he disapproved of verbosity and was fond of quoting with approval the example of the correspondent who ended a letter with the sentence “I am sorry to have written you such a long letter, but I did not have time to write you a short one”. This attitude was consistent with the importance he attached to thoroughness, a quality which was evident in all that he did.

Mr. and Mrs. Gwilt took great pleasure in the musical talents of their four children, three of whom are professional musicians. The eldest son followed in his father’s profession and his progress was a source of much satisfaction and pride to his father.

J. L. A.