

QUEST: CALLED TO SOMETHING GREATER

VIDEO ONE

“Mountains don’t need people. People need mountains.”

Famous words amongst mountaineers. Except Maurice Wilson was no professional climber. Wilson was born in the bustling city of Bradford. At the outbreak of the First World War, he embarked upon his first quest: to defend Queen and country on the glories of the battlefield.

Yet what he witnessed was far from glamorous.

One day, under heavy shell and machine gun fire, he held the frontline long after others had retreated. The enemy attack was resisted, but on his return he trudged past hundreds of his battalion’s bodies lying dead and broken along the ground.

It was a miracle he survived to tell the tale.

Returning home after the war, familiar streets now felt lifeless. Once filled with the voices of friends, they were now subdued. Full of widows and men who were a shadow of their former selves.

Men like his brother Victor. Medals in hand, but scars on his mind and heart.

Bradford no longer felt like home.

Increasingly frustrated and seeking to cope with his trauma, Wilson headed for far off countries. Around the globe into the arms of many women. In and out of the lives of many friends. Still he remained restless.

Until one day, things changed. Flicking through a newspaper he came across a report that stopped him in his tracks. And he became convinced of a new calling. A dream as vast as the mountains themselves.

To conquer the unconquered. Mount Everest.

His friends were sceptical. It was utter madness given his lack of skill and his refusal to buy specialised kit. Yet Wilson silenced their doubts. This is what he was made for.

Wilson formed a plan. Not satisfied with the challenge he’d given himself, he made it harder. He’d teach himself to fly a plane to the base camp.

Whilst many thought him mad, there were others who became lifelines in Wilson’s quest.

Arriving in Darjeeling, Wilson’s quest was delayed. Perhaps for his good. There he met three experienced Sherpas with unmatched wisdom and experience.

They became his closest companions. Assisting him to navigate icy glaciers and brutal snow storms, they also offered him refuge in their monastery after an early failed attempt to reach the summit.

Wilson's dogged determination remained. Fuelled by letters from family and friends, he tried again to conquer the mountain.

After slow progress and camping on exposed ledges he was defeated once more. Yet Wilson pressed on despite the Sherpas pleading him to return.

Wilson knew he must make one final push for the summit. The destination had become less important than the journey itself.

Now weakened by illness and facing treacherous conditions, Wilson died in his final attempt.

Years later, his diary was discovered on the mountain. Aware of his frailty Wilson reflects the quest was not in vain. He considered the adventure worth it, even though it cost him everything.

You might disagree. But his story lives on, a testament to adventure, determination and the human spirit. And a glimpse into how far one man went to pursue his dreams, against all odds.