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**A CONCISE HISTORY OF:**

# **BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)**

A concise history of the British Troops in Egypt, a static overseas command of the British Army from 1882 until 1948. In addition, known details of the senior appointments held between 1930 and 1948 are included where known.

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## **A Concise History of British Troops in Egypt (History & Personnel)**

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## British Troops in Egypt

British Troops in Egypt (B.T.E.) was a pre-war Command in the British Army. The first British Troops came to Egypt in 1801 in response to the invasion by France of Egypt. A combined force of British and Ottoman troops expelled the French, and in 1805, Kavalali Mehmed Ali Pasha was proclaimed the Sultan of Egypt. Egypt annexed northern Sudan in 1824, and Ali Pasha (now known as Muhammad Ali) established a dynasty that was to last until 1952.

The main development that placed Egypt into the heart of international politics was the building of the Suez Canal in 1869. It was constructed jointly by the Egyptians and French, but it left Egypt severely in debt. The Egyptian share of the Suez Canal was sold to the United Kingdom (U.K.) in 1875. This gave the U.K. control of the main arterial waterway linking Europe with India and the Far East. The first stirring of nationalist resentment against British and French involvement in the government of Egypt began in 1879. In 1882, a nationalist government came to power demanding democratic reforms and control over the budget. The British and French responded by defeating the Egyptian Army at the battle of Tel el-Kebir; after which they re-installed the pro-British Tewfik (from the Muhammad Ali dynasty) as the leader of what became in effect a British Protectorate.

Egypt became an official Protectorate of the United Kingdom in 1914 just prior to the First World War. During that war, Egypt was used as a major military base in the campaigns against the Turkish in Palestine, Mesopotamia and the Middle East. After the First World War, the nationalist movement in Egypt grew, leading to full scale rioting in March 1919. The British government declared Egypt independence on 22 February 1922, but maintained a significant military presence in the country, in the main to protect access to the Suez Canal.

Between the wars, B.T.E. was a Lieutenant General's command, the only one outside the United Kingdom or India which gives an indication of the status of the British forces in Egypt and the strategic importance of the country. The main British bases were at Abbassia on the outskirts of Cairo, Kasr-el-Nil (in central Cairo), Moascar (Ismailia) and at Alexandria. In 1930, there were three formations under command, each commanded by a Temporary Brigadier (Colonel), namely:

- The Cavalry Brigade;
- The Canal Brigade;
- The Cairo Brigade.

In 1936, the U.K. government and the Egyptian government agreed a treaty between the two countries. Under this treaty, the U.K. was required to withdraw all military forces from Egypt other than those required to protect the Suez Canal and its surrounding areas. A limit of 10,000 troops was placed on British military presence in Egypt. The U.K. also agreed to train and equip the Egyptian Army. The treaty was signed on 26 August and ratified on 22 December.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the British retook effective control of Egypt, which became an important military base in the Middle East, although Egypt remained nominally an independent country. In 1940, The British Troops in Egypt (B.T.E.) comprised the:

- Mersa Matruh Garrison;
- Alexandria Sub-Area;
- Cairo Sub-Area.

On 17 June 1940, Western Desert Force was formed in B.T.E. by the re-designation of the Headquarters, 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which had just arrived from Palestine. For the rest of the Second World War, British Troops Egypt existed as a large military supply, reinforcement and training base. The static command had no operational function, although in mid-1942 as the Axis forces reached El Alamein, the command did prepare for the possible evacuation of Egypt. Egypt was also used a base for deception purposes, with large formations apparently based in the country with a possible view to invading the Balkans in order to deceive the German higher commands. It was particularly the case in mid to late 1943 when the Allies were intending to invade Sicily and then Italy.

With the end of the war, resentment about the British presence in Egypt manifested itself. In late December 1945, rioting broke out, escalating through to a peak in February 1946 with violent attacks on British Service Clubs and other Military locations in Cairo. On 25 January major rioting broke out in Ismailia, which was put down by the Lancashire Fusiliers. The next day, rioters attacked British property in Cairo, with the Turf Club being torched and eleven members dying in the attack. During the 'disturbances', the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade lost thirty-three killed and sixty-nine wounded. In Cairo, the barracks at Kasr-el-Nil were besieged for a time, and on 4 March, two British Military Policemen were overwhelmed and killed. There were five members of the Corps of Military Police manning a checkpoint when rioting broke out. The five military policemen were isolated and surrounded by a mob. The two who died were Lance Corporal 1616627 Peter Ronald MAILE, aged twenty-five years, a married man from Thornton Heath in Surrey, and Private 5783652 Arthur James BAILEY, aged twenty-three years, a married man from Glasgow. Lance Corporal MAILE is buried in Grave 8.F.13., and Private BAILEY in grave 8.F.11., of the Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt.

In May 1946, the British and Egyptian governments opened negotiations, resulting in the British Prime Minister, Clem ATTLEE, announcing an agreement resulting in British troops withdrawing from most of Egypt into the Canal Zone. Lieutenant General ALLFREY moved the Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt, from Cairo to Moascar, a suburb of Ismailia in the Canal Zone. The withdrawal commenced on 4 July 1946, with the British handing over the Citadel, the fortress in Cairo, over to the Egyptian Army. Disputes between the United Kingdom and Egypt over The Sudan led to negotiations collapsing, but the British withdrawal continued.

On 9 February 1947, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The Royal Fusiliers handed over Mustapha Barracks in Alexandria to the Egyptians, and the British left that city and former naval base. On 28 March, The Life Guards quietly slipped out of Kasr-el-Nil Barracks at 05.00 hours and withdrew into the Canal Zone. The Canal Zone was divided into two Brigade Areas, the northern formed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, which also the Strategic Reserve. The British Military Mission to the Egyptian Army was closed down at this time.

**General Officer Commanding**13<sup>th</sup> May 1927 – 1930

Lieutenant General Sir E. Peter STRICKLAND, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.M.G., D.S.O., Col R. Norfolk R.

12<sup>th</sup> April 1934 – 1939Lieutenant General Sir George A. WEIR, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Col 3<sup>rd</sup> D.G., *p.s.c.***General Officer Commanding-in-Chief**15<sup>th</sup> June 1939 – 4<sup>th</sup> February 1941Lieutenant General Henry Maitland WILSON, C.B., D.S.O., Col Comdt. Rifle Bde, *p.s.c.*16<sup>th</sup> February 1941 – 8<sup>th</sup> April 1941Lieutenant General (Acting) Richard Nugent O'CONNOR, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*<sup>1</sup>14<sup>th</sup> April 1941 – 13<sup>th</sup> November 1941Lieutenant General Sir James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL, K.C.B, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Col Comd't R.A., *p.s.c.*<sup>2</sup>13<sup>th</sup> November 1941 – 1<sup>st</sup> February 1942Lieutenant General William George HOLMES, C.B., D.S.O.\* , *p.s.c.*1<sup>st</sup> February 1942 – 12<sup>th</sup> December 1944Lieutenant General (Acting) Robert Graham William Hawkins STONE, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.***General Officer Commanding**16<sup>th</sup> November 1944 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1948Lieutenant General (Temporary) Charles Walter ALLFREY, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.\* , *p.s.c.*<sup>3</sup>1<sup>st</sup> January 1948 – 16<sup>th</sup> January 1949Lieutenant General Richard Nelson GALE, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

Lieutenant General ERSKINE,

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<sup>1</sup> Created K.C.B. and knighted for operations in the Western Desert on 4 March 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Promoted General on 10 September 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Created K.B.E. and knighted on 13 June 1946, and promoted Lieutenant General on 23 November 1946.

**Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)**

8<sup>th</sup> October 1929 – 1930

Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) G. M. LINDSAY, C.M.G., D.S.O., *p.s.c. A.D.C.*

25<sup>th</sup> June 1936 – 1939

Temporary Brigadier H. C. LOYD, D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c., p.s.c.*

7<sup>th</sup> August 1939 – 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) A. R. SELBY, *i.d.c., p.s.c.*

28<sup>th</sup> August 1940 – 4<sup>th</sup> February 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Alexander GALLOWAY, M.C., *p.s.c.*

1946 – 1948

Brigadier James Archibald William BALLARD, D.S.O., M.B.E.

1947 – 1949

Brigadier C. S. SUGDEN

**Chief of Staff**

1949 – 1951

Brigadier Kennett BAYLEY

**Brigadier in charge of Administration**

1<sup>st</sup> June 1928 – ??

Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) C. D. LOGAN, C.M.G., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

8<sup>th</sup> March 1935 – February 1939

Brigadier (Temporary) C. T. TOMES, D.S.O., M.C., Col. R. War. R., *p.s.c.*

25<sup>th</sup> February 1939 – 10<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Noel Warren NAPIER-CLAVERING, D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

**Deputy Adjutant & Quarter-Master-General**

1940 – 1941

Brigadier C H MILLER

1942 – 1945

Brigadier Thomas Francis Vere FOSTER

1947 – 1949

Brigadier (Temporary) Robert Thomas COOKE, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

**Assistant Adjutant-General**

10<sup>th</sup> September 1937 – 1940

Colonel T. F. FOSTER, M.C., *p.s.c.*

**Assistant Quarter-Master-General**

1<sup>st</sup> January 1937 – 27<sup>th</sup> November 1939

Colonel R. M. WOOTTEN, M.C., *p.s.c.*

28<sup>th</sup> November 1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel E. S. UNWIN, M.C., R.A.S.C., *p.s.c.*

1939 – 1940

Colonel Lionel MONIER-WILLIAMS, Indian Army



**Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)**

21<sup>st</sup> September 1940 – 16<sup>th</sup> February 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Gerald Knocker DIBB, M.C., *p.s.c.*

In between C.R.A. 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

9<sup>th</sup> April 1941 – 14<sup>th</sup> April 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Gerald Knocker DIBB, M.C., *p.s.c.*

19<sup>th</sup> April 1941 – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942

Brigadier (Acting) Philip Stafford MYBURGH, M.C., R.A.

1942 – 1943/4

Brigadier Thomas Eric Hasler HELBY

**Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)**

23<sup>rd</sup> March 1927 – 1930

Colonel B. W. Y. DANFORD, D.S.O.

1<sup>st</sup> October 1936 – 1939

Colonel H. W. TOMLINSON.

6<sup>th</sup> April 1939 – 21<sup>st</sup> August 1939

Colonel Eustace Francis TICKELL, M.C.

22<sup>nd</sup> August 1939 – 4<sup>th</sup> February 1940

Colonel F. H. KISCH

5<sup>th</sup> February 1940 – 30<sup>th</sup> August 1940

Colonel Henry Porter Wolseley HUTSON, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., R.E.

31<sup>st</sup> August 1940 – 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Gilbert STREETEN, O.B.E., M.C., R.E.

1943 – 1943

Brigadier A. B. E. EDWARDS

**Assistant Director of Survey**

9<sup>th</sup> September 1940 – 19<sup>th</sup> October 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) Alexander PRAIN, R.E.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Promoted Acting Colonel and Substantive Lieutenant Colonel on 1 October 1940

**Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)**

30<sup>th</sup> September 1927 – 1930

Colonel R. M. POWELL, D.S.O.

11<sup>th</sup> September 1935 – 1938

Colonel FitzA DRAYSON, M.C.

13<sup>th</sup> July 1939 – 1940/1

Colonel W. M. MILLER, M.C.

1941 – 1941

Colonel David Terence BASTIN

1941 – 1942

Colonel H. M. SYLVESTER

1942 – 1943

Brigadier G. H. WALTON

1943 – 1944

Brigadier William Charles Vernon GALWEY,

**Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport – (A.D.S.T.)**

19<sup>th</sup> June 1926 – 1930

Colonel R. C. JELICOE, C.B.E., D.S.O., LL.D.

29<sup>th</sup> September 1934 – 1938

Colonel S. E. H. GILES, D.S.O.

16<sup>th</sup> June 1939 – 8<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Colonel John Cardew ARMSTRONG, M.C.

**Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport**

18<sup>th</sup> December 1942 – 13<sup>th</sup> August 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Frederick Sherwood CLOVER, C.B.E., A.I.Mech.E.

**Deputy Director of Medical Services – (D.D.M.S.)**

@1930

Colonel H. C. R. HIME, D.S.O., M.B.

@1937

Colonel G. H. RICHARD.

@1940

Colonel P. S. TOMLINSON, D.S.O., M.R.C.P.

1940 – 1940

Brigadier Robert Glen SHAW

1940 – 1944

Brigadier CRAWFORD-JONES

1946 – 1947

Brigadier Kenneth Alexander Macdonald TOMORY, O.B.E.

**Deputy Director of Ordnance Services – (D.D.O.S.)**

@1930

Colonel H. C. TRAVERS, C.B.E., D.S.O., R.A.O.C.

1937 – 1940/1

Colonel C. A. H. MONTANARO, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

1940 – 1941

Colonel DOUGLAS-WHITE

28<sup>th</sup> August 1944 – 10<sup>th</sup> December 1944

Brigadier (Temporary) George Alexander Neville SWINEY, C.B.E., M.C., R.A.O.C., *o.*

**Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer**

@1930

Major F. R. BLOOR, M.B.E., M.C., A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

1937 – 1940/1

Lieutenant Colonel W. WHITE, M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

**Assistant Director of Veterinary Services**

@1930

Lieutenant Colonel H. E. GIBBS, D.S.O., R.A.V.C.

@1937

Lieutenant Colonel J. J. M. SOUTER, O.B.E., R.A.V.C.

@1940

Major J. JUDGE, R.A.V.C.

**Assistant Chaplain-General**

@1930

Revered E. F. CAMPBELL, D.S.O., B.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Class

@1937

Revered H. G. MARSHALL, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Class

@1940

Revered A. J. WILCOX, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Class

**Command Paymaster**

@1930

Colonel C. C. TODD, C.M.G., R.A.P.C.

@1937

Colonel H. GANGE-ANDREWS, R.A.P.C.

@1940

Colonel E. E. E. TODD, O.B.E., R.A.P.C.

**Command Education Officer**

@1940

Colonel (Acting) W. MacLEAN, M.C., A.E.C.

**Cairo Brigade (Cairo Sub-Area)**

1938 – 1939

Brigadier I. C. GRANT

1941 – 1944

Brigadier John Inglis CHRYSTALL

**Canal Brigade (Alexandria Sub-Area)**

Brigadier Frederick William BEWSHER

**Canal Northern District**

1946 – 1948

Brigadier (Temporary) Hervey Degge Wilmot SITWELL, C.B., M.C., *p.s.c.*

## British Military Mission to the Egyptian Army

### Chief of the British Military Mission to the Egyptian Army

7<sup>th</sup> January 1937 – 28<sup>th</sup> September 1938

Major General James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

29<sup>th</sup> September 1938 – 1<sup>st</sup> September 1940

Major General G. N. MacREADY, C.M.G., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1940 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942

Major General (Acting) Robert Graham William Hawkins STONE, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

17<sup>th</sup> February 1942 – 14<sup>th</sup> February 1945

Major General Noel Warren NAPIER-CLAVERING, C.B.E., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

17<sup>th</sup> February 1945 – 1946

Major General (Temporary) Walter Edmund CLUTTERBUCK, D.S.O., M.C. \*

25<sup>th</sup> June 1946 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1947

Major General Robert Keith ARBUTHNOTT, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

### General Staff Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

22<sup>nd</sup> January 1937 – 1<sup>st</sup> July 1939

Colonel G. R. SMALLWOOD, M.C., *p.s.c.*

1<sup>st</sup> July 1939 – 1940/1

Colonel N. CLOWES, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

### Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General

7<sup>th</sup> January 1937 – 28<sup>th</sup> July 1939

Colonel W. H. OXLEY, M.C., *p.s.c.*

29 July 1939 – 11 February 1941

Colonel George SURTEES, M.C., *p.s.c.*

### Chief Instructor Staff School

14<sup>th</sup> October 1937 – 24<sup>th</sup> August 1938

Colonel A. R. GODWIN-AUSTIN, O.B.E., M.C., *p.s.c.*

10<sup>th</sup> June 1937 – 1940

Colonel (Local) V. F. BROWNE, M.C., R.A., *p.s.c.*

### G.S.O. 2, Staff School

5<sup>th</sup> June 1937 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel (Local) T. S. AIREY, Durham L.I., *p.s.c.*

**Chief Instructor Senior Officers School**

24<sup>th</sup> August 1938 – 1940/1

Lieutenant Colonel (Local) J. S. NICHOLS, Border R., *p.s.c.*

**Chief Instructor (Class Y) Artillery**

5<sup>th</sup> June 1937 – 19<sup>th</sup> June 1937

Brevet Colonel W. R. SHILSTONE, M.B.E., R.A.

19<sup>th</sup> June 1937 – 1940/1

Colonel L. PARRINGTON, M.C., R.A.



## Bibliography and Sources

Please contact the webmaster or see: <https://www.librarything.com/catalog/RobPALMER>