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Author: Robert PALMER, M.A.

A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

MAJOR GENERAL T. SCOTT

A concise biography of Major General Thomas SCOTT, C.B., *p.s.c.*, an officer in the British Army from 1915 until 1927; and then an officer in the British Indian Army between 1927 and 1948.
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A Concise Biography of Major General T. SCOTT, C.B., p.s.c.

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Author: Robert PALMER, M.A. (copyright held by author)
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Major General Thomas SCOTT, C.B., *p.s.c.*

Introduction

Major General Thomas SCOTT, C.B., *p.s.c.*, was an officer in the British Indian Army from 1927 until 1948, having previously served in the British Army from 1915 until 1927. He served in the Great War in the Royal Artillery, being wounded twice, and Mentioned in Despatches three times. When he transferred to the Indian Army, he joined a cavalry regiment, and he saw action in the Eritrean campaign in 1941. After that, he performed a series of staff roles for rest of the war in Singapore, India, Ceylon, and India again.

Early Life and Career

Thomas SCOTT was born on 20 February 1897 at Bonnyton, Angus in Scotland. He was the eldest son of Thomas SCOTT (18/02/1852 – 17/05/1920), a farmer at Bonnyton, in the parish of Maryton, near Montrose in Scotland, and his wife Mary Alexandrina SCOTT (nee BALLANTINE) (? – 18/02/22). The family lived at Bonnyton House, and in 1901, they employed two servants, and Margaret BALLANTINE, Mary's mother-in-law was also living there. Thomas (junior) was educated at Montrose Academy and then attended Edinburgh University.

With the outbreak of the Great War, SCOTT was mobilised into the Special Reserve in early 1915. He was deployed to France and Belgium, serving on the front continuously from 15 May 1915 until the end of the war. He served with the Royal Field Artillery, being wounded twice during the war and being Mentioned in Despatches on 1 January 1917 and 23 December 1917.

Having served two years, one-hundred and eighty-one days in the Special Reserve, he was granted a Regular Army commission in the Royal Regiment of Artillery as a Second Lieutenant, and he was promoted immediately to the rank of Lieutenant. His seniority as Second Lieutenant dated from 20 February 1916 and as Lieutenant from 20 August 1917 to reflect his service within the Special Reserve.

Between the Wars

At the end of the Great War, SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Acting Captain whilst second-in-command of a field battery between 16 November 1918 and 15 June 1919. It appears that SCOTT continued his Regimental duties after the war, but that he found promotion slow to achieve. During this period, both his parents died; his father died on 17 May 1920 aged sixty-eight years and his mother died on 18 February 1922 aged fifty-seven years. Whilst still serving as a Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, SCOTT applied to transfer to the Indian Army. He was successful, and he transferred on 7 January 1927 to join the 6th Rajputana Rifles, an infantry regiment in the British Indian Army.

SCOTT transferred again shortly afterwards, on 6 December 1927, to join the 6th Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers (Watson's Horse), a Cavalry regiment. He was promoted to the rank of Captain, his seniority dating from 22 December 1919. SCOTT served in Waziristan during 1927, 1928 and 1929, and then attended the Staff College at Quetta in 1931. He passed the Staff Course and gained the letters *p.s.c.* after his entry in the Army List, this course being seen as the gateway to further promotion in the army. His first staff appointment was as a General Staff Officer 3rd Grade (G.S.O. 3) in the Peshawar District on the North-West Frontier. He took up this post on 28 February 1933, and then on 15 May 1934 he was made a General Staff Officer 2nd Grade (G.S.O. 2) in the Peshawar District.

He took part in the Mohmand Operations on the North-West Frontier in 1935. SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Major on 22 December 1933. He left Peshawar on 15 December 1936 transferring to Army Headquarters (A.H.Q.), Delhi as a G.S.O. 2. At A.H.Q. he joined the Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence. At the time he served in this directorate, the Director was Brigadier Mosley MAYNE, with Colonel MOLESWORTH as the Deputy Director.

After completing four years on the Staff, SCOTT left A.H.Q. Delhi on 28 February 1938. By this time, he had also been promoted to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on 1 January 1937. Major SCOTT then returned to regimental duties.

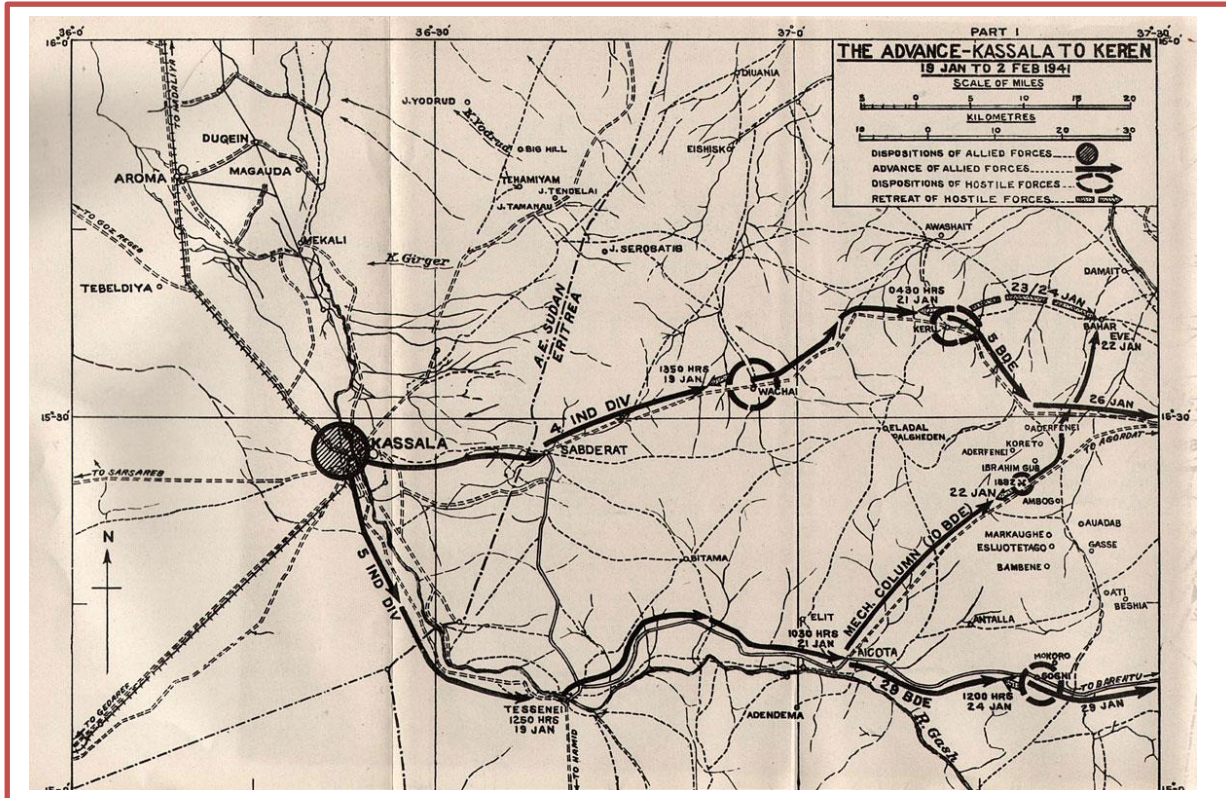
The Second World War – Gazelle Force

The outbreak of the Second World War found forty-two-year-old Major SCOTT still serving in India with his regiment, the 6th Lancers. His opportunity came on 24 July 1940 when he was promoted Acting Lieutenant Colonel and assumed command of Skinner's Horse (1st Duke of York's Own). At this time, the regiment had just completed mechanisation and training at Rawalpindi. It was equipped with unarmoured 15 cwt Chevrolet trucks, there being a shortage of armoured vehicles within the Indian Army.

In September 1940, the regiment came under command of the 5th Indian Infantry Division and then moved with the division to The Sudan. On 16 October 1940, the regiment formed the core of 'Gazelle Force' under command of Colonel F. W. MESSERVY, G.S.O. 1, 5th Indian Infantry Division. The constituent units of Gazelle Force were:

- Skinner's Horse (1st Duke of York's Own)
- One Troop, 'P' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery
- One Troop, 28th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (18 pounder guns)
- 4 Ordnance Workshop Section, Indian Army Ordnance Corps
- 170th Cavalry Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps
- 1 Motor Machine Gun Group, Sudan Defence Force
 - No 2, 4 & 6 Machine Gun Companies, Sudan Defence Force

The role of Gazelle Force was to patrol the long border between Sudan and Eritrea, and to harass the Italian forces in Eritrea. On 24 October 1940, SCOTT was promoted Temporary Lieutenant Colonel, and substantively to Lieutenant Colonel on 22 February 1941.



Initially, Gazelle Force was employed in the Gash Delta to the north of Kassala under the command of the 5th Indian Division. On 25 October, a patrol of No 1 Machine Gun Group was sent by Gazelle Force to cut over one-thousand yards of telegraph line east of Kassala. Three days later, another patrol returned to the same area, and ambushed an Italian party destroying three lorries and capturing six prisoners. From 1 to 11 November, Gazelle Force fought an action against an Italian force around Yodrud, about twenty-five miles north-east of Kassala. A force of about six-hundred Italian troops (including Colonial forces) had crossed the frontier and established themselves in the Yodrud area. They were watched by No 6 Machine Gun Company, and this information was relayed to Colonel MESSERVY.

'A' Squadron, 1st Horse was ordered by Colonel MESSERVY to proceed to the area and with No 6 M.M.G. Coy, to surround the Italian force. The remainder of 1 Horse under Lieutenant Colonel SCOTT was ordered to move up as soon as possible. By the evening of 1 November, the Italian force was being covered by 'A' Troop, 1st/5th Field Battery, Royal Artillery, 'A' Sqn of Skinner's Horse arriving at Mekali Wells that evening. At dawn on 3 November, an additional group of about three-hundred Italian soldiers moved from Eritrea into Sudan and joined the existing force. The gap they came through was closed at midday by 'B' Sqn Skinner's Horse, and Gazelle Force was joined by one company of the 3rd (Royal) Bn. 12th Frontier Force Regiment.

At 06.30 hours, on 4 November 1940, another party of Italian soldiers was reported to be heading east, and they were engaged by 'A' and 'B' Sqns, Skinner's Horse. By now, 'C' Squadron had arrived, making SCOTT's regiment complete. This squadron joined 'A' Sqn in preventing the Italians reinforcing from the position from the south. 'B' Sqn and 6 M.M.G. Company were to hold the ring and prevent the Italians from escaping.

At 23.00 hours on 5 November, a party of Italian soldiers escorting animal transport carrying stores ran into elements of 'A' Sqn, Skinner's Horse in a small picquet on a hill. They managed to overrun the Skinner's Horse party, so 'C' Sqn was sent to reinforce them. In the morning of 6 November, 'A' and 'C' Sqns were engaging the Italians, with 'A' Coy, 3rd/12th F.F.R. attacking the hill. By 13.00 hours, the hill was taken, and the Italians retreated to the hills, leaving one-hundred and fifty prisoners. By 16.30 hours, another ninety prisoners had been taken. They were identified as being from // *Group, Banda Polizia*, with detachments from the 35th and 101st Colonial Battalions. The British lost three men killed, and five wounded. The Italians lost twelve men killed.

The highly regarded Italian air force had become active, and on 7 November, they raided the Advanced Headquarters of Gazelle Force, killing four and wounding four soldiers. The Headquarters moved therefore to Mekali Wells that evening. 'B' Sqn 1st Horse was relieved by No 2 M.M.G. Coy, and it returned to rejoin the main regiment. Two companies of the 3rd Bn. 2nd Punjab Regiment arrived at Mekali Wells during the night of 9/10 November, and 'A' Troop, Sudan Regiment, equipped with four 3.7" howitzers arrived to be placed under the command of the 1st Horse.

On 11 November, while Skinner's Horse and No 1 M.M.G. Coy, under Lieutenant Colonel SCOTT, with the artillery support, held all the possible exits for the Italians to the south, the other infantry units attacked from the north. The attack started at 05.00 hours, and two hours later, a company was on the east side of the main position. The Italians then fought stubbornly, and by 12.00 hours, the attack had stalled. Colonel MESSERVY came up to assess the situation, and he decided that the British forces were not strong enough to eject the Italians, so the British withdrew to the Gash Delta to the south. It was a blow to break off the engagement, particularly as Skinner's Horse had been in action for eleven days continuously. One of the main factors in the decision was the Italian air superiority, and their ability to supply their troops from the air, which was later deployed by the British forces in North-East India and Burma to great effect. Lieutenant Colonel SCOTT's men needed a rest, which they were allowed.

As the plans for the invasion of Eritrea (which was an Italian colony at this time) coalesced around the deployment of the two Indian infantry divisions now in the Sudan, Gazelle Force was transferred to the command of the 4th Indian Infantry Division as a reconnaissance and pursuit group. The 4th Bn. 11th Sikh Regiment was brought down from Port Sudan and placed under the command of Gazelle Force. There were few usable roads in Eritrea, so the 4th Indian Division was to take the more northerly road from Kassala, and the 5th Indian Division, the southernmost. There were indications that Italian forces were withdrawing from the border area between the Sudan and Eritrea.

On 19 January 1941, Kassala was reported to be clear of Italian troops, so Gazelle Force set off in pursuit of the retiring Italians. The dusty road led across a desolate rolling plain, with dried watercourses, with some rocky shelves, and patches of thorn scrub. In the afternoon, the lorry borne Sikhs caught up with the Italians some forty miles east of Kassala. That rearguard melted away, and so Gazelle Force continued the pursuit. They caught up with them again in a defile, and the guns were brought into action. Gazelle Force pushed on through a litter of burning vehicles and dead and wounded soldiers. The 2nd Bn. The Cameron Highlanders and the 25th Field Regiment and 31st Field Regiment had been brought up in support. The Italian air force attacked the British force, with the Camerons suffering twelve casualties.

That night, Gazelle Force probed the Italian positions, and they discovered that Keru village had been evacuated, but the road had been mined and blocked, and that enemy forces occupied the crests either side of the road. On 21 January 1941, a most incredible event took place when a squadron of Italian Eritrean cavalry, about sixty in number, charged the gun positions in front of the Headquarters of Gazelle Force. In a scene reminiscent of the Charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, the Cavalrymen rode on, throwing grenades, but they were cut down by the guns in front of them. Clerks and orderlies occupied slit trenches, and a squadron of Skinner's Horse joined in repulsing the Italian Cavalry. The Italians were ejected from the camp, and they retired leaving twenty-five dead and sixteen wounded lying on the ground. It is not known whether Lieutenant Colonel SCOTT was present to witness this event.

The next day, Gazelle Force attacked the positions at Keru Gorge. Skinner's Horse occupied the low ground on the right, while the 4th/11th Sikhs attacked up the heights to the right. The Italians stood firm, and although the Sikhs cleared the immediate ridge, they discovered further, higher crests. The Camerons were brought up as the Sikhs had suffered several casualties, but during the night, it was found that the Italians were retiring. This was probably due to elements of the 5th Indian Infantry Division had sent a force to outflank the Keru position.

Gazelle Force continued to lead the advance, and they came up against a strong Italian position at Agordat. The town lay in a plain, surrounded by high ground on all sides. Skinner's Horse was sent out to the flanks to undertake a reconnaissance for a route passable for vehicles. They failed to find a route, so the infantry were brought up, and Gazelle Force were held back. After some intense fighting, the 4th Indian Division managed to force the position, and the advance continued to the Keren area, which was more mountainous, and the key to opening the advance into Eritrea. On 3 February, Skinner's Horse explored the hills to the south of the Dongolaas Gorge, but they could not find a route suitable for vehicles and tanks.

Between 6 February and 1 April 1941, a fierce battle ensued in the Keren area as the British forces attempted to break through the gorge, the Italians fighting bravely and with determination. With its role now completed, Gazelle Force was disbanded, with Skinner's Horse returning to the command of the 5th Indian Infantry Division.

The campaign in Eritrea came to conclusion with the Italian forces surrendering in Massawa on 8 April. Fighting continued in Ethiopia, but the two Indian divisions had no role in that. Colonel MESSERVY was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his command of Gazelle Force, but there was no recognition for Lieutenant Colonel SCOTT.

Second World War – Staff Roles

SCOTT was not to be ignored, as he was ordered to return to India to assume the role as General Staff Officer, Grade 1 for the newly raised 6th Indian Infantry Division. SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Acting Colonel on taking up his new appointment on 20 March 1941. He was promoted to the substantive rank of Colonel on 15 May 1941 (his seniority dating from 1 January 1940 and his service number being 13150). This formation was based at Secunderabad and was under command of Major General (Acting) James Noel THOMSON, D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, a British Army officer, who was appointed on 22 April 1941, i.e. about a month after SCOTT's appointment.

This was a busy time as the new division was under orders to proceed to Iraq. The 6th Indian Division began landing at Basra on 11 September 1941, but once again SCOTT was recalled back to India. He left the 6th Indian Division on 17 November 1941 and the next day was appointed the G.S.O. 1 for Far East Command.

Far East Command was formed to coordinate the operations and administration of Malaya Command, Burma Command, British Troops in China, and the Royal Air Force Far East Command. It was commanded by Air Chief Marshall Sir Henry Robert Moore BROOKE-POPHAM, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.F.C.. The headquarters were based in Singapore.

Shortly after taking up his new role, Colonel SCOTT was taken ill on 8 December 1941. This was the day that the Japanese invaded Malaya and war broke out between the United Kingdom and Japan. On 15 January 1942, Far East Command was absorbed into the new South-East Asia Command headed by General WAVELL. This command ceased to exist with the fall of Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Java, and it closed in March 1942.

SCOTT returned to India, taking up his next appointment on 5 May 1942. On that date, he was promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier, and assumed the role as Brigadier General Staff of the newly formed Central Command under Lieutenant General WILLCOX. Central Command was formed to take responsibility for the internal security and training arrangements in the central part of India, as Eastern Command, Southern Command, and Northern Command all became operational armies. SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier six months after his promotion to the acting rank.

On 27 November 1943, SCOTT left Central Command to become the Director of Plans, South-East Asia Command based at Kandy in Ceylon. This was a large command, with over two-thousand personnel at its height. There was, however, some conflict with the role of the Headquarters Allied Land Forces South-East Asia. This may be the reason that Brigadier SCOTT only held that role for a short time before transferring to another role on the island as the Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon.¹ The Commander-in-Chief, Admiral (Acting) Sir Geoffrey LAYTON, K.C.B., D.S.O., R.N. was a Royal Navy officer. The General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) in early 1944 was Lieutenant General (Acting) Harry Edward de Robillard WETHERALL, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.

The Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, from 8 March 1942 onwards, was Major General Ian Stanley Ord PLAYFAIR, D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.* He left this appointment on 7 November 1943, transferring to become the Major General, General Staff at the Headquarters, 11th Army Group in India. Brigadier SCOTT was already based on the island of Ceylon, so it appears that he transferred from his role with South-East Asia Command to replace Major General PLAYFAIR as the Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, on a date between November 1943 and January 1944.

By this period, the British forces on the island of Ceylon had been reduced to one infantry brigade, one anti-aircraft brigade, and locally enlisted troops. In June 1944, SCOTT's role was either downgraded, or a Royal Navy officer assumed the role. On 5 June 1944, SCOTT returned to G.H.Q. Delhi to assume the role as Director of Manpower Planning within the Adjutant-General's Branch. This was a new Directorate tasked with the responsibility for planning the size and structure of the future Indian Army, in particular post-war leading towards independence. This would then determine the needs in terms of skills, abilities and numbers of personnel required post-war. SCOTT was promoted Acting Major General on 8 June 1944 to head up the directorate. He had a small staff, comprising a Deputy Director of Manpower Planning, Colonel G. T. WHEELER, D.S.O., *p.s.c.*, and the following officers:

- 2 x Assistant Adjutant-Generals
- 4 x Deputy Assistant Adjutant-Generals
- 1 x Staff Captain.

Post War and Retirement

SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Temporary Major General on 8 June 1945, having held the Acting rank for twelve months, as was the usual policy of the British and British Indian Armies. In October 1946, he transferred roles within G.H.Q. India to become a Deputy Chief of the General Staff (B).² His service was recognised by him being made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (C.B.) in the New Year's Honours List on 1 January 1947. This award was usual for officers gaining the rank of Major General in the British or British Indian Army.

¹ This appointment is described as 'Chief of Staff, Commander-in-Chief Ceylon Command' in his *Who's Who* entry.

² At this time, there were two Deputy Chiefs of the General Staff termed simply (A) and (B).

In 1947, SCOTT left G.H.Q. India to replace Major General F. J. WALSH as Major General in charge of Administration, Northern Command under General MESSERVY, with whom he had served in Eritrea. The exact date that he assumed this role is not known, but by early 1947, it was obvious to all the members of the British Indian Army that the country was moving towards independence and partition. A process of 'Indianisation' was well underway, with Indian officers being promoted into staff roles, and in command of formations. It was expected that India would become independent in late 1947 or 1948, but on 3 June 1947, the Viceroy, MOUNTBATTEN, announced that it would take place on 15 August 1947.

The announcement of Partition brought about much communal strife, and it meant dividing the British Indian Army into two separate forces, with India taking about two-thirds, and Pakistan one-third of the men and materiel. Preparations commenced in respect of the forming of the new Pakistan Army from the Headquarters of Northern Command, and it is probably in this respect that Major General SCOTT was posted to Northern Command. On 15 August 1947, with the independence of Pakistan, this command became the Army Headquarters for the new Pakistan Army, and Major General WALSH returned to become the Quarter-Master-General of the new Pakistan Army. It is believed SCOTT relinquished his role at this time.

Many British officers in the British Indian Army faced an uncertain future, and with effect from 15 August 1947, they were transferred to the British Army, Special List (ex-Indian Army). SCOTT was one of those transferred, but there was no further employment available to him, therefore, he retired from the British Army on 2 May 1948, aged fifty-one years. SCOTT was granted the honorary rank of Major General upon his retirement, as his substantive rank was Colonel.

Thomas SCOTT had married Enid Pearl SAVAGE (who came from Hexham in Northumberland) in 1922, and they had one son. On his retirement, SCOTT moved to South Africa. He became involved in the horse racing industry and was a Steward. He was also a member of the Civil Service Club, South African (Turf) Club, Milnerton Turf Club in Cape Town, and Jockey Club of South Africa.

Thomas SCOTT lived at Grosvenor Square, College Road, Rondebosch, Cape Province in South Africa. He died on 26 November 1968 aged seventy-one years. He is remembered on his parent's memorial at Maryton Parish Church, Angus with the words 'he gave great service and was beloved by all'.

Thomas SCOTT married Enid Pearl SAVAGE (1895 – 1976), the eldest daughter of the Reverend Canon SAVAGE, from the Priory, Hexham in Northumberland. They married on 31 January 1922 in All Saint's Church, Malabar Hill, Bombay, and they had one son, Geoffrey (1922 – 2014). Enid is also commemorated on the SCOTT family memorial in Maryton.



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Robert PALMER M.A.

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