

2020

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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

EAST AFRICA COMMAND (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A concise history of the East Africa Command, a static command in the British Army covering the British colonies in East Africa between 1940 and 1950. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1940 and 1950 are included.

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The History and Personnel of East Africa Command

Version: 1_2

This edition dated: 21 January 2020

ISBN: Not yet allocated.

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Published privately by: The Author – Publishing as:
www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

East Africa Command

Prior to the Second World War, the United Kingdom had several colonies in East Africa. They were:

- Kenya;
- Uganda;
- British Somaliland;
- Nyasaland (now Malawi);
- Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia);
- Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

In the Great War, a long campaign had been fought in German East Africa, and following the Armistice, that country was incorporated into the British Empire as Tanganyika (now Tanzania). Between the two world wars, responsibility for the Army in the colonies of East Africa was devolved to the individual colonies themselves. The various Army regiments in the colonies were amalgamated into the King's African Rifles in 1902, which after the Great War was reduced to six Regular battalions. Its role was as an imperial police force tasked with internal security in East Africa.

An Inspector General of African Colonial Forces was appointed to oversee the units in both East and West Africa. In 1935, Italy annexed Ethiopia, raising tensions in the area. In 1938, Major General George GIFFARD was appointed Inspector General of Colonial Forces and commenced a programme to expand African forces and provide up to date equipment and training. On 3 February 1940, East Africa was placed under the command of G.H.Q. Middle East. East Africa Force came into being on 21 August 1940, with Major General DICKINSON officiating until the arrival on 1 November 1940 of Lieutenant General Alan CUNNINGHAM, D.S.O., M.C.. East Africa Force had three divisions under command for the campaign in East Africa, the:

- 11th (African) Division;
- 12th (African) Division;
- 1st South African Infantry Division.

The 1st South African Division was on the left flank of the East Africa Force, and attacked into Abyssinia in January 1941. The 11th (African) Division and 12th (African) Division both attacked into Italian Somaliland in January 1941 and drove along the coast before turning inland and into Abyssinia. With the end of the main campaign, on 15 September 1941, East Africa Force was redesignated as East Africa Command, with Lieutenant General PLATT being appointed as the new Commander-in-Chief.

The new Command was divided into four Areas:

- Eritrea;
- Ethiopia and British Somaliland (the 12th (African) Division);
- Central Area (Italian Somaliland, Uganda, Kenya, Zanzibar and Tanganyika);
- Southern Area (Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia).

Ethiopia was regained sovereignty on 31 January 1941, which was recognised by an agreement in December 1944. The 12th (African) Division was disbanded on 18 April 1943 as the Ethiopian government regained control of the country. A new Islands Area was formed on 1 September 1942 to take control of Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius. Southern Rhodesia was transferred to the responsibility of South Africa, and the General Officer Commanding Southern Area became the General Officer Commanding Islands Area. The Islands Area was disbanded on 24 July 1944, with the Headquarters becoming H.Q. Northern Area. The Central Area became the Southern Area on 1 August 1944 to give two Areas, as existed pre-war.

After the end of the Second World War, East Africa Command continued to operate until October 1946, when it was downgraded to a Major General's command as the East Africa District. In August 1951, the Mau Mau began coming to notice. They were a militant African nationalist movement whose intention was to remove British rule from Kenya. The Kenyan Government imposed a curfew in three districts on the outskirts of Nairobi, where gangs of arsonists were setting fire to homes of Africans who refused to take the Mau Mau oath.

On 7 October, the Senior Chief Waruhuo was assassinated after speaking out against the Mau Mau. The British Government agreed to send troops to Kenya on the 19th October, and two days later, the Kenyan Government declared a state of emergency after a spate of over forty murders in Nairobi. The President of the Kenya Africa Union, Jomo KENYATTA was arrested during this period. The Mau Mau declared open rebellion on 25 November, with the British responding by arresting over two-thousand suspected Mau Mau terrorists. On 26 January 1953, panic spread amongst the Europeans after a white farmer and his family was murdered. Settlers formed their own commando units as they are concerned about the lack of response by the authorities. The Kikuyu tribal areas were cordoned off to restrict the movement of Mau Mau terrorists.

The British government responded in a similar manner to that employed in Malaya. A new Commander-in-Chief was appointed and in addition a Major General as Director of Operations to be responsible for all tactical operations. On 24 April 1954, five-thousand British and Empire troops and one-thousand policemen carried out a series of coordinated dawn raids. On 18 January 1955, the Governor General, Sir Evelyn BARING offered an amnesty, but three days later, two English schoolboys were murdered, and in June, the amnesty was cancelled.

By October, over seventy-thousand Kikuyu tribesmen had been arrested, thirteen-thousand people had been killed over the past three years. The rebellion began to die down, and on 10 November 1959, the state of emergency ended.

The British territories began to be granted independence in the 1960's. Each country achieved independence on the following dates:

- Tanganyika (now known as Tanzania) 9 December 1961;
- Uganda 9 October 1962;
- Kenya 12 September 1963;
- Nyasaland (renamed Malawi) 6 July 1964;
- Northern Rhodesia (renamed Zambia) 24 October 1964.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

21st August 1940 – 1st November 1940¹

Lieutenant General (Acting) Douglas Povah DICKINSON, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.

1st November 1940 – 28th August 1941

Lieutenant General (Acting) Alan Gordon CUNNINGHAM, D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

28th August 1941 – 5th December 1941 (Officiating)

Lieutenant General (Acting) Henry Edward De Robillard WETHERALL, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.

5th December 1941 – 11th December 1944

Lieutenant General Sir William PLATT, K.C.B., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*²

12th December 1944 – October 1946

Lieutenant General Sir Kenneth Arthur Noel ANDERSON, K.C.B., M.C., *p.s.c.*

General Officer Commanding

October 1946 – 8th July 1948

Major General William Alfred DIMOLINE, C.B., C.M.G, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

9th July 1948 – 6th September 1951

Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Arnhold Bullick DOWLER, K.B.E., C.B., *p.s.c.*

7th September 1951 – 6th June 1953

Lieutenant General Sir Alexander Maurice CAMERON, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

7th June 1953 – 2nd May 1955

General Sir George Watkin Eben James ERSKINE, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O.

2nd May 1955 – 1957

Lieutenant General (Temporary) General Gerald William LATHBURY, C.B., D.S.O., M.B.E.

Deputy General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

7th June 1953 – 1954

Lieutenant General Sir Alexander Maurice CAMERON, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.

Director of Operations

January 1953 – 1956

Major General William Robert Norris HINDE, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.**

¹ Lt. Gen CUNNINGHAM was appointed on 19 October 1940, but DICKINSON appears to have remained in post until 1 November 1940 to effect the changeover in command.

² Created K.B.E. on 1 January 1943, and promoted General on 4 January 1943.

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

26th August 1940 – 23rd April 1942

Brigadier (Acting) John Keith EDWARDS, M.C., *p.s.c.*

24th April 1942 – 2nd May 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Wilfred Algernon EBSWORTH, *p.s.c.*

25th May 1943 – 13th February 1944

Brigadier (Temporary) Wilfred Algernon EBSWORTH, *p.s.c.*³

14th February 1944 – 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) Edward Steven Bruce WILLIAMS, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

1949 – 1952

Brigadier James Rupert COCHRANE,

General Staff Officer, 1st Grade

6th April 1940 – 26th January 1941

Colonel (Acting) William Alfred DIMOLINE, O.B.E., M.C., R.Signals, *p.s.c.*

Deputy Director of Military Intelligence

15th September 1941 – 7th April 1942

Colonel (Acting) Reginald Antony HUTTON, 2, G.R., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General – (D.A. & Q.M.G.)

15th February 1941 – 14th September 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Edward Henry Lysaght LYSAGHT-GRIFFITHS, D.S.O., O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Brigadier i/c Administration

15th September 1941 – 8th October 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Edward Henry Lysaght LYSAGHT-GRIFFITHS, D.S.O., O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General – (D.A. & Q.M.G.)

9th October 1941 – 23rd March 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Alan Colquhoun DUFF, O.B.E., M.C., R.E., *p.s.c.*

Assistant Adjutant-General

6th November 1941 – 27th June 1942

Colonel (Temporary) Rupert Edward HOBDAY, D.S.O.* , *p.s.c.*

³ Awarded the C.B.E. on 8 July 1943.

Assistant Quarter-Master-General

2nd June 1940 – 8th October 1941

Colonel (Temporary) Alan Colquhoun DUFF, O.B.E., M.C., R.E., *p.s.c.*

June 1940 – September 1941

Colonel (Acting) Sir Brian Hubert ROBERTSON, Bt, D.S.O., M.C., South African Defence Force (Major, Reserve of Officers), *p.s.c.*

Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)

6th December 1940 – 30th August 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Eric Henry BLAKER, M.C., *g*

11 April 1941 – 22 November 1941

Brigadier (Local) John Yeadon ORMSBY, R.A., *g*.⁴

31st August 1941 – 19th February 1943

20th February 1943 – 1945/6

Brigadier (Temporary) Stephen Keith THORBURN, O.B.E., M.C., R.A. (Major, Reserve of Officers)

Commander Royal Artillery

14th May 1943 – 23rd July 1944

Colonel (Acting) Walter Whitney COWAN, R.A., *g*.

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

29th June 1940 – 22nd May 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Arnold MINNIS, R.E.

12th June 1941 – 2nd October 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Henry Porter Wolseley HUTSON, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.

18th September 1945 – 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) Richard Leigh WITHINGTON, M.C.

Deputy Director of Survey

1940 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel BRADFORD

November 1940 – February 1941

Colonel Martin HOTINE,

1941 – 1943

Brigadier John SPOTTISWOODE,

⁴ The rank he held is not clear. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission gives his date of death as 22/11/41, and the London Gazette date of death as 23/11/41. Rank on death shown as Lieutenant Colonel, but the book 'History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery' states he was a Brigadier Royal Artillery, East Africa circa 1941.

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

18th March 1940 – 24th September 1941

Lieutenant Colonel Cyril Edward SKETCH, R.Signals. later C.S.O. LoC Signals

1941 – 1945

Colonel C. M. F. WHITE

Deputy Director of Supplies & Transport – (D.D.S.T.)

9th September 1940 – 15th December 1943

Colonel (Acting) Charles Vore BENNETT, O.B.E., A.M.I.Mech.E, R.A.S.C.⁵

2nd January 1944 – 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Lionel George HUMPHREYS, A.M.I.Mech.E.

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

13th June 1941 – 5th October 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Robert Eric BARNSELY, M.C., M.B.

6th October 1941 – 4th April 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Evelyn Alexander SUTTON, O.B.E., M.C., R.A.M.C.

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

1946 – 1948

Brigadier John Mandeville Mac FIE,

Consultant Surgeon

Consulting Physician

1940 – 1942

Brigadier William Heneage OGLIVIE,

Brigadier Edward Revill CULLINAN,

⁵ Promoted Acting Brigadier in post on 15 September 1941.

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

19th August 1940 – 2nd June 1942

Colonel (Acting) John William GAISFORD, R.A.O.C.

3rd June 1942 – January 1945

Colonel (Acting) Horace Rupert PRIMMER, R.A.O.C., o⁶

January 1945 – 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) Cyril William BACON, C.B.E., o.

1946 – 1948

Colonel Hugh Fraser MacKENZIE, C.B.E., o.

Deputy Director of Mechanical Engineering – (D.D.M.E.)**Command Paymaster****Assistant Director of Dental Services**

⁶ Promoted Acting Brigadier whilst in post on 24 August 1943, and Temporary Brigadier on 24 February 1944. Awarded the C.B.E. on 1 January 1945.

ETHIOPIA**General Officer Commanding Ethiopia (12th African Division)**

15th September 1941 – 18th April 1943

Major General Charles Christopher FOWKES, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.*

CENTRAL AREA**General Officer Commanding Central Area**

15th September 1941 – 7th December 1941

8th December 1941 – 22nd April 1943

Major General Henry Edward De Robillard WETHERALL, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.

23rd April 1943 – 31st July 1944

??

NORTHERN AREA**General Officer Commanding Northern Area**

1st August 1944 – 1945

Major General Gerald Russell SMALLWOOD, D.S.O., M.C.

1945 – 1948

??

1948 – 1951

Brigadier Alexander Cosby Fishburn JACKSON, O.B.E.

SOUTHERN AREA**General Officer Commanding Southern Area**

15th September 1941 – 30th August 1942

Major General Gerald Russell SMALLWOOD, D.S.O., M.C.

Commanding Officer, Southern Area1st August 1944 - 1945??1946

Brigadier William CARDEN-ROE,

ISLANDS AREA**General Officer Commanding Islands Area**1st September 1942 – 24th July 1944

Major General Gerald Russell SMALLWOOD, D.S.O., M.C.

Chief Political Officer1941 – 1942

Major General Philip Euen MITCHELL, C.B.

Deputy Chief Political Officers1940 – 1943

Brigadier Maurice Stanley LUSH, M.C.*

1940 – 1943

Brigadier The Honourable Francis James Rennell RODD.

Head of British Military Mission to Ethiopia1941 – 1943

Major General Stephen Seymour BUTLER, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Reserve of Officers

April 1943 – 1949

Major General Algernon Edward COTTAM, O.B.E., M.C. (1)

Military Administrator of Eritrea1941 – 1942

Brigadier Brian KENNEDY-COOKE

1942 – 1944

Brigadier Stephen Hemsley LONGRIGG,

Chief Administrator of Eritrea1945 – 1946

Major General John Meredith BENOY, C.B.E.

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