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**A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:**

# **LIEUTENANT GENERAL W. G. H. VICKERS**

A concise biography of Lieutenant General Wilmot Gordon Hilton VICKERS, C.B., O.B.E., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, an officer in the British Indian Army between 1910 and 1944 who became the Quarter-Master-General of the Army in India.

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**A Concise Biography of Lieutenant General W. G. H. VICKERS**

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## Lieutenant General Wilmot Gordon Hilton VICKERS, C.B., O.B.E., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

Lieutenant General Wilmot Gordon Hilton VICKERS, C.B., O.B.E., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, was an officer in the British Indian Army between 1910 and 1944. In the Great War, he served mainly in India, but afterwards, saw active service in Aden. Between the world wars, he rose steadily up through the Indian Army and was a brigade commander at the outbreak of the Second World War. After appointments in G.H.Q. India and with British Forces in Iraq, he was then Quarter-Master-General for India Command for two years during a crucial period as the Indian Army rapidly expanded to meet the threat from Japan's entry into the war.

Wilmot Gordon Hilton VICKERS was born on 8 June 1890 in Burma, the only son and eldest child of Lieutenant Colonel Hilton VICKERS of the Indian Army and his wife, Winifred Kathleen VICKERS (nee HOLWORTHY). He was baptised on 3 July 1890 at Belgaum, in the Province of Bombay in India. Wilmot had two sisters: Kathleen Olga VICKERS (1898 – 1993) and Nellie Prior VICKERS (1899 – u/k). Aged ten years in the 1901 Census, Wilmot is shown as a pupil at St. Mary's College, Harlow, Essex. He was later educated at the United Services College at Westward Ho! in North Devon. The school moved to Windsor whilst VICKERS was a pupil, and it was retitled as the Imperial Services College.

From being a Gentleman Cadet at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, on 29 January 1910, VICKERS was commissioned on the Unattached List with a view to his appointment to the Indian Army as a Second Lieutenant. He was second in terms of order of merit, and was in the same group of cadets as the future Lieutenant General Ralph Bouverie DEEDES. On 13 March 1911, VICKERS was admitted to the Indian Army from the Unattached List and was appointed a squadron officer with 31<sup>st</sup> Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant with effect from 29 April 1912.

The outbreak of the Great War found VICKERS serving as a Lieutenant in India. His promotion to the rank of Captain was published in the London Gazette of 6 April 1917, being ante-dated to take effect from 1 September 1915, although without pay and allowances of that rank applying until 1 September 1916.

Near the end of the war, VICKERS saw active service with the Aden Field Force. He was appointed the Brigade Major of the Aden Infantry Brigade on 1 September 1918 in the rank of Captain. Promoted to the rank of Temporary Major on 28 April 1919, VICKERS became the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General for the brigade. On 19 June 1919, he was made the Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master-General of the Aden Field Force, and he retained the rank of Temporary Major. VICKERS left Aden on 4 January 1920 and was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) on 31 March 1920, but with the award to take effect from 3 June 1919. This award was granted for his valuable services rendered in connection with military operations in Aden.

In the 1922 consolidation and reorganisation of the cavalry regiments in the Indian Army, VICKERS' regiment merged with another cavalry regiment, and was redesignated as the 13<sup>th</sup> Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers. On 1 January 1922, VICKERS was appointed as a Deputy Assistant Military Secretary in the Military Secretary's Branch at Army Headquarters in Delhi, a post he held until 11 February 1923. He attended the Staff College during this period, qualifying from the staff course to gain the letters *p.s.c.* after his entry in the Army List.<sup>1</sup> On successfully completing the Staff Course, on 28 January 1925 he was made the Brigade Major of the 21<sup>st</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade. Initially, this was in the rank of Captain, but VICKERS was promoted to the rank of Major on 29 January 1926. He relinquished this post on 1 April 1929. Wilmot VICKERS arrived in the U.K. on 23 May 1930 at the Port of London aboard the 'Viceroy of India'. He had left Bombay, with the passenger liner calling Aden, Port Said, Malta, Marseilles, Gibraltar and Plymouth. This was probably for an extended period of leave.

The next staff appointment VICKERS held was as a General Staff Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, which he held between 1 March 1931 and 18 March 1934. On 1 July 1931, he was promoted to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel. His next appointment was as the Commandant of the School of Equitation at Saugor, India which he assumed on 1 June 1934. On 1 December 1935, without having held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, nor having commanded his regiment, VICKERS was promoted to the rank of Colonel. This promotion took effect from 1 December 1935 (his seniority dated from 1 July 1934) and he left the School of Equitation to assume the role as Deputy Director of Staff Duties (D.D.S.D.) at Army Headquarters, India.

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<sup>1</sup> He probably attended the Indian Staff College at Quetta, but may have attended the British Staff College at Camberley.

This Directorate was at the time headed by Major General Claude AUCHINLECK, and apart from VICKERS there were six other officers in the Directorate in the rank of Major and Captain. The Directorate was responsible for all non-operational war planning, orders of battles of formations (which included the allocation of units and formations to higher formations) and appropriate policy.

Relinquishing the role as D.D.S.D. on 28 December 1937, VICKERS then attended the Imperial Defence College at Buckingham Gate, London in 1938. There were nine Army officers on the tri-service course of one year's duration. Two were from the Indian Army, VICKERS and Lieutenant Colonel Geoffry SCOONES. Both officers were selected as they were seen as having the capability to reach the highest ranks of the Indian Army, which future events were to prove correct.

Hilton and Winifred VICKERS settled at 19, Lansdown Place, Cheltenham following Hilton's retirement from the British Indian Army. Wilmot married Mary Catherine NUTTALL on 6 January 1923 in Bangalore, Madras India. It appears that Wilmot and Mary came to live at Cheltenham with Wilmot's parents at 19, Lansdown Place. Sadly, Mary died on 4 August 1938, aged forty-eight years, at Aldeburgh, Suffolk. After he completed the course, Wilmot VICKERS was placed on the Semi-Effective List on 18 December 1938 as no vacancies existed for him at this time. He was restored to the Effective List on 27 March 1939, and on 5 July 1939 appointed as the commanding officer of the Allahabad Brigade in India. VICKERS was promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier on taking up this new role. This brigade was part of the Lucknow District in Uttar Pradesh state of north central India.

On 15 September 1940, at the age of fifty years, VICKERS was promoted to the substantive rank of Major General (with his seniority dating from 16 May 1940) and appointed the Director of Supplies and Transport at General Headquarters, India. Usually this post was held by officers in the Royal Indian Army Service Corps, but, VICKERS had now significant experience as a staff officer and was presumably deemed suitable for this post.

In February 1941, units from the 10<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division landed in Iraq and secured the country in a short campaign. In May 1941, VICKERS was sent to Iraq where, on 7 May, he assumed the role as Major General in charge of Administration for the British Forces in Iraq, under command of Lieutenant General E. P. QUINAN.

Major General VICKERS was to spend ten months in Iraq, during which period both Iraq and Persia were taken under British control and preparations made to defend the oilfields against German invasion through the Caucasus mountains with a substantial build-up of formations and units.

On 2 March 1942, VICKERS was appointed the Quarter-Master-General at General Headquarters, India on promotion to the rank of Acting Lieutenant General. As such, he was responsible for provision of all equipment, supplies and transport for India Command. This was a period of massive expansion in the Indian Army, which the Indian economy struggled to meet. VICKERS was awarded the Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (C.B.) on 11 June 1942 and was promoted to the substantive rank of Lieutenant General (one of only four in the Indian Army) with effect from 20 June 1943. VICKERS relinquished the role as Quarter-Master-General on 8 January 1944 and retired from the Indian Army on 3 April 1944. He was not granted any further honours or awards; unusually, he was not knighted despite reaching the rank of substantive Lieutenant General.

On retirement, Wilmot VICKERS moved to the United Kingdom, and settled at 4, Oakhurst Court, Parabola Road, Cheltenham. On 24 September 1946 he was appointed a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the County of Gloucestershire, City and County of Gloucester; and City and County of Bristol. He was also the County Cadet Commandant of the Army Cadet Force in Gloucestershire between 1946 and 1955, and County Chief Warden in the Civil Defence organisation for Gloucestershire between 1949 and 1960.

Wilmot and Mary VICKERS had two sons together. One of their sons joined the British Army and became Lieutenant General Sir Richard Maurice Hilton VICKERS, latterly Commandant, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Sir Richard was the third generation of the family to serve in the Army. Lieutenant General Wilmot VICKERS died on 13 September 1987, aged ninety-seven years. He left an estate of £83,443.

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