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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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, 6th 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 3rd 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 2nd 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 3rd Infantry Brigade, which also the Strategic Reserve. The British Military Mission to the Egyptian Army was closed down at this time.
General Officer Commanding

13th 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.

12th April 1934 – 1939

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

15th June 1939 – 4th February 1941

16th February 1941 – 8th April 1941
Lieutenant General (Acting) Richard Nugent O’CONNOR, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., i.d.c., p.s.c.¹

14th April 1941 – 13th November 1941

13th November 1941 – 1st February 1942

1st February 1942 – 12th December 1944

General Officer Commanding

16th November 1944 – 31st December 1948
Lieutenant General (Temporary) Charles Walter ALLFREY, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.*, p.s.c.³

1st January 1948 – 16th January 1949

Lieutenant General ERSKINE,

¹ Created K.C.B. and knighted for operations in the Western Desert on 4 March 1941.
² Promoted General on 10 September 1941.
³ Created K.B.E. and knighted on 13 June 1946, and promoted Lieutenant General on 23 November 1946.
Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)
8th October 1929 – 1930
Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) G. M. LINDSAY, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. A.D.C.

25th June 1936 – 1939
Temporary Brigadier H. C. LOYD, D.S.O., M.C., i.d.c., p.s.c.
7th August 1939 – 1940
Brigadier (Temporary) A. R. SELBY, i.d.c., p.s.c.
28th August 1940 – 4th 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

1st June 1928 – ??
Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) C. D. LOGAN, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c.
8th March 1935 – February 1939
Brigadier (Temporary) C. T. TOMES, D.S.O., M.C., Col. R. War. R., p.s.c.
25th February 1939 – 10th September 1940

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

10th September 1937 – 1940
Colonel T. F. FOSTER, M.C., p.s.c.

Assistant Quarter-Master-General

1st January 1937 – 27th November 1939
Colonel R. M. WOOTTEN, M.C., p.s.c.
28th 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.)
21st September 1940 – 16th February 1941
Brigadier (Acting) Gerald Knocker DIBB, M.C., p.s.c.

In between C.R.A. 6th Infantry Division.
9th April 1941 – 14th April 1941
Brigadier (Temporary) Gerald Knocker DIBB, M.C., p.s.c.
19th April 1941 – 23rd October 1942
Brigadier (Acting) Philip Stafford MYBURGH, M.C., R.A.
1942 – 1943/4
Brigadier Thomas Eric Hasler HELBY

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)
23rd March 1927 – 1930
Colonel B. W. Y. DANFORD, D.S.O.

1st October 1936 – 1939
Colonel H. W. TOMLINSON.
6th April 1939 – 21st August 1939
Colonel Eustace Francis TICKELL, M.C.
22nd August 1939 – 4th February 1940
Colonel F. H. KISCH
5th February 1940 – 30th August 1940
Colonel Henry Porter Wolseley HUTSON, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., R.E.
31st 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
9th September 1940 – 19th October 1941
Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) Alexander PRAIN, R.E.⁴

⁴ Promoted Acting Colonel and Substantive Lieutenant Colonel on 1 October 1940
Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)
30th September 1927 – 1930
Colonel R. M. POWELL, D.S.O.

11th September 1935 – 1938
Colonel FitzA DRAYSON, M.C.
13th 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.)
19th June 1926 – 1930
Colonel R. C. JELLI COE, C.B.E., D.S.O., LL.D.

29th September 1934 – 1938
Colonel S. E. H. GILES, D.S.O.
16th June 1939 – 8th September 1940
Colonel John Cardew ARMSTRONG, M.C.

Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport
18th December 1942 – 13th 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
28th August 1944 – 10th December 1944
Brigadier (Temporary) George Alexander Neville SWINEY, C.B.E., M.C., R.A.O.C., o.

Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer
@1930
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 1st Class
@1937
Revered H. G. MARSHALL, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1st Class
@1940
Revered A. J. WILCOX, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces 1st 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. 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

7th January 1937 – 28th September 1938

29th September 1938 – 1st September 1940
Major General G. N. MacREADY, C.M.G., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., i.d.c., p.s.c.

2nd September 1940 – 31st January 1942

17th February 1942 – 14th February 1945

17th February 1945 – 1946
Major General (Temporary) Walter Edmund CLUTTERBUCK, D.S.O., M.C.*

25th June 1946 – 31st December 1947

General Staff Officer 1st Grade

22nd January 1937 – 1st July 1939
Colonel G. R. SMALLWOOD, M.C., p.s.c.

1st July 1939 – 1940/1
Colonel N. CLOWES, D.S.O., M.C., p.s.c.

Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General

7th January 1937 – 28th 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

14th October 1937 – 24th August 1938
Colonel A. R. GODWIN-AUSTIN, O.B.E., M.C., p.s.c.

10th June 1937 – 1940
Colonel (Local) V. F. BROWNE, M.C., R.A., p.s.c.

G.S.O. 2, Staff School

5th June 1937 – 1940
Lieutenant Colonel (Local) T. S. AIREY, Durham L.I., p.s.c.
Chief Instructor Senior Officers School
24th August 1938 – 1940/1
Lieutenant Colonel (Local) J. S. NICHOLS, Border R., p.s.c.

Chief Instructor (Class Y) Artillery
5th June 1937 – 19th June 1937
Brevet Colonel W. R. SHILSTONE, M.B.E., R.A.
19th 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