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Author: Robert PALMER, M.A.

A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

G.H.Q. INDIA (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A short history of General Headquarters India Command between 1938 and 1947, and details of the key appointments held in G.H.Q. India during that period.

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A Concise Biography of Lieutenant General Sir William H. G. BAKER

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Author: Robert PALMER (copyright held by author)

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Headquarters Staff of the Army in India

Headquarters of the Army in India was a pre-war command covering the entire country of British India. The headquarters consisted of six branches:

- Military Secretary's Branch,
- General Staff Branch,
- Adjutant General's Branch,
- Quarter-Master-General's Branch,
- Master-General of the Ordnance Branch,
- Engineer-in-Chief's Branch.

The Commander-in-Chief was a General in the Indian Army. This was usually a four-year posting. The C-in-C had a staff of five, an Assistant Military Secretary (Personal) (Lieutenant Colonel), three Aides-de-Camp (one Major and three Captains) and a personal surgeon (Major).

At the beginning of the Second World War, the headquarters was redesignated as the General Headquarters (G.H.Q.), India Command.

Military Secretary's Branch

The Military Secretary's Branch was small organisation concerned with filling the authorised establishments with the most suitable officers available. It did not control the size of the establishments, just merely trying to put the right people in the right post. In 1939, the Branch was composed of six officers and forty-five superintendents and clerks. There were five sections:

- M.S. 1 – Deputy Military Secretary,
- M.S. 2 – Assistant Military Secretary,
- M.S. 3 – Assistant Military Secretary,
- M.S. 4 – Office Supervisor,
- E. & S.B. – Officer Supervisor.

Section M.S. 1 was responsible for staff appointments, M.S. 2 dealt with British Army service officers regimental appointments, M.S. 3, handed Indian Army regimental appointments, and M.S. 4 dealt with the Army in India Reserve of Officers and other miscellaneous appointments. The E. & S.B. was the establishment and Selection Board, which interviewed officers for promotion and also handled establishment matters.

The outbreak of the Second World War led to the inevitable expansion in the work of the Branch, with the establishment fixed at twelve officers and sixty-six superintendents and clerks. In April 1940, another section was added to the Branch with the transfer from the Quarter-Master-General's Branch of the section dealing with the postings and promotions of officers of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps. This section became M.S. 5.

The Military Secretary's Branch was reorganised in 1941. Two additional Deputy Military Secretaries were approved, one for touring and the other for control of M.S. 2 and M.S. 3. The M.S. 1, 4, and 5 Section also expanded at this time. The following year, a fresh reorganisation took place, with the sections absorbed into four Groups or Directorate. A fourth Deputy Military Secretary was appointed. The four Groups were:

- Senior Staff and Co-ordination Group,
- Junior Staff and Recruiting Group,
- British Services Regimental Group,
- Indian Army Regimental Group.

Ten more sections were added in 1943, including one to look at the release of officers from Army Service to strength the civil administration in Bengal due to the famine and increased military presence. By the end of 1944, the Military Secretary's Branch reached its peak at forty-three officers and three-hundred and seventy-seven superintendents and clerks, organised in thirty-two sections.

Early in 1945, the responsibility for all postings and transfers of regimental officers up to and including the rank of Lieutenant Colonel were transferred to the Organisation Directorate in the Adjutant-General's Branch. The Military Secretary's Branch then concentrated on the appointments of officers of the rank of Colonel and above, all graded appointments, confidential reports, commissioning, retirements, resignations, promotions, complaints, honours and awards. On 15 August 1945, the establishment of the Branch stood at forty-three officers and two-hundred and sixty-five superintendents and clerks. The layout of the Branch was now:

- Deputy Military Secretary,
 - Assistant Military Secretary, British Service,
 - Assistant Military Secretary, Indian Army,
- Assistant Military Secretary, Command and Staff Section,
- Assistant Military Secretary, Co-ordination,
- Office Supervisor, Honours and Awards.

Principal Administrative Officer's Office

In October 1943, with the growth of the Indian Army and the growth of the G.H.Q. India, it was decided to appoint a Principal Administrative Officer to assist the Chief of the General Staff and the Supreme Commander with the administration required to run the Indian Army. Lieutenant General LINDSELL was sent to India from the Middle East as an experienced administrator. He had a very small staff as his main function was to coordinate and audit the administrative arrangements in G.H.Q. The post continued to exist until abolished in the run up to partition.

POST WAR CONTRACTION AND PARTITION

At the end of the Second World War, in November 1945 the number of officers based at G.H.Q. India was:

- Lieutenant Generals = 8
- Major Generals = 30
- Brigadiers = 83
- Colonels = 102
- Others = 2,375

With the end of hostilities, the political pressure was raised to rapidly reduce the number of personnel at G.H.Q.. There were already some vacancies as with the introduction of 'Python' leave for British Army who had served more than three years, eight months in the Far East, there was a shortage of suitably trained and experienced staff officers. In the period from August 1945 to November 1945, three Brigadier's posts had already been abolished, and by the end of the year, further reductions planned were:

- Major Generals = 2
- Brigadiers = 15
- Colonels = 20
- Others = 729

G.H.Q. India remained in existence until 15 August 1947, when it was disbanded upon the partition of India and Pakistan. A new Headquarters, Pakistan Army was formed by Northern Command, and a new Headquarters of the Indian Army took over the headquarters in Delhi.

A Supreme Commander of British Forces in India and Pakistan was retained for a short period of time under Field Marshal AUCHINLECK to transfer responsibilities to the new armies and to organise the withdrawal of British Army units and British former officers and men of the British Indian Army. The office of Supreme Commander closed on 1 December 1947 upon the formal retirement of Field Marshal AUCHINLECK. Major General L. G. WHISTLER had been appointed the General Officer Commanding British Troops in India in 1947, and remained in command until the very last British unit, the 1st Bn. The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) left on 28 February 1948. The 2nd Bn. The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) had been the last British Army unit to leave Pakistan on 26 February 1948.

Some British officers remained in senior positions in both the Indian and Pakistani Armies until well into the 1950's.

Commander-in-Chief India

30th November 1935 – 26th January 1941

General Sir Robert Archibald CASSELS, G.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

27th January 1941 – 5th July 1941

General Sir Claude John Eyre AUCHINLECK, G.C.I.E, C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E., Indian Army, *i.d.c., p.s.c.*

5th July 1941 – 5th January 1942

General Sir Archibald Percival WAVELL, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C., *p.s.c., A.D.C.*¹

5th January 1942 – 7th March 1942

General Sir Alan Fleming HARTLEY, G.C.S.I., C.B., D.S.O., Indian Army

7th March 1942 – 20th June 1943

General Sir Archibald Percival WAVELL, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C.²

20th June 1943 – 15th August 1947 (Partition)

General Sir Claude John Eyre AUCHINLECK, G.C.I.E, C.B., C.S.I. D.S.O., O.B.E.

Deputy Commander in Chief

7th March 1942 – 29th February 1944

General Sir Alan Fleming HARTLEY, K.C.S.I., C.B., D.S.O., Indian Army, *i.d.c., p.s.c.*³

24th January 1946 – 15th August 1947

Lieutenant General (Temporary) Sir Arthur Francis SMITH, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

¹ On 3 January 1942 (also shown in some sources as 7 January), WAVELL was appointed Supreme Allied Commander A.B.D.A. Command, and relinquished command of G.H.Q. India. On 22 February 1942, A.B.D.A. Command was abolished, and WAVELL resumed command of G.H.Q. India. He was offered the role as Viceroy of India on 14 June 1943.

² WAVELL was promoted Field Marshal on 1 January 1943.

³ Created G.C.I.E. on 1 January 1944.

Military Secretary and Secretary to the Selection Board

23rd April 1936 – 22nd April 1940

Major General Neil Charles BANNATYNE, C.B., C.I.E.

23rd April 1940 – 21st August 1943

Major General Henry FINNIS, M.C., Indian Army

21 August 1943 – 10 March 1944

[Major General Ralph Bouverie DEEDES, C.B., O.B.E., M.C., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*](#)

6th March 1944 – 11th November 1946

Major General (Acting) Ross Cairns McCAY, C.B.E., D.S.O., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

12th November 1946 – 14th August 1947

Major General (Acting) Henry Robinson SWINBURN, O.B.E., M.C., 17 Dogra R., *p.s.c.*

Military Secretary to the Supreme Commander British Forces in India and Pakistan

15th August 1947 – 1948

Major General (Acting) Henry Robinson SWINBURN, O.B.E., M.C., 17 Dogra R., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Military Secretary

?? – 1st October 1937

Colonel R. H. WILSON, M.C.

1 October 1937 – 20 December 1939

Colonel Ralph Bouverie DEEDES, O.B.E., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

21 December 1939 – 17 August 1940

Colonel Berthold Wells KEY, D.S.O., M.C., Indian Army

18th August 1940 – 30th April 1941

Lieutenant Colonel Ross Cairns McCAY, D.S.O., 6 Raj Rif, *p.s.c.*

1st May 1941 – 1945

Colonel K. C. D. DAWSON, O.B.E. (temp 1/11/41), 13 F.F.Rif.

27th July 1942 – 1944/5

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) G. S. NEWMAN, O.B.E., (S.U.L.), Indian Army

17th November 1942 – 1944/45

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) H. P. E. JONES, D.C.L.I.

1st December 1944 – 1946

Brigadier (Acting) M. HENRY, 5 Mahratta L.I., *p.s.c.*

Assistant Military Secretary

5th November 1941 – 1946

Brigadier (Acting 01/06/45) J. A. BLOOD, O.B.E., 12 F.F.R.

Military Secretary to the India office

7th September 1931 – 8th November 1933

Major General Sydney Frederick MUSPRATT, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

9th November 1933 – 6th June 1936

Lieutenant General Sir John Francis Stanhope Duke COLERIDGE, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.*, Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

7th June 1936 – 30th September 1937

Major General Roger Cochrane WILSON, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

1st October 1937 – 14th December 1941

Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Frederick MUSPRATT, K.C.B., C.S.I., C.I.E., D.S.O., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

15th December 1941 – 9th July 1943

Major General (Acting) Rob McGregor MacDonald LOCKHART, M.C., Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

10th July 1943 – 31st December 1944

Major General George Noble MOLESWORTH, C.S.I., Indian Army, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*¹

1st January 1945 – 31st December 1946

General Sir Ashton Gerard Oswald Mosley MAYNE, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., Indian Army, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

1st January 1947 – 15th August 1947

General Sir Geoffry Allen Percival SCOONES, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C, Indian Army, *p.s.c.*

¹ Promoted Lieutenant General on the 16th November 1943.

Principal Administrative Officer's Office

Principal Administrative Officer

12th October 1943 – 19th January 1945

Lieutenant General Sir Wilfrid Gordon LINDSELL, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Col Commd't R.A., *i.d.c.*,
p.s.c.

20th January 1945 – 1946

Lieutenant General (Local) A. R. GODWIN-AUSTEN, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

General Staff Officer 1st Grade

4th December 1943 – 1945

Colonel (Temporary) W. E. V. ABRAHAM, C.B.E., R.E.

1st August 1944 – 1946

Colonel (Acting) C. W. ARMSTRONG, O.B.E., R.E.

NOTES:

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