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## A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

# BRIGADIER
# E. WODEHOUSE

A short biography of Brigadier E. WODEHOUSE, C.B.E., who served in the British Army between 1913 and 1949. He served in the First World War, being wounded and taken prisoner. During the war, WODEHOUSE served with his Regiment rising to command a Battalion. During the Second World War, he became the Military Attaché to Eire, a sensitive role during 'The Emergency'.

**A Concise Biography of Brigadier E. WODEHOUSE.**

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# Brigadier Edmond WODEHOUSE, C.B.E.

## Introduction

Not all Army officers can enjoy careers that leave a legacy which is well known to the public or historians. The majority will lead satisfying, and in their own way, important careers, but these will remain unknown to all but their families and a few historians. One of these men was Brigadier Edmond WODEHOUSE, C.B.E., who had a short war in the First World War, as he was taken prisoner in 1914. After the war, he had a routine career to eventually reach command of one of the Battalions of his Regiment, but in the Second World War, he was appointed the Military Attaché to Eire, which was an important and sensitive role.

## Early Life

Edmond WODEHOUSE was born on 25 March 1894 at Waltham St. Lawrence, Berkshire, the third child and only son of Rear Admiral Capel WODEHOUSE (1841 – 1906) and his wife Portia Maria WODEHOUSE (nee RASHLEIGH) (1865 – 1912). His father was aged forty-eight years when he married, and Edmond was born when he was aged fifty-three years. His elder siblings were Dulcibella and Alice. The family lived at a house called 'The Grange' in the village, which is near Maidenhead. Capel WODEHOUSE died on 3 March 1906 at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, when Edmond was just eleven years of age. After his preparatory education, Edmond was sent to Winchester College in Hampshire as a boarder and lived with other boys from the school at 69, Kingsgate Street, Winchester, under a house master and his family. Edmond's mother died on 25 August 1912, by which time he had secured a place at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst to train as an officer in the British Army.

WODEHOUSE was commissioned in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on 17 September 1913 in the rank of Second Lieutenant and with the service number of 8253. The Regiment had been reformed on 1 July 1881 under the Cardwell reforms with the title as above. On 1 January 1923, it changed the term Welsh to the older spelling of 'Welch', with which it continued until amalgamation. WODEHOUSE joined the 1st Battalion, which was based at Portland in Dorset. On 1 January 1914, the battalion sailed for Malta for a period serving with the garrison on the island.

## The First World War

The Great War broke out on 4 August 1914, and shortly afterwards, the 1st Bn. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers were recalled to the United Kingdom. The battalion arrived back at Southampton on 3 September 1914 and came under command of the 22nd Brigade in the 7th Division. It landed at Zeebrugge on 7 October 1914 and moved up into the line to be stationed near Zandvoorde. On 21 October 1914, WODEHOUSE was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

The German Army attacked on 29 October, with the main weight of the attack falling upon the dismounted Household Cavalry Brigade to the right of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The Germans surged through, coming in from around and behind the Welsh battalion's position.

Lieutenant WODEHOUSE wrote of this day:

> *We were holding a line about three-quarters of a mile long. 'A' Company on the right, then 'B', 'D' and 'C' on the left. Battalion H.Q. was in a dug-out about 600 yards to the rear. The trenches were not well sited for the field of fire. So far as I know, no-one was on our right; some Blues (Royal Horse Guards) were supposed to be there, but I did not see them. It was foggy in the early morning so that the Germans could not shell us much, which was lucky, as they had two batteries on Zandvoorde Ridge. About 8 am the shelling increased, and we saw large numbers of German soldiers advancing down a slope about 1,500 yards to our front. Also I believe large numbers were seen coming round our exposed right flank. The batteries on the ridge were now firing point blank into our trenches, so that it was difficult to see what was happening, and the rifle fire also increased from our right rear. No orders were received, so it was thought best to stay where we were, and about midday the whole battalion was either killed, wounded or taken prisoner.*

Lieutenant WODEHOUSE was both wounded and taken prisoner and was committed to spend the rest of the next four years in the custody the Germans. Forty-six-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Henry Osbert Samuel CADOGAN, the commanding officer of the battalion, was killed trying to succour his wounded Adjutant. Twice Mentioned in Despatches, he was the son of the Reverend Edward CADOGAN, the Rector of Wicken in Northamptonshire. He was married to Evelyn Violet CRISPIN (formerly CADOGAN) of Little Salterns, Beaulieu, Hampshire. He is buried in Grave IXA. L. 11 of the Hooge Crater Cemetery in Belgium. At the end of the day, the battalion numbered just ninety men, including rear details, from the original eight or nine-hundred. The brigade was down to four officers, including the Brigadier, and about two-hundred men. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers contributed thirty men under a serjeant.

For his service in the First World War, Lieutenant WODEHOUSE, was awarded the 1914 Star and Clasp, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. During his time in captivity, he was promoted to the rank of Captain with effect from 1 August 1916. His battalion finished the war in Italy, and upon his release, Captain WODEHOUSE rejoined the battalion.

The 1st Battalion reformed at Oswestry in 1919 to be ready for overseas service. Lieutenant Colonel J. B. COCKBURN commanded the Battalion which sailed for India to continue its period of overseas service that had commenced in 1914. In October 1919, the 1st Bn. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers was posted to Lucknow in British India, and it served on the North-West Frontier in Waziristan.

On 1 January 1921, the Regiment was redesignated as the 1st Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers. In January 1922, the battalion was transferred to Landi Kotal, also on the North-West Frontier. It took part in the Makin operations with four members of the Battalion being awarded the Military Medal. For his service in Waziristan, Captain WODEHOUSE was awarded the Waziristan Medal and Clasp. The battalion moved to Multan and in 1925, it transferred again to Nasirabad in Rajputana. The Battalion was particularly successful in boxing tournaments held in India Command during this period. The Battalion won the All-India Boxing Tournament three times. Two years later, it was back to the North-West Frontier to be stationed at Quetta, where it won the Infantry Polo Cup. Now aged thirty-five years, and with twenty-six years' service in the British Army, WODEHOUSE was promoted to the rank of Major on 10 September 1929. He had spent thirteen years in the rank of Captain, a not unusual occurrence in the British Army during this period.

The 1st Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers left India and the battalion transferred to The Sudan in December 1930. The Battalion knew that this was a staging post on its way home, and found itself stationed at Khartoum with companies at Atbara and Gebeit in eastern Sudan. One detachment from the Battalion was stationed on Cyprus, with the men of 'C' Company providing the first football team to beat the local champions on the island.

On 21 April 1932, the battalion landed back at Southampton, its foreign service tour completed. Lieutenant Colonel E. O. SKAIFE was now commanding the Battalion, with he and Major WODEHOUSE the only two members who had sailed for Malta in 1914. The Battalion found itself stationed in Tidworth, Hampshire. A representative detachment led by Lieutenant Colonel SKAIFE was presented to King George V at Buckingham Palace in July, with the Battalion proudly displaying the pioneer tools of mattocks, picks, shovels and axes that only this Regiment was now allowed to carry. In 1933, Lieutenant Colonel J. G. BRUXNER-RANDALL replaced Lieutenant Colonel SKAIFE, and he led the Battalion at the 1934 Tidworth Tattoo, where they re-enacted the assault landing at Aboukir Bay in Egypt in 1801. In 1935, the battalion came under command of the 6th Infantry Brigade and was stationed at Woking. Two years later, the number of battalions in each infantry brigade was reduced from four to three, with spare units being transferred or reroled. The 1st Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers were retrained as a machine gun battalion for the 2nd Infantry Division at Aldershot, but in 1939, it returned to the traditional infantry role and transferred back to the 6th Infantry Brigade at Blackdown.

## The Second World War

On 17 July 1939, WODEHOUSE was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel within his Regiment, one of just two officers of this rank allowed in the Army establishment. After all his service with the 1st Battalion, WODEHOUSE had to transfer to the 2nd Battalion in order to achieve his rank. WODEHOUSE was aged forty-five years and had been in the Army for thirty-four years. The 2nd Battalion was stationed at Lucknow, in British India, and was just concentrating after the period of hot weather in the hills.

With the new season, the Battalion had taken over Internal Security duties from the 2nd Bn. The Royal Berkshire Regiment. It was not, therefore, under command of the 6th (Lucknow) Indian Infantry Brigade, and it was not likely to see active service. Those members of the Battalion on leave in the U.K. were posted to the 1st Battalion, which was preparing for service with the British Expeditionary Force in France. A draft of three officers and sixty-three other ranks arrived from the 8th Battalion in the U.K. to bring the 2nd Battalion up the strength.

**Officers of the 2nd Battalion prior to departure from Lucknow, 1940**

*Back row:* Capt. (Q.M.) C. Jones, Lieut. F. B. E. Cotton, Lieut. Gregory, 2/Lieut. Howard-Williams, 2/Lieut. G. Demetriadi, 2/Lieut. S. Pearson, 2/Lieut. P. C. Lucking.

*Centre row:* Lieut. H. C. Pollicott, 2/Lieut. H. J. E. Jones, Lieut. I. W. Pitcairn-Campbell, 2/Lieut. R. C. H. Barber, Lieut. M. G. Harrison, Lieut. J. E. Vaughan, 2/Lieut. N. L. A. Vesper, 2/Lieut. P. A. E. Jones.

*Front row:* Capt. B. P. Doughty-Wylie, Captain Clement Davies, Major R. G. Davies-Jenkins, Major D. H. W. Kirkby, Lieut.-Col. E. Wodehouse, Lieut. and Adj. G. F. T. B. Dickson, Major W. H. Bamfield, Brevet Major H. D'O. Lyle, Capt. J. G. Vyvyan.

*Above – As titled.*

*Taken from: The Red Dragon*

Following the fall of France, the 2nd Battalion was chosen for combined operations training back in the U.K.. Before it departed Lucknow, there was an element of excitement when it was ordered to enclose a barrack block in barbed wire to form a prisoner of war cage. The excitement waned when only eight German and two Italian prisoners arrived to be accommodated. They were not there long, before being moved to another location. The only other incident of note was that the Battalion was ordered to undertake a flag march to Gorakhpur. A number of officers and men were airlifted in antiquated aircraft from Lucknow to Gorakhpur, one of the earliest examples of the airlifting of troops that became common only four years later.

The Battalion packed up its silver for transport back to Wales, and the mess fittings were sold. During the last two weeks, the officers were invited to share the mess of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Berkshire Regiment. On 14 May 1940, the Battalion was given five days' notice to move, but it had two companies three-hundred miles away at a hill station at Ranikhet.

Arrangements were put in hand and the Battalion marched out of Lucknow to the sounds of the band of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, and watched by the families of the officers and men who were remaining in India. Mrs WODEHOUSE, as was expected of the wife of the commanding officer, was responsible for comforting the wives and families of the men and making arrangements to keep in touch with them. The Battalion embarked at Bombay on 6 June aboard the S.S. Aska, a converted British India Liner, and crossed the Indian Ocean in a slow convoy to Durban. On arrival in South Africa, the Battalion formed up and marched down the main street to a church parade, led by the Battalion's band and watched by a large crowd.

The convoy moved around to Cape Town on 23 June, where everyone was able to see Table Mountain and the spectacular harbour. Here, many of the officers and men were invited by South Africans to spend the day at their homes. The convoy sailed on around the Cape of Good Hope and up the west coast of Africa to Takoradi in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). The ships called here for water, and then sailed on to Freetown in The Gambia for coal. The S.S. Aska left Freetown independently for several days until it joined a fast convoy in the Atlantic Ocean. The troops were set to work sandbagging the ship, practicing anti-aircraft fire using their rifles, and mounting anti-submarine guards. The weather became colder, and the ships sailed for a couple of days in fog, but the convoy was brought around the north coast of Ireland and into the Irish Sea. The S.S. Aska docked at Liverpool on 16 July after about six weeks at sea.

The Battalion moved to Aldershot, where together with three other infantry battalions that had just returned from India, it was mobilised to form the 29th Independent Infantry Brigade Group under Brigadier Oliver LEESE. The Battalion was issued with Bren Guns, anti-tank rifles, 2" and 3" inch mortars, and Bren Gun Carriers, all of which none of the troops had seen before. The men were granted seven days' leave, after which they were billeted in the area of Horsham in Sussex.

The Headquarters of the Battalion was established at a village called Bolney, and it was tasked with acting as a mobile counter-attack force with the Brigade Group. This was mid-1940, when the threat and likelihood of a German invasion was thought to be imminent. While the Battalion was stationed at Bolney, the codeword 'Cromwell' was circulated, which signified that an invasion was underway. Church bells were rung across Kent and Sussex, and the Battalion 'stood-to'. The next morning, the stand-down was received as it was a false alarm.

Throughout August and September, Lieutenant Colonel WODEHOUSE prepared his Battalion for active service, and there were several exercises to familiarise the troops with the countryside and to deal with the tactics used by the Germans in France so effectively. On 6 November 1940, the Battalion moved to an area between Littlehampton and Worthing, with the Battalion Headquarters located at Angmering. The troops were spectators to the aerial battle overhead, and one German aircraft was engaged by an anti-aircraft gunner in 'A' Company, but the aircraft returned fire. These were the first shots fired at the Battalion by the enemy.

Early in 1941, Brigadier John GROVER replaced Brigadier LEESE, and he inspected the Battalion on 9 January. The next three months were spent on anti-invasion exercises, and then in March, Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn GWYDYR-JONES arrived to assume command of the Battalion. On 12 March 1941, WODEHOUSE was promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier and Acting Colonel, on being appointed a brigade commander. He assumed command of the 217th Independent Infantry Brigade (Home), which was raised on 20 October 1940 with four battalions under command under Brigadier HOLMES a'COURT.

When Brigadier WODEHOUSE assumed command, the units under his command were the:

- 12th Bn. The West Yorkshire Regiment,
- 8th Bn. The East Yorkshire Regiment,
- 12th Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers,
- 15th Bn. The Durham Light Infantry.

The Brigade was under command of the Durham and North Riding County Division, a formation whose purpose was to provide defences for the beaches in the area under its jurisdiction. The battalions also acted as draft finding units for battalions of their regiment on active service. After six months in the acting rank, he was promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier and Temporary Colonel on 12 September 1941. On 17 July 1942, WODEHOUSE completed his three-year long period in command as a Lieutenant Colonel, but he remained on full pay (supernumerary). With Germany having invaded the Soviet Union in mid-1942, the realistic threat of invasion of the U.K. became negligible. In consequence, the Brigade was disbanded on 22 December 1941.

This left Brigadier WODEHOUSE without an appointment, and with no active service during this war, and due to his age (forty-seven years), it was likely that he faced retirement in three years' time. The major change in his fortunes came in 1942, when he was appointed the Military Attaché to Eire.

## The Republic of Ireland (Eire)

On 1 January 1801, the Act of Union bound the island of Ireland as part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The great famine between 1845 until 1849 saw the population of the island fall by 30%, as one million Irish people died of starvation or disease, while another one and a half million emigrated, mainly to the United States. From 1880 onwards, the Irish Parliamentary Party began arguing for land reforms and Home Rule. The Protestant community began organising from 1886 onwards, and opposed Home Rule. The Third Home Rule Act was passed in 1914, but tension between the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities was close to open rebellion. The outbreak of the First World War suspended the implementation of the Home Rule Act. The Unionists, who were organised as a militia within Ulster to oppose Home Rule, formed the 36th (Ulster) Division, while the Catholic community joined the Irish Regiments that formed the 10th (Irish) and 16th (Irish) Divisions.

An armed insurrection began on 24 April 1916 in Dublin with the seizing of the General Post Office in O'Connell Street by Irishmen opposed to British rule. After a week of intense fighting, the British Army suppressed the uprising, with fifteen of the ringleaders being executed. There was a general election in December 1918, in which the majority of Members of Parliament elected in Ireland were members of Sinn Fein, who refused to take up their seats in Westminster. They established an Irish Parliament called the Dail Eireann, and in January 1919, issued a Declaration of Independence.

The end of the uprising did not end the violence. In 1918, disturbances following an anti-conscription campaign resulted in the deaths of six people, with about one-thousand people arrested. There was severe rioting in Dublin on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, that led to about one-hundred British soldiers being injured. The Irish Volunteers, as the men who were prepared to fight against British rule were known, began raids to secure arms. A Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) policeman was killed and the R.I.C. barracks in Kerry were burnt out. In July 1918, Volunteers ambushed two R.I.C. police officers, one of whom was shot in the neck and the second beaten. Their carbines and ammunition were stolen. On 21 January 1919, in County Tipperary, the Irish Volunteers, now styled the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), attacked and shot two R.I.C. Constables escorting some explosives. This incident is generally seen as the opening of the Irish War of Independence which was to last another two years and five months.

A state within a state was steadily established within the Roman Catholic dominated provinces of Ireland, and although violence was low, the Royal Irish Constabulary became a particular target for the members of the I.R.A.. Although the R.I.C. was recruited from the Irish Roman Catholic population, it was seen by its opponents as an arm of the British state and repression. The Dail introduced a policy of ostracization of the R.I.C. on 11 April 1919, which meant that members were unable to buy food or leave their barracks without fear of attack or ridicule. Strikes grew in frequency, and in May 1920, dock workers in Dublin refused to handle any military supplies. By 1920, the R.I.C. had effectively withdrawn from rural areas into towns, leaving the I.R.A. to dominate these places with their own form of justice. The British court system collapsed, and the Inland Revenue also collapsed as people refused to co-operate with the system.

After a soldier in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry was killed by the I.R.A. when they attacked a church parade on 7 September 1919, the British troops retaliated by looting and burning businesses in the town. The British instituted raids on homes, and arrested suspects for various offences, but sadly, allegations arose of indiscriminate shootings and property being burned. In March 1920, the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Cork was killed by men with blackened faces who were seen to return to the local Police barracks. The local District Police Inspector was later tracked down and murdered in Lisburn, County Antrim, as this pattern of quasi-judicial killings and reprisals escalated.

Both sides developed intelligence organisations, with the Dublin Metropolitan Police setting up 'G' Division to subvert the republican movement. The members of 'G' Division became a specific target for the I.R.A., who also infiltrated the Police at many levels. Most I.R.A. activity was focused around Munster and Dublin, with only isolated activity elsewhere, with about three-thousand volunteers on active service at any one time.

The British recruited about seven thousand former soldiers into an Auxiliary force that became known as the 'Black and Tans'. Most came from English and Scottish cities and did not sympathise with the Republican movement. They were first deployed in March 1920, but soon formed a reputation for ill-discipline, and violent conduct. In July 1920, another body was formed by recruiting over two-thousand former British Army officers into the Auxiliary Division, otherwise known simply as the Auxiliaries, and they gained a similar reputation for reprisals. On 9 August 1920, the British Parliament passed the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, which replaced trial by jury with courts-martial. On 10 December 1920, martial law was proclaimed in parts of Munster. It was extended in January 1921, and internment was introduced. Violence escalated from November 1920 and the Connaught Rangers based in India suffered a mutiny.

Some events had the effect of escalating the conflict. The Lord Mayor of Cork died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison in London in October 1920, while two I.R.A. men died on hunger strike in Cork Jail. On 21 November 1920, I.R.A. members killed fourteen British intelligence officers across Dublin in a coordinated series of attacks. In retaliation, members of the R.I.C. drove in trucks to Croke Park, the Gaelic football and hurling ground in Dublin, and shot into the crowd, killing fourteen and wounding sixty-five others. This event became known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

One of those executed by the I.R.A. was Major Geoffrey Lee COMPTON-SMITH, D.S.O., of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He was born on 19 August 1889 in South Kensington, London, but was baptized in Cromford, Derbyshire. He was educated at Windlesham House School in Surrey, where he was a boarder. COMPTON-SMITH was commissioned in the rank of Second Lieutenant in The Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment) on 20 April 1910. COMPTON-SMITH was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 19 July 1911. He served throughout the First World War, transferring to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on 10 June 1915 in the rank of Captain. He was promoted to the rank of Brevet Major on 3 June 1917, and Acting Lieutenant Colonel for a period of time. He was made a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) on 18 July 1917 and was awarded the rank of Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.

Major COMPTON-SMITH was captured on 21 November 1920, in Dublin, but was held for some months by the 'Sinn Feiners'. Prior to his execution, he was permitted to write to his wife and his Regiment. To his wife he wrote:

> *I am about to be shot in an hour's time. Dearest, your hubby will die with your name on his lips, your face before my eyes, and he will die like an Englishman and a soldier.*

To his Regiment, Major COMPTON-SMITH wrote:

> *Dear Royal Welch Fusiliers,*
>
> *I am to be shot in an hour's time. I should like you fellows to know that this sentence has been passed on me and that I intend to die like a Welch Fusilier with a laugh and forgiveness for those who are carrying out the deed.*
>
> *I should like my death to lessen rather than increase the bitterness which exists between England and Ireland.*
>
> *I have been treated with great kindness and, during my short captivity, have learned to regard Sinn Feiners rather as mistaken idealists than as a 'Murder Gang'.*
>
> *My cigarette case I leave to the Mess. I carried it with the regiment throughout the war and I shall die with it in my pocket.*
>
> *God bless you all, Comrades.*
>
> *G.L. C.-S.*

He died on 30 April 1921, aged thirty-one years. He was the son of William COMPTON-SMITH of Richmond, Surrey, and was married to Gladys Mary COMPTON-SMITH (nee LLOYD). They had one daughter together. His letters were discovered in May 1921 when British authorities raided the offices of Michael COLLINS, the leader of Sinn Fein, in Dublin. Major COMPTON-SMITH is buried in the Fort Carlisle Military Cemetery in County Cork, Ireland.

Over one-thousand people were to die up until a truce was arranged in July 1921 and the Dail declared war on Great Britain. Major confrontations took place between British troops and I.R.A. units, with the latter succeeding in inflicting significant losses on the British forces. The British also had some successes in ambushing I.R.A. active service units, including wiping out the Leitrim flying column at Selton Hill. Often these events resulted in the I.R.A. killing people they suspected of informing the British authorities. On 25 May 1921, several hundred men of the Dublin I.R.A. Brigade occupied and burned the Custom House, which functioned as the local government centre. Five I.R.A. men were killed and eighty captured, which crippled the Dublin Brigade. Neither the British nor the I.R.A. were capable of gaining ascendency, but the British Government began to accept that the I.R.A. could not be defeated militarily. Sinn Fein now dominated the Parliament of Southern Ireland but did not take up their seats. Governance was therefore exercised by the Lord Lieutenant.

A truce was signed on 11 July 1921, with the conflict at a stalemate. Talks between the Dail and the British Government failed to find a solution to satisfy both sides. The British Prime Minister, David LLOYD-GEORGE remained insistent that the I.R.A. surrender their arms. Both sides were keen on an outcome, the British were finding that the security operations were costly in people and money, while the I.R.A. were short of arms and ammunition. The breakthrough is credited to King George V, General Jan SMUTS, the Prime Minister of South Africa, and David LLOYD-GEORGE. The King was dissatisfied with the behaviour of the Black and Tans, and the tone of his speech prepared for him on the opening of the new Parliament for Northern Ireland. SMUTS offered to draft some ideas on a compromise solution at the request of the King. LLOYD-GEORGE invited SMUTS to address the Cabinet, and the King's revised speech talking of reconciliation was well received.

Sinn Fein and the British Government agreed to terms on 9 July, and the new truce came into force on 11 July. Activity on the ground did not cease, with attacks on R.I.C. members continuing, and on Protestant families living in Southern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921 and ratified by the Dail Eireann on 7 January 1922. Northern Ireland decided to opt out of the treaty, as it was permitted to do under the agreement, with an Irish Boundary Commission formed to decide on the border between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. In the end, places with a nationalist majority were incorporated into Northern Ireland, including contentious places such as the City of Londonderry (now called Derry). This led to violence between Republicans and Loyalists in Northern Ireland which has been a feature of the Province ever since.

The new agreement was not deemed acceptable to some more militant Irish republicans, with a group of anti-treaty I.R.A. men occupying several buildings in Dublin in April 1922. Civil war broke out in the Irish Free State (officially formed on 6 December 1922) between those who supported the treaty, and those who did not and wished to continue the conflict with the British Government. The civil war came to a conclusion the following year with the defeat of the anti-treaty group.

In Northern Ireland, inter-sectarian rioting broke out in Derry in June 1920 that resulted in eighteen deaths. Loyalists marched on the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast in July 1920 and forced over seven-thousand Roman Catholic and left-wing Protestant workers from their jobs. Rioting erupted in Belfast with many people of either faith or community being forced from their homes. There was a lull in violence in early 1921, but violence resumed in April. In July, following an I.R.A. ambush on British troops in Raglan Street, Belfast, rioting broke out that led to the deaths of sixteen Roman Catholics and two-hundred and sixteen homes burned out. In Northern Ireland, the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) came into prominence, with members joining the Ulster Special Constabulary, known as the 'B' Specials. Even with the truce taking effect in Southern Ireland, there was no cessation of violence in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland was now ingrained in the cycle of action followed by reaction. In March 1922, sixty people died in Belfast, including six members of the Roman Catholic McMAHON family who were killed by the 'B' Specials.

The West Belfast Unionist Member of Parliament, William TWADDELL was murdered in May 1922, which led to the arrest of about three-hundred and fifty I.R.A. members. In June, the British forces used artillery to drive an I.R.A. unit from the village of Pettigo. More people died in sectarian violence in Belfast in particular, with many Roman Catholic families leaving the city for Dublin or Glasgow. The I.R.A. also began targeting Protestant civilians. As matters settled down both in the North and South of Ireland, violence in Northern Ireland steadily declined.

In October 1921, the strength of the British Army in Ireland was about 57,000 men, with the evacuation of British troops commencing on 12 January 1922. The R.I.C. disbanded on 31 August, to be replaced in the Irish Free State by the Garda Siochana. By November, the British Army was reduced to about 6,600 soldiers, mainly based in Dublin. The last act was the transfer of the Royal Barracks to the Irish Free State on 17 December 1922, with the British garrison embarking at Dublin port that evening to return to the mainland. With effect from 6 December 1922, the Irish Free State was a constitutional monarchy within the British Commonwealth. The U.K. appointed a Governor-General to represent the King. Many of the pro-treaty members of the I.R.A. joined the new Irish Army, which included men who had served with the Irish regiments of the British Army disbanded in 1922. The British supplied some arms and ammunition for the new Army.

The Government of the Irish Free State held a national plebiscite in July 1937 to seek ratification for a new constitution for Ireland. This was passed, and it came into force on 29 December 1937. The country now became known officially as Eire, and the office of President was established. The Governor-General's appointment had ceased in December 1936, but the state of Eire remained a constitutional monarchy and Dominion of the U.K., even though the President exercised the functions of head of state. After the war, Eire terminated its status as a Dominion of the U.K. on 18 April 1949, when the Republic of Ireland Act 1948 came into force.

## Military Attaché in Ireland

Eire remained neutral during the Second World War, in a period it described as 'The Emergency'. It found itself in a delicate situation, having only recently become a state in its own right having gained independence from the United Kingdom. The Irish Free State had adopted a policy of military neutrality in 1922, as it did not wish to be drawn into Britain's wars. If it did so, the fledgling country risked another civil war which it was ill-equipped to deal with. Following the civil war of 1922 and 1923, and a mutiny by the Army in 1924, the defence establishment of the Irish Free State was run down. In the 1930's, as the risk of war in Europe escalated, the General Staff realised that merely remaining neutral would not avoid risks to the security or independence of the country. It was decided to strength the forces within Ireland to undertake the defence of the country from both internal and external threats.

The head of the Irish Army, the Chief of Staff, from 1940 until January 1949, was Lieutenant General Daniel McKENNA. He was born in 1893 in Maghera, County Derry, in what was now Northern Ireland, and had served with the 2nd Derry Battalion of the Irish Volunteers. During the war of independence, he had become the Deputy Officer Commanding of the Northern Division of the Irish Republican Army. In 1922, he was appointed the Adjutant of the Waterford and Claremorris Commands, and after the civil war, he was the Adjutant of Southern Command. In 1930, he was appointed the Deputy Quarter-Master-General of the Irish Army. Three years later, he was made the Director of the Cavalry Corps, and in 1936, he became the Deputy Quarter-Master-General. He was appointed Chief of Staff in 1940 and is the longest serving Chief of Staff in the Irish Army. It is perhaps ironic that McKENNA was an Ulsterman, while the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland from May 1941 until November 1943, Lieutenant General Harold FRANKLYN, came from Cork in Southern Ireland (Eire).

From 1922 onwards, the Defence Forces had been kept under strict financial control, with the number of troops reduced from over 48,000 in 1923 to just 6,700 in 1932. A volunteer reserve was formed in 1934, which numbered 8,800 men, to give four reinforced Brigades, one for each of the four military Commands. In December 1937, an assessment estimated that a force of three divisions (i.e., three formations of 18,000 men each), together with artillery, specialist forces, an air force and naval forces, were required to defend Eire; a total of about 100,000 men. To achieve this, additional spending of £4,723,432 was required, which the country could not afford. By late 1938, the position had worsened so that the Irish Defence Forces could only raise two reinforced Brigades, with a handful of anti-aircraft guns and some garrison troops. It was judged that these Brigades were only suitable to maintain internal security.

Following the Munich crisis of September 1938, an expanded war establishment was agreed to provide two fully-equipped Brigades. Each Brigade comprised between two and five infantry battalions, but usually three in accordance with the standard organisation that applied in the British Army, and similar to the German and U.S. Armies. A Colonel commanded each brigade, and in order to equip them, a budget of £2,170,000 was allocated with most of the arms and ammunition being supplied by the U.K.. Issues in the Irish government delayed the acquisition of the military equipment, so when the orders were placed in March 1939, the U.K. was focused on building up its own forces. Most of the equipment ordered was never delivered. Approaches to the United States also failed, with the U.S.A. unable or unwilling to supply arms to the Irish government. The outbreak of the Second World War led to the Irish Defence Forces mobilised, with 7,600 Regulars, 4,300 Reservists and 7,200 volunteers, about 30% below establishment.

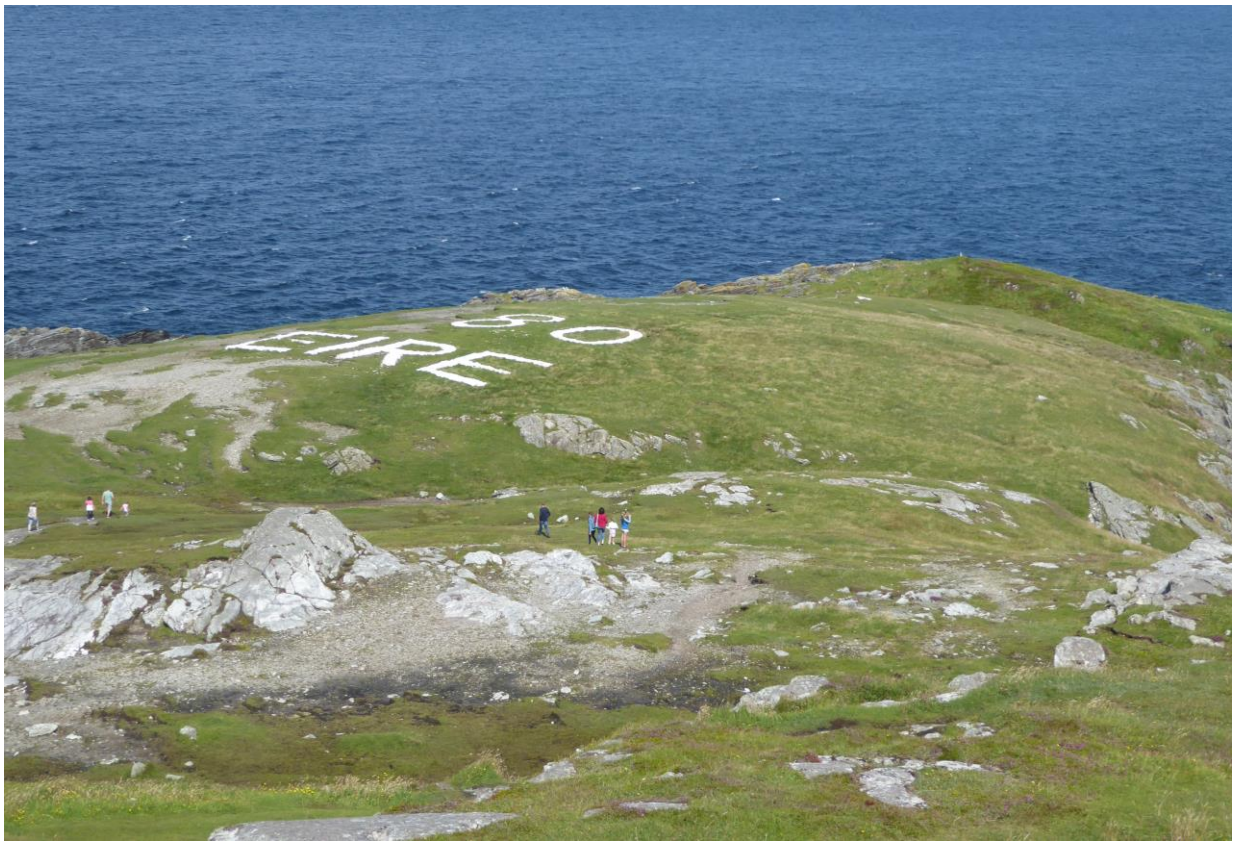
The Irish Taoiseach, Eamon De VALERA, and his government felt that the threats to their country were real and credible. The threat from the I.R.A. within Eire was low, which was in part due to harsh domestic security policies introduced by the government. The external threat to Eire was seen to come from both the U.K. in Northern Ireland and from Germany. In 1940, Eire felt very vulnerable and the likelihood of invasion was believed to be imminent.

In November 1940, the U.K. had two infantry divisions, an infantry brigade, and ancillary units based in Northern Ireland; more than enough to defend the Province against any Irish incursion. It was very unlikely that any German force would attempt a landing in Northern Ireland, so it can only be presumed that the presence of a large force of British troops in the Province was to deter any German activity in Eire, and if any German forces landed in that country, to invade Eire and force the Germans out. By 1941, the Irish Defences Forces had grown to about 40,000 men, but it was woefully short of modern or heavy equipment. Clothing was also in short supply, with greatcoats, pullovers, gloves kit bags all being scarce. The Irish Army had two Armoured Squadron, equipped with locally produced armoured cars manufactured in Cork, Dublin and by the cavalry Workshops at the Curragh. There was also one Bren (or Universal) carrier squadron, and two squadrons of cyclists. The morale of the Irish Army was good, with indicators such as crime or desertion very low. The Irish Air Corps comprised just three serviceable Gloster Gladiator bi-plane fighters, five Westland Lysanders for Army Co-operation, six Avro Ansons and two Walrus aircraft for maritime reconnaissance, and eighteen training aircraft.

The Irish commenced covert liaison with the British in late 1940 and warned that any invasion would be resisted and would stir up bitter hatred of the invading forces. The British Representative in Ireland was Sir John MAFFEY, and the Military Attaché was Major PRYCE. The Irish military was weak, with little artillery and armour, but in 1941, it numbered about 40,000 men. By 1942, the threat of invasion from the U.K. was deemed to have subsided, but it was feared that an attack from Germany was still possible. German spies were well established in Dublin, much to the concern of the British and later the U.S. Forces.

It was into this delicate and important role that Brigadier WODEHOUSE found himself appointed. It is not clear why he was appointed, although the fact that he was without a current role may have helped. It was a step up for a Brigadier to be appointed in place of a Major and it is possible that the U.K. wished to upgrade the role and recognise the importance of Eire to the U.K..

During his tenure as Military Attaché, Brigadier WODEHOUSE maintained a balanced approach to his role. Eire was prepared to repatriate air crew who had landed in their territory, and they permitted Allied aircraft to overfly their territory along the Donegal Corridor in order to gain better access to the Atlantic Ocean. The main problem that arose during the tenure of Brigadier WODEHOUSE was in early 1944 with the build-up to Operation Overlord, the forthcoming invasion of Normandy. The U.S. believed there was a substantial risk of a leak occurring in Dublin that could threaten to compromise Operation Overlord and demanded that the Irish Government expel Axis diplomats in Eire. Then the threat of invasion of Eire was perceived to come from the large U.S. Army presence in Northern Ireland, but the crisis passed without incident.



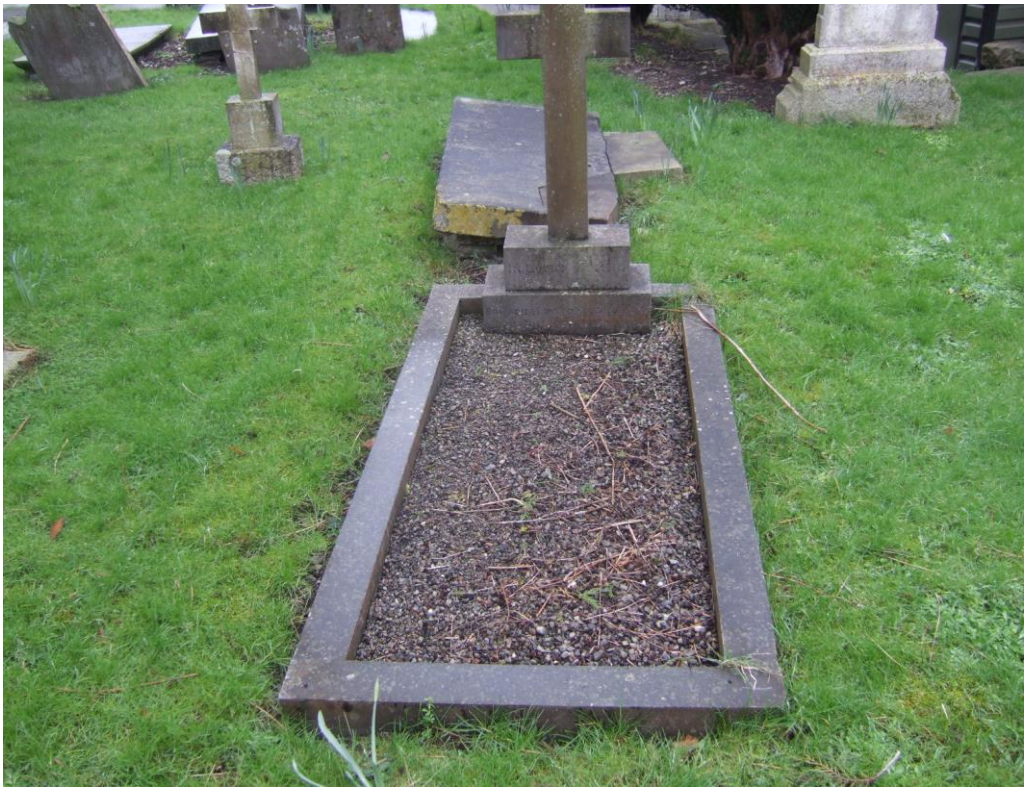

*Above – The visual indicator at Malin Head, County Donegal, to signify to Allied pilots the limitations of the Donegal Corridor.*

*Taken by: The Author (2019)*

## Retirement and Death

In the end, Brigadier WODEHOUSE served as Military Attaché to Dublin for six years. He was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) on 10 June 1948 for his services in Eire on behalf of the British government. On 5 January 1949, at fifty-four years of age, and having exceeded the age limit for retirement as a substantive Lieutenant Colonel (fifty years), WODEHOUSE was placed on retired pay and was granted the honorary rank of Brigadier. He had served in the British Army for thirty-six years.

WODEHOUSE had married Persis Joan Mary ROPER (1912 – 2006) in August 1935, in Ellesmere, Cheshire, and they had four children together. After his retirement, WODEHOUSE and his wife remained living in Dublin, and resided at Palmerston Lodge, Dublin. He died on 31 December 1959, aged sixty-five years, and he is buried in St. Lawrence's churchyard, Chapelizod, Dublin.



*Above – The grave of Brigadier WODEHOUSE in St. Lawrence's Churchyard, Dublin. Courtesy of: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/105831393/edmond-wodehouse#view-photo=75816934*

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