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A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

GENERAL SIR JAMES H. MARSHALL- CORNWALL

A concise biography of General Sir James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., an officer in the British Army between 1907 and 1943. He is noted as a gifted linguist, and he served as an intelligence officer during the First World War. During the Second World War, he served in France in 1940, and then as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Command until his retirement.

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A Concise Biography of General Sir James H. MARSHALL-CORNWALL

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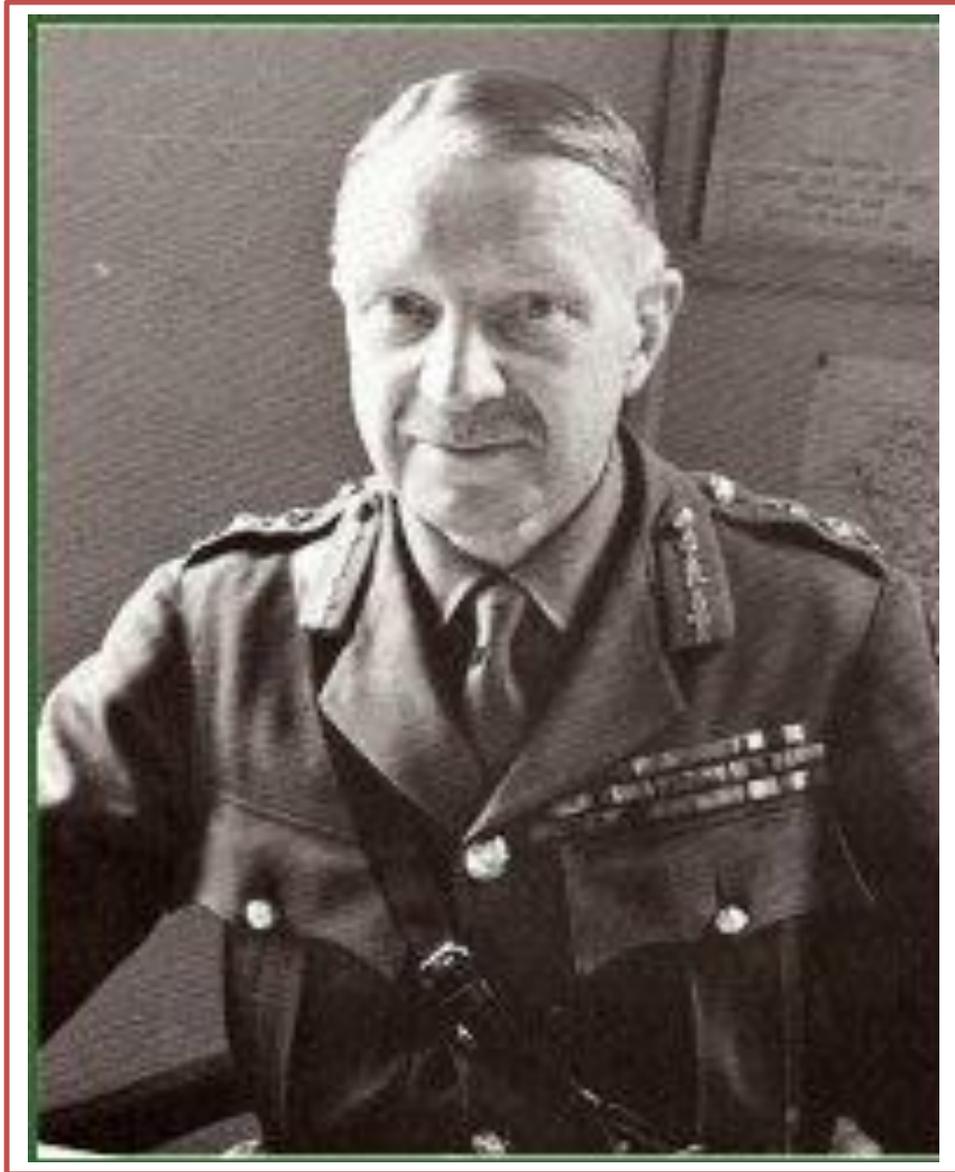
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**General Sir James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL,
K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.***



Introduction

General Sir James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*, (known to affectionately to his colleagues as 'Jimmy'), was an officer in the British Army from 1907 until 1943.

He served with distinction as an intelligence officer during the Great War. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was a substantive Major General serving in Egypt. Aged only fifty-two years, it could be expected that he was to serve with distinction during the war, but apart from serving on active service in France in 1940, he slid instead into obscurity only to retire in 1943.

Early Life and Career

Born in India on 27 May 1887, he was named James Handyside Marshall CORNWALL. He was the only son of James CORNWALL senior, who was the Postmaster General of the United Provinces in India. He was educated initially at Cargilfield, a small preparatory school in Edinburgh, from which he progressed to Rugby School. From Rugby School, he gained entry to the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich as a Gentleman Cadet.

Shortly after his twentieth birthday, he was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery on 23 July 1907 in the rank of Second Lieutenant (service number 1094). During his first period of leave, CORNWALL travelled to Germany where he studied German, becoming a first-class interpreter. During his career, he also became a first-class interpreter in French, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, and Italian. On 23 July 1910, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

He served as an Officer Commanding a Company of Gentlemen Cadets (Class B) at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, between 23 December 1913 and 4 August 1914. In this role, despite being only twenty-six years of age, and with six years Army service, he was responsible for the training and welfare of the eighteen-year old cadets as they joined the Royal Military Academy, and throughout their initial training.

The Great War (First World War)

At the outbreak of the Great War, CORNWALL was seconded to the Intelligence Corps, and on 5 August 1918, he was appointed as a Staff Lieutenant (Intelligence) at Le Harve in France. He arrived in France on 12 August to commence his intelligence duties. The German Army advanced steadily through Belgium, and after the stand at Le Cateau in late August 1914, CORNWALL was given command of a squadron of 15th Hussars for a short period of time during the subsequent retreat. On 30 October 1914, CORNWALL was promoted to the rank of Captain. On 25 February 1915, he was appointed General Staff Officer 2nd Grade (Intelligence) at the headquarters of II Corps, under Lieutenant General SMITH-DORRIEN.

He left II Corps on 16 January 1916 on promotion to the rank of Temporary Major, and he was appointed a General Staff Officer 2nd Grade (Intelligence) at the General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) of the British Expeditionary Force. CORNWALL was promoted to the rank of Brevet Major on 3 June 1916, and substantive Major on 9 July 1917. His next appointment came on 29 January 1918 when he was posted to the War Office as Head of M.I.3 section of the Military Intelligence Directorate (graded as a General Staff Officer 1st Grade) in the rank of Temporary Lieutenant Colonel. He was to remain in this post for the rest of the war, only leaving on 27 April 1919. Whilst serving as the Head of M.I.3, he was promoted to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on 3 June 1918.

During his war service, James CORNWALL was wounded once, but also received several decorations from various countries. From the British Army, he was Mentioned in Despatches five times (on 19 October 1914, 17 February 1915, 1 January 1916, 15 June 1916, and 15 May 1917). CORNWALL received two awards for gallantry, the Military Cross in 1916 and the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry and his leadership on 4 June 1917. He also received the 1914 Star and Clasp, the British War Medal and Victory Medal. The King of the Belgians awarded him the Croix de Guerre and the Ordre de la Couronne (Order of the Crown), in the rank of Officier (Officer) on 11 March 1918. The United States awarded him the Distinguished Service Medal on 12 July 1919.

Between the Wars

After the end of the war, CORNWALL travelled to Paris in 1919 as a member of the British Delegation at the Peace Conference, his work being recognised with the award of the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.). He then attended the Staff College at Camberley, being a student on the first post-war course. On qualifying, as a staff officer, he was able to place the letters *p.s.c.* after his entry in the Army List. Although he had spent the majority of the war on staff duties, and had clearly performed well in those duties, he was still required to complete the course in order to progress his Army career.

On completion of his staff course, CORNWALL was posted as an Adjutant from 19 January 1920 until 15 February 1921. On 9 August 1921, CORNWALL was posted as a Special Service Officer (Class BB) to Turkey. He remained in Turkey until 2 October 1923. From Turkey, CORNWALL moved on secondment to the Army of the Black Sea in the rank of Temporary Lieutenant Colonel from 14 July 1924, where he became a member of the Thracian Boundary Commission until 4 November 1925.

On 29 March 1927, having married and changed his surname to MARSHALL-CORNWALL, he was sent to British Troops in China, where he was stationed at Shanghai. His role was as Brigade Major Royal Artillery to the Shanghai Defence Force. He learnt Chinese Mandarin and travelled extensively with his wife in the Far East. He left that role on 31 August 1927 and returned to the United Kingdom.

MARSHALL-CORNWALL's next promotion came on 18 April 1928, when he was promoted to the rank of Colonel (seniority from 3 June 1922), on being appointed the Military Attaché to Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. He was based in Berlin and he spent four years in Germany, which was then the Weimar Republic. During his tenure, Germany experienced severe economic hardship as a result of the 'Wall Street Crash', with high inflation and unemployment, sowing the seeds that led to the rise of the Nazi party. When he relinquished that appointment on 18 April 1932, he was placed on half pay the next day.

As was common between the two world wars, officers in the British Army endured periods without employment, and the hardship of being on half pay. For MARSHALL-CORNWALL this first period lasted three months until 26 July 1932, when he was appointed as the Commander Royal Artillery for the 51st (Highland) Division based in Perth, Scotland. He retained the rank of Colonel, and he was responsible for the management and training of the three field brigades (regiments) based in the Highland Area.

Towards the end of that appointment, MARSHALL-CORNWALL was promoted to the rank of Major General on 14 September 1934. He left the post of Commander Royal Artillery the next day, and with no other employment available, was placed on half pay. On 23 June 1936, he was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (C.B.). During his period on half pay of about two and a half years, MARSHALL-CORNWALL travelled throughout Europe and he also visited the United States.

His next appointment was as the Head of the British Military Mission to Egypt, which he assumed on 7 January 1937. This also meant he was restored to full pay. During this period, Egypt was an independent country, but the United Kingdom maintained a significant political influence. The U.K. also maintained a large military garrison to protect the Suez Canal. In addition to the British troops stationed in Egypt, there was a significant number of British Army personnel as part of the Military Mission. They were responsible for the training and supervision of Egyptian Army, with MARSHALL-CORNWALL as the commander of this mission. His work was acknowledged on 31 January 1940 with the award of the Order of the Nile, Grand Officer, by the President of Egypt. He also qualified as an interpreter in Arabic while stationed in Egypt.

MARSHALL-CORNWALL was recalled from Egypt on 28 October 1938, promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General the next day, and given a new role as Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Coast Defence and Anti-Aircraft). His role was to coordinate planning and equipment production and to oversee the expansion of anti-aircraft artillery in the British Army. He was surprised at this promotion, not having held an operational major general's command other than the Egyptian Military Mission. In addition, he did not see himself as a specialist anti-aircraft gunner. This appointment coincided with the expansion of the anti-aircraft from two divisions to five divisions. The manpower was to be raised from 43,000 to 100,000, a massive expansion in a short period of time. The new Anti-Aircraft Corps commander was Lieutenant General Alan BROOKE, who was responsible for the inspection, training, and discipline of the anti-aircraft forces.

In order to solve the problem of raising manpower for the new anti-aircraft units and formations, several Territorial Army infantry and yeomanry regiments were chosen to convert to an anti-aircraft role, often much to their annoyance and resistance. MARSHALL-CORNWALL worked closely with General Sir Walter KIRKE, the Director-General of the Territorial Army to ensure this restructuring was completed expeditiously. On 25 March 1939, the title of the role changed to Director-General Air and Coast Defence. It was at this time that the Minister of War, HORE-BELISHA decided to double the size of the Territorial Army. This only added to the problems that MARSHALL-CORNWALL and his colleagues faced. There were not enough officers and non-commissioned officers to train the newly enlisted Territorial Army recruits.

The Second World War

By the time war was declared on 3 September 1939, there were seven anti-aircraft divisions in existence, with some nine-hundred guns and three-thousand searchlights ready for deployment. A fine achievement indeed, however, MARSHALL-CORNWALL felt that the post should be abolished, and he asked the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to be redeployed. MARSHALL-CORNWALL was appointed a Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Artillery on 14 February 1939, this being a mainly ceremonial role, but also responsible for the welfare and heritage of the regiment and its personnel. With effect from 2 October 1939, MARSHALL-CORNWALL was specially employed at the War Office. On 30 September, he had been appointed the senior British Army Member of the Allied Military Committee. This committee had been established in August 1939 as an advisory sub-committee to the Chief of Staff Committee, and it contained representatives of the French and British Military. MARSHALL-CORNWALL became the chairman of the sub-committee and retained the rank of Lieutenant General.

With the German invasion of France and the Low Countries, their forces quickly split the British and French forces. The invasion caused MARSHALL-CORNWALL some domestic difficulty as his surviving daughter Janet (who was now fourteen years of age) was living in France near to the Swiss border. He managed to evacuate her back to London in time. MARSHALL-CORNWALL was based in London attached to the War Cabinet Secretariat, although his role involved frequent travel to France. On 29 May 1940, the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff ordered him to proceed to France as the head of the new Number 17 Military Mission. By this date, the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk was well underway. MARSHALL-CORNWALL arrived in France on 31 May, and he met personnel from Number 1 Military Mission headed by Major General HOWARD-VYSE and Number 2 Military Mission headed by Colonel John SWAYNE. MARSHALL-CORNWALL's role was as the liaison officer with French X Army. He arranged for the British forces to retreat into the Cherbourg peninsula and their subsequent evacuation on 18 June 1940; MARSHALL-CORNWALL leaving on the last ship H.M.S. Manxman at about 4.00 pm.

On 24 June 1940, having arrived back in the United Kingdom, MARSHALL-CORNWALL was appointed General Officer Commanding III Corps, then located in North West England and North Wales. His own headquarters was located at Conway, but he moved it to Whitchurch in Shropshire.

During his period in command, he was knighted and created a Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (K.C.B.) on 11 July 1940. He was also Mentioned in Dispatches on 20 December 1940. MARSHALL-CORNWALL's linguistic skills were used next when CHURCHILL tasked him with leading a military mission to Turkey, to encourage the country to enter the war on the side of the British. He relinquished command of III Corps on 30 November 1940, and he left for Turkey. He was employed on this task until 13 April 1941, without persuading Turkey to join the Allies although the country was to remain neutral throughout the war.

On 14 April 1941, MARSHALL-CORNWALL assumed command of the British Troops in Egypt (B.T.E.) to replace Lieutenant General Richard O'CONNOR. This was a static command, overseeing the base from which the war in Egypt and Libya was pursued. On 10 September 1941, MARSHALL-CORNWALL was promoted to the rank of General.

Western Command and Retirement

MARSHALL-CORNWALL left B.T.E. on 13 November 1941, and returned to the United Kingdom, where on 1 December 1941, he became the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Command, based at Chester. He was Mentioned in Dispatches on 30 December 1941 for his service in the Middle East. Western Command covered the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire, Westmorland, and Cumberland, as well as the whole of Wales, but in terms of the overall war strategy somewhat of a backwater. Unfortunately, MARSHALL-CORNWALL managed to get into trouble in this backwater, which led to his removal from that command. The issue centred on Liverpool Docks. It was brought to MARSHALL-CORNWALL's attention that the machinery controlling the lock gates was vulnerable to sabotage and damage, which would put the docks out of action. On 17 August, he attended a conference also attended by Lord DERBY (Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire) and Sir Hartley SHAWCROSS (Regional Commissioner) and engineers from the docks. MARSHALL-CORNWALL advised the meeting that the docks did not form one of his designated 'Vulnerable Points' supplied by G.H.Q. Home Forces, and that therefore he would not supply troops to guard the docks.

Lord DERBY was not happy with this decision, so decided to telegram the Prime Minister directly. MARSHALL-CORNWALL was prepared to move a Home Defence battalion to Liverpool, but as it would have left another location unguarded, this would have been contrary to his orders from G.H.Q. Home Forces. Lord DERBY and Hartley SHAWCROSS assured MARSHALL-CORNWALL that their direct contact with the Prime Minister would not cause problems, as opposed to contacting G.H.Q. Home Forces as MARSHALL-CORNWALL wished. The telegram was sent, and MARSHALL-CORNWALL telephoned G.H.Q. Home Forces to advise them that he proposed to move troops to Liverpool Docks. Two days later, he was visited by a staff officer from G.H.Q. Home Forces who told him that General PAGET, the General Officer Commanding in Chief of Home Forces disapproved of his actions. MARSHALL-CORNWALL argued that he was in a better position to judge the situation and where to station his troops as opposed to Home Forces.

On 21 August 1942, MARSHALL-CORNWALL received a written reprimand from General PAGET about the telegram sent to the Prime Minister. Then, on 7 September, MARSHALL-CORNWALL received an order from the Army Council to hand over immediately command of Western Command to Lieutenant General 'Teddy' SCHREIBER. It is also likely that personal animosity between PAGET and MARSHALL-CORNWALL (who was senior to PAGET in terms of military service) contributed to his removal.

MARSHALL-CORNWALL was not given any other official appointment, and he spent his time at the War Office attempting to improve relations between the Special Operations Executive and Military Intelligence Section 5 (M.I.5.). With no prospect of being rehabilitated, he retired from the Army on 4 January 1943, aged fifty-six years. He was awarded the Legion of Merit, Degree of Commander, by the United States on 16 January 1947.

Personal Life

James CORNWALL married Marjorie Coralie Scott OWEN in Wales in 1921. He had met his wife whilst serving in Turkey, as she was driving a Red Cross ambulance in the Izmit peninsula supporting White Russian refugees from the Bolshevik revolution. In 1927, he inherited an estate in Scotland from his uncle, William MARSHALL, but only with the condition that he assumed the name of MARSHALL, which he did by turning his third forename into a hyphenated surname.

James and Marjorie had a son and two daughters. The elder daughter Peggy died in 1938 aged fourteen following an operation for appendicitis. They were to feel the tragic effects of war when their only son, James Gerald MARSHALL-CORNWALL, was shot dead by a sniper in Normandy, France on 30 July 1944. At the time, James was serving as a Lieutenant with the 4th Bn. Grenadier Guards and was aged twenty-two years. He is buried where he died in an orchard in Normandy, his father purchasing the orchard to protect his son's grave. Their daughter, Janet, married Digby WILLOUGHBY, 12th Baron Middleton and went to live at Malton in North Yorkshire.

After retirement, MARSHALL-CORNWALL was editor-in-chief of the captured German archives held at the Foreign Office and wrote several books on military history, including a biography on Field Marshal The Earl HAIG. He was made President of the Royal Geographical Society from 1954 until 1958, having been a fellow since the 1920's. Marjorie MARSHALL-CORNWALL died in 1976, so James went to live with his only surviving daughter at Birdsall Manor, Malton, in North Yorkshire. Whilst living there he wrote his autobiography entitled '*Wars and Rumours of Wars*'. James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL died on 25 December 1985 aged ninety-eight years.

His obituary described him as a man of '*gentle courtesy and modesty*', remembered for his unquenchable zest for life. He was short and slightly built, modest and not self-promoting in nature. His outstanding intellect was notable, allowing him to become a gifted linguist, however this may have led to jealousy from his peers.

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