

2021

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**A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:**

**BRIGADIER**

**T. E. D. KELLY**

A short biography of Brigadier Theodore Edward Dudley KELLY, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*, who served in the British Army from 1923 until 1955. He was commissioned in the Royal Artillery, and he served in Burma and the Netherland East Indies during the Second World War.  
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**A Concise Biography of Brigadier Theodore Edward Dudley KELLY.**

Version: 1\_1  
This edition dated: 9 November 2021  
ISBN: Not yet allocated.

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Published privately by: The Author – Publishing as:  
[www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk](http://www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk)

## **Brigadier Theodore Edward Dudley KELLY, C.B.E., p.s.c.**

Theodore Edward Dudley KELLY was born on 24 February 1902 in Southsea, Hampshire. His father, Henry Edward Theodore KELLY (1870 – 1932) was an officer in the Royal Regiment of Artillery, who had been born on 22 February 1870 in Southsea. His first wife was Elizabeth Caroline Every LEGGATT (1866 – 1898), and following her death, Henry KELLY remarried Mary Evelyn DAVIES (1873 – ?). Theodore was their only child.

In the 1911 Census, Henry KELLY was holding the rank of Major, at the age of forty-one-years, and he and his family were living at 2, The Morne, Durrington, Salisbury, Wiltshire. The family employed a house parlourmaid, a cook and a governess, twenty-two-year-old Constance Mary REID, who was responsible for educating young Theodore. Henry KELLY died on 27 August 1932 in Middlesex.

Theodore KELLY was educated at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, from where he was commissioned on 31 January 1923 into the Royal Artillery in the rank of Second Lieutenant. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 31 January 1925. On 26 September 1930, Lieutenant KELLY sailed from London aboard the Rajputana, of the P & O Steam Navigation Company, bound for Karachi in British India. It is assumed that he had been appointed to a role within the British Army in India. He gave his home address as 24, Kensington Gardens, London S.W.5.

KELLY was promoted to the rank of Captain on 31 January 1936, and around this time, he attended the Staff College at Camberley. After successfully completing the Staff Course, he was appointed the Staff Captain, Royal Artillery for Malta Command on 13 November 1936. He relinquished this post on 29 September 1938, and a few days later, on 1 October, he was specially employed in Malta as a Local Lieutenant Colonel. Around this date, KELLY left Malta bound for the U.K. and to take up his next posting.

On 28 October 1938, KELLY took up a post as an instructor at the Staff College, Camberley, graded as a General staff Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, with the rank of Local Lieutenant Colonel. He was promoted to the rank of Acting Major on 1 September 1939, Temporary Major on 1 December 1939 and substantive Major on 31 January 1940. He, his wife, and his son, lived in the grounds of the Staff College in a property called Thomson Ride. They employed a children's nurse, who was from Switzerland. KELLY left the Staff College on 9 May 1940. He was promoted to the rank of Acting Lieutenant Colonel on 18 November 1940 and Temporary Lieutenant Colonel on 18 February 1941.

Promotion to the rank of Acting Colonel came on 4 March 1942, and then on 23 September 1942, he was promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier and assumed the role as a Deputy Director of Military Operations in the General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) of the Army in India in Delhi. KELLY served in G.H.Q. until 9 July 1944, during which time he had been promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier on 23 March 1943, also being promoted to the ranks of Temporary Colonel and War Substantive Lieutenant Colonel on the same day.

It was not unusual for officers who had held a staff appointment to request a command appointment afterwards, even if that meant a reduction in rank, and this is what happened to KELLY. He relinquished the post at G.H.Q. on 9 July 1944 and reverted to the rank of War Substantive Lieutenant Colonel the same day to assume command of the 134<sup>th</sup> (East Anglian) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. This was a former Territorial Army unit that had arrived at Bombay in April 1942. The unit had served with the 19<sup>th</sup> Indian Division as a jungle field regiment, but it moved back to Deolali. On 1 October 1944, the unit converted into a medium regiment and was redesignated as the 134<sup>th</sup> Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery.

In December 1944, the regiment received 6" howitzers and four 25 pounders, and by February 1945 it was deployed at Palel under command of XXXIII Indian Corps. It participated in the advance to the Irrawaddy at Shwebo, and it crossed the River Irrawaddy at Wetto. The regiment was then engaged Mandalay, and it breached the walls of Fort Dufferin.

On 7 April 1945, KELLY was promoted back to the rank of Temporary Brigadier and appointed the Commander Royal Artillery of the 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division where he replaced Brigadier The Baron de ROBUCK. At this time, the division was engaged in the final stages of the Arakan campaign. The lead units were around Taungup

With the surrender of the Japanese Armed Forces on 15 August 1945, the urgent need arose for British forces to occupy former British, French, and Dutch colonies in the Far East in order to disarm the Japanese troops, restore law and order, and to repatriate Allied prisoners of war. The 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Division was ordered to Sumatra, a former Dutch colony, where there were reported to be some two-thousand, two-hundred prisoners of war, and over fourteen-thousand five hundred internees.

Brigadier KELLY remained as the Commander Royal Artillery of the 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division throughout its deployment in the Netherlands East Indies, during which period there were significant unrest with separatists using violence to precipitate independence from the Netherlands. Many people in the Netherlands East Indies, which included the islands of Java and Sumatra, did not wish to have the Dutch return as their colonial authority following the end of hostilities with the Japanese. The British and Dutch governments signed a Civil Affairs Agreement giving the British full power to assume responsibility for the governance of the Dutch colonies, as following its occupation by German forces for most of the Second World War, the Dutch government was not in a position to exert control of its colonies.

The Dutch people living in the East Indies did assume some local control, but there was a hiatus until British forces could be deployment. In the city of Medan in Sumatra, there were demonstrations in support of independence, and public meetings held in Merderka Square. On 6 October 1945, large-scale public meetings were held in the city, with red and white flags flying from buildings taken over from the Japanese, and banners displaying 'Down with Imperialism'.

British troops arrived on 9 October, under the command of Brigadier KELLY. On his arrival, he informed the local dignitaries that his forces merely wanted to carry out humanity tasks, evacuating Japanese detainees from Medan and the surrounding districts. Dutch officials followed the British into Medan, with one incident sparking considerable unrest. A Dutch official seized a red and white badge worn by a boy outside the Medan Hotel, and then trampled on it. Soon afterwards, armed clashes broke out, and in Brastagi, local people who were enraged by the reimposition of colonial rule as they saw it killed some British soldiers who had lowered a red and white flag from a government building.

To attempt to lower the tension in the city, a remarkable event took place, with Brigadier KELLY handing over responsibility for security outside Medan to Japanese troops under Lieutenant General TANABE. Inside the city, they retained the responsibility for security, supported by Chinese businesspeople, who also acted as armed vigilantes. The local Sumatrans managed to persuade some of the Japanese soldiers leaving the area to hand over their weapons, but violence broke out between the Sumatrans and the Japanese, leading to the deaths of about forty Japanese soldiers. Over four days of clashes, around 3,000 people and 250 Japanese became casualties. Battles took place almost daily around the city, and this situation continued through 1946. The Dutch increasing took the lead for security and the British troops withdrew.

This situation remained in effect, a state of civil war, until the new country of Indonesia came into being on 27 December 1949. During this period, Brigadier KELLY was promoted to the rank of Substantive Colonel on 30 July 1946 (his seniority dating from 23 March 1946. On 1 August 1946, KELLY was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.).<sup>1</sup>

The post of Commander Royal Artillery of the 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Division came to an end in January 1947, when the division returned to India where it was disbanded. Brigadier KELLY returned to the U.K. and remained on the active list. On 27 February 1952, KELLY was promoted to the substantive rank of Brigadier, and on 30 July 1952, he was declared supernumerary to the establishment. His final appointment was as the Deputy Quarter-Master General, Far East Land Forces, based in Singapore, which he held from 1952 until 1955 and his retirement. Brigadier KELLY retired from the British Army on retired pay on 5 October 1955.

Theodore KELLY married Phyllis Anne ROWBOTHAM (1905 – 1997) in September 1930 in Marylebone, London. They had one son, John Edward Theodore KELLY (1931 – 1955), who was born on 30 September 1931. He joined the Army to follow the family tradition, and he was a Lieutenant when he was sent to Cyprus in 1955, when there was unrest between the Greek and Turkish communities as both sought independence from the U.K. On 18 December 1955, 420868 Lieutenant KELLY was killed at Yialousa Police Station, when it was attacked by Eoka terrorists.

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<sup>1</sup> The citation for this award has not been located.

In August 1960, KELLY arrived at the port of London having travelled back from Cape Town in South Africa with his wife aboard the Braemar Castle. He gave his occupation as retired government official, which suggests that he found employment after he retired within the government in some capacity. Brigadier Theodore KELLY, C.B.E., died on 22 November 1980 at Wadhurst, Sussex. He was living in a house called 'Rodale' in the town. He left an estate of £98,114.

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