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A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

MAJOR (QUARTER-MASTER) F. C. STUDLEY

A concise biography of Major (Q.M.) F. C. STUDLEY, M.B.E., who served with British Army from 1910 until 1946, seeing service in the Western Desert with the Royal Horse Artillery during the Second World War.

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A Concise Biography of Major (Q.M.) F. C. STUDLEY

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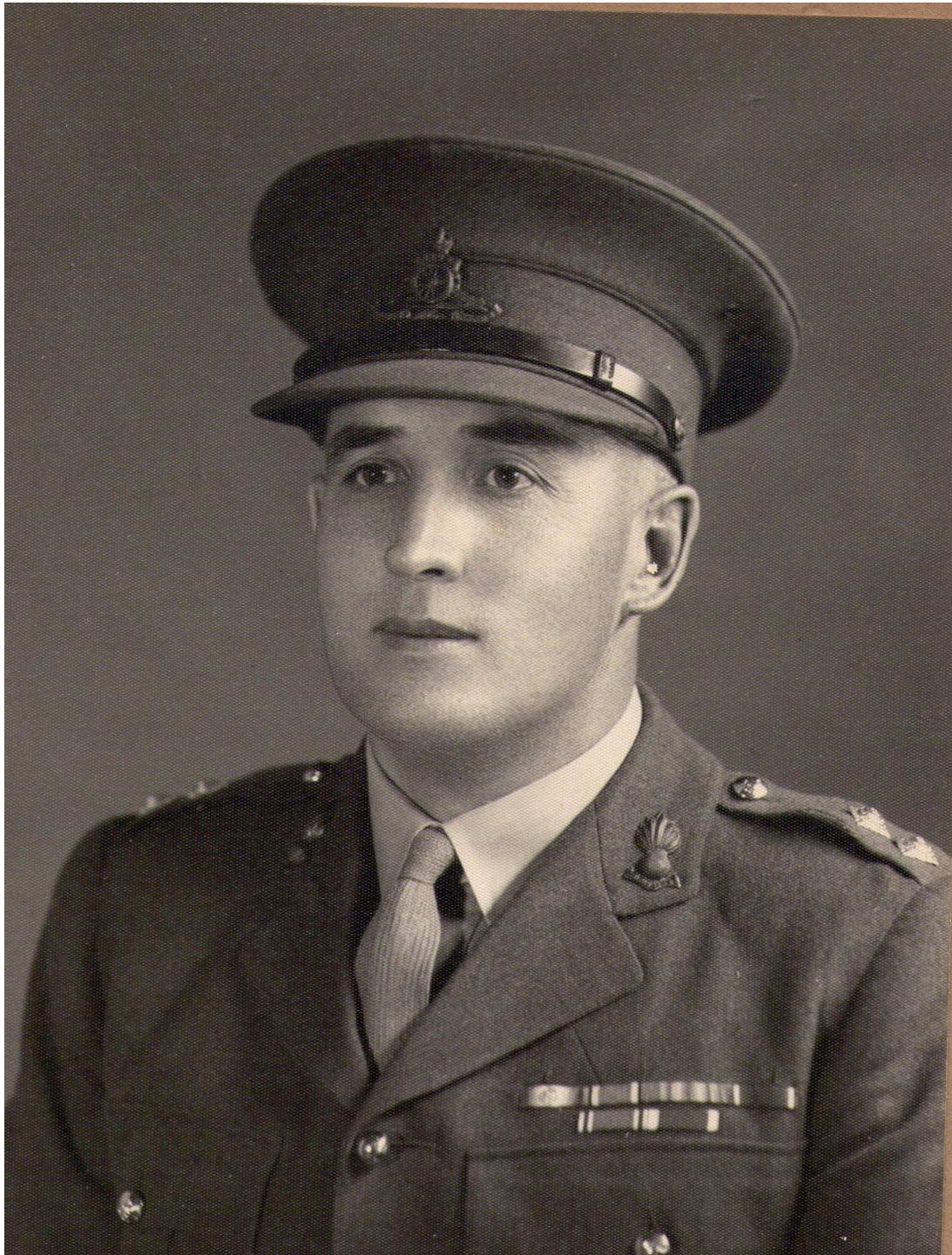
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The author wishes to thank the LAMB DEN family for making available photographs and documents relating to Frederick STUDLEY. This booklet was commissioned by Ann LAMB DEN to commemorate the life of her father, and it is dedicated to Ann and her family.

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**Major (Quarter-Master) Frederick Charles STUDLEY,
M.B.E.**



Introduction

The British Army has maintained a clear distinction between its leaders and its soldiers. Its leaders, officers, received their commission from the sovereign of the United Kingdom, with this and their promotions published in the London Gazette for the general public to view, if they wish. All three of the British Armed Services, the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force compile and publish a 'List', in which the names, ranks, and seniority of every officer is shown. For the non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, their details are held by the regiment or corps to which they belong, and they are generally not published.

There are two ways in which a soldier, or non-commissioned officer (e.g., serjeant, or serjeant major) can receive a commission. The first is usually applied in wartime and is when a suitable candidate for a commission is recommended to attend a Selection Board. There, they are interviewed by officers, and assessed on their suitability for a commission. If selected, they will attend an Officer Cadet Training Unit. The second method is for senior non-commissioned officers within the Army, who have reached the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 (Regimental Serjeant Major (R.S.M.) or the corps equivalent) to receive what is termed a Quarter-Master's commission. These personnel are promoted from R.S.M. to Lieutenant (Quarter-Master). They are usually employed as the Quarter-Master within a battalion or artillery regiment. The highest rank they can reach is that of Major.

Frederick Charles STUDLEY is one example of a soldier who made the British Army his career, and he made the transition from soldier to officer. He came from an Army family, and he was indoctrinated in the traditions and lifestyle of the Army, so it was perhaps not surprising that he followed his father's footsteps and joined the British Army as a boy soldier. He served in total for thirty-nine years, only retiring when he reached the age limit of fifty-five years. He saw active service in both world wars, and he was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) for his service in Egypt and Libya during the Second World War. This is his story.

Family Background and First World War

Frederick Charles STUDLEY was born on 21 December 1894, in the Artillery Barracks, St. Peter's, in Dorchester, Dorset. His father, William STUDLEY, was a Sergeant in the Royal Horse Artillery; his mother being Alice Annie STUDLEY (nee KERRY). He was baptized in the Parish of West Fordington, Dorset on 20 January 1895; the artillery barracks being located in this parish. Frederick enlisted at Woolwich into the Royal Regiment of Artillery as a boy soldier on 21 January 1910, aged fifteen years. His Army Number was 1023882. In the 1911 census, he is shown living at the Depot of the Royal Horse Artillery in Woolwich, aged sixteen years. He lived in a dormitory with other boy soldiers, cared for by a housekeeper called Ellen Maud WOODHOUSE. He spent his first four years of service as a boy soldier in the United Kingdom, until the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914.

Now aged nineteen years, he was old enough to be sent on active service overseas, so he served in France and Belgium from 15 August until 5 December 1914. Frederick STUDLEY returned to the U.K. and spent the rest of the Great War in the United Kingdom, continuing to serve at home until 3 November 1922. With the massive expansion of the British Army, it was necessary to find suitable soldiers to train the new recruits. As Frederick was a pre-war soldier and had knowledge and experience of the Army, in spite of his youth, he became an instructor in London. By 1916, Frederick had been promoted to the rank of Serjeant.

To recognise his service in the First World War, he was awarded the 1914 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal. On 4 November 1922, Frederick STUDLEY was posted to India, where he served for four years and twelve days. It is likely that he served with II Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, based at Risalpur in British India. Post the First World War, there were just five regiments (but known as Brigades) of the Royal Horse Artillery. Each was given a Roman numeral as their prefix. In July 1920, I Brigade was stationed in Egypt, II Brigade at Risalpur in India, III Brigade at Lucknow in India, IV Brigade at Newbridge in Monmouthshire, and V Brigade at Aldershot. Lieutenant Colonel W. STIRLING, C.M.G., D.S.O., commanded the regiment, with Captain G. I. THOMAS, D.S.O., M.C. as the Adjutant. It had three Batteries, 'C' commanded by Major H. W. WALKER, D.S.O., 'H' commanded by Major Sir T. P. LARCOM, Bart, D.S.O., and 'K' commanded by Major P. G. YORKE, D.S.O.. The effects of the regiment's service during the First World War is seen by the fact that the Commanding Officer, all three Battery Commanders, and the Adjutant, all held the Distinguished Service Order. Of note, the Adjutant rose to end his career as General Sir Ivor THOMAS, Adjutant General to the Forces.

In November 1926, II Brigade moved to Abbassia in Egypt, and STUDLEY moved with his regiment from India to Egypt.¹ In July 1929, Lieutenant Colonel G. M. SPENCER-SMITH, D.S.O. commanded the regiment, with Captain W. T. H. PEPPE, M.C., as the Adjutant. Major H. W. WALKER, D.S.O., still commanded 'C' Battery, with Major J. L. C. WHITE, M.C. commanding 'K' Battery, and Major J. O. THURBURN, M.C. commanding 'L' (Nery) Battery. STUDLEY returned to the United Kingdom on 23 April 1930. There were now only three brigades of the Royal Horse Artillery due to the contraction of the British Army in the 1920's, but Frederick STUDLEY remained in the Army to continue his career, even though the prospects for promotion were now restricted.

Just prior to his fortieth birthday, on 18 October 1934, Frederick STUDLEY was promoted Warrant Officer Class 1; making him one of just five Regimental Serjeant Majors in the Royal Horse Artillery. By April 1937, he was the senior R.S.M. in the Royal Horse Artillery and was attached to the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich as the Academy Serjeant Major (see picture next page).

¹ At this time, units in the Royal Regiment of Artillery were called 'Brigades'. Just prior to the Second World War, they were more properly renamed 'Regiments'.



Commission and Second World War

R.S.M. STUDLEY was granted a Quarter-Master's commission on 10 July 1939, being granted the rank of Lieutenant, and the new service number 95460. He had served with the British army for twenty-nine years, one-hundred and seventy-three days. His final assessment on 'Leaving the Colours' to become a commissioned officer reads:

Military Conduct – Exemplary;

Testimonial – He has shown himself to be an outstanding warrant officer. He is exceptionally hardworking and has carried out his duties entirely satisfactorily. He is tactful and painstaking. He has a very good manner with both his seniors and with those under him. He has a sense of humour and a good sense of proportion.

The 4th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (R.H.A.) was formed at Helmieh in Egypt in May 1939, therefore suggesting that Lieutenant STUDLEY was appointed the Quarter-Master of the regiment shortly after its formation. It comprised 'C' and 'F' (Sphinx) and 'G' (Mercers Troop) Batteries, R.H.A., equipped with 18/25 pounder guns and was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel E. LATHAM. The regiment came under command of The Armoured Division (Egypt). 'G' Battery left in September 1939 to return to the United Kingdom to form part of the new 5th Regiment, R.H.A.. By 24 August, the regiment was deployed with 'C' Battery being deployed forward to Mersa Matruh. Lieutenant Colonel LATHAM left the regiment on 1 September to be replaced by Lieutenant Colonel J. C. CAMPBELL, known to all as 'Jock' CAMPBELL.

At this time, the only British formations in Egypt were The Armoured Division (Egypt) (later to be redesignated as the 7th Armoured Division) and the 4th Indian Infantry Division. They faced nine regular Italian Army divisions, three 'Blackshirt' divisions and two locally enlisted divisions just across the border in Libya. By the end of May 1940, the threat of war with Italy appeared inevitable. Tension was increasing with Egypt looking vulnerable to Italian aggression.

The bulk of the 7th Armoured Division was located in and around Mersa Matruh, with the 3rd Regiment, R.H.A.; 4th Regiment, R.H.A., 106th Regiment, R.H.A. and 7th Medium Regiment as the artillery component of the force. On 8 June 1940, Major General Richard O'CONNOR arrived from Palestine to assume command of the newly formed Western Desert Force, of which the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. became part. Events gathered pace, with the Mediterranean Fleet being placed at two hours' notice to move at 04.00 hours on 10 June. Merchant ships were given orders in anticipation of enemy action, plus the lights along the Suez Canal were switched off. At 16.45 hours, the British Ambassador in Rome was informed that with effect from 00.01 hours on 11 June 1940, the King of Italy would consider his country at war with the United Kingdom.

The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was now equipped twenty-four 24 pounder guns: twelve in each of the two batteries. The regiment had been dug in around Mersa Matruh when the Italian Army commenced their advance into Egypt on 9 September, but it then moved forward to the frontier. On 13 September, the Italians bombed Musaid and it was occupied by the 1st Libyan Division. They then moved on to attack Sollum. The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. were confronted by a large body of Italian troops organising themselves in the desert for the assault. The British artillery fired several concentrations that broke up the formation and caused many casualties. On 14 September, the British forces on the frontier withdrew. The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. formed the rearguard at Alam Hamid, and they broke up an Italian tank attack intended for Sidi Barrani the next day.

Lieutenant DOE, a Forward Observation Officer with 'C' Battery, directed the fire of the battery onto the Italian troops. He stood on top of his 8-cwt truck directing the fire of his guns whilst being driven around the desert. Four or five rounds were fired from six guns, all shots falling on the target resulting in the enemy turning and fleeing from the scene. Overnight 19/20 September, the commanding officer of the 4th Regiment R.H.A., Lieutenant Colonel CAMPBELL, formed an all arms force consisting of:

- One squadron of the 11th Hussars,
- 'C' Battery 4th Regiment, R.H.A. (25 pounders),
- 'D' Battery, 3rd Regiment, R.H.A. (2 pounder anti-tank guns),
- One company, 1st Bn. The King's Royal Rifle Corps.

This force was the first use of what became known as a 'Jock' Column. It acted independently to harass and disrupt the Italian troops in their positions. The Italians did not pursue their advance into Egypt, but they decided to dig in and establish some defensive camps.

General WAVELL organised a counter-attack against the Italian forces, which was planned in great secrecy. All was ready on 4 December with the first movements forward taking place on 8 December. 'C' Battery of the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. supported the 4th Armoured Brigade, firing an accurate concentration on Sidi Salim. As the battery crossed a wadi, it came under accurate fire hitting one gun. Some of the ammunition caught fire so stocks below low.

Additional ammunition had to be brought up to keep the battery in action. In this engagement, eleven men were injured. Sidi Barrani fell on 10 December with three Italian divisions surrendering.

On 16 December, the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. supported the 4th Armoured Brigade in its attack on Sidi Omar. The town fell, giving up some ten-thousand prisoners. At the end of December, the 4th Indian Division was withdrawn to take part in the offensive in Italian East Africa. It was replaced by the 6th Australian Infantry Division, with the advance into Cyrenaica continuing. 'F' Battery from the regiment was used to support the Australians in their attack and capture of Tobruk on 21 January. The regiment continued to support the 4th Armoured Brigade in its advance across the Libyan Desert. Benghazi was taken on 7 February 1941, with the 7th Armoured Division trapping the majority of the Italian 10th Army which surrendered.

On reaching El Agheila, the 7th Armoured Division was relieved, to make its way back into Egypt to rest and refit. The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. returned to Cairo, victorious and exhilarated with their exploits. Captain W. A. P. WARDEN and Captain R. G. COOK were both awarded the Military Cross. Sergeant H. L. COOPER was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, with Bombardier W. NORTH and Gunner S. E. ROGERS being awarded the Military Medal.

By the end of January 1941, the campaign in East Africa was well underway; the 1st Cavalry Division was stationed in Palestine; the 6th Australian Division was in Cyrenaica, with the 7th and 9th Australian Divisions just arriving. The New Zealand Division was concentrating in Egypt, but it was designated to move to Greece in line with British policy. The newly arrived German forces in Africa struck on 31 March 1941, quickly overcoming the resistance of the 2nd Armoured Division at El Agheila. The British forces collapsed, with Lieutenant Generals O'CONNOR and NEAME both being captured in the chaos.

The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was called forward and entered the front line on 9 April. It went into action near the Trigh Capuzzo, then in the area of the Halfaya Pass. A busy month followed, with the regiment in action on several occasions. Batteries and troops were deployed in several 'Jock' Columns used to harass the German advanced forces. The British forces were dangerously weak, with forces used in small, semi-mobile groups in the open desert. Fortunately, the German and Italian forces had logistical problems, so did not continue their advance. In addition, they failed to capture Tobruk, which the Australians held as a thorn in the side of the German and Italian positions for several months.

The position stabilised along the Halfaya Pass, so the British commanders decided to mount a limited offensive to relieve Tobruk. This was to be known as Operation 'Brevity' and was due to start on 15 May 1941. The 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was part of the 7th Support Group, under the command of Brigadier 'Straffer' GOTT. The support group was ordered to hold Halfaya Pass, to operate as far forward as possible and to prepare a start line for a further advance. Operation Brevity failed to meet its objectives, so plans were made for a more significant offensive once reinforcements and additional supplies (in particular, tanks) arrived in Egypt.

Whilst these plans were being formulated, actions still continued along the front line. On 14 June, 'F' and 'G' Troops engaged enemy targets near Halfaya. Captain LOMAS advanced to within four-hundred yards of seventy enemy tanks to provide effective forward observation of the shoot. After Operation 'Brevity', mid-June 1941 saw another failed British offensive codenamed Operation 'Battleaxe'. This commenced on 15 June with the British enjoying air superiority. An attempt to capture the Halfaya Pass failed, but Fort Capuzzo was taken. Two days later, on 17 June, the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was involved in action near Sidi Omar, during which thirty year old Major 124388 Ronald George COOK, M.C.* was wounded in an air attack. He died two days later, on 19 June 1941, and is now buried in Grave 19. F. 5. in the Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery. This coincided with the end of Operation Battleaxe, with the Axis forces counter attacking and forcing the British onto the defensive.

The regiment had a change in command on 21 June, when Lieutenant Colonel 'Jock' CAMPBELL was promoted to assume command of the 7th Support Group in the 7th Armoured Division. He was replaced as commanding officer of the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was Major J. R. B. CHRISTOPHER, who was promoted to the rank of Acting Lieutenant Colonel. As a fellow officer in the Royal Horse Artillery, CAMPBELL and STUDLEY would have been well known to each other. CAMPBELL clearly held STUDLEY in high regard, for on 17 August 1941, he recommended Fred STUDLEY for an award. The citation prepared by CAMPBELL read:

Lieut STUDLEY has acted as Quartermaster in the field continuously during this period. He has displayed most outstanding qualifications. He has worked tirelessly and endlessly to obtain the many essentials which a regt. requires in the desert. On one occasion in May when the enemy advanced rapidly and there was a certain amount of uncertainty as to the position in the rear areas, Lieut STUDLEY immediately took charge and by his personal example was the means of stabilizing what might otherwise have become a very difficult situation. This officer's behaviour under difficult circumstances is a fine example to all ranks.

The support group commander, Brigadier 'Straffer' GOTT, endorsed this recommendation, as did Major General O'MOORE-CREAGH the divisional commander. Lieutenant General BERESFORD-PEIRSE also endorsed the recommendation. Based upon these recommendations, Frederick Charles STUDLEY was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) on 30 December 1941.

On 16 October 1941, the regiment reorganised into three batteries, each of eight 25 pounder guns. A new third battery, entitled 'DD' (Jerboa) Battery was formed and became part of the regiment. The regiment had a new commanding officer in Lieutenant Colonel J. C. CURRIE. At the commencement of Operation Crusader, the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was allocated to support the 7th Armoured Brigade. At dawn on 18 November, the units of XXX Corps (of which the 7th Armoured Brigade was part) crossed the frontier from Egypt into Libya. They met little resistance, with the brigade directed towards Sidi Rezegh.

The brigade pushed well forward and reached the airfield at Sidi Rezegh, destroying nineteen aircraft on the ground. At this time, the Axis commander, General ROMMEL was not convinced that this was a major offensive and did not respond in strength. He was still focused on assaulting Tobruk, but he ordered that the British penetrations behind his lines should be dealt with. The 21st Panzer Division was directed to Sidi Rezegh but ran out of fuel before reaching it.

On 20 November, enemy infantry made an attack on Sidi Rezegh airfield, which was broken up by the guns of 'DD' Battery. The following day, the 7th Hussars were attacked by a large number of enemy tanks, so 'F' Battery was called upon to support them. Then the 6th Royal Tank Regiment was attacked. The Forward Observation Officer (F.O.O.) Captain D. SMITH was injured, so Lieutenant 182086 James Michael KERSHAW went out in a Stuart tank to act as F.O.O.. Aged just twenty-two years, KERSHAW and his crew were not heard of again. His body was located eventually, and he is now buried in Grave 4. D. 3. of the Knightsbridge War Cemetery, in Libya. He was a scholar of Radley College and Magdalen College, Oxford where he qualified for the award of a B.A. (Oxon) before joining the Army.

Late on the evening of 20 November, orders were given for the brigade to exploit towards El Duda to coincide with the breakout from Tobruk. The key day in Operation 'Crusader' was 21 November, when no less than four Victoria Crosses were awarded for gallantry. One was awarded to Brigadier CAMPBELL, the former commanding officer of the regiment. The London Gazette published the award on 30 January 1942, the citation reading:

In recognition of most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Sidi Rezegh, in Libya. On 21st November 1941 Brigadier Campbell was commanding a small force holding important ground in the area of Sidi Rezegh Ridge and Aerodrome. The force was repeatedly attacked by large numbers of tanks and infantry. Wherever the situation was most difficult and the fighting hardest Brigadier Campbell was to be seen with his forward troops either on foot or in an open car. In this car he carried out several reconnaissances for counter attacks and formed up tanks, under close and intense fire. The following day the enemy attacks were intensified. Brigadier Campbell was always in the forefront of the heaviest fighting, encouraging his troops, staging counter-attacks and personally controlling the fire of his guns.

During the final enemy onslaught he was wounded but continued most actively in the foremost positions, controlling the fire of batteries which inflicted heavy losses on enemy tanks at close range. Throughout these two days his magnificent example and his utter disregard of personal danger were an inspiration to his men and to all who saw him. His brilliant leadership was the direct cause of the very heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. In spite of his wound he refused to be evacuated and remained with his command where his outstanding bravery and consistent determination had a marked effect in maintaining the splendid fighting spirit of those under him.

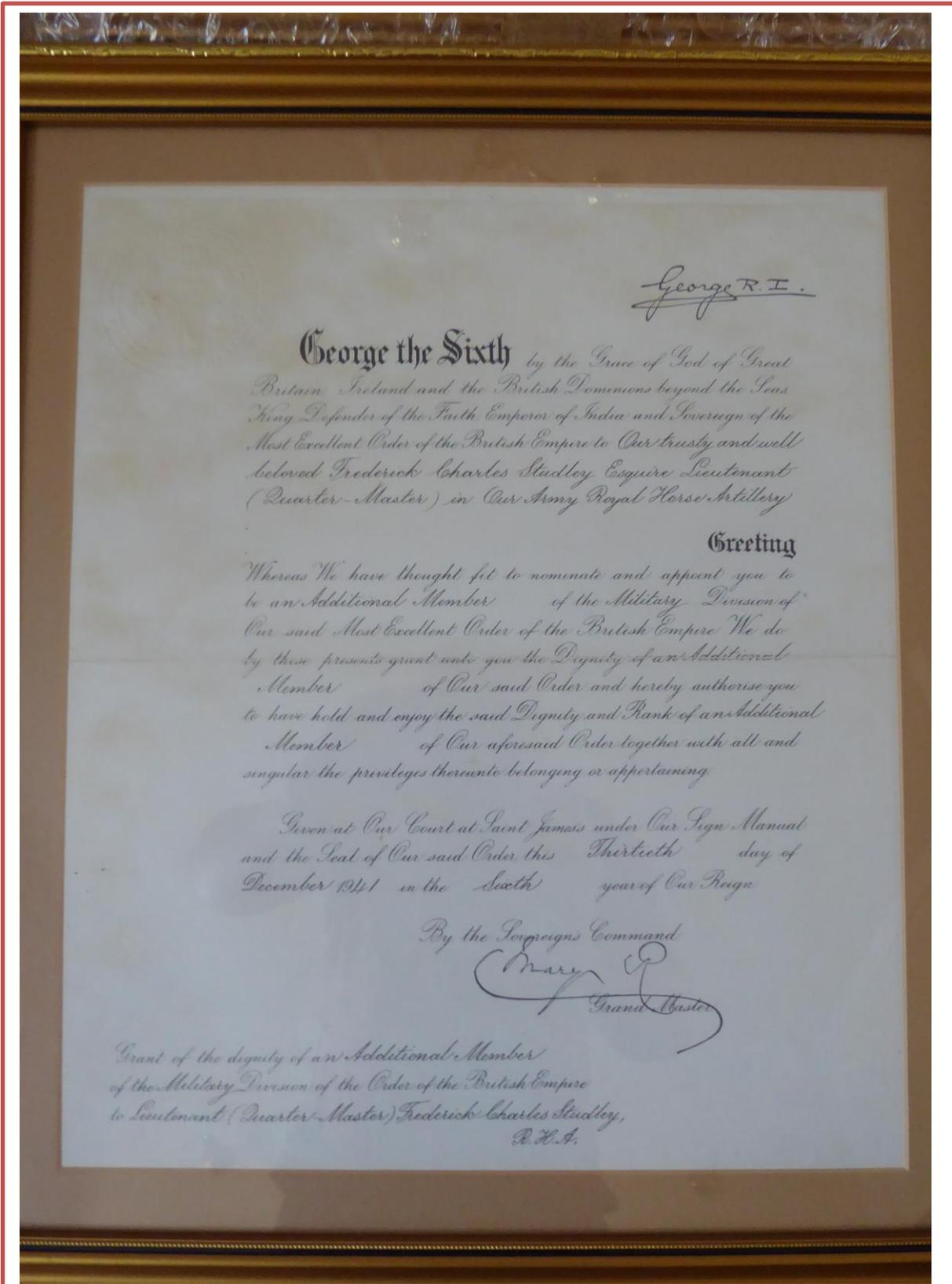
CAMPBELL was promoted to command the 7th Armoured Division in the rank of Major General, but he was killed in a road accident on 26 February 1942. Major General John Charles CAMPBELL, V.C., D.S.O., M.C. was aged forty-eight years when he died and is now buried in Grave K. 171 of the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery.

21 November was a day of confused fighting, in which the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. played a key role. The two British armoured brigades tried to push northwards across the Trigh Capuzzo, with the two German armoured divisions facing them. By the next day, British tank losses had been heavy with the German troops holding the key locations. 4th Regiment, R.H.A. remained heavily engaged, helping to break up a determined German attack against the 1st South African Division. The regiment had been in almost constant action for three days and its losses were building. Four guns of 'C' Troop were lost, but then recovered. The General Officer Commanding 8th Army, Lieutenant General Alan CUNNINGHAM, considered that his forces were exhausted and so weakened that the attack should be called off. General AUCHINLECK came forward and by his own account took a gamble that the Axis forces were also in trouble so ordered the offensive to continue. The Axis armoured forces then made a dash to the Egypt frontier. On 24 November, the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. was with the 7th Support Group still in the Sidi Rezegh area trying to prevent the Ariete Division from guarding the flank of the two German armoured divisions as they tried to outflank the British positions. It was in this period of confused fighting that Lieutenant STUDLEY was taken prisoner-of-war. It appears that Frederick STUDLEY was promoted to the rank of Acting Captain, at some time during this period.

The Axis forces finally decided to withdraw back to El Agheila and the British regained Cyrenaica. The remnants of the 4th Regiment, R.H.A. were withdrawn back to the Delta to rest and reform. Lieutenant STUDLEY was sent to Germany, where he was incarcerated in Stammlager XXB and Oflag IX A/H. This latter camp was originally opened in October 1939 near Spangenberg Castle in Hesse, northern Germany for air force personnel, and reopened for British Army and R.A.F. officers in February 1941. It was evacuated in October 1941, and it appears that Lieutenant STUDLEY was moved to Stalag 344, also known as Stalag VIII-B. This came was located near Lamsdorf in Silesia. It eventually held about 100,000 prisoners of war of various nationalities. The camp was liberated by Soviet troops on 17 March 1945.

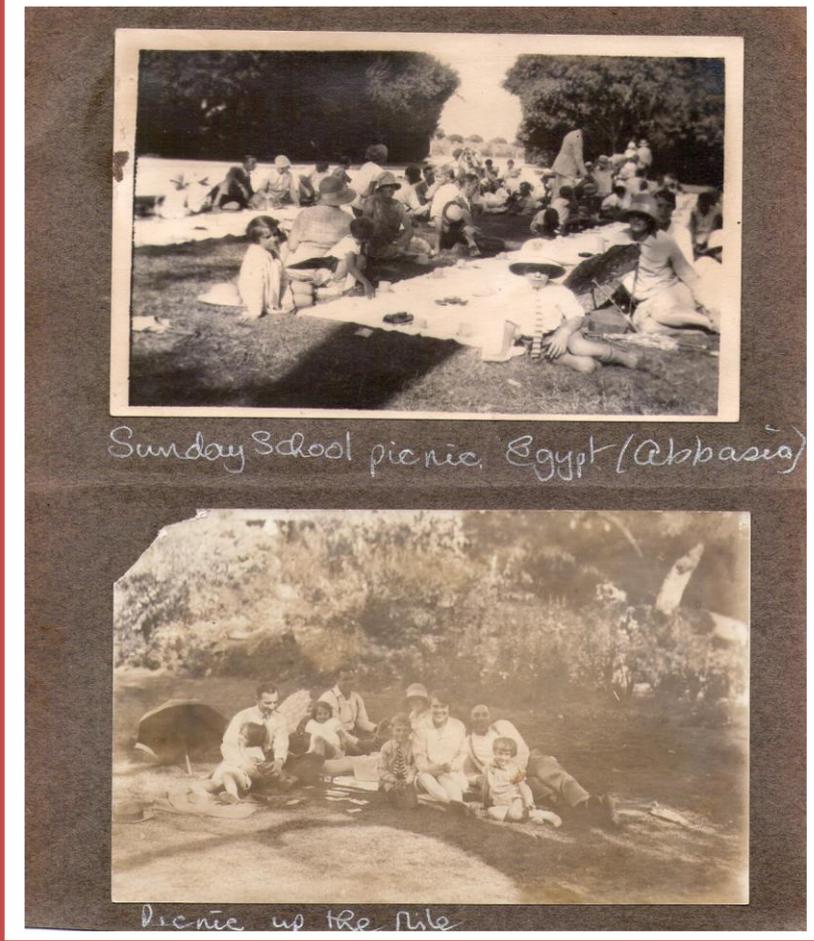
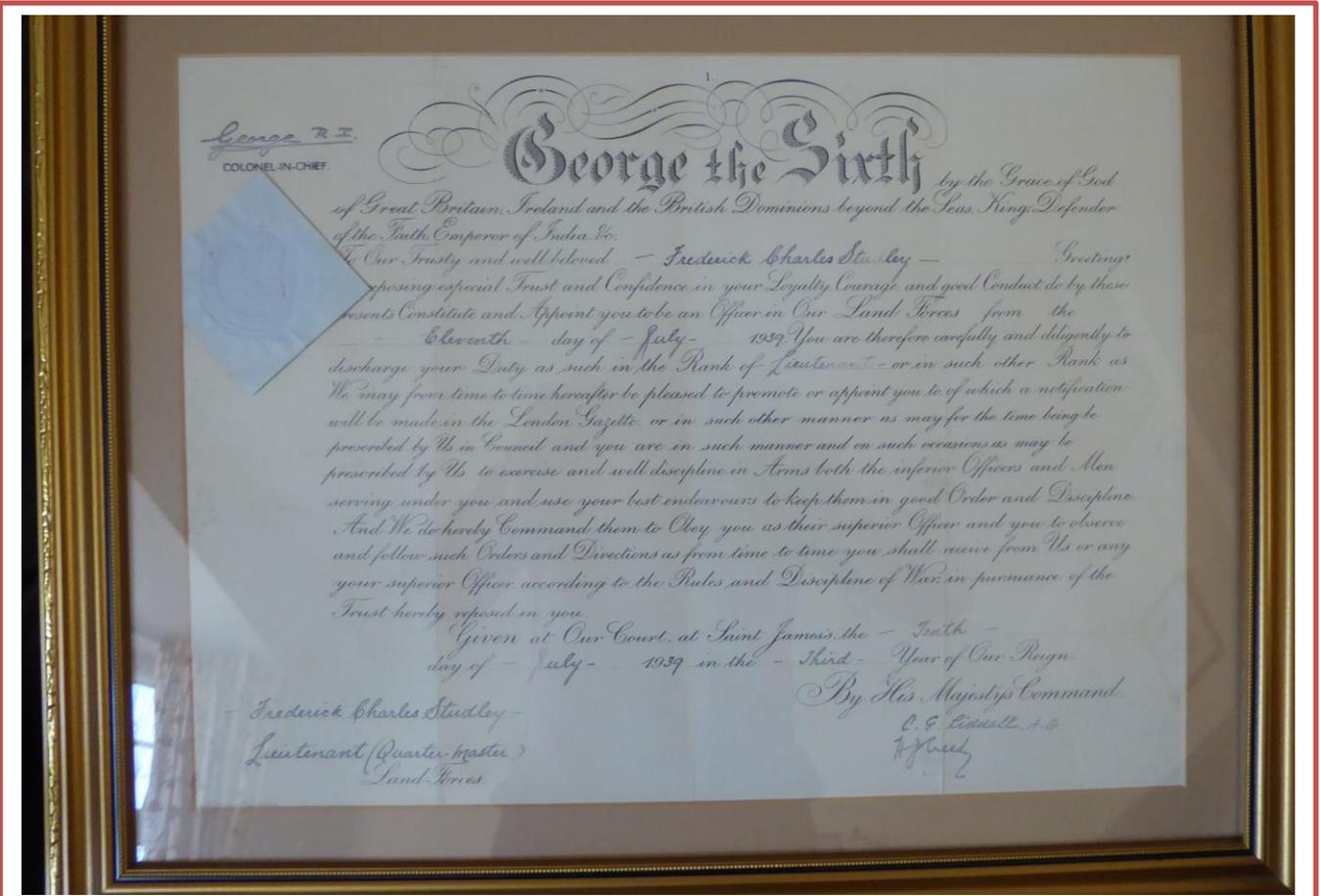
Post War & Family Life

On 10 July 1945, STUDLEY was granted the substantive rank of Captain (Quarter-Master), and on 2 September 1946, Captain STUDLEY, M.B.E. was promoted to the rank of Major (Quarter-Master). 95460 Major F. C. STUDLEY, M.B.E., retired from the British Army on 20 December 1949, having attained the age limit for retirement of fifty-five years.



Above – The Royal Warrant for the award of the Military Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

Courtesy of the LAMB DEN family



Sunday School picnic, Egypt (Abbasia)

picnic up the Nile

Above – The Royal Warrant granting the commission as an Officer in the Land Forces.
 Left – Some family photographs from Egypt.
 Courtesy of the LAMB DEN family



Sgts Men, RHA, Abbassia



Above – The Serjeant's Mess at Abbassia in Egypt.

Left – Sgt STUDLEY (top left) with colleagues in Egypt.

Courtesy of the LAMB DEN family



Above – A post Second World War reunion of the Royal Horse Artillery. Major STUDLEY is seated on the row on the extreme right, the fifth person up from the bottom of the picture.

Courtesy of the LAMB DEN family



Above Left – Frederick STUDLEY as a young Gunner.

Above Right – Frederick STUDLEY as a Warrant Officer, Class I, (Regimental Serjeant Major), probably while stationed at Woolwich.

Courtesy of the LAMB DEN family

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