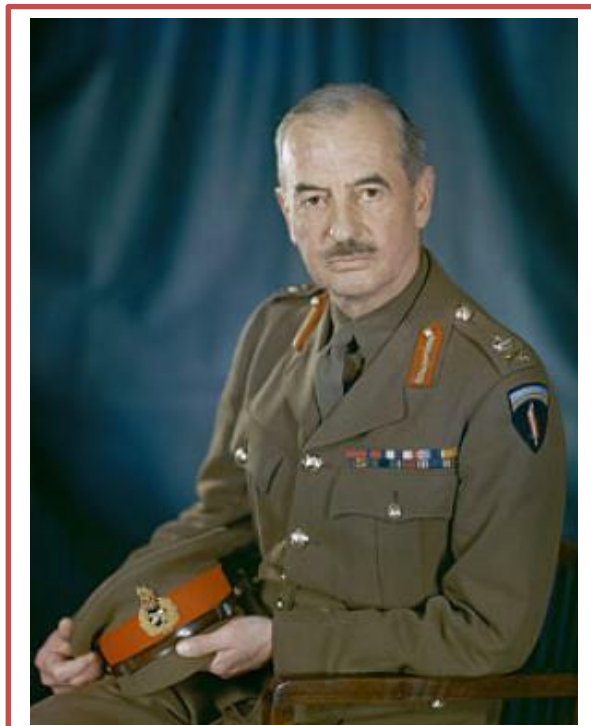


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Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Edward GRASETT

A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR ARTHUR E. GRASETT

A concise biography of Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Edward GRASETT, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, who both served with British Army between 1909 and 1947. He commanded British Troops in China but left before the Japanese invasion to become a corps commander. He is most notable for heading the Civil Affairs Branch of S.H.A.E.F. in 1944 and 1945.
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A Concise Biography of Lieutenant General Sir Arthur E. GRASETT

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Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Edward GRASETT, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

The military of any nation tends to perform a variety of functions above and beyond that of simply fighting a battle or campaign. In addition, to prosecute any military campaign successfully, any army must have effective and efficient support functions to enable it to fight. When an area is taken from an enemy, it is necessary for the military to provide initial governance, food, water, and shelter for both the resident population and often many displaced persons.

The United Kingdom and British Army used its experience of colonial service in order to develop a civil affairs structure for liberated territories and captured enemy countries. From 1943, this function became a joint United States and British responsibility, with the French also becoming increasingly involved from 1944 onwards. One of the officers of the British Army who played a key role in the development of civil affairs functions was Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Edward GRASETT, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, who was a Canadian citizen by birth.

Family Background

Arthur Edward GRASETT was born in Plymouth, Devon, on 20 August 1888, the eldest son of Arthur Wauton GRASETT (1854 – 1934) of Toronto, Canada, and his wife, Catherine Frances GRASETT (nee HEWETT) (1866 – 1941). They had three children together, namely:

- Agnes Katherine GRASETT (1887 – 1919)
- Arthur Edward GRASETT (1888 – 1971)
- Sydney Hugh Bridgman GRASETT (1892 – 1972) – Lieutenant Colonel.

His father was a merchant, who appears to have been visiting the U.K. with his family at the time of Arthur's birth. His elder sister had been born in Toronto, so the family must have travelled to the U.K. in late 1887 or early 1888. They returned to Canada via New York, where they arrived on 10 April 1890, having departed from Liverpool.

GRASETT was educated at Upper Canada College, Toronto; and he then attended the Royal Military College at Kingston, Ontario in 1906. GRASETT commissioned in the Royal Engineers on 24 June 1909 in the rank of Second Lieutenant (service number 6855). He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 4 February 1911. In the 1911 Census, twenty-two-year-old GRASETT is shown as living at the Royal Engineer Barracks, Brompton in Chatham.

The Great War

With the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914, GRASETT deployed to France, arriving there on 12 August 1914, and being destined to serve in France and Belgium for the rest of the war. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on 24 June 1915, and he was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry on 14 January 1916. On 17 January 1916, GRASETT assumed the role as a General Staff Officer 3rd Grade (G.S.O. 3), 6th Army Corps, British Armies in France. On 5 October 1916, he was appointed the Brigade Major of the 47th Infantry Brigade, also in France. On 6 January 1917, he was promoted to the rank of Temporary Major and appointed a G.S.O. 2nd Grade, 9th Army Corps, British Armies in France.

GRASETT was promoted to the rank of Brevet Major on 1 January 1918 in recognition of his services during the war. Just over a year in his previous role, on 26 February 1918, Brevet Major GRASETT was appointed the G.S.O. 2 of the 18th Army Corps in France. Only two months later, on 27 April 1918, he was transferred to the role of G.S.O. 2 with the 9th Army Corps in France. His last appointment in France was to become a G.S.O. 2 with the 37th Division, with took effect on 15 October 1918.

Brevet Major GRASETT was awarded a Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) on 3 June 1919.¹ Recognition of his service on active duties in France is evidenced by him being Mentioned in Dispatches on five occasions, namely:

- 19 October 1914
- 1 January 1916
- 4 January 1917
- 11 December 1917
- 5 July 1919.

In addition, GRASETT received the 1914 Star and Clasp, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal in recognition of his served in the Great War.

Post-Great War Service

On 1 May 1919, GRASETT was appointed on a temporary basis as a General Staff Officer 2nd Grade at the War Office in London. Having held several staff posts during the Great War, GRASETT attended the Staff College in Camberley, Surrey in 1920 to qualify formally as a Staff Officer.

Within the British Army and British Indian Army during this period, officers seconded by regiments and corps to the Staff undertook all the planning, organisation, and administration of the army.

¹ No citation for the award of the D.S.O. is available.

The Staff divided into three main sections: the General Staff (dealing with military operations, intelligence, training, and staff duties), the Adjutant-General's Branch (dealing with personnel matters) and the Quarter-Master-General's Branch (dealing with the provision and supply of materiel). There were some other staff roles such as military secretariat, judge advocate general and with the Master General of the Ordnance.

To train selected officers for staff duties, the British Army opened a staff college at Camberley, Berkshire. In order for an officer to gain entry to one of the two staff colleges, his commanding officer had to recommend him, and he had to pass an entrance examination. GRASETT had proved his ability during the war, so no doubt received a positive recommendation. The Staff Course at Camberley usually lasted two years, however, GRASETT's course was just one year's duration because of the previous experience of the students. The course was geared towards the staff requirements of the inter-war Army, equipping the students to undertake staff roles within the Army, so much was based upon learning Army regulations, situational appreciations, operational orders, loading tables and some tactical awareness. On the successful completion of the course, an officer had the letters *p.s.c.* placed after his entry in the Army List, this being seen as a prized achievement and as a passport to promotion to the rank Lieutenant Colonel and possibly beyond. Usually within the next twelve months, a successful officer was posted to a staff role (e.g., Staff Captain, Brigade Major, or General Staff Officer) for a period of up to four years, although they may change staff roles within that period.

The commandant of the Staff College at Camberley was a Major General, with two Colonels as Chief Instructors. There were fourteen instructors, all of whom held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (either substantive, brevet or local) and a Wing Commander from the Royal Air Force. There was also an Adjutant appointed. The students were usually Captains or Majors in the Army, with about eight to ten years' service in the Army. Usually about fifty students came from the British Army, ten from the Indian Army, two from Canadian Forces, two from Australian Army, one from the South African Army and two from the Royal Air Force.

On completion of his course, Brevet Major GRASETT was posted to India where he was appointed as a Brigade Major on 28 April 1921. He served in Waziristan, being awarded the campaign medal and clasp. GRASETT served in India until 15 March 1923, when he returned to the United Kingdom.

On his arrival back in the U.K., GRASETT was appointed an instructor (graded General Staff Officer 2nd Grade) at the Staff College at Camberley in Surrey. During his posting to the Staff College, he was promoted to the rank of Temporary Lieutenant Colonel; and was also promoted to the substantive rank of Major on 7 February 1925. GRASETT left the Staff College on 30 December 1926, being promoted to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on 1 January 1927.

In January 1928, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel GRASETT was appointed to command the 59th Field Company, Royal Engineers, based in the U.K., replacing Captain C. de C. E. FINDLAY, V.C., M.C., although it is unclear whether GRASETT ever actually took up this appointment.

On 16 January 1928, GRASETT was appointed as a General Staff Officer 2nd Grade at the War Office in London. He was one of nine G.S.O. 2 Grade officers within the Directorate of Staff Duties, under the Director, Major General BONHAM-CARTER. There were also three G.S.O. 1st Grade officers in the Directorate, all of which held the rank of Colonel, and three G.S.O 3rd Grade officers in the rank of Captain. The Directorate of Staff Duties was responsible for non-operational war plans, orders of battle (allocating formations and units for particular forces and theatres of war), war organisation, and liaison with the Royal Air Force. At this period, the work included Staff Duties for Artillery, Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Signals.

Brevet Colonel GRASETT remained at the War Office until 20 December 1930, leaving to attend the 1931 course at the Imperial Defence College at Buckingham Gate in London. Opened in 1927, the Imperial Defence College provided for the higher education of senior officers from the Royal Navy, the Army, and Royal Air Force in respect of strategic war and political studies. In addition to which, some senior civil servants and senior officers from the dominions also attended each course. The duration of the course was one year, and it covered general principles of defence, organisation for war, issues of imperial defence, strategy, and international relations. The Chiefs of Staff would allocate the students projects to complete during their course. Successful students had the initials *i.d.c.* added to their entry in the Army List.

The three services provided the Commandant on rotation, who held the rank of Vice-Admiral, Lieutenant General or Air Marshal. The three directing staff were a Royal Navy Captain, a Brigadier from the Army, and a Group Captain from the Royal Air Force. The Army usually provided nine or ten students per course, of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel, two of whom came from the Indian Army (pre-partition), with one from Canada and one from Australia. Many of the officers who achieved the highest ranks in the British Army attended the Imperial Defence College, including Generals WEYMSS, and SCOONES, and Lieutenant Generals VICKERS and GAMMELL (1938 course), Field Marshal SLIM, General CUNNINGHAM, Lieutenant Generals SCOBIE, SELBY and DURNFORD (1937 course).

On 15 July 1932, GRASETT was promoted to the rank to the rank of Colonel (his seniority dating from 1 January 1930), and he assumed an appointment as a General Staff Officer 1st Grade in India. He remained in this role for just over two years until 27 December 1934, when he was recalled to the United Kingdom. He returned to the Staff College at Camberley on 19 January 1935 to become one of the two senior instructors at the college. In March 1936, the new Commandant of the Staff College was Major General, The Viscount GORT, and GRASETT worked under him for the rest of his appointment until he left on 25 April 1937 to be replaced by Colonel John SWAYNE. This appointment indicates the stature in which GRASETT was seen in the British Army at the time, as only the most respected officers were appointed as instructors at the Staff College.

On leaving the Staff College, GRASETT was promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier on appointment as the Brigadier General Staff, Northern Command in the United Kingdom.

This role was that of the senior staff officer within the Command, effectively running the command on a day-to-day basis on behalf of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief. The Headquarters, Northern Command was based in York, and although his office was here, his role would have involved a lot of travelling across northern England. He held this appointment until 26 September 1938, as the next day he was promoted to the rank of Major General (his seniority dating from 9 January 1938).

At first, GRASETT was specially employed, but on 4 November 1938, he took up the appointment as General Officer Commanding British Troops in China. This post was based in the British territory of Hong Kong. It included responsibility for the British concessions in Shanghai and Teinshin.

The Second World War

It was during his tenure here that the Second World War commenced in September 1939. At the beginning, the Second World War was in effect a European War, although Japan had been at war with China since July 1937. In 1940, the British Army withdrew from Tientsin in March 1940 and Shanghai in September 1940 to concentrate British forces on Hong Kong and Kowloon. In the King's Birthday Honours List published on 11 July 1940, GRASETT became a Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (C.B.), this being a common decoration awarded to Army officers of the rank of Major General. This was a challenging period for Major General GRASETT, as Japan was fighting a war with China, and tension was rising in the region as the threat of further Japanese aggression increased. The British Government realised that it was too demanding on the nation to fight a major war against three opponents, and with the priority being the defence of the United Kingdom from German invasion, and the protection of British interests in the Middle East from Italian aggression, the British Empire in the Far East was to an extent neglected. GRASETT would have been aware that it was very unlikely that in the event of a Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, the colony would be able to resist occupation, and that reinforcements would not be forthcoming. Due to his Canadian heritage, Major General GRASETT is credited with persuading the Canadian Government to send two infantry battalions to Hong Kong to strengthen the defences.

GRASETT left Hong Kong on 27 August 1941, handing over to Major General MALTBY. This is possibly due to the War Office seeing GRASETT as too valuable to leave in the Far East, and that his presence was required back in the U.K. for higher command. It was destined to be MALTBY who had command of Hong Kong when the Japanese invaded in December 1941 leading to the surrender of the Colony, including the Canadian reinforcements.

On his return to the United Kingdom, GRASETT assumed command of the 48th (South Midland) Infantry Division with effect from 8 October 1941. This pre-war Territorial Army formation had seen active service in France in May 1940, during which it had suffered many casualties. After less than a month in command of this division, the War Office appointed GRASETT to command of a corps. He was promoted Acting Lieutenant General with effect from 7 November 1941 and assumed command of VIII Corps.

This formation was based in the south-west of England, with its main responsibility the defence of an extended coastline. Twelve months after being granted the acting rank, the War Office promoted GRASETT to the rank of Temporary Lieutenant General on 7 November 1942

A retired Army officer, Lieutenant General Sir George Norton CORY, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., had been recalled to duty in July 1940 to assume the role as Chief Liaison Officer for the Allied Contingents based in the United Kingdom. By early 1943, he was approaching the age limit for compulsory retirement, so a replacement was sought for this appointment. Now aged fifty-five years and with thirty-four years' service in the British Army, GRASETT was considered too old to lead a corps in any forthcoming campaign. On 14 January 1943, he handed over to forty-six-year-old Lieutenant General Herbert LUMSDEN, who had recently been relieved of command of X Corps in Egypt by Lieutenant General MONTGOMERY.

GRASETT's new appointment as Chief Liaison Officer for the Allied Contingents involved liaising with the Polish, Czech, Dutch, Belgian, French, and Norwegian armed forces based in the United Kingdom, and importantly with their governments in exile. This was as much a political role as a purely military one. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, the Allies were assembling, equipping, and training a large army in readiness for the invasion of France. This army came under the overall command of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (S.H.A.E.F.) under the U.S. Army General Dwight D. EISENHOWER.

One of the facets of S.H.A.E.F. was the Civil Affairs Branch responsible for planning and delivery of the provision of military governments in the liberated countries while they prepared for the reinstatement of civilian government and administration. S.H.A.E.F. used the U.S. Army system of designation of staff functions, this branch being known as G-5. Major General Sir Roger LUMLEY, a British Army officer, headed the branch. He was not a professional soldier, being a former colonial administrator, and he not regarded highly by senior American officers. A debate took place regarding an upgrade of the post and a replacement for LUMLEY. EISENHOWER preferred a British officer to fill the role, with GRASETT selected to fill that role.

GRASETT became the Assistant Chief of Staff G-5 in mid-April 1944, his official date of appointment being 22 April 1944. Major General LUMLEY was relieved and left S.H.A.E.F.. There was little time to lose, with GRASETT instituting a reorganisation of the G-5 Branch. One of his first decisions was circulate a policy statement on 19 April in which he stated: *'It has become apparent to me that some confusion of thought exists on the method by which civil affairs will be conducted once operations start. Time is short and cannot be wasted on fruitless discussion.'* GRASETT determined that the S.H.A.E.F. would control civil affairs operations directly, so that a central authority would oversee each country's military governance rather than acting independently.

There was some resistance to the policy put forward by GRASETT as many of the staff had served in the Mediterranean where a Standard Policy and Procedure System had been used. Morale within the civil affairs staff suffered and there was an air of disorganization.

GRASETT determined the final structure following the reorganisation, announcing his decision on 28 April 1944. The new structure came into effect on 1 May 1944. The G-5 Branch now had six branches:

- Legal
- Fiscal
- Supply
- Public health
- Displaced persons
- Economics.

The G-5 Operations element had a plans branch and six country sections. GRASETT's deputy was an American, Brigadier-General Cornelius W. WICKERSHAM. The head of the British Control Commission was Major General S. W. KIRBY, with the U.S. Control Council head by Lieutenant General Lucius D. CLAY. The head and deputy for each of the country specific missions were:

- France:
 - Head – Major General John T. LEWIS, U.S. Army
 - Deputy – Major General Harold REDMAN
- Netherlands:
 - Head – Major General J. K. EDWARDS
 - (replaced by Major General J. G. W. CLARK)
 - Deputy – Brigadier-General George P. HOWELL, U.S. Army
- Belgium and Luxembourg:
 - Head – Major General G. W. E. J. ERSKINE
 - Deputy – Colonel John B. SHERMAN, U.S. Army (Belgium)
 - Deputy – Colonel F. E. FRASER, U.S. Army (Luxembourg)
- Denmark:
 - Head – Major General R. H. DEWING
 - Colonel Ford TRIMBLE, U.S. Army
- Norway
 - Head – General Sir Andrew THORNE
 - Deputy – Colonel Charles H. WILSON, U.S. Army

The headquarters of G-5 Branch were at Shrivenham in Wiltshire, with training undertaken at Eastbourne and Shrivenham. The issue of civil affairs and military governance of Germany had not been decided at this time. The invasion of France took place on 6 June 1944, with the occupied countries of Europe being steadily liberated after that, although Norway and Denmark were not liberated until May 1945 and the surrender of Germany.

In recognition of his services as Head of G-5 Branch at S.H.A.E.F., GRASETT received a knighthood with effect from 21 August 1945 on being created a Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (K.B.E.).

His citation reads:

General GRASETT joined General EISENHOWER's staff on 16th June 1944 as Adjutant-General of Br. S-5, in which capacity he has since been charged with the duty of planning, organizing and heading the Civil Affairs operations in connection with the invasion of N. W. Europe.²

In addition, General GRASETT has been charged with regular liaison between SHAEF and the Governments and Military Authorities of our European Allies.

General GRASETT has performed his multifarious and unprecedented duties in a manner deserving of the highest praise. His unfailing tact and cheerfulness, his ever ready wit and sympathy, his great knowledge of the world and its ways and his resourceful have enabled him to cope with any and every situation.

The successful work of S-5 throughout the campaign with its multifarious and intricate responsibilities can be attributed very largely to the General GRASETT's fine leadership and example. This area of work at Supreme HQ has both smoothed the path of the armies through the liberated territories and has maintained the effort required to organise the rearward areas. To his credit also may be laid to a notable degree the not inconsiderable assistance being afforded by our many Allies. In all, General GRASETT's outstanding services have been such as to render him worthy of very high reward.

In addition, GRASETT gained other awards from Allied countries; on 21 June 1945 he gained the Order of the Red Banner from the U.S.S.R., on 8 November 1945 he was awarded the Legion of Merit, Degree of Commander, by the United States government, and the King of Belgium awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown on 13 August 1946.

With the liberation of the Channel Islands, the British Crown reinstated the positions of Lieutenant Governors for Jersey and Guernsey. The King appointed Major General HYLAND to be the Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, but illness prevented him from taking up that appointment. As GRASETT's role with S.H.A.E.F. was effectively redundant, the King chose GRASETT to become the Lieutenant Governor in replacement of Major General HYLAND. He took up his new appointment on 25 August 1945 with the rank of Local Lieutenant General. As such, he oversaw Jersey emerge from German occupation, having to deal with many legacy issues.

GRASETT formally retired from the British Army on 2 July 1947, being granted the honorary rank of Lieutenant General, however, he remained the Lieutenant Governor of Jersey until 15 October 1953. GRASETT became a Colonel Commandant of the Royal Engineers on 12 July 1945, holding that appointment for the usual term of ten years until 11 July 1952.

² NOTE: this date is inconsistent with that given in the Army List of 22 April 1944, this latter date being preferred. By 16 June, Allied forces had landed in Normandy so this may be the date that the G.5 Branch became effective in France under command of S.H.A.E.F.

Family Life

GRASETT married Joan Mary FOSTER of Egton Manor, Yorkshire in 1935, and they did have a family together. He died on 4 December 1971 in Banbury, Oxfordshire, aged eighty-three years. GRASETT's body was taken to Canada, where he is buried in the Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto, Ontario in his native land.

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