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A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY OF:

MAJOR GENERAL

R. D. INSKIP

A concise biography of Major General Roland Debenham INSKIP, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*, an officer in the British Indian Army between 1905 and 1942.

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A Concise Biography of Major General Roland Debenham INSKIP

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Major General Roland Debenham INSKIP, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

Introduction

Major General Roland INSKIP, who was known as 'Tim', was an officer in the British Indian Army. He saw active service during the Great War, and then followed a typical career path between the wars, seeing active service in Waziristan in 1937. He was unemployed at the outbreak of the Second World War, but became a district commander for a short period, before becoming a divisional commander on Ceylon. In the latter years of the war following his retirement, Major General INSKIP was employed inspecting the training establishments in India Command that were responsible for transforming the Indian Army.

Early Life and Career

Roland Debenham INSKIP was born on 17 September 1885 at Spalding Grammar School in Lincolnshire, where his father was then the headmaster. His father, the Reverend O. D. INSKIP became the Headmaster of Framlingham School in the county, and Roland started attending that school in 1894. During his time at the school, he won his 1st XI Colours for cricket and football, but he was undistinguished in terms of his academic achievements. He left Framlingham School in 1902, and he undertook a crammer course in London, and this allowed him to enter the Royal Military College, Sandhurst as a Gentleman Cadet in 1904. At Sandhurst, he won his cricket 'blue', and prizes for drill and signalling.

INSKIP passed out from Sandhurst on 5 August 1905 to be placed on the Unattached List for the Indian Army. As was usual for newly commissioned officers in the Indian Army, he spent a period serving with a British Army regiment stationed in India. In INSKIP's case, this was the 1st Battalion, The Northamptonshire Regiment, which he joined on 8 December 1905. On 8 December 1906, he transferred from the Unattached List to join the 59th Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) as a Second Lieutenant. The regiment was at the time based at Peshawar. While stationed at Peshawar, he played cricket and hockey for his regiment, and he ran the station cricket club. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 5 November 1907. INSKIP served on the North-West Frontier of India in 1908, taking part in the Zakha Khel expedition, and being awarded his first campaign medal. In 1910, the regiment moved to Fort Lockhart and Kohat. The following year, INSKIP returned to the U.K. on a period of leave. During his leave, he played first class cricket for the Free Foresters and I Zingari, and he was called a rude name by W. G. GRACE after he hit an England bowler on GRACE's team for five sixes in two overs.

In the 1911 Census, which must have been during his period of leave in the U.K., INSKIP is shown living as a boarder with Mr and Mrs MEUDEL, at 38 and 40 Langham Street West, Marylebone, London. His occupation is shown as a Lieutenant with the 59th Rifles, Indian Army.

First World War

At the beginning of 1914, the regiment moved to Jullundur in the Punjab, and INSKIP was appointed the regimental adjutant. This was an important role as the staff officer to the commandant, arranging training, movements, postings, promotions, and also being responsible for discipline. On 4 August 1914, he was promoted to the rank of Captain.¹

The 59th Scinde Rifles were part of the 3rd (Lahore) Division, which was the first Indian formation to go to France. It arrived at Marseilles at the end of September 1914, and on 24 October, it saw its first action. The Scinde Rifles held a section of the front-line, and for the next fourteen months, they were in and out of the trenches losing officers and men all the time. The first major battle the regiment and the division were involved in was at Givenchy on 19 December 1914. At the end of the day, only Captain INSKIP and the Commanding Officer were left standing. In this action, one officer of the regiment, Lieutenant William BRUCE, was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously.

The next major battle that the regiment participated in was at Neuve Chapelle on 18, 19 and 20 March 1915. This was a disaster for the regiment, Captain INSKIP being the only officer in the regiment to escape death or wounding, which he described as a 'terrible experience for a young officer. Three days later, he was wounded himself by long-range shellfire. The injuries he sustained required him to be sent to a hospital in London, and then to Chequers Court for convalescence. INSKIP returned to the trenches in June 1915, and his old job as Adjutant. There was a constant stream of casualties, with the replacements having to come from India.

In December 1915, all the Indian divisions, except the Cavalry regiments, were transferred to Mesopotamia to fight the Turks.² The troops enjoyed their voyage through the Suez Canal and then up the Persian Gulf to Basra on the Shatt-el-Arab waterway. After disembarking, the troops were ordered to march some two-hundred and fifty miles. There were no roads, so they followed the banks of the River Tigris, with the baggage, food, etc, being conveyed on Arab sailing vessels. Due to the prevailing north wind, however, they had to be hauled by the soldiers all the way up the river. The march took six weeks, and it was conducted in the rainy season. The Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' was deployed in Mesopotamia in November 1914, and after initial successes, the 6th (Poona) Division had just surrendered at Kut-al-Amara in April 1916.

On their arrival at the front-line, the Scinde Rifles took part in the desultory fighting to the relief of Kut-el-Amara, which culminated in the battle of Dujaila on 9 March 1916. The regiment had a long route march to arrive in front of the Turkish positions, with the fighting lasting all day. During this action, INSKIP's wife's brother was killed while standing beside him, and the commanding officer was badly wounded. Again, Captain INSKIP was the only officer left alive and unwounded.

¹ The London Gazette gives the date of 5 August, but INSKIP himself states it was 4 August.

² The area of the Ottoman Empire known as Mesopotamia now forms the country of Iraq.

Between 9 March and 13 April 1916, INSKIP was promoted to the rank of Acting Major whilst second-in-command of the 59th Scinde Rifles. The next day, the regiment retreated nineteen miles across the desert. As it was hot, many men suffered from thirst and hunger. Officers, men, and mules ended up having to drink water from muddy pools, with all the attendant risk of disease. Captain INSKIP admits to his morale being low, and to feeling pretty miserable, but as an officer, he could not show it as the morale of the men had to be maintained at all costs. The soldiers dug in and awaited events. The Turks soon found them and attacked, this time at night. It was pitch dark and the Turks attacked the Scinde Rifles and another regiment all night long. The line held, and in the morning, there were no signs of any Turkish troops. There was only a line of corpses of Turkish soldiers who had been caught by the Indian machine-gun fire as they advanced.

For the next four and a half months, there was no further fighting, but the officers were kept busy reorganising and fighting cholera, scurvy and enteric fever amongst their troops. The heat was appalling, reaching 129 degrees in the shade in tents, and the flies were a menace. A soldier could not eat any jam, for as soon he did so, the flies would descend and cover the jam in a black cloud. In spite of this, the majority of the soldiers survived, and the administration improved slowly.

Captain INSKIP was then appointed the Staff Captain of the brigade, and he left his regiment for the Brigade Headquarters on 11 May 1916, although his regiment was part of the brigade, so he felt that he was still looking after the men of the Scinde Rifles. Operations resumed in December 1916, and it took two months of hard fighting in and around Kut for the British and Indian troops to gain the ascendancy over the Turks. The British advanced up both sides of the River Tigris, up to Baghdad, which was about two-hundred miles distant. On their arrival in Baghdad, the brigade was sent to the foothills of the frontier with Persia (Iran) to meet elements of the Russian army advancing down from the north. The brigade met up with a Russian cavalry regiment, and for two days, the two sets of troops enjoyed a period of fraternization. On the third day, the Russians disappeared, as the revolution had broken out in their country. As Turkish forces were on both flanks of this brigade, they were withdrawn back to Baghdad, a march of about ninety miles. Then they were required to march a further eighty miles to the head of the Baghdad railway at Sammara. The weather warmed up again, but this time it was more bearable, and the troops were able to bathe in the Tigris, and to go fishing in the river as well.

In the autumn of 1917, operations commenced to drive the Turks out of Mesopotamia. The British met little opposition, and so the division was ordered to move to Palestine by sea, INSKIP leaving the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force on 7 September 1917. They sailed down the Persian Gulf, and then up the Red Sea and Suez Canal to their destination. The voyage was enjoyable, with good food and comfortable quarters. The division disembarked at Ismailia, half-way down the Suez Canal, and the troops were promised a few days rest and recuperation in Cairo. Captain INSKIP, however, was posted to Jerusalem to join a brigade in a former Territorial Force division as the Brigade Major. The division was camped in the foothills overlooking the valley of the River Jordan, and INSKIP was immediately ordered to carry out a reconnaissance of the river at night, in anticipation of forcing a crossing of the river to enable mounted troops to reach Amman.

INSKIP went down the river, which had Turkish guards on the far bank, fortunately most were smoking so he could see where they were. He had to enter the river to work out the depth and profile, which he did successfully. He chose two places to make a crossing, which subsequently, one turned out to be successful while the other was a bloody affair. The mounted troops went through to Amman, and so Captain INSKIP was ordered to rejoin his original brigade.

His brigade was now deployed on the coast, which was quiet, but he was again sent to work with another brigade to plan an attack on a prominent feature. The toll taken on INSKIP with the constant strain of operations was having an effect, and he developed acute insomnia. He was admitted to a hospital on 6 September 1918, and then was posted back to his Regimental Depot in India with effect from 25 January 1919, with the rank of Acting Major. Captain INSKIP was awarded the Military Cross (M.C.) on 14 January 1916 and the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) later in that same year.³ He was promoted to the rank of Brevet Major on 22 March 1919 for distinguished services in the field during the campaign in Mesopotamia. He admits that it took over a year to recover from the effects of the First World War.

Inter-War Career

Promotion to the substantive rank of Major came with effect from 5 August 1920, and INSKIP attended the Staff College in Camberley in 1921 and 1922. He found the course hard work, but he enjoyed the facilities for games, playing cricket and hockey, and he won the tennis doubles competition. He returned to his regiment, to find it packing for a move to Iraq, so once again Major INSKIP sailed for Basra, but this time he travelled by train to Baghdad. The country was now very different, with it being safe to move around freely. There was the opportunity to hunt, shoot, fish, play polo, and to play football and hockey with the regiment.

On completion of the staff course and being awarded the *p.s.c.* (passed staff college) title to his service record, he was appointed the Brigade Major of the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade on 7 January 1924, (the brigade being redesignated as the 2nd (Rawalpindi) Infantry Brigade in 1927). Rawalpindi was then the largest military station in British India, and INSKIP found it to be the most enjoyable and interesting period of his service. In 1926, he was appointed the captain of two teams representing Northern India against the touring cricket team from the M.C.C., with one of his teams being all-British, and the other British and Indian. INSKIP left the appointment as Brigade Major having completed four years in the role on 7 January 1928 to return to his regiment as the second-in-command.

INSKIP was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 5 August 1931 and was appointed commandant of the 6th Bn. 13th Frontier Force Rifles. He spent two and half years in command of his battalion on the North-West Frontier, before he was promoted to the rank of Colonel on 7 December 1934 (his seniority dated from 1 July 1932).

³ Neither citation is available at the London Gazette.

INSKIP was appointed as a General Staff Officer, 1st Grade at Army Headquarters, India on the same day as his promotion. He found it a sad day to leave his regiment, leaving it still deployed on the North-West Frontier. Colonel INSKIP was posted to the Military Training Directorate, which at the time was under the command of Major General GORT. He had been at Sandhurst with GORT, and GORT had been one of his instructors at the Staff College, so he knew him well. He found his new role 'irksome', but he learnt a lot from Major General GORT, and he found him easy to work with.

Having relinquished his post as a G.S.O. 1 on 23 December 1935, at the beginning of 1936, INSKIP travelled to the United Kingdom to attend the Imperial Defence College in Buckingham Gate, London. His attendance on this course indicates the standing in which INSKIP was held in the Indian Army and that he was expected to reach high rank in the Army. This course was tri-service, with usually only two representatives from the Indian Army attending each course. The course was of one year's duration. He was granted some leave to allow him and his wife to travel together, and on their journeys to and from the U.K., they visited Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Amoy, Shanghai and Kyoto in Japan. They spent ten days in Japan and took several day trips from Kyoto.

On their arrival in London, they had to find their own accommodation, and they considered themselves fortunate to be able to rent a small flat within a short underground journey from the College. INSKIP found the course very interesting, meeting senior officers from the Army, Navy and Air Force, plus a few civilians. He felt, however, that he did not get enough physical exercise, as even walking home did not seem enough.

On his return to India, INSKIP was appointed the commanding officer of the 1st (Abbottabad) Infantry Brigade on 28 January 1937 and was promoted to the rank of Temporary Brigadier with effect from the same date. The brigade formed part of the Rawalpindi District (1st Indian Division) under command of Major General Eric De BURGH. This static command was located in the North-West Frontier Province of British India (it is now located in Pakistan) and co-existed as one of the four divisions in the Indian Army before the outbreak of the Second World War. With his headquarters based at Murree, De BURGH had command of the 1st (Abbottabad) Infantry Brigade, 2nd (Rawalpindi) Infantry Brigade and 3rd (Jhelum) Infantry Brigade. De BURGH reported to General COLERIDGE who commanded Northern Command.

During 1936, there had been some disturbances in Waziristan involving the Tori Khel Wazirs. In January 1937, a settlement had been reached with the Tori Khel tribe and Waziristan returned to normal. The reinforcements that had been sent to the area had been withdrawn, and the area returned to the political control of the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province. Taking advantage of the situation, the Faqir of Ipi, a Pathan tribal leader renewed his campaign against the British that had escalated in 1936 over a Hindu girl who had fallen in love with a Muslim man. The Tori Khel failed to comply with the terms of their settlement and armed groups started to gather in the area south of the Tochi valley. On 6 February 1937, an officer in the South Waziristan Scouts was murdered, and on the next day the Assistant Political Agent for North Waziristan was also murdered. The general tension increased with people being kidnapped, and raids undertaken.

The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Northern Command, General COLERIDGE decided to reinforce the Waziristan District. The 1st (Abbottabad) Infantry Brigade (Brigadier R. D. INSKIP) and the Bannu Brigade (Brigadier F. H. MAYNARD) were moved to the area on active service. Fighting tribesmen is different to other forms of warfare, and it required a great deal of specialist training. INSKIP's brigade comprised three battalions of Gurkhas, and a battalion of the South Wales Borderers. The Gurkhas soon adapted to the mountain warfare, and the Borderers quickly got the hang of this type of military operation. The enemy was rarely visible, their clothing merging into the scenery, and they operated in gangs, attacking troops at night and then disappearing to obtain food from their villages. The troops would sleep in holes in the ground to protect themselves from sniping, but the animals were not so fortunate. This type of operation meant a lot of trekking for the troops, sometimes in valleys and sometimes up hills up to 8,000 feet in height. The weather could veer from very cold to hot, and the land was barren and dry, with no roads.

Political pressure was brought against the Wazirs and tribal Jirgas of the Mahsuds and Maddi Khel. The situation continued to deteriorate, so Major General De BURGH was ordered to move with the Headquarters of the 1st Indian Division and the 3rd (Jhelum) Infantry Brigade (Brigadier A. N. FLOYER-ACLAND) to Waziristan. In March 1937, negotiations continued with the tribes, but these failed to reach a solution. On 21 and 29 March, serious attacks were made on troops of the 1st (Abbottabad) Infantry Brigade. The brigades set up road clearance and piquet patrols to maintain communications, and air operations commenced over the affected area. On 9 April, a convoy of about fifty lorries were attacked. The personnel from the convoy suffered and the road became blocked. Reinforcements were sent to the scene, and although an aircraft was shot down during the operation the situation was restored. Additional reinforcements were dispatched to Waziristan. On 12 April the 3rd (Jhelum) Infantry Brigade concentrated at Mir Ali, and on 15 April, the 2nd (Rawalpindi) Infantry Brigade (Brigadier C. D. NOYES) arrived in Waziristan. On 21 April, the 9th (Jhansi) Infantry Brigade was also put at forty-eight hours notice to move to Waziristan. By this time, it had become clear that a negotiated settlement was very unlikely, so General COLERIDGE was given full political as well as military control for Waziristan. COLERIDGE was instructed by the Government of India to 'restore peaceful conditions throughout the area'.

On 23 April, a large column under the command of De BURGH and comprising the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigade advanced southwards from Mir Ali into the Khaisora River valley, where there was a large concentration of tribesmen. Sustained attacks were made on the column by tribesmen, but they were beaten off. There was full air support, an example of Army – Air cooperation that was used to such effect in the Second World War. The column achieved its objective of pushing the tribesmen into the hills and inflicting heavy casualties on them, but it was not decisive and by 3 May, the column had returned to Mir Ali. The Faqir of Ipi was still in a strong position and dissent continued. Another large concentration of tribesmen loyal to the Faqir were located in the valleys of the Sham and Shaktu Rivers. The Waziristan District was upgraded to an operational division under the command of Major General HARTLEY, being reinforced by troops from the 1st Indian Division.

The operation commenced overnight 11 and 12 May, with a night advance over the Iblanke Pass which outflanked the tribesmen in the Sham Valley. Continuous air support was provided by the Royal Air Force throughout this operation. The tribesmen were forced from the Sham Valley and then attention turned to the Shaktu Valley, where the Faqir of Ipi had his headquarters. On 18 May, the Bannu Brigade (Brigadier MAYNARD) advanced into the valley, supported by the 1st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier INSKIP). The Faqir and his followers were forced to withdraw to the Mahsud – Bhitanni border. This resulted in the Tori Khel agreeing to the settlement allowing restrictions on the tribe to be relaxed and air operations against them to be halted.

The focus then moved to South Waziristan, where the Mahsud tribes were restless. The elders had not declared their hostility towards the Indian Government, but younger and more radical elements had sided with the Faqir of Ipi. The command of these operations was given to the Waziristan Division which now had under command the Razmak Brigade (Major General J. S. MARSHALL), Bannu Brigade and Wana Brigade (Brigadier L. M. HEATH). The 1st Infantry Brigade and Bannu Brigade advanced again into the Shaktu Valley as some tribesmen had reassembled there, whilst the Razmak and Wana Brigades cleared hostile gangs south of Razmak. Again, support from the Royal Air Force was important in supporting this operation.

Steadily, a more peaceful situation began to emerge, but with some problems remaining amongst the younger people in the affected tribes. A programme of road construction began to open the area up and to provide it with better communications. Isolated armed engagements continued, but the Tori Khel settlement held, with their fine being paid in rifles. Meanwhile, the Bhattani tribe started raiding settled areas and taking hostages. At the end of April, a Bhattani Jirga was informed that unless the tribe conformed to good behaviour and released their hostages, action would be taken against them. This proved successful and the hostages were released. During these operations, the British and Indian troops had suffered one-hundred and eighty-three men killed, and four-hundred and forty-nine wounded.

Peace did not return fully to the Province, and in September 1937, the Faqir of Ipi was still agitating against the British and Government of India having located himself in caves in the Shawal area. Trouble flared when some three-hundred tribesmen attacked posts in South Waziristan. The Waziristan Division was again called into action, with the Razmak Brigade (now under command of Brigadier H. V. LEWIS) and the Bannu Brigade moving southwards to restore order in the Khaisora Valley. This operation dispersed the hostile tribesmen and warnings were given to the Maliks (tribal leaders) about their future behaviour. Further problems broke out in North Waziristan but the actions by Government forces had pacified the Mahsuds and Wazirs for the time being.

The 1st Indian Division was instructed to take action against the Bhitanni tribe who had been raiding into the areas around Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. De BURGH decided to send the 2nd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier C. D. NOYES) into Bhitanni territory. On 19 and 20 October, opposition by some three-hundred tribesmen was met, but they were defeated and dispersed.

On 22 October, another Jirga was held, and it was agreed that the tribesmen would hand in the hostages and rifles as security for good behaviour. The Faqir of Ipi had moved to the border between Afghanistan and India to continue his activities. In mid-October, a group of about one-hundred and fifty tribesmen attacked posts and the roads in North Waziristan. The 9th (Jhansi) Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. P. QUINAN) visited the area. A couple of skirmishes took place, and the tribesmen withdrew. In November, the 1st Infantry Brigade and 9th Infantry Brigade continued their operations in the Khaisora and Sham Valleys. On 15 December, the political and military control of the area passed back to the Waziristan District and normality was restored.

During 1938, some disputes continued between the Faqir of Ipi and the Indian authorities necessitating further columns and operations to pacify the local tribesmen. The Faqir had moved into mountainous country on the Afghanistan border. Here he raised a lashkar of several hundred tribesmen, and at the end of May, there were a group of about two-hundred and fifty with two guns near Lwargi; about four-hundred with one gun at Tut Narai; and about six-hundred near Drewasta. To counter this, the Razmak Brigade and 3rd Infantry Brigade were deployed in and around the Upper Tochi Valley. In July, Major General HARTLEY assumed command and political control in Waziristan, with Major General E. P. QUINAN assuming command of the Waziristan District. Further groups of tribesmen were gathering in South Waziristan with attacks made on villages in the Bannu and Kohat areas. The brigades reopened the roads and steadily reasserted control and by December 1938 the Faqir of Ipi had adopted a low profile and peace returned to Waziristan.

The 1st (Abbottabad) Brigade was deployed into the Waziristan District during these operations, and it was concentrated at Mir Ali on 1 March 1937. The brigade was active in suppressing the Pathan tribesmen and restoring calm to the district. For his exploits in the Waziristan campaign between 16 September and 15 December 1937, on 16 August 1938 INSKIP was made a Companion of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire (C.I.E.), the only officer to do so from this campaign. He was Mentioned in Despatches twice, and he received the campaign medal with two bars. Having spent a year on active service, Brigadier INSKIP was also entitled to three months leave, so he and his wife decided to visit South Africa. They called at the Seychelles, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam, Beira, Zanzibar, Lourenco Marques, and Durban, where they left the ship. They travelled by train up to Johannesburg where they met old friends from Framlingham College who were living and working in South Africa. They moved to Pretoria, where they met other old friends from school, and they spent three days in the Kruger National Park. This trip reinforced for INSKIP the value of the 'old school' network that exists in British society.

On his return to India, he resumed command of the brigade at Abbottabad, to find that further trouble had broken out on the frontier. The weather was very hot in the camps in the foothills, but when the brigade trekked up into the mountains, and just after they pitched camp, it began to snow. The troops endured terrible conditions, and they were stranded there for three weeks. The men of the brigade were fed on supplies dropped from aircraft. During this period, Brigadier INSKIP began to experience kidney problems and he reported that he was suffering 'a pretty bad time', but fortunately, the brigade was ordered to return to Abbottabad at the end of April 1939.

The Second World War and Retirement

At the age of fifty-four years, and with thirty-four years' service in the British Indian army, INSKIP was promoted to the rank of Major General on 16 April 1939. On 8 June 1939 he was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (C.B.), which was a usual decoration granted to Army officers on reaching the rank of Major General. He relinquished the role of brigade commander on 5 August 1939, and he was then transferred to the Semi-Effective List as there was no vacancy for him to fill. At this time in the Indian Army, there was an establishment of nine Major General's, but only seven jobs for that rank, meaning that the two most junior had to go onto half pay and wait their turn. INSKIP and his wife decided to return to the U.K. for him to have treatment for his kidney condition. In London, they were able to rent the same flat as previously, but living in London on half pay was 'grim' in INSKIP's own words. In September 1939, INSKIP was staying at the Osborne Convalescent Home at Cowes on the Isle of Wight, no doubt recuperating from his kidney problems.

INSKIP was restored to the Effective List on 21 April 1940, having been appointed as the Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General of Northern Command on that date. In this role, he was responsible for all administrative issues for the command other than military operations and intelligence. He was based in Rawalpindi, a city he was familiar with. Major General INSKIP knew that he was now nearing the age limit for retirement of fifty-seven years, however, an opportunity became available for him to achieve a command. On 15 May 1941, with the promotion of Major General NOYES to be Quarter-Master-General at G.H.Q. India, a vacancy was created as General Officer Commanding, Rawalpindi District. INSKIP was appointed the district commander with effect from 15 May 1941, not having to move far as both headquarters were located relatively close to each other. He enjoyed his time as the District Commander, focusing on training his troops for both fighting in the Middle East and on the North-West Frontier.

This was a period of rapid expansion in the Indian Army, with authorisation given in October 1940 for the formation of five infantry and one armoured division. These were formed over time in 1941, and one of these divisions raised at this time was the 34th Indian Infantry Division. It was formed at Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh in October 1941, and was intended to comprise the 98th, 99th and 100th Indian Infantry Brigades. The first General Officer Commanding appointed to this new division was Major General (Acting) Francis Ivan Simms TUKER, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*, but in late December 1941, he was appointed to command the 4th Indian Infantry Division in Egypt. INSKIP had relinquished his command of the Rawalpindi District on 21 November 1941, handing over to Major General GATTIE, so he was appointed the General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) of the 34th Indian Infantry Division in December 1941. He was also detailed to be the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Army on the island of Ceylon. The only directive given to him was to make Ceylon 'air minded'. INSKIP was only provided with a skeleton staff, and he was told to find the rest from volunteer personnel on the island, in particular, from the Ceylon Planters Association.

Ceylon was an important location for the British to impose their control over the Indian Ocean, and the trading routes to India, South Africa, and Europe. A major Royal Navy base was established on the east coast at Trincomalee, and Colombo was the other important port on the island. A locally recruited Militia was raised in 1881, which by 1910, had become the Ceylon Defence Force. There were no British troops stationed on the island, until the Second World War. The Japanese attack on Malaya, the Philippines (under U.S. administration), and the Netherland East Indies on 7 December 1941, changed the balance of power in the region drastically. As the build-up to conflict occurred, Ceylon was taken under India Command with effect from 22 November 1941. With the rapid advance of the Japanese forces across South-East Asia, the threat of invasion of Ceylon, specifically the east coast around Trincomalee, meant that British forces on the island had to be strengthened significantly. With the loss of Malaya, Ceylon became the main source of rubber for the British Empire. Vice Admiral Geoffrey LAYTON was appointed the Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, in March 1942, and he began to reorganise the defences to face a probable attack.

Two Australian infantry brigades, the 16th and 17th, were diverted from their journey back to Australia from the Middle East, to provide an initial garrison for the island, pending the arrival of other troops. The 34th Indian Infantry Division had been raised at Jhansi in October 1941, and it was still not fully trained or equipped when it was ordered to Ceylon in January 1942, minus the 98th Indian Infantry Brigade which transferred to the 19th Indian Division. It was stationed in and around Trincomalee, being responsible for coastal and airfield defence. On his arrival on the island in February 1942, INSKIP also acted as the General Officer Commanding Ceylon until the arrival of Lieutenant General Sir Henry POWNALL on 7 March 1942. The arrival of the Indian division allowed the two Australian brigades to continue their journey to Australia by late April.

Major General INSKIP faced a confused chain of command, not knowing whether he was under the War Office in London or the Headquarters of the Army in India. He was not given any financial powers, but he ended up spending a significant amount of money establishing his headquarters in a hotel in Colombo, and in building a new road from Colombo into the interior of the island to allow troops to move about more easily. He ordered an armoured train to be provided, which patrolled the coast from Colombo to the South, and he had to arrange for local troops to receive arms and clothing. Fortunately, INSKIP and the Governor got on well, and the co-operation between the three armed services on the island was very good.

Ceylon Army Command was formed with effect from 7 March 1942, based at Colombo, with Lieutenant General Sir Henry POWNALL, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*, as the first General Officer Commanding-in-Chief. Anti-Aircraft defences were built up rapidly, with the 1st Royal Marine Anti-Aircraft Brigade being responsible for the defence of Trincomalee, and the 23rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade responsible for Colombo and its environs, including the R.A.F. base at Ratmalana.

Commencing on 31 March 1942, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a major operation against the British Eastern Fleet, based at Trincomalee. Singapore had fallen on 15 February 1942, and two Royal Navy warships, H.M.S. Prince of Wales and H.M.S. Repulse had been sunk off the eastern coast of Malaya by Japanese aircraft, making Ceylon and Southern India vulnerable to Japanese aggression. The Japanese occupied the Andaman Islands on 23 March 1942, adding to the concerns about an invasion of Ceylon. Fortunately for the British, the Imperial Japanese Army was unable to commit any troops to an invasion of Ceylon, so it fell to the Navy to carry out an offensive against the British in the Indian Ocean. Admiral Isoroku YAMAMOTO commanded what was known as Operation 'C', which commenced on 26 March 1942. The intention was to attack the British Eastern Fleet in port at Colombo on 5 April, and the Japanese were confident of being able to do so.

The Japanese naval force comprised five aircraft carriers and four battleships, vastly out-numbering the small Royal Navy presence in the area. Vice-Admiral Sir James SOMERVILLE commanded three aircraft carriers, the modern H.M.S. Formidable and H.M.S. Indomitable, and the older H.M.S. Hermes. H.M.S. Warspite acted as the flagship of the Fleet, which also comprised four Revenge class battleships. SOMERVILLE's intention was to avoid direct contact with the Japanese, and to preserve his fleet in being. Allied intelligence knew of the Japanese force heading towards Ceylon, but had underestimated the strength of it. At about 16.00 hours on 4 April, a Catalina from No. 413 Squadron, R.C.A.F., sighted the Japanese fleet south-east of Ceylon. A second Catalina, R/205 from No. 205 Squadron, R.A.F., was shot down on 5 April while shadowing the Japanese naval forces. Vice Admiral LAYTON ordered the ships in the harbours at Colombo and Trincomalee to put to sea, to avoid being attacked in harbour. This included the cruisers H.M.S. Cornwall and H.M.S. Dorsetshire which sailed from Colombo, and the small aircraft carrier, H.M.S. Hermes, which sailed from Trincomalee with orders to hide north-east of Ceylon.

On 5 April 1942, the Japanese launched an air strike on Colombo. As they passed over the main R.A.F. base at Ratmalana, just south of Colombo, the British fighters were still on the ground. The Japanese attacked the remaining ships in the harbour, sinking the armed merchant cruiser, H.M.S. Hector, the destroyer H.M.S. Tenedos, and a Norwegian tanker. An air battle took place over Colombo, with the British losing twenty of the forty-one aircraft that had taken off, plus six Swordfish from No. 788 Squadron, F.A.A., which were airborne armed with torpedoes. The Japanese lost about seven aircraft.

At about 10.00 hours, a Japanese aircraft found H.M.S. Dorsetshire and H.M.S. Cornwall, and it began shadowing the two Royal Navy cruisers. The Japanese aircraft carriers rearmed their planes with torpedoes, and they started taking off at 11.45 hours. They homed in onto the two Royal Navy cruisers, which were attacked and sunk at about 14.00 hours. Four-hundred and twenty-four officers and men were lost from the two warships. The Dorsetshire was commanded by Captain Augustus AGAR, V.C., D.S.O., a fellow former pupil of Framlingham College, and INSKIP had visited him three days before the cruiser sailed from Trincomalee. Fortunately, Captain AGAR survived the sinking of his warship. The British fleet were searching for the Japanese warships, and some elements were spotted by two Albatrosses, with one being shot down.

The main body of the Japanese fleet was not sighted, as it had turned away from Ceylon to the south-west. The two fleets missed each other for various reasons, but on 6 April, two Japanese heavy cruisers sank five merchant ships. The Eastern Fleet then withdrew to refuel, now being aware of the size of the Japanese force in the Indian Ocean.

On 8 April, the Japanese fleet approached Trincomalee from the east, and they were detected by a Catalina aircraft at 15.17 hours. The harbour was cleared, with H.M.S. Hermes and H.M.A.S. Vampire being sent to the south along the coast. This time, the Japanese strike group of one-hundred and thirty-two aircraft was detected prior to the attack. The defending fighters, seventeen Hurricanes and six Fulmars were airborne to meet the raid.

The Japanese attacked the harbour and the China Bay airbase, causing significant damage. The civilian population were badly alarmed, with many fleeing from the town. A merchant ship was hit and caught fire, and the monitor, H.M.S. Erebus was damaged. Eight Hurricanes and one Fulmar were shot down, for the loss of four Japanese aircraft. A Catalina from No. 413 Squadron, R.C.A.F., was also shot down while shadowing the Japanese fleet. At about 10.25 hours, nine unescorted Bristol Blenheim aircraft from No. 11 Squadron located and attacked the Japanese carrier force. They dropped their bombs from 11,000 feet, and although some bombs fell close to one of the carriers, none were hit. Four Blenheims were shot down during the attack, with one later being shot down by aircraft returning from attacking H.M.S. Hermes.

H.M.S. Hermes and her escort, H.M.A.S. Vampire, were located shortly after the attack on Trincomalee, and they were attacked by about eighty Japanese bombers, near Batticaloa. Both warships were overwhelmed, with H.M.S. Hermes being hit by about forty 500 lb bombs. Three-hundred and seven men from H.M.S. Hermes, and eight from H.M.A.S. Vampire were lost. Other ships nearby were attacked, including the corvette, H.M.S. Hollyhock, a naval auxiliary, a tanker, and a cargo ship. The Japanese fleet withdrew after attacking Trincomalee, but the events had highlighted the British position of weakness in defending Ceylon and southern India. The Eastern Fleet withdrew its base to Kilindini in Kenya, ceding control of the eastern Indian Ocean to the Japanese. British intelligence indicated that the Japanese were planning an invasion of Ceylon, so the defences were improved and strengthened. Three additional R.A.F. Squadrons arrived on Ceylon, including No. 222 Squadron equipped with Bristol Beaufort maritime strike aircraft.

In June 1942, the Imperial Japanese Army developed plans for a major offensive in the Indian Ocean, including an invasion of Ceylon. As the German and Italian forces were advancing in North Africa, thoughts were given to linking up Axis forces in the Middle East. The Imperial Japanese Navy was, even by this early stage of the war, over-committed, with the main threat coming from the U.S. forces in the Pacific region. The Japanese limited themselves to the use of submarines patrolling the Indian Ocean to attack shipping, but after the events of April 1942, no more major Japanese naval units were deployed to the Indian Ocean. The build-up of British Army forces on Ceylon continued, with the 21st (East Africa) Infantry Brigade arriving on the island on 21 March 1942.

The 20th Indian Infantry Division arrived in Ceylon in mid-1942, and in June 1943, with the threat reduced, the 34th Indian Infantry Division was disbanded, and the 20th Indian Infantry Division departed for North-West India and Burma. The other two Brigades of the 11th (East Africa) Infantry Division arrived in June 1943, consolidating the division on Ceylon, where it became the main garrison force.

By mid-1942, INSKIP was fifty-seven years of age and relatively old to hold an operational command, so he was replaced as G.O.C. of the 34th Indian Infantry Division on 23 August 1942 by Major General Francis MOORE. He states: *'By now, I was well beyond the age limit for command in the Field, so on return to India in 1943, I was made Inspector of Recruit Training Centres – all arms'*. Major General INSKIP retired from the Indian Army on 7 October 1942, but he was immediately recalled as the Inspector of Training Centres based at General Headquarters, India. He was admitted to the Indian Reserve of Regular Officers (I.R.R.O.) and was granted the rank of Local Major General. He served in this appointment until 1945, visiting thirty training centres twice each, but then he contracted dysentery and was admitted to hospital. In the following year, he was the Chief of Staff of the Bhopal State Forces, which he was delighted to be offered. He was provided with a guest house, and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. INSKIP states: *'At the end of the war, one of the state Rulers whom I had got to know very well on my rounds asked me if I would reorganise his Army. I jumped at the idea as England was in these days no place for us so I spent the next eighteen months in Bhopal enjoying life with a nice house and garden, and sufficient Europeans in the capital to make life happy. This was the sort of experience many would like, but few obtain.'*

He left this post on the partition of British India on 15 August 1947, which also saw the end of all the individual Princely States. INSKIP and his wife left India for good, and after forty-one years' service, they returned to the U.K. with no house, no furniture and nowhere to go. They decided to settle in Ipswich in Suffolk, and INSKIP took a keen interest in the British Legion and the Old Contemptibles, the association dedicated to those who served in France in the First World War.

Roland INSKIP was twice married and had two sons. His first marriage took place on 13 July 1918 at Naini Tal, Utterakhand in India, to Evelyn RICHARDS (1888 – 1961). One of their sons, Derek Roland INSKIP joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. As a Flying Officer, he was killed in action on 31 January 1944 whilst flying over France. He was twenty-one years of age. The second son survived the war. INSKIP divorced in around 1927, and he remarried to Mabel Louisa SCOBIE (1899 – ?) on 3 June 1929 in Srinagar, West Bengal.

Major General Roland INSKIP was active in his school society during his retirement. In June 1947, he distributed prizes at the annual speech day, and he encouraged his audience to think of their future in terms of an open-air life, in the service of what remained of the British empire. His view was that these countries needed young, male, Britons of the right type, in terms of both mental and physical education. He also stated how the pupils should be jealous of the school's reputation, and he talked about the debt that they owed to the school and for them to be proud to wear the old school tie.

The school magazine described Major General INSKIP as a ‘tall, upright man, with a distinguished military career, with experience and understanding in the handling and guidance of fighting men, and a modest bearing and kindly approach.’ He was active in the Society of Old Framlinghamians from 1949 until 1967, and he became the society’s president in 1954. He was chairman of the College Centenary Appeal Committee, which pleased him as he was able to demonstrate his deep love for the school.

Failing health began to affect Major General INSKIP from 1967 onwards, and he died on 23 November 1971. At the time of his death, he was living at 67, Woodbridge Road East, Ipswich, Suffolk, and he left an estate of £17,266.

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