

Lieutenant General Sir Ernest WOOD, K.B.E., C.B., C.I.E.,M.C.

Lieutenant General Sir Ernest WOOD was an officer in the British Indian Army, who rose to high rank and notoriety based upon his skills and ability as an administrator. He did not hold any operational role from 1936 when he was a Major until his retirement as Lieutenant General in 1948.

Ernest WOOD was born in 1894. He joined the Indian Army and served in The Great War, being awarded the Military Cross in 1917. In 1922, his regiment became part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Rajput Regiment. WOOD attended the Staff College at Quetta in 1929 and 1930, being in the same Senior Division as other future Lieutenant Generals Eric GODDARD and Douglas GRACEY.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1931, Wood was appointed a Staff Captain, and on the 8<sup>th</sup> July in the following year, he was promoted to the rank of Brevet Major. Promotion to the rank of Major came with effect from the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1933, and to Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1935. This period included a posting as a Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General which he relinquished on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1935. In 1936, WOOD was appointed the Deputy Secretary of the Defence Department.

WOOD was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (Provisional) with effect from the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1938, and appointed the Secretary, Supply Department of the Government of India. His provisional promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel was confirmed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1939. WOOD was promoted to the substantive rank of Colonel on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1940 (his seniority dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1938) and appointed Director-General, Department of Supply of the Government of India with the rank of Temporary Brigadier. For his work with the Department of Supply, WOOD was made a Companion of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire (C.I.E.) on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1941.

In January 1942, WOOD was promoted to the rank of Acting Major General and appointed the Administrator-General, Eastern Frontier Communications. In this role, WOOD was responsible for the safe evacuation of civilians from Burma in the face of the invasion by the Japanese forces throughout the country. Many of these civilians had endured many weeks of walking several hundred miles with limited possessions, so reception camps were established in Assam to provide them with medical treatment, food, clothing and shelter. The numbers involved may never be known, but it was hundreds of thousands of people, mainly of British or Indian descent who had settled in Burma before the war. By July 1942, those civilians who were able to escape Burma had made it into India and the operation to receive them was scaled down. On the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1942, WOOD was Mentioned in Dispatches for his services in Burma in the rank of Acting Major General.

WOOD's next appointment in late 1942 was as Secretary of the Food Department of the Government of India. The following year saw him being appointed the Director-General of Munitions Production in India. He was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (C.B.) on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945, and promoted to the substantive rank of Major General on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1945. On the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945, WOOD was appointed to the role as Deputy Master-General of Ordnance at General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) of the Indian Army at Delhi.

Appointment to the role as Quartermaster General at G.H.Q. India came on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1946, with WOOD being promoted to the rank of Acting Lieutenant General. In His Majesty's Birthday Honours List on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1947, WOOD was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (K.B.E.) and became Sir Ernest. On the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the country of British India partitioned to form the independent countries of India and Pakistan, so WOOD became the Quartermaster-General at the Headquarters, Supreme Commander of India and Pakistan. He was heavily involved in the division of the British Indian Army and the allocation of resources to the two new countries. This was not easy, with both countries keen to seize and hold onto scarce resources for their fledgling armies.

The partition resulted in the dissolution of the former British Indian Army, so with his role now redundant, WOOD retired on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1948 at the age of fifty-four years. He was granted the honorary rank of Lieutenant General. Following his retirement, WOOD settled in the United Kingdom. In 1948, he was made the Controller of Operations for the Colonial Development Board, which he held until 1951. In that year, he was appointed the Chief of Staff, Defence Production Board for the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (N.A.T.O.). He held this post for only one year. In 1955, he became the Director of Civil Defence for the Eastern Region, being based at Cambridge.

In his later years, WOOD lived at Foxton House, near Royston in Hertfordshire. He had married Grace GOODLIFFE and they had two daughters. WOOD died on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1971.