

MAJOR-GENERAL ROLAND DEBENHAM INSKIP CB CIE DSO MC (1894-1902)

He was born in 1885, the elder son of Rev OD Inskip who was headmaster of the College (1887-1913).

After leaving the College he went to Sandhurst. He then joined 1st Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment in India on 8 December 1905. He served on the North West Frontier, India in 1908. During WW1 he served in France from September 1914 to December 1915; Mesopotamia from January 1916 to December 1917; Palestine from January 1918 to the end of the war. During WW1 he was mentioned in dispatches 5 times, was Brevet-Major and was awarded DSO and MC. He was wounded in France.



After the war he continued in the Army and had the following postings - North West Frontier, India 1930; Commandant 6 Royal Battalion, 13 Frontier Force Rifles 1932-1934; General Staff Officer Grade 1, Army Headquarters, India 1934-1935; Imperial Defence College 1936. In 1937 he was appointed Brigadier Commander, 1 (Abbottabad) Bde, India during Waziristan campaign of 1937-1939. During this campaign he was mentioned in dispatches twice and awarded the CIE (Companion of Order of Indian Empire).

At the outset of WW2 he was appointed Major General and awarded the CB (Companion of Order of Bath). He was District Commander, Rawal Pindi, India 1941; General Officer Commanding Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1941-1942. He retired in 1942 but was immediately re-employed and appointed Honorary Colonel of his regiment. In 1943 to 1945 he was Inspector of Training Centres throughout India, before finally becoming Chief of Staff Bhopal State Forces until 1947.

He distributed prizes at Speech Day at the College in June 1947. During his speech he urged his young audience to think of their future in terms of an open-air life – a life in the service of whatever part of the British Empire still remained. He went on to say that these countries needed young Britishers of the right type – education both mental and physical must not be neglected: the body must be developed for the hardships that would be required of it. He concluded by saying "Be jealous of your School's reputation which, together with that of our Old Boys Society, stands higher today than ever before. It is not given to all of us to enhance the School's reputation whilst at School, but we may have a chance to do so afterwards. When you succeed don't forget what you owe to your old School and be proud of wearing the old School tie"

Les Gillett in the 2nd 60 years writes "Those who knew this tall, upright man and knew of his distinguished military career, his experience and understanding in the handling and guidance of fighting men, could not but be profoundly impressed by his modest bearing and kindly approach. On his retirement he devoted himself to furthering the well being of ex-servicemen, the College and the SOF (he conducted the Overseas Bag from 1949 to 1967 and was the Society's President in 1954). He was Chairman of the College Centenary Appeal Committee: the office and the duties delighted him for he had long cherished the hope that he might put to practical effect his deep love for his old school."

He died in November 1971.

We are grateful to Ellen Inskip Viera niece, who provided the photo taken in 1964 and referenced in the East Anglian Daily Times on Wednesday, June 17, 1964 - quote: "*Major-Gen. R. D. Inskip, a former old boy and son of a former headmaster, inspected the Framlinghamian College Combined Cadet Force, at Framlingham, yesterday. With him in the picture is Contingent Commander Lieut.-Col. P.L. Podd (left) and the school's headmaster, Mr. W. S. Porter. The parade, an event held almost every year since the college's cadet force was founded in 1906, marked the opening of the celebrations this month for the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the college. In addition to the cadets there were 56 members of the college's pre-service training company on parade.*"

The following extensive write up on him is taken from the Spring 1973 OF Magazine.

O.F. NEWS

MAJOR GENERAL R. D. INSKIP
C.B. C.I.E. D.S.O. M.C.

Early Years

"Tim" Inskip, Framlingham's most distinguished soldier, was born on 17th September 1885 at Spalding Grammar School where his father was Headmaster. He came to Framlingham where his father was now Headmaster, in 1894. When he left in 1903 he had won his 1st XI colours for cricket and football but it had been, as he put it "an entirely uneventful period from the academic point of view." So he went to a crammer in London and passed into Sandhurst in 1904; here too he won his cricket "blue," as it was called, as well as prizes for drill and signalling.

He was commissioned into the Indian Army and arrived in India at Christmas 1905 for attachment to the 1st Battalion the Northamptonshire Regiment. A year later he joined the Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) in Peshawar where an O.F., Brigadier A. Wallace, was serving. Inskip clearly enjoyed Peshawar; he played hockey and football for his Regiment and ran the Station cricket club. However it wasn't all sport; in 1908 he saw his first active service and won his first war medal on the Zakka Khal expedition on the North-West Frontier.

Leave in England followed; and then the Regiment moved from Peshawar to Fort Lockhart and Kohat in 1910. In 1911 he was home on leave again; "playing in near first-class cricket for the Free Foresters and I Zingari. I had the honour of being called a rude name by no less a cricketer than W. G. Grace.

My offence was that I had hit Lenny Braund, who bowled for England, for five sixes in two overs,"

The First World War

By the beginning of 1914 the Regiment was stationed in Jullundur in the Punjab and Inskip was appointed Adjutant.

"On August 4th I became a Captain and on that day World War I broke out. The Division to which I belonged (3rd Lahore Division) was the first Indian Division to go to France. We arrived at Marseilles at the end of September and on October 24th we had our first baptism of fire. Along a mile of front we dug in and for the next 14 months we were in and out of trenches losing officers and men all the time. The first big battle we took part in was at Givenchy on Dec. 19th. At the end of the day only the C.O. and myself among the officers were left standing. One officer won a posthumous V.C.

"The next big battle in which we took part was at Neuve Chapelle on March 18th, 19th, 20th 1915. This was a disaster as far as we were concerned—as it was for the 4th Suffolks (containing a Company from Framlingham Town). I was the only officer in this battle in my Regiment who escaped death or wounds—a terrible experience for a young officer. Then three days later I was myself wounded by long distance shell fire. There followed 3 glorious months in hospital in London and Chequers Court (now used as a home for tired Prime Ministers) for convalescence."

In June he was back in the trenches

in his old job as Adjutant; it was, he said "normal trench warfare" but there was a constant stream of casualties and of course reinforcements had to come from India. In December all Indian Army troops, except the Cavalry, were transferred to Mesopotamia (now Iraq); everyone enjoyed the voyage through the Suez Canal and then up the Persian Gulf to Basra in the Shatt-el-Arab.

"After disembarkation we were ordered to march up to the Front, a mere matter of 250 miles. There was no road so we were told to follow along the banks of the Tigris. Baggage, food, etc., was carried on Arab sailing vessels which owing to the prevailing north wind could not use sail but had to be hauled by the men, all the way. Walking proved faster than the boats. Never shall I forget that march in the rainy season. It took us 6 weeks but my word we were fit at the end of it.

"On arrival at the Front we took part in desultory fighting for the relief of Kut-el-Amara. All this fighting culminated in the Battle of Dujailah on March 9th 1916. After a very long night march we arrived in front of the Turks' position and fighting lasted all day. During this action my wife's brother was killed at my side and my C.O. was badly wounded. At the end of the day I was once again the only officer left alive or unwounded. Next day we retreated 19 miles across the desert. By then it was beginning to get really hot and we all suffered like hell from thirst and hunger. I saw officers, men and mules fighting to get down to drink at a muddy

31

pool. Needless to say I was a pretty miserable chap but I couldn't show what I felt—the morale of the men had to be maintained at all costs. So we dug in and awaited events and sure enough the Turks came on again and this time at night. It was pitch dark and they attacked my Regiment and another all night long but the line held and next morning there was no sign of Turks—only lines of corpses of men who had been caught by our machine gun fire.

“For the next 4½ months there was no fighting—we were kept busy reorganizing and fighting cholera, scurvy and enteric. The heat was appalling; 129 deg. in the shade in tents and the flies were a menace—one couldn't eat jam, for if one did one's lips would soon be black with flies. However, we survived somehow while administration slowly but surely improved.”

Inslip was now appointed Staff Captain of the Brigade; like any good soldier he was reluctant to leave his Regiment but at least they were in the same formation and indeed as an administrative staff officer he felt he was serving them.

“Operations didn't really get going again until December 1916 and when they did it was as strenuous as ever. Kut, of course, had fallen but the Turks remained there and it was only after two months' hard fighting on both sides of the Tigris that the British had the Turks on the run. And so on the move again following up the enemy marching and fighting right up to Baghdad, another 200 miles.

“Immediately on our arrival in Baghdad my Brigade was ordered off to the foothills forming the Frontier of Persia in order to meet a portion of the Russian Army who wished to join up with us. After a stiff action in the foothills we

eventually met a Russian Cavalry Regiment. For two days fraternisation was the order of the day but on the third day we woke to find the Russians had gone—the 1917 Revolution had broken out. Since Turkish forces were said to be threatening us on both flanks we were off next night back to Baghdad—another 90 mile march. Arrived back in Baghdad we were ordered to proceed to Summara the head of the so-called Baghdad Railway—another 80 miles. By the time we reached our destination the hot weather was upon us so after driving the Turks away northwards we again settled down for the hot weather. It was calculated that from February to May 1917 the Division (3 Bdes) in which I was serving marched and fought over a distance of 520 miles. (Nowadays infantry are carried in lorries!). This hot weather was not nearly so bad and fishing and bathing in the Tigris was available.”

In the autumn operations began again with the aim of driving the Turks out of Iraq. They met little opposition and at the end of the year the Division was ordered to Palestine by sea, back through the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.

“The voyage was much enjoyed by everyone especially the food and comfort provided on the ships. We disembarked at Ismailia half way down the Canal and were promised a few days leave to Cairo. But not I. Hardly had I got off the boat when I was ordered to proceed to Jerusalem and join as Brigade Major a Brigade of a Territorial Division—all Londoners. I found the Division encamped in the foothills overlooking the Jordan valley. The Divisional Commander sent for me and said, ‘Your Brigade is to

force the crossing of the Jordan to enable mounted troops to proceed to Amman. You will carry out the reconnaissance of the river at night. Turks and Germans are on the far bank and you must be careful not to be seen. It's five miles down to the river, you can have a Ford car for part of the way and you'd better take two men with you.’ So for the next few nights I was creeping along the bank of the river selecting suitable places for a crossing, noting the depth and current of the river. Enemy sentries were posted all along the far bank at about 100 yards apart. Fortunately I could see them as they were all standing up and smoking. I didn't like getting into the river to test the depth, etc., but it had to be done. As it began to get light I would be back on a high mound watching to see where the main force at the crossing was and so back to sleep. The first night I went down we were going very slowly with no lights and suddenly the car seemed to stand up on end. My nose contacted the windscreen and the rifle of a man sitting behind me hit me on the back of the head. I said to the driver, ‘What the hell are you doing, driver?’ He replied, ‘Beg pardon, Sir, there used to be a bridge here once but there ain't one now!’ We had only gone 2½ miles so that meant having to walk the rest of the way.

“Eventually I chose two suitable places for the battle for the Jordan. It was a bloody affair at one place but successful at another and the mounted troops went through. I was there a month and then was ordered to rejoin my own Brigade. I was hoping I might get off on leave to Cairo but no, my Brigade was already up in the line on the coastal sector. During the next few months

nothing much happened in our Sector though elsewhere there was great activity in view of the final effort to knock the Turks out of the war. However, I was again detailed to go off to another Brigade in the same capacity and assist them in an action to take a prominent feature which would help in the big battle that was to come."

Few men could have taken the sort of strain that this ceaseless campaigning entailed without some effects, and Inskip was not superhuman. Just as the campaign against the Turks was coming to an end acute insomnia set in and he found himself in hospital. He returned to India and the Regimental Depot and there kidney trouble started. Long periods in hospital followed and finally the doctors, the war now over, sent him home, a very sick man.

The Post War Years

It took him over a year to recover from as hard a war as most men had experienced. He had been specially promoted to Major, had won the D.S.O. and the M.C. and three Mentions in Despatches, a magnificent record.

"After a long period in England I was given a nomination to the Staff College Camberley for a 2-year Course. Thus I spent 1921 and 1922 enjoying myself among several students of my own length of service. It was hard work but the facilities for games were all that I could wish for. I was a member of the 1st teams at Cricket and Hockey and won the Tennis doubles."

His "p.s.c." in his pocket, Inskip returned to India and rejoined his Regiment which had been honoured for its gallantry in the War with the title "Royal"; it was now the 6th Royal Battalion 13th

Frontier Force Rifles.

"I found the Regiment on the Frontier packing up to go to Iraq for a 2-year tour of duty in Baghdad. We arrived there at the end of January proceeding by sea to Basra and thence by train to Baghdad. How different the country seemed to what I knew it to be during the War. Now one could move about at will and enjoy excellent shooting, polo, fishing apart from the usual games with the men, i.e. football and hockey. I enjoyed every minute of 1923 and of all countries I have been to that is the one I should most like to revisit."

At the end of 1923 Inskip took over as Brigade Major in Rawalpindi, the largest military station in India; it was then a four year appointment and he says that it was the happiest and most interesting period of his service. With his war experience behind him he knew all about the job.

"The only difference being that one was in war and the other peace-time training. In 1926 I had the honour of being appointed Captain of two teams representing Northern India against A. E. R. Gilligan's M.C.C. cricket touring team—a very hot side. One of my teams was all British; the other British and Indian. For my work—and possibly play—there I appeared in the Honours List as being especially promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel.

"At the end of my 4 years I took long leave and then rejoined my Regiment as 2nd in command on the Frontier. Conditions then all along the Frontier were very difficult on account of both internal and external risings. It was virtually active service and indeed on that account I received a bar to the medal I had received in 1908. At the end

of 1932 I was given command of my Regiment thereby attaining the height of my ambition.

"It was a sad day for me when early in 1934 and still on the Frontier I was ordered to G.H.Q. to take up the appointment of General Staff Officer Grade 1 with the rank of full Colonel in the Military Training Directorate under that famous soldier Lord Gort (later to become Field Marshal in W.W.2). Gort and I were at Sandhurst together and he was one of the teachers at the Staff College when I was there. The work now was interesting but after leading such an active life I found being 'chair-borne' irksome. However I learnt a lot from my boss, he was a grand man to work for and for the rest of my service I was to enjoy his friendship. Even during W.W.2 when he was besieged in Malta he found time to write to me long letters in his own handwriting. He never forgot a friend and his early death as well as that of his only son was a source of great sorrow to me.

"At the end of 1935 I was informed that I had been nominated for a one year course of Instruction at the Imperial Defence College in London. I at once applied for leave as I wanted to see something of the Far East before going on a course of this nature. So my wife and I joined a ship at Calcutta for a 2-month trip. Out and back we visited Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Amoy, Shanghai and Kyoto (Japan). At the important places friends met us and showed us all the social and strategic aspects which I wanted to know about. We had 10 days in Japan and went up to the ancient capital, Kyoto, and did day trips from there. On the way back we added to the interest and knowledge

33

gained on the way out. This was indeed two months very well spent.

“On arrival in London we first had to find accommodation. We were lucky in being able to rent a small flat within a short underground railway distance from the College. The year’s course was very interesting and one met a grand lot of men from the Army, Navy and Air Force and a few civilians. My difficulty was to gain enough exercise—walking home at night didn’t seem enough.

“The years soon ended and before returning to India I was informed that I had been appointed to the command of the Abbottabad Bde. with the rank of Brigadier. I arrived at Abbottabad (N.W. Frontier Province) at the end of January and found that my new Brigade was about to proceed to Waziristan on Active Service (So off we go again says I). Thus during the whole of 1937 I was on active service. Fighting tribesmen is different to any other form of warfare and entails a great deal of specialized training. My Brigade consisted of three Gurkha battalions, of whom one can say there are no finer soldiers in the world especially in Frontier Warfare, and the South Wales Borderers. The S.W.B. were a grand lot and soon got the hang of things.

“As I said, frontier warfare is different from any other form of warfare. One rarely sees the enemy for they are almost invisible in their own type of clothing. They appear in gangs, attack picquets, snipe camps all night long then disappear to obtain food from their villages only to reappear somewhere else. So from our point of view it was a matter of trekking all over the country—sometimes in valleys,

sometimes up hill ranges up to 8000-ft.; sometimes bitterly cold, sometimes hot. A barren and dry land with no roads and that means pack animals, mules and camels. It’s an unrewarding job because though you may have a bit of a scrap here and a bit of a scrap there it’s rare that the tribesmen will put up a real fight. Meanwhile one loses a few officers and men here and there. At night one sleeps in holes in the ground to avoid sniping, that’s how one gets so many casualties among the animals. In this way the whole of 1937 passed but at the end of the year a sort of truce had been arranged and we were able to return to Abbottabad in time for Christmas.”

A year’s active service on the Frontier in those days entitled one to three month’s leave, so Inskip and his wife decided to visit South Africa. He wrote to some O.F.s in that country to warn them of their coming and left Bombay at the beginning of March 1938 on a small passenger ship “and what an interesting trip it proved to be thanks to those O.F.s.”

“We called at The Seychelles, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam, Beira, Zanzibar, Lorenzo Marques and Durban where we left the ship. One of the Hall brothers was on the quay to meet us with hotel, etc., all arranged. This was Dickon Hall and what a wonderful time he arranged for us there. From Durban we went up country by train to Johannesburg spending a day at Pietermasitzburg where we met one of the Adnams brothers. At Johannesburg we found Paul Adnams awaiting us and thanks to him we saw everything including the whole process of gold mining. Thence to Pretoria to be met by two O.F.s. in Aylward and Plant. Then we stayed with

the Hall family at Metaffin and spent three days in the Kruger National Park in the care of Mrs. Hall who later wrote a book entitled ‘No Time to Die.’ This visit was the highlight of the whole trip. And so to Lorenzo Marques when we were entertained right royally by Hugh LeMay who not only arranged a small O.F. dinner but took us all to the local Casino and even gave each member of the party the wherewithall to start gambling. The trip brought home to me more than anything else the true meaning of the S.O.F. and what it stands for overseas.”

Inskip returned to Abbottabad to find that trouble had again broken out in Waziristan and that his Brigade was to leave in three days time and travel partly by train and partly on foot. It was frontier warfare as before except that this time they had to spend the second half of the hot weather in camps in the foothills which was most unpleasant.

“The following March we were sent on a long trek up into the mountains. Soon after arriving at our highest point where we were due to stay two days, and just after we had pitched camp, it started to snow and we were there bogged down in really *terrible conditions*—too bad even for the enemy to snipe at us—for three weeks. We had to be fed from the air. During this period my kidney trouble started up and I was having a pretty bad time but fortunately for me we were able to return to Abbottabad by the end of April. This period July 1938-April 1939 was the worst ever climatically in my experience.”

For his services Inskip received the C.I.E., two Mentions in Despatches and a new medal with two bars.

“In May 1939 I was promoted Major

General and therefore had to leave my Brigade—and what a wonderful send-off I was given; almost as generous as that when I left my Regiment. In the Indian Army of those days there were 9 Major Generals but only seven jobs of such rank so the junior ones had to go on half pay and wait their turn.”

The Second World War

Inskip therefore decided to go home and have something done about his kidney trouble. He and his wife were lucky enough to be able to take the same flat that they had rented during his year at the I.D.C. He had to wait a year for an appointment, and living in London on half-pay was grim to say the least, especially in wartime. Finally in May 1940 he was appointed senior Staff Officer at Headquarters Northern Command in Rawalpindi; he was getting very near the age limit and the war seemed a long way off. However, in March 1941 he was appointed G.O.C. Rawalpindi District, a job he enjoyed as it involved training troops over a vast area. He was not to have it for long.

“In February 1942 I was detailed to go to Ceylon as General Officer Commander in Chief. My only directive was to make Ceylon air minded. I was given a skeleton staff and told to complete it as best I could from the Volunteer forces—in particular the Ceylon Planters Association who had provided so many temporary officers in W.W.I. So off I went with 6 other officers on this most extraordinary assignment. On arrival I realised what a tremendous job I had undertaken. From the first I did not know whether I was under the War Office or India and I was given no financial powers whatsoever. This

was just as well as I spent a great deal of money in setting up my H.Q. in a Hotel, providing an additional road exit from Colombo to the interior, improving internal roads so that troops could move about the island, providing an armoured train for the railway which ran along the seashore from Colombo to the South, equipping the local Ceylonese with arms and clothing. The only Regular Troops stationed in the Island were a Battery of obsolete 9.2 guns guarding Trincomalee Harbour. From India I received two all Indian Army Brigades for whom camping sites etc., had to be provided. In addition I had one Squadron R.A.F. and on Navy matters I conferred with an Admiral R.N. R.N. ships were disposed on the East and West of the island. I doubt if any officer of H.M. Forces has ever had to undertake such an assignment as this. The most amazing thing was that it worked, thanks to the whole-hearted co-operation I received from the Governor downwards whenever I wanted assistance. On no occasion was the large amount of money I had expended queried. Nothing much happened until news was received that an air attack by Japanese air forces might be expected. Three days before the attack came I went on board H.M.S. Dorsetshire commanded by Capt. A. Agar R.N., V.C. D.S.O. (O.F.) then lying in Trincomalee Harbour. In due course the attack came. Every ship of the R.N. (Aircraft Carrier, Destroyer and two Cruisers) was sunk and Colombo itself was bombed producing such panic among the inhabitants as I have never seen.”

Fortunately Inskip's planning had included the provision of an additional road from the city. Singapore fell at

this time; more troops came down from India and a British brigade arrived from North Africa. The force was now too big for a mere Major General to command and he handed over to a full General who had escaped from Singapore. Ceylon now came under the Commander-in-Chief India.

“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. This job meant touring the whole of India from North to South and East to West travelling continuously all over the vast Indian Peninsula.”

In twelve months he visited 30 training centres twice and as he says “put them properly on their feet.” Unfortunately he contracted dysentery and found himself in hospital once more.

“While convalescing I was invited to do the same job for Indian States Forces. India in those days contained a lot of States under their own Rulers and most of them had their own Private Armies; several units of which served with the Regular Army in war. I jumped at this job because I had never visited any of the States and wanted to see some of them. In a State guest houses are provided for all visitors and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience.”

For his many and varied services during the war Inskip was made C.B.

“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 18 months in Bhopal enjoying life with a nice house and garden and sufficient Europeans in the capital to make life

35

happy. This was the sort of experience many would like but few obtain.”

Retirement

In 1947 came partition and the end of State Forces under the new regime. Inskip and his wife left India for ever and after 41 years of service came home with no house or furniture and nowhere to go. By the end of 1948 they had settled

in Ipswich. He soon took over the Overseas Bag from A.P. (Alfred Pretty), and took a keen interest in the British Legion and the Old Contemptibles. He was a most successful Chairman of the Centenary Appeal Committee. In 1954 he was elected President of the Society, an appointment which probably pleased him as much as any of his well-earned military awards, for throughout his life

he had always maintained a keen interest in Framlingham and all that it stood for. Up to 1967, when failing health caused him to relinquish the work of the Overseas Bag, he had devoted himself almost entirely to work connected with his old School and the Old Boys' Society. In November 1971 saw the passing of one of Framlingham's most famous sons.