



### **Brigadier Douglas Alexander Pringle OBE**

The eldest son of Maj Alexander Pringle, formerly of the Indian Army and the Egyptian Police, Douglas was born in 1912. He was educated at Dean Close School, where he excelled at Cross-country running. He entered RMA Woolwich in 1930, and was commissioned to R Signals in 1032, having gained his colours for Athletics, Swimming, and Modern Pentathlon. After training in Catterick, he was posted to 4 Div Sig Regt, serving initially in Colchester, and subsequently in Canterbury. An exceptionally fit young officer, he ran successfully for the Three Services Milocarian Athletic Club, competing in the British Games at White City in 1936. That year he was selected as a member of the British Olympic Team for Modern Pentathlon at Hitler's Berlin Olympic Games. His early life revolved round the horse drawn Cable Wagon, horses in general, hunting, and athletics.

In 1936, Douglas was posted to India, where he joined 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Sig Bde Sig Tp in Sialkot, completing the demanding Indian Cavalry School course at Saugor, qualifying in the top grade. He became proficient in polo, pig sticking, and show jumping. At the outbreak of WW2, he was Adjt, 5 Indian Div Sig Regt, and went with them to the Middle East, seeing service in Eritrea and North Africa. He returned to India in 1941, (by which time he was a Temp Maj and 2ic of the Regt), to study at Staff College, Quetta. The journey was in an RAAF Sunderland flying boat, taking off from the Nile at Cairo, and refuelling in the Dead Sea, Lake Habbaniya (West of Baghdad), and Basrah, en route to Karachi.

Returning to 5 Indian Div in a similar manner, he was summoned by Maj Gen Penney, SO-in-C Middle East, to be informed that he was to be Lt Col, at the age of 29, jumping the rank of Maj entirely. He was to be the first R Signals instructor at the ME Staff College in Haifa, spending just over a year there. He spent a short period as GSO1 Ops at HQ Palestine and Trans Jordan in 1943, where his focus was primarily on the defensive requirements against a possible German invasion from the north via the Caucasus. One of the tasks was the layout of a defensive line along the Carmel Range, from Haifa to Jenin, and back to Jericho. This was to be the second line of defence, the first being in the mountains of Syria and the Lebanon.

At the end of 1943, he was recalled to India for parachute training, and to raise the new 44<sup>th</sup> Indian Div Sig Regt. The war ended shortly before the Div was due to drop, either on Bangkok or on the Causeway at Singapore. He commanded the Regt until 1946, when he returned to the Airborne Training Establishment in Salisbury and Aldershot. By the end of 1946, he was back in Palestine, this time commanding 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Div Sig Regt, where he was twice Mentioned in Despatches for gallantry. He returned from Palestine with his Regt in 1948 to Perham Down Camp, Tidworth, for the subsequent disbandment of 6<sup>th</sup> AB Div. This led to the reduction of the AB Sig Regt to form an Independent Para Bde Sig Sqn, later numbered 16 Indep Para Bde Sig Sqn, the '1' and the '6' coming from the two famous (wartime) Divs. He remained a keen supporter of Airborne Signals, regularly attending the Annual Dinner. He regarded the AB Signals as the elite of the Corps, with a spirit and a style that made them worthy successors to the horsed Cavalry Bde Sig Units of early years.

From 1949 to 1953, he was Comd Victory College, RMA Sandhurst, as a brevet Lt Col. He went on to become AQMG, GHQ East Africa Comd, 1953-1956, in Nairobi, where he was awarded the OBE for service during the Mau Mau Uprising. After a year in UK Land Forces, working on the formative stage of Civil Defence planning in the nuclear age, he was promoted Colonel, and became GSO1 Signals 5, at the War Office. In this appointment, his work was of considerable importance in planning the structure of the Corps in the newly emerging all Regular Army. He was promoted Brig in 1958, and became GSO GHQ Middle East in Cyprus, from 1958 to 1961, during the EOKA campaign. After further brief service in 1962 as CSO Northern Comd in York, his final appointment was Comd British Bde and Garrison, Hong Kong. He retired in 1965, his all-round experience having been of great assistance to his Corps.

From 1966 to 1974 he was Bursar of the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover. In addition to the traditional responsibilities of Bursar, he took enormous interest in the boys' military affairs, advising and assisting those who wished to join the Army. He also stage-managed the schools' annual Trooping the Colour Parade in a manner that would have done credit to Horse Guards. He was an enthusiastic military historian and member of military societies till the end of his life.

Douglas, together with his brother, Maj RC (Colin) Pringle, a R Signals officer who served with the Chindits in Burma and 6 AB Div Sig Regt in Palestine, was the third generation of Army officers in his family.

Douglas Pringle was a man of strong personality, strong views, and sincere convictions. Modest, private, and self-deprecating, he had no time for self-seekers or for those that did not pull their full weight. He always fought, without fear, for what he believed to be the rights of those who worked for him, even when it was plainly contrary to his own interests. He never feared to speak up. He had no time for eyewash, and with impeccable personal standards of turnout, he always insisted that, "no technician was any better for wearing long hair or a grubby hat".

Douglas died on 18 Apr 2005, aged 93. In 1940, he married Wendy Gordon, daughter of Col RE Gordon MC, RE. It was an exceptionally happy marriage. Wendy predeceased him by six months, and his younger son by two years. He is survived by his daughter, and his elder son, who followed him into the Army, and was commissioned into the Royal Green Jackets in 1966.

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