

MAJOR-GENERAL B. D. JONES

Major-General Basil Douglas Jones, CB, CBE, Inspector of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, 1958-60, died on October 15 aged 89. He was born in Devonshire on May 14, 1903.

BY COINCIDENCE "B. D.", as he was known, because he loathed the name Basil, was one of three senior Royal Army Ordnance Corps officers who transferred from combat arms during the mechanisation of the Army in the 1930s and whose obituaries have appeared in these columns within a month. They applied to transfer for different reasons, but all three became major-generals and important ordnance policy-makers before they retired in the 1960s.

"B. D." was a Welshman, the son of the Rev B. Jones. Educated at Plymouth College and Sandhurst, he was commissioned into the Welch Regiment in 1924. He served with them in Shanghai and Singapore, and in 1932 married Katherine, daughter of Colonel H. W. Man of the RAOC, who persuaded him that there were better prospects in the expanding RAOC than in the Infantry. "B. D." transferred in 1935, and was immediately sent to join the Saar Plebiscite Force.

Small in stature and slightly built, he had, nevertheless, a commanding presence and strength of personality. He often looked stern, and he could be so when occasion demanded, but as a devout Christian he was kind, good humoured and guileless, never disparaging anyone.

In 1939 he was commanding the RAOC detachment in Bermuda. He was posted home at the outbreak of war for more active employment, and to his surprise was relieved by his father-in-law, who had been recalled from retirement. He was even more surprised to be sent to Australia

in 1941 to help with the expansion of the RAAOC. He was closely involved in the planning of the Papua/New Guinea campaign, and became one of the ordnance officers at Port Moresby, supplying the Australian troops as they forced the Japanese back along the Kokoda trail through the Owen Stanley range.

Perhaps his most challenging task after the war was command of the vast, sprawling Base Ordnance Depot at Tel-el-Kebir in the desert 60 miles from Cairo. Within its wired and mined 17-mile perimeter were massive quantities of stores and equipment left over from the war, making it an attractive target for marauding Egyptian gangs, who persistently tried to break in. Political relations between Britain and Egypt were so strained at the time that his officers and men, together with their families, were forced to live under primitive conditions within a defended compound.

Subsequently he held a series of challenging ordnance appointments: Senior Ordnance Officer in GHQ Middle East; of Northern Command; of the Vehicle Organisation at Chillwell; and of the Base Depot at Didcot. His last appointment in the Army was Inspector of the RAOC as a major-general.

When he retired from the Army in 1960 he tried his hand at management consultancy, but decided to turn back to his favourite schooldays subjects: classics and divinity. For many years he taught both at Millbrook House Preparatory School where he became known as "Dominie". He also became a pillar of village life at Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, where he had lived for his last 34 years.

His dynamic wife, Katherine, died in 1986. Their son and two daughters survive him.

Major-General B. D. Jones.

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