

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL C.W.M. NORRIE, D.S.O., M.C.

Lieutenant-General Chas. Willoughby M. Norrie, who now commands a corps in Libya; has been further behind German and Italian positions than any other senior British officer. Grey-haired and of ruddy complexion he wears his hat at the authentic Beattie angle, talks slowly, and grabs at a vivid phrase that usually is completely non-military but drives home his line of argument.

When Rommel was counter-attacking in the first phases of the second Libyan battle, General Norrie had the bulk of the British armour under his command. To be up with them meant that his Armoured Command vehicle was rarely still.

He believed so much in personal reconnaissance that it was the normal procedure for him to leave his Armoured Command vehicle, grab a 15 cwt. truck and go off into the desert unescorted by tank, Bren carrier or even an armoured car. He narrowly missed capture on several occasions.

On one of these occasions he set off in his truck followed half a mile behind by three war correspondents. They were captured but General Norrie was not.

He is proud of the hundreds of South African armoured cars which are in his Corps. He calls them his "Mosquitoes," and claims that their harrying tactics drove Rommel almost to the point of desperation. There is every reason to believe that this is so, for some of the raids which Willoughby Norrie's "Mosquitoes" have carried out on enemy lines of communication and supply dumps have been daring in the extreme.

On one occasion a squadron of armoured cars destroyed one of Rommel's main petrol, oil and food supply depots, burnt 40 trucks of various sorts and liquidated 6 aeroplanes which had been grounded.

General Norrie's comment on this exploit was:- "These Mosquitoes can sting."

Son of a soldier General Norrie was educated at Eton and Sandhurst, receiving his commission in the 11th Hussars in 1913.

Throughout the Great War he served on the Western Front as a Staff Captain with the 73rd Infantry Brigade afterwards becoming G.S.O. 3 with the 18th Army Corps. Later he was Brigade Major with the 90th Infantry Brigade, Brigade Major with the 2nd Tank Corps, and finally G.S.O. at Tank Corps Headquarters. Thus General Norrie has had as long an experience of mechanised warfare as any serving officer today. He was wounded four times during the Great War, in which he won the D.S.O., the M.C. and bar. General Norrie commanded the 10th Royal Hussars from 1931 to 1935 when he was appointed to the command of the 1st Cavalry Brigade. From 1938 to 1940 he commanded an Armoured Brigade and, after some months as Inspector, R.A.C. he was for 15 months in command of an armoured division. He afterwards served as a Major General at G.H.Q., Middle East until, in 1941, he was promoted Lieutenant-General and given a Corps Command in the Middle East.

General Norrie has been a great lover of horses all his life. Twenty years ago he was equally well known in the hunting field, in the show-ring and as a rider at point-to-point in steeple chases and hurdle races. He is, however, typical of the modern cavalry officer in that from the very first, he appreciated the importance of thorough mechanisation in war and threw himself whole-heartedly into the novel problems of tank training and tactics.