

Sir John Maxwell

Sir John Maxwell (1859-1929) served with the British Army in Egypt during World War One before taking responsibility for restoring civil order in Ireland during the Easter Rising of 1916.

Maxwell received a commission into the British Army in 1879, graduating from Sandhurst. He served thereafter in Egypt before acting as Pretoria's military governor.

Maxwell was promoted to Major-General in 1906 before returning to Egypt in command of British forces stationed there between 1908-12. By the time the First World War broke out in August 1914 Maxwell had reached the rank of Lieutenant-General.

With war underway Maxwell travelled to France at the head of the British military mission despatched to France's GHQ by the British government. He remained on the Western Front until after the successful First Battle of the Marne in September 1914.

Thereafter returned by the Army to Egypt, where he again commanded British forces stationed there, Maxwell acted to repulse a Senussi attack in January 1916.

Frustrated at his role in Egypt - he regarded his position as little better than Quartermaster General to the Army, with his role seemingly one of providing endless training and supplies to troops destined for Gallipoli, Salonika and Palestine - he requested that he be recalled home to Britain, a transfer that took place in March 1916.

The timing of Maxwell's return was fateful. Within a month he was posted to Ireland and given military command in Dublin. In this capacity and with wide powers at his disposal he put down the nationalist Easter Rebellion of 1916.

Excoriated by Irish nationalists today for his role in executing leaders of the rebellion and for his imposition of martial law (a combination of acts that worked to turn general Irish public apathy into one of outrage), Maxwell - who was fully supported by Asquith's government in London - was nevertheless promoted in June 1919 to full General.

Having retired in 1922 Maxwell died in 1929.