



# El Alamein: The Battle that Turned the Tide of the Second World War (General Military)

*Bryn Hammond*

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The battle of El Alamein in 1942 was one of the most crucial events in the entire Second World War. Before it, the British had never won a major battle on land against the Germans; nor indeed had anyone else, even the Russians. At Alamein the British Eighth Army first thwarted the Axis attempts in North Africa to seize Cairo and the Suez Canal and then smashed through the German-Italian defences, eventually driving the Axis forces out of North Africa. This victory, by a 'British' army actually composed of a variety of nationalities including men and women from the Indian sub-continent, southern Africa, Australians, New Zealanders, French and Greeks, as well as British troops, had psychological and morale-raising significance that exceeded even its strategic importance. Nothing had the sweet smell of success prior to this battle than El Alamein and for the battered British Empire battling against the might of the Third Reich this victory was crucial to its ability to continue its war efforts.

El Alamein's significance went beyond the events of the war. The opposing army commanders were perhaps the first 'celebrity' generals, attracting the attention of press and newsreel reporters alike. This led to a host of myths and tales of idiosyncratic behaviour that were shamelessly exploited by the individuals themselves and, especially in Britain, eagerly devoured by a public enamoured of the romance of warfare in this remarkable and hostile environment where men were at war with each other as well as with the elements. Drawing on a remarkable array of first-hand accounts, this book reveals the personal experiences of those on the frontline, giving the individual's point of view of the battle, from all sides, and provide a fascinating account of the minutiae detail of how war was actually fought alongside the analysis of the strategic decisions made by the generals.

El Alamein 1942 is the story of exactly how a seemingly beaten and demoralized army turned near-defeat into victory in a little over four months of protracted and bloody fighting in the harsh North African desert and of the repercussions of the battle for the participants, for historians and in popular culture.

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