

Colour printed lithographed map.

BRITISH MAP CHARTING THE PROGRESS OF THE HEJAZ RAILWAY

Sketch Map of Arabia.

Author
[WAR OFFICE]

Publication date
1906.

Publisher
[Intelligence Division, War Office] Geographical Section,

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Colour printed lithographed map.

Dimensions
490 by 475mm (19.25 by 18.75 inches).

Notes
Produced by the War Office, Intelligence Division in 1906, the present map depicts the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the twentieth century, with an inset map of ‘Koweit and Surrounding Country’. During this period, the Ottoman Empire maintained control over most of the peninsula, which was a mosaic of tribal rulers subject to Ottoman suzerainty. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Al Saud strove to regain the control that they had briefly held at the beginning of the

century. By 1891, however, they had been defeated by their Al Rashid rivals, who cooperated closely with the Ottomans, and were driven into exile in Kuwait.

Of the tributary Arab states, the Sharif of Mecca was the most important who ruled the western Hejaz region where the important cities of Mecca and Medina are located. In 1900, the Ottomans had initiated the project of building a railway line between Damascus and Medina, passing through the Hejaz. From the beginning, however, the railway line was subject to attacks from local Arab tribes, and although no one of these was ever particularly successful, they caused considerable difficulties for Turks posted to the project. Nonetheless, by the time the present map was produced, a significant length of tracks had been laid through Hejaz, indicated by the solid black line, and the rest of the track planned down to Medina. The following year, the line reached Al-'Ula and amid the celebration of this achievement, a group of Harb tribesmen began a small rebellion with the hope of halting the project. Their attempt ultimately failed, and by 1908 the line between Damascus and Medina had been completed.

At the outset of the twentieth century, the British presence in the Arabian Peninsula was concerned primarily with maintaining access to British India, protecting the Suez Canal, supporting the declining Ottoman power against the threat posed by Russia, guaranteeing an oil supply from the Middle East, administering protectorates in present-day Yemen, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and enforcing its naval role in the Mediterranean. At this time, railways were widely considered an indispensable tool in administering, gaining and buttressing power, not only in this region but across the world.

This is probably why the present map, which was made some time earlier, was revised and updated in 1906 with the changes recently made to the Hejaz Railway: "Corrections, July 1905; Railways revised Sept, 1906". It also shows other transport routes, as well as regional boundaries, numerous significant cities and settlements, and relief, indicated by hachures. Furthermore, in the lower left-hand corner there is an inset map showing Kuwait and parts of the surrounding areas. Kuwait had become a British protectorate in 1899 and remained so until 1961. Along the lower edge of the map, beneath the list of agents licensed to sell it, is a manuscript signature in black ink, which is likely by the same hand as the annotations found on the map across parts of Hejaz.

Bibliography

Provenance
Provenance:
Annotations, adding place-names, in black ink.

Price: £6000

Inventory reference: 17633

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