





NOTES:

1. A Parachute Battalion was a smaller unit than a standard infantry battalion of this period. An infantry battalion had an establishment of thirty-six officers and eight-hundred and nine other ranks, whilst a parachute battalion had only twenty-nine officers and five-hundred and eighty-four other ranks. The battalion was generally well equipped with additional Sten Carbines and an additional Bren gun per platoon. The battalion lacked heavy weapons, but it was not intended to seize and hold a defensive position for any length of time.
2. The officers and men who formed the battalion headquarters included:
 - a. Commanding Officer – Lieutenant Colonel;
 - b. Second-in-command – Major;
 - c. Adjutant – Captain;
 - d. Medical Officer – Captain;
 - e. Padre – Captain (Chaplain to the Forces 4th Class);
 - f. Regimental Serjeant Major;
 - g. Army Physical Training Corps Serjeant;
 - h. Army Physical Training Corps Serjeant;
 - i. Provost Serjeant;
 - j. Provost Corporal;
 - k. Orderly Room Serjeant;
 - l. Orderly Room Corporal.
3. The Headquarter Company was commanded by a Major. There was also a Company Serjeant Major and Company Quarter-Master Serjeant on the establishment.
4. The Intelligence Officer for the battalion, a Lieutenant, commanded the Intelligence Section. The section was equipped with eight sniper rifles and provided the sniper capability for the battalion.
5. A Lieutenant commanded the Signals Platoon. All the personnel were from the Parachute Regiment as opposed to Royal Corps of Signals personnel.
6. The Administration Platoon comprised the Quarter-Master (a Major Q.M., Captain Q.M. or Lieutenant Q.M.), the Administration Captain, the Regimental Quarter-Master Serjeant, Cook Serjeant, Armament Serjeant and Post Corporal.

7. The Anti-Tank Platoon was commanded by a Lieutenant, with a Platoon Serjeant. As anti-tank guns could not be dropped by parachute, the platoon was equipped with ten PIAT mortars and two Bren guns. The Bren guns were provided to give some limited anti-aircraft cover. In some units, it is believed this platoon acted as battalion headquarters defence platoon, and also as a reserve platoon. Some battalions later refer to an Assault Platoon instead of an Anti-Tank Platoon, which is presumed to be the same men re-rolled to meet a tactical demand.
8. The Mortar Platoon was commanded by a Lieutenant, with a Platoon Serjeant and two Serjeants as Detachment Commanders. The platoon was equipped with four 3" mortars, two in each of two detachments (sections).
9. The Medium Machine Gun Platoon was similarly commanded by a Lieutenant, with a Platoon Serjeant and two Serjeants as Section Commanders. The platoon was equipped with four Vickers Mark 1 .303 machine guns. It is believed that the men of the Mortar Platoon and Machine Gun Platoon were trained on both weapons, and were interchangeable. The battalion had eight mortars on strength, so the commanding officer could take eight mortars and no machine guns, or six and two, or four and four. Most battalions appear to have opted for the four and four approach.
10. A Parachute Battalion had only three Rifle Companies. Each was commanded by a Major, with a Captain as Second-in-Command. Each company had a Company Serjeant Major and Company Quarter-Master-Serjeant. There were three platoons, each commanded by a Subaltern (Lieutenant or Second Lieutenant), with a Platoon Serjeant, and a Serjeant in command of each of the three sections.

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The British Parachute Battalion circa 1944 – 1945

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