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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (PERSONNEL)

A short history of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.), an operational command that was formed in September 1939 for deployment to France. It remained in France until evacuated in May 1940, and was then disbanded. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1939 and 1940 are included.

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A Concise History of British Expeditionary Force (History & Personnel)

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British Expeditionary Force

When the United Kingdom declared war on Germany on the 3rd September 1939, the British Government and Chiefs of Staff activated plans that had been in preparation since March 1939 for the deployment of a British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) to France to serve under the French High Command.

The B.E.F. grew steadily throughout late 1939 and into early 1940 until the German attack on the 10th May 1940. A concise history of the British Expeditionary Force is published on this website.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief3rd September 1939 – 19th July 1940General The Viscount GORT, V.C., K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. M.V.O. M.C., *p.s.c.***Military Secretary**12th September 1939 – 20th July 1940Brigadier (Acting) Sir Colin Arthur JARDINE, Baronet, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.***Assistant Military Secretary**1939 – 1940

Brigadier C. A. WEST

Chief Liaison Officer1939 – 1940

Major General His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester

Liaison Officer (Number 1 Military Mission to the French Army)30th September 1939 – July 1940Major General Sir Richard Granville Hylton HOWARD-VYSE, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*,
retired pay (Reserve of Officers)**Military Liaison Officer**1939 – 1940

Colonel B. TURNBULL

Deputy Judge Advocate-General1939 – 1940

The Honourable Brigadier H. S. BARRETT

Financial Adviser1939 – 1940

Brigadier S. N. RICE

Chief of the General Staff4th September 1939 – 30th June 1940Lieutenant General (Acting) Henry Royds POWNALL, C.B., D.S.O.* , M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.***Deputy Chief of the General Staff**3rd September 1939 – 4th February 1940Major General Philip NEAME, V.C., D.S.O., M.C, *p.s.c.*5th February 1940 – 11th May 1940Major General Frederick Vavasour Broome WITTS, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.***Brigadiers General Staff**1st September 1939 – 14th June 1940¹Brigadier (Acting) John George des Reaux SWAYNE, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.***Director of Military Intelligence**1939 – 1940

Major General F. N. MASON-MacFARLANE

Adjutant General3rd September 1939 – 23rd May 1940

Lieutenant General Wellesley Douglas Studholme BROWNRIGG, C.B., D.S.O.,

Assistant Adjutant-General1939 – 1940

The Honourable Brigadier J. WHITEHEAD

1939 – 1940

Colonel C. W. M. FIRTH

¹ Also shown as Head of British Military Mission to French General Headquarters

Quarter-Master-General4th September 1939 – 26th May 1940

Lieutenant General (Acting) Wilfrid Gordon LINDSELL, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., *i.d.c.*,
p.s.c.

Assistant Quarter-Master-General18th December 1939 – 4th February 1940

Colonel Ian Cameron GRANT, D.S.O.

Major General Royal Artillery3rd September 1939 – 26th May 1940²

Major General Sydney Rigby WASON, M.C.** , *p.s.c.*

Deputy Director of Artillery1st September 1939 – 30th June 1940

Colonel (Acting) John Morton Devereux WOOD, M.C., R.A., *g.*

Chief Instructor in Artillery1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel C. M. CHRISTIE,

Engineer-in-Chief4th September 1939 – 30th June 1940

Major General Ridley Pakenham PAKENHAM-WALSH, M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

Deputy Engineer-in-Chief4th October 1939 – 8th June 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Charles John Stuart KING, C.B.E.

Deputy Chief Engineer1939 – 1940

Colonel J. L. FRENCH

Director of Survey2nd September 1939 – 30th June 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Arthur Butler CLOUGH, O.B.E., M.C.

² On this date, WASON assumed command of III Corps on the southern flank of the B.E.F. as Lieutenant General ADAM moved back to establish the Dunkirk perimeter.

Director of Works1st September 1939 – 22nd June 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) William CAVE-BROWNE, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

Deputy Director of Works (E & M)5th September 1939 – June 1940

Colonel (Acting) Harold Henry BATEMAN, D.S.O., M.C., retired pay, (Reserve of Officers)

Deputy Director of Works (Stores)2nd September 1939 – June 1940

Colonel Victor Edward Gwynne GUINNESS

Chief Engineer, Air Component, B.E.F.2nd September 1939 – 25th May 1940

Colonel Kenelm Charles APPLEYARD, O.B.E., M.I.Mech.E., T.A.

Chief Engineer, Advanced Air Striking Force (A.A.S.F.)2nd September 1939 – 1940

Colonel Paul William CLARK, C.B.E., D.S.O.* M.C.

Chief Engineer, 'X' Force³18th October 1939 – 3rd March 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Arnold MINNIS, R.E.

Deputy Chief Engineer, 'X' Force18th October 1939 – 3rd March 1940

Colonel John Linnaeus FRENCH, T.D., T.A.

Signal Officer-in-Chief2nd September 1939 – June 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Ralph CHENEVIX-TRENCH, O.B.E., M.C.

Deputy Assistant Director of Signals1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel P. B. D. H. FOOT

³ 'X' Force was sent to France to create large works on the British front. Force comprised two groups, each of five field companies and one field park company all drawn from the Territorial Army.

Director of Supplies & Transport – (D.S.T.)2nd September 1939 – 30th November 1939

Brigadier (Acting) Gordon King ARCHIBALD, D.S.O., A.M.I.Mech.E.

Director of Supplies1st December 1939 – 1940 (new appointment)

Brigadier (Acting) G. C. G. BLUNT, D.S.O., O.B.E., A.M.I.Mech.E, retired pay (Reserve of Officers)

Deputy Director of Supplies2nd September 1939 – 1940

Colonel A. E. HOLBROOK, D.S.O., retired pay, Reserve of Officers

2nd September 1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel J. A. de B. JENKINS

Assistant Director of Supplies2nd September 1939 – 1940

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. N. CRAIG-McFEELY, R.A.S.C.

Director of Transport – (D.S.T.)1st December 1939 – June 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Gordon King ARCHIBALD, D.S.O., A.M.I.Mech.E

Deputy Directors of Transport – (D.D.S.T.)2nd September 1939 – 20th June 1940

Colonel Arthur Beresford Philemon PEREIRA, D.S.O.

Assistant Director of Transport3rd September 1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel A. F. St. C. COLLINS, O.B.E., M.C., A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.S.C.

Director of Medical Services – (D.M.S.)4th September 1939 – June 1940

Major General John Walter Lennox SCOTT, D.S.O.

Deputy Director of Medical Services2nd September 1939 – June 1940

Colonel George Forbes DAWSON, M.C., M.B.

Director of Ordnance Services – (D.O.S.)2nd September 1939 – June 1940Brigadier (Temporary) Arthur Clare Vernon GIBSON, O.B.E., *p.a.c.***Principal Director of Ordnance Services (E)**3rd September 1939 – June 1940

Brigadier (Acting) John Donald WHITE, D.S.O., M.C., A.M.I.Mech.E.

Provost Marshal1939 – 1940

Colonel S. V. KENNEDY

Paymaster-in-Chief28th September 1939 – 4th July 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Guy Allen Colpoys ORSMBY-JOHNSON, O.B.E., M.C.

Chief Paymaster1939 – 1940

Colonel W. J. H. BILDERBECK

Assistant Director of Dental Services**Director of Labour**1939 – 1940

Brigadier A. L. I. FRIEND

Deputy Director of Labour1939 – 1940

Colonel M. J. O'BRIEN-TWOHIG

Deputy Chaplain-General to the Force1939 – 1940

Revered A. T. A. NAYLOR

President, Claims Commission and Director of Hirings1939 – 1940

Colonel H. C. COLE

General Officer Commanding, Lines of Communication

Major General P de FONTBLANQUE

Chief Engineer, Lines of Communication

14th January 1940 – 2nd July 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Richard Leigh WITHINGTON, M.C.

Deputy Director of Works, Lines of Communication

2nd September 1939 – June 1940

Colonel John Howard STAFFORD, O.B.E., M.C.⁴

Base Commandant

1939 – 1940

Brigadier J. A. A. GRIFFIN

⁴ Promoted Acting Brigadier in role on 18th January 1940.

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