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BRITISH TROOPS IN CHINA HISTORY & PERSONNEL

A concise history of British Troops in China, a static command covering Hong Kong and British enclaves in China between 1930 and 1941. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1930 and 1950 are included.

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British Troops in China History & Personnel

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British Troops in China

British Troops in China was a pre-war Command that reported direct to Whitehall. British Forces and other foreign powers occupied parts of China in the 19th century as part of the growth in British economic interests in the Far East. The United Kingdom fought a war against China between 1839 and 1942, which is known as the Opium War. China had remained isolated as international trade grew from the west, and was culturally very different to Europe. However, speculative traders began importing opium from India into China for that country's large population. The Emperor of China became so alarmed at the problems caused by the increased use of high quality opium in his country, that he banned the trade.

The United Kingdom saw this action as an attack on free trade, and against British interests in the area. The port of Canton was the only point of entry to China for British trade, and it was felt necessary for the British to use military force to pursue their commercial interests. Troops from India were used to enforce British policy. Britain's jewel in the crown, however, was their possession of Hong Kong. They seized the island in 1839, with the cessation of the island being confirmed by the treaty of Nanking in 1842. China leased the New Territories to the United Kingdom in 1898 for 100 years.

Following the First World War, The British maintained settlements in Tientsin, Shanghai and Wei Hai Wei, as well as their forces deployed to Hong Kong. Tension in China began escalating well before the accepted commencement of the Second World War. The U.K. sent reinforcements to Shanghai in 1927 due to disturbances in the city, and withdrew from Wei Hai Wei in 1931. China Command was an independent command responsible for the British possessions of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and the British concessions in the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Tientsin. The command was a Major General's appointment. The garrison of Shanghai and Tientsin in 1930 comprised two British infantry battalions plus supporting services. Hong Kong was the most significant garrison, and included the Royal Navy presence. The Army deployed two British and one Indian infantry battalion to Hong Kong and Kowloon, with the headquarters of British Troops in China located at Hong Kong.

In 1931, Japan invaded and annexed Manchuria, but the main increase in international tension arose in July 1937, when Japan and China commenced full-scale war. The two British concessions in China were abandoned in December 1939 (Tientsin) and August 1940 (Shanghai). The colony of Hong Kong was seen as isolated and difficult to reinforce in the event of war with Japan. In the event, one Indian battalion was sent to reinforce the colony in early 1940, and two Canadian battalions arrived in November 1941. This allowed the creation of a second infantry brigade in Hong Kong.

The Japanese invaded on 8 December 1941, and despite some heroic resistance, the Governor decided to surrender the colony at 15.15 on 25 December 1941. 1,045 British and Canadian Officers, other ranks and Indian other ranks were killed, and 1,068 reported missing. The rest faced the next five years in captivity.

General Officer Commanding – (G.O.C.)1937

Major General A. W. BARTHOLOMEW, C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O.

4th November 1938 – 27th August 1941Major General Arthur Edward GRASETT, D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*¹28th August 1941 – 25th December 1941 (Prisoner of War)Major General (Acting) Christopher Michael MALTBY, M.C., *p.s.c.***General Staff Officer 1st Grade – (G.S.O. I)**1937Colonel V. R. BURKHARDT, D.S.O., O.B.E. (*Temporary*)2nd March 1937 – 10th March 1939

Colonel N. M. S. IRWIN, D.S.O., M.C.

21st January 1939 – 1940Colonel A. G. NEVILLE, M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*10th February 1939 – 1940 (Temporary)Colonel G. E. GRIMSDALE, *p.s.c.*17th March 1940 – 25th December 1941 (Died in Captivity)Colonel (Acting) Lanceray NEWNHAM, M.C., *p.s.c.***General Staff Officer 2nd Grade**1939 – 1939Major P. E. C. J. GYWN, 14th Punjab Regiment (*Temporary*)23rd August 1940 – 1941

Major C. R. BOXER, Lincoln R.

13th October 1940 – 25th December 1941 – (Died in Captivity)Major (Acting) Gordon Eric NEVE, R.W.K., *p.s.c.*²**General Staff Officer 3rd Grade**1939 – 1939

Captain H. S. P. HOPKINSON, Rifle Brigade

1939 – 22nd August 1940

Captain C. R. BOXER, Lincoln R.

29th December 1939 – 1941

Captain H. F. G. CHAUVIN, R.A.

13th October 1940 – 1941

Captain (Temporary) P. H. MacMILLAN, R.A.

¹ Awarded the C.B. on the 11th July 1940.² Major 31062 Gordon Eric NEVE, died in captivity on 23 January 1942. He is buried in Collective Grave 5. D. Coll. Grave 1 – 4 in the Stanley Military Cemetery. He was the son of Ernest and Alice NEVE, and husband to Mary Alice NEVE, of Densole, Kent.

General Staff Officer 3rd Grade for Anti-gas Training

24th October 1940 – 1941

Captain G. V. BIRD, Reserve of Officers

Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General i/c Administration – (A.A. & Q.M.G.)

2nd October 1934 – 1937

Local Brigadier (Colonel) H. G. SETH-SMITH, D.S.O.

1937 – 1940

Brigadier (Local) Alexander Brackstone THOMSON, M.B.E., *p.s.c.*

19th December 1940 – 25th December 1941 (Prisoner of War)

Brigadier (Local) Andrew PEFFERS, O.B.E., M.C., Cameronians, *p.s.c.*³

Deputy Assistant Adjutant General

1937 – 1939

Major J. F. BENOY, South Staffordshire Regiment

25th March 1940 – 1941

Major R. E. MOODY, Inniskilling Fus, *p.s.c.*

Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master General

1939 – 1939

Major C. E. S. DOBBS, M.C., R.A.S.C., *p.s.c.*

20th December 1940 – 1941

Major (Acting) I. D. H. HELBY, R. Berks R., *p.s.c.*

Commander Royal Artillery – (C.R.A.)

1938 – 1939

Colonel A. BURROWES

24th February 1939 – 25th December 1941 (Prisoner of War)

Brigadier (Temporary) Toquil McLEOD, *p.s.c.*

Staff Captain

1939 – 1940

Captain P. S. WHITEHEAD, R.A.

Brigade Major, Royal Artillery

1st February 1940 – 1941 (Died on Active Service)

Captain Geoffrey Ernest Sullivan PROES, R.A.⁴

³ Awarded the C.B.E. on the 4th April 1946 for services in defence of Hong Kong in 1941.

⁴ Major 23683 Geoffrey Ernest Sullivan PROES, died between 19 and 25 December 1941, ie, before the surrender of the Colony. He was aged thirty-nine years, and has no known grave. He is commemorated on Column 1, Sai Wan Memorial in Hong Kong. He was the son of Colonel E. S. and Mrs. E. PROES, and husband of Nancy M. PROES, of Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

Major Instructor in Gunnery

(Vacant)

Captain Instructor in Gunnery

1939 – 1940

Major J. M. SMITH, R.A.

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng)

1937 – 10th June 1940

Colonel G. C. GOWLLAND

11th June 1940 – 25th December 1941

Colonel (Acting) E. H. M. CLIFFORD, C.B.E., M.C., R.E.

Staff Officer, Royal Engineers (S.O.R.E.)

1939 – 1940

Major D. H. STEERS, O.B.E., R.E.

1st February 1940 – 1941

Captain F. J. FREEMAN, B.A., R.E.

Command Signal Officer –

Major J. C. McDONALD, M.C., Royal Signals.

1939 – May 1940

Lieutenant Colonel E. P. C. COLLINS, Royal Signals

19th May 1940 – 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) E. LEVETT, R. Sigs.

Movement Control Officer

1st December 1940 – 1941

Captain A. J. DEWAR, R.A.S.C.

Assistant Chaplain-General

1939 – 1940

Reverend W. M. A. FARREN, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces, 1st Class

1940 – 1941

Reverend H. W. TODD, M.C., M.A., Chaplain to the Forces, 1st Class

Senior Chaplain to the Forces

Reverend G. H. BATEMAN, M.A., Chaplain to the Forces, 3rd Class.

Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport

1st December 1936 – ??

Colonel H. H. WRIGHT, D.S.O.

1938 – 1940

Colonel E. S. WHITE

?? – 25th December 1941

Colonel Keble Theodore ANDREWS-LEVINGE⁵

Deputy Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport

1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel T. W. RICHARDSON,

1940 – 1940

Major C. W. RICHARDS, R.A.S.C,

Assistant Director of Medical Services – (A.D.M.S.)

1938 – 1939

Colonel H. H. BLAKE, O.B.E., M.B.

1939 – 1941

Colonel John Thomas SIMSON, M.B.

Deputy Assistant Director of Pathology

1939 – 1939

Lieutenant Colonel W. A. FROST, O.B.E., M.B., R.A.M.C.

1939 – 1940

Major G. T. L. ARCHER,

1st May 1940 – 1941

Major (Temporary) J. D. A. GRAY, M.B., F.R.C.P. Edin, R.A.M.C. (T.A.)

Deputy Assistant Director of Hygiene

193? – 1939

Major F. C. TIBBS, R.A.M.C.

1939 – 1941

Major H. G. G. ROBERTSON, R.A.M.C.

Assistant Director of Dental Service

Lieutenant Colonel J. S. SMITH, A.D. Corps

⁵ Awarded the O.B.E. on 4th April 1946 for services in Hong Kong in 1941.

Assistant Director of Ordnance Services – (A.D.O.S.)1937 – 1940

Colonel J. F. KING, R.A.O.C.

26th January 1940 – 25th December 1941 (Prisoner of War)Colonel Gilbert R. HOPKINS, O.B.E., R.A.O.C., *p.a.c.***Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services**1939 – 28th February 1940

Major B. G. COX, R.A.O.C.

1st March 1940 – 25th December 1941

Lieutenant Colonel R. A. P. MacPHERSON, R.A.O.C.

Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer

Major W. H. POSTLE, A. M. I. Mech. E., R.A.O.C.

1939 – 1941

Major W. J. L. SMITH, A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

1941 – 25th December 1941

Lieutenant Colonel W. J. L. SMITH, A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

Command Paymaster1937

Colonel L. J. LIGHTFOOT, O.B.E., R.A.P.C.

?? – 25th December 1941 (Prisoner of War)

Colonel Noel FORDE, R.A.P.C.

Assistant Command Paymaster1939 – 1939

Major R. H. SMYTH, M.C., R.A.P.C.

1939 – 1941Major Thomas Alexander MEEK, M.C., R.A.P.C.⁶**Deputy Assistant Director of Veterinary Services**1939 – 1939

Major M. A. MURPHY, R.A.V.C.

1940 – 1941

Major C. W. HEANE, R.A.V.C.

⁶ Colonel Thomas Alexander MEEK, M.C., died on Active Service on 6 December 1943, while serving in Iraq. He was aged fifty-four years, and is buried in Grave 23. G. 4., of the Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery. He was the son of Andrew Alexander and Christina Malcolmson MEEK, and husband to Dorothy Marguerite MEEK of Glemsford, Suffolk.

Special Appointments**Deputy Judge Advocate-General**

4th December 1937 – 1941

Major (Local) H. W. R. WILLIAMS, E.R.E. List

Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal

9th July 1938 – 1941

Captain C. H. R. HYDE, Manch. R.

Command Education Officer

1939 – 1939

Major H. H. JOSEPH, B.A., A.E.C.

1939 – 1941

Major W. de B. WOOD, M.A., A.E.C.

Garrison Adjutant

1939 – 1939

Captain B. J. RIMMER, M.M., R.U. Rif.

1939 – 1940

Captain S. BURN,

1st May 1940 – 1941

Second Lieutenant S. R. KERR, General List

Department of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War**Financial Adviser and Auditor**

1937... – 1939

A...C. MILNE, Esq

1939 – 1941

H. J. KILPATRICK, Esq.

Assistant Financial Adviser and Assistant Auditor

1937 – 1939

G. F. COSTELOE, Esq.

1939 – 1941

A. W. GILPIN, Esq

Hong Kong Infantry Brigade.**Commander**

3rd March 1937 – 1938

Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) Frederic William Lyon BISSETT, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

27th August 1938 – 15th November 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) John Talbot Wentworth REEVE, D.S.O.

16th November 1941 – 19th December 1941 (Killed in Action)

Brigadier (Local) John Kelburne LAWSON⁷

Brigade Major

1939 – 1939

Captain R. H. BOWER, K.O.Y.L.I.

Staff Captain

1939 – 1939

Captain J. C. R. FITZGERALD-LOMBARD, R.E.

Kowloon Infantry Brigade**Commander**

16th November 1941 – 25th December 1941

Brigadier (Local) Cedric WALLIS, 7th Rajput R.

Brigade Major**Staff Captain**

⁷ Brigadier John Kelburne LAWSON died on 19 December 1941. He was aged fifty-four years, and was previously a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment. He is buried in Grave VIII. C. 27. of the Sai Wan War Cemetery, Hong Kong. He was the son of Edward Arthur and Selina Mary LAWSON, and husband of Augusta LAWSON, of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

SHANGHAI AREA.**Commander**

Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) TELFER-SMOLLETT, D.S.O., M.C.

1939 – 8th September 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Frank Keith SIMMONS, O.B.E., M.V.O., M.C.

Staff**Brigade Major**

Captain Tom Gordon RENNIE, The Black Watch

Officer Commanding Royal Engineers

Captain Ct. E. HOWARD-VYSE, R.E.

Supplies and Transport

Major Keble Theodore ANDREWS-LEVINGE, R.A.S.C.

Senior Medical Officer

Lieutenant Colonel R. W. GALLOWAY, D.S.O., M.B., R.A.M.C.

Paymaster

Captain F. W. C. THOMAS, R.A.P.C.

Assistant Provost Marshal

Lieutenant J. R. COLE, Loyal R.

TIENTSIN AREA**Commander**

27th September 1935 – 1937

Temporary Brigadier (Colonel) A. H. HOPWOOD, D.S.O.

1939 – 15th March 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Sir John Emilius LAURIE, Bart, D.S.O.*

Staff**Brigade Major**

Major C. B. H. DELAMAIN, M.C., R.A.

Attached to the Staff**Officer Commanding Royal Engineers**

Major H. A. BAKER, M.C., Royal Engineers

Supplies and Transport

Major H. B. B. BUTLER, O.B.E., R.A.S.C.

Senior Medical Officer

Lieutenant Colonel S. J. BARRY, R.A.M.C.

Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services

Lieutenant (Local Captain) F. W. WILTS, R.A.O.C.

Paymaster

Major C. J. H. TREGLOWN, M.C., R.A.P.C.

Chronology of Events British Troops in China

1939

December British troops withdrawn from Tientsin. 1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry move to Egypt.

1930

August British troops withdrawn from Shanghai. 2nd Bn. The East Surrey Regiment move to Malaya, and 1st Bn. Seaforth Highlanders move to Hong Kong, and then move on to Malaya, and then India.

1941

16 November Two Canadian battalions arrive in Hong Kong.

7 December All units deployed to their battle positions.

06.45 Declaration of war announced.

8 December Japanese troops bridge the Lo Wu river and cross into the Laffans Plain.

08.00 Japanese aircraft attack Kai Tek aerodrome.

08.00 Japanese aircraft attack Kai Tek aerodrome.

19.30 British troops ambush a Japanese platoon inflicting severe casualties.

9 December Japanese troops advance into Shingmun Valley. Fierce fighting breaks out at the Shingmun Redoubt, defended by the 5th/7th Rajput Regiment.

10 December Kai Tek aerodrome evacuated. Intense shelling of Stonecutter Island starts. Japanese vessels sighted off-shore.

17.42 Last telegraph cables cut. Hong Kong isolated in respect of communications.

11 December Japanese attack left flank of positions held by 2nd Royal Scots, forcing them to retire and opening up the Castle Peak and Taipo Roads. This leaves the 2nd Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment and one company of 5th Bn. 7th Rajput Regiment cut off. Counter attack by one company of 1st Winnipeg Grenadiers to fill the gap created by the Japanese advance.

Midday. Withdrawal from the Mainland ordered by the GOC.

12 December	Most Indian and British troops evacuated safely from the Mainland, albeit they are very tired after four days continuous action.
13 December	A Japanese launch brings a flag of truce. Surrender rejected by H.M. The Governor.
15 December	British troops on Hong Kong island organised as two brigade areas, the East Infantry Brigade and West Infantry Brigade.
18 December 22.00	Japanese troops begin crossing to Hong Kong island. Severe, heavy shelling continues. Landings reported between Lyemun and North Point.
19 December	The Power Station, held by a force called the 'Hughesiliers' and other scratch troops is eventually captured. Leighton Hill is attacked and 'D' Company 5 th /7 th Rajputs is lost. Lyemun Gap is held by British troops.
08.00 – 09.00	Headquarters, West Brigade is overrun by Japanese troops. Brigadier LAWSON is killed, together with most of his staff.
11.00	Counter attack is ordered by GOC for 2 nd /14 th Punjab Regiment to link up with 5 th /7 th Rajput Regiment.
13.00	British troops withdraw from Tytam Gap area.
20 December 07.15	Winnipeg Grenadiers withdraw from Mount Nicholson.
09.30	Japanese troops surround Repulse Bay Hotel. Fierce fighting takes place, with hotel grounds finally cleared by troops from the Royal Rifles of Canada late in the afternoon.
17.00	Japanese troops force the Wong Nei Chong Gap, driving out a mixed force from the 2 nd Royal Scots and Winnipeg Grenadiers.
21 December 1941	Japanese troops infiltrate around the Repulse Bay Hotel.
25 December 1941	With Japanese troops in control of most of Hong Kong Island, the Governor agrees to surrender the colony.

British Troops in China ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, British Troops in China

Hong Kong Infantry Brigade ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, Hong Kong Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

1st Bn. The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's)

2nd Bn. The King's Own Scottish Borderers

3rd Bn. 15th Punjab Regiment

Other Troops in the Hong Kong Area

Hong Kong Heavy Brigade, Royal Artillery ⁽³⁾

(H.Q., 12th, 20th & 31st Heavy Batteries, Royal Artillery)

Hong Kong Brigade, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery

(H.Q., 1st Mountain Batteries and 2nd, 3rd & 4th Heavy Batteries, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery)

40th (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers

Hong Kong Signal Company, Royal Corps of Signals

Supply Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps

27th Company, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Veterinary Corps

NOTES:

1. China Command was a pre-war independent command, responsible for the British possessions of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and the British concessions in the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Tientsin. Command of the British Troops in China was a Major General's appointment. The Japanese forces attacked on 8 December 1941, and despite gallant resistance, the colony was forced to surrender on 25 December 1941. Few personnel escaped, with the majority facing four years in captivity.
2. The two British battalions were based at Nagking Barracks on the Mainland. The Indian battalion was based at Whitfield Barracks on Hong Kong island. The 1st Somerset Light Infantry arrived in 1928, and left in October 1930 to move to Madras in India.
3. This pre-war Regular Army regiment was based in Hong Kong. On 16 November 1939, 'X' Battery was redesignated as 36th Heavy Battery. On the same date, the 20th and 24th Batteries transferred to the newly formed 12th Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery, which had been formed in Hong Kong. The regiment was redesignated as the 8th Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery on 14 December 1940.

Shanghai Area (1)

Headquarters, Shanghai Area

1st Bn. The Worcestershire Regiment

2nd Bn. The Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's)

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Shanghai Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

12 Company, Royal Army Service Corps

No. 7 General Hospital, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Shanghai Section, Corps of Military Police

NOTES:

1. The Treaty of Nanking of 1842 opened up the Chinese port of Shanghai to international trade, one of the main commodities being opium. The United Kingdom was one of the countries that took up concessions within the city. To protect British interests, the U.K. Government deployed British troops to Shanghai. With the increased threat from Japanese forces, the British troops withdrew from Shanghai in August 1940.

Tientsin Area (1)

Headquarters, Tientsin Area

2nd Bn. The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)

2nd Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's)

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Tientsin Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

NOTES:

1. The Tientsin Area was responsible for the British concession in the Chinese city of Teinstin (now called Tianjin). During the war between Japan and China, the city of Teintsin was captured by Japanese troops on 30 July 1937. Japan, however, respected the foreign concessions in the city, and the British troops remained in situ.

British Troops in China ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, British Troops in China

Hong Kong Infantry Brigade

Headquarters, Hong Kong Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

- 2nd Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers
- 1st Bn. The Seaforth Highlanders
- 1st Bn. The Royal Ulster Rifles
- 1st Kumoan Rifles, 19th Hyderabad Regiment

Other Troops in the Hong Kong Area

- 8th Heavy Brigade, Royal Artillery
(H.Q., 12th, 20th & 24th Heavy Batteries, Royal Artillery)
- 5th Anti-Aircraft Brigade, Royal Artillery
(H.Q., 7th & 9th Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery)
- Hong Kong Brigade, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery
(H.Q., 1st & 2nd Mountain Batteries and 3rd & 4th Medium Batteries, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery)
- 22nd (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers
- 40th (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers
- Hong Kong Signal Company, Royal Corps of Signals
- 12th Company, Royal Army Service Corps
- Hong Kong Mule Corps, Royal Army Service Corps
- 27th Company, Royal Army Medical Corps
- 6 Section, Royal Army Ordnance Corps
- Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Veterinary Corps

Hong Kong Company, Corps of Military Police

NOTES:

4. China Command was a pre-war independent command, responsible for the British possessions of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and the British concessions in the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Tientsin. Command of the British Troops in China was a Major General's appointment. The Japanese forces attacked on 8 December 1941, and despite gallant resistance, the colony surrendered on 25 December 1941. Few personnel escaped, with the majority facing four years in captivity.

Shanghai Area (1)

2nd Bn. The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Shanghai Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Shanghai Section, Corps of Military Police

NOTES:

2. The Treaty of Nanking of 1842 opened up the Chinese port of Shanghai to international trade, one of the main commodities being opium. The United Kingdom was one of the countries that took up concessions within the city. To protect British interests, the U.K. Government deployed British troops to Shanghai. With the increased threat from Japanese forces, the British troops withdrew from Shanghai in August 1940.

Tientsin Area (1)

1st Bn. The Lancashire Fusiliers

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Tientsin Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps Detachment, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

-
2. The Tientsin Area was responsible for the British concession in the Chinese city of Teinstin (now called Tianjin). During the war between Japan and China, the city of Teintsin was captured by Japanese troops on 30 July 1937. Japan, however, respected the foreign concessions in the city and the British troops remained in situ.

British Troops in China ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, British Troops in China

Hong Kong Infantry Brigade ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, Hong Kong Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

2nd Bn. The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)

2nd Bn. The Middlesex Regiment ⁽³⁾

1st Kumoan Rifles, 19th Hyderabad Regiment ⁽⁴⁾

Other Troops in the Hong Kong Area

8th Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery ⁽⁵⁾

(H.Q., 12th, 20th, 24th & 30th Heavy Batteries, Royal Artillery and 'X' Heavy Battery, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery)

5th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery ⁽⁶⁾

(H.Q., 7th & 9th Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery)

1st Hong Kong Regiment, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery ⁽⁷⁾

(H.Q., 1st & 2nd Mountain Batteries and 3rd & 4th Medium Batteries, Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery)

22nd (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers

40th (Fortress) Company, Royal Engineers

Hong Kong Signal Company, Royal Corps of Signals

12th Company, Royal Army Service Corps

Hong Kong Mule Corps, Royal Army Service Corps

27th Company, Royal Army Medical Corps

6 Section, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Veterinary Corps

Hong Kong Company, Corps of Military Police

The Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (8)

Armoured Car Platoon, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 1 Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 2 (Scottish) Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 3 (Eurasian) Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 4 (Chinese) Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 5 Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 6 (Portuguese) Company, H.K.V.D.F.

No. 7 Company, H.K.V.D.F.

The Stanley Platoon, H.K.V.D.F.

1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Batteries, H.K.V.D.F.

5th (Anti-Aircraft) Battery, H.K.V.D.F.

Field Company Engineers, H.K.V.D.F.

H.K.V.D.F. Signal Section

Army Service Corps Company, H.K.V.D.F.

NOTES:

5. China Command was a pre-war independent command, responsible for the British possessions of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and the British concessions in the Chinese cities of Shanghai and Tientsin. Command of the British Troops in China was a Major General's appointment. The Japanese forces attacked on 8 December 1941, and despite gallant resistance, the colony was forced to surrender on 25 December 1941. Few personnel escaped, with the majority facing four years in captivity.
6. The two British battalions were both based at Nagking Barracks on the Mainland. The Indian battalion was based at Whitfield Barracks on Hong Kong island.
7. The 1st Bn. The Middlesex Regiment was reorganised as a machine gun battalion in 1938. It had four machine gun companies, and raised a fifth ('Z') Company prior to the Japanese invasion.
8. This battalion left Hong Kong in November 1940. It moved to Rawalpindi, and later served with the 24th Indian Infantry Brigade in Iraq and Persia.
9. This pre-war Regular Army regiment was based in Hong Kong. On 16 November 1939, 'X' Battery was redesignated as 36th Heavy Battery. On the same date, the 20th and 24th Batteries transferred to the newly formed 12th Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery, which had been formed in Hong Kong. The regiment was redesignated as the 8th Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery on 14 December 1940.
10. This Regular Army regiment had been formed in 1935 in Hong Kong. It comprised the 7th and 9th Anti-aircraft Batteries, but by December 1941, this had changed to the 7th, 17th and 18th Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the 5th Anti-Aircraft Battery, H.K.V.D.C. The regiment was captured with the surrender of Hong Kong.
11. The Hong Kong Singapore Battalion Royal Garrison Artillery was formed in 1903 as a local enlisted regiment of artillery. This brigade was formed in 1934, and from 1935 onwards, it comprised two mountain and two medium batteries. It was redesignated as a regiment in 1938, and was captured with the fall of Hong Kong.
12. The Hong Kong Volunteers were originally formed in May 1854, as the local volunteer militia force funded by the British authorities. It was soon disbanded, but then reformed in 1864. In 1917, they adopted the title of 'Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps'. The armoured car platoon was formed in 1933 and was equipped with four locally built armoured cars. The infantry companies were raised with volunteers from the various nationalities living in Hong Kong. Again, few escaped with the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941.

Shanghai Area ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, Shanghai Area

2nd Bn. The East Surrey Regiment ⁽²⁾

1st Bn. The Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-shire Buffs, The Duke of Albany's) ⁽³⁾

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Shanghai Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

Shanghai Section, Corps of Military Police

The Shanghai Volunteer Corps

Shanghai Light Horse

'A' Company (British), S.V.C.

'B' Company (British), S.V.C.

'C' Machine-Gun Company

NOTES:

3. Shanghai was opened up to international trade in 1842 with the Treaty of Nanking. The United Kingdom was one of the countries that took up concessions within the city. To protect British interests, British troops were deployed to Shanghai. With the increased threat from Japanese forces, the British troops were withdrawn from Shanghai in August 1940.
4. This battalion left Shanghai in late August 1940, and moved to Malaya, where it arrived on 1 September 1940. It was destined to remain in Malaya, later coming under command of the 11th Indian Infantry Division. It suffered heavy casualties in the retreat down the Malayan peninsula, with the remnants being captured with the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942.
5. When the British forces were withdrawn, this battalion left Shanghai on 18 August 1940, moving to Hong Kong. It did not remain there long, moving to Malaya in November 1940. It joined the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade, but left Malaya in February 1941 to move to India. The battalion later served with the 23rd Indian Division in Assam and Burma.

Tientsin Area (1)

Headquarters, Tientsin Area

1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry (2)

Detachment, Royal Engineers

Tientsin Signal Section, Royal Corps of Signals

Detachment, Royal Army Service Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Medical Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Detachment, Royal Army Pay Corps

NOTES:

3. The Tientsin Area was responsible for the British concession in the Chinese city of Teinstin (now called Tianjin). During the war between Japan and China, the city of Teintsin was captured by Japanese troops on 30 July 1937. Japan, however, respected the foreign concessions in the city and the British troops remained in situ until December 1939.
4. This Regular Army battalion was based in Tientsin, but one company was detached and stationed in Peking. The battalion left Teintsin in late December 1939, and sailed for Egypt, where it arrived on 31 January 1940.

Hong Kong

Headquarters, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Infantry Brigade (1)

Headquarters, Hong Kong Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

1st Bn. The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) (2)

The Royal Rifles of Canada (3)

The Winnipeg Grenadiers (3)

Kowloon Infantry Brigade (4)

Headquarters, Kowloon Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

2nd Bn. The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)

5th Bn. 7th Rajput Regiment

2nd (Duke of Cambridge's Own) (Brownlow's) Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment

Command Troops

8th Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery

(12th, 30th & 36th Coast Batteries, Royal Artillery)

12th Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery

(24th & 26th Coast Batteries, Royal Artillery)

5th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery

(7th, 17th & 18th Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery and 5th Anti-Aircraft Battery
H.K.V.D.C.)

1st Hong Kong Regiment, Royal Artillery

(1st & 2nd Mountain Batteries and 3rd & 4th Medium Batteries)

Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps

(1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Batteries)

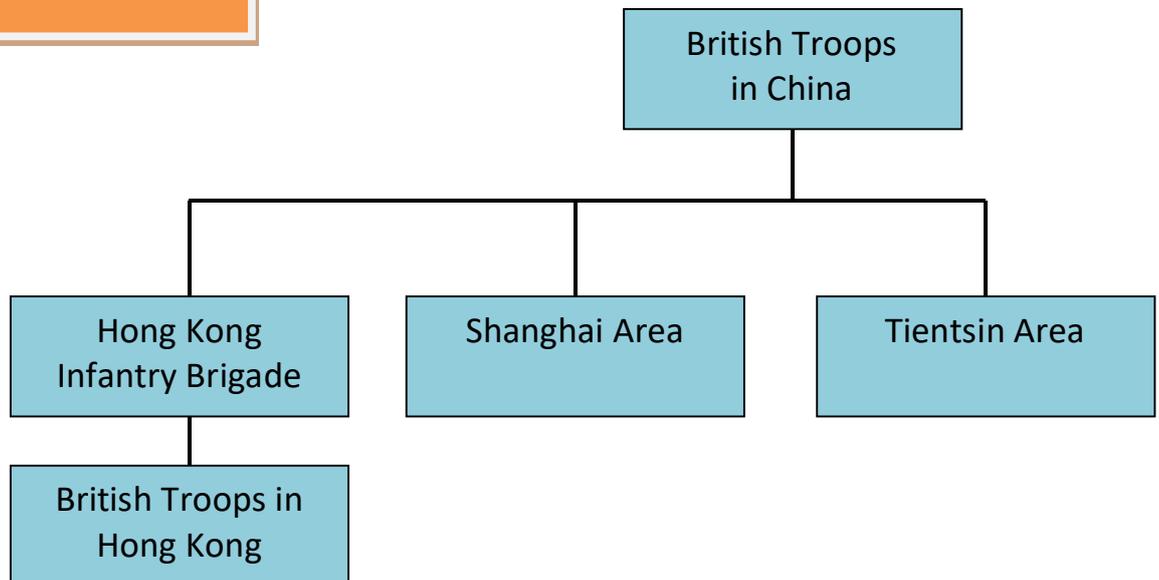
22nd Fortress Company, Royal Engineers

40th Fortress Company, Royal Engineers

NOTES:

1. This was a pre-war infantry brigade, part of the British Troops in China.
2. The 1st Bn. The Middlesex Regiment converted into a machine gun battalion in 1938. It was designated to man various pill-boxes on the island of Hong Kong in the event of a Japanese invasion.
3. These two Canadian battalions arrived in Hong Kong in November 1941 as reinforcements for the colony. They came under command of this brigade on 16 November 1941. They were war raised units, considered by the General Officer Commanding Hong Kong as inadequately trained for modern warfare.
4. The second brigade was formed on 16 November 1941, as additional reinforcements arrived in the Colony. The 2nd Bn. The Royal Scots and the 5th Bn. 7th Rajput Regiment transferred across from the Hong Kong Brigade to the new Kowloon Brigade.

September 1939



NOTES: British Troops in China was an independent command reporting to the Colonial Office until the outbreak of war, from when it reported to the War Office. On **18** November 1940, it became part of the newly formed Far East Command; the headquarters of which were located in Singapore. Tientsin was evacuated in December 1939.

38th Division ⁽¹⁾

38th Infantry Group Headquarters

Tankette Company, 38th Infantry Group Headquarters

228th Infantry Regiment ⁽²⁾

I Bn. 228th Infantry Regiment

II Bn. 228th Infantry Regiment

III Bn. 228th Infantry Regiment

228th Regimental Infantry Gun Company

228th Regimental Anti-Tank Gun Company

229th Infantry Regiment ⁽³⁾

I Bn. 229th Infantry Regiment

II Bn. 229th Infantry Regiment

III Bn. 229th Infantry Regiment

229th Regimental Infantry Gun Company

229th Regimental Anti-Tank Gun Company

230th Infantry Regiment ⁽⁴⁾

I Bn. 230th Infantry Regiment

II Bn. 230th Infantry Regiment

III Bn. 230th Infantry Regiment

230th Regimental Infantry Gun Company

230th Regimental Anti-Tank Gun Company

Divisional Troops

38th Mountain Artillery Regiment ⁽⁶⁾

I Bn. 38th Mountain Artillery Regiment

II Bn. 38th Mountain Artillery Regiment

III Bn. 38th Mountain Artillery Regiment

38th Engineer Regiment ⁽⁸⁾

38th Transport Regiment (9)

Divisional Medical Unit

One Field Hospital

Veterinary Section

Ordnance Section

NOTES:

1. The Japanese 38th Division was raised in Nagoya on 30 June 1939. It was known by the Japanese as the 'Swamp Division'. It was organised as a standard Type 'B' infantry division, with an emphasis on light, or mountain, warfare, and had an establishment of about 20,000 men. It trained extensively in night operations in the run-up to the invasion of Hong Kong, which paid off in the assault on the Shing Mun Redoubt, and breaching the 'Gin Drinker's' Line. Initially, the division was deployed to join the Japanese 21st Army in the Guangdong Province of China. The 21st Army was dissolved in February 1940, so the division came under command of The South Army. On 28 June 1941, it was incorporated into the Japanese 23rd Army. The division was deployed along the border with Hong Kong, and prepared for the anticipated invasion of the British colony, which took place on 7 December 1941. Major General T. SANO commanded the division during the invasion of Hong Kong. The division later served in the battle for Java, and in New Guinea. The division was reinforced by the 66th Regiment, which was used to garrison the mainland, while the division assaulted Hong Kong Island.
2. Colonel Teihichi DOI commanded this regiment in 1941.
3. Colonel Tanaka RYOSABURO commanded this regiment.
4. Colonel Toshishige SHOJI commanded this regiment.

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