

2019

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**A CONCISE HISTORY OF:**

# **NORTHERN IRELAND DISTRICT (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)**

A short history of the Northern Ireland District, and British Troops in Northern Ireland, a static command in the United Kingdom. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1930 and 1950 are included.

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## **A Concise History of the Northern Ireland District (History & Personnel)**

Version: 2\_1

This edition dated: 27 April 2019

ISBN

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Author: Robert PALMER (copyright held by author)

Published privately by: The Author – Publishing as:  
[www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk](http://www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk)

## Northern Ireland District

In 1902, the British Army formed the Headquarters III Army Corps (Irish Command) in Dublin Castle, Ireland. The Corps had under command three Districts, namely the:

- Dublin District;
- Cork District;
- Belfast District.

In February 1905, this Corps was upgraded to the status of a full Command. It now comprised:

- North Irish Coast Defences;
- South Irish Coast Defences;
- North Irish District (No. 11 District);
- South Irish District (No. 12 District).

With the upsurge of violence in 1916, the Headquarters moved to the Royal Hospital in Dublin, and later to Parkgate also in Dublin. In 1920, the Dublin District was reformed. On 6 December 1922, with the partition of Ireland, Irish Command was disbanded. The South Irish Coast Defences remained however, with No. 11 District reorganised as the Northern Ireland District was formed with its headquarters based at Belfast. There were three Regular Army regiments with their depots located in the Province:

- The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at Omagh;
- The Royal Ulster Rifles at Armagh;
- The Royal Irish Fusiliers (Princess Victoria's) at Omagh.

The role of Northern Ireland District was internal security and the defence of the Province. It was a Major General's command. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the establishment of the District was increased. This was achieved in the main by the use of retired officers from the Regular Army Reserve of Officers. The four Regular Army battalions stationed in Northern Ireland were all quickly posted away. They were replaced by the Territorial Army 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) Infantry Division, which arrived in tranches between October 1939 and April 1940. The first contingent was the 158<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade with its three constituent battalions; plus the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The Monmouthshire Regiment from the 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. The units were deployed as follows:

- Headquarters 158<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade – Lisburn;
- 6<sup>th</sup> Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers – Lisburn;
- 160<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance – Lisburn;
- 4<sup>th</sup> Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers – Belfast;
- 7<sup>th</sup> Bn. The Royal Welch Fusiliers – Londonderry;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The Monmouthshire Regiment – Ballymena.

The rest of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division had arrived by May 1940. With the arrival of the rest of the division, the Northern Ireland District was divided into four areas:

- Belfast (Headquarters 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division);
- Northern Area – Londonderry (159<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade);
- Eastern Area – Lisburn (158<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade);
- Southern Area – Portadown (160<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade).

By April 1940, the whole of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division was deployed to the Province. The 61<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division arrived on 20 June 1940, leading to a reorganisation of the areas as:

- Northern Area (61<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division);
- Southern Area (53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division).

With two field formations now deployed in the Province, on 12 July 1940 a new appointment was made as General Officer Commanding British Troops in Northern Ireland (B.T.N.I.), a Lieutenant General's position. The Headquarters, VI Corps was formed in the Province, however, the corps appears not to have functioned as an operational formation being absorbed by B.T.N.I.. The role of B.T.N.I. was to prepare for:

- Action against enemy forces invading Eire;
- Action to repel an enemy invasion of Northern Ireland;
- A combination of both of the above;
- Dealing with enemy raids on the coast;
- Action against the I.R.A.;
- Control of the Eire – Northern Ireland border.

Northern Ireland District remained in being to control non-field force units and depots in the Province. The 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrived in the Province in April 1941. Headquarters III Corps was sent to the Province in June 1941, to take command of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Divisions. The 53<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division returned to the mainland in November 1941, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division left in early 1942 to move to be deployed overseas. The 61<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division left Northern Ireland on 2 February 1943 to return to XI Corps District on the Mainland. Headquarters III Corps left the Province on 31 May 1942, to commence its move to Persia and Iraq. The 59<sup>th</sup> (Staffordshire) Infantry Division transferred from III Corps to B.T.N.I. on this date. This division remained in Northern Ireland until 19 March 1943 when it returned to the mainland.

The first U.S. Troops arrived at Belfast in January 1942. On 7 May 1942, Major General Russel P. HARTLE, assumes command of the U.S. Army Northern Ireland Force. In November 1942, most U.S. troops left Northern Ireland on being deployed on Operation Torch, the invasion of French North Africa. In autumn 1943, U.S. troop levels began to build again in Northern Ireland in anticipation of the invasion of France. Most American forces left in June 1944, with the last U.S. Army unit leaving on 7 July 1944 for France.

On 9 May 1943, the Headquarters B.T.N.I. was amalgamated with the Northern Ireland District to form one combined headquarters, which was located at Lisburn in County Antrim. This amalgamation arose because the threat from the Republic of Ireland has disappeared. On 21 December 1943, the H.Q. of the 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrived in the Province to come under command of B.T.N.I.. The divisional headquarters and two brigades returned to the mainland in July 1944, but the 199<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade remained under command of Northern Ireland District until June 1945, when it left to rejoin the rest of the division. In 1944, the areas disbanded and B.T.N.I. was downgraded back down to a District establishment.

After the Second World War, British Troops in Northern Ireland continued to exist as a District command within the United Kingdom. For the first time, Territorial Army units were recruited in Northern Ireland. In 1963, Northern Ireland was raised to the status of a command, and became a Lieutenant General's appointment in response to the increasing tensions between the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities in the Province. With the upsurge in violence and terrorist attacks, when Lieutenant General Sir Ian FREELAND, K.C.B., D.S.O. was appointed on 9 July 1969, his post was entitled General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland and Director of Operations. In addition, during this period, a Major General was appointed as the Commander Land Forces and Deputy Director of Operations. In 2009, with the departure of Major General C. C. BROWN, C.B.E., the post of General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland was downgraded to that of a Brigadier, who now commands all the British Troops in the Province.

As of 2011, there are two brigades stationed in Northern Ireland, the:

- 19<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade;
- 38<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Brigade.

The former is the deployable brigade currently stationed in Northern Ireland; and the latter is the Territorial Army regional brigade for the Province.

### **General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland District**

1<sup>st</sup> July 1929 – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1931

Lieutenant General Arthur Grenfell WAUCHOPE, C.B., C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O.

17<sup>th</sup> September 1931 – 16<sup>th</sup> September 1935

Major General Eric Stanley GIRDWOOD, C.B., C.M.G.

17<sup>th</sup> September 1935 – 6<sup>th</sup> May 1938

Major General Sir William James Norman COOKE-COLLIS, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

7<sup>th</sup> May 1938 – 29<sup>th</sup> April 1940

Major General Robert Valentine POLLOCK, C.B.E., D.S.O.

29<sup>th</sup> April 1940 – 13<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Major General Hubert Jervoise HUDDLESTON, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers)<sup>1</sup>

14<sup>th</sup> July 1940 – 7<sup>th</sup> June 1941

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

7<sup>th</sup> June 1941 – 14<sup>th</sup> May 1943

Major General Vivian Henry Bruce MAJENDIE, C.B., D.S.O., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

### **General Officer Commanding British Troops in Northern Ireland**

14<sup>th</sup> July 1940 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Lieutenant General (Acting) Hubert Jervoise HUDDLESTON, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers).

1<sup>st</sup> October 1940 – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1941

Lieutenant General (Temporary) Sir Henry Royds POWNALL, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.\*, M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

19<sup>th</sup> May 1941 – 8<sup>th</sup> May 1943

Lieutenant General (Acting) Harold Edmund FRANKLYN, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

### **General Officer Commanding, British Troops in Northern Ireland**

9<sup>th</sup> May 1943 – 28<sup>th</sup> July 1943

Lieutenant General Harold Edmund FRANKLYN, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

29<sup>th</sup> July 1943 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 1944

Lieutenant General Sir Alan Gordon CUNNINGHAM, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

### **General Officer Commanding, Northern Ireland District**

1<sup>st</sup> November 1944 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1947

Major General Gerald Corfield BUCKNALL, C.B., M.C.\*, *p.s.c.*

1<sup>st</sup> January 1948 – July 1949

Major General Ouvry Lindfield ROBERTS, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., B.A., *p.s.c.*

9<sup>th</sup> July 1949 – 14<sup>th</sup> July 1952

Lieutenant General Sir Reginald Francis Stewart DENNING, K.B.E., C.B.,

<sup>1</sup> Promoted Local Lieutenant General on 20 June 1940.

**Brigadier General Staff**

14<sup>th</sup> October 1940 – 27<sup>th</sup> October 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Philip George Saxon GREGSON-ELLIS, O.B.E., Gren Gds, *p.s.c.*

**General Staff Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939 – 19<sup>th</sup> January 1941

Honorary Brigadier C. W. FRIZELL, D.S.O., M.C. retired pay Reserve of Officers.

20<sup>th</sup> January 1941 – 5<sup>th</sup> August 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) William Patrick Everard WALTON, N. Stafford R., *p.s.c.*

6<sup>th</sup> August 1941 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1943

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) E. N. K. ESTCOURT, R.A.

1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 – 1<sup>st</sup> February 1944

[Colonel Francis Greville DREW, O.B.E., \*p.s.c.\*](#)

2<sup>nd</sup> February 1944 – 27<sup>th</sup> August 1945

Colonel (Local) The Honorable E. G. YOUNGER, O.B.E., T.D., A.& S.H. (T.A.), *p.s.c.*

28<sup>th</sup> August 1945 – 11<sup>th</sup> January 1946

Colonel (Local) I. H. GOOD, D.S.O., R.U.Rif, *p.s.c.*

12<sup>th</sup> January 1946 – 1946/7

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) C. A. I. SUTHER, O.B.E., Cheshire R., *p.s.c.*

**General Staff Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – (G.S.O. II)**

As at 1937

Major R. E. HOBDAV, D.S.O., Royal Irish Fusiliers, *p.s.c.*

4<sup>th</sup> February 1940 – 1941

Major R. A. CURRIES, R.A., *p.s.c.*

**General Staff Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – (G.S.O. III)**

Major E. D. CORKERY, M.C., Devonshire Regiment, *p.s.c.*

**Colonel i/c Administration**

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1939 – 27<sup>th</sup> June 1940

Colonel R. E. HOLMES A' COURT, D.S.O., (S.C.), retired pay Reserve of Officers

28<sup>th</sup> June 1940 – 9<sup>th</sup> October 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Charles Joseph Edwards GREENWOOD, M.C., *p.s.c.*<sup>2</sup>

11<sup>th</sup> October 1940 – 1942

Colonel A. V. ANDERSON, M.B.E., *p.s.c.*

**Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General – (D.A. & Q.M.G.)**

8<sup>th</sup> July 1942 – 14<sup>th</sup> May 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Philip Sidney WHITCOMBE, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

1<sup>st</sup> June 1943 – 16<sup>th</sup> May 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) G. S. BRUNSKILL, C.B.E., M.C., *p.s.c.*

**Brigadier i/c Administration**

17<sup>th</sup> May 1945 – 1946/7

Brigadier (Temporary) J. W. KENNY, O.B.E., R.A., *p.s.c.*

**Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General – (D.A.A. & Q.M.G.)**

Captain E. M. TYLER, M.C., Royal Artillery, *p.s.c.*

**Staff Captains**

Captain G. M. F. PRYNNE, Border Regiment

Captain J. R. WATERS, Royal Artillery, *p.s.c.*

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<sup>2</sup> GREENWOOD was awarded the C.B.E. on 11 July 1940 and reverted to the rank of Colonel on 21 July 1940



**Commander, Royal Artillery – (C.R.A.)**

*Colonel R. A. Western Command acts as C.R.A. Northern Ireland District*

**Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)**

1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 – November 1944

Brigadier (Temporary) A. A. MIDDLETON, R.A.

**Chief Engineer**

3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 – 26<sup>th</sup> October 1940

Colonel (Acting) G. de C. E. FINDLEY, M.C., retired pay Reserve of Officers

27<sup>th</sup> October 1940 – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1942

Colonel Victor Edward Gwynne GUINNESS.

24<sup>th</sup> August 1942 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1943

Colonel H. E. MOORE, D.S.O., M.C.

1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 – 14<sup>th</sup> May 1946

Colonel J. F. PHIPPS.

**Commander Royal Engineers – (C.R.E.)**

15<sup>th</sup> May 1946 – 1947

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) R. le H. GULTON, R.E.

**Deputy Chief Engineer**

27<sup>th</sup> November 1940 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1941

Colonel (Acting) J. F. PHIPPS, R.E.

30<sup>th</sup> December 1940 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1941

Colonel (Acting) H. GENET, M.C., R.E.

5<sup>th</sup> June 1941 – 1942

Colonel (Acting) A. R. HILDEBRAND, R.E.

**Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)**

31<sup>st</sup> July 1940 – 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1941

Lieutenant Colonel C. J. ASTON, M.C., retired pay Reserve of Officers

24<sup>th</sup> July 1941 – 1942

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) E. M. COGAN-HARRIS, M.A., M.I.E.E., R. Signals.

1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 – 1944

Colonel (Acting) R. H. RAYNER, M.B.E., M.P., Reserve of Officers

19<sup>th</sup> June 1944 – 17<sup>th</sup> October 1945

Colonel (Acting) R. JEE, M.C., R. Signals.

18<sup>th</sup> October 1945 – 1946/7

Lieutenant Colonel (War Substantive) L. de M. THUILLIER, O.B.E., R. Signals.

**Officer Commanding Royal Army Service Corps – (C.R.A.S.C.)**

At 1937

Lieutenant Colonel H. A. C. GARDNER, Royal Army Service Corps

At 1938

Lieutenant Colonel C. CROKER, O.B.E., R.A.S.C.

**Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport – (A.D.S.T.)**

September 1939 – 12<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Lieutenant Colonel F. L. HEWSON, O.B.E., A.M.I.Mech.E. retired pay Reserve of Officers

13<sup>th</sup> July 1940 – 14<sup>th</sup> May 1942

Colonel R. M. AYLMER, retired pay Reserve of Officers

**Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport – (D.D.S.T.)**

15<sup>th</sup> May 1943 – 1944

Colonel E. S. WHITE, D.S.O.

24<sup>th</sup> August 1944 – 1946

Colonel (Acting) J. T. FIELD, R.A.S.C.

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

As at 1937

Colonel A. L. FOSTER

As at April 1940

Colonel E. GIBBON, O.B.E., M.B., retired pay Reserve of Officers

30<sup>th</sup> June 1940 – 10<sup>th</sup> February 1941

Colonel David Turnbull RICHARDSON, M.C., M.B.<sup>3</sup>

30<sup>th</sup> August 1941 – 1942

Colonel (Acting) D. S. MARTIN, M.B., R.A.M.C.

**Deputy Director of Medical Services – (D.D.M.S.)**

May 1943 – 1944

Brigadier (Temporary) J. S. McCOMBE, D.S.O., M.B., retired pay Reserve of Officers

1944 – 11<sup>th</sup> August 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) R. R. G. ATKINS, O.B.E., M.C., M.D.

12<sup>th</sup> August 1946 – 1946/7

Colonel J. J. MAGNER, M.C., M.B.

**Deputy Assistant Director of Hygiene and Pathology**

Major J. R. HAYMAN, Royal Army Medical Corps

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<sup>3</sup> Promoted Acting Brigadier in role on 6 August 1940.

**Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services – (D.A.D.O.S.)**

As at 1937

Major B. E. A. O'REILLY, M.C., Royal Army Ordnance Corps

14<sup>th</sup> December 1939 – 16<sup>th</sup> July 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (acting) Leslie Cuthbert TURNBULL, R.A.O.C.

17<sup>th</sup> July 1941 – 1942

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) W. KIRKBRIDGE, R.A.O.C.

**Assistant Director of Ordnance Services (O)**

1941 – 4<sup>th</sup> May 1942

Lieutenant Colonel J. M. DICKSON, B.Sc., M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

19<sup>th</sup> April 1942 – 4<sup>th</sup> May 1943

Lieutenant Colonel N. A. LEE, T.D., R.A.O.C. (T.A.)

**Deputy Director of Ordnance Services**

5<sup>th</sup> May 1943 – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1944

Colonel (Temporary) George Christopher Hamilton HERON, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

23<sup>rd</sup> October 1944 – 1945/6

Colonel (Temporary) W. T. COBB, O.B.E., M.C., R.A.O.C.

**Assistant Director of Ordnance Services**

4<sup>th</sup> July 1946 – 1946/7

Lieutenant Colonel T. P. LILLY, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

**Assistant Director of Ordnance Services (E)**

**(Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer)**

20<sup>th</sup> August 1940 – 27<sup>th</sup> March 1941

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) D. S. RIDDELL, A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.

28<sup>th</sup> March 1941 – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1943

Lieutenant Colonel J. M. DICKSON, B.Sc., M.I.Mech.E, R.A.O.C.

### **Deputy Director of Mechanical Engineering**

20<sup>th</sup> May 1943 – 1944

Colonel (Acting) J. M. DICKSON, B.Sc., M.I.Mech.E., R.A.O.C.<sup>4</sup>

18<sup>th</sup> June 1945 – 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) Leonard Hamilton HOWARD-JONES, C.B.E., B.Sc. (Eng), M.I.Mech.E., R.E.M.E. (T.A.)

### **Assistant Director of Mechanical Engineering**

1946 – 1946/7

Lieutenant Colonel (War Substantive) L. H. HOWARD-JONES, O.B.E., B.Sc. (Eng), M.I.Mech.E., R.E.M.E. (T.A.)

### **District Paymaster**

As at 1937

Lieutenant Colonel W. D. N. ROBOTHAM, Royal Army Pay Corps

12<sup>th</sup> December 1939 – 1940/1

Major R. L. L. INGPEN, R.A.P.C.

10<sup>th</sup> September 1940 – 12<sup>th</sup> October 1941

Lieutenant Colonel C. D. VINT, R.A.P.C.

13<sup>th</sup> October 1941 – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1943

Lieutenant Colonel A. S. R. HUGHES, R.A.P.C.

1<sup>st</sup> May 1943 – 1945/6

Lieutenant Colonel C. HOLMES, M.C., R.A.P.C.

1<sup>st</sup> March 1946 – 1946/7

Major (Temporary) R. T. NEAL, Captain Reserve of Officers, R.A.P.C.

### **Assistant Director of Dental Services**

17<sup>th</sup> October 1941 – 1943

Colonel (Acting) Benson Edward GENTLEMAN, A.D.Corps.<sup>5</sup>

May 1943 – 1945/6

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) John McLean FOREMAN, A.D.Corps.

20<sup>th</sup> July 1946 – 1946/7

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) B. J. SWYER, A.D. Corps.

### **Assistant Director of Labour**

21<sup>st</sup> April 1941 – 1943

Lieutenant Colonel S. G. JOHNSON, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., retired pay Reserve of Officers

<sup>4</sup> On 1 October 1943, he transferred to the new Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (R.E.M.E.).

<sup>5</sup> Actually Assistant Director Dental Services Western Command, but covered the Northern Ireland District.

**Command Welfare Officer**

15<sup>th</sup> May 1943 – 1945/6

Colonel R. C. A. McCALMONT, C.V.O., D.S.O., retired pay.

**BELFAST AREA**

18<sup>th</sup> November 1940 – 13<sup>th</sup> February 1942

Brigadier (Temporary) Gilbert France WATSON, D.S.O., R.W.Fus, *p.s.c.*

**NORTHERN AREA**

6<sup>th</sup> April 1941 – 1942

Major General (Acting) C. St. Q. O. FULLBROOK-LEGGATT, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

**SOUTHERN AREA**

14<sup>th</sup> March 1941 – 1942

Colonel (Acting) W. T. H. GREGG, D.S.O., Retired Pay (Reserve of Officers)

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First Published by the H.M.S.O. in 1960      Reprinted 1990 The London Stamp Exchange Ltd  
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