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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

1st ARMY

(HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A concise history of the 1st Army, an operational formation of the British Army in 1942 and 1943, which was deployed to North Africa (Tunisia). In addition, known details of the key appointments held in 1942 and 1943 are included.

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A Concise History of 1 Army (History & Personnel)

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1st Army

With the reduction in the threat of invasion of the United Kingdom, an Expeditionary Force, designated Force 110, was formed in Scotland in July 1941 for potential deployment overseas. This was the basis for the formation of the first army level formation of the Second World War. The 1st Army was formed at Largs in Scotland on 6 July 1942 for the purpose of commanding the British troops deployed for the intended invasion of North Africa. At the time of formation, V Corps came under command of 1st Army. The 46th Infantry Division came under command of 1st Army on 24 August 1942.

The Advanced Headquarters landed at Algiers on 9 November 1942. At this time, 1st Army only had under command the 78th Infantry Division, and 'Blade' Force, which comprised elements of the 6th Armoured Division. As the campaign in Tunisia developed, 1st Army took under command:

- V Corps;
- IX Corps.

As reinforcements arrived in the front line, 1st Army began to give the appearance of proper Army level formation. The order of battle for 1st Army on 20 April 1943 was:

- V Corps;
 - 1st (British) Infantry Division;
 - 4th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 78th (British) Infantry Division;
 - 25th Tank Brigade;
- IX Corps;
 - 1st (British) Armoured Division;
 - 6th (British) Armoured Division;
 - 46th (British) Infantry Division;
- French XIX Corps;
 - Division d'Alger;
 - Division du Maroc;
 - Division d'Oran;
 - French Tank Group

The 1st Army disbanded in Tunisia on 25 July 1943. It appears that some elements of the Headquarters returned to the United Kingdom to help in forming the Headquarters 2nd Army.

Commander Designate, Force 110

7 April 1942 – 5 July 1942

Lieutenant General (Acting) Edmond Charles Acton SCHREIBER, C.B., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

Army Commander

6 July 1942 – 11 August 1942

Lieutenant General (Acting) Edmond Charles Acton SCHREIBER, C.B., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*

6 July 1942 – 6 August 1942

General Sir Harold Rupert Leofric George ALEXANDER, K.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C. *, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

12 August 1942 – 14 July 1943

Lieutenant General (Temporary) Kenneth Arthur Noel ANDERSON, C.B., M.C., *p.s.c.*

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

17 March 1942 – 31 March 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Colin Vyvyan O’Neill McNABB, *p.s.c.*, Seaforth’s¹

1 April 1943 – 25 July 1943

Brigadier Cameron Gordon Graham NICHOLSON, D.S.O. *, M.C.

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

1st April 1942 – 20th June 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) John Meredith BENOY, O.B.E., S. Stafford R., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Quarter-Master-General – (D.Q.M.G.)

3 September 1942 – 29 March 1943

Colonel (Acting) Robert Thomas COOKE, R.A.S.C., *p.s.c.*

Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)

1 August 1942 – 25 July 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Hetman Jack PARHAM, D.S.O., R.A.

Brigadier Royal Armoured Corps

17 March 1942 – May 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Ronald Basil Bowen Bancroft COOKE, 17/21st Lancers.

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

24 August 1942 – 1 June 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Norman Annesley COXWELL-ROGERS, D.S.O., O.B.E.

¹ McNABB reverted to rank of W/S Lieutenant Colonel and assumed command of 8th Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Tunisia. He was killed by shellfire on 23 April 1943, aged thirty-nine years.

Deputy Chief Engineer (Airfields)

3 September 1942 – 25 July 1943

Colonel (Acting) Arthur Geoffrey WYATT, R.E.²

Deputy Director of Survey

1942 – 1943

Colonel R. P. WHEELER, (to 18th Army Group)

1943 – 1943

Colonel S. G. HUDSON,

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

1 September 1942 – 25 July 1943 (10th August 1943)

Brigadier (Acting) Charles Kenneth THURSBY-PELHAM, M.C.*, R.Signals.³

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

7 January 1942 – 5 March 1943

Colonel (Temporary) Harold Montague HINDE, O.B.E., R.A.S.C.⁴

5 March 1943 – 25 July 1943 (10th August 1943)

Brigadier (Acting) James Knox GILLESPIE, O.B.E., R.A.S.C.

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

August 1942 – 25 July 1943 (10th August 1943)

Brigadier (Temporary) Ernest Wentworth WADE, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.D.

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

6 July 1942 – 25 July 1943

Colonel (Temporary) Terence Hugh CLARKE, R.A.O.C., *o*.⁵

Deputy Director of Mechanical Engineering – (D.D.M.E.)

4 August 1942 – 29 November 1942

Brigadier (Acting) David Samuel RIDDELL, A.M.I.Mech.E.

29 November 1942 – 30th June 1943

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² WYATT was awarded the C.B.E. for his services in Tunisia.

³ THURSBY-PELHAM had been the Chief Signal Officer of Headquarters Combined Operations, so may have assumed this appointment prior to 1 September 1942 in the rank of Temporary Colonel. Promoted Colonel on 30 June 1943 and awarded the C.B.E. on 5 August 1943.

⁴ On assuming this appointment, HINDE held the rank of Temporary Colonel, but was promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier on 21 August 1942.

⁵ Promoted Acting Brigadier in post with effect from 31 August 1942, and Temporary Brigadier from 1 March 1943.

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