

23rd (Northumbrian) Infantry Division ⁽¹⁾

Divisional Headquarters, 23rd Infantry Division & Employment Platoon

69th Infantry Brigade ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, 69th Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

5th Bn. The East Yorkshire Regiment (The Duke of York's Own)

6th Bn. The Green Howards, (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment)

7th Bn. The Green Howards, (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment)

70th Infantry Brigade ⁽³⁾

Headquarters, 70th Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

10th Bn. The Durham Light Infantry

11th Bn. The Durham Light Infantry

1st Bn. The Tyneside Scottish ⁽⁴⁾

Divisional Troops

8th Bn. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers ⁽⁵⁾

9th Bn. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers ⁽⁶⁾

Headquarters, 23rd (Northumbrian) Divisional Royal Artillery ⁽⁷⁾

124th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery ⁽⁷⁾

(H.Q., 287th (3rd Northumbrian) & 288th (4th Northumbrian) Field Batteries, Royal Artillery)

125th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery ⁽⁷⁾

(H.Q., 294th (2nd Durham) & 295th (3rd Durham) Field Batteries, Royal Artillery)

Headquarters, 23rd (Northumbrian) Divisional Royal Engineers ⁽⁸⁾

233rd (Northumbrian) Field Company, Royal Engineers ⁽⁹⁾

507th Field Company, Royal Engineers ⁽¹⁰⁾

508th Field Park Company, Royal Engineers ⁽¹¹⁾

Detachment, 23rd Divisional Signals, Royal Corps of Signals ⁽¹²⁾

One echelon, Divisional Supply Column, Royal Army Service Corps ⁽¹²⁾

186th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps ⁽¹²⁾

33rd Field Hygiene Section, Royal Army Medical Corps ⁽¹²⁾

Detachment, 23rd Divisional Provost Company, Corps of Military Police ⁽¹²⁾

NOTES:

1. This division was a second line Territorial Army formation, raised as a duplicate of the 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division. Like its parent division, this formation was organized as a Motor Division on a reduced establishment compared to a standard infantry division. Fifty-nine years old Major General William Norman HERBERT, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.* was recalled from retirement to command the division with effect from 2 November 1939. It arrived in France and Belgium on 22 April 1940, and being neither fully equipped nor trained, it was allocated to III Corps for training and labour purposes. All the other ranks were expected to be armed with a rifle, and were issued with an additional set of overalls and a woolen vest. The division was not issued with any anti-tank weapons, other than the anti-tank rifles issued to the infantry battalions. Each infantry battalion was ordered to take any 2" or 3" mortars they were in possession of with them, but it appears that no battalion actually had any 3" mortars issued. Each battalion had ten Boys anti-tank rifles and eighteen Bren guns, well under establishment. The main form of transport were 15 cwt trucks, with several requisitioned vehicles in use, with no Universal carriers available for issue. It was transferred to II Corps on 28 May 1940 and evacuated from Dunkirk on 31 May 1940. On return to the U.K., the division was broken up. It was officially disbanded on 30 June 1940 and Major General HERBERT reverted to retired pay.
2. The 69th Infantry Brigade was a second-line Territorial Army formation raised in 1939 as part of this division. Brigadier (Temporary) the Viscount DOWNE, a Territorial Army officer, assumed command of the brigade on 11 September 1939. Aged thirty-seven years, DOWNE had served for three years in the Grenadier Guards from 1923 until 1926 as Richard DAWNAY, before succeeding to the peerage. DOWNE then served with the Green Howards in the Territorial Army, quickly rising to the rank of Colonel, T.A.
3. The brigade was a second line Territorial Army formation with its headquarters located at Durham. Brigadier (Temporary) Philip KIRKUP, D.S.O.*, O.B.E., M.C. commanded the brigade from its raising on 24 August 1939. A Territorial Army officer having joined the Durham Light Infantry in 1912, KIRKUP was a colliery manager and was aged forty-six years in May 1940. The 10th Bn. was based at Shildon, the 11th Bn. at Chester-le-Street, and the 12th Bn. at Teams near Gateshead. German armoured troops reached the Canal du Nord on 19 May. The 7th Panzer Division surrounded Cambrai, with the 6th Panzer Division and 8th Panzer Division both managing to cross the Canal du Nord against little opposition. The 23rd Infantry Division was ordered to pull back to avoid being outflanked, but the 70th Infantry Brigade was caught while moving back. The men of the brigade had a march of some twenty miles to make and were very tired. The brigade was strung out along the line of march. The 10th Bn. The Durham Light Infantry were at Lattre, the 11th Bn. The Durham Light Infantry had two companies at Ficheux and the rest at Wancourt. The 1st Bn. The Tyneside Scottish were located at Ficheux. These troops were cut aside by the 8th Panzer Division which caught many British troops out in the open. There were many acts of individual bravery, but these troops were lightly armed and not fully trained or equipped. By nightfall of 20 May, the 70th Infantry Brigade comprised only fourteen officers and two-hundred and nineteen men from all three battalions and attached troops. The brigade was effectively destroyed during the fighting in France, but was reconstituted back in the U.K..
4. The 12th Bn. D.L.I. had been retitled on 1 February 1940 to become:
1st Bn. The Tyneside Scottish
Its parent regiment became the Black Watch.

5. The unit was a T.A. battalion based at Prudhoe. Its role was that of the divisional motor cycle battalion.
6. This unit was a second line T.A. battalion, duplicate of the 7th Bn., which was based at Alnwick. It was designated as a machine gun battalion. It was not officially under the command of the division but was attached for labour duties and training purposes.
7. Neither of the artillery regiments actually travelled to France with the division but remained in the United Kingdom although Bellis (*Regiments of the British Army 1939-45 – Artillery*) shows that they did. Both lacked equipment and training to be suitable for operational deployment. The Divisional Commander Royal Artillery remained in the United Kingdom to command the rear details, ie, those elements of the division that did not travel to France.
8. The Divisional Royal Engineers were on a reduced establishment.
9. This field company was a first line Territorial Army unit, based in Jarrow on Tyneside. It was sent to France on a reduced establishment.
10. A second line field company, this unit was also on a reduced establishment.
11. The field park company was on a reduced establishment when sent to France.
12. All the supporting services sent to France with this division were operating on a modified establishment during the campaign. The Divisional Signals took only some dispatch riders, with no telephone line or radio personnel or equipment, so communication had to be by runners or use of the civilian telephone network. The commanding officer of the field ambulance acted as the Assistant Director of Medical Services for the division. The Provost unit comprised a headquarters and three sections instead of the usual six.

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