

## 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Division <sup>(1)</sup>

Advanced Headquarters, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, Signals & Employment Platoon  
Rear Headquarters, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division & Signals

### 16<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade <sup>(2)</sup>

Headquarters, 16<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade, 'J' Section Signals &  
45<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment

2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
16<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade Anti-Tank Company

### 17<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade <sup>(3)</sup>

Headquarters, 17<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade, 'K' Section Signals &  
46<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment

2<sup>nd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion

### 19<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade <sup>(4)</sup>

Headquarters, 19<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade, 'L' Section Signals &  
79<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment

2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion  
2<sup>nd</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion

### Divisional Troops

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment <sup>(5)</sup>  
(H.Q., 'A', 'B' & 'C' Squadrons and 39<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment)

1<sup>st</sup> Bn. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers <sup>(6)</sup>

Headquarters, Royal Australian Artillery, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division (7)

2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery

(H.Q., 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Batteries and 43<sup>rd</sup> Light Aid Detachment)

2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery

(H.Q., 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Field Batteries and 40<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment)

51<sup>st</sup> (Westmorland & Cumberland) Army Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (8)

(H.Q., 203<sup>rd</sup> (Cumberland) & 370<sup>th</sup> (Cumberland Yeomanry) Field Batteries, Royal Artillery)

104<sup>th</sup> Regiment (Essex Yeomanry), Royal Horse Artillery (8)

(H.Q., 339<sup>th</sup> (Essex Royal Horse Artillery) & 414<sup>th</sup> (Essex Yeomanry) Batteries, Royal Horse Artillery)

7<sup>th</sup> Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery (8)

(H.Q., 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> & 234<sup>th</sup> Medium Batteries, Royal Artillery)

Headquarters, Royal Australian Engineers, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division

2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers

2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers

2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers

2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Field Park Company, Royal Australian Engineers

42<sup>nd</sup> Light Aid Detachment

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Signals, Royal Australian Corps of Signals

18<sup>th</sup> Light Aid Detachment

Headquarters, Australian Army Service Corps, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Ammunition Company, Australian Army Service Corps

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Petrol Company, Australian Army Service Corps

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Supply Company, Australian Army Service Corps

Headquarters, Assistant Director of Medical Services, 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division

2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps

2<sup>nd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps

2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps

2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Field Hygiene Section, Australian Army Medical Corps

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Provost Company

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Postal Unit

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Cash Office

6<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisional Salvage Unit

Australian Expeditionary Force Staging Camp

## NOTES:

1. The raising of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Division on 28 September 1939 marked the beginning of the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Expeditionary Force. The 1<sup>st</sup> A.E.F had fought during the First World War, so the numbering of the divisions and brigades in the 2<sup>nd</sup> A.E.F. followed on from those in the 1<sup>st</sup> A.E.F.. In the same manner, the numbering of the infantry brigades was consecutive to those raised in the First World War. The infantry battalions were numbered 2<sup>nd</sup>/xx in order to reflect their raising for the 2<sup>nd</sup> A.E.F.. The division was allocated the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigades. The 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade sailed for the Middle East on 20 January 1940, to be followed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade on 11 April 1940. The 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade sailed for the Middle East on 8 May 1940, but was diverted to the United Kingdom. To replace the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade was formed in Palestine on 23 May 1940, and joined this division in November 1940. The General Officer Commanding the formation was Lieutenant General Thomas BLAMEY, who assumed command of the division on 13 October 1939. His promotion to the rank of Lieutenant General was to provide him with the authority to act as the commander of the Australian Expeditionary Force. He answered to the Australian government on all matters, except that his formation was under the operational control of the British Middle East Command. On 3 April 1940, BLAMEY assumed command of I Australian Corps, with Major General Iven MacKAY assuming command of this formation. MacKAY remained in command until 13 August 1941. The division first saw combat when it joined Operation Compass on 12 December 1940, replacing the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division which had been withdrawn for active service in East Africa. The first unit to see action was the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, which fought actions at Fort Maddalena and Garn el Grein on 11 and 12 December 1940. The 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade began to move up from Alexandria on 12 December, followed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade and Divisional Headquarters. The 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade was held back in reserve. The 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade with 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment closed up on Bardia by 20 December to join the 16<sup>th</sup> British Brigade. The 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade relieved the 16<sup>th</sup> British Brigade on 27 December, and preparations began to attack Bardia. The assault commenced in the early hours of 3 January 1941, with resistance coming to an end by 13.00 hours on the 5<sup>th</sup>. About 40,000 Italian soldiers became prisoners of war, with the Australians suffering 130 men killed and 326 injured. By midday on 7 January, the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade had closed up on Tobruk. The assault on the town began at 05.40 hours on 21 January, the garrison surrendering on midday on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with about 25,000 Italians surrendering. The Australians entered Benghazi on 5 February, with the Italian Tenth Army surrendering two days later. At the beginning of March, G.H.Q. Middle East Command ordered the division to move back into Egypt and prepare to travel to Greece in anticipation of the German invasion of the country. The 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Division moved into Cyrenaica to replace their colleagues. In total, the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division suffered 214 men killed, 790 injured and 21 captured during Operation Compass.
2. This brigade was originally formed in Australia with four battalions, all raised in New South Wales. The fourth battalion, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>, left the brigade on the formation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Brigadier Arthur Samuel ALLEN commanded this brigade throughout this period.
3. This brigade was originally formed in Australia with four battalions, all recruited from Victoria. The fourth battalion, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>, left the brigade and transferred to the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade in May 1940. Brigadier S. G. SAVIGE commanded this brigade during this period.

4. This brigade was formed on 23 May 1940 from the fourth battalions from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Brigades. It originally formed part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, but transferred to this division in November 1940. Brigadier H. C. H. ROBINSON commanded this brigade.
5. The regiment was the first unit of the division to see action. It was equipped at this time with Bren Carriers and lorries.
6. This battalion was a Regular British Army unit, which at the outbreak of war was based in Egypt. As it was the only machine gun battalion available in Egypt, it was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division for the commencement of Operation Compass, then transferred across to the command of this formation for the rest of the campaign. It left this division before this division sailed for Greece and converted to the anti-tank role in February 1940.
7. Brigadier Edmund Francis HERRING was the Commander Royal Artillery of this division during the campaign in Libya, and also later in Greece.
8. These British Army regiments were attached to this division for the duration of Operation Compass.

#### SOURCES:

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