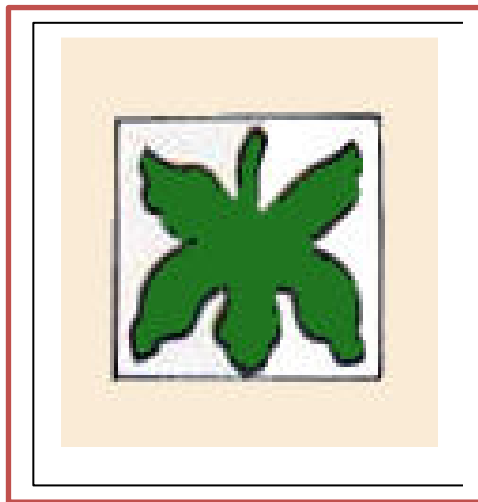


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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

III CORPS (LAND FORCES GREECE) (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A concise history of III Corps, a corps level formation in the British Army between 1939 and 1945. In 1945, the corps was redesignated as British Forces and Military Liaison Greece, and later simply as British Forces Greece. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1939 and 1946 are included.

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A Concise History of III Corps (British Land Forces Greece) (History & Personnel)

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III Corps (British Land Forces Greece)

III Corps was formed in the United Kingdom on 25 October 1939 as the third corps formation for deployment with the British Expeditionary Force in France. It opened in France in April 1940 taking command of the 5th Infantry Division on 8 April 1940, the division transferring from II Corps. The 42nd (East Lancashire) Division arrived in France on 12 April 1940 to join III Corps on 29 April. The 44th (Home Counties) Division arrived in France on 1 April 1940 and joined III Corps on the same day. The 5th Infantry Division passed to the command of G.H.Q. B.E.F. on 1 May 1940.

On 10 May 1940, when the German invasion of Western Europe commenced, the corps had under command the:

- 42nd (East Lancashire) Infantry Division;
- 44th (Home Counties) Infantry Division.

In June 1940, following evacuation from Dunkirk, the corps moved to the North West of England. It took under command the 38th (Welsh) Infantry Division on 15 July 1940, but this formation left on 29 October 1940 to transfer to G.H.Q. Home Forces. On the same date, the 5th Infantry Division transferred to join the corps from Scottish Command. This formation remained under command until 31 March 1941 when it moved to Northern Ireland. In late April 1941, the corps headquarters moved to Northern Ireland, where it took command of the two infantry divisions already based in the Province on 1 May 1941. The order of battle at this time was:

- 5th Infantry Division;
- 61st Infantry Division.

The 5th Infantry Division left the corps on 16 January 1942 to begin its move to India. In the meantime, the 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division had moved to Northern Ireland to join III Corps on 10 November 1941. H.Q. III Corps appears to have left Northern Ireland on 31 May 1942, as the 59th Infantry Division came under command of British Troops Northern Ireland on this date.

Headquarters III Corps reopened in Kermanshah in Iraq in August 1942. On 28 August 1942, the 5th Infantry Division arrived in Iraq and came under command of III Corps. The other division in the corps was the 6th Indian Infantry Division so the order of battle for the corps was:

- 5th Infantry Division;
- 6th Indian Infantry Division.

In September 1942, the corps moved to Qasr Shirin in Persia (Iran). On 31 January 1943, the 5th Infantry Division left III Corps to join XIII Corps in Syria and later Italy.

The corps headquarters moved to Egypt in late 1943. On 1 January 1944, it took under command the 6th South African Armoured Division. This division left on 14 March 1944 in preparation for deployment to Italy. The 5th Infantry Division was again under command between 14 July and 9 August 1944. In mid-1944, planning commenced for the reoccupation of Greece in anticipation that the German forces would withdraw from the country in the near future. On 19 August 1944, the 23rd Armoured Brigade was redesignated as Force 140 for operations in Greece. In September 1944, the German forces started withdrawing from Greece. Headquarters III Corps was redesignated as Force 140 on 18 September, and took under command:

- 23rd Armoured Brigade;
- 2nd Parachute Brigade;
- 139th Infantry Brigade.

On 25 September, British Special Forces aided by Greek partisans captured the port of Patras. British forces arrived offshore the island of Poros on 13 October, with Lieutenant General SCOBIE aboard H.M.S. Orion. Troops from the 2nd Parachute Brigade landed the next day. The corps headquarters and the 23rd Armoured Brigade landed on 16 December, Headquarters III Corps being redesignated as H.Q. Land Forces and Military Liaison Greece the next day. British Special Forces pursued the retreating Germans through Greece, but were not strong enough to do anything other than monitor their movement. The 23rd Armoured Brigade moved into Athens and Piraeus. On 3 November, the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade from the 4th Indian Division landed in Macedonia in northern Greece to assume control of that area.

Lieutenant General SCOBIE reported Greece to be clear of German forces on 5 November, but the next day, rising tensions between the royalist and communist political groupings in the country began to surface. The other two brigades from the 4th Indian Division landed during November; the 11th Indian Infantry Brigade at Patras on 17 November, and the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade at Patras on 22 November. Violence erupted on 3 December, as Greece descended into civil war. As a consequence, the 23rd Armoured Brigade and 2nd Parachute Brigade formed 'Ark Force' in Athens; and the 139th Infantry Brigade also started landing in Greece. In addition, the Greek Mountain Brigade was also deployed into Athens alongside the British troops. SCOBIE ordered a full scale offensive against the communist E.L.A.S. troops who were trying to occupy Athens.

As fighting escalated, on 12 December Headquarters X Corps (under command of Lieutenant General HAWKESWORTH) landed in Greece and assumed command of the British and loyal Greek troops in Athens. Further reinforcements came in the form of the 4th Infantry Division which arrived on 13 December 1944. The civil war in Greece intensified, with particularly fierce fighting taking place in Athens. By New Year's Day 1945, most of southern Athens was under British control, and the tide was turning against the E.L.A.S. troops.

An armistice was agreed in the Peloponnese on 5 January, and 'Ark Force' was disbanded on 8 January, with the units resuming their previous designations. On 12 January, SCOBIE was confident enough to declare all the major towns and cities in Greece under his control. The remainder of the 46th Infantry Division arrived on 14 January and moved into Athens. The next day, SCOBIE signed a truce with E.L.A.S. and the civil war effectively ended. The 2nd Parachute Brigade Group left Greece on 28 January bound for Italy, and on 1 February Headquarters Military Command Athens also closed, with Headquarters X Corps returning to Italy. As matters settled down, the 4th Indian Infantry Division assumed responsibility security in northern Greece, and the 4th Infantry Division for southern Greece.

On 1 April 1945, Headquarters Land Forces and Military Liaison Greece was redesignated simply as Land Forces Greece. The 46th Infantry Division left for Italy on 7 April as troop levels were reduced. In December 1945, the 4th Indian Division was sent back to India, with the British units in the division sailing for the United Kingdom. A new formation, titled the 13th Infantry Division was formed to garrison southern Greece, to allow the 4th Infantry Division to move to northern Greece to replace the Indian formation. The 13th Infantry Division was disbanded in November 1946, and the 4th Infantry Division in the March of the following year. A now much reduced British Forces Greece continued to exist until February 1950 when the last British troops left.

Corps Commander

25 October 1939 – 8 June 1940

Lieutenant General Sir Ronald Forbes ADAM, 2nd Baronet, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

24 June 1940 – 30 November 1940

Lieutenant General James Handyside MARSHALL-CORNWALL, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*¹

15 December 1940 – 11 December 1943

Lieutenant General (Acting) Desmond Francis ANDERSON, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., *p.s.c.*, Col E. Yorks R.²

11 December 1943 – 16 December 1944

Lieutenant General (Acting) Ronald MacKenzie SCOBIE, C.B., C.B.E., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*

General Officer Commanding, Land Forces & Military Liaison (Greece)

17th December 1944 – 12th March 1946

Lieutenant General (Acting) Ronald MacKenzie SCOBIE, C.B., C.B.E., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*³

1st March 1946 – 31st March 1946

Lieutenant General (Acting) Kenneth Noel CRAWFORD, C.B., M.C., *p.s.c.*

General Officer Commanding Land Forces Greece

1 April 1946 – 11 May 1947

Lieutenant General (Acting) Kenneth Noel CRAWFORD, C.B., M.C., *p.s.c.*

12 May 1947 – 30 April 1948⁴

Major General (Temporary) Ernest Edward DOWN, C.B.E.⁵

¹ Created K.C.B. and knighted on 11 July 1940.

² Promoted Lieutenant General on 7 February 1941. Created K.B.E. and knighted on 1 January 1943.

³ Created K.B.E. and knighted on 26 April 1945.

⁴ On 30 April 1948, the command merged with British Military Mission to Greece, with DOWN remaining in command.

⁵ Promoted substantive Major General on 30 October 1947.

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

25th October 1939 – 17th September 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) Daril Gerald WATSON, M.C., *p.s.c.*

12th May 1941 – 16th June 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Alexander Frank Philip CHRISTISON, M.C. *, *p.s.c.*

10th April 1942 – 8th September 1942

Brigadier (Temporary) Gerald Arthur PILLEAU, Queen's R, M.C., *p.s.c.*

17th July 1943 – 26th January 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Robert John SPRINGHALL, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

27th January 1945 – 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Hugh Salusbury Kynaston MAINWARING, C.B.E., D.S.O., R.A., T.A.

1945 – 1947

Brigadier (Temporary) John Mather KIRKMAN, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Chief of Staff, British Land Forces Greece

1st October 1945 – 14th March 1946

Major General (Temporary) Alfred Dudley WARD, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., King's R., *p.s.c.*

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

27th November 1939 – 14th June 1940

Brigadier (Acting) Humfrey Myddleton GALE, C.V.O., M.C.

15th June 1940 – 6th February 1941

Brigadier (Acting) Reginald Henry LORIE, *p.s.c.*⁶

9th February 1941 – 4th November 1944

Brigadier (Acting) William George HARRIOTT, O.B.E., M.C., R.A., *p.s.c.*

Brigadier in charge of Administration

5th November 1944 – 1946

Brigadier (Temporary) Edward Gordon AUDLAND, C.B.E., M.C., *p.s.c.*

⁶ Awarded the C.B.E. on July 1940. Changed his name by deed poll in March 1944 to Rufus Henry LAURIE.

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

25th October 1939 – 1940/1

Brigadier (Temporary) William Edmonstone DUNCAN, C.V.O., D.S.O., M.C.*, *p.s.c.*

1943 – 1943

Brigadier (Temporary) Robert Peel WALLER, D.S.O., M.C., *g*

October 1944 – 5th July 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) David Francis AIKENHEAD, D.S.O., M.C.

Corps Commander Medium Artillery – (C.C.M.A.)

25th October 1939 – 31st October 1941

Brigadier (Temporary) Hudleston Noel Hedworth WILLIAMSON, D.S.O., M.C.

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

25th October 1939 – 1940/1

Brigadier (Acting) John Eric CHIPPINDALL, M.C.

15th April 1942 – 21st February 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Frank William Tarbuck HARDS, R.E.

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

25th October 1939 – 1st July 1940

Colonel (Acting) Fitz-Alan George DRAYSON, M.C. Retired Pay (Reserve of Officers)

Colonel L. B. NICHOLLS

7th September 1943 – 20th June 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Guy Stuart O'Neill POWER, O.B.E., R. Signals

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

6th December 1939 – 5th August 1941

Colonel Lionel George HUMPHREYS, A.M.I.Mech.E.

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

13th January 1940 – 1940

Colonel Alexander Leslie STEVENSON, M.B.

9th August 1941 – August 1942

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

1942 – 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Francis Rossall SANDFORD, C.B.E., M.C., T.D.

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

Colonel

MILITARY LIAISON GREECE

Head of Military Liaison Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania.

12th October 1943 – 13th March 1945

Major General (Temporary) Ivor Thomas Percival HUGHES, D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*⁷

Brigadier Liaison

12th October 1943 – 1st April 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Peter Lockwood SMITH-DORRIEN, Sherwood Foresters, *s.c.*⁸

Brigadier (Military Wing)

12th October 1943 – 1st April 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Raymond Alister Trustram EVE, K.R.R.C., *p.s.c.*⁹

Brigadier (Supplies and Relief) and Head of Military Liaison Headquarters

January 1945 – April 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Godfrey Vaughan PALMER, O.B.E., T.D., The Queen's R., (Lieutenant Reserve of Officers), T.A.

⁷ Awarded the C.B. on 6 January 1944.

⁸ Awarded the O.B.E. for services in Greece on 21 June 1945.

⁹ Awarded the C.B.E. for services in Greece on 21 June 1945.

BRITISH MILITARY MISSION TO GREECE

Commanding Officer, British Military Mission to Greece.

19th October 1944 – 13th March 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Charles Edward Anson FIRTH, D.S.O., *p.s.c.*, Glos. R.

General Officer Commanding

1st April 1945 – 6th April 1945

Major General (Acting) Charles Edward Anson FIRTH, D.S.O., *p.s.c.*, Glos. R.

7th April 1945 – 22nd August 1945

Major General Gerald Russell SMALLWOOD, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *p.s.c.*

23rd August 1945 – 30 April 1948

Major General (Acting) Stuart Blundell RAWLINS, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.*, *p.s.c.*

1 May 1948 – 21 December 1949

Major General Ernest Edward DOWN, C.B., C.B.E.¹⁰

¹⁰ Awarded the C.B. on 1 January 1949.

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The Quarterly Army List April 1944 Parts I and II

The Quarterly Army List July 1944 Parts I and II

The Quarterly Army List October 1944 Parts I and II

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