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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

LONDON DISTRICT (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A concise history of the London District, a higher level formation of the British Army within the United Kingdom, in existence from 1905 to date. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1939 and 1950 are included.

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A Concise History of the London District (History & Personnel)

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London District

London is now recognised as both the capital of England and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but it has a long and complex history. The first settlement in what is now London is believed to have originated in the Bronze Age. This location was chosen as it was the lowest crossing point of the River Thames, at a location where the river was still tidal allowing vessels to come upstream for trade. Several other rivers flowed into the River Thames in this area, providing a series of creeks that were safe and secure.

The Romans invaded England in AD 43, and four years after their landing, they established a settlement where London is now located. This was burnt down by the Iceni tribe in AD 61, but such was this location's ideal situation, a new settlement was built by the Romans, which was this time protected by walls and gates. Londinium prospered, and circa AD 100, it became the capital of the Roman Province of Britannia, replacing Colchester. It is estimated that Roman Londinium had a population of about 60,000 people.

With the collapse of Roman rule in the early Fifth Century, the walled city of Londinium was abandoned, but the Anglo-Saxons settled slightly to the west of the Roman city. It grew to become a major port in this period, but it suffered during repeated Viking assaults on England. King Alfred the Great re-established London as a population centre in AD 886, and it grew steadily from then on. By the Eleventh Century, London was the largest settlement in England, and with Westminster Abbey being constructed in this period, it now had the major church in England. As such, London began to assume the role as England's capital from Winchester.

After William, Duke of Normandy, successfully invaded England in 1066, he was crowned in the recently completed Westminster Abbey, cementing this church as the focal point for England's Kings and Queens. William commenced construction of the Tower of London, as a Norman castle constructed in stone. Two cities developed alongside each other, the City of Westminster as the centre of government, and the City of London as the commercial centre. This was the origins of the City of London having its own governance under the Corporation of London.

By 1300, the population of London had grown to about 100,000, but the disease known as the 'Black Death' killed about a third of the residents of the city. London sided with the Parliamentary cause in the English Civil War, with the New Model Army entering the city in 1647. Disease struck again in the Great Plague of 1665 – 1666, which may have killed up to 100,000 people in London alone, about 20% of the population. The Great Fire of London in 1666 destroyed most of the wooden buildings in the densely populated city. Rebuilding took ten years, and in 1708, St. Paul's Cathedral was completed.

In 1762, King George III acquired Buckingham House, which became his main place of residence in London, and during the Napoleonic Wars, London supplanted Amsterdam as Europe's leading financial centre, London developed as Europe's foremost port, and the United Kingdom as the world's largest and most powerful maritime nation.

London expanded significantly with the advent of the railways, with commuting into work becoming a normal way of life for many people. The Cities of Westminster and London were surrounded by the historic counties of Middlesex, with extended around London from the north-east to the south-west, with Surrey and Kent to the south of the River Thames. Essex extended into what is now the east of London, with Hertfordshire to the north-east.

In 1939, the population of the United Kingdom was 47,762,000, excluding service personnel serving overseas, and merchant seaman. The population of London in the same year was 8,610,000, which constituted 18% of the total population of the entire U.K.. It was a densely populated city, with many people living in flats or lodgings, or closely packed terraced housing. The Port of London extended from Tilbury up the River Thames to Brentford, and it accounted for 20% of all of the U.K.'s maritime trade. The major docks in the East End of London, with the railway systems to serve the docks, were a significant economic asset for the U.K.

In terms of the British Army, London District was formed in February 1905 as an independent district within Home Forces. The headquarters was based at Horse Guards, London. It covered the County of London, and the Guards Depots at Caterham, Windsor and Pirbright. The General Commanding London District also held the post of Major General Commanding, Brigade of Guards. The role of the London District was to provide the troops for the ceremonial and guarding duties within the capital city of the United Kingdom, being the seat of the Royal Family and H.M. Government. Although the District was always an independent command, it shared many appointments and services with Eastern Command.

The London District also administered the large number of units within the Territorial Army that were based in London. In 1930, the London District provided two infantry divisions, the basis of which were twenty-four infantry battalions. As the threat of war again rose in the mid-1930's, H.M. Government and the Army Council decided to raise anti-aircraft artillery units within the Territorial Army. This led to the conversion of several infantry battalions into either artillery or searchlight units, and the disbandment of one of the two London based divisions. This was prescient, as during the Second World War, London was the main target of German air attacks, and later from flying bombs. These killed over 30,000 men, women and children, and they laid waste large parts of London, particularly around the docks. Anti-Aircraft Command controlled the guns and searchlights, but the London District responded with Bomb Disposal units, other engineer and pioneer (labour) units to clear bomb damage and restore essential infrastructure.

The population of London declined significantly during and after the Second World War, mainly due to the destruction of housing and the threat of air attack by aircraft and missiles. In 1980, the population of Greater London was down to about 6.8 million, and it did not recover to 1939 levels until 2015. By 2015, the population of the inner London boroughs declined from 4,440,000 to 3,440,000, but the population of the outer boroughs increased by 24% to 5,190,000.

The London District remains in place today, as the capital remains a key location for the British Army, mainly in respect of ceremonial duties, but with the threat of terrorism, it has a key role in the security of the capital city of the U.K.

General Officer Commanding

1 December 1934 – 26 October 1938

[Major General Bertram Norman SERGISON-BROOKE, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c.](#)

26 October 1938 – 18 October 1939

Major General Augustus Francis Andrew Nicol THORNE, C.M.G., D.S.O.

18 October 1939 – 1 June 1942

[Lieutenant General \(Local\) Sir Bertram Norman SERGISON-BROOKE, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c.](#)

1 June 1942 – 18 February 1944

Lieutenant General (Local) Sir Arthur Francis SMITH, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., p.s.c.

18 February 1944 – 17 February 1947

Lieutenant General Sir Henry Charles LOYD, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, p.s.c.

18 February 1947 – 1950

Major General Sir John Charles Oakes MARRIOTT, K.C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

1950 – 1953

Major General Sir Julian GASCOIGNE, K.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

General Staff Officer 1st Grade (Operations and Training)

10 December 1939 – 15 October 1940

[Lieutenant Colonel \(Acting\) George Frederick JOHNSON, S. Gds, p.s.c.](#)

16 October 1940 – 4 January 1942

[Lieutenant Colonel \(Acting\) Thomas Byrnard TRAPPES-LOMAX, S. G'ds, p.s.c.](#)

5 January 1942 – 30 October 1942

[Lieutenant Colonel \(Temporary\) Hugh Ronald NORMAN, C.G'ds \(s.c\)](#)

1 November 1942 – 3 May 1944

[Lieutenant Colonel John MOUBRAY, D.S.O., C.G'ds](#)

Colonel, General Staff

4 May 1944 – 20 August 1944

[Colonel \(Acting\) John MOUBRAY, D.S.O., C.G'ds](#)

21 August 1944 – 31 July 1947

[Colonel \(Temporary\) Herbert Leslie GRAHAM, M.C., S. G'ds](#)

1 August 1947 – 1948

Brigadier (Temporary) J. N. R. MOORE, C.B.E., D.S.O., Gren G'ds, (s.c.)

Colonel i/c Administration and Assistant Adjutant-General

26 August 1939 – 1940

Colonel L. M. GIBBS, C.V.O., D.S.O., M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers) (Gentleman-at-Arms)

Brigadier i/c Administration and Assistant Adjutant-General

3 December 1940 – 4 June 1945

Brigadier (Acting) L. M. GIBBS, C.V.O., D.S.O., M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers) (Gentleman-at-Arms)

5 June 1945 – 1948

[Brigadier \(Temporary\) Thomas Byrnard TRAPPES-LOMAX, p.s.c.](#)

Assistant Adjutant-General

25 May 1940 – 1945

Colonel (Local 02/10/41) Sir E. Geoffrey HIPPISEY-COX, Knight, C.B.E., T.D., T.A. Reserve

16 September 1945 – 1947

Colonel (Temporary) R. B. PEMBROKE, C. G'ds, *p.s.c.*

7 March 1947 – 1948

Lieutenant Colonel (Temporary) P. T. CLIFTON, D.S.O., Gren G'ds, (s.c.)

Assistant Adjutant-General (Welfare and Leave)

4 September 1945 – 1948

Colonel (Local) John MOUBRAY, D.S.O., C. G'ds

Assistant Quarter-Master-General

20 May 1940 – 1945

Colonel G. R. CODRINGTON, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., T.D., T.A.

24 April 1945 – 1948

Lieutenant Colonel G. W. BROWNING, O.B.E., W. G'ds

Movement Control – Assistant Quarter-Master-General.

15 December 1947 – 1948

Colonel (Temporary) R. G. PHILLIPS, O.B.E., T.D., T.A. Res.

Commander Royal Engineers

2 September 1939 – 1940

Lieutenant Colonel G. R. H. DEANE, retired pay (Reserve of Officers)

29 November 1940 – 23 August 1942

Colonel (Acting) Aubrey Edward WHITE, R.E.

24 August 1942 – 19 August 1944

Colonel Edmund RAIT-KERR, M.C.*

20 August 1944 – 10 January 1945

Colonel Edward Norton CLIFTON, C.B.E.

11 January 1945 – 1945

Colonel (Temporary) W. A. TURNER, M.C., R.E.

9 September 1946 – 1948

Colonel George Frederick Hill ALMS, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

Chief Signal Officer

2 December 1939 – 12 December 1943

[Colonel \(Acting\) Denys Anthony BROWN, M.C., R. Signals](#)

13 December 1943 – 1945

Colonel (Acting) H. V. Von S. THORNE, Employed List

2 October 1946 – 1 September 1947

[Colonel \(Temporary\) Henry Nevay CRAWFORD, M.B.E., R.Signals.](#)

2 September 1947 – 1948

Brigadier (Temporary) R. W. MORGAN, O.B.E.

Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport

26 October 1940 – 1942

Colonel S. E. H. GILES, D.S.O., retired pay (Reserve of Officers)

7 September 1942 – 1944

Colonel (Acting) Sir Francis William Crewe FETHERSTON-GODLEY, Kt, O.B.E., Reserve of Officers

21 February 1944 – 1944

[Colonel \(Acting\) George Brown MacDONALD, O.B.E., M.C., A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.S.C.](#)

30 May 1944 – 1947

Colonel (Temporary) L. W. WALSH, O.B.E., R.A.S.C.

27 February 1947 – 1948

Colonel (Temporary) T. E. CLARKE, O.B.E., M.C., A.M.I.Mech.E., R.A.S.C.

Assistant Director of Medical Services

1939 – 1942

Colonel N. E. DUNKERTON, D.S.O., retired pay (Reserve of Officers)

19 August 1942 – 6 September 1942

[Colonel Roy Kyffin MALLAM, O.B.E., M.B.](#)

Deputy Director of Medical Services

7 September 1942 – 20 March 1945

[Brigadier \(Acting\) Roy Kyffin MALLAM, O.B.E., M.B.](#)

21 March 1945 – 1948

[Brigadier \(Temporary\) Quentin Vaughan Brooks WALLACE, C.B.E., M.C.](#)

Deputy Director Ordnance Services

22 October 1942 – 31 December 1943

Colonel Cyril Francis DOUGLAS-WHITE, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

1 January 1944 – 1944

Colonel K. G. CLISSOLD, R.A.O.C.

18 September 1944 – 13 June 1946

Colonel (Temporary) Cecil Hubert COOPER, C.B.E., R.A.O.C.

14 June 1946 – 1948

Colonel (Temporary) George Arthur VINER, O.B.E., R.A.O.C.

Deputy Director Mechanical Engineering¹

1 February 1940 – 1945

Colonel (Temporary 01/04/44) J. G. H. BUDD, R.E.M.E.

23 September 1946 – 1947

Colonel (Acting) Alan Godfrey DRAKE-BROCKMAN, O.B.E., A.M.I.Mech.E, A.M.I.E.E., R.E.M.E.

30 May 1947 – 1948

Colonel (Temporary) L. H. GORDON, A.M.I.Mech.E., R.E.M.E., (s.c.)

Command Paymaster

The Command Paymaster, Eastern Command

Staff Officer 1st Grade Education

20 November 1941 – 1943

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) P. L. C. WEBSTER, B.A., A.E.C.

16 August 1943 – 1944

Lieutenant Colonel (Acting) A. E. WATTS, M.A., A.E.C.

Command Education Officer

27 June 1945 – 1948

Colonel F. P. ROE, A.E.C.

Command Welfare Officer

1941 – 1943

Colonel (Acting 11/03/41) The Lord NATHAN, General List

¹ This post commenced as Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer, but of 1 October 1942, it changed with the formation of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Staff at July 1937

Aide-de-Camp

Captain Randle Guy FIELDEN, C G'ds

General Staff Officer 2nd Grade

Major Arthur Guy SALISBURY-JONES, M.C. C G'ds

General Staff Officer for Weapon Training

Captain Gerald Harry George LLOYD-VERNEY, Gren G'ds

Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General – (D.A.A. & Q.M.G.)

Major John Charles Oakes MARRIOTT, D.S.O., M.V.O., M.C., Scots G'ds

Staff Captain

Captain G. W. BROWNING, Gren G'ds

Brigade Major, Brigade of Guards

Major J. A. LLOYD, Gren G'ds

Commander, Royal Engineers – (C.R.E.)

Lieutenant Colonel F. E. BULLER, O.B.E., M.C., R.E

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

Lieutenant Colonel H. V. Von S. THORNE, R Sigs

Assistant Provost Marshal (Class FF)

Captain T. H. H. GRAYSON, I G'ds

Supervising Officer for Physical Training (Class GG)

Lieutenant R. T. LEE, Gren G'ds

Command Education Officer

Brevet Major A. E. WATTS, M.A., A.E.C.

North London Area4 December 1939 – 1940Brigadier (Acting) T. R. C. PRICE, C.M.G., D.S.O., retired pay, *p.s.c.***North-East London Sub-Area**18 March 1941 – 1942

Colonel W. H. Wynne FINCH, M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers) T.A.

North West London Sub-Area13th May 1941 – 1942

Colonel H. A. R. AUBREY, O.B.E., M.C., retired pay (Reserve of Officers)

South London Area4 December 1939 – 9 May 1940

Brigadier (Temporary) William Augustus Fitzgerald Lane FOX-PITT, M.V.O., M.C.

South-East London Sub-Area18 March 1941 – 20 August 1944Colonel (Acting) Herbert Leslie GRAHAM, M.C., S. G'ds²**South-West London Sub-Area**18 March 1941 – 1942

Colonel (Temporary) E. J. L. SPEED, M.C.

Headquarters Woolwich Garrison19 September 1939 – 1940Colonel N. H. C. SHERBROOKE, D.S.O., retired pay (Reserve of Officers), *p.s.c.*20 March 1941 – 1944/5Colonel Charles Edmund RYAN, M.C., *p.s.c.*

2 Promoted Temporary Colonel on 18 September 1941, Acting Brigadier on 15 February 1944, and Temporary Brigadier on 15 August 1944. Reverted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 20 August 1944.

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The Half Yearly Army List for the period ending 31st December 1941

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The Quarterly Army List January 1942

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