

## Avon Force <sup>(1)</sup>

Force Headquarters <sup>(2)</sup>

24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Guards) <sup>(3)</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Scots Guards

1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Irish Guards

2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The South Wales Borderers

3<sup>rd</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery <sup>(4)</sup>

229<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers <sup>(5)</sup>

230<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers <sup>(5)</sup>

Detachment, 231<sup>st</sup> (West Riding) Field Park Company, Royal Engineers <sup>(5)</sup>

## NOTES:

1. The original force designated for deployment to Narvik was called Avon Force, under the command of Major General P. J. MACKESY. The overall commander was Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery. The operation was codenamed 'Avonmouth'. It appears the name was changed by Winston CHURCHILL circa 11<sup>th</sup> April to 'Rupert Force'. It was also known as the North Western Expeditionary Force.
2. The Force Headquarters was formed from the staff of the 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.
3. The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Guards) was a war raised formation. It was formed in the United Kingdom with effect from the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1940. The two battalions that came under command when the brigade formed were both Regular Army Guards units based in London. The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Scots Guards were based at Chelsea Barracks, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Irish Guards based at Wellington Barracks. Brigadier (Acting) The Honourable William FRASER, D.S.O. M.C., *p.s.c.* was the commanding officer of the brigade. On formation, the brigade was part of Aldershot Command, but on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1940, it was transferred to Avon Force in anticipation of a forthcoming deployment to Norway. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The South Wales Borderers transferred into this brigade with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1940. The brigade sailed from the U.K. on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1940, arriving in Norway on the 15<sup>th</sup> April. Brigadier FRASER was wounded in action on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1940, with command of the brigade assumed by Lieutenant Colonel T. B. TRAPPES-LOMAX. TRAPPES-LOMAX was replaced on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940 by Lieutenant Colonel W. D. FAULKNER, but he was killed when his ship was bombed. On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1940, when returning from Mo to Harstadt (Norway) the destroyer H.M.S. Somali, was damaged by enemy bombing and had to return to the U.K. taking Brigadier FRASER with it. Brigadier FRASER arrived at Harstadt on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1940, where he was pronounced unfit by a medical board due to wounds received on 30<sup>th</sup> April and returned to U.K.. Command of brigade devolved on Brigadier C. McV. GUBBINS, commander of troops Bodo Area, until it left Norway on 6<sup>th</sup> June for the U.K. to refit and reform. Brigadier FRASER resumed command on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940. (JOSLEN)
4. This was a Regular Army battery. It was equipped with eight (later ten), 40 mm Bofors light anti-aircraft guns. It arrived at Harstad but moved to the mainland at Bardufoss to protect the Allied force. By the 9<sup>th</sup> May, the demands on the anti-aircraft resources were such that the limited resources were deployed widely. On the 9<sup>th</sup> May, this battery had its headquarters and two guns based at Harstad, two guns at Skaanland, two at Bardufoss, and four guarding the French forces at Grattangen, a distance of over eighty miles between these positions. This battery was evacuated on the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> June 1940.
- 5.
- 6.

## Rupert Force (1)

Force Headquarters (2)

### 24<sup>th</sup> (Guards) Infantry Brigade (3)

1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Scots Guards

1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Irish Guards

2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The South Wales Borderers

One troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> King's Own Hussars (4)

203<sup>rd</sup> (Cumberland) Battery, 51<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (5)

### 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade (6)

51<sup>st</sup> (London) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (7)

(H.Q., 151<sup>st</sup> (London), 152<sup>nd</sup> (London) & 153<sup>rd</sup> (London) Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery)

82<sup>nd</sup> (Essex) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (8)

(H.Q., 156<sup>th</sup> (Barking), 193<sup>rd</sup> & 256<sup>th</sup> (Barking) Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery)

55<sup>th</sup> (Devon) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (9)

(H.Q., 163<sup>rd</sup>, 164<sup>th</sup> & 165<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery)

56<sup>th</sup> (East Lancashire) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (10)

(H.Q., 166<sup>th</sup>, 167<sup>th</sup> & 168<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery)

229<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers (11)

230<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers (11)

Detachment, 231<sup>st</sup> (West Riding) Field Park Company, Royal Engineers (11)

### 27<sup>th</sup> Demi-Brigade, Chasseurs Alpains (12)

6<sup>th</sup> Bn. Chasseurs Alpains

12<sup>th</sup> Bn. Chasseurs Alpains

14<sup>th</sup> Bn. Chasseurs Alpains

### 13<sup>th</sup> Demi-Brigade, Foreign Legion (13)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

Polish Brigade (Chasseurs du Nord) (14)

1<sup>st</sup> Demi-Brigade

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

2<sup>nd</sup> Demi-Brigade

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion

4<sup>th</sup> Battalion

342<sup>nd</sup> Independent Tank Company

2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Group, Colonial Artillery

14<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs Alpins

## NOTES:

1. Avon Force was under the command of Major General P. J. MACKESY under the overall command of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery. As the number of forces increased, the decision was taken to appoint a corps commander to assume overall command of the Allied forces in North Norway (sometimes referred to as the North-Western Expeditionary Force). Lieutenant General Claude John Eyre AUCHINLECK, C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E., Indian Army, *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.* assumed command on the 5<sup>th</sup> May when his instructions were issued by the War Office. He travelled to Norway arriving on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, taking over from Major General MACKESY with effect from the 13<sup>th</sup> May.
2. The Headquarters, Rupert Force were formed by personnel from Headquarters, IV Corps.
3. The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Guards) was a war raised formation. It was formed in the United Kingdom with effect from the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1940. The two battalions that came under command when the brigade formed were both Regular Army Guards units based in London. The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Scots Guards were based at Chelsea Barracks, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Irish Guards based at Wellington Barracks. Brigadier (Acting) The Honourable William FRASER, D.S.O. M.C., *p.s.c.* was the commanding officer of the brigade. On formation, the brigade was part of Aldershot Command, but on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1940, it was transferred to Avon Force in anticipation of a forthcoming deployment to Norway. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. The South Wales Borderers transferred into this brigade with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1940. The brigade sailed from the U.K. on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1940, arriving in Norway on the 15<sup>th</sup> April. Brigadier FRASER was wounded in action on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1940, with command of the brigade assumed by Lieutenant Colonel T. B. TRAPPES-LOMAX. TRAPPES-LOMAX was replaced on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940 by Lieutenant Colonel W. D. FAULKNER, but he was killed when his ship was bombed. On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1940, when returning from Mo to Harstadt (Norway) the destroyer H.M.S. Somali, was damaged by enemy bombing and had to return to the U.K. taking Brigadier FRASER with it. Brigadier FRASER arrived at Harstadt on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1940, where he was pronounced unfit by a medical board due to wounds received on 30<sup>th</sup> April and returned to U.K.. Command of brigade devolved on Brigadier C. McV. GUBBINS, commander of troops Bodo Area, until it left Norway on 6<sup>th</sup> June for the U.K. to refit and reform. Brigadier FRASER resumed command on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940. (JOSLEN)
4. Three light tanks of this regiment were sent to Norway. They were lost during transit between locations in Norway and never saw action.
5. This regiment was formed in 1920 by the conversion of the Westmorland and Cumberland Yeomanry. It was based at Carlisle where the H.Q. and 370<sup>th</sup> Batteries were located, with the 203<sup>rd</sup> Battery being based at Whitehaven. This regiment did not go to France with the division, but was earmarked for service in Norway so remained in the U.K.. The 203<sup>rd</sup> Battery arrived in Norway on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, to be deployed at Narvik. The Regimental Headquarters and 370<sup>th</sup> Battery were due to arrive in Norway on the 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> April 1940, but it appears they did not arrive before the evacuation was ordered. After Norway, the regiment joined the 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in July 1940, but left the U.K. in November 1940, to sail for Egypt. On arrival it came under command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Division for Operation Compass. Later it served with the 70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and transferred to the Far East, where it served as a Chindit Column.

6. The 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade was formed in 1939 in the United Kingdom. It was planned to be deployed to France in due course, but instead was earmarked for Norway. The two heavy anti-aircraft (H.A.A.) regiments were equipped with 3.7" guns, with the light anti-aircraft (L.A.A.) units being equipped with 40 mm Bofors guns. The bases at Harstad and Skaanland were protected by the 51<sup>st</sup> H.A.A. Regiment and the 55<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Regiment. A battery from the 82<sup>nd</sup> H.A.A. Regiment and troops from the 3<sup>rd</sup> L.A.A. Battery and 55<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Regiment protected the airfield at Bardufoss to the north of Narvik. At Tromsø were a battery of the 82<sup>nd</sup> L.A.A. Regiment and 167<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery of the 56<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Regiment. Troops from the 3<sup>rd</sup> L.A.A. Battery and the 163<sup>rd</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Batteries from the 55<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Regiment were operating with the French forces. Finally, the 164<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery from the 55<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Regiment was deployed to Mosjoen with Scissors Force. This battery had to fight its way back to Bodo with the British forces for evacuation. The Headquarters, 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade was ordered to bring back to the U.K. all light and heavy anti-aircraft guns as a matter of priority. Twenty-two 40 mm Bofors guns and five 3.7" guns were assembled at Harstad for evacuation. At 22.00 hours on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, all anti-aircraft defences stood down. The units of the brigade claimed the destruction of twenty-three enemy aircraft during the campaign. They suffered seven men killed, twenty-six wounded and eight missing.
7. The first T.A. Anti-Aircraft unit formed, this regiment has been raised in 1922. All four batteries were based in the Duke of York's Headquarters, Chelsea, London SW3. The regiment was deployed to Norway in April and May 1940. Following its return to the U.K., it left again in January 1941, this time bound for Egypt. It moved to Palestine in December 1941, under 9<sup>th</sup> Army. It joined 8<sup>th</sup> Army in September 1942, and moved to Italy in September 1943, staying there until the end of the war.
8. Formed in 1938, this regiment was raised by transferring the 156<sup>th</sup> Battery from the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and the 193<sup>rd</sup> Battery from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment. A new headquarters was formed at Barking, where the 156<sup>th</sup> Battery was based. In addition, a new 256<sup>th</sup> Battery was formed at Barking. The regiment was sent to Norway in April 1940, but was only there for a short time. It returned to the United Kingdom, but in July 1940 was sent to Gibraltar. It served on Gibraltar until May 1943, when it returned to the U.K.. It then served in the U.K. until the end of the Second World War.
9. This regiment was formed in June 1939 as a duplicate of the 51<sup>st</sup> L.A.A. Regiment. The Headquarters and 163<sup>rd</sup> L.A.A. Battery were based at the Drill Hall, Barrack Road, Exeter. The 164<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was based in Paignton, with the 165<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery having Drill Halls in Crediton and Okehampton. The regiment was sent to France to relieve its sister regiment, being deployed at airfields at Lille, Amiens, Abbeville and Poix. Then the regiment was recalled to Le Havre in April 1940, from where it sailed to Southampton. It travelled by train to Scotland to embark for Norway under command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade. The 163<sup>rd</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Batteries operated in support of the French forces around Narvik, whilst the 164<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was sent to Mosjoen. The 164<sup>th</sup> Battery fought in the series of rearguard actions as British forces fell back to Bodo for evacuation. The entire regiment successfully brought back to the U.K. all its 40 mm Bofors guns, leaving Harstad on the 8<sup>th</sup> May. On its return to the U.K., it came under the command of Home Forces. The regiment left the U.K. bound for Ceylon in April 1942. From Ceylon, the regiment moved to India and converted into a L.A.A./Anti-Tank Regiment and saw service in Burma.

10. The 56<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was raised in June 1939 as a duplicate of the 52<sup>nd</sup> (East Lancashire) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. The headquarters and three batteries in this unit were based at the Drill Hall, Moscow Mill Street, Oswaldtwistle in Lancashire. The regiment came under command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade for deployment to Norway in April 1940. The 166<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was sent to Namsos, where it landed on the 29<sup>th</sup> April. It went forward to support 146<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. Two guns were lost to air attacks, but the other two were safely brought back to Namsos. The 168<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was sent to Aandalnes to join Sickie Force, where it arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> April. It returned to the United Kingdom in early June 1940, and served with Home Forces until January 1941. In that month, it came under command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Support Group, 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. It left the U.K. in June 1942 to sail for Egypt with that division. When the division disbanded in November 1942, the regiment came under command of 8<sup>th</sup> Army until placed in suspended animation in Italy in March 1945.
11. These two field companies and the detachment from the field park company were all part of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division.
12. The French Army deployed this Demi-Bridge of mountain troops to Narvik as part of the Anglo-French forces at Narvik. Although designated as mountain troops, they were still not properly trained or equipped for Arctic warfare.
13. The Foreign Legion Demi-Brigade contained several men of German and Spanish origin who had fought in the Spanish Civil War.
14. The French Army formed the Polish Brigade from miners and other Polish workers resident in France. Many of the officers had escaped from Poland in September 1939.

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