

British Infantry Battalion (Middle East)

War Establishment reference VI/587/1

Notified 30th September 1942, effective 4th April 1942

A www.bayonetstrength.uk PDF

Composed of;

Battalion Headquarters	5 Officers, 50 men
Headquarter Company	11 Officers, 297 men
Company Headquarters	(2 Officers, 12 men)
Signal Platoon	(1 Officer, 35 men)
Anti-aircraft Platoon	(20 men)
Mortar Platoon	(1 Officer, 45 men) - (six 3-inch mortars)
Carrier Platoon	(2 Officers, 42 men) - (13 Carriers)
Anti-tank Platoon	(3 Officers, 73 men) - (eight 2-pdr guns)
Administrative Platoon	(2 Officers, 70 men)
Four Rifle Companies, each	5 Officers, 104 men
Company Headquarters	(2 Officers, 11 men)
Three Platoons, each	(1 Officer, 31 men)
Total strength	799 all ranks (36 Officers and 763 men)

Summary Table, British Infantry Battalion (Middle East), April 1942

Detail	Headquarters Company								Total, HQ Company	Four Rifle Companies, each		Total, Rifle Company	Total, Battalion
	Battalion HQ	Company HQ	Signal Platoon	Anti-aircraft Platoon	3-in Mortar Platoon	Carrier Platoon	Anti-tank Platoon	Administrative Platoon		Company HQ	Three Rifle Platoons (each)		
i). Personnel													
Officers	5	2	1	0	1	2	3	2	11	2	1	5	36
Warrant officers	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	7
Staff-serjeants	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	6
Serjeants	4	0	1	1	4	4	10	6	26	0	1	3	42
Corporals	2	0	2	2	6	8	4	8	30	1	3	10	72
Privates	43	10	32	17	35	30	58	55	237	8	27	89	636
Total, all ranks (including attached)	55	14	36	20	46	44	76	72	308	13	32	109	799
ii). Transport													
Bicycles	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	2	1	5	31
Motorcycles	5	0	3	1	3	0	5	2	14	0	0	0	19
Cars (4-seater)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cars, 5-cwt, 4x4	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	1	7	0	0	0	8
Trucks, 15-cwt	2	3	2	2	3	1	8	4	23	2	1	5	45
Lorries, 30-cwt	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lorries, 3-ton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	13	0	0	0	13
Portees (anti-tank guns), 3-ton	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9	0	0	0	9
Carriers, Universal	1	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13	0	0	0	14
Carriers, Universal, 3-inch mortar	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
iii). Weapons													
Pistols	11	2	4	1	4	2	8	3	24	2	1	5	55
Rifles	42	12	32	19	42	42	65	69	281	11	28	95	703
Machine carbines	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	3	9	41
Light machine guns	1	0	0	0	0	13	9	0	22	0	3	9	59
Twin light machine guns	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
Anti-tank rifles, .55-inch	0	0	1	4	3	12	2	1	23	0	0	0	23
2-inch mortars	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	8
3-inch mortars	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
2-pdr anti-tank guns	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	8	0	0	0	8
Cup dischargers (rifles)	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13	0	3	9	49
Signal pistols (for carriers)	1	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13	0	0	0	14
Signal pistols (issued as required)*	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24

Notes

Attached personnel consist of 1 Officer, 4 Serjeants, 2 Corporals and 14 Privates (included in above).

Of the total Corporals (excluding attached) 14 may be Lance-serjeants.

Of the total Privates (excluding attached) 48 may be Lance-corporals.

*signal pistols are not shown other than those for carriers, normal pool assumed to be retained.

Battalion Headquarters (5 Officers, 50 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Battalion commander	Lieutenant-colonel	1	Pistol	
Second-in-command	Major	1	Pistol	
Adjutant	Captain	1	Pistol	
Regimental serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class I	1	Pistol	
Orderly room clerk	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	2	Rifle	
Batman	Private	6	Rifle	
Intelligence officer	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Intelligence serjeant	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	1
Intelligence	Private	1	Machine carbine	
Intelligence	Private	2	Rifle	
Intelligence	Private	3	Rifle	
			Bicycle	3
Provost-serjeant	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	1
Regimental Police	Private	3	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	3
Medical officer (RAMC)	<i>not stated</i>	1	Pistol	
Medical officer's orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
Medical serjeant	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Stretcher bearer	Corporal	2	Rifle	
Stretcher bearer	Private	18	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Car, 5-cwt	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Car, 4-seater	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			<i>office equipment</i>	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			<i>intelligence equipment</i>	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Lorry, 30-cwt, GS	1
			<i>Medical Officer & equipment</i>	
Continued...				

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal	1
			Light machine gun	1
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Machine carbine	
Total, all ranks		55		

Headquarter Company (11 Officers, 297 men)

Company Headquarters (2 Officer, 12 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Company commander	Major or Captain	1	Pistol	
Second-in-command	Captain	1	Pistol	
Company serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class II	1	Rifle	
Company quarter-master-serjeant	Staff-serjeant	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	2	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	1	Rifle	
Storeman	Private	1	Rifle	
Orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
Rangetaker	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Car, 5-cwt	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	3	Rifle	
			Truck-15-cwt, personnel	3
Total, all ranks		14		

(No.1) Signal Platoon (1 Officer, 35 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Platoon commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Batman	Private	1	Rifle	
Signal serjeant	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	1
Orderly	Private	3	Rifle	
			Bicycle	3
Orderly	Private	2	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	2
Signaller	Corporal	2	Rifle	
Signaller	Private	19	Rifle	
Signaller	Private	5	Rifle	
			Bicycle	5
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck-15-cwt, personnel	1
Continued...				

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Truck, 15-cwt, GS <i>signal stores</i> Anti-tank rifle	1 1
Total, all ranks		36		

(No.2) Anti-aircraft Platoon (20 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Serjeant	1	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	1
LMG number and rifleman	Corporal	1	Rifle	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Rifle	
Orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle Truck, 15-cwt, GS <i>reserve ammunition</i>	1
LMG number and rifleman	Corporal	1	Rifle	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Truck, 15-cwt, GS <i>stores & equipment</i>	1
Four detachments, each				
LMG number and rifleman	Private	2	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Car, 5-cwt Twin LMG Anti-tank rifle	1 1 1
Total, all ranks		20		

(No.3) Mortar Platoon (1 Officer, 45 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Lieutenant	1	Pistol	
Fitter, MV (RAOC)	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal, 3-in mortar	1
Platoon serjeant	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	1
Orderly	Private	2	Pistol	
			Motorcycle, solo	2
Mortar detachment	Corporal*	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	1	Rifle	
Rangetaker	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			Anti-tank rifle	1
Mortar detachment	Private	2	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			72 rounds 3-inch ammunition	
			Anti-tank rifle	1
Mortar detachment	Private	2	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			72 rounds 3-inch ammunition	
			Anti-tank rifle	1
Six detachments, each				
Detachment commander	Serjeant**	1	Rifle	
Mortar detachment	Private	3	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal, 3-in mortar	1
			3-inch mortar	1
			72 rounds 3-inch ammunition	
Total, all ranks		46		

* The positions of the Corporals are not identified in the W.E and the above are taken from the linked II/1931/12F/2.

** Detachments Nos.1, 3 and 5 each commanded by a Lance-serjeant (Corporal), and Detachments Nos.2, 4 and 6 each commanded by a Serjeant.

(No.4) Carrier Platoon (2 Officers, 42 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Captain	1	Pistol	
Batman	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal	1
			Light machine gun	1
			Cup discharger (rifle)	1
Second-in-command	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Batman	Private	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	1	Rifle	
Fitter, MV (RAOC)	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
Four Sections, each				
Section commander	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal	1
			Light machine gun	1
			Anti-tank rifle	1
			Cup discharger (rifle)	1
LMG number and rifleman	Corporal	1	Rifle	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal	1
			Light machine gun	1
			Anti-tank rifle	1
			Cup discharger (rifle)	1
LMG number and rifleman	Corporal	1	Rifle	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
			Carrier, Universal	1
			Light machine gun	1
			Anti-tank rifle	1
			Cup discharger (rifle)	1
Total, all ranks		44		

(No.5) Anti-tank Platoon (3 Officers, 73 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Captain	1	Pistol	
Batman-driver	Private	1	Machine carbine Car, 5-cwt	1
Platoon serjeant	Staff-serjeant	1	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	1
Orderly	Private	2	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	2
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Portee, 3-ton Light machine gun Anti-tank rifle**	1 1 2
Fitter, MV	Private	1	Rifle	
Fitter, gun	Private	1	Rifle	
Motor mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
Storeman	Private	1	Rifle	
Two Detachments, each				
Detachment commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Platoon serjeant	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Ammunition number	Private	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	1	Machine carbine	
Orderly	Private	1	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	1
Two Sections, each				
Gun number	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Gun number	Private	4	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Private	1	Rifle Portee, 3-ton 2-pdr anti-tank gun 112 rounds 2-pdr ammunition Light machine gun	1 1 1
Gun number	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Gun number	Private	4	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Portee, 3-ton 2-pdr anti-tank gun 112 rounds 2-pdr ammunition Light machine gun	1 1 1
Continued...				

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Driver, I.C.	Private	2	Rifle Truck-15-cwt, personnel	2
Total, all ranks		76		

* The positions of the four Corporals is not identified in the W.E., possibly four Driver-mechanics

** Two anti-tank rifles allotted, no indication of where carried

(No.6) Administrative Platoon (2 Officers, 70 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Transport	Subaltern	1	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	1
Transport	Serjeant	1	Pistol Motorcycle, solo	1
Quarter-master	<i>not stated</i>	1	Pistol	
Regimental quarter-master-serjeant	Warrant officer, class II	1	Rifle	
Technical stores	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	2	Rifle	
Butchery duties	Private	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	2	Rifle	
Equipment repairer	Private	1	Rifle	
Motor mechanic	Corporal*	1	Rifle	
Motor mechanic	Private	1	Rifle	
Officer's mess servant	Private	1	Rifle	
Postman	Private	1	Rifle	
Sanitary duties	Private	4	Rifle	
Storeman	Private	1	Rifle	
Technical storeman	Corporal*	1	Rifle	
Technical storeman	Private	2	Rifle	
Water duties	Private	1	Rifle	
Bricklayer	Private	1	Rifle	
Carpenter and joiner	Private	6	Rifle	
Mason	Private	1	Rifle	
Pioneer	Corporal*	1	Rifle	
Pioneer	Private	3	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>pioneer tools & stores</i>	1
Armourer (RAOC)	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Shoemaker (RAOC)	Corporal	1	Rifle	
Fitter, MV (RAOC)	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Fitter, MV (RAOC)	Private	1	Rifle	
Continued...				

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Serjeant cook (ACC)	Serjeant	2	Rifle	
Other ranks' cook (ACC)	Corporal	1	Rifle	
Other ranks' cook (ACC)	Private	10	Rifle	
Officers' mess cook (ACC)	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Car, 5-cwt	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Truck, 15-cwt, water (200-gal)	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	3	Rifle Truck, 15-cwt, GS <i>reserve ammunition</i>	3
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>2-inch mortar ammunition</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Anti-tank rifle	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>360 rounds 3-inch mortar</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>officers' mess</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>MT stores & tools</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	5	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>cooking sets, rations, water tins</i>	5
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>baggage</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>anti-gas equipment</i>	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle Lorry, 3-ton, GS <i>petrol distribution</i>	1
Total, all ranks		72		

* The positions of the six Corporals are not identified in W.E., three are assumed as above, the remainder may have been Drivers, I.C.

Four Rifle Companies (5 Officers, 104 men), each

Company Headquarters (2 Officers, 11 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Company commander	Major or Captain	1	Pistol	
Second-in-command	Captain	1	Pistol	
Company serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class II	1	Rifle	
Company quarter-master-serjeant	Staff-serjeant	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	2	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	1	Rifle	
Storeman	Private	1	Rifle	
Orderly	Private	2	Rifle	
			Bicycle	2
Orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
Driver-mechanic	Corporal*	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
			2-inch mortar**	2
Total, all ranks		13		

* The position of the Corporal is not identified in W.E. and the above is assumed

** Two 2-inch mortars held by Company Headquarters for allotment as required

Three Rifle Platoons (1 Officer, 31 men), each

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Platoon serjeant	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	1	Rifle	
Orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
			Bicycle	1
Driver, I.C.	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, GS	1
Three Sections, each				
Section commander	Corporal	1	Machine carbine	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	8	Rifle	
			Light machine gun	1
			Cup discharger (rifle)	1
Total, all ranks		32		

Notes

1. The original War Establishment shows the numbers of Corporals allotted per sub-unit, but does not necessarily identify which particular personnel were to have the rank. Where the rank of Corporal in the foregoing is uncertain I have marked this as assumed.
2. Only a few personnel are positively identified as Lance-corporals. With 48 allowed across the whole Battalion there would be sufficient for one per Rifle Section but this is not explicitly stated.
3. No rank is given for either the Battalion Quarter-master or the attached Medical Officer (RAMC).
4. A batman was provided for each Officer, the Regimental Serjeant-major and the attached Medical Officer.
5. Scottish Battalions and Irish Battalions (except the RUR) will be allowed one Serjeant Piper and five Pipers in addition. A Battalion of Foot Guard will be allowed two Drill Serjeants (Warrant Officers, class II) in addition.
6. One Section per Rifle Platoon to be trained in anti-gas duties.

Comments

The original War Establishment does not include a transport table. Given the similarity of the majority of Platoons and Headquarters to those detailed on War Establishment reference II/1931/12F/2, these have been assumed to be carried over. The New Zealand War Establishment No.28 of June 1942 partially underpins this approach, but some sections of that document are obscured in relation to the Administrative and Anti-tank Platoons.

In terms of the Anti-tank Platoon there is very little to go on. The above assumes that as there were eight 2-pdr guns and eight 15-cwt personnel trucks one of the latter was paired with each gun 3-ton Portee. It is equally possible they were intended for the Detachment and Platoon Headquarters personnel. 2-pdr ammunition allowance is assumed from other British sources and from New Zealand establishments.

The original table does not include an entry for signal pistols, aside from one per Universal carrier (less those in the Mortar Platoon). Both the preceding and superseding tables show 24 signal pistols available for issue as required, so I have assumed this same figure to have been maintained.