

British Parachute Battalion

War Establishment reference III/127/1

Notified 24th September 1941, effective 12th September 1941

A www.bayonetstrength.uk PDF

Composed of;

Battalion Headquarters	5 Officers, 20 men
Signal Platoon	1 Officer, 19 men
Mortar Platoon	1 Officer, 34 men (four 3-inch mortars)
Headquarter Company	3 Officers, 81 men
Company Headquarters	(2 Officers, 3 men)
Administrative Platoon	(1 Officer, 78 men)
Three Rifle Companies, each	5 Officers, 119 men
Company Headquarters	(2 Officers, 7 men)
Two Mortar Detachments, each	(8 men) (one 3-inch mortar)
Three Platoons, each	(1 Officer, 32 men)
Total strength	536 all ranks (25 Officers and 511 men)

Summary Table, British Parachute Battalion, September 1941

Detail	Battalion HQ	Signal Platoon	3-in Mortar Platoon	Headquarter Company		Total, HQ Company	Three Rifle Companies, each			Total, Rifle Company	Total, Battalion
				Company HQ	Administrative Platoon		Company HQ	Two Mortar Dets. (each)	Three Rifle Platoons (each)		
i). Personnel											
Officers	5	1	1	2	1	3	2	0	1	5	25
Warrant officers	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	6
Staff-serjeants	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
Serjeants	3	1	4	0	6	6	0	1	4	14	56
Corporals	2	1	4	0	2	2	0	1	3	11	42
Privates	14	17	26	1	69	70	5	6	25	92	403
Total, all ranks (including attached)	25	20	35	5	79	84	9	8	33	124	536
ii). Transport											
Bicycles (folding)	1	8	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	12
Bicycles	0	0	0	0	13	13	0	0	0	0	13
Cars (4-seater)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Cars (2-seater)	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	5
Trucks, 15-cwt	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lorries, 3-ton	0	0	0	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	8
iii). Weapons											
Pistols	6	1	35	2	1	3	2	8	7	39	162
Machine carbines	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	22	67
Rifles	9	19	0	3	78	81	6	0	19	63	298
Light machine guns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9	27
Anti-tank rifles, .55-inch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	10
3-inch mortars	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	10
Discharger cups	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	14
Signal pistols	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9	27

Notes

Attached personnel consist of 1 Officer, 3 Serjeants, 3 Corporals and 19 Privates (included in above).

Of the total Corporals (excluding attached) 8 may be Lance-serjeants.

Of the total Privates (excluding attached) 39 may be Lance-corporals.

Battalion Headquarters (5 Officers, 20 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Battalion commander	Lieutenant-colonel	1	Pistol	
Second-in-command	Major	1	Pistol	
Adjutant	Captain	1	Pistol	
<i>none stated</i>	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Regimental serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class I	1	Pistol	
Intelligence serjeant	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Provost-serjeant	Serjeant	1	Machine carbine	
Regimental Police	Private	6	Rifle	
Orderly room clerk ≠ Clerk	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
	Private	1	Rifle	
			<i>Unallocated equipment</i>	
			Bicycle (folding)	1
			Anti-tank rifle	1
			Discharger cup (for rifle)	1
<i>Attached personnel</i>				
Medical officer (RAMC)	<i>not stated</i>	1	Pistol	
Corporal (RAMC)	Corporal	1		
Nursing orderly (RAMC)	Private	8		
	Total, all ranks	25		

The W.E. allowed for one Corporal in Battalion Headquarters (excluding attached) but gives no indication of their likely post. From later developments I would suggest it was the Clerk.

Signal Platoon (1 Officer, 19 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Platoon commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Signal serjeant	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Signaller (visual)	Private	8	Rifle Bicycle (folding)	8
Wireless operator	Corporal	1	Rifle	
Wireless operator	Private	9	Rifle	
	Total, all ranks	20		

Mortar Platoon (1 Officer, 34 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Headquarters				
Platoon commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Rangetaker	Private	1	Pistol	
Orderly	Private	1	Pistol	
Four detachments, each				
Detachment commander	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
Mortar detachment	Corporal	1	Pistol 3-inch mortar	1
Mortar detachment	Private	6	Pistol	
Total, all ranks		35		

Headquarter Company (3 Officers, 81 men) (all ≠)**Company Headquarters (2 Officers, 3 men)**

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Company commander	Captain	1	Pistol	
<i>none stated</i>	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Company serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class II	1	Rifle	
Company quarter-master-serjeant	Staff-serjeant	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	1	Rifle	
Total, all ranks		5		

Administrative Platoon (1 Officer, 78 men)

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Quarter-master	<i>not stated</i>	1	Pistol	
Regimental quarter-master-serjeant	Warrant officer, class II	1	Rifle	
Technical stores	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Transport	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Parachute packer	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Batman	Private	13	Rifle	
Blacksmith	Private	1	Rifle	
Butcher	Private	1	Rifle	
Carpenter and joiner	Private	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	3	Rifle	
Equipment repairer	Private	1	Rifle	
Officer's mess servant	Private	2	Rifle	
Postman	Private	1	Rifle	
Continued...				

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Sanitary duties	Private	3	Rifle	
Serjeants' mess waiter	Private	5	Rifle	
Storeman	Private	2	Rifle	
Technical stores	Private	1	Rifle	
Water dutyman	Private	1	Rifle	
Parachute packer	Private	8	Rifle	
Driver, I.C. *	Private	5	Rifle	
			Car, 2-seater	5
Driver, I.C. *	Private	1	Rifle	
			Car, 4-seater	1
Driver, I.C. *	Private	1	Rifle	
			Truck, 15-cwt, water	1
Driver, I.C. *	Private	8	Rifle	
			Lorry, 3-ton, GS	8
			<i>Unallocated equipment</i>	
			Bicycle (non-folding)	13
<i>Attached personnel</i>				
Armourer (RAOC)	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Fitter, MV (RAOC)	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Shoemaker (RAOC)	Corporal	1	Rifle	
Serjeant cook (ACC)	Serjeant	1	Rifle	
Officers' mess cook (ACC)	Private	2	Rifle	
Serjeants' mess cook (ACC)	Private	2	Rifle	
Other ranks' cook (ACC)	Corporal	1	Rifle	
Other ranks' cook (ACC)	Private	7	Rifle	
Total, all ranks		79		

* Of the total 15 drivers, 13 are drivers, I.C. and 2 are driver-mechanics.

Three Rifle Companies (5 Officers, 119 men), each**Company Headquarters (2 Officers, 7 men)**

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Company commander	Major	1	Pistol	
Second-in-command	Captain	1	Pistol	
Company serjeant-major	Warrant officer, class II	1	Machine carbine	
Company quarter-master-serjeant≠	Staff-serjeant	1	Rifle	
Clerk	Private	1	Rifle	
Orderly	Private	3	Rifle	
Storeman≠	Private	1	Rifle	
			<i>Unallocated equipment</i>	
			Discharger cup (for rifle)	1
			Bicycle (folding)	1
Total, all ranks		9		

Two Mortar Detachments (8 men), each

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
Detachment commander	Serjeant	1	Pistol	
Mortar detachment	Corporal	1	Pistol	
			3-inch mortar	1
Mortar detachment	Private	6	Pistol	
Total, all ranks		8		

Three Rifle Platoons (1 Officer, 32 men), each

Detail	Rank	No.	Weapon/Vehicle/Other	No.
<i>Headquarters</i>				
Platoon commander	Subaltern	1	Pistol	
Platoon serjeant	Serjeant	1	Machine carbine	
Orderly	Private	1	Rifle	
			<i>Unallocated equipment</i>	
			Anti-tank rifle	1
			Discharger cup (for rifle)	1
<i>Three Sections, each</i>				
Section commander	Serjeant	1	Machine carbine	
LMG number and rifleman	Corporal	1	Machine carbine	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Pistol	
			Light machine gun	1
LMG number and rifleman	Private	1	Pistol	
LMG number and rifleman	Private	6	Rifle	
Total, all ranks		33		

Notes

1. The original War Establishment table does not give any indication as to which personnel were to be armed with machine carbines (Thompson submachine guns). The above allocations are therefore suggested only.
2. In 1941 a batman was normally provided for each Officer, the Regimental Serjeant-major and the attached Medical Officer. The establishment only allowed for 13 batmen rather than the 26 this would require. While not stated it seems likely that all Subalterns were required to 'bat' for themselves.
3. No rank is stated for either the Battalion Quarter-master or the attached Medical officer (RAMC).
4. There is no indication as to how the 39 Lance-corporals posts were likely to be allocated across the Battalion. It seems reasonable to assume this figure would allow for one per Rifle Section.
5. The annotation ≠ in the foregoing indicates those personnel who 'need not be parachutists'. This included all officers and men of Headquarter Company.