

= 76th Infantry Division (United Kingdom) =

The 76th Infantry Division of the British Army was raised during the Second World War to defend the Norfolk coast against a possible German invasion , before being transformed into a training division in late 1942 . New recruits to the Army were assigned to the division to complete their training . Once fully trained , the recruits were allocated to formations fighting overseas . The formation was used as a source of reinforcements for the 21st Army Group , that was fighting in Normandy . After all available British army troops left the United Kingdom for France , the division was disbanded in September 1944 .

In addition to the actual formation , a phantom 76th Infantry Division was formed for deception . The phantom division was part of the notional British Fourth Army , to be used for the fictitious Operation Trolleybar . This operation aimed to deceive the Germans into believing that an Allied landing would occur along the northern German coast . While the deception effort was not a complete success , it managed to divert German attention to the northern flank for the remainder of the war .

= = Background = =

In the early stages of the Second World War following the Battle of France in 1940 , the United Kingdom was under threat of invasion from Nazi Germany but during the summer , the Battle of Britain dampened this threat . As the year progressed , the size of the British Army increased dramatically as 140 new infantry battalions were raised . In late 1940 , with the possibility of a German invasion during 1941 , these new battalions were formed into independent infantry brigades that were then loaned to newly created County Divisions .

The County Divisions , including the Norfolk County Division , were around 10 @, @ 000 men strong and assigned to defend the coast of threatened sections of the country , undertaking defensive tasks including the manning of coastal artillery . These divisions were largely static , lacking mobility and also divisional assets such as artillery , engineers and reconnaissance forces . Using the new formations in this manner allowed the pre @-@ war regular infantry divisions to undertake training and form an all @-@ important reserve that could be used to counter @-@ attack any possible German landing .

On 22 June , Germany launched Operation Barbarossa the invasion of the Soviet Union ; this attack all but removed the German threat to the United Kingdom . The British still had to consider the threat of an invasion , due the possibility that the Soviet Union could collapse under the German onslaught , after which Germany could easily transfer troops back to the west . With the arrival of winter in late 1941 , the threat of invasion subsided . This , coupled with the production of new equipment for the British army , allowed the War Office to begin steps to better balance the army , due to the large number of infantry units formed during the preceding year and a half ; as part of this reform , the County Divisions were disbanded .

= = History = =

= = = Home defence = = =

During the war , the divisions of the British Army were divided between " Higher Establishment " and " Lower Establishment " formations . The former were intended for deployment overseas and combat , whereas the latter were strictly for home defence in a static role . On 18 November 1941 , the Norfolk County Division was abolished and reformed as the 76th Infantry Division , a " Lower Establishment " division . The division , like its predecessor , comprised the 213th , the 220th and the 222nd Infantry Brigades . That day , the division was assigned artillery , an anti @-@ tank regiment , engineers and signallers ; reconnaissance troops joined the division in January 1942 . The paper strength of an infantry division at this time was 17 @, @ 298 men . Major @-@ General William Maingay Ozanne , who had commanded the Norfolk County Division since its inception ,

retained command of the division . The 76th Division was assigned to II Corps and maintained its previous mission of defending the Norfolk coastline . The Imperial War Museum comments that the division insignia , a " red Norfolk wherry , under sail " , underscored " the association of the Division with Norfolk " . After the division became a training formation , the insignia was only worn by the permanent division members .

The division was involved in establishing the ability of the Abwehr (German military intelligence) . A German @-@ published order of battle of the British army based within the United Kingdom , dated 10 April 1942 , was captured . This document included the division and had a near perfect listing of its subordinate units , with one exception . Rather than including the 1st Battalion , Leicestershire Regiment , the Germans believed the 18th Battalion , Welch Regiment had already replaced it . This and similar errors led the British to understand the capability of the Germans to intercept wireless communications in the United Kingdom . In 1943 , this , in part , led to the Operation Fortitude a plan to exploit the German ability and deceive their intelligence community about future Allied operations like Operation Overlord .

= = = Training formation = = =

During the winter of 1942 ? 43 , the army overhauled the training of recruits . The 76th Division , along with the 48th Infantry and 77th Infantry divisions , was changed from a " Lower Establishment " unit to a " Reserve Division " . On 20 December , the division was renamed the 76th Infantry (Reserve) Division , becoming a training formation in the process . These three divisions were supplemented by a fourth training formation , the 80th Infantry (Reserve) Division , which was raised on 1 January 1943 . The 76th Infantry (Reserve) Division was assigned to Eastern Command , and moved to Norwich . Soldiers who had completed their corps training , were sent to these training divisions . The soldiers were given five weeks of additional training at the section , platoon and company level , before undertaking a final three @-@ day exercise . Troops would then be ready to be sent overseas to join other formations . Training was handled in this manner to relieve the " Higher Establishment " divisions from being milked for replacements for other units and to allow them to intensively train without the interruption of having to handle new recruits . For example , the 9th Battalion , Dorsetshire Regiment provided recruits to other battalions within the regiment as well as the Royal Norfolk Regiment . During this period , command of the division changed several times . On 21 December 1943 , Ozanne was replaced by Major @-@ General Colin Callander who in turn was replaced by Major @-@ General John Edward Utterson @-@ Kelso on 13 March 1944 .

On 30 June 1944 , the 76th Infantry (Reserve) Division , along with the other training divisions , had a combined total of 22 @,@ 355 men . Of this number , only 1 @,@ 100 were immediately available as replacements for the 21st Army Group . The remaining 21 @,@ 255 men were considered ineligible for service abroad , due to a variety of reasons , ranging from medical , not being considered fully fit or not yet fully trained . Over the following six months , up to 75 per cent of these men would be deployed to reinforce the 21st Army Group , following the completion of their training and having met the required fitness levels . Stephen Hart comments that , by September , the 21st Army Group " had bled Home Forces dry of draftable riflemen " , due to the losses suffered during the Normandy Campaign , leaving the army in Britain , with the exception of the 52nd (Lowland) Infantry Division , with just " young lads , old men , and the unfit " . On 1 September 1944 , the division was disbanded . Utterson @-@ Kelso assumed command of the 47th Infantry (Reserve) Division , which took over the role of the 76th Division .

= = = Deception = = =

The creation of the fictitious division arose from an actual reorganisation of British forces . During 1944 , the British Army was facing a manpower crisis . The army did not have enough men to replace the losses to front line infantry . While efforts were made to address this (such as transferring men from the Royal Artillery and Royal Air Force to be retrained as infantry) , the War

Office began disbanding divisions to reduce the size of the army and to transfer the surplus men to other units to help keep those as close to full strength as possible . The 76th Infantry (Reserve) Division was one of several " Lower Establishment " divisions in the United Kingdom , chosen to be disbanded .

R Force , the Fortitude deception staff , seized upon this opportunity to retain the division as a phantom unit . A cover story was established to explain the change in the division 's status . It was claimed that with the war nearing an end , several Territorial Army divisions would revert to their peacetime recruiting role and release their equipment and resources to other units . For the 76th , this was the 47th Division . With the transfer of equipment , the 76th was notionally raised to the " Higher Establishment " and assigned to reinforce the 21st Army Group .

As a deception unit , the division was assigned to the bogus Operation Trolleybar . Trolleybar was initially envisioned as a fictitious amphibious assault upon the coast of the Netherlands , by the phantom British Fourth Army , to exploit the success of the authentic Operation Market Garden . When the Battle of Arnhem failed , the notional invasion plan was temporarily scrapped . Trolleybar was revived to convince the Germans that the Fourth Army would land near Emden , in support of an imaginary assault by the First Canadian Army , that would be launched west of Arnhem and through the Netherlands . The deception effort was kept up until 1945 , being wound down in January . Despite the British ceasing their attempts to deceive the Germans about this possible landing and the Germans not believing all that had been reported to them , the Germans remained anxious about a landing along the northern coast for the remainder of the war .

= = General officer commanding = =

Commanders included :

= = Order of Battle = =