

# INFANTRY REDUCTIONS AND REORGANISATION 2022

by **Jim Tanner**

In the November 2022 edition of The Bulletin our Chairman described the 2022 reorganisation of the administrative divisions of the British Army's infantry. This exercise sat within the 'Future Soldier' concept that fell out of the 2021 Integrated Review and a glossy guide to these changes can be found at:

[https://www.army.mod.uk/media/15057/adr010310-futuresoldierguide\\_30nov.pdf](https://www.army.mod.uk/media/15057/adr010310-futuresoldierguide_30nov.pdf)

For those outside Defence the whys and wherefores of these changes can only be surmised but there has been a further and radical effect on the organisation and size of the infantry and these are worth describing in more detail.

Members may recall the last major restructuring of the infantry that took place following the 2004 Future Army Structure and its accompanying Future Infantry Structure (FIS). There were further major changes as a result of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review but its resultant 'Army 2020' now looks very different. FIS created the 'large' regiment and the so-called 'large-large' regiments of The Royal Regiment of Scotland and The Rifles but even the latter, a particularly successful branding of an infantry regiment, has now been cut. In 2013 there were 38 Regular infantry battalions of all types, including Gurkhas, and 14 Territorial – that were to be retitled as 'Reserve' – battalions. Army 2020 would reduce this to 32 Regular battalions, with the Reserve battalions being increased to 16. The latest, somewhat creeping, changes bring the total number of 'standard' Regular infantry battalions down to 22, including Guards and Paras, plus the 16 Reserve battalions. The net result in workforce (no longer 'manpower') terms is the loss of 3,000 infantry posts. I shall qualify 'standard' below.

The new administrative divisions came into effect on 30th September 2022. The Prince of Wales's Division had already been broken up in 2016 and the new structure saw the loss of the King's Division. In broad terms the new structure is:

- The Foot Guards and Parachute Division: The five regiments of Foot Guards and the Parachute Regiment (PARA). This also includes five State Ceremonial and Public Duties Companies.
- The Union Division: Royal Regiment of Scotland (SCOTS), Yorkshire Regiment (YORKS), Royal Welsh Regiment (R WELSH), Royal Irish Regiment (R IRISH).
- The Queen's Division: Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (PWRR), Royal Fusiliers (RRF), Royal Anglian Regiment (R ANGLIAN), Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (LANCS), Mercian Regiment (MERCIAN), Royal Gibraltar Regiment (RG).
- The Light Division: The Rifles (RIFLES), Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR).

This loss of ten 'standard' infantry battalions is accounted for through the disbandment of one, the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment in September 2022, the shift of one to become the Land Warfare Centre Experimentation and Trials Group, the 2nd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, and the setting up of two new structures that have taken the remaining eight out of the line. These are:

- The creation of The Ranger Regiment and its four battalions:

1 SCOTS is now 1 RANGERS.  
1 PWRR is now 2 RANGERS.  
2 LANCS is now 3 RANGERS.  
4 RIFLES is now 4 RANGERS.

For administrative purposes each of these battalions sits within one of the four administrative Divisions. Operationally, they are part of the Special Operations Brigade. It should be noted too that it was intended to raise a third battalion of Gurkhas but the two companies already formed were then added as fourth companies in 2 and 4 RANGERS.

- The conversion of four infantry battalions to Security Force Assistance battalions. These are to be 1 IRISH GDS, 3 SCOTS, 1 R ANGLIAN and 3 RIFLES. Each of these 'battalions' will have an establishment of around 250 personnel. For operations they come under the 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade.

The 22 infantry battalions that might be termed 'standard' are listed below within their administrative Divisions and with their operational roles – no less than seven – shown thus: Light (LT), Light Mechanised (LT MECH), Mechanised (MECH), Light Reconnaissance Strike (LT RECCE), Airborne (AB), Air Assault (AS), Jungle (J).

## **GUARDS AND PARA DIVISION**

### **Regular**

1 GREN GDS (LT)  
1 COLDM GDS (LT)  
1 SCOTS GDS (LT MECH)  
1 WELSH GDS (LT)  
2 PARA (AB)  
3 PARA (AB)

### **Reserve**

1 LONDON GDS  
4 PARA

## **UNION DIVISION**

### **Regular**

2 SCOTS (LT)  
4 SCOTS (LT MECH)  
1 YORKS (LT MECH)  
1 R WELSH (MECH)  
1 R IRISH (LT RECCE)

### **Reserve**

6 SCOTS  
7 SCOTS  
4 YORKS  
3 R WELSH  
2 R IRISH

## **QUEEN'S DIVISION**

### **Regular**

1 PWRR (MECH)  
1 RRF (MECH)  
1 LANCS (LT)  
2 R ANGLIAN (LT MECH)  
1 MERCIAN (MECH)  
1 RG (LT)

### **Reserve**

3 PWRR  
4 PWRR  
5 RRF  
4 LANCS  
3 R ANGLIAN  
4 MERCIAN

## **LIGHT DIVISION**

### **Regular**

1 RIFLES (LT MECH)  
2 RIFLES (LT)  
5 RIFLES (MECH)  
1 RGR (J)  
2 RGR (AS)

### **Reserve**

6 RIFLES  
7 RIFLES  
8 RIFLES

### **Additional points:**

- In addition to their operational roles, two of the battalions of Foot Guards rotate through Public Duties in London.
- Army 2020 defined different operational roles which included Armoured Infantry, Heavy Protected Mobility and Light Protected Mobility. These are now gone and vehicle-borne troops will now be Mechanised and Light Mechanised. The former, all formerly Armoured Infantry, will gradually give up their Warriors for the eight-wheeled Boxer. The Light Mechanised battalions will retain Jackal and Foxhound light armoured vehicles.
- One light battalion will be rotated through the Cyprus Garrison.
- The 16 Reserve battalions are all organised as Light Infantry and are allotted in the main to the operational brigades. Where possible they are twinned with their Regular counterparts.
- The London Regiment, resurrected in 1993, was aligned with the Foot Guards under Army 2020, the Guards, hitherto, not having had any Territorial/Reserve affiliation. In 2022 The London Regiment was retitled as The London Guards.

Except for defined roles I have made no attempt here to describe the operational organisation of the Army or, indeed, to examine the other Combat elements, let alone everything else. Organisation is, again, in a state of flux and it is difficult to work out which infantry battalion is assigned to, or will be assigned to, which formation. These formations are being reorganised but appear to encompass:

- Headquarters 1st (UK) Division: 4th Light Brigade, 7th Light Mechanised Brigade, 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade.
- Headquarters 3rd (UK) Division: 1st Deep Strike Reconnaissance Brigade, 12th Armoured Brigade Combat Team, 20th Armoured Brigade Combat Team.
- Headquarters 6th (UK) Division: Special Operations Brigade, 77th Brigade.