



Guards Armoured

The Guards Armoured Division was a Second World War British Army formation.

The Guards Armoured Division was formed on 17 June 1941. The division remained in the United Kingdom, training, until 26 June 1944, when it landed in Normandy as part of VIII Corps.

Guards Armoured Division was a remarkable part of the British Army. It was formed in 1941 to increase the number of tank regiments available in the event of invasion but this did not please everybody.

Some argued that the Guardsmen were too tall to fit in tanks and too rigidly disciplined to fight them with skill and initiative. And it did not help that their armoured regiments did not regard themselves as an integral part of the Royal Armoured Corps. Events were to prove the doubters wrong.

Its first major engagement was Operation Goodwood, the attack by three armoured divisions towards Bourguebus Ridge in an attempt to break out of the Normandy beachhead.

That was followed by Operation Bluecoat, the advance east of Caen as the Falaise pocket formed. Transferred to XXX Corps, the division liberated Brussels.

It led the XXX Corps attack in Operation Market Garden, the ground forces' advance to relieve airborne troops aiming to seize the bridges up to Arnhem, capturing Nijmegen bridge in conjunction with American paratroopers. During the battle of the Bulge, it was sent to the Meuse as a reserve in case the Germans broke through the American lines. It endured hard fighting in Operation Veritable, the advance towards the Rhine through the Reichswald, and again in the advance through Germany.

The division existed until 12 June 1945, when it was reorganised as an infantry division, the Guards Division



Image courtesy of Harry Rose Family.

Description: Photograph showing Trooper Harry Rose of the 2nd Household Cavalry Regiment, driving the dingo past a captured 88mm gun reputedly somewhere in Normandy France.

Note that the car bears the Guards Armoured signs and that the recce unit 44 markings has does not have the white top denoting the unit to be under the control of the corps

Reputedly June / July 1944



Grenadier Guards Armoured

1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards was the Motor Battalion in 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, Guards Armoured Division.

On the eve of D-Day, like most other armoured divisions, Guards Armoured consisted of one infantry brigade (formed from battalions of the Coldstream, Welsh and Irish Guards) and 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, which comprised Grenadier, Coldstream and Irish Guards in tanks plus 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards as the Motor Battalion.



This was probably done on account of height since, on average, 1st Battalion, which included the King's Company, featured some of the tallest men in the British Army.

The role of the Motor Battalion was to operate in lightly armoured vehicles, in close company with the tanks to provide them with immediate infantry support. The Motor Battalion was organised as three Motor Companies, which had twelve Half-Tracks to carry the infantry of three Motor Platoons and eleven Universal Carriers in the Carrier Platoon.



Image courtesy of the Bovington tank Museum reference 7977-C3
Photographer: Unknown
Daimler Scout Car F47727, possibly being used by the Grenadier Guards
Date Unknown



Irish Guards

On the 1st September 1939, general mobilisation was ordered again, and the training Battalion was formed and moved to Coulsdon Common just outside the Guards Depot at Caterham.

Meanwhile on the 3rd September 1939 when War was declared both the First and Second Battalions were at Wellington Barracks.

In London in November 1940, The Holding Battalion (later to be the 3rd Battalion) was formed.



On the 10th April 1940 the 1st Battalion, which formed part of the 24th Guards Brigade, left London for service in Norway putting an end to the questions about where they might be sent first. It was here the Battalion fought against German troops for the first time since 1918. The ship carrying the Battalion into action (HMT Chobry) was bombed by a force of Heinkel bombers resulting in a dreadful loss of life, including the Commanding Officer Lt. Col. W.D. Faulkner, the Second-in-Command Major C.L.J. Bowen, the Adjutant Capt the Hon B.A. O'Neill and three of the five Company Commanders.

However, the Battalion successfully went into action and was subsequently withdrawn in the evacuation on the 4th June 1940 from Narvik. The Battle Honour 'Norway' was awarded.

On the 12th May 1940 (the day before the 1st Battalion sailed) the 2nd Battalion was ordered to sail for the Hook of Holland, to cover the evacuation of the Dutch Royal Family and Government. Eight days later, in the company with the 2nd Battalion Welsh Guards, they were off again, this time to Boulogne in an attempt to buy time for the BEF's evacuation from Calais and Dunkirk. Pressed on all sides by the Germans and being fired upon the remains of both Battalions re-embarked. Each Battalion leaving behind 200 Officers and Other Ranks killed, wounded or missing.

In June 1941, the 2nd Battalion equipped with well worn Covenanters Mark 1 Tanks and took its place in the newly formed Guards Armoured Division. The 3rd Battalion joined the Guards Armoured Division during the Autumn of 1943 to be one of the Infantry Battalions in the Division and from then until the end of the war they trained with the 2nd Armoured Battalion on the Regiment.

On the 1st March 1943 the 1st Battalion embarked for North Africa and formed part of the 1st Army. They suffered very heavy casualties but it was during this campaign that Lance Corporal Kenneally won his Victoria Cross (For his full citation see the Victoria Crosses page).



Image courtesy of the Irish Guards Book
Photographer: Unknown
Dingo Scout Car cars of the Irish Guards



From North Africa the 1st Battalion moved across to Italy and took part in the particular bitter fighting in the Anzio beach head. Casualties were very heavy and in April 1944, the remnants of the 1st Battalion, a total of no more than 20 Officers and 247 Other Ranks returned to England and took no further part as a Battalion fighting in Europe with the survivors being absorbed into the other two Battalions.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions landed with the Guards Armoured Division in Normandy in June 1944, and fought with the Division until the end of the war, taking part in the advance from Seine to Nijmegen. It was during this time the celebrated Lt. Col. J.O.E. Vandeleur, Commander of the Irish Guards Group led an attack on the bridge over the Meuse-Escaut Canal at De Groote Barrier (which is forever immortalised by the film "A Bridge Too Far".) This bridge is now known as 'Joe's Bridge' in Honour of his exploits.

In June 1945, the 2nd Battalion relinquished its tanks and reverted back to its original role as an Infantry Battalion and formed part of the Occupation Army of the Rhine. The Battalion returned from Germany in March 1947 and was disbanded in July of the same year when its Colours were laid up. The 3rd Battalion was withdrawn to England in February 1946 and disbanded. The training Battalion was disbanded in July 1946.

During the Second World War the Irish Guards lost a total of

59 officers killed

114 Officers wounded

645 Other ranks killed

1464 Other ranks wounded

During this time the following Medals were awarded

2 Victoria Crosses

17 Distinguished Service Orders

33 Military Crosses

18 Distinguished Conduct Medals

72 Military Medals

110 Mentions in Despatches



Image courtesy of the Internet & Smon Hamon

Photographer: Unknown

Daimler Armoured Scout Car follows Sherman tank and infantry of the Irish Guards at Aalst.

Date 5th September 1944



Scotts Guards

The 1st Battalion served in the campaigns in 1939 Norway, in North Africa and in Italy, including the Anzio Landing.

The 2nd Battalion served in Africa from the Western Desert to Tunisia, in Italy including the Salerno Landing, and in North West Europe.

The 3rd Battalion fought in Churchill tanks from Normandy to the Elbe.



The 4th Battalion, formed in 1941 but disbanded before it could go overseas, found two independent companies, who fought in Italy and North West Europe respectively, "S" Company with 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards and "X" Company first with the 3rd Battalion Irish Guards and subsequently with 1st Battalion Welsh Guards. Between them these battalions and companies gained for the Regiment forty-one battle honours, of which the following are borne on the Colours:

"North Africa 1941-43", "Gazala", "Medenine", "Djebel bou Aoukaz 1943, I", "Italy 1943-45", "Monte Camino", "Anzio", "North West Europe 1944-45", "Quarry Hill", "Rhineland".

Captain The Lord Lyell was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross whilst serving with the 1st Battalion in Tunisia. Ninety-eight officers and 943 other ranks of the Regiment lost their lives between 1939 and 1945.

At home the 5th Battalion was raised in 1940 as a ski battalion to fight against the Russians in Finland, but after training in France it was disbanded. The Holding Battalion existed for three years from April, 1940, and the Training Battalion was located at Pirbright for the duration of the war. *

In May, 1945, the 1st Battalion moved into 1945 Trieste, where until its return home in October, 1947, it was involved in holding the Morgan Line against the Yugoslav claim to the Venezia Giulia.

The war precluded any large-scale celebration of the Tercentenary of the Regiment in 1942, but a special programme was broadcast by the B.B.C., an historical pageant was enacted at Pirbright, and the 2nd Battalion had a day's holiday in the Western Desert.

The 2nd Battalion remained as part of the British Occupation Force in Germany until its return home in December, 1946. During this time it found the British Guard of Honour at the Potsdam Peace Conference and accepted the surrender of Heligoland.

The 3rd Battalion, after handing in its tanks in June and reverting to infantry, was finally disbanded in January, 1946. Its Colours were handed back to the Sovereign for the third time for safe keeping.

In 1948 As a Government economy measure, the 1st Battalion assumed the role of Guards Training Battalion at Pirbright for three years until April, 1951. At this time the Guards Independent Company, The Parachute Regiment, was formed with a proportion of Scots Guardsmen.

In September the 2nd Battalion left at short notice for Malaya, where it was to be occupied in operations against Communist terrorists until its return home in May, 1951.

Six officers and eight other ranks of the Battalion lost their lives during these operations.

In November, 1951, the 1st Battalion moved by air and sea to Cyprus. In this year an alliance between the Regiment and the 3rd Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment was approved.



Coldstream Guards
1st Battalion,.



Welsh Guards
1st Battalion,.



Image courtesy of the IWM BU2856

Photographer: No 5 Army film photographic unit Sgt Jones

Description: Churchill tanks of 6th Guards Tank Brigade pass a burning Daimler scout car F206480 during the advance towards Coesfeld. Date 30 March 1945