A British Armoured Division in 1944 consisted of one Armoured Brigade, one Infantry Brigade and attached engineer, machine-gun, anti-tank, artillery and other support units. A complex system of markings were used to indentify vehicles within the division. This document attempts to outline the official markings for the combat elements of a 1944 British Armoured Division as a guide to modelers and wargamers. The listing is limited to the major combat arms and excludes signals, medical and other service units.

**Arm-of-Service**

Arm-of-service markings are numbers on a coloured field. The number indicates the regiment/battalion within the division while the coloured background indicated the arm of service of the unit - armour, infantry, Royal Artillery and so on. These were usually displayed on the front right and rear right hull or fender.

**Tacsigns**

Tacsigns are diamond, triangle, square, circle or bar markings indicating the armoured vehicle’s squadron within a regiment. Colours are red for the senior regiment, yellow for the second regiment, blue for the junior regiment and green for the motor battalion. Armoured Recce vehicles and armoured car tac signs are usually white. Placement of these markings varied widely but they generally appear on the hull sides or turret and sometimes included numbers identifying individual the vehicle. Tacsigns “were only ever used on armoured vehicles of tank regiments, motor battalions, armoured car regiments and recce regiments” and “SP anti-tank or artillery never used tacsigns”. [1]

**Bridge Classification**

Bridge classification markings indicate the vehicle weight in tons and are usually a black number on a yellow circle usually on the hull front.

**Divisional Badges**

Each division had a badge or insignia which was usually displayed on front left and rear left of the hull or fender. [1][3]

**WD Numbers**

War Department numbers were codes that identified individual vehicles. These were usually a letter followed by a series of numbers. The letter identified the type of vehicle - T for tanks and carriers, F for armoured and scout cars and so on. [2]

**Tank names**

Tank crews often gave their vehicles names. This varied by regiment but some British units chose tank names which started with the squadron letter. So in these units C squadron tanks would have names starting with “C”.

**Allied Star**

Many vehicles displayed the allied star but “it doesn’t appear that all units followed the specifications for these markings. Some would have the full compliment, while others none at all”. [6] The allied star within a circle was mainly an air recognition symbol and was generally placed on the largest topside hard surface - never on canvas. “The plain star was for placement on the sides of vehicles” [6]
Armoured Brigade

The Armoured Brigade of a British Armoured Division consisted of three Armoured Battalions and one Motor Rifle Battalion.

- **Brigade HQ**
  - Arm-of-Service: markings for Armoured Brigades are 50 for Brigade HQ vehicles, 51, 52, and 53 for the Armoured Regiments and 54 for Motor Rifle Battalion vehicles - all on a red field.

- **Senior Armoured Regiment**
  - Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks
  - Tacsigns: diamonds, triangles, squares, and circles indicating the squadron within the regiment. A vertical bar was used if regiments had a D Squadron. Colours are red for the senior regiment, yellow for the second regiment, blue for the junior regiment and green for the motor battalion.

- **Second Armoured Regiment**
  - Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks

- **Junior Armoured Regiment**
  - Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks

- **Motor Battalion**
  - Infantry in M5 Half-tracks

Infantry Brigade

The Infantry Brigade of a British Armoured Division consisted of a Brigade HQ and three lorried Rifle Battalions.

- **Brigade HQ**

- **Senior Rifle Battalion**
  - Infantry in 3-ton Lorrys

- **Second Rifle Battalion**
  - Infantry in 3-ton Lorrys

- **Junior Rifle Battalion**
  - Infantry in 3-ton Lorrys

Royal Artillery Group

Royal Artillery units were attached to British Armoured Divisions to provide artillery, anti-tank, and anti-aircraft support.

- **Senior Field Artillery Regiment**
  - Sexton SP 25-pounders

- **Junior Field Artillery Regiment**
  - Towed 25-pounders

- **Anti-Tank Regiment**
  - 17-pounder AT guns and M10 17-pounder SP

- **Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment**
  - Bofors 40mm

**Bridge Classification Numbers**

Bridge classification numbers show the vehicles weight in tons on a yellow circle usually on the hull front. Shermans were 30 while Fireflys were 33 and Cromwells were 27.

**Divisional Badges**

Each division had a badge or insignia which was usually displayed on front left and rear left of the hull or fender.

**Motor Battalion**

The Motor Battalion provided the Armoured Regiments with organic infantry support and included three motorised infantry companies in M-5 half-tracks as well as a support company equipped with 6-pounder anti-tank guns and machine-guns.

**Arm-of-Service**

Arm-of-service markings for Royal Artillery units in an Armoured Division are red over dark blue.

**Light AA Regiments**

Light AA units of Armoured Divisions also used a mix of Polsten, Oerlikon, and Hispano-Suiza 20mm cannons until August 1944. [9]
Royal Engineer Group

Royal Engineer units were attached to British Armoured Divisions to provide military engineering support.

- **41** Senior Field Squadron
- **46** Junior Field Squadron

Arm-of-Service

- Arm-of-service markings for Royal Engineer units in an Armoured Division is cobalt blue.

Engineer Field Squadrons

- Engineers provided construction, demolition, mine-laying, entrenching and other engineering services to the division.

Divisional Troops

British Armoured Divisions include other support units like armoured car and armoured recce regiments to provide support.

- **64** Independent MG Company
  - Arm-of-Service: Arm-of-service markings for the Independent MG Company is green or black. The Arm-of-Service (AoS) for Armoured Recce Regiment and Armoured Car Regiment is green over cobalt blue, with a white stripe above the ACR flash to indicate it is a Corps-level unit.

- **45** Armoured Recce Regiment
  - Cromwell and Challenger tanks
  - Regiments include an AA Troop with SP anti-aircraft guns and a Recce Troop equipped with Stuart light tanks.

- **44** Armoured Car Regiment
  - Scout cars and armoured cars

Armoured Recce Regiment

- An Armoured Recce Regiment has three tank squadrons equipped with Cromwell and Challenger tanks. The AAR HQ includes an AA Troop with SP anti-aircraft guns and a Recce Troop equipped with Stuart light tanks.

Armoured Car Regiments

- Armoured Car Regiments were Corps-level units equipped with scout and armoured cars tasked with providing reconnaissance.

British Armoured Division Table of Organisation 1944

This TO&E shows the 1944 organisation of a British Armoured Division, simplified to show just the major combat arms.
References


[2] WD Numbering System
http://www.canadianregister.co.uk/wd_numbers.html

[3] British Tank Markings in Normandy

[4] British Armoured Regiment TO&E
http://www.kerynne.com/games/BritishArmouredRegimentTOE.html

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Britain_World_War_II_Armoured_Division_Structure_1944.png

[6] Allied stars on vehicles and stars in circles?

[7] Vehicle Markings

[8] Late-war British Decal Recognition Guide

[9] Light Anti Aircraft Weapons
http://www.bayonetstrength.150m.com/Weapons/lightantiaircraft/light_anti_aircraft_weapons.htm

[10] Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment
http://ww2talk.com/forums/topic/23766-reconnaissance/
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