



Sherman Firefly and Sherman V in markings for 2nd Armoured Battalion Grenadier Guards of the 5th Armoured Brigade, Guards Armoured Division in 1944. They show the Arm-of-Service flash for the senior armoured regiment, the Guards Armoured Division emblem and the bridging classification marking but lack tacsigns and WD numbers.

British Armoured Division Markings (1944)

By Harry Leith

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 identify 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]



British Armoured Division Markings (1944)

Divisional HQ

40 Divisional HQ

Armoured Brigade

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

50 Brigade HQ

51 Senior Armoured Regiment
Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks



52 Second Armoured Regiment
Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks



53 Junior Armoured Regiment
Sherman V and Sherman Firefly tanks



54 Motor Battalion
Infantry in M5 Half-tracks



Arm-of-Service

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.

Tacsigns

Tacsigns are 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. Positioning varied between divisions but these generally appear on the hull sides or turret and could include numbers identifying the vehicle within the squadron.

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 Fireflies 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.

Infantry Brigade

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

60 Brigade HQ

61 Senior Rifle Battalion
Infantry in 3-ton Lorries



62 Second Rifle Battalion
Infantry in 3-ton Lorries



63 Junior Rifle Battalion
Infantry in 3-ton Lorries



Arm-of-Service

Arm-of-service markings for Infantry Brigades are 60 for Brigade HQ vehicles and 61, 62 and 33 for the Rifle Battalion vehicles - all on a green field.

Tacsigns

Infantry Brigade vehicles do not use tacsigns.

Divisional Badges

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

Infantry Battalion

Each Infantry Battalion has four rifle companies each with a company HQ and three rifle platoons. Each battalion also contains a support company equipped with 3" mortars, universal carriers and an anti-tank platoon equipped with 6-pounder anti-tank guns.

Royal Artillery Group

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

74 Senior Field Artillery Regiment
Sexton SP 25-pounders



76 Junior Field Artillery Regiment
Towed 25-pounders



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



73 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment
Bofors 40mm



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, Oerliken and Hispano-Suiza 20mm cannons until August 1944. [9]

British Armoured Division Markings (1944)

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.

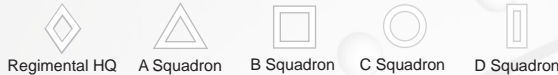
64 Independent MG Company
MMGs, 4.2" mortars & Wasp Flamethrowers



45 Armoured Recce Regiment
Cromwell and Challenger tanks



44 Armoured Car Regiment
Scout cars and armoured cars



Arm-of-Service

Arm-of-service markings for the Independent MG Company is green or black. The 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 [1]

Independent MG Company

The Independent MG Company provided divisional units with heavy support and was equipped with Vickers medium machineguns, 4.2" mortars and sometimes even Wasp flamethrowers. It rarely fought as a unit with its sub-units being attached out as needed.

Armoured Recce Regiment

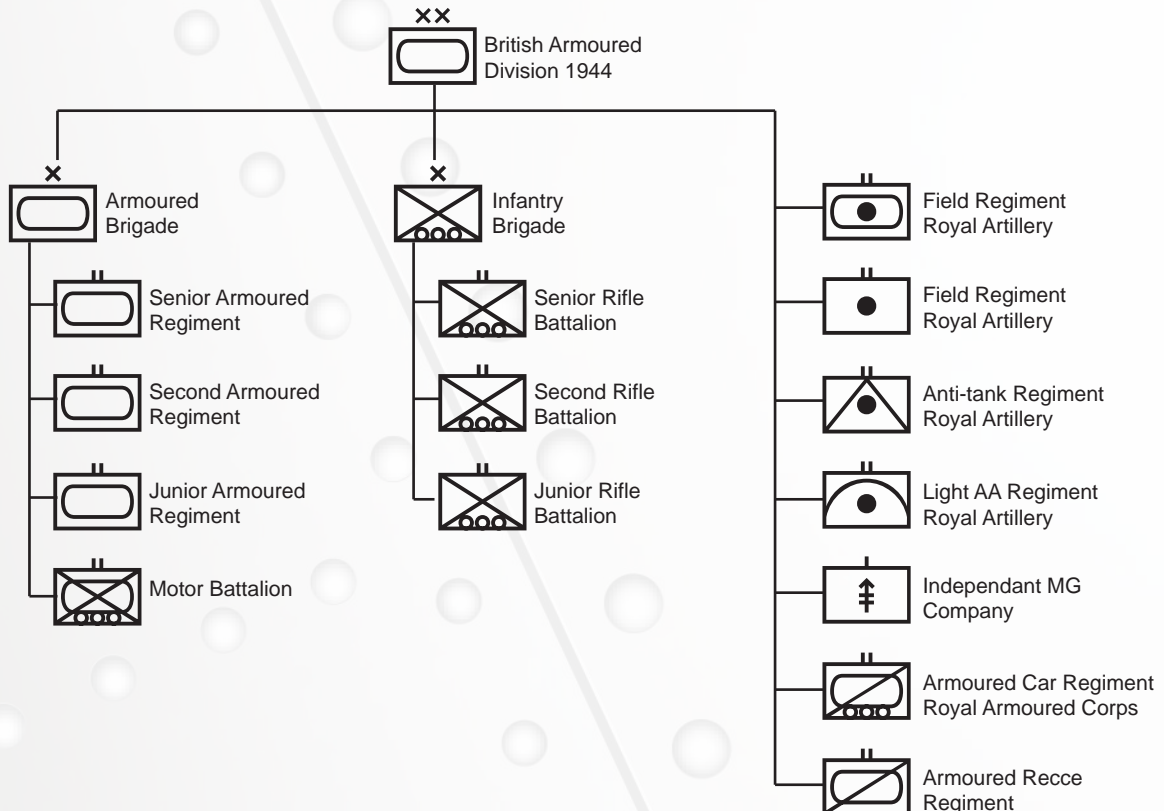
An Armoured Recce Regiment has three tank squadrons equipped with Cromwell and Challenger tanks. The AAR HQ includes an AA Troop with SP anti-aircraft guns and a Recce Troop equipped with Stuart light tanks. [11]

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. [5]



British Armoured Division Markings (1944)

References

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