

# The London Regiment, Territorial Force, c. 1914

## Introduction

The London Regiment, Territorial Force, was established on 1 April 1908 when the Territorial Forces were formed as the umbrella organization for the volunteer reserve units of the British Army.



*38th Middlesex (Artists') Volunteer Rifle Corps in Camp, 1884.*

Painted by Godfrey Merry.

Reproduced from a postcard from the National Army Museum, London.

The predecessor of the Territorial Force was a movement of defense-interested citizens, united in voluntary rifle corps, *the Rifle Volunteers*. This movement started in 1859 out of fear of a French invasion.

These volunteer rifle corps, supplemented by a number of sub-divisions of other arms, constituted until 1908 a motley and sometimes unruly collection of units that could only be deployed in the defense of England. During the Boer War, there was a need to reinforce the regular units that fought in South Africa.



1st City of London Volunteer Rifle Brigade, c. 1900.  
Drawn by Richard Simkin. From Modelworld, October 1972.

Being prevented from using the volunteer corps due to their territorial service limitation, therefore it became necessary to form special infantry and cavalry units that could be sent to South Africa.

The units were named *the City Imperial Volunteers* (infantry) and *the Imperial Yeomanry* (mounted infantry). Many of the soldiers in these units came from the volunteer corps, but were supplemented by volunteer, unmarried men.

One of the many lessons learned from the Boer War was that the structure of the reserve units had to be put into a firmer framework, and after a great deal of preparatory work to set up the necessary structure, on 2 August 1907 the English Minister of War, Richard Haldane, adopted The Territorial and *Reserve Forces Bill* in Parliament.

Based on this, the Territorial Force was organized into 14 infantry divisions and 14 cavalry brigades (mounted infantry) and the associated combat support and supply units. At the same time, the former volunteer corps were disbanded, whose traditions were largely carried on by the new units, including the *South Africa 1900-1902 insignia*, which forms part of many of the units' regimental insignia.

Local organizations were given responsibility for setting up the new units, and large-scale recruitment campaigns were carried out. Many of the soldiers came from the disbanded volunteer corps, but many had to be recruited "from scratch". It was not easy everywhere, but eventually most units managed to approach the determined strength targets [1](#).

## The London Regiment



*The London Regiment, City of London Battalions, c. 1911.*  
After drawing by Richard Caton Woodville.

The London Regiment was chosen as the designation for the former rifle corps in London. It became a title rather than a unit, as the regiment had no staff or personnel of its own, nor any regimental badge. The 28 battalions in London were thus independent, but some had some connection to the regiments of the regular army.

In practice, however, the regiment only came to consist of 26 battalions, the places being the 26th and 27th battalions (*Inns* were intended respectively for the infantry battalion of *The Honorable Artillery Company* of the *14th Middlesex and of Court*) *Volunteer Rifle Corps*.

However, *The Honorable Artillery Company* flatly refused to become part of the new grand regiment, while *The Inns of Court* ignored the matter. From the official side, the situation was taken into account, as it was hardly possible to get the two regiments, which had more than 300 years of history behind them, and extremely good connections, to agree. The places thus became empty.

The first eight battalions belonged to the City of London, the rest to Greater London (County of London).

The battalions formed the infantry element of two of the Territorial Forces' 14 divisions - 1st and 2nd London Division

## Uniform plates from The London Regiment

The examples shown here come from the book *His Majesty's Territorial Army - A descriptive account of the yeomanry, artillery, engineers and infantry with the army service and medical corps, comprising the 'King's Imperial Army of the Second Line'* by Walter Richards (Source 1 ) 2). The book's 32 plates, all drawn by Richard Caton Woodville, have often been removed for framing. My renderings are thus also images of loose plates, seen for sale at MILPRINTS.

The three plates here give a good impression of the varied uniforms of The London Regiment, ranging from uniforms almost identical to the peacetime uniforms of the regular units, through the distinctive gray uniforms carried over from the Volunteer Rifle Corps, to the khaki field uniform Model 1902. The book however, gives no explanation for the three plates, apart from the designations used here. However, some give themselves, e.g. The London Scottish, but I haven't identified all the uniforms yet, so here's a bit to tinker with...

## st 1 London Division



*The London Regiment, County of London Battalions, c. 1911.*  
After drawing by Richard Caton Woodville.

## 1st Brigade

- 1st (City of London) Bn. London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) 2nd
- (City of London) Bn. London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) 3rd (City
- of London) Bn. London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) 4th (City of
- London) Bn. London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)

## 2nd Brigade

- 5th (City of London) Bn. London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade) 6th
- (City of London) Bn. London Regiment (City of London Rifles) 7th (City
- of London) Bn. London Regiment 8th (City of
- London) Bn. London Regiment (Post Office Rifles)

## 3rd Brigade

- 9th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Queen Victoria's Rifles) 10th
- (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Paddington); from 1912 (Hackney) 11th
- (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Finsbury Rifles) 12th (County
- of London) Bn. London Regiment (Rangers).



*London Scottish - March to the Highlands, c. 1911.*

As the London Scottish were the only unit of their kind in The London Regiment, their uniform is easily identifiable; the soldier in the gray uniform is probably from the Civil Service Rifles.

Contemporary postcards, published in America; perhaps from the battalion's "big trip" to Scotland in 1911, when it marched from Oban to Glasgow [3](#).

## 2nd London Division



*The London Regiment, County of London Battalions, c. 1911.*  
After drawing by Richard Caton Woodville.

#### **4th Brigade**

- 13th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Kensington)
- 14th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (London Scottish)
- 15th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles)
- 16th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles)

#### **5th Brigade**

- 17th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Poplar & Stepney Rifles)
- 18th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (London Irish Rifles)
- 19th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (St. Pancras)
- 20th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Blackheath & Woolwich)

#### **6th Brigade**

- 21st (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (First Surrey Rifles)
- 22nd (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (The Queen's)
- 23rd (County of London) Bn. London Regiment
- 24th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (The Queen's).



*28th (County of London) Bn.  
London Regiment  
(Artists Rifles), 1914.*

Card 30 in Player's cigarette card series Uniforms of the Territorial Army, 1939.

## Independent units

- 25th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Cyclists) [4](#)
- 28th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (Artists Rifles), attached to 2nd London Division.



*28th (County of London) Bn.*

*London Regiment (Artists Rifles).*

From *Regimental Badges*

by TJ Edwards, Gale

& Polden Limited, 1951.

The text on the back of the card reads:

*This regiment, one of the principal officer producing groups of the Territorial Army, owes its origin to Edward Stirling, an art student. It was formed in 1860 as the 38th Middlesex (Artists') Rifle Volunteers, with Headquarters at Burlington House.*

*In the Great War the Artists went to France as a fighting unit in October 1914, but in November were called on to send fifty selected men as officers to the BEF (British Expeditionary Force). They subsequently formed a Cadet School, supplying 10,000 officers to various arms of the Service. We show one of the "first fifty" in the uniform of a private of the Artists, with an officer's shoulder badge. In the background is the Town Hall, St. Omer.*

## Other devices



The Honorable Artillery  
Company, Infantry



The Inns of Court  
Officer Training Corps.

The infantry battalion of The Honorable Artillery Company was attached to the 1st London Division, as an independent battalion.



14th Middlesex (Inns of Court) Volunteer Rifle Corps became The Inns of Court Officer Training Corps in 1909.

The battalion traditionally consisted of lawyers and legal staff. At a parade in 1803, when this information was given to King George III, he stated that they should thus be called *The Devil's Own*, an epithet they later bore with some pride. The unit was formally organized into 3 companies and 1 cavalry squadron.

The illustrations are from *Regimental Badges* by TJ Edwards, Gale & Polden Limited, 1951.



*Signal flag practice at the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps in 1914.*  
From Source 8.

The soldiers in the photograph are uniformed as horsemen.

## World War One

Shortly after the mobilization, it is decided that all units in the Territorial Force must be duplicated, whereby designations such as e.g. 2/1st 24th (County of London) Bn. London Regiment (The Queen's); this exercise is repeated a few times during the war.

By the end of 1914, The London Regiment thus included 58 battalions; in May 1915 the number of battalions reaches 88. Of these, 56 take part in active service in virtually all theaters of war where British units are deployed. The remaining battalions are part of the home country's defense and/or function as personnel replacement units for the active battalions. At the end of the war, the regiment had a total of 61 battalions.

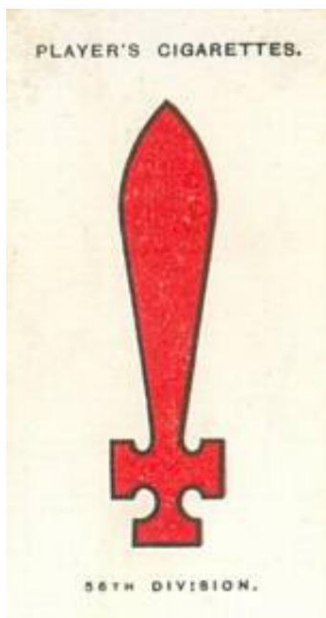
The two divisions become the 56th (1st London) Division and the 47th (2nd London) Division; later the 58th is formed

(2nd/1st London) and 60th (2nd/2nd London). When the 2nd London Division gets a lower number (47) than the 1st London Division (56), it is because a large part of the battalions in the 1st London Division had already been sent to the front as individual battalions, whereby the division as such was not operationally capable. However, other units are added as replacements and the division takes its place in the line during 1916.

## Sources

1. *His Majesty's Territorial Army - A descriptive account of the yeomanry, artillery, engineers and infantry with the army service and medical corps, comprising the 'King's Imperial Army of the Second Line'* by Walter Richards, Virtue & Co., London (ca. .1911).
2. *The Territorial Battalions - A Pictorial History 1859-1985* by Ray Westlake, Spelmount Limited, Tunbridge Wells, Kent 1986, ISBN 0-946771-68-5.
3. *British Territorial Units 1914-18* by Ray Westlake, Osprey Men-at-Arms No. 245, London 1991, ISBN 1-85532-168-8.
4. *The Civil Service Rifles in the Great War* by Jill Knight, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, South Yorkshire 2005, ISBN 0-84415-057-7.
5. *The London Scottish in the Great War* by Mark Lloyd, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, South Yorkshire 2001, ISBN 0-85063-713-9.
6. *The London Regiment 1859-1999* The magazine Regiment Nr. 35, 1999.
7. *The London Regiment, TA The long, long trail - The story of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918.*
8. *Kitchener's Army and the Territorial Forces* by Edgar Wallace, Georgens Newnes, London, c. 1915.
9. *Divisional and Other Signs* by Vincent Wheeler-Holohan, Naval & Military Press, London 2001 (reprint of 1920), ISBN 1-84342-095-3.
10. *The Volunteer Infantry 1880-1908* by Ray Westlake, The Military Historical Society, Special Number 1992, London 1992, ISBN 0-9510603-1-7.

## Postscript - Division Marks



The text on the back of the cards gives the following summary of the history of the divisions:

### 56th (London) Division

*The 56th Division was formed in France in February 1916, and consisted chiefly of Territorial Battalions*

of the London Regiment. Several of these battalions had gone to France in 1914 and the early days of 1915, and had been fighting alongside the Regular Army. The sign, a red sword, was copied from the charge in the Arms of the City of London. The first big action the 56th took part in was the Somme (July 1st, 1916), and some of its other actions included Arras, Langemarck, and Cambrai, 1917, and Arras 1918. It was demobilized in March 1919.



### 58th (London) Division

The official sign of this division was really a correct reproduction of the Tower of London, but as this was a somewhat complicated design to reproduce, a plain tower, as illustrated, was often used instead. The 58th was composed of second line battalions of the London Regiment, and after a period of duty on the East Coast, went to France in January 1917. Among its battles were: -1917: Bullecourt, Third Ypres, Menin Road Ridge, Polygon Wood, and Passchendaele; 1918: St. Quentin, Albert, Second Bapaume, Epéhy, and on September 18th, it took Pozières.

Source 9 further states that the letters EHN were occasionally used with the division mark - the E and H symbolizing the 5th and 8th letters of the alphabet, while the N was the last letter of the word division.



Cards Nos. 17, 15 and 30 in Player's cigarette card series Army, Corps and Divisional Signs 1914-1918, Series 1.

### 60th (London) Division

This very distinctive sign is supposed to have represented the initial of the GOC (General-officer Commanding), Major-General Sir Edward Bullin. Formed in September 1914, this Territorial Division

went to France in June 1916, where it had its baptism of fire near Arras. In January 1917 it went to Salonika, and was through heavy fighting in May. June 1917 saw it join the EEF (Egyptian Expeditionary Force) in Palestine. In July 1918, the Division was reorganized; seven of its battalions being transferred to France, and the vacancies were filled with Indian troops.

The London Division's badge is discussed in my article *About the 24th (County of London) Bn. The London and 2 Regiment (The Queen's)*.

Per Finsted

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### **Notes:**

- 1) See e.g. my review of the book *Regulations for the Territorial Force and County Associations*, 1908.
- 2) See also my article *Uniforms - Territorial Army*, approx. 1911, showing several examples of the book's uniform plates.
- 3) The battalion is i.a. featured in my review *Bogomtale - The London Scottish in The Great War*.
- 4) The battalion is referred to in my article *On English Cyclist Units, Part 1 and Part 2*.