

## South Western Area <sup>(1)</sup>

### Regular Depots in the Area

The Devonshire Regiment	– Exeter
The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's)	– Taunton
The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry	– Bodmin
The Dorsetshire Regiment	– Dorchester

### Regular Troops in the Area

1<sup>st</sup> Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery <sup>(2)</sup>  
(H.Q., 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Heavy Batteries, Royal Artillery)

### Militia in the Area

8 <sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Depot	– Yeovil
20 <sup>th</sup> Searchlight Depot	– Yeovil
22 <sup>nd</sup> Searchlight Depot	– Taunton
3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Training Group	– Newton Abbot

### Territorial Army Troops in the Area

The Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry (Prince of Wales's Own) <sup>(3)</sup>  
The North Somerset Yeomanry <sup>(4)</sup>

5<sup>th</sup> (Prince of Wales's) Bn. The Devonshire Regiment <sup>(5)</sup>  
7<sup>th</sup> (Haytor) Bn. The Devonshire Regiment <sup>(6)</sup>

51<sup>st</sup> (Devon) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery <sup>(7)</sup>  
(H.Q., 151<sup>st</sup> (Devon), 152<sup>nd</sup> (Devon) & 153<sup>rd</sup> (Devon) Light Anti-Aircraft Batteries,  
Royal Artillery)

55<sup>th</sup> (Devon) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery <sup>(8)</sup>  
(H.Q., 163<sup>rd</sup>, 164<sup>th</sup> & 165<sup>th</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Royal Artillery)

## NOTES:

1. The South Western Area was reformed in 1920 as part of Southern Command. It was under the command of the commanding officer of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade based at Devonport and comprised the counties of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. During the 1920's the area merged with the Southern Area to form the Wessex Area, taking control of the counties of Hampshire and Dorset. On 1 April 1937, the Wessex Area was split to reform the South Western Area (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset) and Southern Area (Hampshire and part of Wiltshire), with other parts of Wiltshire under command of the Salisbury Plain Area. A Major General was appointed Area Commander, and he was based at Devonport. The commanding officer of the Southern Area was also the General Officer Commanding 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Division, with the headquarters of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division moving from Devonport to Salisbury.
2. The regiment was based in Plymouth. It left Plymouth in November 1939 and went to France to come under the command of the B.E.F..
3. This unit was a first line Territorial Army cavalry unit, which was based at Trowbridge in Wiltshire. The regiment joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade when it was formed in October 1939, formally coming under command of the brigade on 3 December 1939. The brigade left for Palestine on 11 February 1940. The battalion later fought in the Iraqi campaign, before being converted to an armoured regiment in July 1941. It saw service in Egypt and Libya before returning to the United Kingdom to act as a training and draft finding unit.
4. A first line Territorial Army cavalry regiment, which was based in Bath. This Regiment joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade earlier than the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, doing so on 15 November 1939. With this Brigade, the Regiment served in Palestine, Syria and Iraq. In 1941, this Regiment was converted into the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Formation Signals.
5. This battalion was a first line Territorial Army battalion, equipped as a machine gun battalion. The battalion was based at Plymouth and was allocated to the 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Infantry Division. In November 1941, the battalion was converted to an artillery role and was redesignated as:  
**86<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery**  
As such, the regiment fought in North West Europe under the command of XII Corps and 2<sup>nd</sup> Army.
6. This battalion was a second line battalion, duplicate of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion and also equipped as a machine gun battalion. It was based at Torquay and was allocated to the 45<sup>th</sup> (Wessex) Infantry Division. In November 1941, the battalion was converted into an artillery role and redesignated as:-  
**87<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery**  
The regiment served in North Africa and Italy before being disbanded in June 1944.
7. This regiment was formed in November 1938 from the 56<sup>th</sup> (Devon) Army Field Brigade R.A.. The Headquarters and 151<sup>st</sup> Batteries were based at the Drill Hall in Barrack Road, Exeter (opposite the Royal Artillery Topsham Barracks. The 152<sup>nd</sup> Battery in Paignton and the 153<sup>rd</sup> Battery at Crelake, Tavistock. The regiment went with the B.E.F. to France and Belgium in November 1939. Following evacuation from Dunkirk, the regiment remained in the U.K. with Home Forces until joining the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division in June 1942. The regiment served with the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division in North Africa and Italy. It left the division in November 1944 and came under command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. It saw the end of the war in Italy.

8. This regiment was formed in June 1939 as a duplicate of the 51<sup>st</sup> L.A.A. Regiment. The Headquarters and 163<sup>rd</sup> L.A.A. Battery were based at the Drill Hall, Barrack Road, Exeter. The 164<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was based in Paignton, with the 165<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery having Drill Halls in Crediton and Okehampton. The regiment was sent to France to relieve its sister regiment, being deployed at airfields at Lille, Amiens, Abbeville and Poix. Then the regiment was recalled to Le Havre in April 1940, from where it sailed to Southampton. It travelled by train to Scotland to embark for Norway under command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade. The 163<sup>rd</sup> and 165<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Batteries operated in support of the French forces around Narvik, whilst the 164<sup>th</sup> L.A.A. Battery was sent to Mosjoen. The 164<sup>th</sup> Battery fought in the series of rearguard actions as British forces fell back to Bodo for evacuation. The entire regiment successfully brought back to the U.K. all its 40 mm Bofors guns, leaving Harstad on 8 May. On its return to the U.K., it came under the command of Home Forces. The regiment left the U.K. bound for Ceylon in April 1942. From Ceylon, the regiment moved to India and converted into a L.A.A./Anti-Tank Regiment and saw service in Burma.

**SOURCES:****Orders of Battle Second World War 1939-1945**

Prepared by Lieut-Col H. F. JOSLEN

First Published by the H.M.S.O in 1960 Reprinted 1990 The London Stamp Exchange Ltd

[ISBN 0 948130 03 2]

**British Southern Command on 3 September 1939**

Available online at:

<http://www.patriotfiles.com/index.php?name=Sections&req=viewarticle&artid=6694&allpages=1&theme>

[Accessed 9 November 2011]