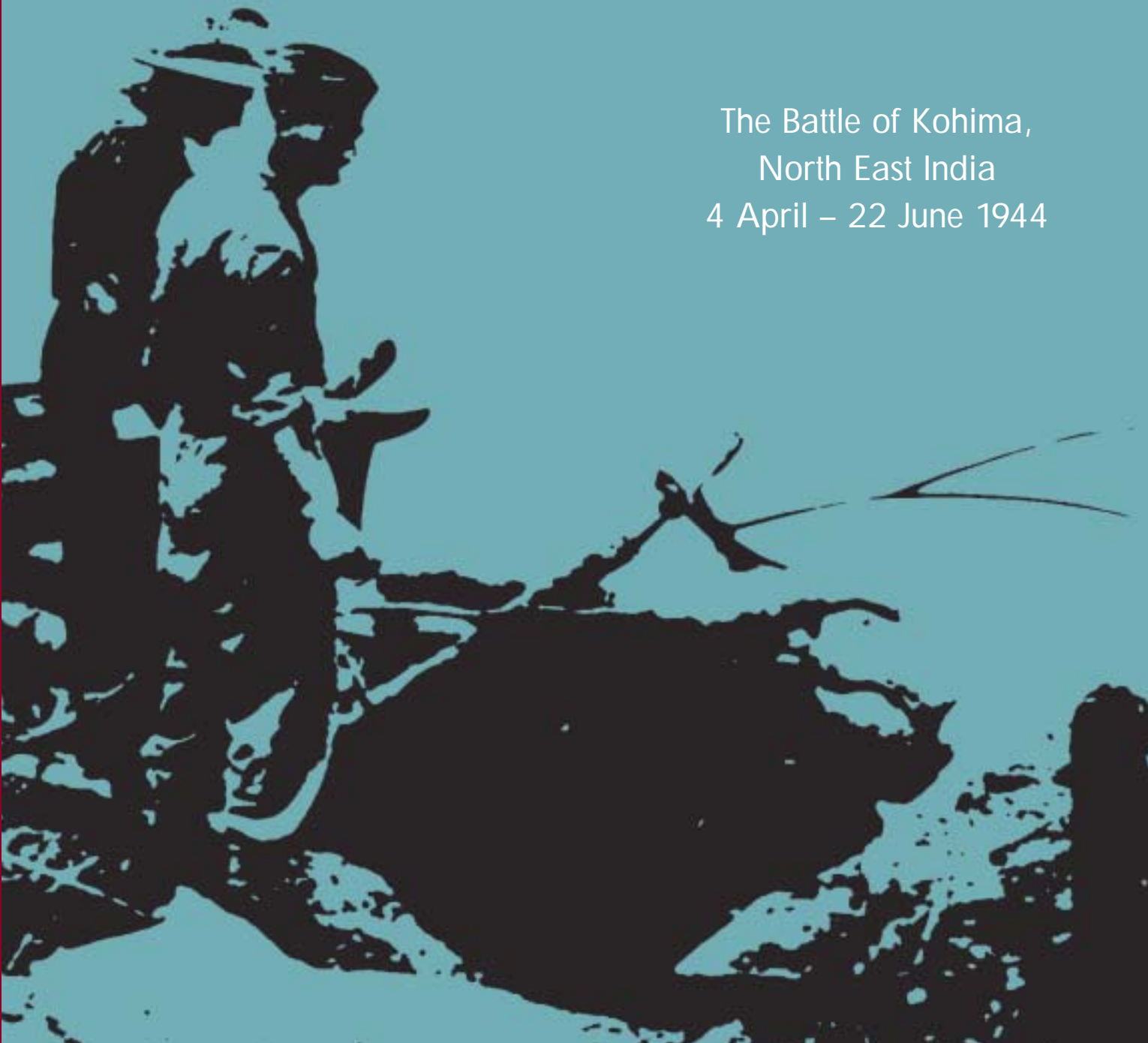


SECOND WORLD WAR

60<sup>TH</sup>

ANNIVERSARY

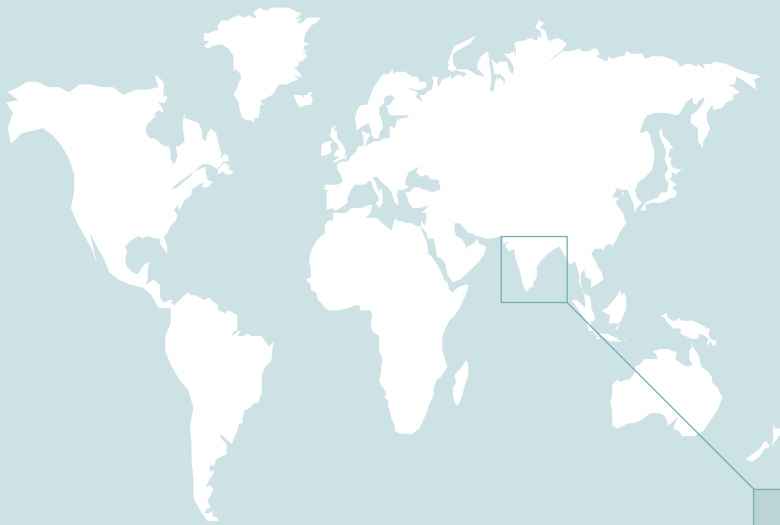
The Battle of Kohima,  
North East India  
4 April – 22 June 1944



**'The turning point in the war with Japan'**

# Kohima

KOHIMA, THE CAPITAL OF NAGALAND IN THE NORTH EAST OF INDIA



## KEY FACTS

Kohima is:

- 5000 feet above sea level
- 40 miles from Dimapur
- 80 miles from Imphal



## Foreword by the Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans, Ivor Caplin MP

**'A nation that forgets its past has no future.'** These words by Winston Churchill could not be more apt to describe the purpose of this series of booklets, of which this is the first. As Minister for Veterans I believe that we should continue to remember the bravery of our Armed Forces during the Second World War; without their efforts and sacrifices, our lives today would be very different. These booklets will commemorate various Second World War actions, and aim not only to remember and commemorate those who fought and died, but also to inform future generations of the sacrifices made by those who fought. The inspiration that can be derived from their stories will be invaluable for their future. I want to help those growing up now to be aware of the veterans' sacrifices, and of the important contributions they made to our security and to the way of life we enjoy today.

Each booklet is intended to be linked with a specific commemorative event. In April 2004, veterans of Kohima, along with relations of soldiers who died there, will be travelling to North India with Remembrance Travel for a two-week pilgrimage of the region. I hope that this series will have relevance beyond these events, as well as serve as a memento of the 60th anniversary commemorations.

It has been very difficult to select specific campaigns for these booklets, and for this first booklet we have chosen Kohima to represent the war in Burma. This is in no way intended to diminish the importance of the other battles fought in that theatre. This is a tribute to all who served there, and I hope that the series will return to this theatre of the war with an issue on the Fourteenth Army and the liberation of Burma.

It is hard for us to understand the horrors of these battles. In a message for issue 'to all ranks on the Manipur road', Earl Mountbatten wrote after the battle of Kohima that 'only those who have seen the horrific nature of the country under these conditions will be able to appreciate your achievements'. This sums up a great truth about the battle of Kohima, and emphasises the magnitude of the victory bought at great cost by the combined British and Indian force of the 2nd British Division, the 161st Indian Brigade (which included the 4th Royal West Kents), and the 33rd Indian Brigade. Though its importance was not fully realised at the time, Kohima was a turning point in the war against Japan. This booklet will, I hope, go some way to helping us to understand, and to remember, those who stopped the Japanese advance into Northern India.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivor Caplin'.

## The Background to the Battle of Kohima

Kohima, a hill town in North-East India (Assam), 5000 feet above sea level in the middle of the Naga Hills, was from April to June 1944 the location of one of the most bitterly fought battles of the Second World War. Over the course of 18 months, the British and Indian Fourteenth Army, under the command of General William Slim, had been building up logistical bases at Dimapur and Imphal for an eventual offensive into Burma. The Japanese Fifteenth Army, under the command of Lt General Renya Mutagachi, received orders in early 1944 to put a stop to the British preparations in Assam. The fighting in and around Kohima in the spring of 1944 was part of a larger Japanese offensive, known as 'U-Go', in which three Japanese divisions, the 15th, 31st and 33rd, attempted to destroy the British/Indian forces at Imphal, Naga Hills and Kohima. The Japanese, however, were unaware that the British and Indian troops based in Assam in 1944, unlike their predecessors in 1942, were properly trained for the coming battles.

Kohima was an important hill station on the only road that led from the major British/Indian supply depot at Dimapur to Imphal. It was nearly 40 miles from Dimapur, and 80 miles from Imphal. The Japanese plan was for the 31st Division to split into three columns that would cut the Kohima–Imphal Road and envelop

the village from three different angles. The Japanese operation, 'U-Go', began in mid-March 1944; by the 22nd elements of the British IV Corps (17th, 20th and 23rd Indian Divisions) based in and around Imphal, were engaging the first of the Japanese troops.

General Slim understood that a major Japanese offensive was under way. With most of IV Corps tied up in Imphal and the Imphal–Kohima road cut, he knew that Kohima would need to be reinforced. British military intelligence did not initially realise the threat to Kohima. It was assumed that no more than a few battalions would be able to traverse the high ridge system that existed between the Chindwin River and Kohima. Before long, however, reports confirmed that an entire Japanese division was on the move to Kohima.

In mid-March, the only troops stationed in the Kohima area were a few units of Assam Rifles, 1st Assam Regiment and Line of Communications troops. The 1st Assam Regiment, which was stationed east of Kohima, was forced to withdraw before the Japanese advance after heavy fighting. Realising the state of affairs, Slim acted to move the 5th (and later 7th) Indian Divisions by air to reinforce both Imphal and Kohima. Both of these units had just completed an excellent defence and counter-offensive



Kohima battlefield showing Jail Hill and DIS Ridge

campaign in the Arakan region of Burma, against the Japanese Operation 'Ha-Go'. Slim also activated XXXIII Corps; the 2nd British Division, 268th Indian Brigade and the 23rd Infantry Brigade (Chindits) were all earmarked to relieve the garrison at Kohima and open the road to Imphal.

The battle-hardened and well-trained 161st Indian Brigade, 5th Indian Division was flown to the Dimapur area in late March. The brigade moved down the road towards Kohima and by early April was creating defensive positions in and around the village. Defending the area presented significant problems; the key feature, Garrison Hill, and a long wooded spur on a high ridge west of the village, were the scene of perhaps the bitterest fighting of the whole Burma campaign. The small area of terrain provided by this ridge and the surrounding area permitted the deployment of only one battalion, the 4th Royal West Kent Regiment. The rest of the 161st Indian Brigade – the 1/1st Punjab Regiment, the 4/7th Rajput Regiment and the brigade's artillery – were placed two miles west of Kohima, in Jotsoma. Over the course of the battle, units from Jotsoma were sent forward to reinforce areas covered by the 4th Royal West Kents.

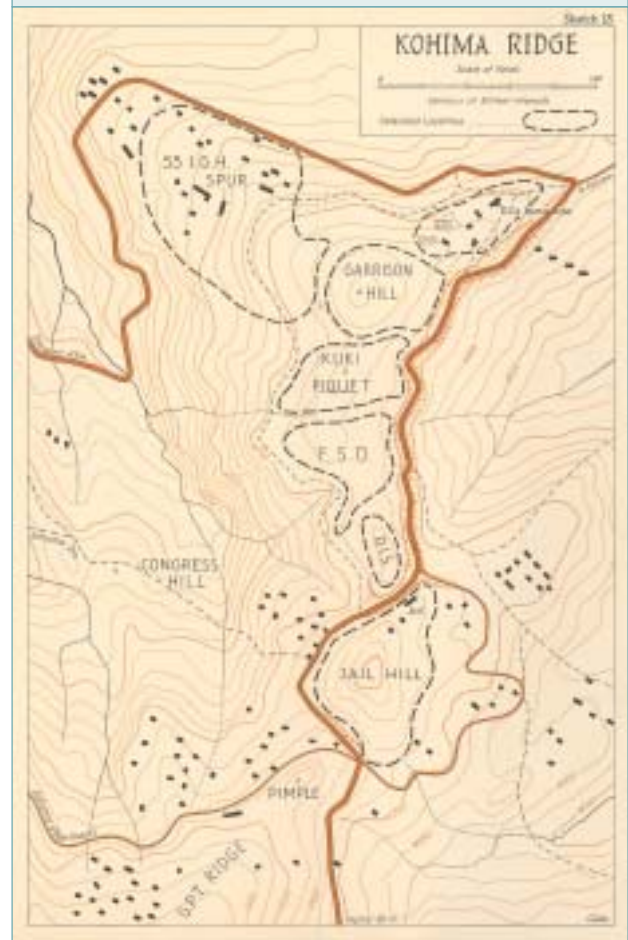
The defenders of the Kohima area, the 161st Indian Brigade, Assam Rifles and 1st Assam Regiment, contained the Japanese advance in the region and forced them into a battle of attrition. The battle included fierce hand-to-hand combat, especially in the garden of the Deputy Commissioner's (representative of the Government of India, Indian Civil Service) bungalow and around the tennis court. The defenders were cut off from Dimapur, and had to rely upon daily air re-supply. Despite these obstacles, they withstood 13 days of siege and heavy fighting without backing down.

The battle for Kohima can be divided into two phases: the siege, which lasted for 13 days;

and the clearance of the Japanese 31st Division from the area, followed by the opening of the Kohima–Imphal road, from mid-April until 22 June. This second stage occurred over the course of two months and caused more casualties for both armies.

This battle was ultimately to prove to be the turning point of the Burma Campaign. Earl Mountbatten described it as 'probably one of the greatest battles in history...in effect the Battle of Burma... naked unparalleled heroism...the British/Indian Thermopylae'.

**Kohima Ridge and the Defended Localities**



## The Siege

By 5 April, the 4th Royal West Kents and the remainder of the 161st Brigade were set up in their respective positions in and around Kohima. The 4th Royal West Kents and the supporting troops from the Assam Rifles and Assam Regiment were positioned in a series of trenches along the Kohima Ridge. The Kohima ridge consisted of features such as Garrison Hill, Jail Hill, Field Supply Depot (FSD) Hill, and Detail Issue (DIS) Hill; these areas, along with the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Bungalow, were used as the main lines of defence.

The Japanese 31st Division, which had deployed more than 12,000 men in the Kohima region, opened the attack on the evening of 5/6 April. The 4th Royal West Kents, recognising their numerical inferiority and need to shorten their defences, withdrew from the more isolated positions on the ridge after the first major assault. The Japanese had made significant inroads into the ridge and were preparing their own positions for defence. By 7 April, reinforcements from the Rajputs arrived from Jotsoma, providing a boost for morale.

The Japanese launched a series of attacks into the north-east region of the defences on 8 April, and by the 9th the British and Indians there had been forced back to the tennis court. At this juncture, the Japanese cut the tracks between Jotsoma and Kohima and the road between Jotsoma and Dimapur. The Japanese forced the garrison at Kohima to withdraw further into their lines on 10 and 11 April with attacks on DIS and FSD.

On 13 April, the Japanese pressed their advantage against the British and Indian positions on the ridge. The troops defending near the DC's bungalow and the tennis court came under increasingly heavy artillery and mortar fire, and had to repel frequent infantry assaults. This area was the scene of some of the hardest, closest and grimmest fighting, with

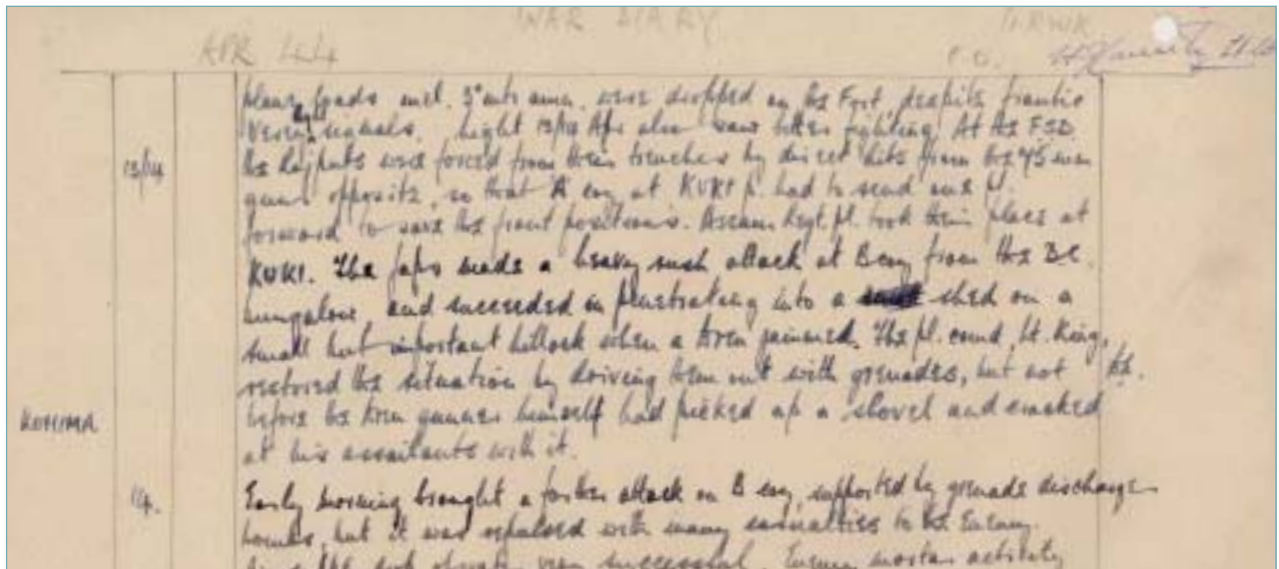
grenades being hurled across the tennis court at point-blank range. The War Diary of the 4th Royal West Kent Regiment opposite describes the scene.

In the end the attacks were beaten off with the help of remarkably accurate fire from the Royal Artillery positioned at Jotsoma ridge. This fact did not escape the Japanese commanders, and they turned much of their attention against the positions of the 161st at Jotsoma. The British and Indian troops were able to repel these attacks.

14 April was to mark a turning point in the siege. While the Japanese continued to shell and fire upon the Kohima and Jotsoma garrisons, they did not send any infantry attacks. The 2nd British Division, newly arrived from an air and land 1500-mile transportation, and the 161st Brigade had broken the Japanese roadblock on the Dimapur–Kohima



Remains of the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow and tennis court



13/14 April  
KOHIMA

Night 13/14 Apr also saw bitter fighting. At the FSD the Rajputs were forced from their trenches by direct hits from the 75mm guns opposite, so that A Coy at KUKI p. had to send one pl. forward to save the front positions....The Japs made a heavy rush attack at B Coy from the DC bungalow, and succeeded in penetrating into a shed on a small but important hillock when a Bren jammed. The pln. comd, Lt King, restored the situation by driving them out with grenades, but not before the Bren gunner himself had picked up a shovel and cracked at his assailants with it.

14 April  
KOHIMA

Early morning brought a further attack on B Coy, supported by grenade discharge bombs, but it was repulsed with many casualties to the enemy. Air supply drop of water very successful. Enemy mortar activity continued throughout the day, interspersed with smoke bombs which was taken to mean that his stock of captured ammunition was running low. This assumption was correct.

Extract From 4 Battalion Royal West Kents War Diary 13-14 April 1944

road. The garrison in Kohima received word of this on the 15th and morale soared. They were bolstered by the knowledge that the lifting of the siege was inevitable and fast approaching.

Knowing that reinforcements were on the way, the Japanese launched a last deadly and desperate attack against the positions at FSD on the evening of 16/17 April. Each side took the positions more than once, only to be thrown out by their opponents. The heavy fighting and the casualties sustained forced the British and Indian troops to withdraw from FSD to the

Garrison Hill positions. This action left the defenders hemmed in from the south, north and east.

With matters reaching crisis level, on the morning of 18 April British artillery opened up from the west against the Japanese positions. Elements of the 2nd British Division, 161st Brigade and tanks from XXXIII Corps pushed into the area north-west of Garrison Hill and forced the Japanese from their positions. The road between Dimapur and Kohima had been opened, and the siege was lifted.

## The Relief and Clearance of Kohima

The 161st Indian Infantry Brigade's defensive stand in and around Kohima blunted the Japanese offensive in the region. With the opening of the road between Dimapur and Kohima, the 2nd Division and troops from XXXIII Corps were able to move into the area and support the counterattack, which began in early May.

The task of the 2nd Division, 33rd and 161st Indian Brigades was to clear the Japanese forces stationed around Kohima and open the road to Imphal. Major General John L. Grover, GOC 2 Division, had devised a strategy to destroy the Japanese positions in and around the Kohima region by envelopment. Grover ordered the 4th Infantry Brigade to destroy the Japanese to the south at GPT Ridge and in the Aradura region. The terrain and climate in the region made this a difficult task, as Lieutenant Horner, the signals officer of the 2nd Royal Norfolks, 4th Infantry Brigade, described:

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The physical hammering one takes is difficult to understand. The heat, humidity, altitude and the slope of almost every foot of ground combine to knock hell out of the stoutest constitution. You gasp for air which doesn't seem to come, you drag your legs upwards till they seem reduced to the strength of matchsticks, you wipe the sweat out of your eyes... So you stop, horrified to be prodded by the man behind you or cursed by an officer in front.

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The 5th Infantry Brigade was to swing north-east to clear the Japanese from the Naga Village. The remaining brigade of the 2nd Division, the 6th, was to clear the centre, FSD Hill and Jail Hill. The fighting within the 6th Brigade's area was documented by Major Boshell, who commanded 'B' Company, 1st Royal Berkshires, in the 6th Infantry Brigade:

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To begin with I took over an area overlooking the Tennis Court... The lie of the land made it impossible to move by day because of Japanese snipers. We were in Kohima for three weeks. We were attacked every single night... They came in waves, it was like a pigeon shoot. Most nights they overran part of the battalion position, so we had to mount counter-attacks... Water was short and restricted to about one pint per man per day. So we stopped shaving. Air supply was the key, but the steep terrain and narrow ridges meant that some of the drops went to the Japs. My company went into Kohima over 100 strong and came out at about 60.

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The 33rd and 161st Indian Brigades were under the command of the 2nd Division to clear the Japanese. The fighting was bitter and extremely difficult, with the Japanese putting up a consistently stiff defence. Arthur Swinson, the distinguished historian of Kohima, recorded how:

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7th May and the three days that followed were probably the bitterest time in the whole battle of Kohima. After thirty-four days and nights of close and bloody fighting, after hunger, thirst, discomfort, after appalling casualties, the enemy still held the main bastions of their position. No bombs, shells, mortars, flame-throwers or grenades could seem to shift them...The Jap[anese] had lost thousands upon thousands of men, and reports kept saying they were weak and diseased and running short of ammunition. But all the British, Gurkhas and Indians knew was that as soon as they got near a bunker, the fire poured out of it as mercilessly as ever.

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By the morning of 13 May, many of the features in the Kohima region had been taken by the British/Indian forces; a few, among them the DC's bungalow, were still holding out against the Dorsets and their supporting tanks. Major Michael Lowry published an account in 1950 of the attack by his 'B' Company, The Queen's Royal Regiment, on Jail Hill on 10 May.

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At 2200 hrs got the order to move out at 2215 hrs... This night approach, in my opinion, was most difficult – very tricky navigation and altogether rather nerve-racking, something I shall never forget... I had to navigate the column – in fact, I had to lead it. Very tricky, no defined tracks, thick undergrowth, down hundreds of feet round spurs and up hundreds of feet and across re-entrants, hacking, pushing, stumbling, and through ruined bashas and so on...

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Supplies arriving at the foot of FSD Hill

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The gist of this local attack on to this position was an assault in line under covering fire. Pen and I started the ball rolling by whistling over some grenades... But the terrain was not easy, there being many shell-holes, horizontal tree stumps and the odd trench to negotiate. As we were going down the slope we caught the full blast of about three light machine guns and rifle fire and, of course, grenades as we tried to negotiate the obstacles. This, I am afraid, resulted in many more men dropping...

After this there followed a sniping duel, and then things happened the like of which I had never seen before. It was the nearest approach to a snowball fight that could be imagined. The air became thick with grenades, both theirs and ours, and we were all scurrying about trying to avoid them as they burst. This duel appeared to go on non-stop for an unreckonable time...

For the rest of the day we dug like beavers – everything we could find, plates, mugs, bayonets and entrenching tools – not so much digging as is normally done, but by making a hole and burrowing and tunnelling ourselves forward below ground level. By the evening we were completely dug in and all section posts linked up...

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Over time, the British and Indian troops gained the upper hand, forcing the Japanese 31st Division to begin a withdrawal by mid-May. As Japanese troops were cleared from the area, additional British and Indian units from XXXIII Corps were moved into the area to reinforce and relieve members of the 2nd Division and 33rd and 161st Indian Brigades.

Strengthened by reinforcements, the 2nd Division and other units began to clear the Japanese from the Kohima–Imphal road, preparatory to lifting the siege of Imphal. More heavy fighting ensued, but eventually the Japanese troops were cleared from the road. British and Indian troops from Kohima and Imphal met at Milestone 110 on 22 June, formally ending the sieges of Imphal and Kohima.

The British and Indian forces had lost around 4000 men, dead, missing and wounded. The Japanese had lost more than 7000 men in the Kohima area fighting. On 31 May, General Sato, Commander of the Japanese 31st Division, ordered the first units to withdraw; he wrote of this decision that:

we fought for two months  
with the utmost courage  
and have reached the limits  
of human fortitudes...  
Shedding bitter tears I now  
leave Kohima.

## The Role of the Air Force



British and Indian troops with supplies on a forward airfield in Burma

At both Kohima and Imphal, the army was entirely reliant on supply by the RAF until the road from Dimapur was cleared. At Kohima the main problem was to drop air supplies accurately on to the narrow ridgelines, whereas at Imphal there were a few airstrips to land on. The first air drop at Kohima, on 13 April, was a great disappointment; the first planes with air supplies mis-identified the dropping zone, and delivered their loads outside the perimeter. Once the dropping zone was correctly identified, however, the air drops became more regular and exact, providing the daily needs of food, water and ammunition. By mid-April, most days, as Arthur Swinson wrote:

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In the late afternoon some half a dozen Dakotas, flying in line ahead, would come up the valley, circle low round Garrison Hill, and release their many-coloured parachutes. A good few of the precious parachutes drifted away to the enemy's lines... Some lodged in the trees, these were retrieved by shooting at the cords till they came down.

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By May, the troops were never short of food or ammunition, and the silk parachutes themselves were much coveted and used for warmth and decoration. The water, which had been rationed to a pint a day during most of April, was gradually increased to three pints, thanks to the RAF. Nevertheless, air and ground crews were near exhaustion when the besieged garrisons were relieved; the RAF had flown nearly 19,000 tons of supplies and more than 12,000 men, and had evacuated 13,000 casualties and 43,000 non-combatants.

### KEY FACTS

By the end of the battle the Royal Air Force (RAF) had flown:

- 19,000 tons of supplies
- 12,000 men
- 13,000 casualties
- 43,000 non-combatants

## Victoria Crosses

The Victoria Cross is the British realm's highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It has precedence over any other of our Sovereign's awards or Commonwealth decorations.

The Victoria Cross was founded by Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856. The Cross itself is cast from the bronze of cannons captured at Sevastopol during the Crimean War. The design, chosen by Queen Victoria, consists of a cross with the Royal Crest resting upon a scroll bearing the words 'For Valour'.

Since its inception the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1,354 times. The youngest recipient was 15 years old and the eldest was 69 years old. Three cases exist where both father and son have won the Victoria Cross; four pairs of brothers have also been recipients.

Two Victoria Crosses were awarded following the battle at Kohima.

### KEY FACTS

About the Victoria Cross:

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### LANCE CORPORAL JOHN HARMAN

4th Battalion,  
The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment,  
161st Indian Infantry Brigade,  
5th Indian Division

Lance Corporal John Harman was a sniper in 'D' Company, defending DIS Hill from 6 April when the siege began. On the 7th, Harman crawled forward from his slit trench, towards a Japanese light machine-gun team which had taken cover in a captured trench. Before the Japanese could react, he sprinted the 35 yards to fling himself down below the level of the enemy fire slit. He took out a grenade with a four-second fuse, counted to three, and threw the grenade into the Japanese positions. Having verified that both of his opponents were dead, Harman then returned to his section with their weapons.

The following day, the Japanese resumed their attacks on DIS Hill. Once again, Harman, bayonet fixed, set out to attack a Japanese trench containing five men armed with automatic weapons. Harman shot his way into the trench, wiped out the position, and then began walking back, ignoring his comrades' shouts to run. He was hit by a burst of fire, and died, saying: 'I've got to go. It was worth it – I got the lot.'

These actions, which prevented the premature fall of the hill, resulted in Lance Corporal John Harman receiving the Victoria Cross. The *London Gazette* on 22 June 1944 read:

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Lance-Corporal Harman's heroic action and supreme devotion to duty were a wonderful inspiration to all and were largely responsible for the decisive way in which all attacks were driven off by his company.

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### TEMPORARY CAPTAIN JOHN NEIL RANDLE

2nd Battalion,  
The Royal Norfolk Regiment,  
2nd Division

Captain Randle was commander of 'B' Company of the Norfolks. He was ordered to attack the Japanese flank on GPT Ridge. The *London Gazette*, 12 December 1944, wrote:



On the 4th May, 1944, at Kohima in Assam, a Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment attacked the Japanese positions on a nearby ridge. Captain Randle took over command of the Company which was leading the attack when the Company Commander was severely wounded. His handling of a difficult situation in the face of heavy fire was masterly and although wounded himself in the knee by grenade splinters he continued to inspire his men by his initiative, courage and outstanding leadership until the Company had captured its objective and consolidated its position. He then went forward and brought in all the wounded men who were lying outside the perimeter. In spite of his painful wound Captain Randle refused to be evacuated and insisted on carrying out a personal reconnaissance with great daring in bright moonlight prior to a further attack by his Company on the position to which the enemy had withdrawn. At dawn on 6th May the attack opened, led by Captain Randle, and one of the platoons succeeded in reaching the crest of the hill held by the Japanese. Another platoon, however, ran into heavy medium machine gun fire from a bunker on the reverse slope of the feature.

Captain Randle immediately appreciated that this particular bunker covered not only the rear of his new position but also the line of communication of the battalion and therefore the destruction of the enemy post was imperative if the operation was to succeed. With utter disregard of the obvious danger to himself Captain Randle charged the Japanese machine gun post single-handed with rifle and bayonet. Although bleeding in the face and mortally wounded by numerous bursts of machine gun fire he reached the bunker and silenced the gun with a grenade thrown through the bunker slit. He then flung his body across the slit so that the aperture should be completely sealed. The bravery shown by this officer could not have been surpassed and by his self-sacrifice he saved the lives of many of his men and enabled not only his own Company but the whole Battalion to gain its objective and win a decisive victory over the enemy.

# Memories of Kohima

UNVEILING OF THE ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS MEMORIAL 1944



## The Battle in Retrospect

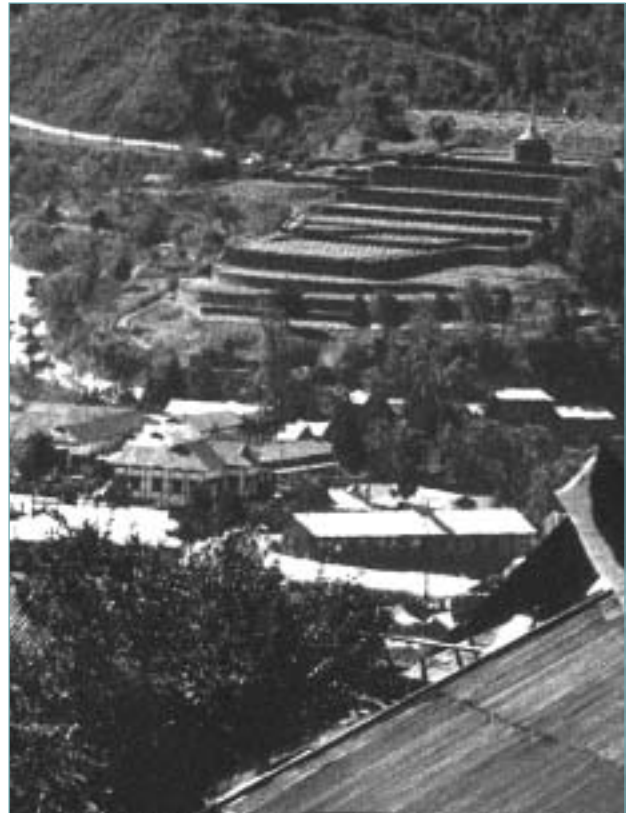
One veteran returned to the battlefield 10 years later and recorded his feelings.

### Memories of Kohima

**MAJOR GORDON GRAHAM MC & BAR**  
of the Cameron Highlanders who returned to  
the battlefield in 1954

The trees are all young on Garrison Hill, and in Naga Village children are playing. The wet earth and sprouting shrubs have the same spring-fresh smell. And there is no stench. Grass-filled fox-holes still mark forgotten remains and some rusty ration tins and leather straps have escaped, as too worthless to pick up, a decade of scavengers.

Beneath the Hill the graves. One thousand three hundred and eighty-seven of them, in orderly, impersonal, endless rows. In this geometrical panorama there is no heartbreak, no rebuke, no regret. It is a design of peace, the pious peace that follows war, the revulsive peace of 'Never Again'. It is the mute attempt to express the inexpressible by those who, helpless, are left behind. It has the same conscious inadequacy as the 'Remarks' column in the Visitors' Book, where a sudden embarrassment catches the pen which has written smoothly the name and address and then stumbles on to an anti-climactic 'Very impressive' or 'A fitting resting-place for heroes'. But one ex-soldier had written in a flash of perceptiveness, 'I wish my name were here'.



Kohima Town and Cemetery 1954

'When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Yet the heartbreak is there. On this bronze plate or that is written the parting message of those who loved. Some are inspired; some are simple and heartfelt; some are superstitious; some, like the blank spaces in the Visitors' Book, are stilled to silence by the despair of incomprehension. But, mute or vocal, all concern those who speak, and we are left wondering what may be the response of those who are gone before. Do they know too much to keep their treasures in the crumbling storehouses of memory? Or do they go unforgetful, yet untrammelled by past happiness? Killed in Action. April 18 1944. Aged 27. 'Good-night, Daddy.' Killed in Action. April 21 1944. Aged 29. 'A very parfit gentle Knight.' Killed in Action. May 5 1944. Aged 35. 'Beatae memoriae quis nos separabit?' Killed in Action. May 6 1944. Aged 23. 'Our only beloved son, who died that freedom might live.'

Statistics can be comforting. Fifty thousand rupees; 200 saplings; 36 tons of cement; 1387 graves; and 10 years. Like the poignant milestones, past which the country bus had driven in as many minutes as the advancing troops had moved in days, these figures measure the thinker, not the thought. To some they are mere computation; to others they are the sight, smell, and touch of a forgotten battlefield. Just as, at the summit crossroads where the bus groans to a standstill, the level space above is to some that which was once a tennis court and is now a war cemetery; to others it was a point of dominating destiny. Behind lies the tortuous mounting road. Before lie the jumbled blue forests and hills of Nagaland and Burma. Above the cross-roads is the memorial, its message unread by those who pass, but commanding and holding the gaze of those who arrive: 'When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Round the memorial are written the names. Brigadiers and privates; tankdrivers and stretcherbearers; signalmen and riflemen; names from every corner of England, Scotland and Wales. For our tomorrow, they gave their today. One of tomorrow's children guided me to the memorial on the Naga Village height. With proud knowledge he explained the bullet-riddled sheets of corrugated iron. The track which the bull dozers drove up the hillside is now a leafy lane; and houses identical with those which the battle obliterated have hidden



the pattern of war till it can no more be traced. Red blanketed Nagas, cheerful rebels now as then, stared in unbelief as I panted upward behind the nimble barefoot urchin to the place which I should have known better than he and which I knew before he was born. The Highlanders' memorial is in a houseyard, a confusion of fencing, pigs and hens. McCassey, Mackay, Mackinnon, Macmillan, MacNaught, in bronze alphabetical permanence. Here 83 were killed and eight were missing. Beneath the names is the title of the Cameron lament, 'Lochaber No More'.

The wail of the bagpipes from the Assam Rifles' barracks on the ridge below was almost too timely a background to reverie. So, too was the bugle sounding reveille when stumbling through the thickets in the mist of a rainy dawn, I looked for ghosts and found none. We are the ghosts called forth by our own memories, investing each impersonal inch of soil with our own personal meanings; these meanings our self-conjured mists in which wraithlike, we startle only ourselves.

But as the mists are swept clear of the heights above by the rushing winds of an oncoming monsoon, there where we stare uncomprehendingly at the sudden call for vision – still too sudden too fleeting but unutterably certain – is the great meaning we seek. For the trees are all young on Garrison Hill, and in Naga Village children are playing.



Kohima War Cemetery – Cross of Sacrifice

# Kohima today

VIEW OF THE CEMETERY AT KOHIMA



Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, today has a population of 40,000. It is located some 40 mountainous miles from the Burmese border, and has no air or rail link. It is sandwiched between Assam to the west, Burma to the east, Arunachal Pradesh to the north and Manipur to the south. Further north lie the Himalayas, further south the Chin Hills. It is hard to think of a more inaccessible place. The views are wonderful, through high mountains, deep forests, small turreted villages.

In Kohima the homes have tin roofs, the pets run wild, the roads are dusty and no-one ever seems to be in any great hurry. Relics of the battle can still be found on the battlefield, along with monuments to the Royal Scots at Aradura Spur, the Royal Norfolks on GPT Ridge, the Durham Light Infantry at Kuki Piquet, and the memorial to the 1st Battalion the Queen's Royal Regiment inside the Kohima War Cemetery.

Kohima War Cemetery lies on the battleground of Garrison Hill. No trace remains of the DC's bungalow, which was destroyed in the fighting, but white concrete lines mark for posterity the boundaries of the historic tennis court. The cemetery, which is completely terraced, now contains 1420 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War. At the highest point in the cemetery stands the Kohima Cremation memorial, commemorating 917 Hindu and Sikh soldiers who fought alongside the British as part of the British Indian Army, and whose remains were cremated, in accordance with their faith. At the lower end of the cemetery, near the entrance, is a memorial to the 2nd Division – a massive



2nd Division War Memorial

stone which was dragged by Naga tribesmen to its present position.

The cemetery also contains a memorial to the 2nd Battalion, the Dorsetshire Regiment; and a number of other regimental memorials have been erected on or near Garrison Hill

#### KEY FACTS

Kohima War Cemetery is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Commission maintains over 1,179,000 war graves at 23,203 burial sites in 148 countries around the world. It also commemorates a further 760,193 Commonwealth war dead on memorials to the missing.

Commonwealth governments share the cost of maintenance in proportion to the number of graves of their war dead: UK – 79%; Canada – 10%; Australia – 6%; New Zealand – 2%; South Africa – 2%; India – 1%.

# British and Indian Army Units awarded the Battle Honour of Kohima

## FOURTEENTH ARMY, XXXIII CORPS

### 2ND BRITISH DIVISION:

2nd Manchester Regiment (Machine Gun Battalion)

### 4th Infantry Brigade:

1st Royal Scots

1/8th Lancashire Fusiliers

2nd Royal Norfolk Regiment

### 5th Infantry Brigade:

7th Worcestershire Regiment

1st Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders

2nd Dorsetshire Regiment

### 6th Infantry Brigade:

1st Royal Welch Fusiliers

1st Royal Berkshire Regiment

2nd Durham Light Infantry

10th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

### 5TH INDIAN DIVISION:

#### 161st Indian Infantry Brigade:

4th Royal West Kent Regiment

1/1st Punjab Regiment

4/7th Rajput Regiment

### 7TH INDIAN DIVISION:

#### 33rd Indian Infantry Brigade:

1st Queen's Royal Regiment

4/15th Punjab Regiment

4/1st Gurkha Rifles

#### 114th Indian Infantry Brigade:

1st Somerset Light Infantry

4/14th Punjab Regiment

4/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles

## OTHER XXXIII CORPS UNITS

11th Cavalry

45th Cavalry

149th R.A.C.

1st Burma Regiment

1st Chamar Regiment

1st Assam Regiment

Shere Regiment (Nepalese)

Mahindra Dal Regiment (Nepalese)

### 268TH INDIAN BRIGADE:

2/4th Bombay Grenadiers

5/4th Bombay Grenadiers

17/7th Rajput Regiment

### 3RD INDIAN DIVISION (CHINDITS):

#### 23rd Infantry Brigade:

2nd Duke of Wellington's Regiment

4th Border Regiment

1st Essex Regiment

### LUSHAI BRIGADE

#### (UNDER DIRECT COMMAND OF FOURTEENTH ARMY):

1st Royal Battalion Jat Regiment

8/13th Frontier Force Rifles

7/14th Punjab Regiment

1st Bihar Regiment



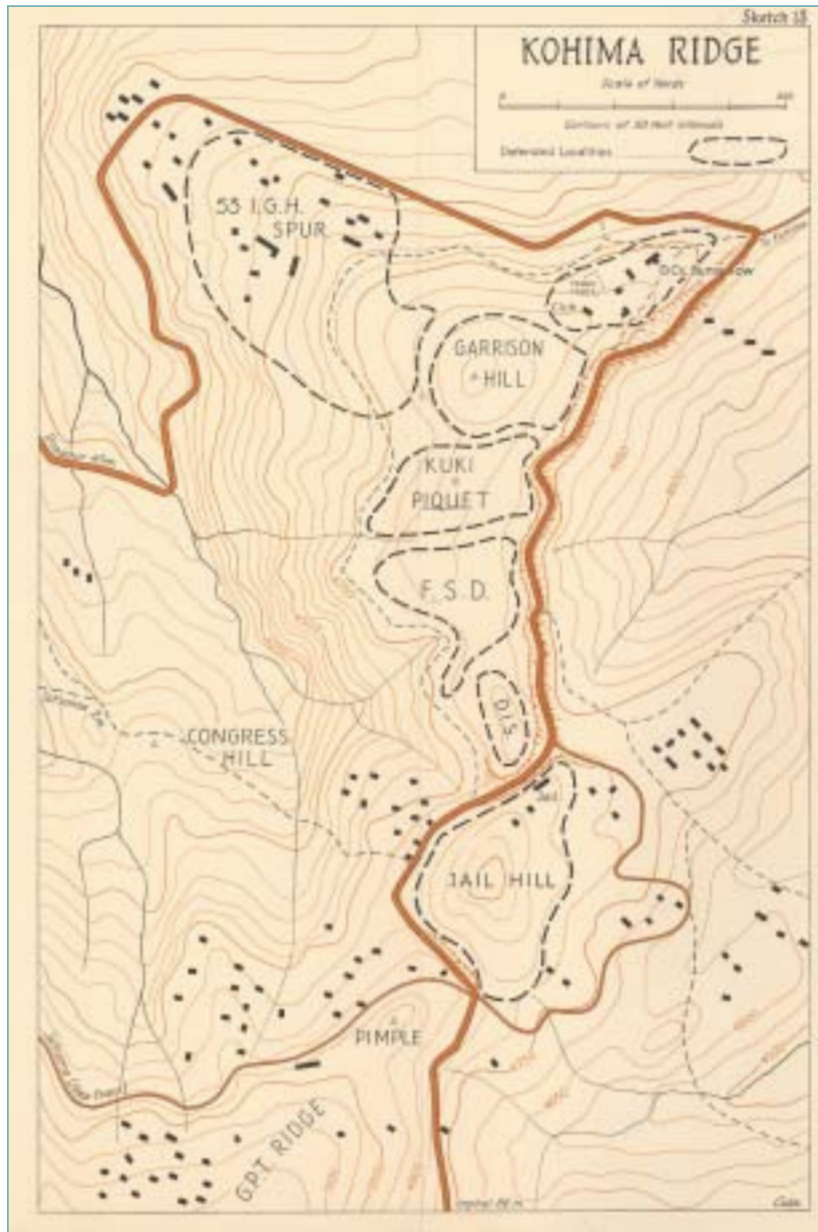
50th anniversary of the battle of Kohima

# Glossary

This booklet is intended to be of interest to young people, as well as veterans. As the former may not be acquainted with basic military terminology, a simple glossary of 1944

British Army terms relating to variously-sized commands is included here. These commands are listed in descending order of size with the rank of the commander shown in italics.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Army Group <i>General or Field Marshal</i>	The largest military command deployed by the British Army, comprising two or more armies, and containing 400,000–600,000 troops.
Army <i>Lieutenant-General</i>	A military command controlling several subordinate corps, plus supporting forces, amounting to 100,000–200,000 troops.
Corps <i>Lieutenant-General</i>	A military command controlling two or more divisions, as well as other supporting forces, amounting to 50,000–100,000 troops.
Division <i>Major-General</i>	The standard 1944 British Army formation, an infantry or armoured division contained 10,000–20,000 personnel.
Brigade <i>Brigadier</i>	A formation that contains several battalions or regiments that amount to 3000–6000 personnel, which exists either independently or else forms part of a division.
Regiment <i>Lieutenant-Colonel</i>	A unit typically of armoured or artillery forces, amounting to 500–900 soldiers, that equates in status and size to an infantry battalion.
Battalion <i>Lieutenant-Colonel</i>	A unit usually comprising 500–900 soldiers (such as an infantry, engineer or signals battalion).
Squadron <i>Major</i>	Typically, a sub-unit of an armoured or recce regiment that equates in status and size to an infantry company.
Company <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit of a battalion. A typical infantry company could contain around 150–180 soldiers.
Battery <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit, usually of artillery, that forms part of a battalion.
Unit	A small military grouping that ranges in size from a section (of 10 soldiers) up to a battalion or regiment (500–900 personnel).
Formation	A large military grouping that ranges in size from brigade up to army group.
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DIS	Daily Issue Store
FSD	Field Supply Depot
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GPT	General Purposes Transport
MC	Military Cross
RAF	Royal Air Force



The Ridge showing the main landmarks and the location of principal regiments.

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### Photography

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'A nation that forgets its past has no future'.

These words by Winston Churchill could not be more apt to describe the purpose of this series of booklets, of which this is the first.

These booklets commemorate various Second World War actions, and aim not only to remember and commemorate those who fought and died, but also to remind future generations of the debt they owe to their forebears, and the inspiration that can be derived from their stories.

They will help those growing up now to be aware of the veterans' sacrifices, and of the contributions they made to our security and to the way of life we enjoy today.



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