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Page 1 / 2

**THE BRITISH ARMY 1939 – 1945.
BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
ORGANISATION AND ORDER OF BATTLE 10TH MAY 1940.**

Volume 1.

Alan Philson

Military Press, 2005.

vi + 170pp, A4 size.

ISBN: 0-85420-930-1 cased

ISBN: 0-85420-935-2 paper

**BRITISH ARMY OF WORLD WAR TWO
WAR ESTABLISHMENT TABLES**

Northwest Europe June 1944 – May 1945.

Volume 1: The Infantry Division.

Gary Kennedy

Military Press, 2005

vii + 139pp, A4 size.

ISBN: 0-85420-961-1 cased

ISBN: 0-85420-966-2 paper

Available from the publisher:

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Review by Mike Taylor

Although produced independently, and despite the non-uniform titles, these two series are essentially complementary and deal with the same topic, namely the war establishment tables (tables of organisation and equipment) on which British units mobilised for World War 2.

The topic of war establishments is at the hyper-detailed end of the spectrum and therefore likely to pass below the radar of the formally-trained historian, used to being urged to look beyond the tactical weeds to the bigger picture. It is presumably for this reason that this material is seldom (never?) quoted in serious academic publications but the way an army's constituent units are organised can often offer insights into studies of doctrine, operational analysis, manpower studies and doubtless even more erudite topics. One of the main problems with accessing this material has surely been that it would be an unreasonable call on a professional writer or academic's time and resources to find and evaluate the material. What these books provide is a digest, focussed on specific and defined areas, and so the information will be more readily accessible.

The 1940 series is currently planned to run to four volumes. Volume 1 deals with GHQ units; Volume 2 is Corps troops and the divisions; Volume 3 will be L. of C, RAF and "late additions" like 1 Armd. Div. Volume 4 is to be "an operational history of each division during the campaign". Volumes 1 and 2 are currently in print.



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The Northwest Europe series is currently planned to run at five volumes. Volume 1 deals with the infantry division; Volume 2 the armoured division; Volume 3 artillery; Volume 4 Engineers, S&T, Ordnance, REME, and Medical; Volume 5 the independent brigades and specialist units. Volume 1 is currently available.

Both effectively reproduce the war establishment tables in a format similar to the original to show personnel numbers by rank, trade and duty, and vehicles by general type. Many also show a suggested tactical grouping of personnel and vehicles. The 1940 Volume 1 has in many cases been able to indicate actual personnel on strength as of 10 May. The Northwest Europe Volume 1 (and similar is planned for the remainder) has added value in the form of a commentary on the role of various units and sub-units and how the whole fitted together. The downside to this N.W.E. series is that there is at the moment no intention to go above divisional level and so the Corps and Army Troops will again be invisible.

Both series are seriously deficient in providing adequate academic references. The N.W.E. series gives no sources at all for the tables or the ancillary information and the 1940 series simply lists the PRO / TNA class numbers consulted but not the piece numbers. This is particularly irritating with regard to WO24, the source of the war establishment tables, because of the sheer number of documents involved.

For those BCMH members who feel their reputations might be damaged if seen acquiring such anorak accessories, I gather these can be sent in plain brown wrappers. Me, I'm beyond shame.