

The British Army in the Low Countries, 1813-1814

By [Andrew Bamford](#)

Preface to the Revised Article

This article was first written, and published on the Napoleon Series, back in 2008. In the first instance, it represented little more than an attempt to clarify in my own mind the organisation of the British forces serving in this theatre under Sir Thomas Graham; however, research even to get things to the level of detail provided in the article as initially published piqued my interest in this obscure but fascinating campaign and I ended up writing a book about it.¹ Since research for said book showed up several errors in the initial version of my article – some minor, other glaring – it struck me that it was about time that the article had a revision. Additionally, since my collected monthly strength and loss data for the units involved is now available separately,² I have omitted this from the revised article and concentrated instead on simply providing effective unit strengths for the various versions of Graham's order of battle presented here.

Historical Background

In the closing months of 1813, with Napoleon's forces largely expelled from Germany and the allied armies advancing towards the Rhine, insurrection began to break out in the Netherlands. Britain having a keen interest in this part of the world, and placing some importance on its being retained in friendly hands, it was decided to dispatch an armed force of around 7,000 men in order to aid the insurgents. Additionally, arms were dispatched, and political contact made through the offices of Major General Sir Herbert Taylor, a soldier-diplomat who had served as Private Secretary to King George III and later to Queen Charlotte. Lt. General Sir Thomas Graham, previously Wellington's second-in-command in Spain 1811-1813, was nominated to command the forces with the local rank of General. Six British battalions, and elements of the King's German Legion, had previously been deployed to North Germany in 1813 to secure the Baltic ports; some of these troops, commanded by Major General Samuel Gibbs, could be drawn upon for the new army, but the remainder of Graham's forces would have to come from units at home. All Graham's infantry, including later reinforcements, were either single-battalion regiments or second, third, and fourth battalions. Most had seen no prior service, and none was at anything approaching full strength. In addition to Gibbs, who brought embarked four of his battalions from Stralsund to join the assembling force, and Taylor who was already in the Netherlands on his diplomatic duties, Graham was assigned Major Generals George Cooke, Kenneth Mackenzie and John Skerrett as subordinate general officers.

The initial objective of Graham's forces, operating in conjunction with Bulow's Prussian corps, was Antwerp and, more specifically, the French naval squadron based there. During these operations two combats were fought at Merxem, on January 13th and February 2nd 1814, the village being taken on the both occasions. After the first action, Graham was obliged to fall back so as to conform to a Prussian withdrawal, but on the second occasion a bombardment of the French Fleet was commenced, lasting from February 3rd to February 6th.

¹ Andrew Bamford, *A Bold and Ambitious Enterprise: The British Army in the Low Countries 1813-1814* (Barnsley, 2013)

² Andrew Bamford, "British Army Unit Strengths: 1808-1815", at http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/Britain/Strength/Bamford/c_BritishArmyStrengthStudyIntroduction.html

This, however, was ineffectual due to the inadequate means available, and the withdrawal of Bulow's Prussians necessitated Graham also falling back before a better siege train could be brought to the front. Without allied help, Graham was unable to operate against Antwerp, but as an alternative an ill-fated attack was launched against the fortress of Bergen-op-Zoom on the night of 8th-9th March. The repulse of this attack, and subsequent surrender of the greater part of those troops who had penetrated the French defences, brought an effective end to active operations, but with the ending of hostilities following the fall of Paris, Graham was ultimately able to negotiate the evacuation of both Bergen-op-Zoom and Antwerp by their French garrisons³

Proposed Organisation and Strength

In a Memorandum of November 21st 1813, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies Lord Bathurst outlined the following proposed organisation for the force under Graham, with what he understood as the strengths of the units in question:⁴

3rd KGL Hussars– 480
Royal Artillery – 615
Major General Cooke's Brigade
 Detachment 1st Foot Guards – 800
 Detachment Coldstream Guards – 400
 Detachment 3rd Foot Guards – 400
Major General Mackenzie's Brigade
 2/35th (Sussex) – 600
 2/37th (North Hampshire) – 500
 2/44th (East Essex) – 500
 2/52nd (Oxfordshire) Light Infantry – 300
Major General Skerrett's Brigade
 55th (Westmoreland) – 400
 3/56th (West Essex) – 400
 2/69th (South Lincolnshire) – 500
 3/95th Rifles – 250
 1st Royal Veteran Bn. – 500
Major General Gibbs' Brigade
 2/25th (King's Own Borderers) – 390
 33rd (1st West Riding) – 600
 54th (West Norfolk) – 510
 2/73rd – 560

This would give a total of 7,610 infantry, and 8,705 all arms. Staff was to comprise one Deputy Adjutant-General and one Deputy Quartermaster-General, with two Deputy Assistants in each department, medical staff sufficient for a force of 7,000, and a due proportion of officers from the commissary and paymasters departments.

The brigades of Mackenzie and Skerrett comprise the units drawn from the home station, split by seniority, whilst Gibbs' Brigade was projected as being composed of units from Germany

³ Historical summary largely from HMSO, *British Minor Expeditions 1746-1814, Compiled in the Intelligence Branch of the Quartermaster General's Department* (London, 1884); Hon. J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (Thirteen Vols. London, 1899-1930), Vol.X, pp1-11, 33-55.

⁴ Memorandum of 21 November 1813, TNA, WO6/16, pp.18-19

already serving under that officer. The 4/1st (Royal Scots) and 2/91st would remain in the Baltic; reports indicate that these were the least effective battalions under Gibbs' command.⁵ The Foot Guards detachments were all to come from the standing Second Guards Brigade, which comprised the second battalions of the three Foot Guards regiments and functioned largely as a depot; nevertheless, the brigade had been called upon for active service before, sending its flank companies to Walcheren and providing troops for a provisional brigade at Cadiz 1810-1811. Mention of the 3rd KGL Hussars would seem to be in error for the 2nd regiment, since the former was already in Germany whilst the latter was available at home; a subsequent proposal for shipping the force list the 2nd KGL Hussars, and it was indeed this regiment that initially went out with Graham.⁶

Unfortunately, Bathurst's conception of the strength of the available forces did not correspond with the reality:

Unit	Assumed Strength as per Bathurst Memo	Total Strength December 25th 1813	Effective Strength December 25th 1813
Detachment 1st Foot Guards	800	761	696
Detachment Coldstream Guards	400	516	490
Detachment 3rd Foot Guards	400	546	509
1st Royal Veteran Bn.	500	461	459
2/25th	390	316	316
33rd	600	530	502
2/35th	600	461	453
2/37th	500	298	279
2/44th	500	422	406
2/52nd	300	197	191
54th	510	406	395
55th	400	356	340
3/56th	400	280	262
2/69th	500	487	487
2/73rd	560	450	402
3/95th	250	305	287
Totals Strengths	7,610	6,792	6,474

Figures for December relate to the troops actually sent to the Low Countries with Graham, and are from monthly returns in National Archives WO17/1773; those for 3/95th refer to the provisional rifle battalion (see below), whereas the Bathurst figure seems to have been calculated based on the five companies of the 3/95th then stationed in Britain. Other than the shortfall in numbers, the main organisational change highlighted by the table is the composition of the contingent supplied by the Foot Guards. Whilst the total number of guardsmen sent is roughly on a par with Bathurst's proposal – in fact, at 1,823 total it slightly exceeds it, although not all were effective as of December 1813 – these men are distributed fairly equally between the three regiments. Bathurst seems to have envisaged an organisation similar to that utilised at Cadiz in 1810-11, with a full battalion from the 1st Foot Guards and a provisional battalion formed out of men from the other two regiments. What happened in

⁵ Bamford, *Bold and Ambitious Enterprise*, pp.18-19.

⁶ "Return of the Officers, Non Commissioned Officers, Drummers and Private men who are ready, or who are expected to be prepared for embarkation for Holland", TNA, WO1/198, p.3

reality, there being plentiful influx of militia transfers to swell their ranks, was that each regiment deployed the effective part of its second battalion, subsequently providing reinforcements over the course of the following months as more fit men became available. The three guards battalions were initially prepared for service with a six-company organisation, with the 2/1st Foot Guards adding a seventh company before departure.⁷

The Guards, however, were something of an exception and the majority of the other units called upon were unable to provide enough fit manpower to make up Bathurst's numbers. Once the shortfall became apparent – albeit too late to do anything before the expedition sailed – the decision was taken to reinforce Graham's force with the following battalions.⁸

From Jersey:

2/30th (Cambridgeshire), assumed strength about 600 rank and file.

2/81st (Loyal Lincoln Volunteers), assumed strength about 490 rank and file.

From Leith:

2/21st (Royal North British Fusiliers), assumed strength about 380 rank and file.

2/78th (Ross-shire Buffs Highland), assumed strength about 400 rank and file.

Additionally, a reinforcement of 550 rank and file was prepared to go out to join the three Foot Guards battalions, later followed by another, smaller, draft.⁹ It was further envisaged that the British and KGL units serving as part of Lt. General Wallmoden's Corps in the allied Army of the North would be sent to reinforce Graham, these being the 3rd Hussars and 1st and 2nd Horse Batteries of the KGL, and the 2nd Rocket Troop, Royal Horse Artillery. Wallmoden wrote to Graham, however, explaining that some delay would be involved before these forces could be expected to arrive.¹⁰

Initial Organisation

Although aware that reinforcements were on the way, Graham was compelled to begin his campaign with the forces immediately at hand, and these were landed between the sixth and seventeenth of December 1813. Once fully disembarked, Graham organised his forces in the following fashion.¹¹

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

Guards Brigade: Major General Cooke

2/1st Foot Guards

2/Coldstream Guards

2/3rd Foot Guards

⁷ Lt. Gen. Sir F.W. Hamilton KCB, *The Origin and Service of the First or Grenadier Guards* (3 Vols. London, 1874), Vol.II, pp.484-485.

⁸ Torrens to Bunbury, December 19th 1813, TNA, WO1/198, p.39.

⁹ Torrens to Bunbury, December 30th 1813, TNA, WO1/198, p.55.

¹⁰ Wallmoden to Graham, January 18th 1814, TNA, WO1/199, p.509.

¹¹ See "Cantonments of the Army under General Sir Thomas Graham" dated December 27th 1813, TNA, WO1/199, p.245.

Light Brigade: Major General Mackenzie

2/35th
2/52nd
2/73rd
Rifle Battalion

First Brigade: Major General Skerrett

2/37th
2/44th
55th
2/69th
1st Royal Veteran Bn.

Second Brigade: Major General Gibbs

2/25th
33rd
54th
3/56th

Royal Artillery: Lt Colonel Sir George Wood

Rogers' Brigade (2nd Co./3rd Battalion)
Truscot's Brigade (5th Co./3rd Battalion)
Fyers' Brigade (9th Co./3rd Battalion)
Tyler's Brigade (6th Co./5th Battalion)
Hawker's Brigade (4th Co./9th Battalion)¹²

In addition to these units, there were detachments of Royal Engineers and Royal Sappers and Miners under Lt. Colonel James Carmichael Smyth, and of the Royal Wagon Train. The Rifle Battalion comprised Fullarton's and Kent's companies 3/95th, Glass's company of the 1/95th, and Eeles's company 2/95th. It was commanded from January 1814 by Brevet Lt. Colonel Cameron of the 1/95th. Secondary sources often refer to the whole as 3/95th, but the detachments from the other two battalions continued to be present.¹³

It will be seen that this organisation, though maintaining the Foot Guards as a single brigade as was their traditional prerogative, sought to mix the four battalions from Germany –which had come direct from Stralsund with only a pause onboard transports in Yarmouth Roads – with the less experienced units out from Britain. To some extent, this reorganisation was a product of circumstances, since the 2/73rd was found on landing to be in poor health and was therefore left to garrison Willemstad during the earliest operations. Meanwhile, the 2/37th and

¹² For individual units, see Major Francis Duncan, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery*, (Two Vols, London, 1879): Service histories in these volumes do not list Fyers' Brigade as present in the Netherlands until 1815, but Graham explicitly mentions that unit in a dispatch of January 14th 1814 and HMSO, *Minor Expeditions*, does state five companies as present in December 1813 whereas Duncan only gives four; it would therefore seem reasonable to conclude that Fyers' was the fifth company present from the outset.

¹³ Sir William H. Cope, *The History of the Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own) Formerly the 95th* (London, 1877), pp.175-9.

3/56th had been misdirected to Scheveningen when the rest of the army entered the Scheldt, and took some time to re-join. When they did arrive, the 2/37th relieved the 2/73rd at Willemstad – making its assignment to Skerrett rather nominal – and the other battalions were assigned as above. Although still recovering its fitness, the 2/73rd had at least seen action at Görde earlier in the year, which baptism of fire may explain why it was selected for the Light Brigade, which seems to have been assigned the pick of Graham's line infantry to bulk up the small numbers of men provided by the 52nd Light Infantry and 95th Rifles.¹⁴

Reinforcements, Reorganisation, and the First Attack on Antwerp

The above organisation was almost immediately supplemented by the arrival of the 2nd KGL Hussars on December 27th, and subsequently by the reinforcements from Leith, the 2/21st and 2/78th, which joined on January 10th 1814. The 2/21st was nominally assigned to the First Brigade, displacing the 1st Royal Veteran Battalion, which went into garrison, and the 2/78th was posted as a reinforcement to the Second Brigade. In reality, however, the 2/21st also assumed a garrison role, so that the only reinforcement for the field force was the 2/78th. Concurrent with the arrival of these reinforcements, the army as a whole assumed a divisional organisation, with Cooke and Mackenzie commanding the First and Second Divisions respectively. Cooke was replaced at the head of the Guards Brigade by Captain and Lt. Colonel John, Lord Proby, of the 1st Foot Guards, who was appointed a Colonel on the staff. To replace Mackenzie at the head of the Light Brigade, Gibbs was moved across from the Second Brigade, and was in turn scheduled to be replaced by Taylor. However, before Taylor could take up this post Major General Skerrett was injured in a fall from his horse and could not take part in the initial advance on Antwerp. Taylor was therefore assigned temporary command of the First Brigade pending Skerrett's recovery. Once his battalion joined the field army, Colonel John Macleod of the 2/78th took command of the Second Brigade, with command of the 2/78th passing to Lt. Colonel Martin Lindsay. These changes creating the following order of battle, which was in force during the first series of operations against Antwerp.¹⁵

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

First Division: Major General Cooke

Guards Brigade: Colonel Lord Proby

2/1st Foot Guards (696)
2/Coldstream Guards (490)
2/3rd Foot Guards (509)

First Brigade: Major General Taylor¹⁶

2/44th (406)
55th (340)
2/69th (487)

¹⁴ Bamford, *Bold and Ambitious Enterprise*, p.60.

¹⁵ Unit strengths given are effective rank and file, using data for December 25th for those units present in the theatre on that date, and for January 25th for the late arrivals.

¹⁶ Replacing Major General Skerrett, injured in a fall from his horse.

Divisional Artillery

Rogers' Brigade

Second Division: Major General Mackenzie

Light Brigade: Major General Gibbs

2/35th (453)

2/52nd (191)

2/73rd (402)

Rifle Battalion (287)

Second Brigade: Colonel Macleod¹⁷

2/25th (316)

33rd (502)

54th (395)

3/56th (262)

2/78th (301)¹⁸

Divisional Artillery

Fyers' Brigade¹⁹

Cavalry: Lt. Colonel Baron Linsingen

2nd KGL Hussars (451, with 517 horses)

Left in Garrison

2/21st (174)²⁰

2/37th (279)²¹

1st Royal Veteran Bn. (459)

Unassigned Artillery: Lt Colonel Wood

Truscot's Brigade

Tyler's Brigade

Hawker's Brigade

¹⁷ Of the 2/78th, replacing Taylor temporarily reassigned to the First Brigade.

¹⁸ Strength calculated by adding January 25th strength of 262 rank and file to the 39 casualties at suffered at First Merxem.

¹⁹ Duncan, Francis, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery*. London: John Murray 1873, Vol. I, p.223, only gives Rogers' Brigade as present at Merxem, Graham specifically notes that Fyers' was attached to the Second Division there, leading to the assignments conjectured as per this order of battle. For want of other information it is inferred that these divisional assignments remained in force for the rest of the campaign; certainly, these seem to have been the only batteries equipped for field service.

²⁰ Nominally assigned to First Brigade.

²¹ Nominally assigned to First Brigade.

Colonel Macleod was wounded during the first attack on Merxem, “but did not quit command of the brigade till he became weak from loss of blood”.²² He was replaced by Lt. Colonel John Browne of the 3/56th. It is not clear whether Browne also commanded prior to Macleod’s arrival, or if – as seems likely – Gibbs initially remained with his old brigade until the 2/78th joined, with Mackenzie retaining personal command of the Light Brigade in the early stages of the operations, whilst also commanding the Second Division as a whole.

An alternative divisional order of battle given for these operations by Fortescue in his *History of the British Army*, but this perpetuates a number of errors. Most seriously it transposes the First and Guards Brigades, placing them in the wrong divisions; Fortescue furthermore does not seem to have used Graham’s monthly returns for his strength figures, some of his data appearing instead to have been taken from the inaccurate Bathurst memorandum given above.²³

Further Reorganisation, and the Second Attack on Antwerp

Although there was no reinforcement of Graham’s army in the interval between the two Antwerp operations, a limited reorganization nevertheless took place, with the 2/35th moving from the Light Brigade to the Second in exchange for the 2/25th and 54th. Two of the rifle companies may also have been attached to the Second Brigade during the advance on Antwerp, but all four were operating as a battalion again at Second Merxem. Skerrett, recovered from his fall, resumed command of the First Brigade, which was joined by the flank companies of the 2/21st and 2/37th; the 2/44th, which had temporarily been detached to reinforce the garrison at Tholen, also re-joined the brigade before the second advance on Antwerp. Skerrett’s return to duty in turn released Taylor to command the Second Brigade as originally planned. During the night immediately prior to the second attack on Merxem, Mackenzie was injured after falling from his horse. He was relieved by Gibbs, with Lt Colonel William George Harris of the 2/73rd stepping up to take temporary command of the Light Brigade.²⁴ This final set of changes produced the following order of battle for Second Merxem and the subsequent operations against Antwerp.²⁵

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

First Division: Major General Cooke

Guards Brigade: Colonel Lord Proby

2/1st Foot Guards (708)
2/Coldstream Guards (479)
2/3rd Foot Guards (499)

First Brigade: Major General Skerrett

2/44th (399)
55th (295)
2/69th (433)

²² Graham to Bathurst, January 14th 1814, in Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham*, pp.703-705.

²³ Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, Vol.X, p.8.

²⁴ Graham to Bathurst, February 6th 1814, in Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham*, pp.707-710.

²⁵ Strengths are effective rank and file, from Monthly Return of 25 January 1814 in TNA, WO17/1773.

Flank Companies, 2/21st and 2/37th (264)²⁶

Divisional Artillery

Rogers' Brigade

Second Division: Major General Gibbs²⁷

Light Brigade: Lt. Colonel Harris²⁸

2/25th (319)

2/52nd (185)

54th (439)

2/73rd (474)

Rifle Battalion (255)

Second Brigade: Major General Taylor

33rd (502)

2/35th (432)

3/56th (255)

2/78th (262)

Divisional Artillery

Fyers' Brigade

Cavalry: Lt. Colonel Baron Linsingen

2nd KGL Hussars (451, with 517 horses)

In Garrison

Centre Companies, 2/21st (107)²⁹

Centre Companies, 2/37th (179)³⁰

1st Royal Veteran Bn. (330, plus 131 detached)

Unassigned Artillery: Lt Colonel Wood

Truscot's Brigade

Tyler's Brigade

Hawker's Brigade

²⁶ Calculated based on numbers of men returned as "on command" by these two battalions; actual figure may have been slightly lower if detached men from the centre companies were also listed under this heading. Whilst it would at first glance appear that the number for the combined flank companies is disproportionately high relative to the strength of the two battalions; it should be understood that neither was fielding a full complement of eight centre companies.

²⁷ Replacing Major General Mackenzie.

²⁸ Replacing Major General Gibbs.

²⁹ Nominally assigned to First Brigade.

³⁰ Nominally assigned to First Brigade.

With Merxem captured, the siege train could be brought up and the bombardment opened, but, as the following listing of the ordnance employed on each of the three days makes clear, this operation was severely hampered by the poor quality of the majority of the ordnance employed. As a result of failures either of the pieces themselves, or of their carriages, the weight of fire that could be brought to bear was never as substantial as had been hoped.³¹

Ordnance Employed On February 3rd 1814

English Ordnance	Four 10" Mortars Two 8" Howitzers Six 24-Pounders
Dutch Ordnance	Three 12" Gomers Mortars Four 11" Mortars Six 7 ½" Mortars

Total, twenty-five pieces of ordnance.

Ordnance Employed On February 4th 1814

English Ordnance	Four 10" Mortars Two 8" Howitzers Six 24-Pounders
Dutch Ordnance	Three 12" Gomers Mortars Two 7 ½" Mortars

Total, seventeen pieces of ordnance.

Ordnance Employed On February 5th 1814

English Ordnance	Two 10" Mortars Two 8" Howitzers Three 24-Pounders
Dutch Ordnance	Three 12" Gomers Mortars Six 7 ½" Mortars (without beds)

Total, eighteen pieces of ordnance.

Further Reinforcements and Reorganisation

Following the failure of the bombardment and the departure of the Prussians, Graham's army fell back from Antwerp for a second time. Major General Taylor left the army on February 22nd, having been recalled to take up his duties at court as Private Secretary to Queen Charlotte. Lt. Colonel John Browne of the 3/56th again assumed command of the Second Brigade; until Mackenzie was fit to return to duty in early March, this left the Second

³¹ Detailed in Graham to Bathurst, February 6th 1814, TNA, WO1/199, pp.569-578.

Division with Gibbs as its only general officer.³² In the early February further reinforcements arrived in the shape of the 2/30th and 2/81st from Jersey, along with the 4/1st and 2/91st which had marched overland from Germany under Brigadier General Arthur Gore. Gore, late commanding officer of the 33rd until his promotion the previous year, had been left in command at Stralsund after the departure of Gibbs. The two battalions from Leith were assigned to the Second Division, going to the Light and Second Brigades respectively; the two battalions from Stralsund remained as an independent brigade under Gore. This brigade does not seem to have been assigned to either division: although it operated with the First Division, Graham still speaks of it as an independent entity in his dispatch of March 10th 1814.³³ Gore also brought with him nine men detached from those units brought from Stralsund by Gibbs, and “100 foreign recruits for the 33rd Regiment.”³⁴ The arrival of these reinforcements, and the changes in command already noted, created the following order of battle for mid-late February, during which time Graham had the majority of his troops concentrated to the rear to prepare for the eventuality of a French counter-attack into the Low Countries whilst leaving the Second Division to observe Antwerp.³⁵

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

First Division: Major General Cooke

Guards Brigade: Colonel Lord Proby

2/1st Foot Guards (692)
2/Coldstream Guards (546)
2/3rd Foot Guards (601)

First Brigade: Major General Skerrett

2/44th (300)
55th (272)
2/69th (416)
Flank Companies, 2/21st and 2/37th (326)³⁶

Divisional Artillery

Rogers' Brigade

Second Division: Major General Gibbs

Light Brigade: Lt. Colonel Harris

2/25th (311)
2/30th (449)

³² See “Description of the Troops under the command of his excellency General Sir Thomas Graham KB” TNA, WO1/658, p.567.

³³ Printed in *The Times*, London, March 15th 1814.

³⁴ See return of Gore's Brigade, dated Breda, February 28th 1814, in National Archives, WO1/200, p.37.

³⁵ Derived from Table of Cantonments for February 10th 1814, TNA, WO1/199, p.613; strengths from return of February 25th 1814 TNA, WO17/1773

³⁶ Calculated as above, with the same caveat applying.

2/52nd (171)
54th (401)
2/73rd (417)
Rifle Battalion (242)

Second Brigade: Lt. Colonel Browne

33rd (348)
2/35th (413)
3/56th (223)
2/78th (257)
2/81st (351)

Divisional Artillery

Fyers' Brigade

Independent Brigade: Brigadier General Gore

4/1st (729)³⁷
2/91st (442)

Cavalry: Lt. Colonel Baron Linsingen

2nd KGL Hussars (393, plus 69 detached, with 517 horses)

In Garrison

1st Royal Veteran Bn. (292, plus 131 detached)
Centre Companies, 2/21st (157)
Centre Companies, 2/37th (119)

Unassigned Artillery: Lt Colonel Wood

Truscot's Brigade
Tyler's Brigade
Hawker's Brigade

Later in February the reinforcements from Wallmoden's Corps finally arrived. Despite the arrival of the 3rd KGL Hussars, no cavalry brigade was formed and the regiment operated independently under its commander, Lt. Colonel Lewis Meyer. For want of information to the contrary, it is assumed that artillery assignments remained unchanged.

The Attack on Bergen-op-Zoom

On March 8th 1814, Graham launched his attack on the fortress of Bergen-op-Zoom, using forces drawn from the First Division and Gore's independent brigade, plus the 33rd from the Second Division. Other units from the Second Division were also pulled back from the

³⁷ This unit had no less than 209 men sick at the time of the return, not included here and amounting to 22% of the battalion's strength.

outposts to be on hand if needed, and, indeed, the 2/35th arrived outside Bergen-op-Zoom on the morning of the ninth, just in time to cover the escape of the last British troops to extricate themselves from the fortress after the failure of the storm. Sources that indicate that these battalions were formally transferred from the Second Division to the First are incorrect, but it is conceivable that the 33rd, Gore's old battalion, was slated to join the brigade commanded by that officer, which was otherwise rather weak. If this was the case, these plans were overtaken by events and in the immediate aftermath of the fighting the 33rd resumed its place in the Second Division.

The need to provide a number of storming parties for three genuine attacks and an additional feint or false attack, meant that the established organisation of the brigades involved was largely broken up, creating the organisation given below. Unit strengths are all taken from those given by Graham in his dispatch.³⁸ Although round numbers, they may not be far off the actual figures since it would seem that in most cases the forces committed to the storm represent picked detachments rather than entire units; only the battalions assigned a supporting role seem to have gone in at full strength.

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

Commander of Assaulting Forces: Major General Cooke

Left Attack: Colonel Lord Proby

Foot Guards Detachments – 600 (Storming Party)³⁹
Foot Guards Detachments – 400 (Supports)

Centre Attack: Lt. Colonel Charles Morrice, 2/69th

55th – 250 (Storming Party)
2/69th – 350 (Storming Party)
33rd – 600 (Supports)

Right Attack: Lt. Colonel Hon. George Carleton, 2/44th

2/44th – 300 (Storming Party)
Flank Companies, 2/21st and 2/37th – 200 (Storming Party)
4/1st – 600 (Supports)⁴⁰

False Attack: Lt. Colonel Benjamin Ottley, 2/91st

Centre Companies, 2/21st – 100
Centre Companies, 2/37th – 150
2/91st – 400

³⁸ Dispatch of March 10th 1814, printed in *The Times*, London, March 15th 1814; see also HMSO, *Minor Expeditions*, pp.84-85.

³⁹ Proby's command consisted of the flank companies of all three Foot Guards battalions, plus detachments from their centre companies.

⁴⁰ Eyewitness accounts would suggest that the flank companies of this battalion joined those of the 2/21st and 2/91st as part of the Storming Party.

Major General Cooke accompanied the First Column; Major General Skerrett and Brigadier General Gore the Fourth. Each column had a detachment of the Royal Sappers and Miners with Lt. Colonel Smyth, in command, accompanying the First Column. Graham's figures give a total attacking force of 3,950 rank and file.

It will be noted that this order of battle differs from that given in all secondary sources published prior to *A Bold and Ambitious Enterprise* in that it assigns command of the False Attack to Ottley rather than Brevet Lt. Colonel Robert Henry of the 2/21st. Henry is named by Graham in his dispatch as the officer who held this command, but this stems from his apparent failure to allow for the last-minute changes that added Ottley's 2/91st to the False Attack. It would seem that centre companies of the 4/1st and 1/91st were not originally intended to participate in the operation, with only their flank companies being assigned to the Right Attack. This was then changed on the evening of the storm, with the assignments being changed to those given as above. Since Ottley outranked Henry, he naturally assumed the command of the False Attack.⁴¹

The operation failed with heavy losses, Major General Skerrett, Brigadier General Gore, and Lt. Colonel Carleton being amongst the killed. Since Skerrett was responsible for the False and Right Attacks, and Gore was ordinarily the brigade commander of the 4/1st and 2/91st, it is easy to see how Graham failed to pick up on the change of command in the False Attack; the more so since both Ottley and Henry were also wounded during the fighting. Cooke was taken prisoner and Morrice wounded; only Proby remained free and unwounded out of those officers who had been assigned command roles. Total casualties amounted to a total of 3,183 all ranks, the bulk of these being prisoners. The distribution of casualties by type and rank was initially reported as follows:⁴²

	Killed		Wounded		Missing	
	Officers	R&F	Officers	R&F	Officers	R&F
Royal Artillery	0	0	1	0	0	0
Royal Engineers	0	0	1	0	0	0
Sappers & Miners	1	7	0	11	0	9
2/1st Foot Guards	2	20	0	16	9	275
2/Coldstream Guards	0	2	1	6	0	33
2/3rd Foot Guards	1	7	1	39	1	35
4/1st	3	38	5	70	17	519
2/21st	0	37	9	76	0	98
33rd	0	36	10	57	0	49
2/37th	1	70	5	44	0	79
2/44th	2	104	11	86	4	135
55th	0	5	6	31	7	62
2/69th	1	8	4	23	2	89
2/91st	0	36	3	20	10	202
Totals	11	370	57	479	50	1,585

⁴¹ For more detail, see Bamford, *A Bold and Ambitious Enterprise*, pp.185-186.

⁴² Data from HMSO, *Minor Expeditions*, p.87.

The above figures come from “Return of Killed Wounded and Missing of the Army under the Command of His Excellency General Sir Thomas Graham KB in the attack upon Bergen op Zoom by storm on the Night of the 8th and Morning of the 9th March 1814”. The accompanying “List of Officers Killed Wounded and Missing” additionally lists one officer killed, five wounded, and two missing from the staff of the army.⁴³ Missing, in this context, equates to prisoners of war although when the final count was complete the total of prisoners came out at one major general, four lieutenant colonels, two majors, twenty captains, sixty-two subalterns, four surgeons, ninety-three sergeants, and 1,872 rank and file, for a total of 2,058 all ranks.⁴⁴ The men taken prisoner were returned on parole, with the exception of three officers and 119 men exchanged immediately for French prisoners taken by Graham’s forces; it is unclear whether or not this last group are included in the figures for prisoners given above.⁴⁵

Reorganisation after Bergen-op-Zoom

The failure to capture Bergen-op-Zoom left Graham with his army badly reduced and its command structure gutted. Having borne the brunt of the losses, the brigades previously under Gore and Skerrett were combined, the former being incorporated into the latter as part of the First Division. Graham then authorised the reorganisation of the effective line infantry of the First Division into two provisional battalions, this organisation becoming effective as of 28 March. The First Provisional Battalion comprised the 4/1st, 2/69th, and 2/91st, and the Second the 2/21st, 2/37th, 2/44th, and 55th. To command the brigade formed from these units, Graham appointed Robert Crawford, a former artilleryman who had more recently held commands in the Irish Militia but who held brevet rank as a lieutenant colonel in the Army. Keen to serve in the line he had obtained a captaincy in the 2/73rd, but, since he had extensive staff experience and twenty years of distinguished service, Graham plucked him from that battalion and gave him a brigade.⁴⁶ Pending the release from parole of Cooke, and the arrival of replacement general officers from home, Gibbs took over the First Division, Lt. Colonel Harris again having the Light Brigade. By the end of March, the organisation of the army as a whole therefore worked out as follows:⁴⁷

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

First Division: Major General Gibbs

Guards Brigade: Colonel Lord Proby

2/1st Foot Guards (503)
2/Coldstream Guards (596)
2/3rd Foot Guards (412)

First Brigade: Lt. Colonel Crawford

⁴³ TNA, WO1/200, p.211217.

⁴⁴ “State of English Prisoners included in the Capitulation”, TNA, WO1/200, p.223.

⁴⁵ HMSO, *Minor Expeditions*, p.88

⁴⁶ Philippart, John, *The Royal Military Calendar or Army Service and Commission Book*. London: A.J. Valpy, 1820, Vol.V, pp.391-399.

⁴⁷ See “Description of the Troops under the command of his excellency General Sir Thomas Graham KB” TNA, WO1/658, p.567; strengths from return of 25th March, TNA, WO17/1773

First Provisional Battalion (572)⁴⁸
Second Provisional Battalion (646)⁴⁹

Divisional Artillery

Rogers' Brigade

Second Division: Major General Mackenzie

Light Brigade: Lt. Colonel Harris

2/25th (295)
2/30th (429)
2/52nd (165)
54th (419)
2/73rd (460)
Rifle Battalion (227)

Second Brigade: Lt. Colonel Browne

33rd (448)
2/35th (402)
3/56th (234)
2/78th (257)
2/81st (355)

Divisional Artillery

Fyers' Brigade

Cavalry: No Brigade commander.

2nd KGL Hussars (423, with 510 horses)
3rd KGL Hussars (620, with 683 horses)

In Garrison

1st Royal Veteran Bn. (141, plus 295 detached)

Unassigned Artillery: Lt Colonel Wood

Truscot's Brigade
Tyler's Brigade
Hawker's Brigade
1st KGL Horse Battery
2nd KGL Horse Battery
2nd Rocket Troop, Royal Horse Artillery

⁴⁸ 4/1st, 2/69th, and 2/91st.

⁴⁹ 2/21st, 2/37th, 2/44th, and 55th.

Final Changes and Reorganisations

The priorities for Graham after Bergen-op-Zoom were replacing the manpower and command losses that had been incurred there. For political reasons, various obstacles prevented a speedy exchange of the men taken prisoner at Bergen-op-Zoom, who were not finally released from parole until early April. Even then, the men of the 4/1st were exempted from the exchange; instead the whole battalion was withdrawn from Graham's command and reassigned for duty in Canada. This enabled advantage to be taken of a clause in the parole agreement in which it was promised that, prior to exchange, paroled men would be barred only from serving against the French or their allies *in Europe*. Once the exchange of the paroled men had been completed the temporary organisation of the First Brigade into provisional battalions was abandoned, with the exception that the 2/21st and 2/37th were still too weak to function independently – the former, in addition, having lost all its field officers at Bergen-op-Zoom – and so continued as a combined unit for the remainder of the war.⁵⁰

Prior to the decision being taken to go ahead with an exchange, it had been intended to reinforce Graham with the Brigade of Provisional Militia that eventually joined Wellington at Bordeaux, and, in addition, a plan was set in order to form three Battalions of Detachments from weak units stationed in the British Isles, which were slated to join Graham as a brigade under the command of Major General William Eden. In the event, this formation was still incomplete when the war ended, although Eden was placed on the staff in the Low Countries, and Graham had him earmarked as a new commander for the First Brigade. In the event, Eden, like his intended command, never left Britain.⁵¹ However, Graham did obtain the services of Lt. General Sir Ronald Ferguson to act as his second-in-command, and Brigadier General Colin Halkett was also placed on the staff. Ferguson took command of the First Division, displacing Cooke to the Second and Mackenzie to a newly created Reserve. This latter formation replaced the old Light Brigade, which disappeared from the order of battle and was replaced in the Second Division by a new Third Brigade under Halkett. The 1st Foreign Veteran Battalion was sent out to join the army. With these arrivals and changes, Graham's order of battle at the end of the war stood as follows:⁵²

Commander of Forces: General Sir Thomas Graham

First Division: Lt. General Ferguson

Guards Brigade: Colonel Lord Proby

2/1st Foot Guards (633)
2/Coldstream Guards (499)
2/3rd Foot Guards (527)

First Brigade: Lt. Colonel Crawford

33rd (486)

⁵⁰ Graham to Bathurst, April 15th 1814, TNA, WO1/200, pp.553-557.

⁵¹ On the Battalions of Detachments, see Andrew Bamford, "Battalions of Detachments in 1814 – the Duke of York Responds to Britain's Manpower Shortfall", at http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/battles/1814/c_BritishDetachments1814.html.

⁵² Organisation as per Graham to Bathurst, 15 April 1814, TNA, WO1/200, pp.553-557. Unit strengths are effective rank and file, taken from Monthly Return of 25 April.

54th (437)
Provisional Battalion⁵³ (229)

Divisional Artillery

Rogers' Brigade

Second Division: Major General George Cooke

Second Brigade: Major General Gibbs

2/25th (296)
2/44th (107)
55th (233)
2/73rd (473)

Third Brigade: Brigadier General Halkett

2/35th (473)
3/56th (384)
2/69th (210)
2/91st (183)

Divisional Artillery

Fyers' Brigade

Reserve: Major General Mackenzie⁵⁴

2/30th (430)
2/52nd (248)
2/78th (268)
2/81st (351)
Rifle Battalion (260)

Cavalry: No Brigade commander

2nd KGL Hussars (417, with 512 horses)
3rd KGL Hussars (590, with 632 horses)

In Garrison

1st Royal Veteran Bn. (228, plus 209 detached)
1st Foreign Veteran Bn. (167, plus 301 detached)

Unassigned Artillery: Lt Colonel Sir George Wood

⁵³ 2/21st and 2/37th.

⁵⁴ Mackenzie also had a squadron of hussars and four guns of the KGL horse artillery under his command, but it is not specified from which units these came.

Truscot's Brigade
Tyler's Brigade
Hawker's Brigade
1st Troop, KGL Horse Artillery
2nd Troop, KGL Horse Artillery
2nd Rocket Troop, RHA

This organisation remained in force until after the closing of hostilities, with only a few small changes. Major General Victor von Alten came out in June to assume command of the cavalry.⁵⁵ In May the 1st Royal Veteran Battalion and two troops of the Royal Wagon Train were ordered home to be reduced, whilst the 55th also returned to England, "being ord[ere]d home about a Court Martial by the Commander in Chief".⁵⁶ Graham, or Lord Lynedoch as he had become in May, finally left the army in July, being relieved by the Prince of Orange.

Break-up of the Army

Even prior to the attack on Bergen-op-Zoom, demands in other theatres had led to the decision to withdraw the bulk of Graham's army. In a dispatch to Graham dated February 28th 1814, and marked "Secret", Lord Bathurst had notified Graham that the bulk of his forces were to be withdrawn and sent to North America whilst the Foot Guards were to join Wellington's Army in the south of France.⁵⁷ It has been since argued that this dispatch prompted the Bergen-op-Zoom assault, although this is hard to substantiate and Graham certainly had other, more pressing, reasons for ordering that operation.⁵⁸ In any case, these plans to break up the army were overtaken by events and only the 4/1st was sent to Canada, as noted above. In fact, the ending of European hostilities, and subsequent political need to maintain a military presence in the Netherlands, meant that, although some battalions were withdrawn, the force was ultimately reinforced, first by Hanoverian troops and then by more British and KGL units, to become the nucleus of the Army that Wellington led at Waterloo.

The subsequent services of those remaining units from Graham's original army were as follows:

2/1st Foot Guards – Remained in Netherlands; First Brigade, First Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/Coldstream Guards – Remained in Netherlands; Second Brigade, First Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/3rd Foot Guards – Remained in Netherlands; Second Brigade, First Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/21st – Left Netherlands September 1814; no further overseas service.

2/25th – Remained in Netherlands; Seventh Brigade, in garrison, during Waterloo campaign.

2/30th – Remained in Netherlands; Fifth Brigade, Third Division, during Waterloo campaign.

33rd – Remained in Netherlands; Fifth Brigade, Third Division, during Waterloo campaign.

⁵⁵ Table of Cantonments dated June 30th 1814 TNA, WO1/201, p.13.

⁵⁶ Lynedoch to Castlereagh, May 30th 1814, TNA, WO1/201, pp.769-770; the circumstances of this court martial are detailed in Andrew Bamford, "Dastardly and atrocious": Lieutenant Blake, Captain Clune, and the Recall of the 55th Foot from the Netherlands, 1814", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Autumn 2014, pp.210-222.

⁵⁷ Quoted in full in Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham*, p.714.

⁵⁸ See Bamford, *Bold and Ambitious Enterprise*, pp.158-176.

2/35th – Remained in Netherlands; Sixth Brigade, Fourth Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/37th – Remained in Netherlands; Seventh Brigade, in garrison, during Waterloo campaign.

2/44th – Remained in Netherlands; Ninth Brigade, Fifth Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/52nd – Remained in Netherlands; effectives absorbed into 1/52nd April 1815, cadre returned home and subsequently disbanded.

54th – Remained in Netherlands; Sixth Brigade, Fourth Division, during Waterloo campaign.

3/56th – Left Netherlands September 1814; disbanded October 1814.

2/69th – Remained in Netherlands; Fifth Brigade, Third Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/73rd – Remained in Netherlands; Fifth Brigade, Third Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/78th – Remained in Netherlands; independently assigned to garrison duties during Waterloo campaign.

2/81st – Remained in Netherlands; Tenth Brigade, Sixth Division, during Waterloo campaign.

2/91st – Left Netherlands September 1814; no further overseas service.

Rifle Battalion – Men from 1/95th and 2/95th rejoined parent units in May and April 1815 respectively; the two companies 3/95th remained independent and served with Third Brigade, Second Division, during Waterloo campaign.

1st Foreign Veteran Battalion – Remained in Netherlands; independently assigned to garrison duties during Waterloo campaign.

2nd KGL Hussars – Remained in Netherlands; Fifth Cavalry Brigade during Waterloo campaign.

3rd KGL Hussars – Remained in Netherlands; Seventh Cavalry Brigade during Waterloo campaign.

Of the senior officers remaining with the army, Ferguson returned home when Orange assumed the command; this being necessitated by Orange being his junior. Victor von Alten remained in the Netherlands through the Waterloo campaign in nominal command of the Hanoverian cavalry. Cooke remained in the Netherlands, and commanded the First Division in the Waterloo campaign. Mackenzie remained in the Netherlands, though not fully recovered from his fall, and commanded the Seventh Brigade, on garrison duties, during the Waterloo campaign. Gibbs left the Netherlands in October 1814, subsequently commanding a brigade during the expedition against New Orleans where he was killed. Halkett remained in the Netherlands and commanded the Fifth Brigade in the Waterloo campaign. Lord Proby was promoted to Major General in June 1814, but had returned to England by August and was struck off the staff in the Netherlands in December, his leave having expired the previous month, and replaced by Major General Maitland. Sir George Wood remained as commander of the Royal Artillery in the Netherlands, with the brevet rank of Colonel, and served through to Waterloo, as did Lt. Colonel Carmichael Smyth.

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