

ROYAL TANK REGIMENT 1946—2005

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At the beginning of 1946, the Regular elements of the RTR were deployed in various locations, many on occupation duties. A few TA elements were still active (one would remain so into 1947). The TA was officially reconstituted 1 Jan 1947 although units may have been actually reformed at later dates. The bulk of the TA RTR elements disappeared in 1956, most converted back to infantry. The last TA unit survived to 1967, when the old TA itself disappeared.

The end of National Service, announced 1957, meant reduction to the RTR as well as other parts of the Army, and the three highest-numbered regiments were consolidated with others 1959-1960. The five surviving regiments in 1960 were all allocated distinct recruiting areas in the UK. Until 1959 (with reductions in the RAC underway) the Regular RTR units were restricted to their traditional role as armoured regiments, which meant that they served long tours in Germany with BAOR. Only in that year did an RTR unit convert to the armoured car role, until then restricted to cavalry regiments. Another regiment disappeared in 1969. Finally, when Options for Change was announced in 1992, the RTR was reduced to two regiments only 1993-94. With a later reduction in armoured regiments from eight to six, 1st RTR survived by forming part of the new Joint Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Reconnaissance Regiment, and only 2nd RTR was still an armoured regiment. Headquarters of the RTR is at Stanley Barracks, Bovington Camp.

The regiment earned the battle honour KOREA 1951—53 in the post-war period. Presumably a battle honour will be awarded for Operation TELIC (the 2003 invasion of Iraq).

Regular Elements

1st Royal Tank Regt

1946	Stationed in Germany on occupation duties (including Berlin, returned to Schleswig-Holstein Mar 1946)
1946 (Jul)	Detmold (7 th Armoured Brigade)
1950 (Nov)	Transferred to 33 rd Armoured Brigade ¹
1952 (Sep)	Moved to the UK; sailed for Korea Oct 1952
1952 (Dec)	Served in Korea (1 st Commonwealth Division) to Dec 1953
1954 (Jan)	Moved to Egypt (Suez Canal Zone, 25 th Armoured Brigade)
1955 (Aug)	Moved to the UK (Tidworth) ² and assigned to TA assistance
1956 (Jul)	Mobilized for Suez crisis; assigned new 34 th Armoured Brigade Aug 1956 and sent to Malta Oct 1956 and then returned to the UK
1957 (Jun)	Moved to Hong Kong (48 th Gurkha Infantry Brigade) ³
1960 (Jul)	Moved to Germany (Munster, 5 th Infantry Brigade) ⁴
1961	Assigned Merseyside, Blackburn, Burnley, Oldham, Leeds, Halifax, Wakefield as recruiting area
1962 (Jun)	Moved to Fallingbowl and assigned 11 th Infantry Brigade
1964 (Jul)	Transferred to 7 th Armoured Brigade
1965 (Nov)	Moved to Aden (24 th Infantry Brigade) [converted to armoured cars] ('B' Sqn in tanks to Hong Kong, 'C' Sqn Bahrain for a period)

¹ Became first regiment equipped with Centurion Mk. 3.

² One squadron remained in Egypt until Mar 1956.

³ Becoming the last regiment equipped with the Comet.

⁴ Re-equipped with the Centurion.

[1st Royal Tank Regiment]

1967 (Jan)	Moved to the UK, as RAC Training Regt at Catterick ('A' Sqn to Berlin)
1969 (Jan)	Moved to Germany (Osnabrück, 12 th Mechanised Brigade)
1972	Provided two sqns in infantry role for NI Jan-Jun 1972
1973 (May)	Moved to NI (Omagh) and converted to armoured cars
1974 (Nov)	Moved to Tidworth and converted to recce role (one squadron to Cyprus and one squadron to Hong Kong)
1975 (Oct)	Regiment reconcentrated in the UK
1976 (Apr)	Moved to Germany (Herford: covering force)
1977	Provided two sqns for duties in Northern Ireland May-Aug 1977
1978 (Jan)	Moved to Hohne as recce for 2 nd Armoured Division
1982 (Jan)	Moved to the UK as RAC Centre Regiment, Bovington (one squadron to Cyprus)
1985 (Jan)	Moved to Germany (Hildesheim, 22 nd Armoured Brigade)
1993 (30 Apr)	Amalgamated with 4 th RTR at Tidworth (1 st Mechanised Brigade) without change of title; recruiting area changed to Scotland and Merseyside (north west England) ⁵
1996 (Aug)	Moved to Germany (Paderborn, 20 th Armoured Brigade) ⁶
1999 (Jul)	Returned to the UK; 'A' Sqn posted to Warminster (part of Combined Arms Training Centre, equipped with Challenger 2); remainder posted to RAF Honington in Suffolk, formed RHQ and one squadron ⁷ of the Joint Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Reconnaissance Regiment (JNBCR), equipped with Fuchs Reconnaissance Vehicles and specialist vehicles mounting NBC detection equipment.
1999 (Dec)	Regiment fully operational in new role ⁸
2003	Regiment (or elements) deployed in support of Operation TELIC (invasion of Iraq) ⁹

2nd Royal Tank Regt

1946	Stationed at Palmanova (Venezia Giulia)
1946 (Aug)	Left Palmanova for the UK
1947	Moved to Germany (Luneburg: 4 th Armoured Brigade)
1948 (Apr)	Moved to the UK; sent to Crookham and assigned 56 th (London) Armoured Division for TA support (reduced to RHQ and one squadron)
1951 (May)	Converted back to operational status and assigned to new 20 th Armoured Brigade
1952 (Feb)	Moved with brigade to Germany (Munster)
1956 (Apr)	Placed directly under 6 th Armoured Division
1957 (Sep)	Assigned 6 th Infantry Brigade (Munster)
1959 (Aug)	Moved to the UK
1959 (Oct)	Moved to Cyrenaica and converted to an armoured car regiment ¹⁰
1961	Assigned Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, and Greater London as recruiting area

⁵ Squadrons designated as A, D, G and H (HQ) to commemorate original designations of 1st, 4th, 7th and 8th RTR.

⁶ The last regiment to operate the Chieftain, converting to Challenger 1 after moving to Germany.

⁷ D and H Sqns amalgamated as G Sqn of regiment and former G Sqn disbanded.

⁸ One independent troop permanently stationed in Kuwait.

⁹ Listed in official publication, Ministry of Defence (MOD): *Operations in Iraq: First Reflections* (July 2003), but not in most lists published by the MOD.

¹⁰ By this date, if not before, 2nd RTR referred to squadrons by name (e.g., Badger instead of B Sqn).

[2nd Royal Tank Regiment]

1961 (Oct)	Reorganized 1961 with one squadron airportable (solely in Ferret scout cars) ¹¹ and then moved to Tidworth
1962 (Oct)	Moved to Aldergrove, NI (one squadron left in England)
1964 (Dec)	Regiment reconcentrated in England at Perham Down ¹²
1965 (Nov)	Moved to Germany (Hohne: 7 th Armoured Brigade) ¹³
1970 (Aug)	Moved to the UK as RAC Centre Regiment, Bovington
1972 (Sep)	Moved to Germany (Minden, 11 th Armoured Brigade) ¹⁴
1975	Regiment (less Badger) spent four months in NI (Armagh) in infantry role
1977	converted to armoured recce role ¹⁵
1977	Regiment (less Cyclops) returned to NI for 4 month emergency tour in infantry role
1978	Regiment reconcentrated at Munster (5 th Field Force) in armoured recce role
1979 (May)	Moved to Omagh, NI in the infantry role
1980 (Nov)	Moved to Germany (Wolfenbüttel, as recce for 4 th Armoured Division)
1982 (Nov)	Moved to Fallingbostal, converted to armoured regiment (22 nd Armoured Brigade) ¹⁶
1984	Moved to the UK (still officially under 22 nd Armoured Brigade)
1985 (May)	Returned to Germany (Fallingbostal, 7 th Armoured Brigade)
1990 (Apr)	Moved to the UK as RAC Training Regiment, Catterick
1992 (Jul)	Moved to Germany (Soltau, 7 th Armoured Brigade)
1992 (Sep)	Amalgamated with 3 rd RTR at Fallingbostal without change in designation; recruiting area changed to SE London, Somerset, Devon, Dorset, and Cornwall ¹⁷
1993	Served tour in Cyprus Jul to Dec then returned to Fallingbostal
1997	Selected as second regiment to receive Challenger 2 MBT
2001	Moved to Tidworth (1 st Mechanised Brigade) ¹⁸
2003	Moved to Persian Gulf Feb and then Operation TELIC (invasion of Iraq) Mar under 7 th Armoured Brigade; withdrawn ca. Jun 2003

3rd Royal Tank Regt

1946	Stationed in Germany on occupation duties
1948 (Jan)	Returned to the UK; 'A' Sqn to School of Infantry (Warminster)
1948 (Sep)	Remainder of regiment moved to Bovington Camp for Strategic Reserve role
1949	Moved to Hong Kong ('B' Sqn ca. May, remainder Jun)
1952 (Apr)	Moved to the UK

¹¹ 2nd RTR provided basis for first missile-armed squadron summer 1962.

¹² One squadron (Ajax) sent to Cyprus Nov 1964-May 1965.

¹³ Reequipped 1967 with Chieftain 1.

¹⁴ Badger to NI in 1973 in armoured car role, Ajax in 1974 in armoured car role.

¹⁵ Ajax and Badger became Medium Reconnaissance Squadrons equipped with Scorpions and Scimitars; Cyclops became a Close Reconnaissance Squadron equipped with Fox. Hunstman was disbanded on change of role.

¹⁶ Equipped with Challenger 1.

¹⁷ Squadrons designated as B, C, E, F (HQ) to commemorate original designations of 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th RTR.

¹⁸ Fourth sabre squadron raised Oct 2001; squadrons redesignated as Badger, Cyclops, Egypt, Falcon and Nero (HQ).

[3rd Royal Tank Regiment]

- 1952 (Oct) Moved to Germany (Detmold, 33rd Armoured Brigade)
- 1956 (Apr) Transferred to 12th Infantry Brigade
- 1957 (Sep) Transferred to 20th Armoured Brigade
- 1959 (31 Oct) Amalgamated with 6th RTR without change in title
- 1961 Assigned Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Avon as recruiting area
- 1962 (Sep) Moved to the UK as tank training regiment at Catterick
- 1965 (Feb) Moved to Germany (Hohne, 7th Armoured Brigade)¹⁹
- 1968 (Feb) Moved to the UK (Tidworth) and converted to armoured recce role; one squadron served in Cyprus and one in Sharjah during 1968
- 1969 (Dec) Moved to Germany (Wolfenbüttel, screen force)
- 1971 (Nov) Moved to Fallingbostal, converted to armoured regiment (11th Armoured Brigade)
- 1974 (Nov) Moved to Hohne (7th Armoured Brigade)
- 1976 (May) Moved to Tidworth (3rd Infantry Division)
- 1978 (Jan) Moved to Germany (Paderborn), converted as armoured recce, 3rd Armoured Division
- 1979 (May) Moved to Germany (Munster, 5th Field Force [armoured recce?])
- 1981 (Jan) Moved to Paderborn, armoured regiment (11th Armoured Brigade)
- 1986 (Jan) Moved to the UK (still assigned 11th Armoured Brigade?)
- 1988 (Feb) Moved to Germany (Hemer, 33rd Armoured Brigade)
- 1992 (Jun) Moved to Fallingbostal
- 1992 (Sep) Amalgamated with 2nd RTR

4th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 (Jan) Moved to Italy
- 1946 (Aug) Replaced 2nd RTR at Palmanova; served in Italy and Austria
- 1947 (Jun) Moved to Egypt
- 1948 (May) Moved to Palestine; returned to Egypt (Canal Zone) Jul 1948
- 1953 (Feb) Moved to the UK (tank training regiment at Catterick?)
- 1954 (Jul) Moved to Germany (Fallingbostal, 7th Armoured Brigade)
- 1956 (Apr) Came directly under 7th Armoured Division
- 1957 (Sep) 7th Armoured Brigade reformed
- 1959 (3 Apr) Amalgamated with 7th RTR without change in title (moved to Hohne and replaced 7th in the 11th Infantry Brigade)
- 1960 (Nov) Converted to APC role: two squadrons in APCs and 'C' Squadron in tanks in Berlin²⁰
- 1961 Assigned Scotland as recruiting area
- 1963 (Apr) Moved to the UK and converted to armoured cars
- 1963 (Oct) Moved to the Persian Gulf²¹
- 1964 (Aug) Moved to Malaysia
- 1966 (Jul) Moved to Germany (Herford, screen force)
- 1968 (Jan) Moved to Fallingbostal, converted as armoured regiment and assigned 7th Armoured Brigade
- 1973 (Jan) Moved to the UK as RAC Centre Regiment, Bovington; one squadron in Berlin

¹⁹ Became first Chieftain regiment.

²⁰ RHQ remained at Hohne; 'A' and 'B' Squadrons went to Lemgo and Celle.

²¹ D' Squadron operated in Aden (Radfan) Jan to ca. Oct 1964.

[4th Royal Tank Regiment]

- 1974 (Nov) Moved to Germany (Munster, 4th Armoured Brigade)
- 1976 (Dec) Transferred to 2nd Armoured Division
- 1981 (Jan) Transferred to 4th Armoured Brigade
- 1982 (Aug) Moved to Tidworth (1st Infantry Brigade)
- 1984 (Nov) Moved to Germany (Osnabrück, 12th Armoured Brigade)
- 1993 (30 Apr) Amalgamated with 1st RTR

5th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 Stationed in Germany on occupation duties
- 1947 By this date at Hohne (7th Armoured Brigade)
- 1953 (Aug) Moved to the UK
- 1953 (Dec) Sent to Korea (1st Commonwealth Division)
- 1954 (Dec) Left Korea and moved to Cyrenaica (25th Armoured Brigade Group)
- 1957 (Apr) Moved to the UK as training regiment at Catterick
- 1959 (Dec) Moved to Germany (Fallingbommel, 7th Armoured Brigade)
- 1960 (1 Jul) Amalgamated with 8th RTR without change in title
- 1960 Assigned Yorkshire as recruiting area 1960.
- 1965 (Mar) Moved to the UK; converted at Tidworth as recce regiment (3rd Infantry Division)²²
- 1968 (Jun) Moved to Germany (Wolfenbüttel, screen force)
- 1969 (7 Dec) Disbanded in the UK

6th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 In Italy on occupation duties; also served in Austria
- 1947 (Jul) Moved to Egypt
- 1948 Moved to the UK; sent to Scofton Airfield near Worksop for TA support and assigned to 49th (West Riding) Armoured Division (probably reduced to RHQ and one squadron)
- 1951 (May) Converted to operation status as part of new 20th Armoured Brigade
- 1952 (Jan) Moved with brigade to Germany (Munster)
- 1956 (Feb) Moved to the UK and given TA assistance role
- 1956 (Jul) Mobilized for Suez; assigned Aug 1956 to new 34th Armoured Brigade; sent to Malta and then Suez Oct 1956 (and then back to Malta?)
- 1957 (Jan) Returned to the UK
- 1957 (Apr) Moved to Cyrenaica²³
- 1959 (Sep) Moved to the UK
- 1959 (31 Oct) Amalgamated in Germany with 3rd RTR

7th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 Stationed in Germany on occupation duties
- 1946 (Sep) Withdrawn to the UK (Barnard Castle)
- 1947 (Jan) Sent to India; based at Sialkot on arrival²⁴
- 1947 (Jul) Regiment reassembled at one location

²² One squadron was in Malaysia Feb-Sep 1966 and one squadron was in Aden/Persian Gulf Apr-Jul 1967.

²³ One squadron on Cyprus from Jul 1957 to ca. the end of 1958.

²⁴ 7th RTR absorbed personnel 146th RAC after arrival and was organized with a mixture of Stuart light tanks and Fox armoured cars in its troops. The regiment was in operations by Mar 1947. In Jun 1947, RHQ remained Sialkot; 'A' Sqn went to Lahore, 'B' to Amritsar, and 'C' to Jullundur.

[7th Royal Tank Regiment]

- 1947 (9 Sep) Left India for the UK; on arrival temporarily near Wolverhampton, and then to Tidworth, taking over specialized armour role²⁵
- 1952 (Mar) Moved to Hong Kong as divisional regiment RAC for 40th Infantry Division
- 1954 (Oct) Moved to the UK (Catterick)
- 1957 (Oct) Moved to Germany (Detmold, 11th Infantry Brigade)
- 1959 (3 Apr) Amalgamated at Hohne with 4th RTR

8th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 (Jan) Moved from UK to Graz, Austria [mix of Shermans and scout cars]
- 1946 (May) Moved to Egypt
- 1946 (Jun) Moved to Palestine [all tanks by now; under command 2nd Infantry Brigade]
- 1946 (Sep) Returned to Egypt
- 1947 (Aug) Moved to the UK; sent to Catterick as a training regiment
- 1951 (Feb) Gave up training regiment and converted to operational status
- 1951 (Aug) Moved to Germany (Paderborn, 33rd Armoured Brigade)
- 1956 (Apr) Transferred to 6th Infantry Brigade
- 1957 (Sep) ??
- 1959 (Jan) Transferred to 7th Armoured Brigade
- 1960 (1 Jul) Amalgamated with 5th RTR

1st Independent Sqn

- 1951 (Nov) Formed in Germany
- 1952 (Jan) Moved to Berlin
- 1957 (Oct) Disbanded in Berlin
- ****
- 1963 (Mar) Formed in Berlin as **Independent Sqn**
- 1965 (Nov) Disbanded in Berlin

Parachute Squadron

- 1962 Formed in the summer from 2nd RTR (primarily Cyclops [C Sqn]) with Malkara ATGW
- 1965 Disbanded (merged into Parachute Squadron RAC)

Wartime TA Elements

40th Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 Remained in Greece (23rd Armoured Brigade) until placed in suspended animation Apr or May

43rd Royal Tank Regt

- 1946 In India and served on peacekeeping operations
- 1947 (May) Redesignated **2/43rd RTR** when original unit reformed in TA
- 1947 (9 Sep) Sailed from India; disbanded on arrival in the UK

²⁵ 'C' Sqn sent to Korea (mixture of flamethrower, AVRE, and flail tanks), serving there until Oct 1951 with 29th Infantry Brigade (assigned to them ca. Jun 1950).

46th Royal Tank Regt

1946 Remained in Greece (23rd Armoured Brigade) until placed in suspended animation Apr or May

50th Royal Tank Regt

1946 Remained in Greece (23rd Armoured Brigade) until placed in suspended animation Apr or May

Territorial Army Elements

40th (The King's) Royal Tank Regt

1947 Reconstituted at Liverpool (23rd Independent Armoured Brigade)
 1956 (2 Nov) Amalgamated with 41st (Oldham) RTR to form **40th/41st RTR** (23rd Armoured Brigade)
 1961 23rd Armoured Brigade disbanded; became GHQ unit Western Command
 1967 (30 Mar) Disbanded²⁶

41st (Oldham) Royal Tank Regt

1947 Reconstituted at Oldham (23rd Independent Armoured Brigade)
 1956 (2 Nov) Amalgamated with 40th (The King's) RTR to form 40th/41st RTR

42nd Royal Tank Regt

1947 Reconstituted in London (22nd Armoured Brigade)
 1956 (1 Sep) Converted to infantry as 23rd London Regiment, part of the Corps of The East Surrey Regiment

43rd Royal Tank Regt

1947 Reconstituted at Newcastle (9th Independent Armoured Brigade)
 1956 (1 Nov) Converted to infantry under former title 6th (City) Bn The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers

44th/50th Royal Tank Regt

1947 Amalgamated with duplicate unit and reconstituted at Bristol (GHQ Southern Command)
 1956 (Apr) Amalgamated with The North Somerset Yeomanry to form The North Somerset Yeomanry/44th Royal Tank Regt [later The North Somerset and Bristol Yeomanry]

45th/51st (Leeds Rifles) Royal Tank Regt

1947 Amalgamated with duplicate unit and reconstituted at Leeds (8th (Yorkshire) Armoured Brigade)
 1956 (30 Oct) Converted to infantry under former title 7th (Leeds Rifles) Bn The West Yorkshire Regt (The Prince of Wales's Own)

[46th (Liverpool Welsh) RTR was reconstituted 1947 as 653 Heavy AA Regiment RA. The 47th, 48th and 49th RTR were all disbanded 1 Jan 1947.]

²⁶ Used 1 Apr 1967 to form part of The Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry (Royal Tank Regiment) in the TAVR.

SOURCES

Web sites:

Todd Mills, <http://regiments.org/regiments/uk/cav/RTR.htm>

Army site, <http://www.army.mod.uk/1rtr/index.htm> and

<http://www.army.mod.uk/2rtr/index.htm>

RTR regimental site, <http://www.royaltankregiment.com/pages/MainFrame2.htm>

Kenneth Macksey, *The Tanks: The History of the Royal Tank Regiment, 1945-1975* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1979)

Information provided by Graham E. Watson to the author

Note: information is not always consistent, and some extrapolation or best guess has been used. For example, details on stations, assignments and roles on the regimental site for the 1st and 2nd RTR does not always agree with the regiment's 1975 history.