



Mobilized in September of 1939, the Northumbrian Division was sent to France in January of 1940 to become part of the BEF. After participating in the lost campaign against the Germans in May, the division was evacuated at Dunkirk and arrived home with only 2400 men and no heavy equipment. After rebuilding, re-equipping, and training, the division was sent overseas again, arriving in North Africa in June of 1941. The division saw heavy action and appeared in nearly all the major battles in North Africa and Tunisia. The 50th then landed as part of the invasion of Sicily and served to the end of that campaign. The division was then returned to England, arriving in November, 1943. The veteran division was reinforced and trained in beach landings, becoming one of the initial assault divisions on D-Day. After the landing, the Northumbrians were heavily engaged in the rest of the Normandy campaign and accompanied the rest of XXX corps in the advance across France after the breakout.

In the build-up to Market-Garden, the 50th was again heavily engaged in forcing a crossing of the Albert Canal and establishing the beachhead there needed as the start-off point for the upcoming operation. While recovering from this action, they began as the rear division in the XXX Corps advance. Initially used to help keep the road open, by the end of the campaign they were at the Nijmegen front, defending against German counterattacks. At this point in the war, the British Army was suffering manpower shortages and some of the most veteran units were being absorbed into the rest of the army. Starting in November, much of the 50th was transferred to other divisions and what was left was sent home to be a training command. For the Northumbrians, their war was effectively over, having more than done their duty.