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# CLASSIC MILITARY VEHICLE

Issue 198



# Roaring Forties

*World War Two British Scammell and Bedford*



## Vietnam War Vehicles:

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- **Reo M35 6x6**
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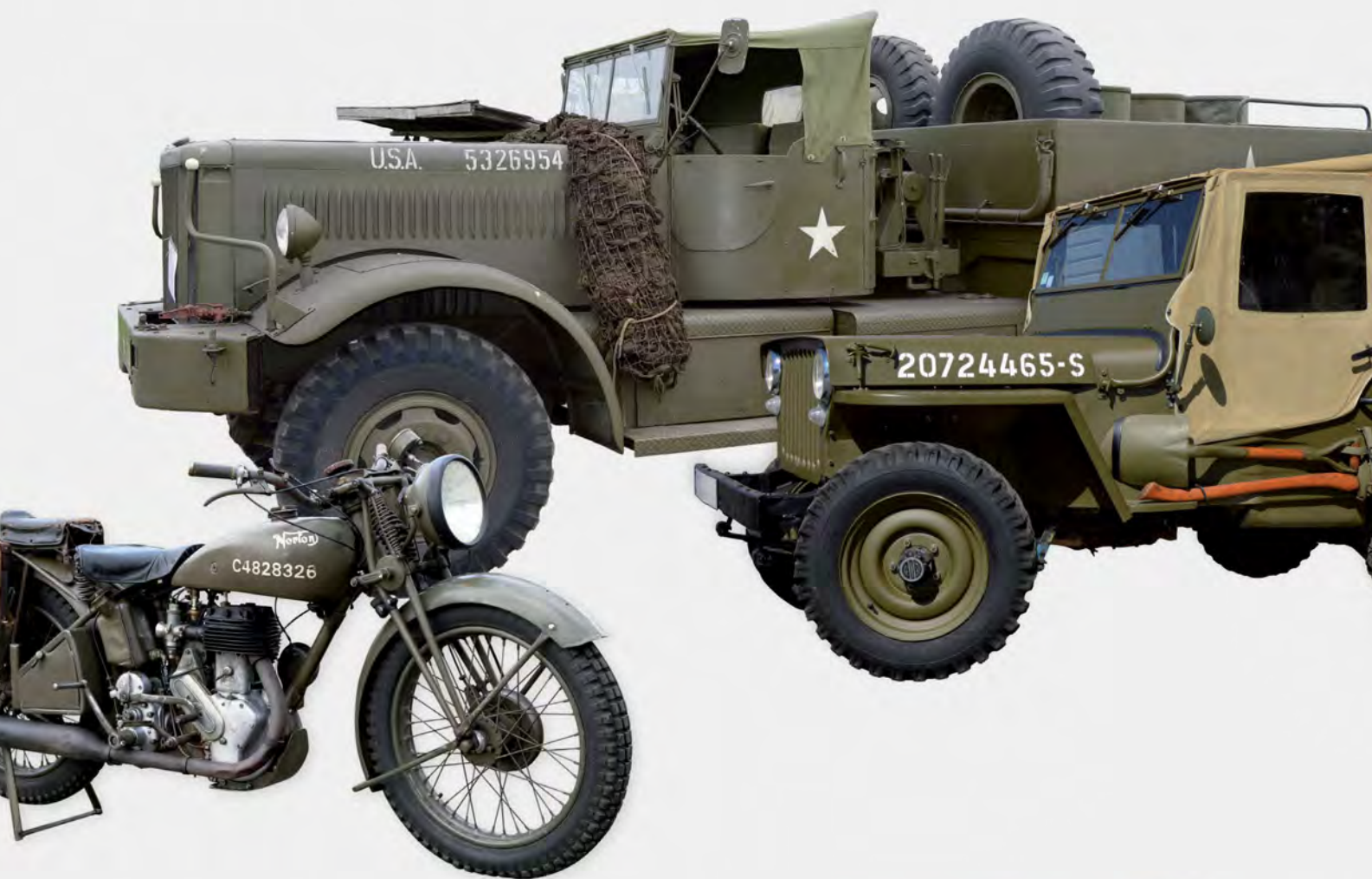


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# Cambrai, Arnhem and Vietnam

*This month's magazine has, aside from the regulars, three distinct parts. Firstly, it marks the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Cambrai which was fought in November 1917. Our archive photos tell the story of this, the first battle in which tanks were used en masse.*

*Secondly, it contains a report on the annual Race to the Bridge on the 73rd anniversary of Operation Market Garden. The bridge at Arnhem famously proved to be 'a bridge too far' and, after 10 days of bitter fighting, the operation ended with the evacuation of the 1st British Airborne Division from the Arnhem area.*

*The third section of this issue comprises a number of features about the Vietnam War. These use both archive and contemporary photographs to illustrate the many and varied vehicles that the US Army used in a war that caused huge divisions in American society. More recently, it spawned numerous classic movies*



**The M151A2, introduced in 1970, was a revised version of the M151A1 that incorporated redesigned suspension to reduce rollover accidents**

*and books and was referenced in numerous songs but, arguably, has now been overshadowed by the recent US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

*Overall it's a packed issue and I hope you find it interesting.*

*John Carroll*

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**John Carroll**

Editor John is a longstanding military vehicle enthusiast who has owned a variety of green machines from a Scammell Explorer to a Harley 45 via Jeeps and Land Rovers



**Vicky Turner**

Editorial Assistant Vicky is crucial to the organisation of the new CMV team and the production of the magazine. She's also the owner of a classic 1960s Land Rover



**Luke Want**

Luke is new to the CLR team. Having worked on another Key title, he is the perfect addition to deal with our advertisers and their specific needs



**Steve Donovan**

Chief Designer Steve has worked with Designer Dave Robinson in redesigning the magazine to produce CMV's fresh, new look for 2017

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With the Scammell SV/2S manoeuvred into position and the jib in its first, inner position, the lifting winch is attached to the non-starting OXD and the angle assessed LOUISE LIMB



# Vietnam War

**The Vehicles  
of the  
Vietnam War**  
*28 pages  
in this issue*



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# Little and Large

Two of the best known  
British vehicles of World War  
Two are seen restored and running in West Yorkshire

When Britain went to war with Germany in 1939, the country was not as well prepared for battle as history would lead us to believe. Certainly, as far as its military vehicles were concerned, the United Kingdom found itself requisitioning a whole host of civilian trucks, light vehicles and motorcycles and adapting them for military service.

Drawing on existing projects, the War Office also commissioned and tested wheeled vehicles throughout the 1930s at the Mechanical Warfare Experimental Establishment (MWEE) at Farnborough, which, during the war, would become The Wheeled Vehicles Experimental Establishment (WVEE), moving to Chertsey in 1943.

Both the vehicles featured here began life as commercial trucks and were subjected to military testing and modification, the innovative Scammell Pioneer having undergone close scrutiny during its development throughout the 1920s and '30s. However, the Bedford 'O' Series civilian trucks had only just been introduced in 1939 after a company revamp of their civilian offering and were rapidly requisitioned for military use on the outbreak of war on September 1 1939.

The Bedford OXD currently in Mike Shackleton's care was originally restored some years ago and is one of only three known to be running in the UK. The stunning



*'As the war proceeded,  
aluminium became scarce and was prioritised  
for aircraft'*

Pioneer 2V/2S Heavy Breakdown Tractor, seen here using its jib and winch, has recently been beautifully and painstakingly restored by John Pickersgill with invaluable help from his team of volunteers, John Bramfitt and Norris Davison.

Supplying almost 250,000 vehicles, Bedford accounted for the highest number of British trucks during the war. Most numerous was the 'O' Series, with more than 72,000 examples of the three-ton OY and 24,428 30 cwt (1.5-ton) OX models built over the course of the war. Others included the specially designed military four-wheel drive QL, introduced in 1941, anticipating later cab design by seating the driver above the engine and the 15-cwt 4x2 MW, an even smaller general service transport vehicle which resembled the larger OY and OX in its front aspect.

Britain would lose all but a very few of its first 1939 and 1940 Bedford OX trucks in the Dunkirk evacuation between May 26 and June 4, 1940. Scammell too would lose a significant number of their artillery tractors and some SV/2S recovery tractors to a very appreciative Third Reich. However, unlike the Bedford OXD general service lorry, the Scammell

Pioneer SV/2S heavy recovery tractor not only enjoyed post-war success in the commercial field from which it had come, but could be found still in service into the 1960s and as late as 1984 in Belize. Sadly, after the war ended the hard-worked OXD was of no further use to the army and was run into the ground by civilian users both in Britain and across Europe, leaving few survivors for present day restorers to cherish.

The diminutive Bedford OXD four-wheeled 4x2 General Service lorry with its steel panel cab seating two in sparse comfort was produced in relatively small

numbers compared with the larger OY three-ton six-wheeled general service truck, the latter class being more suited to War Office needs as the war progressed. The OY was roughly equivalent to the ubiquitous American GMC CCKW 2.5 ton 'deuce and a half' which came to characterise large scale transportation of men



*Both derived from commercial designs, the Scammell Pioneer's styling dates back to pre-1920s and the Model T Ford while the Bedford OXD's style is more streamlined, characteristic of the late 1930s and features sliding door windows*

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The flat-grilled Bedford OXD's markings indicate it was assigned to an RASC unit attached to 50 (Tyne-Tees) division. The civilian registration number is presumed to have been allocated when the vehicle was demobbed around 1950

**BOTTOM MIDDLE:** Mike Shackleton's Bedford OXD general service lorry is one of only three known restored examples in the UK; note the military crash bar and cut out engine panel vents, the latter cheaper to construct than earlier mesh ones

**BOTTOM LEFT:** With its well-maintained rear canvas, Mike Shackleton's OXD was restored during the 1980s and provides compact load space; note the circular holes cut as steps in the tailgate for troops to access the rear

**BELOW:** The four-wheeled short wheelbase Bedford OXD GS 30cwt lorry was used in all theatres of operation during World War Two but was a less useful size and therefore less plentiful than the larger three-ton Bedford OY



## SPECIFICATIONS

Make **Bedford**  
 Model **OXD**  
 Nationality **British**  
 Year **1940**  
 Production Run **1940-1945**  
 total **22428**  
 Engine **Bedford**  
 Type **Six cylinder type WD OHV**  
 Fuel **Petrol**  
 Displacement **3,519cc**  
 Power **72bhp at 3000rpm**  
 (16.45 bhp/ton at governed 2,580rpm)  
 Torque **161lb/ft at 1200 rpm**  
 Transmission **Bedford**  
 Type **Four speed**  
 Gears **Four forward, one reverse**  
 Transfer Box **None**  
 Suspension **Front and rear semi-elliptic with hydraulic shock absorbers all round**  
 Brakes **Foot; hydraulic vacuum servo-assisted on all wheels Hand; mechanical on rear wheels only**  
 Wheels **Steel disc two-part**  
 Tyres **10.50 x16**  
 Crew/seats **Two in cab, in the rear of GS**  
 Weight **Two tons 11 ¾cwt**

**Dimensions(overall)**  
 Length **194 ¾in**  
 Width **85 ½in**  
 Wheelbase **111in**

## THE MAGNIFICENT GARDNER 6LW ENGINE



The Gardner 6LW 8396cc direct-injection diesel engine was, modern, simple to operate and maintain and innovative and was specified by the War Office in many military vehicles; John's is a later war unit with cast iron crank, sump and cases as aluminium was scarce

Joseph Gardner already enjoyed a reputation for reliable, versatile and freshly-designed diesel engines when the company produced the 6LW. Its predecessor, the L2, launched in 1929, had been developed for marine applications but readily transferred to the commercial automotive

market resulting in economy as well as efficiency. Gardner was looking for further efficiencies when he refined the unit for buses and revealed the 6LW in 1931, a lighter, smaller unit that packed a much greater punch. One exhaust valve per cylinder and cam-driven levers,

pushrods and tappets to operate the valves and a single sprayer injecting diesel between the valves and into the cylinder it was less complex and easier to maintain, as well as being available in four, five and six-cylinder configurations.

The improved design of the piston crown and combustion chamber meant more complete fuel combustion and hence more economy. It was only to be expected that the War Office should test the engine for reliability, durability and ease of starting, and on mobility trials in North Wales in 1937 it passed with flying colours. The 8,396cc 6LW was the natural choice for the Scammell Pioneer.

In the original design, for greater efficiency, aluminium alloy was used in place of cast iron for the sump and crankcase and light steel for the flywheel. However as the war proceeded, aluminium became scarce and was prioritised for aircraft, meaning crankcases and sumps were once again made from cast iron (as the 6LW in John's Pioneer has) until a couple of years after the war had ended.

and supplies across all theatres of operation in World War Two.

When the War Office requisitioned the first civilian OX trucks at the beginning of the war they set about modifying them for military use. The chassis was strengthened and a flat, raised, sloping bonnet would accommodate the type of large air filter the War Office specified across its lorries. Mesh grilles were set in engine side panels to increase air flow, later replaced with simple vents to cut production costs. Initially, 34 x7 size tyres were specified but later these were changed to a 10.50 x 16 cross-country tyre fitted to larger divided Sankey W60 wheels with eight bolts. A crash bar protected the radiator and lights were set flush with the front panel.

As well as the General Service OXD with its timber or steel superstructure body, Bedford produced some as slave battery trucks, with more headroom and extended sides to provide assistance with starting for armoured and other important vehicles in the field. It also acted as a spare battery carrier and charging plant and as a minor repair facility for wiring and electrical equipment in the field. Two CAV 12-volt dynamos were mounted below the floor and, together with the 30-volt slave battery charging dynamo, were belt-driven by a gearbox-mounted power take-off. Equipped by Spurling Motor Bodies Ltd a number were refurbished after the war for the Danish Army.



## SPECIFICATIONS

Make **Scammell**  
 Model **Pioneer SV/2S**  
 Nationality **British**  
 Year **1942**  
 Production Run **Total between 1939 and 1945, 1975**  
 Engine **Gardner 6LW**  
 Type **Direct injection four-stroke water-cooled in-line six cylinder OHV**  
 Fuel **Diesel**  
 Displacement **8396cc**  
 Power **102bhp**  
 Torque **358 lbs/ft**  
 Transmission **Scammell**  
 Type **Six-speed constant mesh**  
 Gears **Six forward one reverse four neutral positions (to engage power take-off position is at neutral between second and third) final drive to centre of gear-cases on the rear bogies**  
 Transfer box **None**  
 Suspension **Single transverse leaf spring to front axle, 'walking beam' rear axle bogies pivots on rear axle**  
 Brakes **No front brakes; servo-assisted drum brakes to rear wheels; hand operated contracting shoe transmission drum brake for emergencies**  
 Wheels **20in four-piece pressed steel disc**  
 Tyres **13.50 x 20 cross country bar grip**  
 Crew/seats **Three**  
 Weight **9838kg (unladen)**  
**Dimensions(overall)**  
 Length **6109mm (with jib extended 7811mm)**  
 Width **2,590mm**  
 Wheelbase **1302mm**

*BELOW: With a shovel by each door and flawless deep bronze green semi-matt paint, the Scammell Pioneer is now prepared for military action, canvas roll down windows providing some weatherproofing for passengers and driver*  
*BOTTOM RIGHT: John has sourced correct War Office specification bar grip tyres and when he acquired the SV/2S, it was missing its weight frame; this has been accurately fabricated from steel using a template*  
*BOTTOM LEFT: The offside bumper sports the blue yellow and red striped REME arm of service sign, complementing the Allied white star on the driver's door, the latter a replacement made to a template*



*The Scammell Pioneer owes its exceptional off-road agility to clever design both in the front axle with its central single transverse eight-leaf spring above the axle giving 610mm travel and to the use of independently-gearred bogies attached to a massive worm-drive rear axle, both of which help protect the chassis from risk of torsion stress.*  
*The rear axle was manufactured*

*One freshly shot-blasted short wheelbase Scammell Pioneer chassis awaiting the vehicle's rebuild in 2010*



## SCAMMELL'S 'WALKING-BEAM' SUSPENSION EXPLAINED

*by Kirkstall Forge Engineering in Leeds which is now closed - bought out by GKN and shut in 1974. They produced many axles for military vehicles during both world wars. Final drive at the rear was achieved through 'walking-beam' gearcases, each of which carried two wheels and pivoted centrally from the axle. Spur gears on the axle half-shafts drove the wheels via idler gears to a spur gear on each wheel. As a result, the rear wheels on each side can travel independently up approximately 300mm along a vertical plane.*  
*The 'walking beam' design was patented by Scammell in the 1920s and continued with slight updating in 1939 in their military vehicle range for more than 30 years and was continued into the Leyland Martian range of vehicles (FV1100) into the 1950s.*



*Dave Bramfitt supervises while admiring the 'walking-beam' gear cases, now exposed in all their ingenious glory*



Other Bedford OXs became mobile offices while quite a few were pressed into service as mobile canteens for the Queen's Messengers Convoy Food Flying Squad, a gift of the American Committee for Air Raid Relief.

The Bedford OXA was an interesting if primitive armoured variant with limited visibility and armed with a Bren gun and Boys anti-tank rifle it was issued to the Home Guard. Thankfully it didn't see action as neither it nor its occupants would have survived. Later, the OX's cab and chassis were put to use as a tractor for a semi-trailer known as the OXC, the work to convert these carried out by Scammell. Some of these were put to use transporting damaged aircraft.

However, if the Bedford was an everyday workhorse, the Scammell Pioneer in all its variants was without doubt one of the most impressive vehicles of World War Two, even after the American usurper, the Diamond T 980/981 took over most of its tank transportation duties.

Towering over every other wheeled military conveyance of the period, and with unrivalled articulation over rough terrain thanks to its patented rear axle configuration, the archaically styled vehicle was virtually unstoppable.

Development of the vehicle that was to become the Pioneer began in 1925 with a fully working prototype appearing in 1927, Percy

Hugh's innovative features encouraged by Oliver Danson North, design director at the time. Watford-based Scammell patented a 'walking-beam' rear suspension with the axle driven by a worm and wheel, which, together with a front axle centrally pivoted on a single transverse leaf spring, would put the vehicle at a huge advantage over others at the time.

Both front and rear wheels had the sort of degree of travel relative to both one another and to the chassis one sees in extreme off-road vehicles nowadays. This meant that the vehicle could crawl over very uneven terrain without putting any twisting strain on the rigid chassis. Until this point Scammell had only been producing articulated vehicles and this one could literally climb walls.

Tractor and trailer combinations were supplied to Venezuela, India, to oilfields across the Middle East and for geological exploration in Western Australia using Scammell's own six-cylinder petrol engine, the optional six-speed gearbox producing phenomenal torque. In first gear one could extract the vehicle from practically any ground conditions, with the engine at 1,000 rpm and the output shaft rotating only once every eight seconds.

In 1932, the War Office bought a tank transporter tractor from Scammell for testing which had a cab similar to the later production models. A powered winch was fitted for self-recovery but without modern hydraulics the business of low-loading was laborious and time-consuming. In 1937 a longer wheelbase version was produced along with a short wheelbase artillery tractor, the former featuring stronger springs and a more appropriate

## 'Without modern hydraulics the business of low-loading was laborious and time-consuming'

### JOHN PICKERSGILL'S SCAMMELL PIONEER SV/2S

The hardworking team of three; from left to right Norris Davison, John Pickersgill and Dave Bramfitt



Based in West Yorkshire, John Pickersgill has a keen interest in old vehicles, particularly those concerned with heavy haulage and plant rather than military transportation. Keen to restore and own a Scammell Pioneer he came across this SV/2S advertised in a classic commercial publication in 2009. The recovery truck fitted his budget and superficially looked fairly tidy - if in need of new boarding to the cab floor. The owner had even polished the brass handles. Once home though and on closer inspection the Pioneer required complete restoration to all parts. Gathering parts and with help and advice from

Dave and Mandy Weedon who also own a number of Scammells, work began in 2010 with the all-important rear axle. John Bramfitt, a local engineer, brought his expertise with building shafts to the task, dismantled the bogies and by skilfully using metal spray, restored the metal surfaces to their original tolerances. The complex 'walking beam' axles refurbished, reconstructing badly worn brakes followed. With all components removed, the bare chassis was shot-blasted in the open air along with the wheels. The engine presented a more complex challenge as it required careful re-building, the cast iron block more diffi-

cult to work with than the aluminium it would have been made of if not for wartime shortages. It took three years of painstaking work to recondition as some parts were missing. John is indebted to Paul Hopps, a retired mechanic from the Keighley Bus Museum who volunteered to finish the job, fitting six new pistons, reconditioning the cylinder head and block. Hindle Reman of Bradford re-machined the worn crank and crankcases, white metal bearings found to suit the crank. John found too that Gardner Marine of Kent, the original makers of the 6LW were, still able to supply suitable parts and advice. They even have 6LW engines on their website awaiting overhaul. Curiously, the Scammell gearbox was the only part of the vehicle that needed only a clean, oil and a quick check over. By now it was 2013 and four years into the restoration. Norris Davison, a keen model engineer helped John re-board the cab and construct the rear body lockers from Keruing timber, a type of hardwood from Indonesia and used commonly in lorry bodies. The main rear body was re-made from softwood as it would have been in 1942 and painted, the original cappings and hinges blasted and refurbished. The carpentry alone took six to nine months of hard work and careful measuring. Additionally, the cab had arrived with the wrong doors and using a friend's

Scammell door as a template, John constructed a new set. Likewise, a front weight frame was fabricated from scratch using a pattern taken from the same recovery truck. Finding an original Scammell workshop manual was completely invaluable for identifying oils, setting tolerances and as a source when rewiring the truck. With chassis number 4757 John was able to pinpoint his Scammell to contract number S832, which meant it was supplied to the War Department after August 31, 1942. John also had an elderly friend, Harry Richards, who sadly died recently at 92, and who would entertain him with tales of his exploits with REME during the war, driving the massive Pioneers in Italy - despite his short stature. Sadly, he never saw it finished and John is planning to name the SV/2S 'Little Harry' after his friend, sign-written above the windscreen. Likewise, he plans to add an 11th Armoured Division formation sign, that of the black bull, partly as one of John's work-roles is as dairy farmer. Dedicated to: 'Little' Harry Richards

Thanks to:  
Dave Bramfitt and Norris Davison  
Dave and Mandy Weedon  
Ashley Walker  
Paul Hopps  
Phil Morgan

## MIKE SHACKLETON'S OXD

Although generally simple and reliable, running the OXD over the past seven years has had its moments. In 2013 a can of worms opened when the exhaust manifold sprang a leak which resulted in an engine rebuild and while Bedford parts are plentiful and interchangeable, the replacement plus sixty thou pistons were a shock at £585 plus VAT. Ignition coil failure too is an intermittent problem as it is also on the QL. The ignition coil tends to overheat and Mike keeps a spare coil handy in the cab. In common with some other vintage vehicles the OXD also experiences the drawbacks of vacuum-operated windscreen wipers which mean that the harder the engine works, the slower they go. As well as the coil, modern compromises include tyres, halogen bulbs, rear reflectors, modern rear lights and indicators, with the switch on the dash, together with a cartridge oil filter which is cunningly

housed within the original housing. The OXD has proved its worth and surprised Mike, who says: "For a two-wheel-drive vehicle, it is surprisingly able in off-road conditions. At the inaugural Yorkshire Wartime Experience a few years ago, the site was waterlogged when a month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours. My OX travelled the length of the site on at least half a dozen occasions and while there was a fair amount of slipping and sliding, it did not once get bogged down!"

Thanks to:  
Fellow World War Two re-enactors who brought the Scammell 'recovery' to life for the camera...  
David Shackleton,  
Jess McGreal  
Matthew Widdop  
Jack Sharples

Proud owner and son left to right; David Shackleton and Mike Shackleton



ABOVE: The Bedford OXD's six-cylinder WD OHV 3,519cc petrol engine is simple to maintain though ignition coils failing are a problem at the moment

ABOVE MIDDLE: The Bedford OXD driver's windscreen section was once capable of opening but during restoration was sealed shut while thirties civilian styling abounds in the simple cab, the civilian model door linings are ribbed for strength

ABOVE RIGHT: The leather-lined holders between the canvas upholstered seats are to restrain two rifles



rear axle configuration for the job of transporting tanks.

Meanwhile, the War Office, finding little need for recovery vehicles in the inter-war years dragged its feet and only in 1936 was a contract drawn up for ten purpose-built 'tractor, heavy breakdown' units from Scammell designated SV/1S or SV/1T. The vehicle was fitted with a narrow, collapsible 'A' frame carrying a jib which could be folded back into the body when travelling, the job rated at two tons when extended and three in the inner position. It proved awkward in use. By this time the Gardner 6LW engine was fitted to all Pioneer recovery trucks, driving the rear bogie through a six-speed Scammell gearbox.

Like the SV/1S the SV/2S which followed in 1939 had a timber rear body with storage lockers either side of the jib but was fitted with a more flexible two-position sliding jib crane, again rated at two and three tons depending on position and supplied by Herbert Morris. The 'A' frame remained fixed for strength, bolt-

ed to the rear body panel and braced onto the chassis. An extending jib section slid out to two positions increasing reach or height. This was all hand-operated by a three-man crew using chains and Morris winding gear. As well as carrying a rigid tow bar and distance frame, an eight-ton vertical spindle, worm-gear lifting winch was fitted underneath the floor of the timber body on both models. Up to seven removable counterweights, each weighing 70kg could be carried in a steel bracket mounted ahead of the radiator to balance a suspended load. Standard War Office draw gear was also fitted front and rear on heavy-weight spring mounts.

After a slow start in 1939 and following the Dunkirk evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force in 1940, production stepped up to four a month, but while an eventual total of 1975 SV/2S recovery trucks were produced during World War Two, supply never quite matched demand. Additionally, the twin-boom Holmes wrecking gear fitted to the

US-built Ward La France, Kenworth and Diamond T recovery vehicles proved more versatile and capable with complex recovery operations and heavier vehicles. However, despite its top-end speed of 35-38km/hr (24mph) at its lightest, the Scammell Pioneer was viewed by the War Office as having the greatest scope of any vehicle in the service and has become, justifiably, a legend, with the SV/2S the longest serving variant, often seen alongside its successor, the Scammell Explorer. ◀

### Further Reading

*British Military Trucks of World War Two*, Les Freathy, Tankograd Publishing 2012 ISBN 978-3-936519-29-7

*Pioneer The Scammell R100, SV1 and SV2, TRMU20 & TRMU30 in British Army Service*, Pat Ware, Warehouse Publications 1998 (a very rare book, listed as available at the British Library) ISBN 0-9525563-8-3

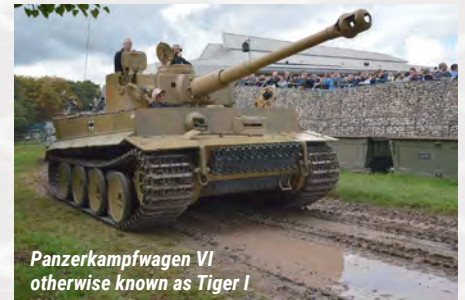
# Tiger Day VIII



Tiger 1 running in the arena with Leopard C1 PHOTOS COURTESY OF IAN WILCOX



Sherman 'Fury' star of the 2014 film



Panzerkampfwagen VI otherwise known as Tiger I

September 16 saw another successful Tiger Day at Bovington Tank Museum, it was yet again a sell-out occasion, with 4,500 people flooding in to The Tank Museum to see the Tiger 131 in action on one of its biannual appearances. It was a great opportunity for Tiger fans to explore, if they hadn't already done so, the Tank Museum's exhibition, 'The Tiger Collection – the Tanks, the Terror and the Truth'. Open since April, this exhibit has every member of the

Tiger tank family together, including the virtual reality apparition of the Sturm Tiger. The highlight of the day was a 45-minute display which saw Tiger 131 take to the arena alongside its Axis and Allied contemporaries - including the very same Sherman tank as played the 'Fury' in the eponymous film starring Brad Pitt. Tiger 131 is the only running Tiger 1 in the world and it was captured intact by the allies in 1943 in the Tunisian desert. A chance

shot had jammed the turret mechanism so that it couldn't turn and the crew had abandoned it. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and King George VI went to be pictured with this prized tank during their visit to North Africa.

## Swimming tanks that Drowned

In April 1944 during Exercise Smash, Studland Bay became the practice ground for 'D-Day landing' training for British infantry. They used amphibious vehicles to land on the beach and live ammunition was employed to create a strong sense of realism for those involved. There were aerial bombardments by British and American planes dropping incendiaries and firing at Studland Heath, while ships fired on the area from offshore. Semi-submersible Valentine tanks which had been equipped with propellers and canvas



the history of the event alive. Over the years the tanks have started to disintegrate and unfortunately five had to be blown up for safety in the 1980s by the Royal Navy. Project Valentine 75 will provide a lasting record of the tanks and the information collected will enable underwater archaeologists to monitor their condition in the future." Winston Churchill, King George VI, US General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery were all pres-



A two-year initiative was recently unveiled by the Isle of Purbeck Sub Aqua Club (IPSAC) to record, survey and research the history of these seven Valentine Duplex Drive tanks, which have remained 60ft below the waves of Poole Bay ever since they sank. In 2019 the club will mark the 75th anniversary of Operation Smash. Club chairman

Chris Dunkerley said: "The tanks are a favourite dive for many of us and we have decided to collect as much information about them as we can. Project Valentine 75 is our attempt to keep

skirts to make them amphibious, were deployed during the rehearsals, but seven of them sank with the loss of six lives.

Chris Dunkerley said: "The tanks are a favourite dive for many of us and we have decided to collect as much information about them as we can. Project Valentine 75 is our attempt to keep

## Ice Cold in Alex

I read the collectable books, *Ice Cold in Alex* and the references to the film. One error in the film concerns the famous sand dune scene; reverse gear is not the lowest gear in an Austin K2Y Ambulance, first is.

In the desert two-wheel-drive vehicles were preferred, (lower maintenance) ,with power take-off (PTO) air compressors for tyre inflation.

The four-wheel-drive K2Y ambulance in the film, has the PTO removed to give clearance for the front drive shaft, it is also a very early model Austin Ambulance, that has been

rebuilt, due the later internal switches and CAV electrics (CAV electrics,L-WD-H1 head-lights,L-WD-T1 rear light, axle flood light after

c1942) and service modified can holders, to take Jerrycans. The ambulance rear body is also a mix, the rear canvas has been removed and is now covered with plywood. Headlights are 7in and should be 8in and just one on the L/H side(8in),or 7inand 8in dependant on the time line. Engine side covers are for an ATV.

Obviously the Canadian Military Pattern C8A/X axles and transfer box are non standard. My brother's K2Y Ambulance had the PTO modified in North Africa for what reason I do not know. **Rupert Condick**



## Lottery Life-line for D-Day's Last Landing Craft



Timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings in two years time the landing craft 'LCT 7074' that took part in Operation Neptune, the naval element of the Allied invasion of northern France in 1944 will be restored thanks to a £4.7m lottery grant.

Landing craft LCT 7074 landed on Gold beach with one Cromwell tank, two Sherman tanks and seven Stuart tanks and their crews on board. It is the only landing craft to survive from D-Day and just one of ten remaining vessels from the wider fleet. It was one of 800 that had the capacity to carry ten tanks or armoured vehicles plus their crew. After its refurbishment, it will go on display as the focal point of Portsmouth's D-Day Museum, an affiliate of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, after a major overhaul.

The landing craft tank was decommissioned in 1948 and later converted to a floating clubhouse and nightclub in Birkenhead, before falling into a semi-submerged and deteriorating state and eventually being salvaged in 2014. As part of the restoration, LCT 7074 will be taken apart and reassembled so it can be properly catalogued, and conservation work will be undertaken on its hull, superstructure and interior spaces.

## News Briefs

### SturmTiger to the Australian Armor Museum



*World of Tanks* brought their mixed reality *SturmTiger* experience at this year's *Aus Armourfest* event at The Australian Armour and Artillery Museum in Cairns September 2 and 3. This 'first-of-its-kind' interactive installation was previously launched at The Tank Museum in Dorset to fill a gap in its *Tiger* exhibition, but tank and history enthusiasts can now come face-to-face with a virtual replica of the *SturmTiger* tank in Australia.

### Swedish Mishap



Swedish media are reporting that a *Pansarterrängbil 360 APC* (also known as the *Patria*) was hit by a passenger train. This accident happened during the *Aurora 17* military exercise near *Trosa*, south of *Stockholm*. Media reports indicate that three people in the military vehicle were injured, while one train passenger suffered minor injuries.

### Medical Training



The last days of September saw reservists from 335 Medical Evacuation Regiment undertake a demanding training exercise alongside one of their paired regiments, 1 Armoured Medical Regiment (1AMR), in Germany.

Exercise *Serpent Run* provided the reservists, many of who come from NHS backgrounds, with key training opportunities to enhance their skills across a wide spectrum of core medical and military skills. At the same time some 110 Army Reservists from 254 Medical Regiment spent two weeks living and working alongside 50 Croatian soldiers on the *Crvena Zemlja* training area in *Knin, Croatia*. The aim of these exercises is to ensure the reservists are competent and confident in their core medical and military skills and to link the reservists training with that of other NATO forces to ensure the best tactics and techniques are shared between nations.

## Unreliable Foxhound

The BBC reports that armoured vehicles designed to protect British troops from roadside bombs keep breaking down, and cannot handle the heat in Iraq and Afghanistan. First deployed in 2012 Foxhounds were the vehicle to replace the lightly armoured Snatch Land Rover, dubbed the 'mobile coffin' after 37 soldiers lost their lives while travelling in the vehicles.

The Foxhound was intended to safeguard troops in a blast and to operate in desert conditions, indeed it was designed specifically by F1 engineers to operate in the hot and dusty climate of Helmand in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defence bought 400 Foxhounds, at a cost of £370m, after it was criticised for taking too long to provide troops in Iraq and Afghanistan with proper protection. But troops now say there are serious problems with reliability, with overheating being the most common problem.

An Army sergeant in Iraq, responsible for the maintenance of seven Foxhounds, reportedly told the BBC that the vehicle was a waste of money. He said: "At 50 degrees the engine cooks out, and I'm having to strip the vehicles down every five or six weeks to keep them running. Normally, this would only be done twice a year" He also claims he has had to alter the bonnets to try to increase the air supply to cool down the engines.



The Ministry of Defence said Foxhound had dealt with "demanding conditions in Iraq" and was "keeping soldiers safe".

# Shipping Scam

I would like to inform your readers of a scam that I have just fallen victim to and would like you to warn any potential buyers of military vehicles from the USA. I bought a Humvee in February from a reputable dealer in Ohio, I then looked to get a shipping agent to pick it up for me and ship back to the UK. I found one that looked like it would suit me so I did a little research and decided to go ahead with them. They wanted \$1,750 plus UK taxes and port fees which all seemed OK. The first problem came when I kept being told they were waiting for other vehicles to fill the container. The first date came and went, then

the second. I was told that the container had been picked for intense examination but that all the paperwork was good (I had paid extra for him to complete all the relevant paperwork). He said it was just something that customs do sometimes. It was in the customs for 45 days, all the time running up storage costs. It finally arrived on July 22 and I was given an invoice for \$7,000 more than I was quoted. I was charged for the storage of the container and it turned out that the container was pulled because he had put a motorcycle in the container that didn't have a title document and that is not permitted in the US.

As my Humvee was here he passed the charges onto me and told me that if I didn't pay I wouldn't get my vehicle. Tantamount to blackmail, extortion and fraud. I have tried to report this but no one wants to help as it's a problem with a US company and could cost thousands and take months during which time I would continue to rack up storage charges in the UK. So now I have the Hummer but I am now £5,700 out of pocket - I have tried to talk to them to resolve the problem but the reply I got was 'we will see you in court' - beware!  
**Peter Dixon**

## News Briefs

### US Tanks damaged in Polish railway mishap



Russian news sources RT and Sputnik International have published articles describing a rail accident in Poland that has left ten US armoured vehicles damaged; photos of the incident show them to be Bradley IFVs. Apparently they hit a metal awning that overhangs the tracks at a station near the city of Torun while being transported from Gdansk to a military range in Zagan. These vehicles were being transported as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, a NATO exercise intended to boost the Alliances presence in Eastern Europe.

### Terminator



Alexander Shevchenko, the Russian defence ministry's tank-automation commander, said the tank support combat vehicle, dubbed the Terminator, had successfully passed all tests. It is anticipated that the majority of the Terminators will be delivered to Russia's military in 2018. Believed to be based on Russia's T-72 main battle tank the Terminator primarily provides direct attack and defensive support to other tanks on the battlefield, including Russia's T-90A tank. They weigh 44 tonnes and are equipped with two 30mm-caliber 2A42 autocannons and a 7.62mm-caliber PKTM twin-mount machine gun. It has been designed with urban warfare in mind and requires five members to operate it - a gunner, a driver-mechanic, two riflemen and a commander.

# Malpas Yesteryear Rally, Cheshire, September 9 and 10



**Scammell Explorer Recovery Truck and a Series One, belonging to the Durham Light Infantry Regiment.** WORDS AND PICTURES MIKE STAPLETON

The weather forecast wasn't good, but I went along on the Saturday of the annual Malpas Yesteryear Rally weekend. This rally has run since 1972 and their website promises 30 steam engines, 120 cars, 70 military vehicles, 120 commercial vehicles, 150 tractors, 100 stationary engines, motorcycles, pedal cycles, heavy horses, working demonstrations, trade and auto-jumble stands and a variety of catering outlets. I don't think there were quite as many vehicles as promised in the web site as no doubt some had been put off by the rain but there was more than enough to keep one occupied and I spent four hours wandering round the rally.

**BOTTOM: On the left a Scammell Tank Transporter and on the right a Foden Recovery Truck. BELOW: Series III FFR in the military vehicle Section of the rally.**



# This rusty old lady can become yours!



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This very rare WW2 survivor, and godfather of the entire US built Halftrack family was definitely active in the liberation of Europe!

After serving many years in the French army it ended on a scrapyard, where we found the Halftrack still carrying its French markings (see photos at right).

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*For more questions please do not hesitate to contact us.*



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## October

### 22 Chelmsford Militaria Fair

Marconi Social Club, Beehive Lane, Chelmsford  
[www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com](http://www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com)

## November

### 5 Northern Military Expo

Indoor show at Newark County Showground, 200 trade stalls selling militaria and vehicle parts. For more information (traders and public) either call 01302 739000, email [jeep.promotions@btconnect.com](mailto:jeep.promotions@btconnect.com) [www.northernmilitaryexpo.co.uk](http://www.northernmilitaryexpo.co.uk)

### 11 Nostalgia Day

To celebrate the centenary of the Women's Royal Naval Service featuring classic military vehicles and displays of a new World War One memorial to Hertfordshire Regiment in Belgium Free entry although we welcome donations to the Royal British Legion Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall, The Forebury, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9AX. For further info email [david.mead7@btinternet.com](mailto:david.mead7@btinternet.com)

### 12 Chatham Fair

Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent. ME4 4TZ  
[www.chathammilitariafairs.co.uk](http://www.chathammilitariafairs.co.uk)

### 19 Malvern Militaria Fair

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, WR13 6NW. Militaria, vehicle spares, books, badges and Jeeps for sale at this well established event. 9am-3pm. Admission £5 Amanda Lycett 01743 762266 [sales@jeeparts.co.uk](mailto:sales@jeeparts.co.uk) [www.militaryconvention.com](http://www.militaryconvention.com)

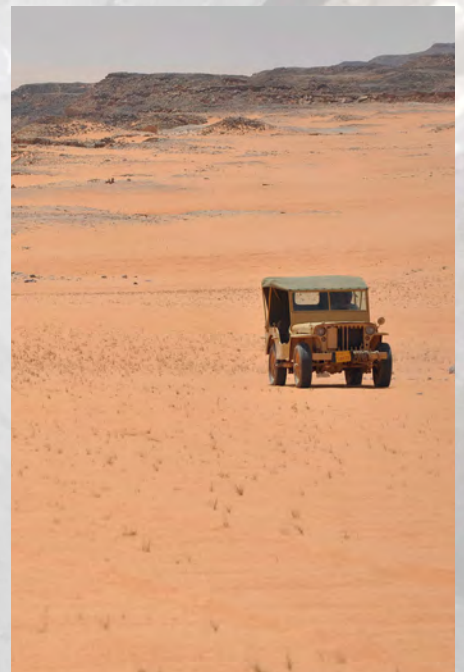
## December

### 3 Chelmsford Militaria Fair

Marconi Social Club, Beehive Lane, Chelmsford  
[www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com](http://www.chelmsfordmilitaria.com)

### 10 Chatham Fair

Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent. ME4 4TZ  
[www.chathammilitariafairs.co.uk](http://www.chathammilitariafairs.co.uk)



## January 2018

### 7 The Croydon Airport Aviation & Military Collector's Fair

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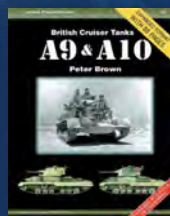
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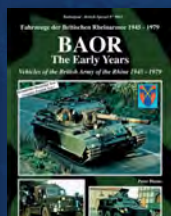
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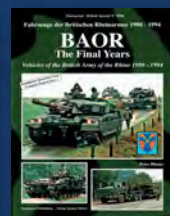
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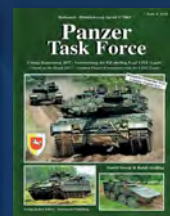
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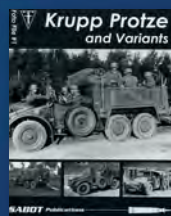
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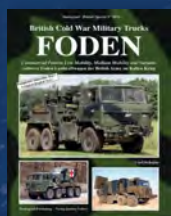
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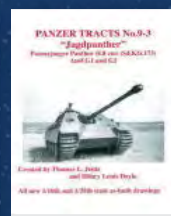
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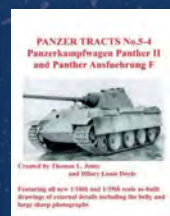
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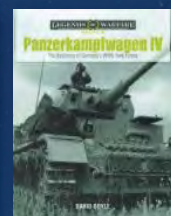
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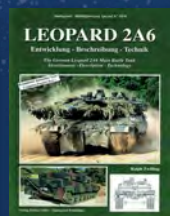
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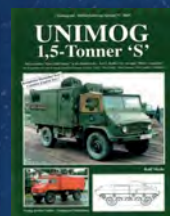
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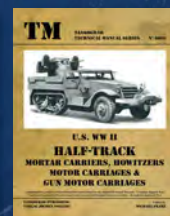
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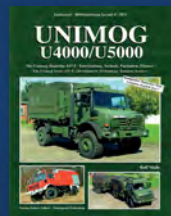
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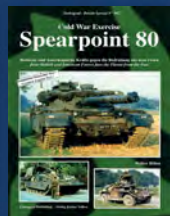
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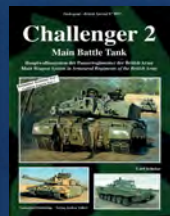
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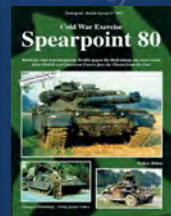
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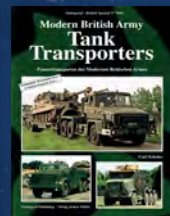
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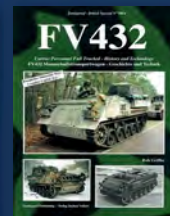
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# A Burgeoning Hobby

Sales of military vehicles are still very healthy as enthusiasts flock to buy



**Lovely Bedford QLR at £16,500**



**Citroën Kegresse P17 - the forerunner of World War Two half-tracks**

We have had well over 300 Jeeps advertised on Milweb since early 2016: Jeeps of all ages, models and conditions. But imagine the excitement amongst the Jeep world when a genuine Ford GP Four-Wheel-Steer example came up for sale. Fully restored by its Belgian owner, it had been bought as a complete project with 13 standard Ford GPs about 20 years back. He did a ground up restoration and explained that the matching engine had unfortunately been scrapped by the previous owner due to severe frost damage.

Only six of the original 50 GP Four-Wheel-Steer models exist, so the price was rather higher than the average Jeep. All the serious Jeep players came out for it and the sale was concluded within five days of it coming onto the market. The UK-based buyer also went home with a Ford GPA amphibian that he admired in the same collection.

A friend of mine, a Jeep collector for more than 40 years and who saw the GP advert, rued the day when he and some chums found some Jeeps in Normandy about 30 years ago on a farm and the one that none of them wanted to buy was a rather dilapidated four-wheel-steer GP. If only they had known...

Another old friend, Peter Skelton, a Jeep owner and enthusiast since the 1960s, sadly died just before we went to press. He often used to comment to us younger chaps that he had never paid more than £100 for a Jeep. We are certainly seeing a very healthy market in Jeeps, but sales of military Land Rovers have dropped off in recent months.

Hardly any Series Land Rovers seem to come up for sale and replica Wolfs have all but disappeared – this is due to release of the real Wolf models in the last few months. However those Land Rovers that are offered seem to sell quickly but we haven't seen a hike in asking prices.

At £16,500, the late John Funnel's 1943 Bedford QLR reflects the increased value of British war time softskins. Two Bedfords, an OY and an MW,

both restored in civilian trim, at £7,000 each are almost too nice to put back into military colours but I suspect we will see them on our show circuit next year. Another World War Two heavy, an AEC Matador in civilian livery, sold in just days.

We have also seen two restored Leyland Hippos come onto the market with quite a difference in asking prices, one at £9,000 and one at £18,000 (kitted out as motorhome).

Post-war British vehicles this month include a Stalwart for £5,000, a Mk2 Saracen at £25,000 and a Mk2/3 Ferret at a modest £8,000.

On two wheels, we saw a 1962 Harley WLA project, looking very original and complete for €16,000 with a restored version at an almost modest £20,000 reflecting the rising prices of military Harleys now – I wish I still had mine....

Brisish bikes continue to flourish with a Royal

Enfield WDC/CO at £4,750, another needing finishing at £3,750 and a 1938 BSA M20 500cc at £5,350.

At €39,000 a Citroën Kegresse p17 restoration project would have normally been considered a civilian vehicle, but the one we have on offer is an ex-French army model. Built in 1932, the French army used these in their colonial operations in North Africa and the Sahara. As an expedition and survey vehicle it truly proved its worth. The name comes from the system's inventor Adolphe Kégresse, who designed the original track system while working for Tsar Nicholas II of Russia between 1906 and 1916. He applied it to several vehicles in the royal garage including Rolls-Royce cars and Packard trucks.

The Russian army also fitted the system to a number of their Austin armoured cars. In the 1920s, the US Army bought several Citroën-Kégresse vehicles for evaluation followed by a licence to produce them. This resulted in the army ordnance department building a prototype in 1939. In December 1942, it went into production with the M2 Half-Track Car and M3 Half-track versions. The Nazis also captured many of these Citroën half-track vehicles and armoured them for their own use.

Visitors checking into War and Peace will have seen another, slightly more challenging, project Kegresse on display – courtesy of the show's owner John Allison.

It is pretty much the end of the rally season. The War and Peace Show returning to Beltring made a very tangible difference to the hobby and the market. Followed up by Military Odyssey, Yorkshire Wartime Experience and Firepower, it is clear to us all that the military hobby is on the up and I think a word of thanks to all of our show organisers, large and small, club or commercial is needed. Without the shows, the hobby would certainly be a lot duller. And on behalf of all show organisers I must say – Please support the arena events – they can make or break a show. ◀



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## Marine Corps Tank Battles In Vietnam

Author **Oscar E Gilbert**  
 Year **2017**  
 ISBN **978-1-61200-532-7**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Paperback**  
 Pages **288**  
 Size **152x228mm (6x9in)**  
 Price **£14.99**  
[www.casematepublishers.co.uk](http://www.casematepublishers.co.uk)

This narrative wonderfully combines well-researched and detailed historic, strategic and tactical information with personal stories told by the men who were there, on the ground, engaging with the enemy. For anyone wanting to know more about the Vietnam War, this is a must read. There are few geographically localised conflicts such as Vietnam that have offered the



variety of terrain over which armoured divisions must fight; jungle, sand dunes, mountains, paddy fields, small villages and ancient cities were all the backdrop here, each with their own challenges.

The war became increasingly unpopular at home and of course this had an impact on the crews' state of mind, as did the fact that there was no front and no rear, and no let up from fear, with the enemy surrounding them and hiding among the civilian population. Tankers are well used to making amphibious landings, providing heavy guns to the artillery and escorting supplies, but less so to conducting

road blocks, patrolling on foot or guarding isolated outposts but in Vietnam, they were called upon to thus diversify. **VT**

*Verdict* Much of what is popularly known of the Vietnam War is received impressions from Hollywood blockbusters. This book is as readable as the films are watchable, but its content hasn't been

tarnished or simplified by artistic licence.

## Fallen Giants

The Combat Debut of the T-35A Tank

Author **Francis Pulham**  
 Year **2017**  
 ISBN **978-1-78155-626-9**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Paperback**  
 Pages **144**  
 Size **152x228mm (6x9in)**  
 Price **£18.99**  
[www.fonthillmedia.co.uk](http://www.fonthillmedia.co.uk)

One of history's odddest tanks, the T-35A was a regular on Soviet parade grounds between the wars. It captured the imagination of the industrialising nation and was a propaganda poster star. However, it failed to fulfil its reputation when put to the test in a combat situation.

The Soviet T-35A is the only five-turreted tank ever to enter production. Formidable as it looked it became quickly obvious at the outbreak of World War Two that it was outclassed and outdated by other European nations' technological advances. By 1941 the T-34 was the mainstay of the Soviet armed forces so consequently little



is known about its predecessor, the T-35A, other than production history between 1933 and 1939. The author has used original wartime photographs taken by German soldiers of the tanks on the battlefield to cross-reference with contemporary maps and surviving documents to describe, explain, and set combat scenes to try to understand the history of each tank in this well-produced paperback.

He has worked tirelessly on identifying individual tanks by chassis number and their specific features in order to document their combat careers and fates. There are more than 170 wartime photographs, five maps and eight colour profiles of the T-35 to complement the well-written and painstakingly researched history. **VT**

*Verdict* This book is the most authoritative work in English on the T-35 tank and its variants. This book will be great for modellers, tank buffs and military history enthusiasts alike.

## Dien Bien Phu

The First Indochina War, 1946-1954

Author **Anthony Tucker-Jones**  
 Publisher **Pen & Sword Military**  
 Year **2017**  
 ISBN **1526707985**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Softback**  
 Pages **130**  
 Size **158x234mm (6x9.25in)**  
 Price **£14.99**  
[www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

The Vietnam War has its roots in the political manoeuvrings in the wake of World War Two as French control of its former colonial possessions including Indochine Française or French Indochina waned. The French finally suffered a huge defeat in the region that ended their colonial ambitions in this part of the world for ever, at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. This book guides the reader through this conflict with a concise text and contemporary photographs, providing critical insight into the conduct of the war by both sides and the wider ramifications. The Viet Minh (predecessors of the Viet Cong), after resisting the Japanese in Indochina, sought independence



for Vietnam from France. The French, with limited military resources mostly weapons and equipment of World War Two vintage, moved to reassert control in 1945, sparking a decade-long conflict.

The French defence of Hanoi relied on holding the Red River Delta, making it a key battleground. Then the Viet Minh invaded neighbouring Laos and the French deployed to fight a set-piece battle at Dien Bien Phu but instead were encircled and trapped. All relief attempts failed and in May 1954, the French defences were slowly overwhelmed. It was a costly victory for the Viet Minh because of the stubborn and heroic defence by many French units including those of la Légion Étrangère.

Despite its casualties, the legion's reputation was enhanced whereas the defeat became an embarrassing scandal among senior military and political figures in France. **JC**

**Verdict**

*This book is a useful guide to one of the world's lesser known post-war conflicts.*

## Railway Guns of World War 1

Author **Marc Romanych and Greg Heuer**  
 Year **2017**  
 ISBN **978-1-4728-1639-9**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Paperback**  
 Pages **48**  
 Size **184x256mm (7.25x9.75in)**  
 Price **£10.99**  
[www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)

Although railway guns had been fielded during the American Civil War, the Anglo-Egyptian war and the Boer War, in 1914 the idea of railway artillery pieces was still comparatively new. Designed to break the stalemate of trench warfare, the first railway guns deployed by the French were simple, improvised designs made by mounting surplus coastal defence and naval guns onto existing standard railway carriages. As the war continued, railway artillery was

developed to incorporate longer-range guns that could shell targets far behind enemy lines. This change in emphasis brought about much larger and more sophisticated guns and necessitated specially-designed railway carriages to transport them.

This book details the design and development of railway guns during World War One from the early basic designs to the later, purpose-built

and enormous railway guns. Accompanying the text are many rare, never-before-published photographs and full-colour artworks by Steve Noon to depict how these weapons were used. **VT**

*Verdict* A fascinating read, perfect for those with an interest in the more esoteric weaponry of the first great war.

Having had little tactical impact on combat operations there is a danger that these guns could be forgotten, this book ensures they won't be





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# Chickenhawk

Author **Robert Mason**  
 Publisher **Corgi Books**  
 Year **1984**  
 ISBN **0-552-12419-2**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Softback**  
 Pages **400**  
 Size **125x195mm** (5x7.75in)  
 Price **£9** (used)  
[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

When it came to picking collectable books about the Vietnam War to review for this issue of CMV, this one was immediately my first choice. Chickenhawk is Robert C Mason's narrative of his experiences as a Huey UH-1 helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. The book chronicles his enlistment, flight training, deployment to Vietnam and his subsequent experiences there and after returning from the war. The slightly dog-eared copy pictured is the one I bought in 1984 - when it was first published in Britain - and sat up for a couple of nights reading it until I got to the unexpected twist at the end. I read the last couple of pages over and over again and, for once, concur with the reviewers quoted on this book's rear cover, "It will stun readers," Time Magazine. "Compelling... A hypnotic narrative" New York Times. "Chickenhawk is one bloody, painfully honest and courageous book," Martin Cruz Smith (author of Gorky Park).

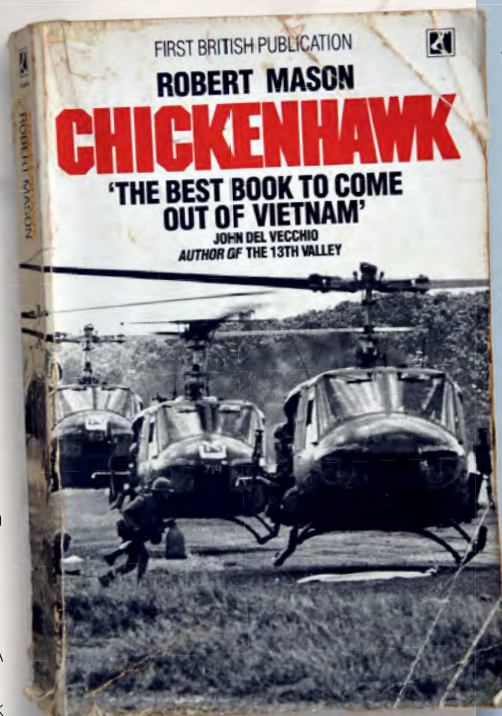
According to Wikipedia, Mason was encouraged to write this book by Knox Burger, the editor of an author-friendly magazine (Bill Smith, better known as Martin Cruz Smith).

Mason was born in March 1942 and flew Hueys as a Warrant Officer 1 and served nine months of a one-year tour with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) - 'First Cav'.

During the Battle of Ia Drang Mason and his fellow pilots flew missions to resupply the infantry and carry the wounded out of hot landing zones (LZ). Mason details many of the missions and battles and gives the reader an idea of the demands of being a helicopter pilot in combat. Things that

particularly stick in my mind are Mason's accounts of the need to check the rotor blades after missions no matter how exhausted he was and the consequences of not doing so.

He writes of how pilots would use the rotation of the blades to corkscrew a Huey overloaded with grunts out of a hot LZ when the chopper was everybody's lifeline. He writes of the dangers of flying in combat and, this book, like few others, makes you almost feel the bullets thudding into the bodywork of the hovering choppers. Mason



also writes of the fatigue, the craziness, the alcohol and the almost inevitable post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which leads to the unexpected ending in the book and his incarceration.

Less than ten years after the end of the Vietnam War, while working on the final manuscript, Mason had to face several rejections along the lines of 'it's good but no one wants to read about Vietnam,' that summed up much of America's ambivalence to the war and those who had been drafted for it. He was released from prison on May 17, 1985, another disaffected former US Serviceman and, such is the power of this book, every time I hear the opening bars of Steve Earle's Copperhead Road, I think of Robert Mason and Hueys evacuating wounded grunts. **JC**

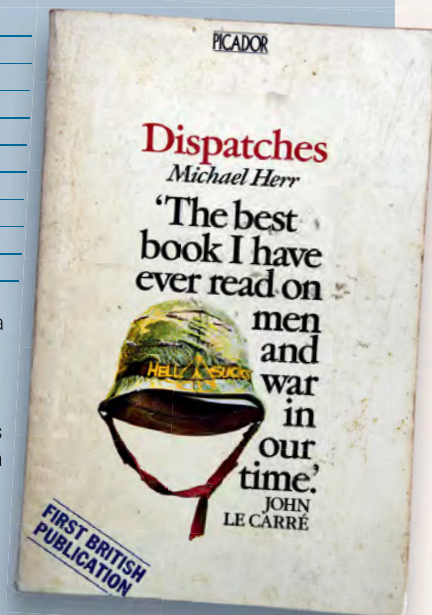
# Dispatches

Author **Michael Herr**  
 Publisher **Picador** (this edition)  
 Year **1978**  
 ISBN **0 330 25573 8**  
 Language **English**  
 Binding **Softback**  
 Pages **210**  
 Size **125x195mm** (5x7.75in)  
 Price **£1.50** (used)  
[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

The Vietnam War can claim a lot of firsts; the first helicopter war, the first rock 'n roll war and the first war fought in the media spotlight. It also casts a long shadow over America with the divisions it caused in American society, the fuel it added to the counter culture's fire, being a hot, proxy war in the Cold War, the issues in US race relations and the futile loss of lives including more than 58,000 American ones.

This made choosing a second book to review difficult simply because there are so many - two lesser known ones that nearly made the cut were from the pile of paperbacks picked up in bookshops as far apart as San Francisco and Rapid City, Tank Sergeant by Ralph Zumbro (Pocket Books/1988) and The Siege of Khe Sanh An Oral History by Eric Hammel (Warner Books/1989) - but another classic took precedence.

As the war raged, Country Joe and the Fish sang the I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag, just one of many antiwar songs of the time, photographers like Don McCullin recorded images of hell in gritty black and white and a correspondent for Esquire magazine, Michael Herr (1940-2016), wrote Dispatches. It started life as columns in magazines and was first published as a book in 1977. It was among the American literature that portrayed the experiences of soldiers in the Vietnam War for American readers and brought the violence of Khe Sanh, marijuana, body bags and PTSD into suburban living rooms. Featured in the book are fellow war correspondents Sean Flynn, Dana Stone, and Dale Dye, and photographer Tim Page. Page, who inspired



Dennis Hopper's character in Apocalypse Now, later wrote his own book entitled Mentioned in Dispatches, because of being mentioned in Herr's seminal book. Herr's book attracted praise from John le Carré who described Dispatches as "the best book I have ever read on men and war in our time."

Dispatches was reprinted in 2009 by Everyman's Library as a contemporary classic and it featured in the journalism section of The Guardian's 100 greatest non-fiction book list in 2011. Both books should be required reading for anyone interested in the Vietnam War and both books are subtly unequivocal about why the US would never win it. They also explain, why ten years after the US withdrawal, Bruce Springsteen would play benefit gigs for the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and record lines such as Born in the USA, "I had a brother at Khe Sanh, fighting off the Viet Cong. They're still there, he's all gone."

**JC**



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### **CONTACT:**

[james@chathamilitariafairs.co.uk](mailto:james@chathamilitariafairs.co.uk)  
07595 511981

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A BTR-152K six-wheeled Soviet Armoured Personnel Carrier built on the chassis and drive train of a ZIS-151 utility truck



The Soviet S-75 Dvina (SA-2 Guideline) is a surface-to-air missile defence system.



A Soviet amphibious light tank PT-76 that was introduced in the early 1950s and soon became the standard reconnaissance tank of the Soviet army



A Soviet-designed MiG-21 supersonic jet fighter and short-range interceptor aircraft



This Katyuska rocket launcher was a type of rocket artillery first built and put into service by the Soviet Union in World War Two

The iconic Soviet-designed T34 tank, which, given its unrivalled combination of firepower, mobility and protection, had a lasting effect on tank design



## Moldova's Inheritance

The former Soviet Republic of Moldova has been independent since 1991, although tensions between pro-Romanians and the former Soviet region of Transnistria erupted into civil war in 1992. An uneasy truce remains with Transnistria which is now a self-proclaimed republic, unrecognised by any other countries except North Korea, and still occupied by the Russian 14th Army.

Moldova's capital, Chisinau, is a small, clean, green and hospitable city with some interesting buildings and monuments, including a huge war memorial in the form of an open-air park with an enormous Victory Memorial consisting of red stone rifles with an Eternal Flame in the centre.

Surrounding the park are five large Soviet relief sculptures depicting different years of the war. In the centre of Chisinau there is a small Soviet military museum with a free open-air military exhibition (relocated from the memorial park) displaying Soviet-made tanks, fighter planes and other military vehicles inherited by Moldova's armed forces.

Hardware on display includes a fighter jet, T-34 tank and various armoured cars.

The museum inside costs 10 Moldovan Lei (50p) and is situated over three floors. The cost of a photography permit is another 10 MDL. The first hall covers weapons from the Stone Age onwards. Subsequent halls and displays focus on World War Two and the civil war of 1992, as well as the Moldovan involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. The final area is underground and contains many artefacts from the Soviet occupation. Each area is packed full of exhibits, film footage and information, although sadly only in Romanian and Russian.

The vehicles outside are relics from the Soviet occupation and date from the 1950s to the 1980s, including: the BTR-152 (also known as BTR-140) which is a six-wheeled Soviet armoured personnel carrier built on the chassis and drive train of a ZIS-151 utility truck. It entered service in 1950 and formed the mainstay of Soviet motor rifle battalions until the advent of the amphibious BTR-60 series during the 1960s.

The PT-76 is a Soviet amphibious light tank that was introduced in the early 1950s and soon became the standard reconnaissance tank of the Soviet army. The tank's full name is Swimming Tank-76 (76 stands for the calibre of the main armament: the 76.2 mm D-56T series rifled tank gun).

RPU-14 140-mm towed rocket launcher was first produced in 1964 and adopted in 1967. It was first seen publicly in the November 1967 Moscow Red Square parade, and to date it has appeared only with Soviet forces. The RPU-14 is designed for employment with airborne forces. It differs from other rocket launchers due to its air-transportability and air-drop ability.

The Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21 is a Soviet-designed supersonic jet fighter and short-range interceptor aircraft. It was popularly nicknamed 'balalaika', from the aircraft's resemblance to the Russian stringed musical instrument.

The MiG-21 was the first successful Soviet aircraft combining fighter and interceptor characteristics in a single aircraft. It was a light-weight fighter, achieving Mach 2 with a relatively low-powered afterburning turbojet, similar to the American Lockheed F-104 Starfighter.

### Soviet Military Museum, Moldova

Where: Strada Tighina 47, Chişinău, Moldova

Phone: +373 22 272 056

Opening times: 9am-5pm Tue-Sun

For Info: <https://tinyurl.com/ydh5sd3x>

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Each area is packed full of exhibits, film footage and information, although only in Romanian and Russian



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**Land Rover Snatch 2A Armoured Defender 110**, Fitted 300 TDI Diesel Engine R380 Gearbox, Uprated Heavy Duty Front Vented Disc Brakes & Rear Disc Brakes, Power Steering, S-2 Glass Reinforced Phenolic Resin Composite Shell, etc, mileage from 13157km, Excellent condition, ..... **Guide price from £35,000 (20 Available)**



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On the beautiful Rame Peninsula, overlooking key British naval location, the Plymouth Sound and at the most easterly point in Cornwall, an annual celebration of all things military takes place in the idyllic Mount Edgcumbe Country Park. Drawing the summer military season to a close in the south west, Cornwall Area MVT has been meeting here since 2004, until this year over August Bank Holiday and now spanning the following weekend.

The event has gradually increased in size and scope and now features a host of attractions from firepower demonstrations from among others, the Saigon Days Vietnam group with an awesome Howitzer gun, towed behind an impressive Reo, to live entertainment and refreshments both day and night thanks to the 1940s Roadshow. The Dog Company (29th Infantry) re-enactment team came down from Wales while other eras

were also covered, from medieval times to the battles between France and England over the territory the Mayflower sailed to from Plymouth.

Retiring as MVT rep for the area and marking his last Mt Edgcumbe as part of the organising team, Lawson Kent played as vigorous a part in the event's organisation as ever, camping under canvas, as did ex-National Serviceman Tim Greasby with his Norton 16H, through Friday and Saturday's glorious sunshine to Sunday's biblical flood.

An embarkation point for Omaha beach during Operation Overlord, the careful track-building undertaken by the US troops in World War Two at Mt Edgcumbe around Barn Pool came in handy on the Sunday when the torrent would have reduced a less well draining site to a lake. Sadly, the weather was disastrous enough to stop play on Sunday but not before MVT members had enjoyed the sights of a peninsula steeped in military history, an 'Allo Allo' themed evening, talked nonsense with old friends and confirmed that Mount Edgcumbe really is, as your correspondent has discovered, the perfect destination for a military vehicle gathering. ◀

Firepower demonstrations attracted large crowds on the Saturday



Charles Smith and his 1984 RAF Lightweight and Tim Greasby on his 1939 Norton 16H with others in convoy on the Rame Peninsula



Tim Greasby's Norton 16H overlooking Plymouth Sound, a Royal Navy ship glimpsed at anchor

A fondly remembered staff car of World War Two, this Austin 10 dates from 1937 and sports the Anti-Aircraft Command formation sign



Tony Ashford's beautifully restored 1956 FFR Austin Champ enjoys the shade under a Cedar of Lebanon



'Mary' is a finely presented 1952 Morris Commercial MRA1 4x4 belonging to Adam Noble



Roger Jerram's Truck, Utility, 1/4-Ton, 4x4, M151A1 also known as a 'MUTT' is part of his Vietnam period vehicle pool

# Cornwall's Edgcumbe



ABOVE: Enjoying the late summer sun a young re-enactor combines a festival atmosphere with a military vehicle event

Cornwall Area MVT have celebrated Mount Edgcumbe at War at this ideal location since 2004



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
Willys Mb Windscreen security chain	£8.00	Bumper spacer tube	£3.50	Axle pinnion seal	£3.60
Ford GPW Willys MB Hip pad with fixings	£18.00	5/16" Clinch nut	£3.00	Distributor cap and arm	£15.00
Complete King Bee mirror assembly	£36.00	Toolbox Lid felt seal	£6.00	Water Pump	£65.00
Front and rear slave cylinders Vehicle set	£50.00	Hub Oil Seal	£3.50	1/4" Clinch nut	£2.50
Brakelite HT Rain shield set of 4	£5.00	HT Lead set	£24.00	Fuel tank anti squeek set	£8.50
Rubber firewall grommet set	£6.00	Track rod ends- Pair	£25.00	Ford GPW Bumper	£40.00
Ford GPW Engine decal set	£4.00	Fuel line set	£40.00	Ford GPW Fuel tank sump	£110.00
Willys Mb Engine decal set	£4.00	Oil line set	£18.00	Ford GPW Oil filter brakcet	£25.00
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Willys MB Brake Pedal Set	£18.00	Universal Joint	£8.00	Ford and Willys Fuel pump	£40.00
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
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**Geoff Maskell's 1942 Mack EHT truck tractor**



**This 101 Land Rover Ambulance last saw service with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and based at Dreghorn Barracks, Edinburgh.**

# New Home for NEMVC Rally

This may have been the 43rd annual rally of the North East Military Vehicle Club, but it was still a first for them, as this year it was held at the new venue of the Ryhope Engine Museum, following the closure of their previous home, the DLI Museum in Durham.

With an unfamiliar location, and an overcast bank holiday weekend to contend with, the club was not surprised to see smaller numbers than in previous years.

However, NEMVC organisers, and museum

staff all expect the event to gain popularity as the museum proved to be both a practical setting for the rally, and the building an excellent backdrop for the vehicles and dioramas on show. The Ryhope Engine Museum is based in the Ryhope Pumping Station, built in 1868 to supply water to the Sunderland area, but after a century of continuous use, the station ceased to operate in 1967, with the building now housing the museum and the grounds hosting events like this.



**1977 FV107 Alvis Scimitar Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance, tracked (CVRT), owned by R Dove**



**FV103 Alvis Spartan APC owned by R Dove**

There were some fantastic exhibits on display ranging from the armoured Alvis Scimitar to a folding BSA bicycle with something there to interest everyone. The oldest vehicle was the 1939 Bedford MW and the most recent, a 1998 Land Rover Wolf. These were presented among the trees, beside the lake in the pretty grounds of the museum. It was free to park, free to enter, and the rally formed part of the wider celebration of steam hosted by the museum over the August Bank Holiday.



**1958 Chang Jiang 750cc machine owned by K Edmondson. A Chinese copy of the Russian copy of the World War Two German BMW R75 motorcycle combination**



**John Spowart's 1943 Willys MB keeps another pair company**



**A N Clay's 1955 Humber Pig APC in the foreground, a 1943 AEC Matador and behind that a Jeep**



**A very tidy 1987-manufactured, 1993 registered, 590cc petrol Trabant 601, formerly of the East German Military Police**



*The Model EP Renault was used by the French throughout World War One. This one had received some attention but I was uncertain if it ran*

The Great Dorset Steam Fair has been running for 49 years and is established as the leading heritage event of this type in the world. By no means is it just a traction engine rally, it is far more encompassing than that. The diversity of its exhibits means that there will be something for everyone, whether it is steam, agriculture, heavy haulage, motorcycles, tractor-pulling, classic cars, earth moving, commercial and of course military vehicles which can be seen over the enormous 600-acre site. There is also a fairground, crafts, food, horses, live entertainment and an incredible variety of food types to suit every palate.

Over the years the show has grown with the type of attractions remaining much the same. A change occurred in 2014 when it was decided to commemorate World War One by recreating a trench system and gathering together appropriate vehicles and re-enactors to put on what must now be the largest and most realistic World War One trench display.

Using heavy-earth moving equipment and with a rough plan, a trench system and gun pits were built. Mature tree trunks were positioned vertically into holes to give the impression of a shell-blasted woods, while a ruined farmhouse was built using bricks and mortar. Each year the site is developed further and this year a TA detachment of the Royal Engineers were building a bunker from blocks and concrete. For the TA this was actually a controlled assessment of their skills which they need to undertake to obtain certification. For the steam fair this was another addition to their realistic battlefield.

Among the displays were 22 World War One vehicles, but there were many more from World War Two onwards in both the military vehicle section and the heavy haulage section which demonstrated ex-military vehicles in their post-war guise hauling heavy loads up a long steep climb.

The battlefield was a great draw for the public who were queuing to tour the trenches

# Traction Engines and Trenches

all day. The whole site has an air of permanency about it but this is not the case. Next year, 2018 will be the centenary of the end of World War One and it is the intention that the whole site will be bulldozed at the end of the show and returned to agriculture. If you wish to see it before it is lost then 2018 will be your last opportunity. ◀



*This unusual looking machine is the sole survivor of three built for the Royal Engineers by Allan-Taylor of Wandsworth using a Ford 8 engine and chassis*



*AECs were always popular in the timber industry, firstly with the Matador which would be supplemented with the Militant when they were made surplus*



*This International H-542, built for towing semi-trailers is a rare machine in the UK. They were assembled by International, Kenworth and Marmon-Herrington*



*This Great War Thornycroft along with a Dennis displayed their cargo of eight newly-cast bells which they were transporting to St George's church in Ypres*

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# Tanks, Trucks and Firepower



*Chieftain (left) entered service in 1966 was a development of the Centurion. It's rifled Royal Ordnance L11A5 120mm gun became the new NATO standard calibre. Centurion (right) introduced in 1945 and was the UK's primary MBT of the post World War Two period.*



*SAS Pink Panther. This is the earliest surviving 'pinkie' used by the SAS 1969-1974*



*The family of this privately-owned 433 Abbot 105mm Howitzer self-propelled gun enjoying a ride*

It was a three-day spectacular of dramatic explosions, big guns, battle re-enactments and magnificent military might. The 8th Tanks, Trucks and Firepower Show took place over the August Bank Holiday weekend near Dunchurch, Warwickshire attracting hundreds of privately-owned tanks and military vehicles, and thousands of visitors.

Organised by the Alvis Fighting Vehicle Society there was excitement for all the family. Highlights included seeing the AFV Society's fully restored 68-ton Challenger I and a magnificent Chieftain MBT roaring around the main arena



*This World War Two German motorcycle and sidecar heads across the arena prior to an infantry re-enactment*



*A crowd pleasing event as a 50-ton Centurion tank makes light work of crushing a car*

*The show lived up to its name with loud, explosive and spectacular displays of firepower from the pyrotechnic team*



[www.tankstrucksandfirepower.com](http://www.tankstrucksandfirepower.com)  
[www.afvsociety.co.uk/](http://www.afvsociety.co.uk/)

in top gear at full speed. And not to be missed was the explosive CVR(T) pyrotechnic display with bigger and more dramatic explosions.

Other highlights included a display by The Royal British Legion Motorbike Riders and The Tommy Atkins Society and the Moonlight Raiders Group staged a head-to-head battle against the 1st Panzer Wehrmacht 44 group. The West Midlands Volunteer Fire Fighters did a real-life rapid extraction training exercise cutting the roof off a car to rescue a trapped driver.

Another car came to a sticky end as it was flattened by a Centurion tank in a car-crushing event. And Andrew Baker showed his expertise in an impressive recovery winch/tow/drop exercise – against the clock, with a 10-ton Samson CVR(T), managing the manoeuvres in just seconds. Brilliant weather added to the enjoyment, with stalls galore, food, drink and music.

Afterwards Andrew said: "The pyrotechnic and firepower displays were even bigger this year. Because our arena is in a valley and the public are only on one side, we can ramp up the pyrotechnics. We had a Jeep blown up and rolled over, a shed blown up, a pond blown up; we also have a sacrificial Spartan tank that we regularly blow up every year. It's safe for us to do this as we have a professional pyrotechnics team. It's what makes our show absolutely unique." ◀



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# TANKS In The Trenches

Tim Gosling tells the story of the first massed tank attack on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Cambrai

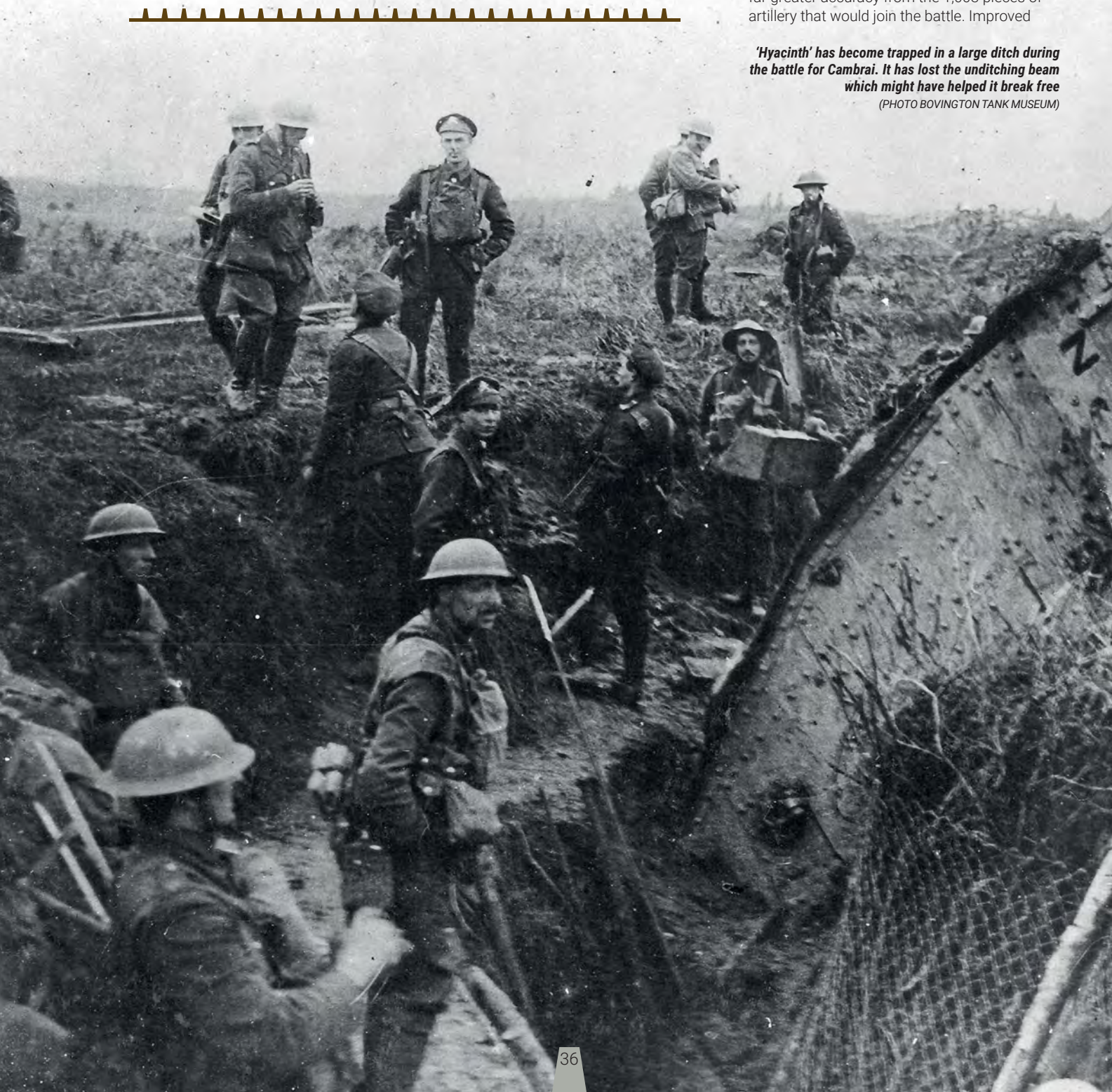
On November 20, 1917 General Haig launched a massive assault across the German Hindenburg line towards the French town of Cambrai. This town was used by the Germans as a supply depot and its capture would also threaten the rear of the German line located to the north making it a very valuable objective.

Having been a quiet area, the German defences had been established in depth of up to six miles in places making a complete breakthrough a significant challenge. The British High Command had developed new tactics to overcome this. Tanks were to be used in a mass assault to crush the barbed wire allowing the infantry to advance unhindered and by dropping fascines (large bundles of brushwood) into the trenches to allow the tanks to cross them.

Improvements in artillery ranging enabled far greater accuracy from the 1,003 pieces of artillery that would join the battle. Improved

*'Hyacinth' has become trapped in a large ditch during the battle for Cambrai. It has lost the unditching beam which might have helped it break free*

(PHOTO BOVINGTON TANK MUSEUM)



infantry tactics had been developed whereby the troops would follow behind the tanks using them as protection to reduce casualties. Time was of great importance, Haig allowed 48 hours for the town of Cambrai to be encircled at which time he knew the German reserves would have arrived making further progress almost impossible.

The lynchpin of the assault would be the success or failure of the 476 Mk IV tanks which were brought up in great secrecy and deployed behind the British lines. More than 350 of these were armed with either 6pdr guns and three Lewis guns (male version), or just five Lewis guns (female version) while the remainder were unarmed.

These unarmed tanks were used for carrying supplies to support the as-

sault. The Mk IV tank had been developed following lessons learned from the operation of its predecessors. The end result was what would become the most numerous example of British-built tanks during the war, with a total of 1,220 examples being manufactured.

I have a specific interest in the Mk IV



***'The battlefield was littered with destroyed or abandoned tanks'***



**At Bourlon Wood 'Grasshopper II' was hit by a shell from a motorised anti-aircraft gun. The tank behind it 'Feu d'Artifice' was picked off next**



**Abandoned at Cambrai is this unidentified Mk IV. The large rail running over the top would carry the unditching beam. The second rail appears to be partially missing**



**German soldiers attempting to recover a Mk IV. One of the many recovered from the battlefield which they used to equip their own tank battalions (PHOTO BUNDESARCHIV)**

as my relation Lieutenant Alfred King Tripe was the commander of the tank Eclipse II during the battle of Cambrai where he would ultimately lose his life.

At 6:10am on November 20, a massive artillery barrage commenced which devastated the German defences and key positions behind. This was followed by a creeping barrage which was then followed by tanks and infantry along the nearly six-mile front. By the end of the day the British had advanced up to four miles in places and had suffered in the region of just 4,000 casualties, an unprecedented success.

However, not all the objectives had been reached with perhaps the greatest failing occurring when the vital bridge which crossed the St Quentin canal collapsed as the tank 'Flying Fox' attempted to cross it. This prevented the 2nd Cavalry Division from reaching its objective in moving to the east of Cambrai. Another significant blow was that the strategically important Bourlon Wood (just west of Cambrai) had not been captured.

The success of the first day would not

be repeated on the second. Possibly because such an advance had not been anticipated there were few reserves, the artillery was in the process of moving forwards and 179 of the tanks had been destroyed or broken down. Small assaults took place but the momentum of the assault had begun to fade and as day two came to a conclusion the advance stopped for a period of consolidation.

This delay allowed the Germans time to bring in much-needed reinforcements which would turn the battle into such a bitter fight.

On November 22 the British undertook some reorganisation ready for assaulting Bourlon woods and the villages of Moeuvres to the left and Fontaine to the right, all crucial objectives on the left flank. The attack, which took place the following day, was led by 92 tanks (including Eclipse II), but this time the Germans were anticipating them and had devised tactics to disrupt them.

The aim was to separate the tanks from their supporting infantry. This was achieved by the German infantry laying low as the tanks

passed by and then opening fire on the British infantry which followed behind. The tanks would then be picked-off by the German artillery and mobile anti-aircraft guns.

The Germans had been experimenting with mobile anti-aircraft guns since 1909 when they mounted a 75mm Krupp gun on a Daimler chassis when airships were becoming a viable threat. By 1917 this idea had been updated to fitting a Krupp (Model L27) 7.7cm gun on a four-wheel-drive Daimler or Ehrhardt truck chassis (both machines being virtually identical).

Despite the gun, ammunition and armoured bonnet taking the weight up to eight tons, the 60-80bhp engine could propel this heavy machine at speeds of up to 30kmph. Without their infantry support the tanks became easy targets for guns while in the open (one German gun was credited with destroying five tanks in quick succession); while among buildings they were quickly disabled by throwing bags of grenades beneath their tracks.

It wasn't just enemy action that disabled the tanks. They could become stuck while crossing enemy trenches or, while travelling through

**Carrying fascines these Mark IV tanks are travelling on French 45 ton ETAT wagons prior to unloading at the Plateau staging area near Cambrai (PHOTO BOVINGTON TANK MUSEUM)**





*The tank 'Ceylon' became stuck at Bourlon wood on November 23. While trying to free itself it broke a track and was abandoned by its crew*



*'Chaperon' was hit while climbing out of a trench near Lateau wood on November 20. The Germans already appear to have removed its weapons*



*Captured by the Germans is this unidentified MK IV. The wooden un-ditching beam can be seen laying on the ground behind the tank (PHOTO BUNDESARCHIV)*

woods, it was very easy to lose a track forcing the crew to abandon the tank.

To make matters worse for the attackers it now began to snow and the supply routes were clogged with vehicle movements. The attack slowly wound itself down until it was abandoned altogether on November 27. Three days later the Germans launched a massive counter attack forcing the British almost back to where they started.

The battlefield was littered with destroyed or abandoned tanks which the Germans examined and then recovered those which could be turned against their previous owners or which could be dismantled for spares. Casualties on both sides were similar with 44,000 British compared to 41,000 German. What had started off as potentially a great victory was turned into a stalemate but useful lessons had been learned in the use of 'combined arms' which would prove vital in the battles yet to come.

In the Lincolnshire Museum of Rural Life is a Mk IV bearing the name 'Flirt II', a tank which was lost to the Germans at Cambrai. Recent research has shown that this tank is not actually 'Flirt II' but was probably 'Daphne' which did not serve at Cambrai but which had been repainted as 'Flirt II' after it was presented

to the city of Gloucester

after the war.

One Cambrai survivor which has no doubt about its provenance is the female tank 'Deborah' which was lost at Flesquieres on November 20, 1917. After it had been knocked out by German artillery it was partially buried and then used as a shelter. Completely lost after the war the tank was rediscovered in 1998 by Phillippe Gorcynski who had been investigating stories of this buried tank for some years. The tank was displayed in a barn in Flesquieres for some years before being moved to a new museum commemorating the battle of Cambrai in time for the centenary of the battle this year.

### **Lt Alfred Tripe**

Lt Alfred Tripe arrived in France on July 1, 1917 to join E Battalion of the tank corps having previously been in the Royal Garrison Artillery. After familiarisation training he was put in charge of 'Eclipse II', a name no doubt chosen by his predecessor, a Lt Maitland who's previous tank 'Eclipse' had been ditched in July. It is said that Tripe had not yet had time to get to know his crew which comprised Corporal Murray, L/Corporal Lewis, Privates Jacques, Innes, Johnson, Hilling and Dove before the battle was joined.

On the morning of the attack on November 20, E Battalion comprised 42 tanks, but three days later this number had dropped to just 11 when they were ordered to assault 'Round

Trench' on the plain west of Moeuvres. At 11:45 am 'Eclipse II' was hit by a shell which passed through the rear of the tank and exploded level with the front of the engine.

Lt Alfred Tripe took the full force of the explosion and was killed instantly along with Murray, Lewis and Jacques. Privates Innes, Johnson, and Hilling were all wounded and Johnson later died of his wounds. The only member of the crew who was unscathed was Dove the driver who was sitting next to Tripe.

He tended the wounded, sending two back to a first aid post and transferring the third who was badly injured to another tank for transportation. Dove returned to 'Eclipse II' to attempt to get it running again. He did this for a further two-and-a half-hours



*On the rear of 'Flirt II' is the large unditching beam which was chained to both tracks and which would help extract the tank if it became stuck (PHOTO BOVINGTON TANK MUSEUM)*



***'It now began to snow and the supply routes were clogged with vehicle movements'***

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Make **Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon and Finance Co, William Foster and Co, Armstrong-Whitworth, Coventry Ordnance Works, William Beardmore & Co, Mirlees Watson & Co.**

Model **Mk IV**  
 Nationality **British**  
 Year **1917 to 1918**  
 Production Run **1,220** (420 male, 595 female, 205 supply)  
 Engine **Daimler Knight**

Type **Sleeve valve**  
 Fuel **Petrol**  
 Displacement **16-litre**  
 Power **105bhp**  
 Transmission, Gears **Two forward, one reverse. Additional two speeds on secondary gears**  
 Armament Male **2 x 6 pdr guns and 4 x .303 Lewis machine guns**  
 Armament female **5 x .303 Lewis machine guns**  
 Ammunition **332 x 6 pdr, 6,272 x 303**  
 Crew/seats **Eight**

**Dimensions**(overall)  
 Length **26ft 3in**  
 Width **13ft 6in**  
 Weight **27.9 tons**

on his own before another tank approached under the command of 2nd Lieutenant Fairbanks.

Fairbanks ordered Dove to abandon the tank, but another shell then scored a direct hit on Fairbanks tank which wounded Dove. Dove would receive the Military Medal for his actions this day and survived the war. The remains of Lt Tripe were not found and he is

commemorated on the Cambrai memorial in Louveral and on the war memorial for GWR employees at Chester station. ◀

**'The Germans had been experimenting with mobile anti-aircraft guns since 1909'**



The German 7.7cm anti-aircraft gun on its four-wheel-drive Daimler or Erhardt chassis was used with devastating affect against the MK IV tanks



Photographed in the town of Armentieres and with all weapons having been removed, this captured Mk IV is to be put back into service against its previous owners



Just west of Moeuvres three damaged tanks have been left for the Germans. In the background can be seen 'Eclipse II' the tank of Lt Tripe



Photographed near Flesquieres two Mk IV tanks pass by German construction work for the Hindenburg line. It was near here that the Mk IV 'Deborah' was lost (PHOTO BOVINGTON TANK MUSEUM)  
 BELOW: In 1998 the Mk IV tank 'Deborah' was recovered from under two metres of soil at Flesquieres. It has now been moved to a purpose-built museum at Cambrai



On the fourth day of the battle this disabled Mk IV has been put to use as an observation post. The WC on the back stands for wire cutter (PHOTO BOVINGTON TANK MUSEUM)





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*Vietnam War: August 29, 1970. South Vietnamese Force troops, backed by a US Army tank [M48A3] advance on North Vietnamese Army positions hidden in scattered villages along the Street Without Joy, 25 miles south east of the DMZ [Demilitarised Zone]. The unit reported killing more than 400 North Vietnamese troops in four days of heavy fighting*





An innovation successfully deployed during World War Two was the Landing Vehicle Tracked, otherwise known as the amphibian tractor or amtrac. The full-tracked vehicle – or rather vehicles, as there were several different designs – were initially acquired by the US Marine Corps for amphibious landings. During the war, the marines used amtracs extensively as they assaulted Pacific islands held by the Japanese. Amtracs were also used by the US Army and America's allies in Europe when major rivers had to be crossed.

War broke out in Korea in June 1950, and the US Marines used their amtracs when they undertook a major amphibious landing at Inchon in September. The war was a gruelling affair, and by the time a peace of sorts was declared in 1953 the marines' amtracs were worn out.

Work on a replacement for World War Two amtracs had actually begun in 1947, when the Marine Corps invited manufacturers to offer designs for an amphibious fully-enclosed armoured personnel carrier.

Both Borg-Warner Corporation's Ingersoll products division and the Food Machinery Corporation (FMC) responded, and both produced acceptable designs. The Borg-Warner vehicle went into production in 1955 as the LVTP-5 (Landing Vehicle Tracked Personnel-5). Five different companies manufactured the LVTP-5, including FMC. However, the FMC-designed vehicle, designated LVTP-6, was not ready for production until 1956. By this time, a large fleet of LVTP-5s was in service, so the LVTP-6 did not proceed beyond the prototype stage.

### LVTP-5

The wartime amtracs were relatively small vehicles, with a carrying capacity of two-three tonnes depending upon variant. In contrast, the LVTP-5 was enormous. Dimensions were 29ft 8in long by 11ft 8in wide by 8ft 7in (9.04m x 3.56m x 2.62m). By way of comparison, length was nearly twice that of the M113 armoured personnel carrier that the US Army would adopt in 1960, and height was about two feet taller.

Carrying capacity of the LVTP-5 was 12,000 pounds (5.4 tonnes) when afloat, 18,000 pounds (8 tonnes) ashore. If carrying personnel, four rows of longitudinal folding seats were installed, accommodating up to 34 marines (though 25 was the optimum number). Without the seats, 45 standing marines could be accommodated for short journeys. Combat weight ashore was 87,780 pounds (39.8 tonnes).

Unlike the earlier amtracs, which had an open hold, the steel hull of the LVTP-5 was fully enclosed. It was fabricated from armour plate, though thickness never exceeded 0.35 inches (9mm).

This was enough to protect against bullets and shrapnel, but nothing more. There was a large bottom-hinged door at the bow of the vehicle – this is where the armour was thickest. Having the door at the bow was more convenient in a landing than the wartime arrangement of door at the stern. Opening and closing of the door was by way of a hydraulic system under the control of the driver.

The door gave access to and from the hold of the LVTP-5 for personnel and light vehicles when it was ashore. For access when afloat, there were two small hatches and two large doors in the roof. Each large door was in two halves, hinged fore and aft down the centre line. Thus each door could

be opened partially, or fully. Marines boarding an LVTP-5 from above climbed down into the hold by way of two removable ladders which were stowed on the outside faces of the doors when not in use. If the marines had to get out in a hurry, there was an escape hatch each side in the hull wall; these hatches were submerged when afloat, however, so could only be used ashore.

The driver sat in a bay off the hold at the front left of the vehicle. Above his position was a hatch, so he could drive with his head out of the vehicle if required. Afloat, he sat under the closed hatch to prevent swamping. The hatch also allowed access/escape from the vehicle. The crew chief sat in a bay off the hold at the right front of the vehicle; his position also had an access hatch. Between the two positions, located on the roof of the hull, was a turret fitted with a .30 calibre M1919A1 Browning machine gun. This was manned by the third member of the crew. There was no turret basket for him – if there had been, it would have fouled access to the hold via the bow door. Instead, the machine gunner stood on a step, which could be removed when the bow door was in use. The turret was traversed by hand; it had no associated hatch.

The main door being at the bow of the vehicle, the engine was necessarily at the stern. And given the large combat weight of the LVTP-5, the engine was large also. It was a Continental LV-1790-1 V12 water-cooled petrol engine, developing 810bhp. Transmission was an Allison CD 850-4 cross-drive that served also as a steering unit. The driver operated the cross-drive one-handed via a 'wobble stick'. The service brake and the accelerator pedals were on the floor; there was also a hand throttle for use afloat. The V12 engine had a great appetite for fuel; at cruising speed ashore, fuel consumption was 2.4 US gallons per mile (2 gallons/9 litres per mile). The 12 fuel cells in the bottom of the hull had a total capacity of 456 US gallons of 80 octane petrol (380 gallons, 1,726 litres). Speed afloat was just short of 7mph; ashore 30mph. Endurance afloat was nine hours; ashore 190 miles.

Access to the engine / transmission for routine maintenance was via two hatches in the roof of the hull at the very rear of the vehicle and a hatch in the engine firewall at the rear of the hold.

The wartime amtracs had tracks that wrapped right round the hull in the manner of a World War One British tank. This meant that there was a run of track up the front of the vehicles, allowing them to climb out of the water and up steep dunes or river banks as the case might be; the arrangement also kept the track return runs out of the water. Such an arrangement was not practicable on the LVTP-5 given its size.

Another difference was that earlier amtracs had the track grousers – the 'teeth' attached to the tracks that propelled the vehicles when afloat – on the outer face of each track link. In that position the grousers worked well in water, but were vulnerable to damage on hard surfaces ashore. The grousers on the tracks of the LVTP-5 were on the inner face of each track link where they still worked well enough afloat but were protected when working on hard surfaces ashore. The vehicle ran on 36 wheels arranged in pairs. One wheel of each pair had a solid rubber tyre, and took the load of the vehicle in normal conditions; the other wheel had a steel tyre, and took heavy and shock loads. The grousers on the tracks ran between each set of paired wheels, locating the tracks firmly. Each set of paired wheels was hung on the end of

**'The wartime amtracs were relatively small vehicles, with a carrying capacity of two-three tonnes'**

*LVTP-5A1s of 3rd AmTrac splash through the surf en route to a sweep and clear operation south of Da Nang. Note that the Marines' M14 rifles have been replaced by new M16s (R.J. DELVECCHIO / 26385802)*

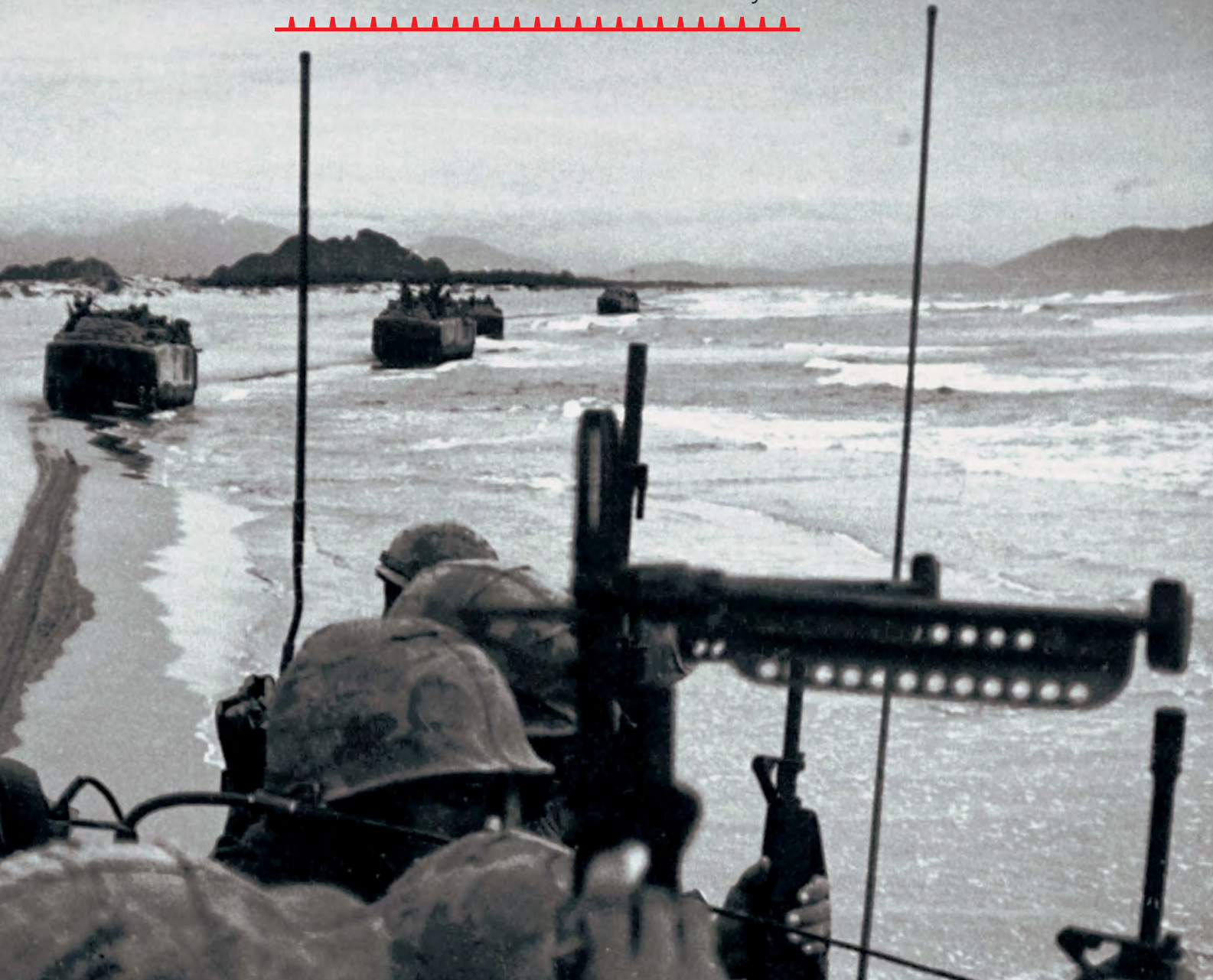


# Waterborne Invasion

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Amphibious tractors were used extensively in the Vietnam War, John Teasdale traces their history

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**Operation Elliot was a search and clear operation conducted by elements of 1st and 7th Marines over the period July 5-9, 1967. Seen here is one of the two of 3rd AmTrac's LVTE-1s deployed in support of 1/7 Marines** (CORPORAL CURRY / 26404109)



**An LVTR-1 of Company B, 3rd AmTrac, changes the engine/transmission assembly of an LVTP-5A1** (CASSELLE / 26404125)



**Company E, 2/3 Marines conducted a search and clear operation in Elephant Valley, west of Da Nang air base from August 19, 1965. Transport. Fire support was provided by 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st AmTrac** (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS G DURBIN / 26404105)



**Company A, 1st AmTrac, landed in Vietnam on May 7, 1965. During the landing, as was routine, shore cranes 2N were used to unload wheeled vehicles and stores from landing craft. Here one is seen being recovered from the surf by an LVTP-5A1** (FRALEY / 26403921)

a rubber-based torsilastic suspension arm. The suspension was not intended for sustained operations ashore, and would give trouble when so used. Steering afloat was effected by the tracks; the rudders at the stern fitted to the prototypes were not fitted to production versions.

Depending upon its predominant role – personnel carrier or cargo carrier – the LVTP-5 was fitted with various radios. These were installed in open racks located the length of the walls of the hold. The racks were also used to store kit as required.

### **LVTP-5A1**

A flaw in the original design of the LVTP-5 was that the engine air intakes and the exhaust were flush with the roof of the hull. Should a wave wash over the roof when the vehicle was afloat, the engine was liable to be swamped. This flaw was corrected by diverting the air intakes and the exhaust into a tower raised above the roof. This modification, plus a revised arrangement of the final drive, resulted in the vehicles to which they were fitted being designated LVTP-5A1. Most if not all of the LVTP-5s were modified to the new standard. A total of 1123 LVTP-5 (and variants thereof) were built.

### **Variants**

The basic LVTP-5 could be modified for various roles. Fitted with stretchers it was used as a mobile aid post. Fitted with desks, chairs, maps boards, additional radios etc, the vehicle was used as a command post or a fire support coordination centre. Vehicles were built new to this specification, and were given a revised designation: LVTP-5 CMD. They were recognisable from the outside by the large number of radio aerials. In addition to the three-man crew, they could accommodate up to 12 men.

LVTH-6 was built from new with a 105mm howitzer in a turret mounted on the hull roof. Stowage was provided for 151 rounds, though the weight of the vehicle meant that only 100 could be carried when afloat. The vehicle was manned by a crew of seven men. A total of 210 LVTH-6 were built.

LVTR-1 was built new as a recovery and maintenance vehicle, fitted with a folding boom, winch (to allow the boom to be used as a crane), welder, generator, air compressor and other tools. A total of 65 LVTR-1 were built.

LVTE-1 was built new as an engineers' vehicle, fitted with a large toothed blade at the front. The blade, lowered and raised using the hydraulic system that opened the door of the LVTP-5, was used for obstacle and minefield clearance. It was fitted behind with foam-filled buoyancy tanks to maintain trim when afloat. Also for minefield clearance, the LVTE-1 was fitted with a line charge projector. The line charge was essentially an explosive cable 350 feet long (107m). Rocket-propelled ahead of the vehicle across a suspected minefield, when detonated it set off nearby mines. Two line charges were carried by the vehicle, which could also accommodate seven engineers. Late production LVTE-1 used the air-cooled Continental AVI-1790 V12 petrol engine as used by the contemporary M48 tank. These vehicles lacked the radiator grilles each side of the hull as installed in the LVTP-5. The hull of the LVTE-1 differed also in having an extra door in the side near the front of the vehicle to replace the original escape hatch which was blocked inside by the storage racks for the line charges. A total of 41 LVTE-1 were built.

All the variants were fitted with the raised air intake/exhaust tower and the improved transmission. Prototypes of an anti-aircraft vehicle were built, but this variant was not mass produced.

### **Vietnam**

Most LVTP-5s and its variants were issued to the US Marine Corps, though a small number were issued to the US Army. The marines deployed LVTP-5s when the United States was asked to protect the government of Lebanon in 1958, though the situation there resolved itself peacefully. The first time that marines used the LVTP-5 in combat was in Vietnam in 1965.

In the aftermath of World War Two, the American government had no sympathy for European powers who were trying to re-conquer colonial possessions lost during the conflict. However, French efforts to re-conquer Indochina came to be seen by the Americans as part of their efforts to resist the spread of communism. When the French were defeated by the communist North Vietnamese, who then seemed likely to conquer the nominally democratic South Vietnam, the American government sent troops to act as advisors to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Imprudently, the North Vietnamese attacked and killed American advisors. This made it more likely than less that the Americans would send combat troops to South Vietnam. And indeed, on December 9, 1964, the marines forming Battalion Landing Team 3/3 landed on the beach at Da Nang. BLT 3/3 did not stay long, and did not engage in combat operations, but the marines would be back in strength from March 1965.

A Battalion Landing Team (BLT) had at its core a marine infantry battalion. Such a battalion was very lightly equipped. To make a BLT an all-arms force, the infantry were supported by a platoon each of M48 tanks, Ontos anti-tank vehicles and 105mm guns detached from specialised marine battalions. Other battalions provided such as engineer, maintenance and medical support. Logistic support was provided by a platoon each of trucks and amtracs detached from Motor Transport and Amphibian Tractor battalions.

For a specific example of the latter, BLT 1/9 as it was constituted in December 1964 had at its core 1st Battalion 9th Marine Regiment. 1/9 Marines was supported by the 11 amtracs of 4th Platoon, Company B, 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion. This number of amtracs was too few to lift the whole infantry battalion at once; only the assault wave would be transported by amtracs during a landing. BLT 1/9's Landing Plan Alpha for an entirely seaborne assault shows the planned allocation of amtracs:

No LVTE-1s were available to clear the beach at the start of the landing, so wave one landing at H-Hour would comprise five LVTP-5s transporting the Assault Platoons of Company B, 1/9 Marines (144 men).

Wave two landing at H+5 would comprise five LVTP-5s transporting the remainder of Company B (another 156 men, plus two M274 Mechanical Mules mounting 106mm recoilless rifles).

Waves three-six would comprise landing craft transporting Companies A and D, plus a shore party, a recon party, a survey troop and artillery.

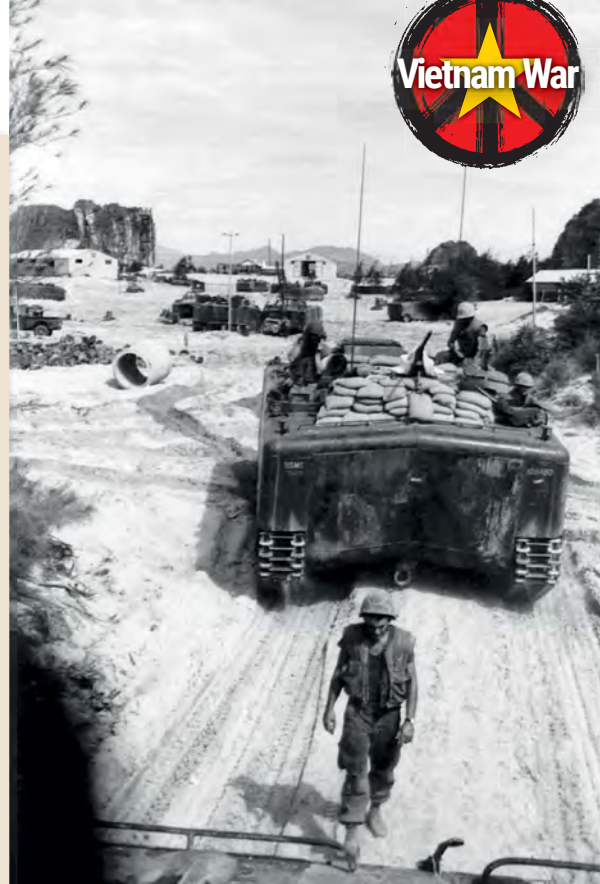
The remainder of BLT 1/9 would be landed as circumstances dictated, as would the commanding officer of 1/9 Marines – he and his staff would be transported in an LVTP-5 CMD.



## SPECIFICATIONS

Make **Borg Warner**  
 Model **LVTP-5** (Landing Vehicle, Tracked, Personnel)  
 Nationality **USA**  
 Year **1956**  
 Production Run **1956-57**  
 Engine **Continental**  
 Type **AV-1790-1 V-12**  
 Fuel **Petrol**  
 Power **704bhp**  
 Torque **n/a**  
 Transmission **Allison**  
 Type **CD-850-4**  
 Gears **Crossdrive automatic**  
 Suspension **Torsilastic**  
 Wheels **Full tracks**  
 Crew/seats **Three+34 passengers**  
 Weight **37.4 tons**

**Dimensions** (overall)  
 Length **9.04m** (29.5ft)  
 Width **3.57m** (11.5ft)  
 Height **2.92m** (10ft)



**ABOVE LEFT: An LVTH-6A1 of 3rd Platoon, 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Company crosses a river on December 23, 1966. The vehicle is acting in support of 1/11 Marines**

(LANCE CORPORAL CD THOMAS / 26403923)

**ABOVE RIGHT: The driver of an amtrac had poor visibility of objects immediately in front of his vehicle. So in combat bases and other places where there were men moving on foot close to vehicles, a marine walked ahead as a guide as seen here. This is one of 3rd AmTrac's LVTP-5A1s** (26403903)

**TOP LEFT: 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st AmTrac on the Cua Viet River 1968. Note the machine gun position fabricated from pierced steel planking. The LVTP-5A1 is conveying men of 1/3 Marines to a jumping off point on the river bank from where they will attack People's Army of Vietnam strongpoints** (LANCE CORPORAL PL SCHACKMANN / 26403909)

Although BLT 1/9 was ordered to be ready to land several times, it would not actually do so until June 1965. When it did land, the amtracs were entirely unsupported by the maintenance and supply components of 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (hereinafter 1st AmTrac).

## Marine Divisions

In due course, 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions would be landed for combat operations in Vietnam. As a general rule, 3rd AmTrac supported 1st Marine Division and 1st AmTrac supported 3rd Marine Division. Part of 5th AmTrac also served in Vietnam during the war. For example, 1st Platoon, Company B, 5th AmTrac was attached to 3rd AmTrac on 23 February 1968; in order to be more self-sufficient, the platoon brought with it an LVTR-1 as well as the usual platoon allocation of one LVTP-5 CMD and ten LVTP-5s.

As described above, the BLTs when they undertook amphibious landings were supported by a platoon of amtracs. The same principle pertained when the marine infantry battalions were serving ashore: as far as resources allowed, a marine battalion was supported by a platoon from one of the AmTrac Battalions. A brief summary of the war experiences of 1st AmTrac is of interest.

## 1st AmTrac

Various platoons landed with the BLTs that they supported from March 1965. Landing of the entire battalion was completed on July 21, 1965. The Headquarters & Service Company (H&S Company) and Company B set up camp in the large base adjacent to the airfield at Da Nang. Company A and Company A, 3rd AmTrac (under the administrative control of 1st AmTrac) set up camp down the coast at the large base adjacent to the airfield at Chu Lai. H&S Company included a Maintenance

Platoon with a LVTR-1 wrecker and various wheeled vehicles; the company establishment also included such as M49 6x6 fuel tankers. Although both companies A and B each had their own allocation of an LVTR-1 wrecker, H&S Company based in Da Nang had obvious difficulties supporting the companies based in Chu Lai with maintenance, fuel and provisions.

When the marine infantry regiments began to conduct operations in the field, they drew upon the experiences of the ARVN infantry in operating M113 armoured personnel carriers. The ARVN had quickly learned to use their M113s not only as transport but also as vehicles from which battles were fought. The M113s were much faster



**On November 8-14, 1966, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st AmTrac provided 11 amtracs in support of Company C, 1/1 Marines as it undertook Operation Arcadia.** (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS C THOMAS / 26404115)

than Viet Cong guerrillas on foot, so after their introduction the VC were no longer able to mount an ambush and then withdraw in advance of any ARVN counter-attacks. The marines did not operate the M113, however, so they used their LVTP-5s instead. However, the LVTP-5 was not intended to grind across country for days on end, and such use soon took its toll on the suspension. The huge bulk of the LVTP-5 also made it a conspicuous target.

Marines transported by an LVTP-5 were very aware of the large volume of highly flammable petrol in the vehicle's fuel cells. Before departing on an operation, therefore, the hold floor was covered in a layer of sandbags. If petrol was set alight by the explosion of a mine – and mines were to be a constant hazard all the time that the marines were in Vietnam – the sandbags would damp down the flames for long enough for the men on board to jump off. Not that any marines travelled in the hold when ashore; they rode on the roof, from where they could quickly jump off if necessary. This reluctance to travel inside the vehicle applied also to the third member of the crew – the machine gunner, supposedly manning the turret. Instead of so doing, he manned a machine gun position up on the roof constructed from such as steel planks or sandbags.

Long-range operation of LVTP-5s proving too wearing on the vehicles, they were used instead as transport to a jumping off point from which the infantry would walk to a zone of operations. Thereafter the amtracs would be used to re-supply the infantry. The usual principle was that a battalion of infantry would be supported by a platoon of 11 LVTP-5s (one of which was the command version). However, for a large operation, more amtracs would be provided.

1st AmTrac had its own allocation of infantrymen. These men – amgrunts – as well as men



**Vietnamese civilian refugees are re-located in March 1967 by LVTP-5A1s of 1st AmTrac. (SERGEANT AL COOPER / 26389506)**

## **'All marine battalions serving in Vietnam were required to support their local Vietnamese populations'**



**Several companies from 1st Marine Regiment and 51st ARVN Regiment undertook Operation Teton in Quang Nam Province over the period October 11-20, 1966. Fire support was provided by: tanks and Ontos of 1st Tank Battalion; 105mm howitzers of Battery C, 1/11 Marines; LVTH-6s of 1st AmTrac. The latter also provided logistical support with LVTP-5A1s. Additional logistical support was provided by Otters of H&S Company, 3rd Motor Transport Battalion. Here we see Vietnamese civilian refugees being brought to a place of safety on an LVTP-5A1 (LANCE CORPORAL WILLIAMS / 26389471)**

from infantry battalions were conveyed by LVTP-5s on patrols of the environs of the base, both ashore and on the local rivers. Riparian patrols were subject to sniping from the shore, and also subject to the hazards of being afloat. On November 22, 1965 the weather was bad – gusty winds raised a heavy swell on the fast-flowing on Cau De Song River. During a patrol LVTP-5s B-31 and B-36 both lost engine power. As they were steadily washed out to sea, two more amtracs and helicopters attempted to rescue those on board. Both B-31 and B-36 were swamped and sank in due course; seven marines drowned.

LVTP-5 A-28 sank in the Song Vinh Dien River during a re-supply mission on March 6, 1967 after it was hit by rocket-propelled grenades and small

arms fire. Two marines were killed and two wounded. Investigations made subsequently concluded that the sinking was due to an escape hatch popping open after being hit. A-27 was also hit during the same ambush, but made it ashore.

1st AmTrac's eight LVTE-1s – the engineer amtracs – were issued to the Mine Clearance Platoon of H&S Company. They were allocated for operations as required, clearing suspected minefields either by ploughing or by firing line charges, levelling bunkers and trenches etc.

All marine battalions serving in Vietnam were required to support their local Vietnamese populations. 1st AmTrac did this principally by fitting out an LVTP-5 as a mobile dispensary and sending it out to local communities – including those floating on the main rivers in sampan villages.

As well as dealing with mechanical breakdowns, 1st AmTrac's wreckers – the LVTR-1s – were frequently sent out to deal with mined vehicles, both the battalion's own and those belonging to other units. Most mines did nothing worse than break a track and damage the suspension. Even on occasions when a fuel cell split open, there was not necessarily a fire. Both repairs and routine maintenance were hindered by a lack of parts – track, connecting pins and tools in particular were in short supply leading to large numbers of vehicles deadlined.



On November 14, 1965, 1st AmTrac was issued with six LVTH-6 – this, it will be recalled, was the amtrac with a turret-mounted 105mm howitzer. These amtracs formed 1st (Provisional) Armored Amphibian Tractor Platoon, and after an intensive training cycle were allocated as required operationally. The first rounds in anger – air bursts over Hill 55 – were fired on December 9, 1965. On November 25, 1966, the Armored Amphibian Tractor Platoon was transferred to 1st Armored Amphibian Tractor Company, and



**In August 1965, intelligence indicated that the 1st Viet Cong Regiment was on the Batangan Peninsula, south-east of Chu Lai. Operation Piranha was undertaken over the period September 7-10 in an attempt to destroy it (26403973)**



**Members of Company C, 2/5 Marines disembark from an LVTP-5A1 of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 3rd AmTrac after a river crossing during Operation New Castle (LANCE CORPORAL JL MCCLORY / 26404063)**



**South Vietnamese soldiers unload ammunition from an LVTP-5A1 of Company B, 1st AmTrac on to the bank of the Cua Viet River in October 1967. Note the substantial sandbagged machine gun position at the front of the amtrac (CORPORAL PORTER / 26404075)**





### **Cua Viet Port Facility**

On Apr 23, 1967, 1st AmTrac handed over its camp at Da Nang to 3rd AmTrac. The next day, 1st AmTrac's H&S Company departed for the journey to Cua Viet Port Facility; this was located on the Cua Viet River not far from Dong Ha, to which place Company B had recently been re-deployed. On arrival at Cua Viet, the battalion commander was designated installation coordinator; his duties included maintaining and defending the perimeter, saturation and aggressive patrolling, requesting and coordinating artillery fire, conducting frequent clearing operations, conducting operations outside the battalion area of responsibility, constituting and maintaining a provisional company facility reaction force to block and counter attack enemy penetrations of the perimeter. He would have a lot on his hands... Company A was therefore re-deployed to Cua Viet at the end of April, and assigned on a permanent basis patrols lasting up to five days through the areas where rocket attacks were frequently launched against Dong Ha and Cua Viet.

Cua Viet Port Facility came under sustained attack by rockets, mortars and direct assault by Viet Cong guerrillas. Amtracs supporting marine infantrymen out in the field came under sustained attack too. To take a few examples from many: while in support of 1/4 Marines, amtracs B-41 and B-44 were destroyed by satchel charges and rocket-propelled grenades; on June 12, 1967 when Cua Viet Port Facility was targeted by some 225 rounds of 140mm rocket and 122mm artillery fire, the bulk fuel facility was damaged as were two amtracs; on 15 June 1967, LVTE-1 H-25 suffered extensive mine damage. Casualties, including fatalities, amongst the men of the battalion became to climb inexorably. Amtracs sustained mine damage frequently. When the People's Army of Vietnam launched the Tet Offensive on January 30, 1968, the fighting increased to a new intensity – casualties and losses of amtracs increased too.

In due course, the Tet Offensive was blunted and the fighting died down somewhat.

However, the Cua Viet Port Facility was still subject to rocket and artillery attack; 400,000 gallons of fuel were lost in May 1968 when a rocket exploded in the bulk fuel facility and started a major fire. During June, US Army cavalry and armoured cavalry companies were placed under the operational control of 1st AmTrac in order to try and clear the surrounding

of enemy troops. By August, things had quietened down considerably, and the number of incoming rockets and artillery rounds was the lowest for six months. Amtracs and men continued to be lost, however, especially to mines.

Following the Tet Offensive, the American government determined that the war would henceforth be fought in the main by the ARVN. On May 1, 1969, 1st AmTrac stood down and ceased to undertake combat operations (though some local patrols still operated).

All the battalion's amtracs were rehabilitated for future deployment; all were converted to the LVTE-1's suspension system which was evidently more robust than standard to cope with the weight of the plough. However, lack of spare parts, especially auxiliary generators, prevented some vehicles from being available for service. The battalion shipped out of Vietnam in June and July 1969. The war was not quite over for the battalion though. For example, the Amphibian Platoon, H&S Company and 3rd Platoon, Company A landed South Vietnamese marines near Cua Viet on May 24, 1972.

### **LVTP-7**

The LVTP-5 and its variants served the marines well in Vietnam, despite their disadvantages. These included the huge size of the vehicles, petrol-fuelled engines and a lack of endurance over extended distances ashore. These disadvantages were rectified in its successor, the LVTP-7, introduced in 1971 – though the LVTP-7 is by no means small. The LVTP-5s cast by the US Marines went on to serve for many more years with Chilean, Taiwanese and Philippine Marines. ◀



**Marines of Company H, 2/3 Marines leave a 1st AmTrac LVTP-5A1 on August 13, 1965; the Ca De River has just been crossed and the sweep and clear mission continues (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS G DURBIN / 26404069)**

**On May 7, 1968, Private First Class RF Yatteau acts as runner between an LVTP-5A1 CMD of Company B, 1st AmTrac and the 2/4 Marines command bunker. At this time, 2/4 was tasked with keeping the Cua Viet River open to US Navy logistic traffic (STAFF SERGEANT JA REID / 26386409)**

1st AmTrac ceased to have any operational control over it.

In March 1966, 3rd AmTrac landed in Vietnam and set up camp in the base at Chu Lai, taking operational control of its Company A from 1st AmTrac. Company A, 1st AmTrac (apart from three platoons which were attached to 3rd AmTrac) then left Chu Lai to join H&S Company and Company B at Da Nang. This concentrated the Battalion at Da Nang – apart from the three platoons still at Chu Lai and one at sea with a Special Landing Force.



**LVTH-6A1s of 1st Platoon, 1st Armored Amphibian Company provided fire support from March 29-April 20, 1969 during Operation Oklahoma Hills. (SERGEANT AV HUFFMAN / 26404121)**



**This is a view of the rear of an LVTP-5A1 of H&S Company, 3rd AmTrac. It is supporting 2/1 Marines on a patrol south of Da Nang on September 27, 1969 (26403965)**



**Over several days from August 12, 1965, Company H and Company F of 2/3 Marines conducted a search and clear operation along the Ca De River north-west of Da Nang Air Base (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS G DURBIN / 26404079)**

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# FULL METAL JACKET

Dan Child restored this Vietnam War-era 1966 Ford M151A1



The 1966 M151A1s were made by the Ford Motor Company



Five gauges in the dash is inherited from the Jeeps that preceded the M151

## 'The swing-axle rear suspension design was prone to radical camber changes'



All versions of the M151 have independent front and rear suspension



M151A1 had wing-mounted indicators



Dan's MUTT tows a M416 trailer

The Truck, Utility, 1/4-Ton, 4x4, M151 was the successor to the M38 and M38A1 Jeep light utility vehicles that saw service in the Korean War. Still commonly referred to as a 'Jeep' or 'quarter-ton', it was produced from 1959 through 1982 by various manufacturers and was used during the Vietnam War. It would subsequently be replaced by the larger AM General HMMWV (Humvee) in most military utility roles. With a number of M151A2 units still in US military service in 1999, the M151 series achieved a longer run of service than that of the World War Two MB/GPW, M38 and M38A1 series of Jeeps combined.

All guises of the M151 (1960-63), M151A1 (1964-1969) and M151A2 (1970-1982) were designed as a general purpose personnel or cargo carrier. Including the driver it was capable of carrying four men plus their equipment.

The 'at a glance' way to tell the successive versions apart is that the M151 had plain front wings, the M151A1 had indicators fitted to them and the M151A2 had much larger combined indicators and blackout lamps fitted to the wings. Other variants were the M151A1C and M825 which carried a 106mm recoilless rifle on an M79 rifle mount. The M718 and M7181A1 were frontline ambulances designed to carry sitting and stretcher-borne casualties and had longer and 5.3in higher tilts as well as a load area 18in longer than an M151A1 to

accommodate the casualties. All these specialised variants had side-mounted spare wheels.

The M151 range was considered an improvement over the previous Jeep 4x4s because its design featured a monocoque and independent suspension with coil springs. These features were intended to increase room within the vehicle, enhance ground clearance while lowering the centre of gravity and offer a more comfortable ride off-road.

The independent front and rear suspension is generally acknowledged to have contributed to numerous rollover accidents in the hands of inexperienced drivers. The swing-axle rear suspension design was prone to radical camber changes when subjected to sudden shifts in lateral load. This resulted in severe oversteer, which often led to the vehicle rolling over.

Sudden steering input, often in high-speed emergency avoidance manoeuvres, was an occasion when rollovers occurred, as was braking midway through a turn. This problem would lead, due to liability concerns, to the US Department of Defense declaring all M151 series vehicles 'unsafe for public highway use'. This limited their sale to the public, so despite more than 100,000 being made they are relatively rare in the military vehicle preservation scene. This was despite the later M151A2 models having a redesigned rear suspension and many vehicles being retrofitted with a rollover protection system (ROPS) in the form of a roll bar. Many M151s were disposed of at surplus auctions as scrap with the body tubs cut into four pieces to ensure that they were beyond economic repair.

This makes the story behind Daniel Child's 1966 model, made the year the battles of A Shau and Long Tan were fought in Vietnam



Underseat fuel tank



Bulkhead mounted electrical socket

## SPECIFICATIONS

Make **Ford**  
 Model **Truck Utility, 1/4 Ton, 4x4, M151A1**  
 Nationality **US**  
 Year **1966**  
 Production Run **1959-82**  
 Engine **In-line four-cylinder**  
 Type **Liquid-cooled, OHV**  
 Fuel **Petrol**  
 Displacement **2,319cc** (141.5 cid)  
 Power **71bhp @ 8000rpm**  
 Torque **128lbs/ft @ 1800rpm**  
 Transmission **Ordnance**  
 Type **Manual**  
 Gears **Four-speed**  
 Transfer Box **Two-speed**  
 Suspension **Independent**  
 Coil Spring  
 Brakes **Hydraulic Drum**  
 Wheels **Steel**  
 Tyres **7.00x16 NDT**  
 Crew/seats **60**  
 Weight **1100kg** (2340lbs)

**Dimensions**(overall)  
 Length **3380mm** (132in)  
 Width **1630mm** (63in)  
 Wheelbase **2160mm** (85in)

**Modifications**  
*The M151A1 vehicle shown has been fitted with a Perkins diesel engine in place of the four-cylinder petrol unit*

**Additional Notes**  
*The M151, M151A1 and M151A2 and variants thereof were successively made by Ford, Kaiser and AM General*



and seen here, even more interesting because it was reportedly exported to the UK in the late 1960s when people were exploring commercial possibilities.

What's more it was fitted with a Perkins diesel engine by Geddes of Leeds soon after its arrival for similar reasons. Dan paid £1,000 for it at the War and Peace Show in 2007 and set about restoring it at home in Hastings. Dan reports that his M151A1 was badly rusted but that he was able to get some steel repair panels for the monocoque that had been made on Danish

presses because the Danish Army had been one of numerous overseas users of the MUTT.

Apart from a couple of tweaks to make the diesel engine fit and non-standard wipers because there's no vacuum attachment on the diesel manifold for the original vacuum-operated type, the vehicle is pretty much the spec of those used in Vietnam, the first conflict in which the M151 MUTT was used. This of course, suits Dan who is a member of Modern Forces one of the Vietnam War Re-enactment groups that were part of the

large Vietnam living history area at War and Peace in 2017.

Modern Forces Living History Group ([www.modernforces.com](http://www.modernforces.com)) is multi-period living history group covering all post 1945 conflicts. Dan has studied the origins and consequences of Vietnam Conflict for 25 years and a continued interest in the technical details led him to start collecting the equipment and this in turn led to the living history group.

Firstly portraying a member of the 2/7 Air Cavalry and then their Long Range

**'Many M151s were disposed of at surplus auctions as scrap with the body tubs cut into four pieces'**



Back seat was designed to accommodate two people



Trailer electrics socket, reflector and military spec era light are all original spec



Dash plates show that the M151A1 was manufactured by Ford

Reconnaissance Company with its H Co designation. He has forged links with H Co LRRPS and visits veterans regularly to hear and appreciate their experiences. This in turn focused his interest in specialised units, leading to a portrayal of US Special Forces in Vietnam from which most of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG), a highly classified, multi-service United States special operations unit which conducted covert unconventional warfare operations,

## **‘Despite more than 100,000 being made they are relatively rare in the military vehicle preservation scene’**

had volunteered from. He continues to study the fascinating story of this secretive unit that operated in the Vietnam conflict. Much of the group’s equipment is moved in Dan’s period correct M416 trailer which was parked

behind the Modern Forces’ tentage. With the rain at War and Peace this year and a row of tents, vehicles and trailers it didn’t stretch the imagination much to see a muddy combat base near Quảng Tri. ◀



Dan Child and his M151A1



Original spec Jerry ‘gas’ can adorns the rear



MUTT has four-speed transmission and two-speed transfer box

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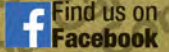
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# On Campaign with *The Otter*

The Otter's ability to splash through rice paddies and travel over rough ground made it ideal for service in Vietnam







**Operation Saline was a search and destroy mission undertaken by units of the 3rd Marine Division in Quang Tri Province in the early months of 1968. This Otter has armour plate – with a small opening for the driver to see through – over the windscreen and round the machine gun ring mount. Note how the marines sitting on the roof of the Otter are dangling their legs over the side of the vehicle. This practice would be banned when marines were being transported by M113 armoured personnel carrier, as a mine explosion would take off their legs** (LANCE CORPORAL TEACHER / 26404139)



**This Otter is re-supplying marines participating in Operation Meade River, conducted south-west of Da Nang in December 1968. Note that this vehicle is not fitted with a ring mount for a machine gun. Re-supply was also undertaken by marine helicopters** (STAFF SERGEANT JA REID / 26404149)

A vital role of the US Marine Corps was, and so remains today, amphibious landings. In the late 1940s, as part of a programme to replace wartime equipment, a new amphibious cargo carrier was designed and tested. In 1952, this was taken into service as the Carrier, Full-Track, Amphibious, M76. The vehicle was also known as the Otter.

Built by the Pontiac Motor Division of General Motors, the Otter was of modest size; crew comprised three men, and carrying capacity was seven men or 3,000lb (1,360 kg) of cargo. The aluminium hull, with a boat-shaped nose, was fairly tall; loaded, height was 103.3in (2.62m). Ground clearance (with 3,000lb load) was 16.75in. Approach angle was 40.25° departure angle was 45.5°. Access to the crew compartment when the vehicle was on solid ground was via side doors; these were partly below water level when the vehicle was afloat, so were strongly made and waterproof. Access to the cargo compartment was via two doors at the rear; these were also, nominally at least, waterproof. However, in service, it was found that when afloat water did get in; water would often leak in faster than the bilge pumps could pump it out, so time afloat had to be limited. Access to the vehicle when afloat was via two round hatches, one above the driver's position and one above the co-driver's, and via a pair of large doors above the cargo compartment.

A prime requirement of an amphibious vehicle is the ability to actually get out of the water, up a sandy beach or a muddy riverbank. The Otter excelled here, being fitted with wide (30in, 76.2cm) steel and rubber tracks. The drive sprocket was at the front, and an idler at the rear could be adjusted to tension the track. The Otter rode on eight dual wheels – four each side. These were fitted with pneumatic tyres (fitted with specially-strong inner tubes). Each dual wheel was

suspended on the end of a torsion bar.

The combination of rubber tracks, pneumatic tyres and torsion bar suspension made for a comfortable ride. A spare wheel and tyre was mounted on the left-hand side of the hull. Cross-country performance was excellent, even in soft muddy conditions; the wide tracks reduced ground pressure to 2.08psi (0.146 kg per sq cm). (The ground pressure exerted by an average male as he walks is about 16psi (0.562 kg per sq cm).) The tracks were used to steer when afloat, though the main means of propulsion was a three-bladed propeller.

## **'For protection, the Otters were fitted with two machine guns, and carried a reinforced marine fire team'**

The Otter was driven by a Continental Model A01-268-3A petrol engine developing 127bhp at 3,200 rpm; maximum torque was 225lbs/ft at 2,600 rpm. The engine was air-cooled, so was arranged as a flat-four; that is, the engine had a central crankshaft, and there were two cylinders on each side right and left. This provided a large surface area for cooling purposes. To maximise the flow of cooling air past the cylinders, the engine was installed vertically. An advantage of air-cooling was that there was no need for a leak-prone water cooling system. A disadvantage was that there were large engine power losses in driving the cooling fan. As

the Otter was amphibious, there could be no natural ventilation of the engine bay; a large cooling fan was therefore required, and in service the Otter was a hot and noisy place vehicle in which to travel. The exhaust pipe exited the vehicle through the roof, between the hatches of the driver and co-driver.

Fuel was supplied by twin tanks mounted each side on the outer hull. Early-build Otters had the fuel tanks located just behind the cab doors. However, later builds had the tanks at the rear in order to improve stability both ashore and afloat. Being mounted high up, the tanks were vulnerable to enemy fire. They were therefore fitted with a self-sealing rubber lining in order to minimise the risk of fire if punctured by a projectile.

The engine drove the tracks (and the propeller, when required) via a General Motors Model CD-150-3 cross-drive torque converter transmission, which combined the functions of steering and automatic gearbox. This proved to be reliable in the Otter, though the transmission fluid required changing on a regular basis as it tended to overheat.

There was a 5,000lb winch in the rear compartment, and a towing pintle at the rear of the vehicle. The maximum recommended towed load (on wheels) was 6,000lb (2,722kg).

### **Vietnam**

The Otter's ability to swim rivers, to splash unhindered through rice paddies and to surmount with ease rough ground made it ideal for service in Vietnam. Well, it would have been ideal, had there been nobody around to shoot at its unarmoured hull. But, as the only reason that the US Marine Corps went to Vietnam was that people were shooting, the Otter was sent there anyway where it would earn itself a very high reputation.

In the summer of 1965, seven marine

**OPPOSITE: This Otter is on duty at the extensive Khe San Combat Base in January 1968. It is one of six Otters at the camp at this time, together forming a detachment of the 3rd Motor Transport Battalion's Headquarters & Service Company. The H&S Company also has six Otters on detachment at Quang Tri, three at Dong Ha, six at Cam Lo and seven at Camp Carroll. The Otters are providing marginal terrain transportation for marine regiments stationed at the various bases. The weather during the month of January would prove to be fair, so the Otters would only be lightly committed. In the month, they would drive a total of 578 miles and transport 154 tons of cargo and 922 troops**

(STAFF SERGEANT REID / 26404129)

NCOs were trained as instructors/mechanics on the Otter at Marine Corps Depot of Supplies, Barstow, California. When the men had completed their training they, and an initial batch of 33 Otters, were shipped to Vietnam; they arrived at Da Nang in September and October 1965. Some of the Otters were issued to the 3rd Motor Transport Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, and the use they were put to can be read about in the battalion's monthly reports (officially described as the Command Chronology).

The battalion arrived in theatre in September and October 1965, along with the rest of 3rd Marine Division. Its companies were widely dispersed: HQ, Headquarters & Service Company and Company A were located at Da Nang; Company B was at Phu Bai; Company C was at Chu Lai (though it would soon return to Da Nang). The task allotted to 3rd MT Battalion was to supply water, rations, ammunition etc. to the various marine regiments that made up 3rd Marine Division. To perform that task, the Battalion operated a fleet of M35 and M36 two and half ton trucks.

In November 1965, the NCOs who had been trained at Barstow began to train members of the battalion on operation and first echelon maintenance of the Otter. Newly-issued Otters, and the men who would operate them, were allocated to the Headquarters & Service Company's Otter Platoon. Training continued on into the early months of 1966.

Typically, every other Otter was fitted with a standard ring mount and a .50 calibre M2 machine gun. The M2 was preferred for local defence over the 7.62 mm M60 as it fired a heavy bullet with immense power.

The bullet punched through thick vegetation, buildings and earthen fortifications in the way that the lighter 7.62 mm bullet could never do. Firing a large bullet resulted in a large recoil, of course. The M2 used this recoil energy to extract and discharge the spent cartridge case, then to draw upon the heavy belt of live rounds in order to feed the next one into the breach. The work done in cycling the gun in this way meant that little recoil energy was transmitted into the vehicle mounting the gun. So, despite firing a very powerful bullet, the M2 could be used without damaging the Otter upon which it was mounted. For the same reasons, the M2 was also the preferred machine gun for local defence of trucks and Jeeps.

The Otter as issued was unarmoured. In Vietnam some were fitted with armour over the windscreen and round the ring mount. All were lined internally with sandbags stacked up against the hull sides and carpeting the hull floor.

On March 21, 1966, two of 3rd MT Battalion's Otters conducting a re-supply mission were ambushed by Viet Cong guerrillas; this was the first time any of the battalion's Otters had come under fire. Three marines were wounded, one of whom subsequently died of his wounds. By June 1966, the Otter Platoon was deploying 10 Otters every day. The vehicles and their crews typically worked at least eight hours per day over rough and sandy terrain that was impassable to 3rd MT Battalion's wheeled vehicles.

## Da Nang

In August 1966, two Otters were destroyed when they ran over landmines, and one was



**The Otters were also used in 'hearts and minds' operations too. In April 1968, these marines of Hotel Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines are seen unloading food and medical goods for issue to Vietnamese villagers. Such a mission was known as a 'Medcap' (Medical Civil Action Program); they took place every couple of weeks (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS T BECHTEL / 26404145)**



**Otters were less likely to run over a landmine than a truck, as they travelled across open country more often than they used Vietnam's roads. However, during the course of the war, Otters did run over landmines, with catastrophic results for the vehicle and often fatal results for the crew. Here Major Rayne of 3rd Marine Division removes a mine from Highway 9 (CORPORAL WM PORTER / 26393568)**



**In 1968, when this photograph was taken, Camp Carroll is one of nine artillery bases built east to west across South Vietnam south of the Demilitarized Zone. US Army artillery units are based here, as is 3rd Marines. Colonel MM Spark (right) has just taken over command of the regiment from Colonel R L Michaels (left). Seven of 3rd Motor Transport Battalion's Otters are at Camp Carroll to provide transport for the marines where wheeled vehicles cannot go (26384237)**

damaged when the Viet Cong attacked the Battalion's main base at Da Nang. The guerrillas, armed with AK47s and satchel charges, also damaged eight M35 trucks (four beyond repair) and three M105 trailers.

The October 1966 monthly report gives the information that although Headquarters & Service Company was based in Da Nang, its Otter Platoon's Otters were by now widely dispersed. Under the Operational Control (OPCON) of 1st Marine Regiment (abbreviated to 1st Marines), Otters were working as follows: three in support of 1st Battalion; four in support of 2nd Battalion; three in support of 3rd Battalion. Three Otters were OPCON 7th Marines, which formed the garrison on Hill 55 (a prominent geographical feature 16 km south-west of Da Nang).

## Value

The January 1967 report specifically mentioned that the Otters had proved their value in the monsoon conditions just experienced by the marines on the ground. As conditions improved, the Otters were to be returned to the battalion's main base in Da Nang for maintenance. If possible they would then be subject to what was termed administrative deadlining (that is, they would be parked up) in order to conserve them for next year's monsoon.

Over the three days 13-15 February 1967, 3rd MT Battalion' HQ and all Companies apart from Company B (which was already there) re-located from Da Nang to Phu Bai. This brought all of the battalion's companies together for the first time in 12 years. However, detachments from H&S Company's Otter Platoon remained dispersed, continuing to support various marine regiments. Nine of the Battalion's Otters were transferred to 1st Motor Transport Battalion, which re-located to Da Nang and took over 3rd MT Battalion's old cantonment and some of its responsibilities.

On February 21, 1967, for the first time, figures were given in the monthly report for the total number of transport vehicles on the battalion's strength: 88 x M35 two and half ton trucks; 10 x M36 long-wheelbase two-and-a-half ton trucks; 5 x M54 5 ton trucks; 15 x Otters. Note that all of these vehicles had petrol engines. The battalion would not get multi-fuel trucks – 26 x M35A2 – until April 29, 1967.

During February 1967, six Otters were allocated to support 4th Marines in Operation Chinook II. In March, six Otters (plus two more later) were sent to Camp Carroll to support 3rd Marines. Otters at Camp Carroll were used to transport reconnaissance teams up to the Demilitarized Zone; the teams monitored traffic on the Ho Chi Min Trail. For protection, the Otters were fitted with two machine guns, and carried a reinforced marine fire team. Seven Otters were sent to Phong Dien in furtherance of Operation Chinook II; the Otters were proving to be vital as the weather was too poor for helicopter support. During the month a group of three Otters came under fire from about 12 Viet Cong; the machine gunners on the Otters gave fire support to the marines on the ground. Two Otter drivers were injured.

At this time, track and tyre inner tubes for Otters were in critically short supply. Tubes were vulnerable to puncturing by shell splinters

from Viet Cong mortar rounds and artillery rounds. As a temporary expedient, 16in tubes from other vehicles were used in lieu of the heavier tubes used by Otters, but there was no substitute for track. During the month of February, 3rd MT Battalion had six Otters sidelined for want of spares.

On April 5, 1967, two Otters came under fire during Operation Big Horn – one was disabled, a machine gunner (Private First Class RJ Fitch) was killed and two of Otter Platoon's marines injured. In the battle that followed, two forward observers of 12th Marines were killed, as were 17 members of 9th Marines.

New inner tubes arrived in April, and new track in May. This allowed 14 Otters to be made serviceable; all were placed in administrative control to preserve them for the monsoon season.

On September 11, 1967, orders were received that eight Otters were to be sent to Dong Ha Combat Base as soon as possible. During the monsoon season, the Battalion's Otters were distributed as follows: Phong Dien (Camp Evans), six Otters OPCON 4th Marines; Cam Lo, ten Otters OPCON 9th Marines; Quang Tri, six Otters OPCON 1st Ma-

**'At this time, track and tyre inner tubes for Otters were in critically short supply'**

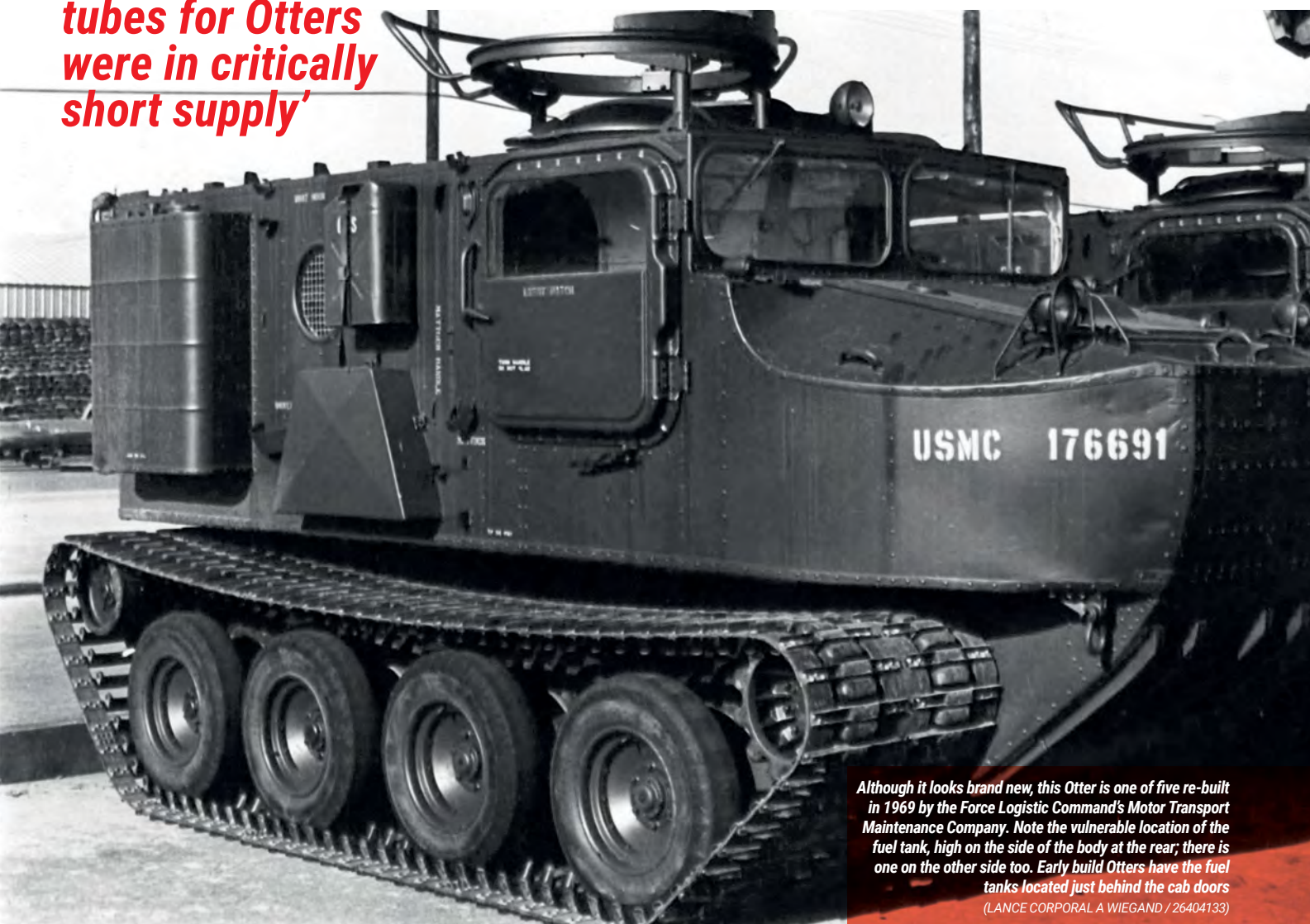


*Operation Chinook II was a search and destroy mission undertaken by units of the 3rd Marine Division and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in Thừa Thiên Province over the period February 17-28, 1967. The crew of this Otter are providing covering fire for the evacuation of wounded marines of 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. The battalion's monthly report included the comment that 'Otters proved a successful means of cross-country resupply when the use of helicopters was curtailed due to adverse weather conditions' (LANCE CORPORAL SM LEIGHTY / 26404135)*

rines; Khe San, six Otters (transported there by helicopter) OPCON 26th Marines. In the weeks that followed, this distribution would alter slightly as operations required.

During February 1968, the Battalion's Otters would drive 1,108 miles, carry 347 tons of cargo,

convey 1,803 personnel and undertake 269 medevacs. The distance driven increased in April: during the month the Otters drove 1,810 miles, carried 248 tons and conveyed 1,578 personnel and seven POWs. Two Otters were lost to enemy action at Khe San. At the month's end, the



*Although it looks brand new, this Otter is one of five re-built in 1969 by the Force Logistic Command's Motor Transport Maintenance Company. Note the vulnerable location of the fuel tank, high on the side of the body at the rear; there is one on the other side too. Early build Otters have the fuel tanks located just behind the cab doors (LANCE CORPORAL A WIEGAND / 26404133)*



**Operation Saline was developed into Operation Napoleon - Saline in May 1968. This Otter is moving forward in support of 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines in fighting east of Dong Ha; it has armour plate over the windscreen and round the ring mount (LANCE CORPORAL TEACHER / 26404143)**

battalion had on strength 42 Otters. On March 22, 1969, the battalion received an initial shipment of Otters from 11th Motor Transport Battalion, which was being issued with the Carrier, Cargo, Amphibious, M116A1 Husky as a replacement for its Otters. With the additional Otters on strength, on April 2, 1969 3rd MT Battalion operated 27 of them – a large reduction from the 42 on strength at the end of April 1968. Availability was good.

Only four were stopped for repairs, and three of those would soon be repaired. (The cross-drive transmission on the fourth had failed, and with no parts on hand there was no knowing when it would be fixed.) Evidently, more Otters then arrived from 11th MT Battalion, as on April 4, 3rd MT Battalion had 47 on strength. Many of the new arrivals were due for routine maintenance, however, 19 of the battalion's Otters were stopped for maintenance or repairs.

In May and June 1969 the battalion undertook re-supply runs 'right to the threshold of enemy territory' to a battery of the 44th Artillery, US Army, and to ARVN units. Given that the battalion's Otters were modestly armoured at best, this was a significant achievement. It was the last hurrah though for the 3rd MT Battalion's Otters. On July 8, 1969 they were re-assigned to 9th Motor Transport Battalion which would transport them to the docks; 3rd Marine Division's tour of duty was coming to an end, and it would soon depart Vietnam and ship across the Pacific to Okinawa.

### **M116 and M116A1 Husky**

The Otter had proved to be a very valuable vehicle in the conditions experienced by the marines in Vietnam. It had driven over terrain impassable to other vehicles, and in weather too bad for helicopters to fly in. 3rd Motor Transport Battalion had used Otters throughout its tour of duty in Vietnam. However, by 1969 the Otter's career with the marines was coming to an end; the vehicles were worn out. The Otter would be replaced by the M116 and M116A1 Husky. ◀

battalion had on strength 42 Otters.

On August 2, 1968, Otter No 176704 was being loaded with ammunition at Cua Viet when a flare was accidentally discharged. The vehicle was destroyed by the resulting fire, as was Otter No 221884 which was parked next to it. On August 12, an Otter hit a mine when running through deep water on its return to Cua Viet. Corporal Bobby Clark of the Battalion was killed, as were two marines of 3rd Tank Battalion – two marines were wounded.

On September 16, 1968, three Otters attached to 1st Amphibious Tractor Battalion were returned to 3rd Motor Transport Battalion for refitting. On September 25, five men from a listening post established outside the perimeter of Quang Tri Combat Base were rescued by an Otter when their post was engulfed by a flash flood. On September 30, two Otters were sent back from Cua Viet to 3rd MT Battalion for refitting.

Operation Liberty Canyon took place in October, and six Otters were used to transport troops.

The number of Otters operated by 3rd MT Battalion steadily reduced as the war ground on, though the monthly reports are not detailed enough to give exact information as to what happened to them.

As noted above, at the end of April 1968, the



**Making use of a decidedly makeshift ramp, Corporal AM Carvella lubricates his Otter. In June 1968, the Otter was one of five operating out of Camp Big John in support of 1st Marines patrolling west of Cua Viet. The Otters carried out re-supply missions and evacuated wounded. Note that this Otter has its fuel tank located just behind the cab doors; there was one on the other side too (LANCE CORPORAL P DEFAZIO / 26404141)**



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**D**esigned by the Pontiac Motor Division in the early 1950s as the prototype T46, this vehicle began life as the intended replacement for the Studebaker M29 Weasel. As an amphibious cargo carrier it was designed to carry cargo or up to eight troops over shallow rivers and swampy terrains and would become, in later production, the M76, also known as the Otter.

Development began in the late 1940s with the less-than-enthusiastic US Army watching on. The army soon lost interest in the project, but the United States Marines, who have a habit of accepting vehicles that the US Army disapproves of, such as the M103 Heavy Tank, became interested. Production would start on the M76 Otter in the mid-to-late 1950s.

The Pontiac Motor Division – perhaps better known for their luxury sports cars – built the M76 at their plant in Pontiac, Michigan. It was tested at General Motors' military proving grounds in Milford, also in Michigan.

The M76 was almost entirely an aluminium construction. This made the vehicle

M48, M60, and M103. As the road wheel arm it is attached to moves up and down, it presses either idler or sprocket wheel forward, keeping a constant track tension.

The tracks were an evolution of the type found on the Weasel. They were a single long rubber band with added metal cleats and thicker rubber blocks for grip. The tracks were 76.5cm (30.1in) wide. The top land speed of the vehicle was 30mph (50km/h). Steering was the traditional clutch type, meaning that one track is slowed allowing the faster track to pivot the vehicle in the desired direction.

Fuel for the M76 was stored in two large fuel tanks mounted externally on either side of the troop/cargo bay. The location of these tanks – and external stowage in general – varied during the Otter's production.

# An Otter is Born

The amphibious Otter proved invaluable in Vietnam, despite its vulnerability to attack

extremely light and therefore perfect for its intended amphibious role but also made it vulnerable to enemy fire.

Located under a truck-like nose at the front of the vehicle was the engine. This is known as a cab-over-engine layout. This engine was a Continental A10-268 air-cooled, four-cylinder opposed engine rated at 130bhp. This was originally an aircraft engine. The exhaust, a small pipe bent to rear, was located just behind the cabin roof.

The power from the engine ran to a small, forward-mounted drive sprocket; the idler was at the rear. Like the M56 Scorpion, the M76's road wheels were pneumatic, simply meaning that the rubber around the wheel is inflated, like a standard truck tire. This lightened the vehicle, but also provided extra buoyancy when the Otter was traversing soft ground or water.

The wheels were attached to a torsion bar suspension, with two wheels per suspension arm (the arm is sandwiched between the two wheels). The sprocket and idler wheels are connected to their closest set of road wheels on an arm. This is like the compensating idler arm found on American tanks such as the

On the early vehicles, such as the T46 prototypes and Mk 1s, the tanks were located centrally on the side of the hull. Later Mk's can be identified by the rear-mounted fuel tanks.

Behind the engine compartment was a two-man cabin with the driver on the left and a spare seat to his right. The driver operated the vehicle with bicycle-like handlebars and is separated from the passenger side by a large round housing for the propeller drive shaft. Above the passenger seat was hatch in the cabin roof, on the outer side of this hatch was a mounting for a Browning M2HB .50 Cal (12.7mm) machine gun. This was the Otter's only defensive armament.

The troop/cargo bay was behind the cabin. It had the capacity to carry either eight fully-loaded troops or 3,000lbs. (1,360 kg) of supplies. The cabin and cargo/troop bay were fully enclosed and insulated. There were traditional truck-style doors on the driver and passenger side of the cab. The troop/cargo bay had rear door for loading and unloading. There were also hatches in the roof. Both the driver and crew/cargo bay could be heated via an internal heating unit.

*Looking very much what it is; a cross between a truck and a boat*





*'The tracks were an evolution  
of the type found on the Weasel'*



*The troop/cargo bay has a simple rear door for loading and unloading*



*With traditional clutch-type steering, one track is slowed allowing the faster track to pivot the vehicle in the desired direction*



*When not in water, the propeller folds up neatly to avoid snagging on the ground*



## ***'The power from the engine ran to a small, forward-mounted drive sprocket; the idler was at the rear'***

Being an amphibious vehicle, the front of the vehicle was built like the bow of a boat. There was a large propeller mounted at the rear of the vehicle under the access doors, below the towing hook. This propelled the Otter when in water, and was folded upwards when on land. Steering in water was conducted by the tracks. This is done by braking one of the tracks. When turning port or starboard, the stopped track provides resistance as the rotating track turns the vehicle. Speed on water was 3.7 – 5.3 knots (7-10 km/h).

As well as carrying troops and supplies, the Otter, much like its Weasel predecessor, often doubled as a field ambulance and could rescue stuck wheeled vehicles from boggy areas. The Otter was better equipped for this job, however, as all of the vehicles had a 5,000lb (2268kg) capacity winch located in the cargo/troop bay under a fold-away seat.

Captain Lang Forehand, quoted in *The Magnificent Bastards: The Joint Army-Marine Defence of Dong Ha, 1968* by Keith Nolan, apparently wrote that even though the M76 Otter 'was







**SPECIFICATIONS**  
 Make Pontiac Motor Division  
 Role Amphibious Cargo and Troop Transport  
 Nationality USA  
 Year 1953  
 Model T46E1  
 Production run 1950-1970  
 Used By United States Marine Corps (USMC)  
 Engine Continental A10-268 air cooled  
 Type Four-cylinder petrol  
 Power 130bhp  
 Transmission Automatic  
 Suspension Pneumatic road-wheels attached to Torsion Bars  
 Brakes Clutch-Brake  
 Tracks Rubber with added metal cleats, 76.5 cm wide.  
 Crew Two Crew and eight passengers  
 Road Speed 30mph  
 Water Speed 3.7-5.3knots  
 Armament One Browning M2HB .50 Cal. (12.7mm) Heavy Machine gun for defence

ABOVE: It is thought that there are fewer than ten fully operational M76 Otters in the world  
 ABOVE LEFT: The tracks were an evolution of the type found on the Weasel, a single long rubber band with added metal cleats and thicker rubber blocks  
 BELOW: A 70 gallon fuel capacity gave a approximate 200 mile road range

**Dimensions(overall)**  
 Length 9.04m  
 Width 2.50m  
 Height 2.31m





ABOVE: **Otter on the move in the arena at War and Peace 2017**

BELOW RIGHT: **This M76 Otter is a Mk2, as can be seen by the later type of fuel tanks mounted to the rear of the cargo body**

BELOW: **With well fitting doors both the driver and crew/cargo bay could be heated via an internal heating unit**

always broke', the boxy, open-topped tracked vehicle 'did more than it was ever designed to do'. He goes on to say 'the vehicle was totally devoid of armour, had a high profile on land and was mounted with a .50-cal MG that invited RPGs. It was slow and ungainly in water, but could and did perform in places that would not support any LVT. These craft were invaluable and those who manned them were complete-

**'The driver operated the vehicle with bicycle-like handlebars'**

ly without fear', but ever resourceful, some marines even went so far as to bolt sheet metal over the Otter's large cabin windows, and the internal walls were heavily 'sand-bagged' in an effort to improve their protection from small arms fire.

The Otter was eventually replaced in service by the M116 Husky, the next generation of amphibious cargo carriers. ◀



**Thanks and further viewing**

With thanks to Tanks Encyclopaedia.

To view an Otter crossing a river during its testing at Michigan's General Motors' military proving grounds in Milford, type this into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/yau3yrgo>

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# Braving *Vietnam's Roads*

John Teasdale reports on the dangers the US  
Marines faced when travelling on land

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**W**hen thinking of the Vietnam War, images of fleets of helicopters flying over the jungle spring readily to mind. Certainly, helicopters were a vital tool of the US military in taking the war to the enemy. However, the bulk of the heavy transport during the war was done by trucks.

Although helicopter-borne troops kept major units of the People's Army of Vietnam at bay (for most of the time), trucks forming convoys throughout much of South Vietnam were always vulnerable to attack by relatively small parties of Viet Cong guerrillas. Convoys were protected wherever possible by armoured vehicles operated by such as the 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment and Military Police units. However, it is the trucks that we shall look at here. The bulk of these comprised two and half ton M35 series and five ton M54 series 6x6 cargo trucks.

### **M35**

In 1950, the US Army took into service the two-and-half ton M34 cargo truck. This 6x6 had single 11.00 x 20 tyres all round. These large diameter tyres necessitated the insertion of wheel boxes into the load space of the truck;

**A fireman, fully kitted out in an asbestos suit, tackles the aftermath of the utter destruction of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) truck on January 1, 1968. The location is just outside Bin Thuy Air Base, which explains why the fireman is on the scene. The original caption does not say what happened, other than that none of the four men in the truck were injured when the explosion occurred (6344041)**

the large wheel and tyre combination was also relatively difficult to change on anything other than a hard surface. M34 trucks were used by the US Army in Vietnam, though they would be handed over to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam as soon as M35 replacements were available. Engineer units would keep their M34s longest, until late 1968.

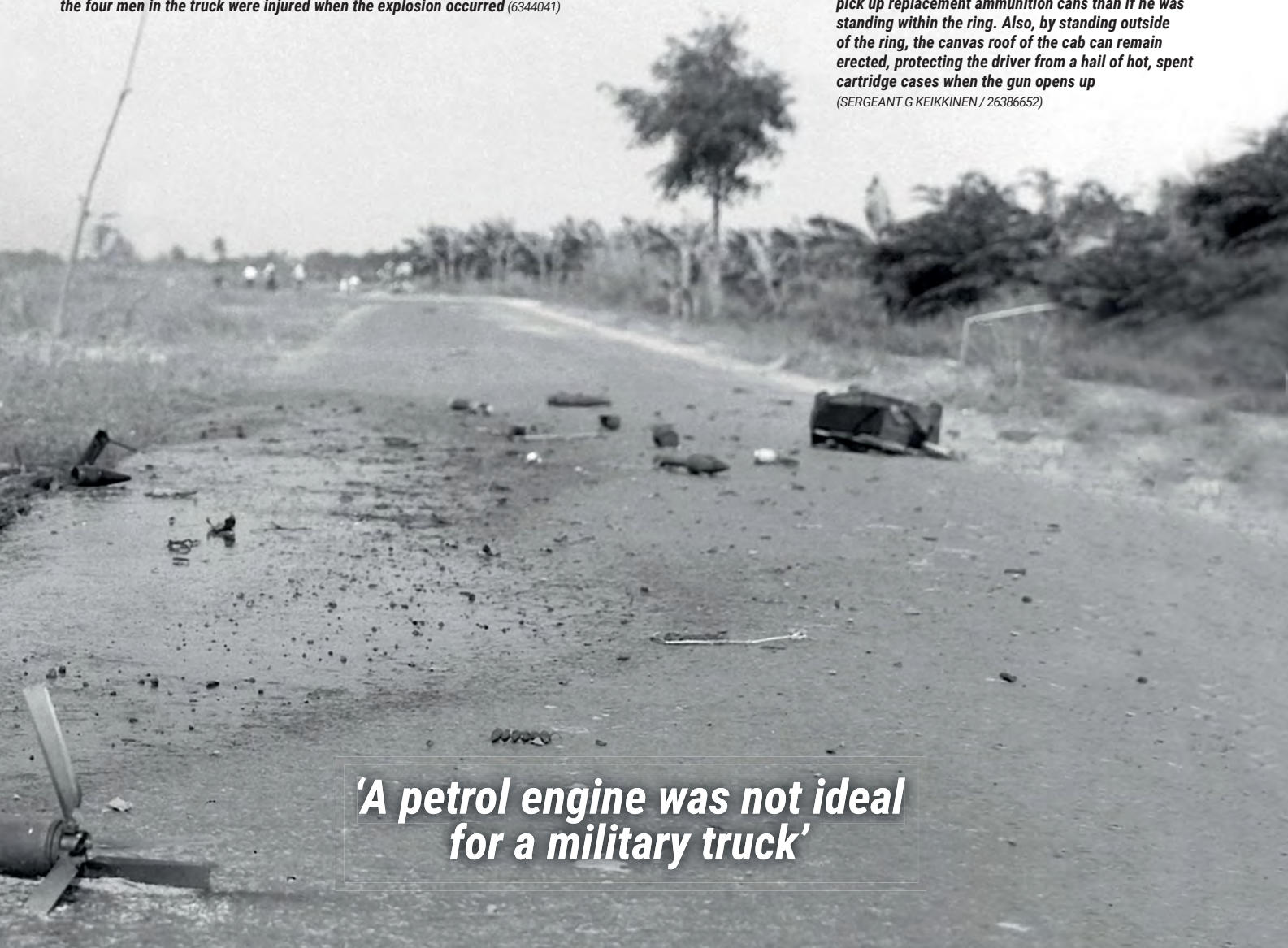
The M34 was soon replaced as the US Army's standard two and half ton truck by the M35. This ran on 9.00 x 20 tyres, dual at the rear. The smaller wheel and tyre combination meant that wheel boxes were not required in the load space, and the wheels were handier when changing too. The M35 was rated to carry 5,000lbs (2.3 tonnes) off-road in all weathers, and double that on-road. It was powered by a six-cylinder petrol engine. Transmission comprised a five-speed gearbox mated with a two-speed transfer box.

A petrol engine was not ideal for a military truck, especially one running convoys in Vietnam that regularly came under fire. The M35A1 was therefore fitted with a Continental six-cylinder turbocharged multifuel engine; in practice, the engine usually ran on diesel. This engine



**Convoys of trucks were protected by accompanying armoured vehicles, but they looked to their own defence too. Some trucks had a ring mount for a .5 calibre M2 machine gun as seen here and in other of the photographs too. The ring was fixed above the cab passenger seat, but note that here Lance Corporal Dan Hazelwood is actually standing in the load bed of the truck. This means that he cannot traverse his gun and aim it to the rear. This is of little consequence, however, as his truck is forming part of a convoy, and he will be required to fire only to the left or the right. Standing in the load bed, Hazelwood can more easily pick up replacement ammunition cans than if he was standing within the ring. Also, by standing outside of the ring, the canvas roof of the cab can remain erected, protecting the driver from a hail of hot, spent cartridge cases when the gun opens up**

(SERGEANT G KEIKKINEN / 26386652)



**'A petrol engine was not ideal for a military truck'**

**US Army and US Marine Corps M54 series five ton trucks assemble on April 10, 1967 prior to undertaking a Rough Rider Convoy. Such convoys conveyed supplies along roads prone to ambush by the Viet Cong guerrillas**  
(GUNNERY SERGEANT NORTHRUP / 26403833)



## 'Conversion to a gun truck was at first a simple affair'

proved to be unreliable, however, and prone to blowing head gaskets. In 1970, the M35A2 was introduced; this was fitted with a larger Continental multi-fuel engine. In early versions the engine was naturally-aspirated; later engines were turbocharged. Given that American troops withdrew from Vietnam in early 1973 after the signing of a peace agreement, relatively few M35A2 trucks operated in the country.

### M54

The M54 6x6 cargo truck began to be issued to units in 1951. Carrying capacity was 10,000lbs (4.5 tonnes) off-road in all weathers, and double that on-road. As with the M35, the M54 was fitted with a six-cylinder petrol engine. The M54A1 was fitted with a six-cylinder turbocharged diesel engine. The M54A2 was fitted with a six-cylinder turbocharged multi-fuel engine.

Studying photographs, a good guide to which type of engine is fitted is the installation of the exhaust pipe. As a general rule, the exhaust of a petrol engine was routed horizontally beneath the chassis to exit in front of the rear wheels. The exhaust of a diesel or multi-fuel

engine was routed vertically in front of the right-hand side of the cab. However, this rule is by no means infallible. Early build trucks with diesel or multi-fuel engines, and some of those converted from petrol to multi-fuel, had horizontal exhausts. Trucks modified for deep wading were fitted with a raised air intake, installed vertically in front of the cab. In order that the engine did not ingest exhaust gases, the exhaust pipe was routed horizontally beneath the chassis, then vertically up the right-hand side of the body. A large air cleaner on

the right-hand wing is an infallible indication that a turbocharged engine was fitted.

### Gun Trucks

The V-100 was a four-wheeled armoured car designed and built by Cadillac Gage. In late 1963, V-100s began to be issued to military police units serving in Vietnam for convoy protection. The vehicle could have been adopted too by Army transport units, but the thought of what a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) would do to the crew when it penetrated the side armour was a definite deterrent. Instead, transport units deployed Jeeps fitted with a pedestal-mounted machine gun, but these proved to be inadequate when a convoy was attacked by a large force of Viet Cong. On September 2, 1967, an attack on an 8th Transportation Group convoy resulted in seven drivers killed, 17 wounded and some 30 trucks damaged or destroyed. As a result, 8th Transportation Group developed the hardened convoy concept; ordinary M35 cargo converted into gun trucks provided the hardening.

Conversion to a gun truck was at first a simple affair: the load space was protected by a wall of sandbags, from behind which men manned a couple of M60 machine guns. If an RPG penetrated the wall of sandbags, the blast would be dissipated in the open load space; ►



**The 1st Military Police Battalion, US Marine Corps, was based in Da Nang. On January 30, 1968, an encounter with the Viet Cong resulted in the deaths of two MPs and the wounding of six others. This M37 three-quarter ton cargo truck was damaged in the fighting** (GUNNERY SERGEANT THOMPSON / 26403871)

## LANDMINES



**ABOVE LEFT: The US Navy's Naval Construction Units – the Seabees – were first deployed in Vietnam as early as 1956 in order to undertake civilian construction tasks. Units came and went as the work required. In January 1963, Seabees landed in Vietnam to build camps in remote areas for US Special Forces and to assist Vietnamese villagers. This column of Seabee dump trucks was on the Liberty Road (built by US Marines to link Da Nang and An Hoa) on August 22, 1966 en route to a work site when the lead truck struck a mine** (RS BRANHAM / 26403795)



**ABOVE MIDDLE: Mined roads were a constant hazard. These Marines of 11th Engineer Battalion are sweeping for mines on a bridge by-pass on April 10, 1967** (GUNNERY SERGEANT NORTHRUP / 26393536)



**ABOVE RIGHT: This Marine M37 was written off when it ran over a mine. There is no information as to the fate of its crew** (26403717)



**ABOVE: A joint US Army / US Marine convoys rolls northwards through the Hai Van Pass in July 1968.**

*(SERGEANT ME LAFFERTY / 26403793)*

**ABOVE RIGHT: On April 10, 1967, Private First Class Robert L Franklin of the US Marine Corps adds sandbags to the wing of his M Series truck to protect the engine from small arms fire. Note the U-bolt (originally intended to attach a leaf spring to an axle) welded to the bumper for use as an auxiliary tie-down when on board ship**

*(GUNNERY SERGEANT NORTHRUP / 26403875)*

**RIGHT: These artillerymen of 3rd Marine Division are unloading empty ammunition crates from an M35 series two and a half ton truck on December 7, 1967. Note the raised air intake forward of the cab on the right-hand side; this may indicate that the truck is fitted for deep wading. Note also the besom behind the cab for use in sweeping clean the load bed** *(PRIVATE FIRST CLASS O MCDOWALL / 26403701)*



**M54 series five ton trucks of the 7th Motor Transport Battalion, USMC, forming a Rough Rider supply column are en route from Da Nang to An Hoa in July 1968. During July, two members of the battalion would be killed in action. In the Da Nang Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR), the battalion's trucks would drive a total of 75,806 miles during the month. In the Phu Bai TAOR, 37,167 miles. In the Dong Ha TAOR, 19,265 miles. And in line haul operations between Da Nang and An Hoa, as seen in the photograph, 13,880 miles** *(PRIVATE FIRST CLASS RK NYSTROM / 26403877)*

To increase a convoy's defence capabilities, standard cargo trucks were converted into gun trucks as seen here in April 1968. These particular trucks, serving with the US Army's 26th Transportation Group, are based on the two and half ton M35 series, but gun trucks were also based on the five ton M54 series. Note that the armoured gun trucks have armoured cab doors, but no armour over the windscreen. The unarmoured gun truck partially visible at the left-hand side of the photograph appears to be fitted with a quadruple .5 calibre M2 machine gun mount. Partly visible in the background is an M42 Duster – an armoured vehicle mounting twin 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns and used here for convoy protection.

Gun trucks normally had a crew of four or five soldiers – in this case, the trucks are being used to transport US Marines

(STAFF SERGEANT RP BEAM / 26403873)



The gunner's view from a truck of the 7th Motor Transport Battalion, USMC (SERGEANT CURTIS / 26386012)

## BRIDGES & PONTOONS



A Marine M35 series two-and-half ton truck crosses the Tu Cau bridge, seven miles south of Da Nang, September 1969 (LANCE CORPORAL G NEWSOME / 26382558)



Trucks of the 7th Motor Transport Battalion, USMC, ferried across a river to convey supplies from Da Nang to An Hoa (PRIVATE FIRST CLASS RK NYSTROM / 26403885)



Operation Cumberland was a search and destroy mission. On the raft are an M38A1 Jeep, an M37 three-quarter ton cargo truck and an M51 five ton 6x6 dump truck. (MASTER SERGEANT R AUSTIN / 26403839)

if the machine gunners were lucky, they might get away completely unscathed. However, the sandbags absorbed rain and became extremely heavy, overloading the trucks.

The sandbags were replaced by first makeshift steel plate armour, and later by factory-built armour plating kits. Armour enclosed both the load space and the cab, though it was open above. As the gun trucks were converted at a unit level, armament varied depending upon what was available; 7.62 mm M60 and .5 calibre M2 machine guns were the most common armaments.

Gun trucks were fitted with a downward-facing exhaust so that the men in the load space manning the machine guns would not have to breathe in exhaust fumes. Crew of a gun truck comprised a driver, two gunners and an NCO in command; occasionally, a third gunner rode along too with an M79 grenade launcher.

Hardened convoys usually comprised 100 trucks (down from the 200 or so often operated previously) with, ideally at least, a gun truck for every 10 cargo trucks. The gun trucks were a useful expedient, though the M35 was in due course replaced by the M54 five ton truck as a basis when the smaller trucks proved to be overladen with armour, ammunition, guns and crew. It is not known how many gun trucks were

created – estimates range from 300 to 400.

Even with a large number of gun trucks in a convoy, the Viet Cong still mounted attacks. Truck crews, delivering vital supplies of ammunition, food and fuel to their comrades in the field, were definitely heroic. Happily though, they are not unsung heroes. In many countries re-enactor groups commemorate the endeavours of US servicemen in Vietnam. Here in the UK memories are kept alive by Rolling Thunder, The Vietnam Experience; see their website at [www.rolling-thunder.org.uk](http://www.rolling-thunder.org.uk) for details. ◀



It is June 1967, and a column of Marine two and half ton M35 series trucks is assisting in the relocation of an entire Vietnamese village from Khe Sanh to a safer location (STAFF SERGEANT GR SMITH / 26403819)

Marines of 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment deploy during Operation Union in May 1967. Operation Union was a search and destroy mission conducted in the Que Son Valley against the 2nd Division of the People's Army of Vietnam. The trucks seen here are M54 series five ton cargo trucks.

(CORPORAL ON BENSON / 26403849)





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# IPMS(UK)

# Operation Market Garden *Commemorated*

Three CMV contributors were at this year's Arnhem Commemoration and they each have their own story to tell



*'These acts of collective remembrance make a mark that, once felt, never leaves'*

I have returned to the Arnhem Commemoration many times over the past 20 years but never fail to be impressed by the welcome from the Dutch people and this year was no different. Once again they turned out in their thousands to see the veterans and watch the drop onto Ginkel Heath despite adverse weather which disrupted the para programme. The number of veterans now attending is much reduced as the years take their toll but still they come supported by family and friends. As always the Parachute Regiment was at the centre of the commemoration but they were joined by fellow Dutch, American and Polish paratroopers alongside other members of airborne forces both past and present.

The event draws military vehicle enthusiasts from far and wide and the sheer scale and variety of World War Two types on display was impres-

sive. The Brits were here in strength and I chatted with Kingsley Rimmel who had brought over his 1944 Willys Jeep and 1942 Welbike along with friends Tim and Ian Sylvester. The Dutch were naturally present in strength and a club of enthusiasts from Zeeland had brought an impressive line-up of Allied motorcycles, a mixture of BSA M20s and Nortons all in good running order.

Formerly the mound at the rear of the perimeter track had been a gathering place for the bikes but this year the security people were restricting access for some unknown reason. I also spotted an interesting DKW RT 125 on a trailer; the design for this machine went to BSA at the end of the war as reparations and famously led to the development of the post-war Bantam.

Alongside the many Jeeps were a varied selection of Allied transport with US types from Dodge,

Ford and GMC much in evidence. An impressive M3 Half Track complete with mounted .50 Browning stood out from the crowd along with a nicely presented Austin Tilly. The Wehrmacht wasn't forgotten with a return of the Kublewagon from last year and very nice Zundapp combination.

One of the features I have noticed over the years is the impressive lengths owners go to in dressing their vehicles with authentic World War Two impedimenta, from helmets to ammunition boxes and items of webbing equipment which all add to that authentic look. Once everyone is parked up on the perimeter track there is always time for a brew again using period correct primus stoves and burners with attendant mess tins and tin mugs. While some owners go for a complete World War Two outfit, usually depicting airborne troops, others stick to jeans or outdoor



*The Race to the Bridge convoy gathered on Ginkel Heath awaiting the parachute drop*



**Hercules C130 dropping paratroops onto the original wartime DZ at Ginkel Heath**

clothes topped off with a Jeep cap or similar to get into the spirit of the event. One item of clothing always much in evidence is the Denison smock, signature dress of airborne forces.

On the Sunday I made the short trip from the campsite at Zuid Ginkel to Oosterbeek for the airborne memorial service, always an emotional experience. Memories of battle lie close to the surface here, quite literally. A Dutch friend told me that any building work in the area inevitably turns up relics from the fighting, rusted weapons and munitions and occasionally human remains. This is not surprising as this quiet suburb of Arnhem saw some of the fiercest fighting and was well named the 'Cauldron' by the Germans attempting to break into the Airborne Perimeter. Several years ago remains were discovered on the drop zone at Ginkel Heath itself by someone out walking a dog and they were later identified as a member of 4th Para Brigade. He had lain out there all these years, one of the missing from the battle. No doubt others still remain to be found.

After a busy weekend photographing the events and chatting with people it was good to share a drink with friends on my last evening and reflect on the whole experience. Each time I make the trip to Arnhem I seem to learn something new. This time I brought along a book by historian Robert Kershaw a former company commander in my old battalion. A Street in Arnhem covers the fighting which raged along the Utrechtsweg, a road that runs 7km from the Arnhem railway station west to Oosterbeek. It is told from the perspective of the British paras, Dutch civilians and German soldiers caught up in the fighting and gives a fresh and very personal perspective on the



**Two enthusiasts in authentic airborne uniform pose with their Jeep**

battle. What stays with me most of all however is the quiet dignity of the few remaining veterans and the generosity of spirit of the Dutch people. It was called a 'Bridge Too Far' but perhaps it has become a bridge between people of different nations and generations signified most poignantly by the local children who lay flowers on the airborne graves each year. **Craig Allen**



**An impressive M3 Halftrack with authentic storage and mounted Browning under the rain covers.**



**One of the many nice Jeeps at Arnhem this year**



**A nicely restored Zundapp combination stood out among all the Allied types**



**DKW RT 125 Lightweight German motorcycle famously copied in the postwar BSA Bantam**



**Dutch enthusiasts from Zeeland with an impressive line-up of M20s**



**Airborne veteran lays a wreath at the Ginkel DZ Memorial with local children**



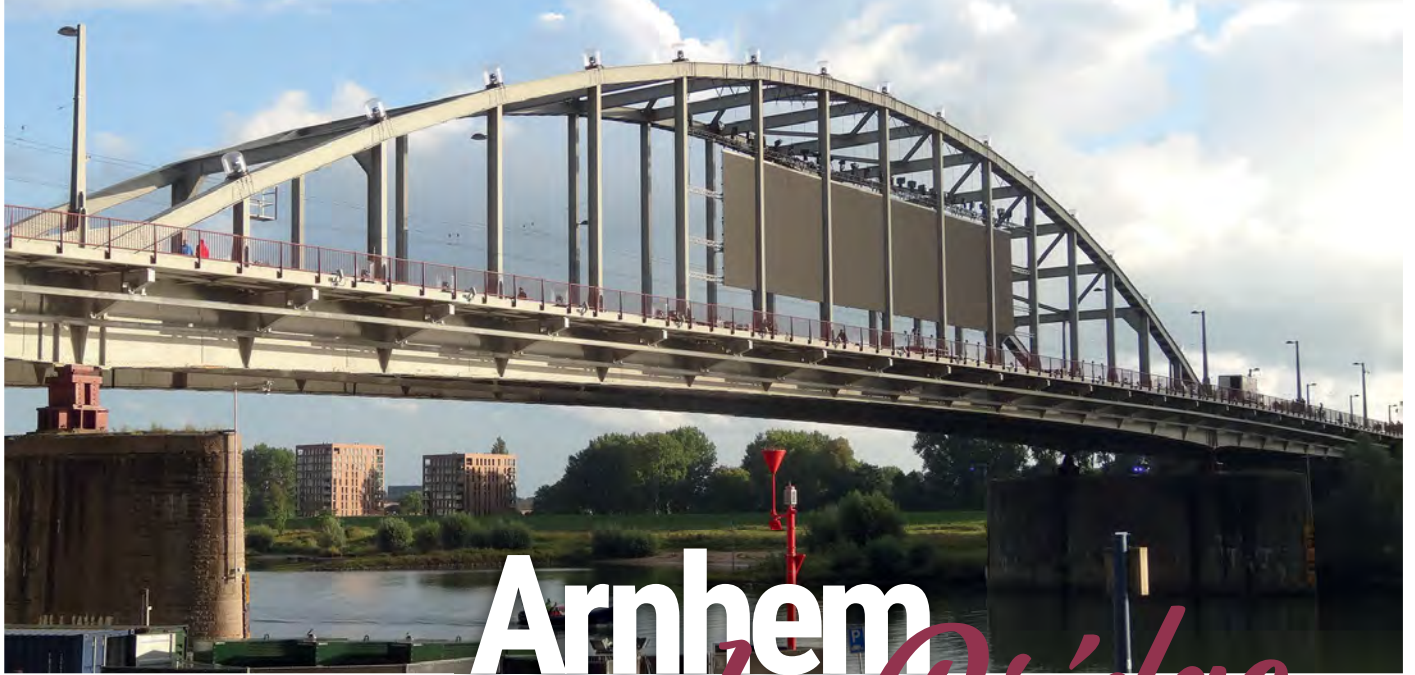
**Austin Tilly, a novelty among the many Jeeps on display**

**BELOW: German Kubelwagen in camouflage trim complete with Union Jack**



**Local schoolchildren lay flowers on the graves at the Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek**





# Arnhem

## Race to the Bridge

There are a few towns and places whose names can evoke instant emotion when World War Two is mentioned. Stalingrad, El Alamein, Monte Cassino, Colditz to name a few, and then there is of course Arnhem. Nine days of vicious fighting, heroism, stoic defence and the film *A Bridge Too Far* released in 1977 have all helped to cement the bridge and the town in World War Two folklore.

To debunk a few Hollywood myths; firstly the film, *A Bridge Too Far*, wasn't filmed in Arnhem but the small town of Deventer about 25 miles north. This location was used because the centre of Arnhem was so badly damaged during the war and all the new buildings were far too modern for authenticity necessitating a change of location. Secondly the bridge you see, or even drive over today, is not the same bridge. Once Market Garden failed, the American Air Force bombed the bridge over the lower Rhine to prevent the Germans using it to reinforce their lines.

The stone arches are still there and indeed used as part of the modern bridge. Look closely and there are bullet holes to be seen on the stairwells. The bridge has become an icon, almost a memorial to the heroes of the Airborne Division who so bravely attempted to capture it during September 1944. Today the bridge is named after Major-General John Frost (1912–1993), who commanded the British forces that reached and defended the bridge.

In the UK we remember the bridge from the film, the men and their attack on it as part of Operation Market Garden. For the Dutch it means something totally different; an almost mythical symbol of their freedom and of the men who came from overseas to liberate them from five years of Nazi occupation.

Consequently, for many years now, from September 17- 26 the Dutch have celebrated, commemorated and remembered those men who fell from the sky and the events of September 1944 and the beginning of the liberation of the Netherlands.



*Despatch riders blocked off every side road and dual carriageway*



*Dodge WC54, maybe needed to treat trench-foot after the heavy rain*



*Ford Jeep decked out with everything except a roof*



*A pause for a brew*

When you talk to the locals no one can actually remember a time that there wasn't some kind of event to commemorate this action. One local man described it to me as this; 'when they taught you history at school they taught you from a book. At our school they just opened the door and pointed to where the British airborne landed'.

This year's various events were spread over the week, from concerts, and displays to walks for local children in darkness from the drop zone all the way to the bridge. On Saturday September 18 they held, as they do every year, 'The Race to the Bridge'. Each year more vehicles take part. A rough estimate was 25 bicyclists, 35 authentic motorcycles and around 75 Jeeps, Dodges, numerous other vehicles and with a few German war trucks and transport cars added for good measure.

We met mostly Dutch vehicle owners, a lot from the organisation Keep them Rolling and club Wheels along with quite a few British, a few from Belgium, France, one from Spain and apparently a Russian who'd driven his Jeep from Moscow but I never got to meet him so can't confirm that.

We started at Cafe Eethuys Airborne on the N782 road in Redkum, a small town some seven miles west of Arnhem Bridge. A lot of re-enactors and their vehicles had camped there for the past few days. Camping was a brave thing to do this year as the area had suffered torrential downpours and thunderstorms prior to the event.

You might think the bad weather would have deterred vehicle owners and the Dutch public from lining the convoy's route, but it didn't. The convoy travelled from Redkum, along the roads used by the airborne into the city centre of Arnhem, then a drive under the bridge and paused for a brew stop by the side of the Rhine river before starting again and making a loop back, ending up meeting at Hartenstein hotel, now the airborne museum, which is well worth a visit.

We had rain of biblical proportions, then it suddenly stopped and more Jeeps and motorcycles arrived - no amount of rain was going to stop a single vehicle, or the vast crowds



*The end of the line could not be seen with the naked eye. So many vehicles*

**'No one can actually remember a time that there wasn't some kind of event to commemorate this action'**



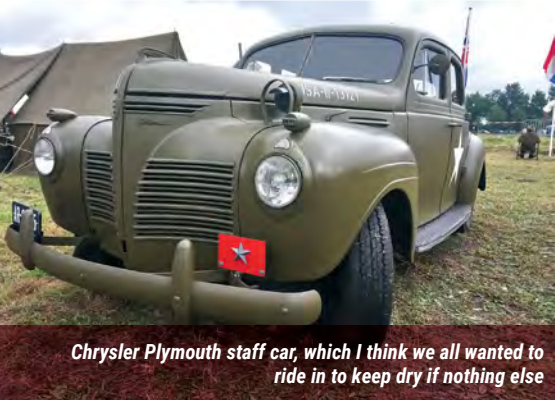
*Row after row of immaculately turned-out motorcycles*

telling me every detail of its restoration, I gave a quick look to the rear; Jeeps as far as the eye could see. I thought this could be so sad. These veterans some from the Arnhem campaign, others from the RAF, the Army, the 30 Corps all in this great convoy and no one will turn out to see it due to the weather. This was not the case, thankfully.

Away we went. The order is cyclists first, then the motorcyclists who were used to police the traffic. Every road junction, bus lane, side street was closed off for the convoy by one or two re-enactors on BSAs, Nortons or Harleys simply parking their motorcycles in the road. No complaints from a single car, in fact the drivers and occupants all got out to wave to the veterans, and take photos of the convoy. From my position I could not see the beginning or the end of the line of antique vehicles travelling this historic route. As we passed under a railway arch my driver told me to look at the bricks, covered in bullet and shrapnel holes. This was like the best tour guide you could have, he was pointing out who, what and where everything happened all those years ago.

The nearer to the centre of the city, the bigger the crowds. All ages; youngsters wanting to see the vehicles, the elders to try and shake hands with the veterans and all ages in between.

The rain held off as we brewed up with vehicles lining the bank of the river. Then we heard the whistle, the command to load up and start your engines. Off we went again and light rain began to fall but the crowds got bigger, deeper and more vocal in their support. We arrived at Hartenstein and I was told to get out and watch the rest of the convoy. Mentally I was counting but gave up after 75. Banner and flag-waving crowds cheered on every single vehicle despite



*Chrysler Plymouth staff car, which I think we all wanted to ride in to keep dry if nothing else*

from lining the route.

Veterans were passengers in the lead vehicles and were as excited as everyone was, taking it in their stride. All in their mid-90s yet each with a grin and a glint in the eye.

As I climbed into a Ford Jeep, its owner proudly



*German vehicles were represented but owners did not wear military uniforms. An act of respect for the elderly locals*



*The Boar of 30 Corps was proudly represented*

*Lined up and ready for part two of the convoy. A time to get dry maybe?*



*Norton, complete with side car*

the rain getting a little heavier. We ran for the tented area for more tea.

This 'Race' happens every single year, it's not just a convoy but a celebration, a remembrance, a sheer 'thank you' in honour of those men and their heroic actions and to be honest it's a once in a lifetime chance to live just a little bit of history.

Check out YouTube, there are dozens of videos from past years and already this year's event has been uploaded. Get involved in next year's 'Race for the Bridge', better still do it 2019, the 75th anniversary; now that will be a weekend to remember. **Chris Cookson**



# Back to the Bridge

## *A Personal View of Remembrance*

To anyone attending the Operation Market Garden commemorations for the first time, one of the most striking features is the whole-hearted welcome, warmth and friendship that the Dutch people extend to all those who make the trip whether they are driving a restored Sherman tank or have simply turned up to watch.

Whereas certain elements of the D-Day commemorations in Normandy have taken on the air of a theme park attraction, those across the Netherlands, and in the Arnhem area in particular, are on a much more human level.

These acts of collective remembrance make a mark that, once felt, never leaves. Whole generations turn out to greet the vehicles and re-enactors who descend on the town every year. Why do they continue to do this?

Although very few remain that have first-hand recollections of the dashed hopes and the desperate fighting that culminated in bitter retreat, capture or death during Operation Market Garden, they have all continued to live under its shadow for the past 73 years. Operation Market Garden is almost woven into the DNA of these good Dutch people and their welcome transcends those years. To take part in events like the Race to The Bridge almost feels like time has stood still and we really are the would-be libera-

tors and the cheering and smiling crowds are sensing their freedom after long years of oppression more than 70 years later.

To my mind anyway, this event means a lot more than simply mucking about in a Jeep. Our group spent the early part of the week in the Groesbeek area and then moved up to the Airborne Battle Wheels campsite at Oosterbeek. This secluded, low-lying field is surrounded by dense woodland and sits in the centre of what was the Oosterbeek perimeter.

The site organisers make a huge effort to provide respectful authenticity and as we swung into the entrance, our first impression was of a genuine World War Two camp spread out before us with lots of green and brown canvas on display while smoke rose lazily from campfires. Jeeps, motorcycles, equipment and clothing of every sort was to be seen on bonnets, piled against tents and strapped to vehicles while figures in a variety of uniforms, mainly sporting the maroon beret, went about their business in an unhurried fashion.

The next hour was spent putting up our canvas bivouac tents which were thoroughly in keeping with the surroundings and, while they certainly look the part, they are utterly miserable affairs when wet through.

Remembrance can be a solitary activity and later that day as sharp showers stalked the sunshine along the river valley and the smoke and cordite had cleared from the 75mm Pack Howitzer firing at Oosterbeek Old Church, I left my companions to walk back to the campsite through the Benedendorpsweg woods.

Even on a pleasant day, it wasn't difficult to imagine small groups of tired, hungry, traumatised and dispirited men clinging to the smock of the man in front making their way towards the river for the final evacuation. Luckily for them, the night of September 25 saw high winds and torrential rain which covered their movements. In all, 2,400 men were ferried across the Lower Rhine in small boats to safety.

The main event of the week is the Race to The Bridge and was the reason that most of us were there. The muster whistles sounded out across the camp at 0700 hours and the dank, misty air was filled with the sounds of Jeep and motorcy-

cle engines coughing into life.

It was a considerable drive to the woodland road on the edge of Ede Heath that had been selected as the point for all vehicles to congregate prior to the drive across the open moorland onto Ginkel Heath. At the allotted time, the convoy moved off along the wet, sandy tracks travelling quickly between the extensive



**AEC Matador and Bedford MW rolling on to the Airborne Battle Wheels campsite Oosterbeek**



**The start line: John Spowart ready to tackle his first Race to The Bridge**



**An early start to get in place for the Race to the Bridge**

**1st Airlanding Brigade Howitzer in the field below Oosterbeek Old Church**





*The Race to The Bridge on the outskirts of Oosterbeek*

stands of heather which was just clinging to the last purple sheen of the late summer flowering.

After a few hours parked up on the heath sampling the carnival-like atmosphere and waiting for the oft-postponed parachute drop, the whistles shrilled again and there was a mad scramble to pile back into vehicles and get to the formal start point on the outskirts of Renkum for the eight-mile run to Arnhem Bridge.

It was while in the 'hurry up and wait' phase that the heavens opened and dowsed the complete convoy in freezing cold rain. It didn't alter the mood; there was a feeling of muted excitement and anticipation and more than a hint of pride in being part of something important and meaningful.

For those who hadn't experienced similar events in Holland before, the next few miles would be a revelation. Despite the weather, the streets were packed with smiling and waving Dutch people, smaller children jumped up and down in excitement as Jeeps laden with mostly middle-aged men somehow became the British 1st Airborne Division in September 1944 come as liberators. Older siblings recorded it on mobile phones for later perusal while their parents smiled and waved at each vehicle and motorcycle as it passed. The more demonstrative gave Churchillian V signs and enthusiastic thumbs-up.

The older folk smiled and watched quietly from the street and the windows of buildings



*John Spowart and Tom Barrass in reflective mood before the start of the Race to The Bridge and...  
TOP: The first taste of the phenomenal welcome from the citizens of Oosterbeek*

that line the route and lifted a hand when you caught their gaze.

The return leg from the bridge seemed quieter but as we neared the end point at the Hartenstein Museum, the crowds swelled once more and that sense of pride at being involved in something very special re-established itself.

It is 73 years since the original tragic events in this Dutch town unfolded and much of the Market Garden story is passing into myth. It is part of the British psyche to attribute glory to defeat and nowhere is that more palpable than here. **Duncan Glen** ◀



*There can be no more fitting epitaph to the past and aspiration for the future than the inscription on the memorial at the entrance to the Hartenstein Museum. It reads:*

**To the people of Gelderland**

*50 years ago British and Polish Airborne soldiers fought here against overwhelming odds to open the way into Germany and bring the war to an early end. Instead we brought death and destruction for which you have never blamed us.*

*This stone marks our admiration for your great courage remembering especially the women who tended our wounded.*

*In the long winter that followed your families risked death by hiding Allied soldiers and airmen while members of the Resistance helped many to safety.*

*You took us into your homes as fugitives and friends, we took you forever into our hearts. This strong bond will continue long after we are all gone*

*The muster point in woodland on the edge of Ede heath*

**'The whistles shrilled again and there was a mad scramble to pile back into vehicles'**





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## *'The 834th division earned a Presidential Unit Citation for its support to besieged US Marines during the 1968 Siege of Khe Sanh'*



**The original caption reads: "Hercules - quick response. In what officials of the 834th Air Division called the biggest 'quick response' move of the Vietnam War, aircraft such as the Lockheed C-130 Hercules, transferred the entire division in operation Liberty Canyon. Infantrymen of the 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) are seen jammed into vehicles before the troop cargo transports air lifted them from Camp Evans to their new headquarters near Tay Ninh." Clearly evident in the picture, as well as the C-130 are a pair of MUTT 151A1 1/4-ton 4x4 utility trucks and a M35 series 2½-ton 6x6 cargo truck.**

From mid-October 1966 onwards, the US 834th Air Division operated as the controlling agency for theatre airlift operations in South Vietnam. It served as a single manager for all tactical airlift operations in South Vietnam. In this role the 834th had operational control over 315th Air Division Lockheed C-130 Hercules assigned to duties in Vietnam.

These planes undertook a variety of roles including facilitating Operation Junction City, the largest American airborne assault of the Vietnam war. This was an assault on Viet Cong forces by soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade who were parachuted into drop zones near Ca Tum, close to the Cambodian border. Also in 1967, the C-130s participated in Operation Banish Beach to deforest areas of ground to support the USMC's Operation Allen Brook, south of Danang to the west of Highway 1. The 834th division earned a Presidential Unit Citation for its support to besieged US Marines during the 1968 Siege of Khe Sanh but before that it would facilitate Operation Liberty Canyon.

Camp Evans (16.562°N 107.38°E) in central Vietnam was established by the 3rd Battalion 26th US Marines during 1966 as part of Operation Chinook. The camp was located to the west of Highway 1, about 24km north-west of Huế in Thừa Thiên-Huế Province, and was named after Marine Lance Corporal Paul Evans who was killed during Operation Chinook.

In January 1968, Camp Evans was taken over by the 1st Air Cavalry Division. Following 1st Air Cavalry's actions during the Tet offensive and in support of raising the siege of Khe Sanh, Operation Liberty Canyon of October 1968 was the repositioning of the US 1st Cavalry Division from Camp Evans in I Corps, south to Phước Vĩnh Combat Base in III Corps, in southern Vietnam.

The Phước Vĩnh Combat Base had been established in mid-1965 and was located approximately 35km north of Biên Hòa in the vicinity of Tây Ninh, a provincial city in the region north of Saigon. The division remained here through the US withdrawal from Vietnam and its final units returned stateside during 1972.

### **Additional Information**

*By the time the 1st Cavalry Division fought in the Vietnam War it was no longer a conventional infantry unit but had become an air assault division. In this guise it was known as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), commonly referred to as the 1st Air Cavalry Division. The use of helicopters on the large scale of the Vietnam War was a new development in battlefield mobility. The 1st Air Cavalry Division's first major operation in Vietnam was to help relieve the Siege of Plei Me near Pleiku and pursue of the withdrawing North Vietnamese Army. This culminated in the Battle of Ia Drang, described in *We Were Soldiers Once... And Young*, the 1992 book by Lt Gen Harold G Moore (Ret) and journalist Joseph L Galloway (ISBN-10: 0552150266). It was also the basis of the Mel Gibson and Sam Elliot film, *We Were Soldiers*. As a result of its actions in the Ia Drang Valley battle, the division earned the Presidential Unit Citation (US), the first unit to receive one in the Vietnam War. In the Vietnam War, the First Cavalry Division suffered more casualties than any other US Army division: 5,444 men killed and 26,592 wounded in action.*

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