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W W II

ALL THE KING'S MEN[™]

The British Empire's Finest Hour



By **BRIAN J. UNDERHILL**

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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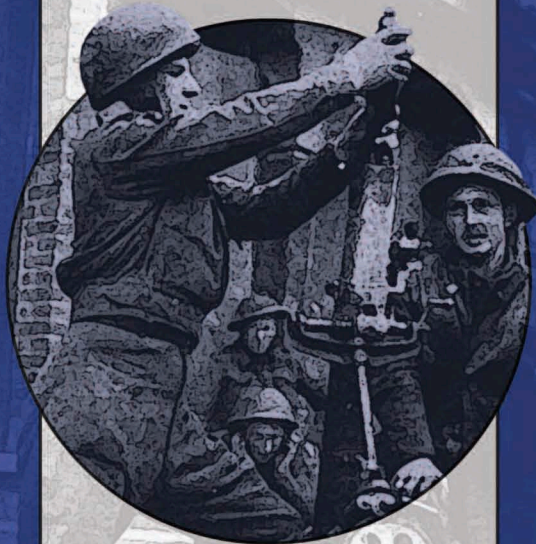
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THE SPITFIRES

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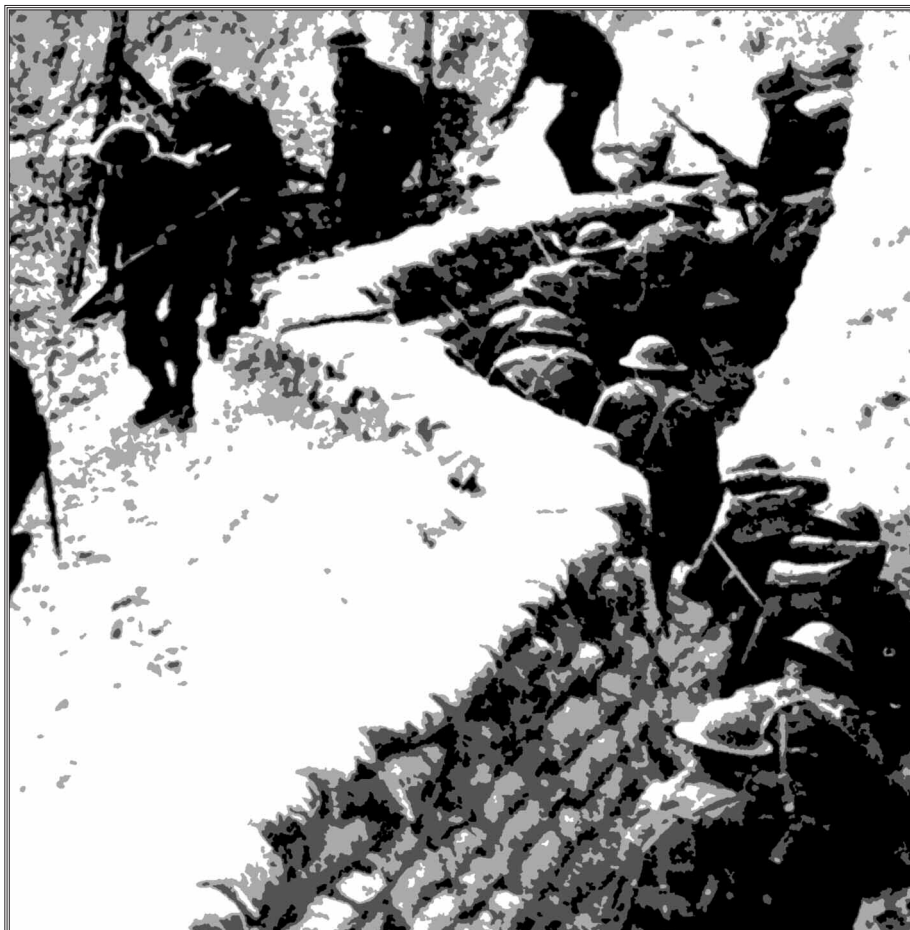
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INTRODUCTION

The English used to boast that the sun never sets on the British Empire. For the centuries leading up to WWII, that was a geographic reality that made Britain the envy of other would-be superpowers. In a crisis, the United Kingdom could draw upon far-flung colonies, protectorates, and commonwealths for men and material. The nation would never have to stand alone.

And yet, it did. In a sense, the British themselves started WWII, by finally saying “enough” to Hitler’s increasing aggression. Though much of the British Empire – including nations that long enjoyed enough independence to say no if they wanted to – and France joined this war against Nazi Germany within days, the United Kingdom held center stage in the early Allied war effort. Within a year, with the fall of France, it all but had the stage to itself. Its distant offspring could offer little more than moral support as the island nation faced a seemingly invincible German military machine.

The British did not blink. In the war’s darkest days, they alone kept the Allied torch burning, fully expecting to die as a free people rather than survive as a beaten one. In December 1941, the United States entered the war and Britain gained hope – but Japanese aggression also forced Britain to fight for its colonies. Just as the threat to Britain itself ebbed, the threat to the rest of the empire grew.

This led the British into a truly world war, ranging from Scandinavia to Burma, France to New Guinea. While these British forces consisted largely of true Brits, many of them

hailed from the far corners of the empire. Commonwealth troops included ANZACs from Australia and New Zealand, who forged reputations for rugged determination in the African sands. Canadians stormed the beaches at Normandy. Nepalese Gurkhas proved themselves fierce time and again. Though *All the King’s Men* focuses on Great Britain and its men, these Commonwealth troops also receive the attention that they deserve.

Though there were several embarrassing defeats for the British forces, in the end the nation stood triumphant at the cost of more than 300,000 fighting men and 60,000 civilians. Victory came as much from Churchill’s inspirational speeches and civilian endurance on the home front as from the efforts of the soldiers who gave all in some nightmarish, flea-infested colonial front. It’s hard to say what Hitler’s destiny would have been without the British as a constant thorn in his side, but certainly life around the world would not be the same if not for the “blood, sweat, and tears” of this island folk.

About the Author

Brian J. Underhill has been writing for Steve Jackson Games since 1989. He is well known as the author of *GURPS Cliffhangers* and *GURPS SWAT*, and has written or contributed to many other *GURPS* supplements, including several books in the *GURPS WWII* line. More information is available at www.brianunderhill.com.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we’ll be happy to let you know what’s new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9”x12” SASE – please use two stamps! – or visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/.

The *GURPS WWII: All the King’s Men* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ww2/allthekingsmen/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are CII to *Compendium*

II, W to *WWII*, W:D to *WWII: Dogfaces*, W:GL to *WWII: Grim Legions*, W:HS to *WWII: Hand of Steel*, W:IC to *WWII: Iron Cross*, and W:RH to *WWII: Return to Honor*. The abbreviation for *this* book is W:AKM. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.



1. BRITAIN AT WAR

**After the
horrid toll
of the
Great War,
Britain again
found itself
at the center
of a brewing
storm.**

We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and the oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air; we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

– Winston Churchill

As the 20th century began, the British empire enjoyed pride of place over its many rivals: the upstart United States, quarrelsome France, blustery Germany, and backward (but huge) Russia. The Royal Navy continued its hold over the world's oceans, and only the United States overshadowed the economic might of British factories. In a few years, however, grim new sensibilities would intrude upon both the empire's status and the Victorian self-satisfaction of its overseers.

THE TERRIBLE TIMES



Though the Great War had been brewing for many years, it nonetheless arrived in a rush that startled many Britons.

The summer of 1914 was packed with events that each inexorably moved Europe a bit closer to war (see p. W6). Turkey and Germany were inching toward an alliance, and Great Britain was moving further away from both. The British had built two battleships to Turkish order, but on August 3 – with war flaring on the continent – Winston Churchill informed Turkey that the warships would not be delivered.

Germany offered Turkey usage of two German-crewed cruisers in their place, a move that would prove crucial in Turkey's decision to enter the war. At the time, those very ships were bombarding French towns on the North African coast. A small Royal Navy flotilla idled nearby, because Britain was not yet in the war. German demands on Belgium prompted the British to enter the fray on the very next day.

The British Expeditionary Force

After the Boer War, War Minister Richard Haldane had created the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) for deployment on foreign soil. On August 22, 1914, the BEF consisted of some 120,000 men, but only four divisions were sent to Belgium, under Sir John French. By October, three more infantry and three cavalry divisions had been added. In December, the BEF was divided into 1st and 2nd Army groups. (A 3rd Army was created in July 1915, and a 4th in March 1916.) They were heartily welcomed by French and Belgians, alike.

THE WESTERN FRONT

Germany's troops had swept aside the small Belgian army. French and British forces under French General Joseph Joffre met the invaders, but suffered defeats at Sambre and Mons. By the end of August, the French 5th and 6th Armies and the BEF were in retreat and the Germans en route to Paris.

The French and British, or Entente, forces retreated some 40 miles south of the Marne, where Joffre planned a counter-attack against the German 1st Army. The Entente units were able to split the German line, and on September 9 the Kaiser's men were finally driven back and forced to retreat past the Marne before settling in for an extended war. By the end of the next day, the Battle of the Marne was over, at a cost of some 250,000 men on each side. The BEF lost 12,733.

The battle prevented a quick, decisive German victory. Germany's ability to retreat in orderly manner and regroup, however, meant that the war was far from over.

Trench Warfare

Determined not to lose any more of the ground he had gained, German General Erich von Falkenhayn ordered his men to dig defensive lines in September 1914. After failed attempts to break those lines, the Entente, too, dug trenches. The Germans already had the good, high ground, so the Entente lines became a morass of nearly unlivable conditions. Soldiers digging in the sandy soil found water only a few feet down.

Within months, the trenches stretched from the North Sea to Switzerland. Life in them was a daily struggle against mud, water, trenchfoot (an infection of wet feet), rats, poor food, body lice, and the "normal" dangers of warfare – artillery barrages, poison gas, aerial attacks, and bullets. It was an experience that often drove hardened soldiers to madness.

Battle of the Somme

The next several months saw little change along the front. Then on February 21, 1916, Germany attacked the French at Verdun. This degenerated into a lengthy campaign of attrition, and the desperate French pushed the British to attack along the Somme to relieve some of the pressure. Britain agreed, and at 7:20 a.m. on July 1, 1916, the troops leapt from their trenches.

By noon, 50,000 of those men lay dead in no man's land. It was only the beginning. Like Verdun, the Somme stretched on, claiming more than a million casualties by November. Like the Germans, the British had gone to war in high spirits, envisioning a quick and nearly bloodless victory. Instead, they watched an entire generation of fair-haired sons – scholars and poets and the best and brightest – disappear into the mud. Entire cities declared days of mourning, but the shock and horror would linger through this war and the years leading to the next.

The Hindenburg Line

In February 1917, Germany gave up 1,000 square miles and pulled back to its new Hindenburg Line, a triple set of improved trenches. On September 18, 1918, Australian and British forces attacked this line, spearheaded by their new weapon: the tank. They broke through, and on September 29 the Hindenburg Line was broken, mostly by U.S. and Australian troops because the United Kingdom proper had just about run out of military-age men in the preceding years.

Within weeks the Entente powers would claim victory, but for the British (as well as the French) it had come at a terribly dear price. Nearly a million men would not come home again, and millions more would bear the scars of their experience.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

In 1919, the formerly warring parties met at Versailles to draw up a treaty. While U.S. President Woodrow Wilson called for leniency and French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau demanded economic revenge on Germany, British Prime Minister Lloyd George maneuvered about in hopes of increasing Britain's colonial holdings. Great Britain, in particular England, had long profited by extracting materials and cheap labor from its colonies while investing little back into them. The British were eager to engage in more of this sort of profiteering, because they were about to enter an economic crisis.

What Is Great Britain?

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is one of two independent states occupying the British Isles. The largest island, sometimes known simply as Britain, consists of the nations of England, Scotland, and Wales; the second-largest island, Ireland, comprises the Republic of Ireland (or Eire) in the south (fully independent and neutral during WWII), and Northern Ireland, a province of the United Kingdom.

Most of the smaller islands are politically attached to the nearest British nation, but the Isle of Man, between Britain and Ireland, is a dependency of the British crown. Though not geographically part of the British Isles, the Channel Islands (p. 11) are also crown dependencies.

A BRITISH DEPRESSION

During the Great War, Britain had borrowed more than 1.3 billion pounds and had loaned out half again that much. With Russia, Germany, and France too broke to resume buying British goods, it seemed unlikely that Britain could earn enough money to pay off its debts. Furthering the crisis, the country's staple industries – shipbuilding, coal mining, and textiles – had entered a slump, and it had failed to develop new and thriving industries – such as oil, autos, and aviation.

Budget deficits, war debt, and unemployment plagued the nation. Budget cuts eased the deficits, but war debt could only be addressed through higher taxes. Most of the European countries that owed Britain war debts could not – or would not – pay them. Unemployment climbed during the interwar years and the government diverted more and more money to unemployment relief, known as “the dole.” Tariffs aimed at protecting British industries further damaged British exports.

Given all these hardships, little money remained for the military. In 1919, the government cut the defense budget and began citing the “10-year rule” – Europe would not be ready for war for at least a decade, so no military expenditures were needed. Such assurances were repeated as late as 1932. The Royal Air Force was turned into little more than a skeleton force through the 1920s. British troops and equipment reached an all-time low in 1932.

To keep other nations from outpacing them, the British engaged in a series of disarmament conferences, most famously the Washington conference of 1922 and London conference of 1930, both of which limited shipbuilding. While the British were quite pleased with the results of these meetings, they allowed aggressive nations such as Japan to rapidly bring their forces up to par with the leading powers.

The Political Fallout

Three parties dominated British politics between world wars: the long-established Conservatives (or Tories), the fading Liberals (originally Whigs), and the growing socialist Labour Party. The Labour Party was generally opposed to rearmament and the Conservatives (with the exception of the loose-cannon Churchill) tended to favor appeasement (see below).

Given its domestic policies and the hard economic times, Labour rose as the Liberals fell, twice gaining power as a minority in Parliament with the support of the Liberals. On the international front, Labour opposed war, armaments, even empire-building. As a general rule the party supported the “international socialism” that was creating a great deal of conservative concern during this period, and it perceived that the French vengeance that won the day at Versailles was victimizing Germany. Though Labour certainly did not care for the Nazis, it envisioned that a rebuilt Germany could become the economic engine of a rebuilt Europe.

These perspectives combined to lead Labour into “appeasement” of Hitler as he began testing his power in the mid-1930s. Britain's Labour leaders wanted to avoid war at all costs, reasoned that they could not pay for a war even if they wanted one, and felt Germany indeed possessed legitimate reasons to lash out at its postwar mistreatment.

Appeasement

Since WWII, “appeasement” has become a dirty word, but between wars the British government saw it as a logical outgrowth of international agreements. Compromises were made to keep the peace. Sometimes the compromise favored the aggressor (e.g., Japan in Manchuria in 1931) but prevented a larger war. Appeasement seemed to work in Spain, perhaps even preventing a general European war. While not perfect, it seemed the ideal policy for a cash-strapped Britain at the time.

Nevertheless, appeasement failed spectacularly in regards to Germany. In hindsight, it's clear that the British underestimated Hitler's resolve to lead his nation back into armed conflict. Worse, appeasement undermined German opposition to the Nazis' bullying ways. Insightful PCs may resist the popular opinion of the day, but they will face an uphill struggle against those seeking “peace in our time” without paying the price for it. The press and other politicians often savaged Churchill for his interwar warnings about Hitler; others would suffer similar abuses.

A RELUCTANT REARMAMENT

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The British government of 1939 was a parliamentary democracy with a number of surviving elements of the older aristocratic system. Parliament was divided into the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The lords, consisting of senior bishops (lords spiritual), judges (law lords), and hereditary peers (barons, viscounts, earls, marquesses, and dukes), had considerable power and influence, but were prevented by the Parliament Act of 1911 from holding up legislation for more than two years. They included a number of peers appointed primarily to represent the major parties.

The House of Commons was the nation's representative body. Its members (MPs), who had to be commoners, were elected, one from each of the 604 constituencies in the United Kingdom. A local election (or "by-election") took place when an MP resigned or died; a national election ("general election") took place every five years – sooner if the ruling party requested it – or in response to a crisis such as a vote of no confidence in the House. The 1935 Parliament remained largely unchanged throughout most of WWII.

The party leader who was judged best able to form a government was invited to do so by the monarch. If one party had an absolute majority in the Commons, the choice was simple. But if there was a "hung parliament" with no clear majority – as happened at times between the wars – some kind of coalition was agreed upon and the role of the monarch as appointing agent became much more important and delicate.

In theory, the prime minister could be a member of the House of Lords, but by the 20th century this was considered unacceptable. There was, however, some discussion of offering the position to Lord Halifax in 1940.

The prime minister then formed the government, selecting cabinet ministers from the MPs and lords supporting the political coalition that backed him.

After 1940, the wartime government became a potentially unstable coalition of the three major parties. The prime minister needed to maintain the support of a majority of MPs, since the Commons could, at any time, pass a motion of no confidence, which would require that the PM resign and a new government be formed. To avoid this possibility, unpopular prime ministers were ousted by their parties, as in the case of the ill-fated Neville Chamberlain in 1940.

When Chamberlain was removed, Lord Halifax was uncertain whether or not the Commons would accept him as prime minister, leaving the way open for the controversial Churchill to assume the position.

Those favoring appeasement (p. 7) could not have asked for a better prime minister than Neville Chamberlain (p. 52). A vain man who greatly overestimated his diplomatic prowess, and a former bean-counter well aware that raising taxes to build an army would destroy his government's popularity, Chamberlain went to extremes to justify doing nothing as Nazi Germany's aggression became increasingly pronounced (see pp. W10-12).

Regardless, the government began hedging its bet by slowly preparing for the possibility of another war. Military spending reversed course and began to increase in 1935. Plans for a major war were revised in 1936 and military spending mildly accelerated once again. Despite the prime minister's concerns, Parliament passed special taxation for armaments in 1937 and lifted restrictions on the armament industry in 1938. By the end of that year, British production of tanks and aircraft almost equaled German production. Still, the British were doing relatively little, and starting relatively late. By the end of 1938, time was running out.

Enough Becomes Enough

In March 1939, Hitler took over the Czechoslovakian rump state that he'd explicitly promised to leave alone upon demanding an earlier chunk of that nation (see pp. WW11 and W:IC104). In public, the British officials at appeasement's forefront explained this away as legally correct, but in private they finally realized that Hitler had been playing them for timid fools.

The government attempted to form an alliance to keep Hitler in check, but given that Germany's neighbors held almost as much suspicion of each other as of the Führer, Britain ended up making do by forming an aid pact with Poland. An increasingly ill Chamberlain was comforted by the fact that France had agreed to make assurances as well, and by the thought that he had left enough loopholes in this agreement to wiggle out of it if need be. With the no-nonsense directness of men with guns held to their heads, the Poles quickly moved to shore up Britain's stance and leave its prime minister no room to show off his less-than-legendary resolve.

The war scare heightened as 1938 turned into 1939, but along with it came an increasing British resolve – starting in the streets before moving up into the corridors of power – that something would have to be done. Crowds who had cheered appeasement a year earlier began rallying to the idea that Hitler needed tackling sooner rather than later.

Sooner suited Hitler, too. On September 1, 1939, he sent his troops into Poland, fully expecting the British leadership to cave in yet again. They did not even consider the prospect. Along with France, the British declared war against Germany two days later. Though in no way obliged to do so, Australia and New Zealand immediately followed suit. Canada, South Africa, and India soon joined the cause. From the beginning, the United Kingdom would fight arm in arm with its dominions and holdings from across the globe. In a short time, they would be fighting around the globe, as well.

A FAMILIAR ROAD TO WAR

What began as a European war would eventually lead to British troops fighting over most of the globe. To make it easier to follow each “thread” of this epic military effort, this history parses the war by geographic region. For a better idea of how the British war effort fit together on a global level, see the timeline on pp. 27-28.

The North African and Middle Eastern theaters receive a closer look as campaign settings in Chapter 5.

FRANCE

Britain’s declaration of war against Germany in September 1939 brought little actual warfare during the opening months. Both Britain and France engaged Germany in what became known as the “phony war.” The British Expeditionary Force (p. 37), together with the French armies, stared across the border at the few German troops not busy in Poland. Neither side made any serious incursions – the Germans were too few to even think of aggression – but neither side backed down.

After securing Poland and starting a medium-scale invasion in Scandinavia (pp. 11-14), the Wehrmacht finally attacked the patient (or placid) BEF and French defensive line in the spring of 1940. The Germans attacked through the Low Countries in a feint designed to lure the French and British forces northward. Once the Allies were engaged in Belgium and Holland, Germany’s Army Group A punched through the supposedly impassible Ardennes forest, severing communication and supply lines, and trapping their enemies.

At the time, the BEF, under Lord Gort, took its orders from French General Henri-Honoré Giraud, commander of the Allied 1st Army, of which the BEF was part. After several unsuccessful attempts to repel the German attack, Giraud and Gort began to move backward toward the French coast, trying to hold ground at every turn, but failing miserably in most engagements. Soon they had been driven almost to the English Channel, and it became clear that evacuation was the only viable option.

Most of the soldiers and officers of the Allied 1st believed they would simply evacuate and return to southern France to continue the fight. A layover of a few days or even weeks was expected; none believed it would be four years before they set foot in France once again.

See *GURPS WWII: Return to Honor* for more details on the Battle of France.



THE CONFETTI WAR

From the start of the war, Britain spent no small amount of time on propaganda and psychological warfare. Leaflets fell from planes and balloons and covered German cities in a blanket of propaganda. More than 20 million leaflets were dropped on Germany in September 1939 alone.

The campaign was designed to spread fear and instill confidence among those opposed to the Nazis. Leaflets proclaiming impending victory were meant to inspire resistance behind enemy lines, while others threatened a nasty end to the Nazi occupation with intent to prompt defections and swell the number of Allied sympathizers.

One leaflet, emblazoned with a Nazi swastika hanging from a gallows, proclaimed: “The day is coming.” Another showed a line of headstones bearing the names of four fallen cities (Rotterdam, Warsaw, Louvain, Amiens) and proclaimed: “Total war against the weaker didn’t hurt you.” The back boldly threatened: “We hit back.”

A German-language newspaper (called *Luftpost*) was printed in England and airdropped into Germany from 1941 to ’44. It was a four-page, 5x8” leaflet that often included photos. The cover article featured positive Allied propaganda while the inside was dedicated to destroying German sympathy. Foreign-language articles, mostly in Polish and French, were aimed at prisoners and civilians in occupied countries. Lists of POW names appeared regularly.

The propaganda war began in the basement of Electra House – the home of the Eastern and Associated Telegraph Cos. at Moorgate. Electra House operations were soon designated SO-1 and became a department of the Special Operations Executive (p. 42). Leaflets were often dropped by loose bundles from open airplane doors, or simply shoved by the handful down chutes intended for dropping flares.

PCs may find work creating or distributing such leaflets. British bombers flew deep into German territory just to deliver their payload of paper instead of bombs. Soldiers behind enemy lines may find the propaganda a valuable (if often biased) source of information on the Allied war effort. An entire adventure could be created around the arrival of a particularly disturbing leaflet or *Luftpost* article.

Examples of such leaflets can be found online and make excellent handouts to supplement a campaign.

Dunkirk

Admiral Bertram Ramsay (p. 57) oversaw the evacuation of the BEF from France in Operation Dynamo. Beginning on May 20, he gathered vessels of every sort in preparation for an eventual evacuation of the French coast. Three ports were to be used – Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk – but before the operation could begin, the first two had fallen. Only Dunkirk and the open beaches along the Belgian frontier remained in Allied hands.

Dynamo began May 26, and the first troops were home by nightfall, but Ramsay realized that the shipping complement was not enough to convey the growing flood of evacuees to England in time. Civilian boats from London (tugs from the Thames river, luxury yachts, fishing boats, barges, even lifeboats) took to sea to help save the trapped French and British soldiers.

In all, some 850 small craft and a fleet of 39 destroyers rescued more than 300,000 soldiers from the port and beaches in only a matter of days.

See pp. W15 and W:RH9 for more information.

Operation Catapult

France fell, and Germany established an almost puppet Vichy government for the portion of the nation that it did not keep for itself. Churchill began to worry about the French fleet; in the hands of Nazi sympathizers – or if simply seized by Hitler – it could join the German Kriegsmarine and reduce the Royal Navy's dominance in surface vessels. The British devised Operation Catapult to keep those French ships out of German hands.

A British task force, Force H, was assembled under Admiral Somerville (p. 57). On July 3, 1940, Force H arrived at the French port of Mers-el-Kébir on the Gulf of Oran. Somerville delivered an ultimatum to the French fleet there, then opened fire when the French attempted to flee. Damage to Force H was light, but the French suffered heavy losses (see p. W:RH11).

Raid on Dieppe

Force H's naval battle served as an epilogue to the first phase of fighting in France. The fighting went on elsewhere for two years before an ill-advised commando action served as an opening to the next phase.

By mid-1942, the Soviet Union and United States were lobbying for the Allies to return to France. The primary theater in the war had become Russia, and this proposed European "second front" would ease the great pressure on the Soviets.

The British did not believe that the time was right. The United States had entered the war only months earlier; its soldiers and war industries were only beginning to learn their jobs. Churchill talked Roosevelt into committing to a North African campaign (see *Operation Torch*, pp. 105-108). Still, the British felt that some gesture needed to be made to give the Russians at least the impression of progress on the second front. This gesture took the form of a raid into occupied France, modeled on previous successful commando operations such as the raid on St. Nazaire (see pp. W:HS4-5). Beyond its symbolic power, the raid would field-test the

existing tactics for attacking a defended port from the sea, information that would be vital in any future invasion.

Code-named Operation Jubilee, the raid on Dieppe was spearheaded by the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division, assisted by Commandos #3 and 4 and a handful of U.S. Rangers. Supporting forces included eight Allied destroyers and hundreds of planes. Although it was originally planned for July, Jubilee was delayed more than once. The delays may have allowed the Germans to catch wind of the invasion, giving them time to strengthen their defenses. On August 19, 1942, Operation Jubilee went off.

It would become a complete disaster. After a late start, the Allied transports encountered a small German convoy just outside the harbor. The ensuing firefight alerted German authorities and delayed the operation, forcing troops assigned to capture shore batteries east of Dieppe to land at dawn, instead of at night. They were wiped out before they could get near the batteries.

Forces landing west of Dieppe managed to destroy the shore batteries covering the harbor, but when they attempted to move inland and attack the port from the rear, they encountered German reinforcements and were forced back to the sea.

The main force landed in the harbor against heavy German defenses. Hampered by a narrow beach and a concrete seawall, they made little progress. Those units that made it off the beach were quickly bottled up in vicious house-to-house fighting. Churchill tanks disembarked for infantry support, but could not climb the steep shingle beach. Many were destroyed by German antitank fire.

By early afternoon, it was clear the attack had failed. The ensuing evacuation was accomplished with great bravery and under heavy fire. Overhead, the RAF kept the Luftwaffe away from the naval task force, but suffered their single worst day of losses during the war.

The raid on Dieppe cost the Allies 30 tanks, 33 landing craft, 106 aircraft, and some 3,600 men, mostly Canadians. The British learned valuable lessons about fire support, landing techniques, and tactics, forcing them to rethink their entire concept of amphibious landings, but the necessity of the casualties of Operation Jubilee is still debated to this day.

D-Day

After another two years, the Allies were ready to take France back from the Nazi regime. A vast armada of ships was formed and thousands of tons of supplies were stockpiled in England. On June 6, 1944, Allied forces stormed the beaches at Normandy in the biggest amphibious operation in history.

British and Canadian forces assaulted the eastern beaches – Sword, Juno, and Gold – with the British 6th Airborne Division anchoring the eastern flank. The British 3rd Infantry Division was tasked with taking Sword, the easternmost beach, while the 3rd Canadian landed at Juno. These two divisions formed 1st Corps, with the 50th Division assaulting Gold as part of 30th Corps.

Glider-borne soldiers of the 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckingham Light Infantry, part of the 6th Airborne, landed a few minutes past midnight – well before the beach landings began – taking bridges over the Orne, Caen, and Benouville canals.

OCCUPATION OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

The islands of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, and four smaller islands off the Cherbourg peninsula were the last parts of William the Conqueror's Norman lands still attached to the British crown. On June 30, 1940, a Luftwaffe platoon occupied Guernsey without resistance. The following day Jersey was occupied in the same manner and Berlin Radio announced the first occupation of British soil by German troops.

The islands had been demilitarized as the fall of France became imminent, and in the week prior to the German invasion, more than 22,000 people had been evacuated to the mainland. The evacuation left some of the smaller islands, including Alderney, almost depopulated. The islanders who remained were a particular propaganda prize to the Nazis and were treated relatively well.

Open resistance was rare, as there were few places on the small islands for partisans to hide. Even small efforts at defiance were punished; one woman, Winifred Green, went to prison for four months for uttering the words "Heil Churchill." Black-market activity, collaborators, informers, and deportation to continental labor camps were, like elsewhere in occupied Europe, a fact of life.

The Germans felt that the Channel Islands were an important part of their "Atlantic Wall" of defenses, and poured vast resources into fortifying these small bits of land with otherwise little military significance. Wehrmacht efforts to convince Hitler that this was unwise were undermined by one of the first wartime British commando raids, which targeted the island of Sark.

Many construction projects were completed by forced labor. Alderney, with so few of its own inhabitants, became an island concentration camp where French Jews and Russian POWs were worked to death with little chance of escape or survival.

The relative comfort of the occupation ended in 1944 when the islands received a new commander, Vice Admiral Friedrich Höffmeier. Conditions on the islands worsened; minor offenses led to deportation to concentration camps and the islanders themselves nearly starved. An ardent Nazi, Höffmeier planned for a bloody stand "until final victory," but little came of his ambitions.

On May 9, 1945, the German garrison surrendered to officers of the Royal Navy, ending five years of occupation. It was seven hours after the war had officially ended in Europe. One islander's diary read: "We are alive and well, and British again."

The bridge at Benouville was the first piece of France liberated by the Allies; it later became known as the Pegasus Bridge, named after the insignia of the British airborne troops. Additional airborne troops drove on the German battery at Merville, storming it and taking it out of action in another heroic assault.

With the flank secure and Germany cut off from the beaches, Allied forces stormed ashore. The struggle was hard fought, but soon the beachhead was secure, and British and American troops began the long journey to liberate France once and for all. A detailed look at the D-Day invasion can be found in *GURPS WWII: Dogfaces*.

SCANDINAVIA

From the start of the war, Scandinavia was the focus of both British and German forces. Two-thirds of Germany's iron ore came from Sweden, and during the winter the only ice-free port that was available for its export was Narvik, Norway. As early as September 29, 1939, Churchill, as first lord of the Admiralty, suggested intercepting the ore shipments along the "Leads" – the protected seaway corridors between Norway's offshore islands and the mainland. But Prime Minister Chamberlain and Lord Halifax rejected the idea, refusing to violate Norway's neutrality by interdicting such shipments.

The Soviet invasion of Finland on November 30 (see *GURPS WWII: Frozen Hell*) raised the issue once again, and Britain and France made a concerted effort to persuade the remaining independent Scandinavian countries, Norway and Sweden, to let a combined expedition land at Narvik and use the Swedish railway to cross into Finland at Tornio.

Norway and Sweden were concerned that such an Allied landing would provoke a German counter-invasion, and Germany was far better placed geographically to conduct operations in Scandinavia than Britain or France. Instead of allowing the landing, both Norway and Sweden urged Finland to make peace with the Soviets.

After a bitter struggle in which the overwhelmed Finns severely bloodied the Reds, Finland surrendered on March 13, 1940, ending any justification for an Allied landing. Edouard Daladier, France's prime minister, resigned on March 20 after a vote of no confidence. His successor pursued the idea of controlling Norway's commercial traffic to the advantage of the Allies.

After much discussion, at a meeting on March 28, Britain and France decided to deliver a joint diplomatic note to the Norwegians and Swedes, warning that they would consider themselves "free to intercept the iron-ore traffic destined for Germany." They also began to sow minefields at three points along the Norwegian coastal sea lane on April 4-5 and considered the viability of laying minefields from aircraft along the Swedish coastal route after the spring thaw. Still, many delays hindered the Allied timetable, not the least of which was gathering the shipping necessary to transport troops.

Elsewhere, behind-the-scenes politics were playing a critical role in Germany. Major Vidkun Quisling led the Norwegian Fascist party, which simply failed to appeal to Norwegians. He made contact with German Admiral Erich Raeder (see p. W:IC55) on December 11. Raeder immediately sent Quisling to Hitler, and the two began conspiring against the Norwegian government.

THE ALTMARK INCIDENT

The *Altmark* was a German supply ship attached to the pocket battleship *Graf Spee*. She was returning to Germany, using Norwegian waters, carrying 299 British merchant seamen that the *Graf Spee* had captured. When the British Admiralty found out, they ordered a rescue. On the night of February 16, 1940, Captain Philip Vian of the *HMS Cossack*, a British destroyer, pursued the *Altmark* into the Jossing Fjord near Stavanger and boarded her with three officers and 30 ratings. After a melee using bayonets, the *Altmark* was captured; four Germans were killed and five wounded.

Norwegian protests of this violation of neutrality died in the face of proof that Norway had permitted an armed vessel to take refuge in neutral waters.

Operation Weserübung

The Germans descended on Norway with 430 combat aircraft, 570 other aircraft, seven infantry divisions, two mountain divisions, and nearly the entire German fleet. Despite warnings from Holland on April 4, 1940, and from the survivors of a German transport sunk by the Polish submarine *Orzel* on April 8, the Norwegians were completely unprepared for the German arrival. Landings took place in cities all across the country, including Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Kristiansand, Arendal, and Oslo.

Despite the vast offensive, Norway fought back with British assistance, and they scored some notable successes. A Norwegian ship intercepted the tanker that was to refuel the destroyers that had landed General Eduard Dietl's mountain troops at Narvik. The Germans lost the cruiser *Blücher* to two torpedoes from shore installations near Oslo. The light cruiser *Königsberg* was damaged by shore guns at Bergen, and then sunk by the British Fleet Air Arm. At Kristiansand, the British submarine *Truant* sank the light cruiser *Karlsruhe*.

The British put a task force to sea that included seven capital ships and 21 destroyers. Because the Admiralty wasn't sure of German intent, it was deployed both to cover Norway and to prevent a possible breakout into the North Atlantic.

The British cruiser *HMS Renown* and four destroyers were covering mine-laying operations off the Norwegian coast when the destroyer *HMS Glowworm* (p. 86) encountered the German cruiser *Hipper* near Trondheim. The *Hipper* quickly turned the *Glowworm* into a burning hulk, and yet her determined skipper, Lieutenant Commander G.B. Roope, managed to ram the German cruiser, tearing away more than 100' of plating. The *Glowworm* eventually sank; the *Hipper* stayed to rescue the British sailors from the icy waters.

The British Admiralty reacted immediately. The aircraft carrier *Furious* went to sea so quickly that she didn't even have her fighter group on board. The troops that had been ordered to Narvik were unloaded and the ships ordered to rejoin Home Fleet at once. Warships that could have entered Trondheim on the heels of the Germans were ordered to instead intercept the battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*.

Despite the mounting British naval opposition, by the evening of April 9 German troops controlled all the key Norwegian ports. Many of them had arrived by air, bypassing the formidable armada awaiting any naval transports. To make matters worse, Denmark had surrendered to Germany's ultimatum, giving Hitler easy access to the entire region.

Stalled at Trondheim

On April 15-16, as the battle for Narvik was just beginning, British troops went ashore near Trondheim. Major General A. Carton de Wiart and the 146th Brigade landed at Namsos, while Major General B. T. C. Paget landed with the 148th Brigade at Åndalsnes. These two forces were to take Trondheim by a converging attack, then link up with the Norwegian forces retreating northward through the Gudbrandsdal and Österdal valleys.

In the meantime, the Germans had been heavily reinforced, doubling their forces at Trondheim when the 181st joined the 2nd Gebirgsjäger division. Even with the arrival of the French 5th *Demi-Brigade of Chasseurs Alpine* at Namsos, and the British 15th Brigade at Åndalsnes, De Wiart and Paget were halted at Stinkjer and Lillehammer, respectively. On April 26, the decision was made to abandon south and central Norway and concentrate on Narvik.

The Battle for Narvik

On April 9, 10 German destroyers landed the 139th Gebirgsjäger Regiment at Narvik. Their refueling tanker had been sunk, so they remained in harbor. The next day, the British 2nd Destroyer Flotilla, consisting of five destroyers and commanded by Captain B.A.W. Warburton-Lee, entered Vestfjord and surprised the German ships. Both sides lost two destroyers and both commanders were killed; the Germans had another three destroyers damaged and lost a merchant ship loaded with ammunition for the German troops. On April 13, the cruiser *HMS Warspite*, leading a destroyer flotilla, entered Vestfjord and sank the remaining German destroyers, stranding more than 2,000 seamen on the frozen shores.

Allied troops didn't arrive until April 15, when the 24th Guards Brigade disembarked at Harstad, more than 60 miles from Narvik. The troops would have to cross both a sea channel and snow-covered mountains, making a rapid advance impossible. In addition, Admiral of the Fleet Lord William Boyle, commanding the naval units, and Major General P.J. Mackesy, commanding the land forces, could not agree on a plan. General Dietl took advantage of the resulting delay, and armed the stranded German seamen with captured Norwegian equipment, organizing them into roughly five battalions.

Soon the British 24th Guards Brigade moved to block the German 2nd Gebirgsjäger as they advanced toward Narvik. In early May, the 1st *Chasseur Light Division*, which included a Polish brigade, landed in the Narvik sector. Mackesy was recalled and Lieutenant General Claude Auchinleck (p. 55) sent to replace him.

On May 13, the 27th *Demi-Brigade* of the 1st *Chasseur* pushed forward to join French Foreign Legionnaires that had landed at Bjerkvik under covering fire from the Royal Navy, including the battleship *Resolution*, the cruisers *Effingham* and *Vindictive*, and five destroyers. The Legionnaires used

specialized landing craft to get both men and tanks ashore; it was the first time such craft were used.

Within days, the Germans had been reinforced by the 137th Gebirgsjäger Regiment and an airdropped parachute battalion. The battle for Narvik thus saw 13 Allied battalions facing 10 German.

Before a major battle could be fought, however, General Béthouart, commander of the 1st *Chasseurs*, received orders to re-embark because of events in France. (The German invasion there had begun three days earlier.) He made it clear to Auchinleck that it would be safer to take Narvik and then withdraw from there, rather than withdraw from other, smaller ports.

On May 28, in a short but pitched battle, units of the 1st *Chasseur* and the 6th Norwegian Division took Narvik. The *chasseurs* pursued the Germans to the Swedish border, then withdrew. The Germans didn't discover that the Allies had demolished Narvik's port and fled until June 7.

The 25,000 men of the combined expeditionary forces began their evacuation to Scotland. At that time, the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and *Hipper* had been ordered to engage Allied supply ships around Harstad, but their fleet commander opted to interfere with the Allied evacuation of Narvik, instead. On June 8, the German task force sank a tanker and a troopship, but followed international convention and spared a hospital ship. The hospital ship also followed standard convention and did not send out warning signals to the Allies.

Several hours later, the Germans surprised the aircraft carrier *Glorious*, escorted by two destroyers. All three British ships were sunk, but the destroyer *Acasta* managed to severely damage the *Scharnhorst* with a torpedo attack before going down. While covering the *Scharnhorst's* retreat, the *Gneisenau* was torpedoed by the British submarine *Clyde*, putting her out of action for six months.

BATTLE OF THE BARENTS SEA

On December 31, 1942, Convoy JW51B, with 14 merchant ships and tankers, was headed to Murmansk, Russia, escorted by a minesweeper, two trawlers, two corvettes, and six destroyers. The cruisers *Sheffield* and *Jamaica* were nearby, escorting a convoy to Scotland.

German submarine U-354 spotted and reported the convoy 240 miles from the German base at Altenfjord. Admiral Raeder ordered the *Lutzow*, *Hipper*, and six destroyers to intercept and destroy convoy JW51B.

Because of standing orders from Hitler not to risk the ships, the Kriegsmarine vice admiral in charge of the operation was cautious in battle. He separated the *Hipper* and *Lutzow* to pincer the convoy, with *Hipper* engaging first. The British escorts rushed to defend against *Hipper*, allowing the *Lutzow* to engage the rear of the convoy without worry. The *Lutzow* fired 162 shells in the poor winter light without a single direct hit. Two hours later, *HMS Sheffield* and *Jamaica* arrived, and firing from the darkness into the light to the south scored three hits on the *Hipper*. The battle turned into a game of blind man's bluff during the winter night, with the Germans losing the destroyer *Friedrich Eckholdt* and the British losing the destroyer *Achates* and the minesweeper *Bramble*.

Hitler was furious over the failure of the German navy to destroy the convoy, and spent 90 minutes in diatribe and incoherent arguments condemning the Kriegsmarine. Raeder retired in the wake of the battle; Admiral Karl Dönitz (see p. W:IC55) succeeded him.





Oslo

On April 9, the German cruiser *Bliicher* led a flotilla up the fjord to Oslo. The fortress Oscarsborg opened fire with its turn-of-the-century guns and torpedoes, and sank the cruiser with a loss of more than 1,000 lives. The cruiser *Lutzow* was damaged as well, and the flotilla withdrew down the fjord, putting ashore two battalions of the 163rd Infantry Division for an overland advance to Oslo.

The Norwegian royal family and most of the government evacuated the city, but the Norwegian forces stationed in and around the city were slow to respond. A small force of German infantry arrived at the Fornebu airfield and inflicted about 120 casualties on the Norwegians. The temporary commander, a Luftwaffe attaché stationed in Oslo, chose not to worry about possible actions by the Norwegians. He mustered his men into formation behind a military band and marched them down Oslo's streets unopposed, capturing the city of 250,000 without another shot being fired.

OPERATION GAUNTLET

The Allies had originally planned to invade and occupy the small Norwegian island of Spitzbergen, but with winter fast approaching a simple sabotage strike was arranged, instead.

A small task force made up of two Royal Navy cruisers, three destroyers, and the former luxury liner *Empress of Canada* arrived at Barentsburg on August 25, 1941. The liner carried a raiding party of Canadian engineers, a Norwegian platoon, and some Royal Army Service Corps personnel. After disembarking, the party quickly destroyed weather stations and coal-mining facilities, evacuating more than 2,000 civilians to Archangel, in the Soviet Union. The coal dumps smoldered for months.

On the return trip from Archangel, the *Empress of Canada* picked up the saboteurs and Norwegian miners and returned them to Britain.

A month later, a German Ju-52 landed at Longyear City, and the German occupation of the islands began.

EAST AFRICA

Much of colonial East Africa belonged to Italy at the start of the war. British and French forces confronted the Italians all along the borders of Eritrea, Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia), and Italian Somaliland. When Italy joined Germany in her war against the Allies on June 10, 1940, she faced enemy troops not only in France and North Africa, but in her East African colonies, as well.

These colonies were isolated from the Italian homeland, with only tenuous air and sea routes to keep the vast Italian ground forces in supply and communication. In most cases, Italian troops could muster numerical superiority, but struggled with limited supplies of fuel and ammunition, poor training, and the probability of facing Allied attack from several directions at once.

Although it offered very few natural resources and presented the empire with its own considerable logistics difficulties, East Africa was critical to Britain. Bases in the region allowed the Italians to strike at British supply lines that ran through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal; the Italians had seven destroyers, eight submarines, and two torpedo boats stationed at Massawa, Eritrea. Italy had garrisoned enough troops in its colonies that a ground assault on British and French Somaliland was also possible, and Allied holdings in the Sudan and Kenya could be threatened, as well.

Britain maintained a close watch on the region, but had very few troops facing the Italian forces at the beginning of the war. A few British detachments garrisoned Sudan and Kenya, small French units guarded French Somaliland, and the native Somaliland Camel Corps protected British Somaliland.

The Italian Offensive

In July 1940, Italian forces from Abyssinia moved against the small British garrisons along the Kenya and Sudan borders. Soon Italian troops marched into British Somaliland, taking the capital on August 19. They also moved on French Somaliland, capturing it as well – one of their only victories against the French during the war. They stopped short of invading the Sudan, believing that Britain had an entire division – 17,500 men – protecting it. In truth, it was guarded by fewer than 1,000.

The offensive was quick and decisive. The limited British and French defenses pulled back and surrendered ground, rather than slugging it out with the numerically superior Italians. By the end of the year, Churchill and Auchinleck ordered troops from North Africa sent to the region to bolster the British forces and to counterattack against the invaders.

British Counterattack

The British campaign to drive Italy from the region began in January 1941. The veteran 4th Indian Division (newly arrived from the North African campaign; p. 91) and 5th Indian Division invaded Eritrea from Sudan, while South African troops attacked Italian Somaliland from Kenya.

Much of the fighting in the region more closely resembled 19th-century colonial warfare than an industrialized 20th-century war. Camel-mounted cavalry charged bayonet-wielding defenders, and foot soldiers marched into battle with little or no mechanized assistance.

By February, the Indians had reached Keren, where a battle would rage for two months. In the south, native troops from South and East Africa had progressed to the Somaliland capital of Mogadishu, which fell on the 25th. The victorious forces pressed onward, driving into Abyssinia shortly thereafter.

In March, British forces were shipped from Aden to British Somaliland to drive into Abyssinia from the northeast. In Eritrea, the battle for Keren ended and the Indians opened the road to the Eritrean capital of Asmara and the port of Massawa. On April 1, the 4th Indian occupied Asmara, taking the vital port only a week later and completing the Allied conquest of Eritrea.

In the south, at nearly the same time, British forces were victorious over Abyssinia, taking the capital city of Addis Ababa on April 6. Resistance continued in the northern part of the country until mid-May, but the major Italian forces finally surrendered at Amba Alagi on May 19.

Pockets of resistance would continue throughout the region for months, with the last of the Italian holdouts surrendering in northern Abyssinia on November 27, 1941. See *GURPS WWII: Grim Legions* for more on the Italian troops opposing the British in this theater.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

The battle for the Mediterranean was largely a battle for control of supply routes. Allied control meant an easy supply route for British troops in North Africa; Axis control meant that supplies had to take the lengthy journey around Africa and through the Suez Canal. One route meant a matter of days, the other a matter of weeks. Supplies from Australia, New Zealand, and India, could be shipped through the Red Sea and the Suez without undue delay, but men and materiel outbound from the British Isles or Americas depended on the Mediterranean for quick shipment to Egypt.

Once Italy joined the war, British planners all but abandoned the direct supply route to Egypt, accepting the Cape route as a slow but unavoidable necessity. Instead, they focused on an offensive campaign, trying to disrupt the north-south Italian supply lines in the Mediterranean.

OPERATION IRONCLAD

The Vichy-held island of Madagascar, off the coast of Africa, represented an enemy base in the heart of Allied shipping lanes. Not only could Vichy and German forces operate from there, but it was a potential base for Japanese forces, too. To prevent the Japanese from gaining a foothold in the region – thereby disrupting shipping routes in the East and South African sea lanes – the Allies mounted an invasion on May 5, 1942.

Operation Ironclad was one of the largest British amphibious operations to date, and included the battleship *Ramillies*, the aircraft carriers *Illustrious* and *Indomitable*, the cruiser *Devonshire*, 11 destroyers, eight corvettes, and 20 mixed support ships.

Before dawn, British Commando #5 made a silent landing near the primary target, Diego Suarez, neutralizing two artillery batteries and capturing 300 prisoners before joining the main attack on the city and port. They joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers in a 20-mile march on the city, encountering strong French resistance by noon. Other troops, supported by naval and air bombardment, assaulted various key points near the city. By May 7, Diego Suarez had fallen.

Fighting continued in outlying areas of the island for months, but Allied forces turned Diego Suarez into a strong Allied base of operations, using Commando #5 for many operations all summer. Vichy forces rejected the Allied offer of surrender on September 18, and another landing to take Tamatave drove the French defenders out of the city after intense street fighting.

The entire island fell under Allied control two months later, on November 5, 1942. Diego Suarez remained a vital port for the Allies throughout the war.

This battle varied in importance and intensity throughout the war. Prior to Italy's entry in June 1940 – with Italy neutral and Germany landlocked to the south – very little fighting occurred in the area. Britain used the time to bolster defenses, improving the bases at Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria. Archibald Wavell (p. 57) was appointed commander in chief of the region, and the first ANZACs began arriving in Egypt in February 1940 to bolster British strength.

With the collapse of France later that year, German-friendly Vichy forces suddenly controlled large portions of North Africa and Italian forces began moving against the Allies, as well. The sea became a hotbed of activity.

At the beginning of June, Britain had two capital ships and nine destroyers at Gibraltar, and 13 capital ships – including an aircraft carrier – and 20 destroyers in Egypt. Force H at Gibraltar was reinforced, and on July 3 destroyed the Vichy French fleet at Oran (p. 10).

Control of the Mediterranean supply routes hinged upon control of the area's most strategically placed air and naval bases. This led to fierce campaigns to take or neutralize key locations such as Crete and Malta.

Greece

In April 1941, Commonwealth forces were dispatched from Egypt to Greece in an effort to forestall a German offensive there. Italy had been at war with Greece since October 1940 (see p. W18), but by April 1941 the war had ground to a stalemate. On April 6, Germany invaded both Greece and Yugoslavia, and within 10 days British and Greek forces had been pushed back to Mount Olympus. Greek forces began falling back, allowing Italian forces to advance from Albania, and with superior German forces pressing down on them, Britain began to withdraw from Greece at month's end.

German troops entered Athens on April 27; the British evacuation took place from April 24 to May 1. The battle had cost 12,000 British and ANZAC soldiers, while Germany had emerged relatively unscathed.

Churchill insisted that the nearby island of Crete be held, for fear of losing any foothold in the eastern Mediterranean. Some 42,000 British, Greek, and New Zealander troops dug in, hoping to hold against the imminent German attack.



Crete

Germany attacked Crete using airborne forces. Some 500 German bombers began pounding the island on May 14; another 500 transports and 72 gliders commenced the airborne invasion on May 20, with Maleme Airfield falling the next day. With the airfield firmly under Luftwaffe control, German reinforcements began arriving, and soon began driving the British defenders back.

The Royal Navy took heavy losses in the nearby sea – mostly to German air attacks – and on May 27 Britain once again began evacuations. The last troops were withdrawn from Sphakia on May 31. Allied casualties amounted to some 17,500 killed, wounded, or captured. Germany lost about 6,000. The Royal Navy had nine warships sunk and 17 damaged.

Malta

A small island south of Sicily, Malta consists of an excellent harbor and not much else. Sited in the narrow waist of the central Mediterranean, it had for centuries proved a crucial stronghold for controlling the trade routes.

The British held the island. If it fell to the Axis, it would be nearly impossible for Britain to maintain any presence in the surrounding waters. Fleet actions occurred throughout the region, with naval clashes off of Greece and aerial armadas screaming over Crete, but in the end, everything depended on Malta. It was both the cornerstone of the British defense and a constant thorn in the Axis' side.

Germany and Italy laid plans to invade the island by air, but the plans were never implemented. Instead, in an effort to disrupt the British presence there, an Axis bombing campaign began in 1942, blanketing the island with bombs an average of eight times per day. In one month alone, Malta endured over 6,500 *tons* of bombs. During those critical months, British supply convoys were destroyed, and soon food and munitions on the island became almost nonexistent. And still Malta held. In April, King George conferred the George Cross on the island for its valiant endurance.

Victory in the desert shifted back and forth, depending largely on how Malta was faring. During the intense bombing campaign, more Axis supplies reached the Afrika Korps and its Italian allies. When the Axis air offensive faded, the Axis supply line could be cut off once again.

In the end, the island stood fast. The Maltese held on long enough for the United States to enter the war, allowing American production and troops to help Britain defeat the Axis in North Africa. With the entire North African shore in their hands, the Allies quickly invaded Sicily, making Malta safe from Axis attacks once again.

The Conquest of Sicily

As the battle in North Africa was coming to a close, Allied commanders were preparing for an invasion of the island of Sicily, to be followed up by an invasion of the Italian mainland proper. U.S. General Eisenhower planned and supervised the attack. The 15th Army Group, commanded by General Harold Alexander, comprised General George Patton's 7th Army and Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's British 8th Army. German defenders included the 15th Panzer Division and the Hermann Göring Division, along with some 275,000 Italian troops.

The landings began on July 10, and within two weeks British forces had reached Mount Etna and U.S. forces had captured Agrigento and Palermo. By August 17, the island was in Allied hands. Combined Allied casualties totaled almost 20,000; Axis losses soared to 164,000.

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS

During the preparations for the invasion of Sicily, British intelligence set out to convince the Germans that the Allied invasion would come, not in Sicily, but in Sardinia. As part of that plan, called Operation Mincemeat, a brilliant deception was created and executed, leaving Germany reeling when Allied forces hit the beaches of their real target.

Using the corpse of a 34-year-old suicide victim named Glyndwr Michael, British intelligence agent Archibald Cholmondley created a completely fictional British officer named “Major Martin” – the man who never was. A briefcase was loaded with ephemera, including a letter and photo of his supposed fiancée “Pam” (portrayed by a British intelligence secretary), an irate missive from his bank manager, a letter from his father, theater tickets, keys, matchbooks, and more. But the key to the operation was the inclusion of supposedly top-secret military documents that indicated that the Allied invasion would land at Sardinia, not Sicily.

The body was then dumped into the sea near heavily trafficked sea lanes. A Spanish fisherman found it and turned his discovery over to German intelligence.

To further convince German intelligence, the British government immediately demanded the return of both body and briefcase, giving “Major Martin” a proper burial with full military honors; his grieving fiancée sent flowers to adorn his grave. On June 4, the British *Times* included his obituary.

Germany was largely convinced and quickly fortified the Sardinian coast, leaving Sicily relatively undefended. Operation Mincemeat provided fodder for at least three books and a 1953 film, *The Man Who Never Was*, starring Clifton Webb.

Invasion of Italy

Immediately after the fall of Sicily, the Allies began planning an invasion of Italy. It commenced on September 3, 1943, when Montgomery’s 8th Army crossed the Strait of Messina from Sicily and began a northwest advance. Within days, Italy capitulated, but fighting continued against German defenders. The port and naval base at Taranto was taken by British airborne troops on September 9. Two days later, the Italian fleet surrendered to Admiral A.B. Cunningham and was escorted to Malta, taking heavy fire from the Germans for the entire trip.

The U.S. 5th Army began landings at Salerno on the 9th, taking fierce fire during German counterattacks on September 13. Three days later they broke through and linked up with the British 8th. U.S. forces drove on Naples on October 1, while the British 1st Airborne captured a key airfield at Foggia.

By October 12, the Allies had a solid hold on much of Italy, although several more battles would be fought before victory was complete. On October 13, Italy officially declared war on Germany; Italian partisans played an important role in the remaining battles.

By early November, Allied forces consisted of the U.S. 3rd, 34th, and 45th Infantry; 82nd Airborne; and 1st Armored divisions. Britain had fielded the 46th and 56th Infantry; 7th Armored; 1st, 5th, and 78th Canadian; 8th Indian; 2nd New Zealand; and 1st Airborne divisions.

The winter saw intense fighting, with the Allies driving to the German Gustav Line. On January 22, 1944, the U.S. 6th Corps – including a British infantry division, armored element, and two Commando elements – began landings at Anzio. Germany put up a hard fight, but the Anzio beachhead held.

A final assault along the Gustav Line, at Monte Cassino, combined with an offensive at Anzio, broke the German defenses in May. Further progress was hindered by the withdrawal of Allied troops from Italy to England for use in the upcoming Normandy invasion.

Remaining British and American forces pressed the Germans back steadily for the remainder of the year. By May 2, 1945, more than 1 million German troops in Italy had officially surrendered. Allied casualties in Sicily and Italy reached 321,000; Axis losses totaled 650,000. More details about the Italian campaign can be found in *GURPS WWII: Grim Legions*.

SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

British involvement in the Southeast Asian theater centered on British holdings in Burma and Malaya. The first major conflict in the region occurred when Japan entered the war in December 1941.

A December 8 Japanese attack on Hong Kong surprised the British garrison, consisting of two British, two Canadian, and two Indian battalions. The defenders tried to hold the Japanese at bay on the mainland, but by December 13 had pulled back to Hong Kong Island. Five days later, Japanese troops crossed to the northern shore and forced the British forces onto the western edge of the island. With no hope of reinforcements or supply, they held out until Christmas Day.

As the battle for Hong Kong raged, another Japanese force gained control of Thailand and began advancing into Burma, while an amphibious force landed on the Kra Peninsula and advanced overland toward Malaya. Meanwhile, Japan had gained air superiority over the antiquated RAF planes in the region, sinking the British warships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* off the coast of Malaya.

Malaya

By the end of the year, the Allies were feeling intense pressure all across the region. Australia and New Zealand wanted increased defenses for their countries, which were perceived as the next targets in the Japanese offensive. The Americans wanted relief for their battered forces in the Philippines. The Dutch wanted assistance in defending the Dutch East Indies. The British sought to hold onto Singapore.

In an attempt to unify the Allied war effort, General Wavell was designated supreme commander of the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command, or ABDACOM. He strengthened the Malay barrier, a line that ran from Burma to Australia. Britain reinforced both Burma and Malaya, and recalled two Australian divisions from the Middle East.

FORCE VIPER

Force Viper was an elite group of Royal Marines that volunteered for “special service of a hazardous nature” in the China-Burma-India Theater. The unit acquired several small launches and diesel motorboats – many armed with machine guns and mortars – and disembarked from Rangoon on February 11, 1942, to patrol the Rangoon River shore and prevent the enemy from flanking British forces.

The British army already was retreating, however. Force Viper found itself acting as a covering force while British troops evacuated and prepared to leave the city.

For two weeks, the unit suppressed looters and protected oil refineries. When it was decided that Rangoon could not hold, they were tasked with blowing up the refineries themselves and covering other demolition squads involved in the same operation. Over 20 million gallons of fuel went up in flames. As Force Viper retreated, they destroyed anything valuable in their wake.

On March 27, they were tasked with holding Paduang, on the west bank of the Irrawaddy River, and preventing enemy crossings. Two platoons and a heavy weapons squad went ashore. Japanese forces attacked that night, and a blazing firefight raged in the moonlit jungles. Force Viper lost more than 30 men in the engagement. The remainder retreated up the river, replacing their damaged boats, blowing up others, rescuing trapped and wounded soldiers, and protecting the flank of the retreating British army.

On May 17, they destroyed all their boats and began a 200-mile walk to Calcutta, arriving eight days later.

The campaign lasted three and a half months, and cost the 107-man force 59 casualties.

British forces in Malaya consisted of the 3rd Indian Corps in the north – with two newly created, partially trained divisions – and an understrength Australian division at Johore. The Indians were no match for Japanese forces and were soon forced to withdraw southward. The Australians held fast to Johore, fighting valiantly for weeks. But by January 31, they too were forced back, taking a final stand on Singapore Island.

Singapore

Singapore Island had been reinforced by two untrained Indian brigades and a British division previously en route to Egypt. By early February, the island was cut off, leaving the isolated defenders on their own. The island bristled with defenses

against a seaborne invasion, but somehow the British authorities had overlooked the possibility of an overland invader crossing the narrow Johore Strait.

Japan crossed the strait with three full divisions on February 9, and in less than a week had forced the uncoordinated and panic-stricken defenders back to the city of Singapore itself. The city came under heavy Japanese artillery fire and its already short supplies ran out very quickly.

On February 15, the garrison surrendered, despite being 180,000 strong and fully capable of meeting the Japanese threat had it possessed fighting spirit and competent leadership. Long a symbol of British power in the region, Singapore fell into Japanese hands. It was a humiliating defeat for Britain, and a blow to British morale around the world.

Burma

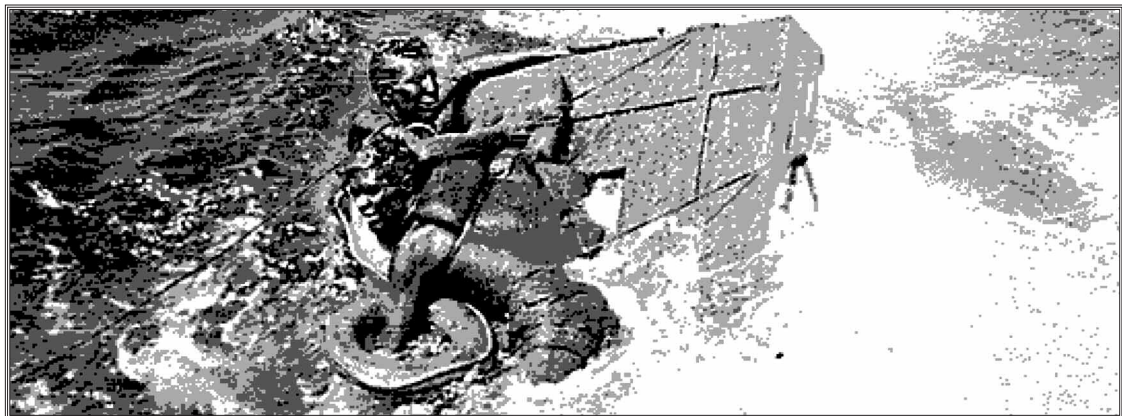
Japan had landed troops in Burma as early as December 16, 1941, adding reinforcements in mid-January. Britain reinforced the small Burma Army with spare troops from India, but by the time the full Japanese attack began, Burma was defended by two poorly equipped divisions made up of a rag-tag group of British, Indian, and Burmese troops supported by a very small air force, which included a squadron from the American Volunteer Group in China, popularly known as the Flying Tigers (see p. W:D9).

On January 20, 1942, Japanese troops crossed the Thai border into Burma, flanking the Indian defenders and capturing Moulmein less than two weeks later. By late February, the invaders had forced the Indians back to the Sittang River.

In mid-February, Chinese troops entered Burma from the north to relieve the Burma Army, allowing the Burmese to move south to aid in the defense of Rangoon. Before they could link up with the Rangoon defenders, Japanese forces had punched between the divisions, capturing Pegu on March 5. Rangoon was evacuated on March 7.

When Malaya fell to Japanese control, Japan shipped additional troops into Burma, allowing them to advance toward Mandalay almost unhindered. By May, they had cut the Burma Road – which had been used to supply Chinese forces to the north – forcing Burma’s soldiers to withdraw. By the end of May, Japan controlled all of Burma and the nearby islands.

Japanese naval forces soon moved into the Indian Ocean, bombing naval bases in Ceylon and sinking two British cruisers, a carrier, and some 100,000 tons of merchant shipping.



THE CHINDITS

The Chindits were the largest British special force in the war. Formed in 1942 by Orde Wingate (p. 54), they operated in Burma, deep behind enemy lines, for months at a time. There were two primary missions into Burma.

The first, Operation Longcloth (see below), saw some 3,000 men tramp through over 1,000 miles of jungle from February 13 to March 31, 1943. The second, Operation Thursday, was supplied by one of the largest airborne operations of the war and included more than 20,000 soldiers from February 5 to August 27, 1944.

Wingate's theory was that small groups of men, kept resupplied by air, could operate behind enemy lines for weeks or months at a time. The Chindits were organized to be small enough to remain relatively undetected, and yet powerful enough to strike a blow at the place and time of their choosing. He called the theory "long-range penetration" and used it as the basis for several formations, including the Chindits, the Special Night Squads (p. 113), and Gideon's Force (p. 54).

The first Chindit brigade, formally called the 77th Infantry, consisted of the 13th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment, the 2nd Gurkha Rifles, 142 Commando Company, 2nd Burma Rifles, a signal section, and a mule-transport company. The mules were especially useful in the jungles. (Almost any veteran of the Chindits campaigns will have high skills in Packing and Animal Handling.)

Wingate chose the name Chindit from a mispronunciation of *Chinthe*, the mythical Burmese creature that guarded pagodas.

The loss of Burma and the Bay of Bengal left India wide open for invasion by Japan. The best Indian forces had been sent elsewhere – mostly Egypt and Iraq – and the equivalent of three full divisions had already been lost against the Japanese, leaving only a small, green force to defend this critical region.

In an effort to hold onto India and Ceylon, three British divisions were sent from Egypt and a fourth arrived from East Africa. A massive airfield construction program was begun, pushing Indian engineers to their limits, in an effort to provide enough facilities for the U.S. 10th Air Force and the India-Burma division of the U.S. Air Transport Command.

Despite the weak defenses, Japan's troops never reached India. U.S. naval victories clinched the situation, and by late 1942 India was no longer considered in danger.

General Wavell, commander in chief in India, turned his attention back to Burma, laying plans for an invasion in October 1942. A single division drove on Maungdaw and Buthidaung, capturing both by December 17, but an amphibious assault to take the port at Akyab was postponed so that the naval resources could be diverted to Madagascar (p. 15). Wavell pushed the ground assault anyway, driving his forces to within striking distance of Akyab and encountering strong resistance in March 1943. The Japanese counterattacked in May, driving the British out of Maungdaw and Buthidaung.

Meanwhile, the Chindits (see above) began Operation Longcloth, crossing the Chindwin River, punching deep into Burma, and wreaking havoc on the Japanese railways there. They were soon surrounded by Japanese forces and took heavy casualties. Only 2,200 Chindits escaped Burma, after months behind enemy lines. Though their efforts produced little in the way of strategic value, the raids were a boon for British morale. In addition, they distracted the Japanese and forced them to bolster the region that the Chindits had penetrated, drawing troops from more vital fronts.

Britain Strikes Back

In November 1943, the Anglo-American Southeast Asia Command, or SEAC, was created under Lord Mountbatten and General Stilwell (see p. W:D65). Plans for a 1944 invasion of Burma were modified several times, and included attacks by Chinese, British, Indian, and Burmese forces, along with specialized raids by the Chindits. The Indian 15th Corps under Lieutenant General William Slim (p. 57) was advancing toward Maungdaw and Buthidaung when Japan launched its own desperate offensive.

The Japanese attack cut off more than 5,000 Allied soldiers, leaving them stranded and out of supply and communication. The trapped soldiers stood firm, driving back the Japanese attack and inflicting heavy losses.

By May, Japan had been driven out of Akyab and the British offensive was in full swing. The Allies had finally gained air superiority over

Burma, and began airlifting supplies to forward units. Soon the Japanese 15th Army fled to the Chindwin River in disarray.

Fighting in the region continued for a year, with the combined might of British and U.S. forces driving Japan out of Burma and eventually out of the war.

EAST TIMOR

In 1749, Portugal and Holland split the island of Timor, with the Portuguese taking the eastern half. Though Portugal remained neutral in WWII, Australian and Dutch forces occupied East Timor in an effort to curb Japan's southern expansion. Despite official protests, the locals supported the move, and a bond formed between the eastern Timorese and the Australians. East Timorese natives joined the Australians as guides, trackers, cooks, porters, and more, sticking with them to the end.

But the Australian force – about 400 elite soldiers – was not enough to stem the Japanese invasion. In February 1942, the island fell into Japanese hands.

Japanese treatment of the Timorese collaborators was harsh. Native supporters were tortured and then killed (shot, beheaded, or burned); entire villages were massacred, leaving only young Timorese women who were used as sex slaves by the Japanese soldiers.

Some 50,000 Timorese lost their lives during the Japanese occupation. Western Timorese despised the Australian intervention, blaming them for the harsh treatment meted out by the Japanese conquerors. Their eastern counterparts remained supportive and confident of Australian intervention. The island regained its freedom in September 1945 with the Japanese surrender.

THE NAVAL WAR



WWII saw naval conflicts across the globe, with one theater – the North Atlantic – remaining active throughout the hostilities. To ultimately defeat the Axis, supplies had to be brought from North America both to feed Britain and to build up the military. If the Allies kept the Atlantic open, they could win. If Germany closed this lifeline, Britain would slowly starve.

Churchill later said: “The only thing that really scared me was the U-boat threat.” The Germans could not stand toe to toe with the Royal Navy and hunt shipping with capital ships, as evidenced by the defeat of *Graf Spee* and sinking of *Bismarck* (see p. W20). Some disguised merchant raiders still prowled the oceans (see p. W:IC33), but the U-boats were the only serious threat left, waging a battle both above and beneath the icy North Atlantic waters.

CONVOY OPERATIONS

Convoy operations were initiated to protect the vital merchant shipments across the Atlantic. A typical convoy was composed of around 35-50 merchant ships escorted by five or more warships. The formation covered five square miles and was arranged in a wide rectangular formation (e.g., seven columns of five ships each). This reduced the length of the convoy, minimizing the targets’ profiles to U-boats.

Fast convoys – code-named HX on the main route from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to the United Kingdom – were made up of ships with speeds between 10 and 17 mph (9-15 knots); slow convoys, code-named SC on the main route, traveled about 8 mph (7.5 knots). Faster ships made solo runs while swinging further south and out of the U-boats’ usual hunting grounds. Convoys were identified by their route/speed suffix and an identification number, such as HX229 or SC422. Some other key routes included PQ (Iceland to Northern Russia) and OS (southbound from Britain).

Sailing in formation did not come naturally to most skippers; their trained instinct was to stay away from other ships. Changing course in formation – to avoid sailing in torpedo-friendly straight lines – was hard, and some owners were impatient with the time it took to form a convoy. Some ships therefore sailed independently. Fast liners like the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* fared well on their own, since they could outrun a U-boat. A typical merchant ship, however, was twice as likely to be sunk on its own as when traveling in convoy.

A Lack of Escorts

Though the convoy plans were sound, there was one major problem. There weren’t enough escorts. This was partly because of a failure to build enough warships before the war, and partly due to a reluctance to divert destroyers away from defense of the home waters after the fall of France.

Further problems were caused by the insistence of some in the Admiralty, even Churchill himself, that convoy operations were too passive, and that “hunter-killer” groups should patrol the shipping lanes. Such offensive patrols proved

ineffective, however, since their proponents had severely overestimated their offensive capabilities and underestimated the U-boats’ ability to avoid detection.

For a time, escorts were provided only near Britain, leaving the vessels to their own devices as they sailed out of range of the U-boats. Merchants heading west would travel in convoy formation to 12.5° W longitude, then disperse. The escorts would then meet up with convoys *arriving* from the west, sometimes defended across the Atlantic by a single sloop or armed merchant.

As the Kriegsmarine’s U-boat commanders caught on, and as more escorts became available, the demarcation line was moved further west, eventually up to 17° W.

The strategy was only effective as long as the German navy had no Atlantic bases and the Luftwaffe had no long-range maritime aircraft. By late summer 1940, U-boats operating from the west coast of France, supported by the long-ranged Fw 200 Condor, were able to range past 17° W, deep into the Atlantic, causing chaos among the nearly undefended merchantmen.

“HURRICATS”

German Fw 200 Condors were a menace to surface vessels without air support. They sank 30 ships in the first two months of operation, earning Churchill’s epithet as “the scourge of the Atlantic.” Escort carriers were being built or converted from cruisers and merchantmen, but until they were operational, a stopgap was needed.

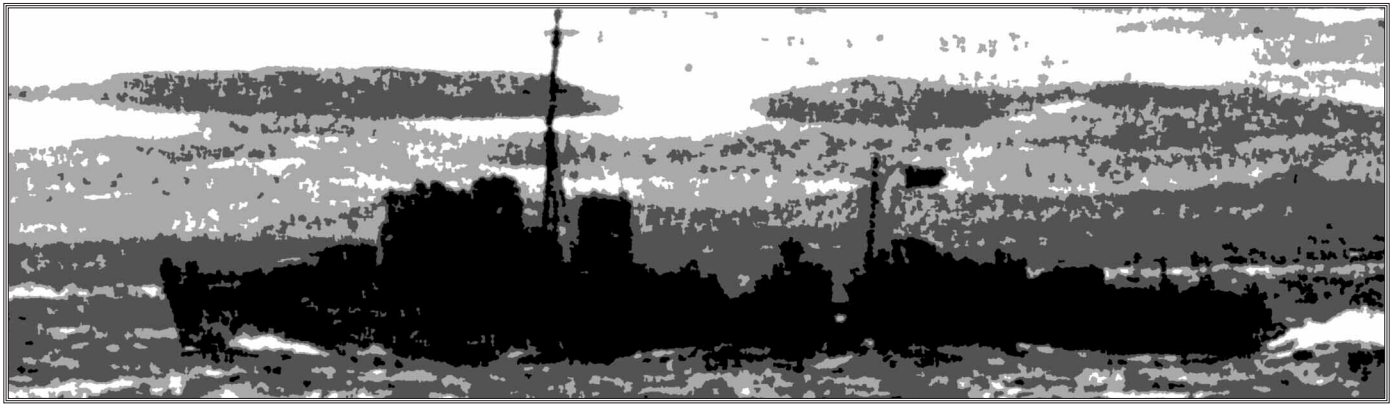
August 1941 saw the appearance of Catapult Aircraft Merchantmen (CAM) – ships equipped with a Hurricane fighter loaded onto a catapult. Because these ships had no landing facilities, once the Hurricane had dealt with the Condor the pilot would have to ditch, to be picked up by the convoy’s rescue vessel. If the plane had enough fuel, the pilot might attempt to fly to shore.

Thanks to the successes of these “Hurricats” against the Condors, early in 1942 the Germans withdrew the Condors from anti-shipping missions, relegating them to maritime reconnaissance only.

The Tide Begins to Turn

In September, Churchill concluded a deal exchanging several military bases in Newfoundland and the Caribbean for 50 U.S. WWI-era destroyers. They were obsolete but the prime minister was desperate. They proved invaluable as convoy escorts, and briefly evened the odds against the steadily increasing number of U-boats.

The climax of the Battle of the Atlantic came in March-April 1943. The number of U-boats in the North Atlantic reached its peak, as did the number of losses among the convoys. The Admiralty was on the brink of giving up the convoy



system when losses began to decrease. The sudden change can be attributed to a number of factors.

Most escorts and maritime patrol aircraft had been fitted with centimetric radar, making it possible to spot surfaced U-boats at beyond-visual range. Escort carriers had made their first appearance. Escort crews were gaining in experience while the U-boat fleet was losing its veterans to attrition. Convoys were increased in size, allowing more escorts per convoy, and convoys, escorts, and patrol aircraft were at last working effectively together. And finally, Bletchley Park (p. 43) had learned to effectively crack the Enigma code used by the Kriegsmarine.

During the first 22 days of May alone, 31 U-boats were sunk. On May 24, Dönitz ordered the U-boats withdrawn from the convoy routes.

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Throughout most of the war, the English Channel was a protective moat for the British, while at the same time it was a no-man's land of deadly minefields, lurking torpedo boats, and heavy air patrols. Early in the war, Germany gave up attempting to move anything larger than coastal barge traffic and light military craft (E-boats and R-boats) through the channel. Officially, Britain kept the channel open to shipping; in practice, anything that moved was subject to German attack.

Most of the fighting involved light forces, with German E-boats attacking British convoys or fending off British MGBs and destroyer forces. Channel skirmishes continued until 1944, when the Allies took command of the channel in preparation for the invasion of Normandy.

The Channel Dash

In late 1941, the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the cruiser *Prinz Eugen* had docked at the French port of Brest. Germany planned on sending the ships back into the Atlantic to resume raiding, but British bombing runs kept the ships from being fully repaired.

It soon became clear that the ships could not stay in Brest any longer. On Hitler's personal order, the cruisers broke out of Brest to race home to German waters. Rather than the longer (but safer) route through the Atlantic and North Sea, the Germans attempted a bold nighttime dash up the English Channel.

On the night of February 11, 1942, the three ships set sail. Escorted by destroyers and other light craft, the ships shot

through the channel at top speed. Once alerted, the British attacked with everything they could muster, including a destroyer squadron, torpedo planes, shore batteries, and small torpedo boats. The Luftwaffe put up heavy fighter cover and helped the German fleet fend off the attacks.

Although two of the German ships were moderately damaged by mines near the end of the voyage, all three managed to make it safely to port.

The operation, conducted in what the British considered their "back yard," was one of the most embarrassing moments for the Royal Navy, and for Britain as a whole.

ARTICLE 16

During most of the war, German and British ships often aided drowning enemy sailors after an engagement. Much of the time, such intervention was impossible due to the continuing threat of enemy air or surface activity. But in many cases – e.g., the *Hipper* in Norway, British ships after the sinking of the *Bismarck* – at least *some* attempt was made to rescue sailors from the sea.

In addition to the unspoken "code of the sea," Article 16 of the Hague Convention stated: "After every engagement, the two belligerents, so far as military interests permit, shall take steps to look for the shipwrecked, sick, and wounded, and to protect them, as well as the dead, against pillage and ill treatment. They shall see that the burial, whether by land or sea, or cremation of the dead shall be preceded by a careful examination of the corpse."

Enemy sailors were generally well treated by their shipboard captors until they could be delivered to a POW camp. Treatment at the camps varied.

The U-boat fleet made an exception to this rule. Late in the war, Admiral Dönitz gave specific orders not to linger after an engagement – and hence, not to rescue enemy prisoners – because a U-boat idling at the site of an engagement made itself extremely vulnerable to attack by planes responding to its victim's SOS call.

The wording of Article 16 – "so far as military interests permit" – meant that ordering an U-boat not to wait after the engagement out of fear of enemy reprisal was legal. Although Dönitz was charged with war crimes at Nuremberg, he was exonerated.

THE NORTH SEA

Neither the Germans nor the British really controlled the North Seas. Germany ran coastal traffic from Norway to Germany, while Britain moved coastal shipping up and down the east side of the British Isles, but any major fleet movements were subject to major air attack.

After heavy fighting during the invasion of Norway – during which both sides lost many warships – major fleet actions were avoided in the North Sea. In the far north, Germany used the Norwegian fjords to attack Murmansk convoys, but they stayed well away from Britain. Likewise, Britain chose to send midget submarines across the sea to attack the *Tirpitz* at her mooring in Norway, rather than risk the British fleet. They eventually used heavy bombers to finish off the battleship.

Throughout the war, both sides dallied about the North Sea. It was an arena that both sides wished to control, but neither would risk stepping into.

Scapa Flow

Scapa Flow was a key naval base for the British home fleet. Situated in the Orkneys, off the lonely, windswept tip of northern Scotland, it had been used during WWI to interdict the breakout of the German fleet. It was also the same place that said fleet scuttled itself after surrendering in 1918.

The Royal Navy was criticized for the port's vulnerability to air and submarine attack, a vulnerability that was confirmed when the *HMS Royal Oak* was sunk by a German submarine while moored there (see box, below).

A barren and forbidding place, Scapa Flow was not popular with naval personnel. It was, however, an ideal location to base the fleet. Ships based at Scapa Flow regularly interdicted the North Sea and Norwegian coast, and supported convoys to Murmansk.

U-47

U-47 was one of the most famous German U-boats of the early war. In October 1939, its commander, Gunther Prien, navigated U-47 past the antisubmarine obstacles at Scapa Flow and torpedoed the battleship *HMS Royal Oak*, quickly slipping out the way that he came. The submarine maneuvered in such tight quarters that it was visible in the headlights of vehicles driving along the harbor's perimeter!

This daring feat shocked the Royal Navy and led to tighter British harbor defenses all over the world. From 1939 to '41, U-47 roamed the Atlantic playing havoc with Allied shipping. For years, it was believed that the British WWI destroyer *HMS Wolverine* sank the U-boat on March 7, 1941. Later theories suggest the *Wolverine* actually damaged a different German sub, the U-A. If that is the case, it may have been the corvettes *HMS Camelia* and *Arbutus*, or even one of U-47's own torpedoes that circled back and sank the submarine. Whatever the case, in the spring of 1941, the U-47 was lost with all hands.

NAVAL BATTLES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Control of the Mediterranean was essential to Britain's early ground campaigns (see p. 15). Ultimately, the British held the upper hand in the naval campaign, because they possessed the formidable base of Gibraltar, at the very entrance to the sea. The base was all but impregnable by sea, and the Germans could not interest Spain in joining the Axis cause and attempting conquest by land. Any Axis shipping other than submarines would have to fight its way past Gibraltar against severe odds, and a submarine attempting to sneak through the straits ran a considerable risk of being caught. Essentially, this meant that German warships could not get in to join the fight, and Italian shipping could not get out. The latter was not a major issue for Italy, because the British were giving them all the fight that they wanted in their home waters.

The Battle of Cape Matapan

By the spring of 1941, Italy was under great pressure from Germany to interdict Allied convoys as the Germans began to deploy in North Africa. The Italian fleet, short of fuel and led by the cautious Admiral Angelo Iachino, decided to sweep the eastern Mediterranean, south of Greece, near a place called Cape Matapan. Iachino's fleet consisted of the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 13 destroyers. It was a fast modern force that lacked only air support – Italy had no aircraft carriers.

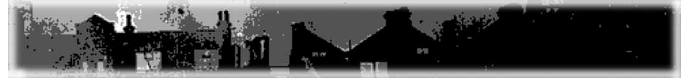
On March 27, the Italian fleet was spotted by a British aircraft out of Malta, and British ships were tasked to intercept. The next morning, a small group of British cruisers encountered the Italians, but were easily outgunned. They fled southeast, dodging Italian fire, and eventually led the unsuspecting Italian fleet directly into a battle with Admiral Cunningham's Alexandria fleet, which had left port the night before.

Cunningham knew he would be unable to pursue the faster Italian ships, so he attacked with carrier aircraft. The first torpedo attack was unsuccessful, but the second damaged the *Vittorio Veneto*, slowing the Italian battleship to 17 knots. For a time, it appeared that Cunningham would catch and engage the now-fleeing Italians, but the *Vittorio Veneto*'s crew soon had the warship steaming at nearly full speed.

A third wave of aircraft missed the battleship, but managed to torpedo the heavy cruiser *Pola*, stopping her dead in the water.

Shortly after 10 p.m., Cunningham's force caught up with the helpless *Pola*, along with the cruisers *Fiume* and *Zara* and several smaller craft. The Italian ships had stopped, apparently to aid *Pola*, and seemed unaware of any danger. The British battleships opened fire at nearly point-blank range. The carnage was one-sided and terrible. The Italians lost all three heavy cruisers, two destroyers, and more than 2,500 men in a single hour – more than Germany had lost at the WWI battle of Jutland. Although the Italian navy made some half-hearted appearances in later fighting, the Battle of Matapan sapped the will of Italian seamen for the rest of the war.

THE AIR WAR



The war may have started earlier and lasted longer for the Royal Air Force than for any other branch of service. RAF bomber crews started dodging German flak on the very first night after Britain declared war, which would have been especially vexing considering that the bombers weren't hitting back in kind (see box, p. 9). Missions over Europe continued throughout the 1939 and early 1940 lull in ground combat, and once France fell the Luftwaffe brought the war to the RAF with literally everything that they had. Even after the Battle of Britain was won, the RAF would face challenges in theaters across the globe before flying its last combat sortie.

When the war began, the RAF was numerically inferior and undertrained, while German aviators that had fought in Spain already were battle-hardened veterans. During the first year, training was improved and new aircraft commissioned, giving Britain a fighting chance when the Battle of France erupted some eight months later.

The RAF fought valiantly in June 1940, providing cover for British and French forces, and striking at the Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht from bases in both France and England. As the Allies retreated across the continent, the RAF lost nearly half of its first-rate forces. The losses would have been even greater if Air Chief Hugh Dowding had not insisted on holding back numerous fighters for the eventual defense of England.

Soldiers in the BEF criticized the decision, blaming the Royal Air Force for not providing sufficient cover, especially on the beaches during the Dunkirk evacuation. The ground troops did not realize that those planes that were covering the beaches had done so by intercepting German bombers well before they reached the beach and British eyewitnesses. The BEF's anger was so strong that RAF pilots who tried to mingle with army soldiers were spat on, assaulted, and verbally abused. Ground troops hissed and booed when RAF exploits came up in newsreels. Only after the Battle of Britain did the RAF finally gain the respect of the army's men; even then, many held a grudge dating from the dire days at Dunkirk.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

If the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."

— Winston Churchill

With the fall of France, Hitler set his sights on Britain. A massive air campaign began in an effort to soften the British mainland in preparation for Operation Sealion, the German invasion of the British Isles (see pp. W17, W:IC13).

Luftwaffe pilots had been watching the English Channel for weeks. Dover was visible on a clear day, and British convoys looked like easy targets as they sailed unimpeded up and down the "British moat." On the afternoon of July 10, 1940, German aircraft targeted a British convoy, attacking it as it neared Dover. The British Fighter Command launched Spitfires and Hurricanes, but they were slow to respond. By the time that the first British fighters arrived, the convoy was already engulfed in a cloud of 70 German planes. A patrol of six Hurricanes was first on the site. The valiant British pilots plunged into the fray, despite the horrendous odds.

By the time that British reinforcements had arrived (some 20 more Hurricanes and Spitfires), the Germans had split into three layers with Me 109s on top at 12,000', Me 110s in the middle, and Dornier Do 17 bombers below, dropping their deadly payload on the convoy. Eight Spitfires from #74 Squadron climbed above the German fighters, and plunged downward through the Luftwaffe spiral, firing at everything that moved. By the time that they reached the bombers, most of their ammunition was spent. The Luftwaffe lost four fighters, the RAF three. But the German attack was broken off and the convoy sailed onward, missing only a single ship.

RADAR

Radar (*radio direction and ranging*) was in its infancy when the Battle of Britain began. Originally called radio direction finding, or RDF, radar played a key role in protecting Britain from German air attack. RDF experiments stemmed from a theory that incoming bombers might be disintegrated by a tight beam of energy fired like some kind of pulp-magazine "death ray." By the late 1930s, the death-ray idea had given way to a chain of 300' radar towers that would help alert the island to incoming continental aircraft.

Radar stations along the southern and eastern coasts gave anti-aircraft batteries and fighter squadrons advanced warning, allowing them to intercept German planes before they arrived over England. Early radar operators tended to underestimate the number of incoming aircraft, especially with low-altitude flights. The vertical sweep, which detected the attackers' altitude, was generally easier to read than the horizontal sweep, which usually meant better estimates of altitude than range and bearing.

It was obvious to Fighter Command that defending British convoys would be a costly proposition. The loss of three fighters may have seemed insignificant, but the loss of three fighters every day would soon break the back of the British air defenses. Dowding was faced with the unenviable choice of leaving British convoys to fend for themselves, or losing planes that would be needed to defend the factories and airfields of Britain. With typical British understatement, Dowding warned the Royal Navy that excursions through the channel might not receive the air cover they would need.

Fighting the Germans as they attacked ports and shipping during this first phase of the battle (July 10-August 7), the RAF found itself critically short of pilots, even though they were knocking down considerably more Luftwaffe planes than they lost. Also aware of their losses, the Germans shifted to directly attacking RAF ground installations, primarily airfields but with a few attacks on the critical radar stations. During this phase, August 8-23, the RAF really began to feel the strain. The radar warnings that allowed Fighter Command to carefully husband its forces became conspicuously important when absent, and fighters lost to bombs while sitting on runways – while less vital than the men who flew them – were hard enough to replace. Still, the RAF's exhausted pilots were exacting a brutal toll on the Germans attacking them. They flew endless sorties and sometimes fell asleep the moment that their plane rolled to a stop after landing.

The next few weeks saw increased attacks on aircraft production centers and airfields. Heavy fighters escorted the German bombers, in hopes of luring the RAF into battle. Unfortunately for the Luftwaffe, when the RAF accepted the challenge those heavy fighters proved no match for the agile single-seaters that the British flew. Still, given that the Luftwaffe held far greater resources to begin the campaign, the RAF was winning almost every air engagement that it fought, but losing the campaign as a whole.

While the battle raged over the channel and southern England, through the entire summer of 1940, many civilians eagerly watched the dogfights, cheering on the brave young aviators. One pilot who bailed out over a London suburb was smothered with kisses by the entire staff of the laundry in which he landed. Other Britons, who had felt the concussion of German bombs too close by, felt that the RAF, for all its publicity, was not doing nearly enough. Some had to be restrained by metropolitan police to prevent them from assaulting downed pilots.

As the summer ended, the RAF's numb fighter pilots must have thought that the intense fighting would never end. They were averaging five hours in the air every single day. The typical pilot could expect to survive only 87 flight hours while facing the Luftwaffe, though as usual this represented many novices who averaged far fewer hours and a few veterans who survived far longer. They did not realize that they were taking an even greater toll on the Germans.

A New Kind of Target

By fall of 1940, the face of the air war had changed. Throughout the summer, Hitler had forbidden planes from bombing civilian targets, but on August 23 a navigational error resulted in two German bombers accidentally dropping

their loads on metropolitan London, setting in motion a chain of events that would eventually help lead to Germany's defeat.

Believing that the London bombing was intentional, Churchill retaliated by ordering bomber strikes on Berlin. In return, an infuriated Hitler ordered a massive strike on London. On September 7, 1940, more than 300 bombers escorted by 600 fighters caught the British air defenses off guard and pounded London. The sheer size of this raid led British authorities to believe that the German invasion was finally set to begin. (It wasn't.) They issued the code-word for invasion, "Cromwell," and various home-defense units began blowing up bridges, setting up roadblocks, and mining roads and fields. Anyone who went walking at night in southern coastal areas during this period was in mortal peril, as eager volunteers awaited stormtroopers who would never arrive.

The bombing campaign – the Blitz, as it was soon called – lasted for weeks, and thousands of bombs rained down on the city day and night. Londoners endured the attacks with British aplomb, bragging that they were often more on the front lines of the war than many British soldiers. By November, air raids had become an almost accepted way of life. Between September 7 and November 13, London was hit by an average of 160 planes each night for 67 consecutive nights.

The attacks devastated the city. (And others as well; Coventry was hit especially hard on November 14.) On the other hand, they gave the exhausted RAF time to regroup, repair airfields, reinforce fighter groups, and generally prepare air defenses once again. Instead of pummeling the reeling British air force into submission, Hitler lost the advantage by shifting his attacks to the urban centers.

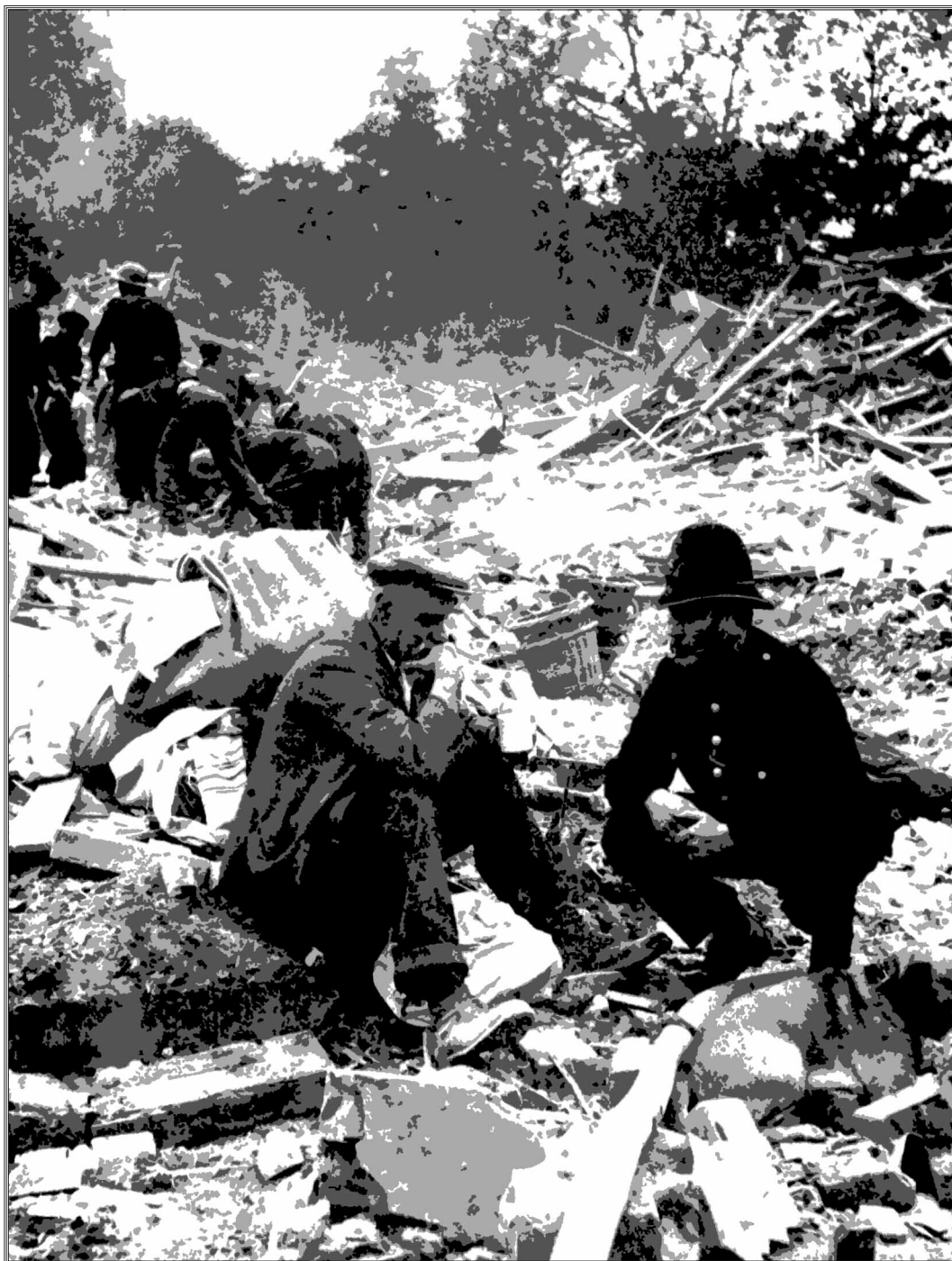
By November, the Battle of Britain was essentially over, though terror bombings would continue until Germany shifted its focus to the Russian front the following year. The RAF had lost about 1,000 fighters and 537 pilots while defending the nation against the Luftwaffe, which itself lost some 1,800 planes and 2,600 flight personnel.

The Long Anticlimax

For the RAF, the rest of the long war would pale in comparison to the battle just fought. Fighter squadrons would continue to support British ground operations in Europe and Africa – and in Burma and the Pacific, when available – but they certainly would not again become the decisive arm they had been in the skies over England. For the last two years of the war, they also would have to share too few Luftwaffe targets with endless and eager U.S. rivals. Allied fighters would increasingly take to attacking ground targets for lack of anything else to shoot.

Finally dropping bombs rather than intimidating catch phrases, Bomber Command would continue its night raids over occupied Europe for the remainder of the war. Some of its tactics would lead to controversy (see p. W25), and the real economic impact of its often ill-aimed bombloads could be debated, but ironically its bomb runs did the job that the earlier propaganda leaflets had failed to do: They insistently and loudly reminded the Germans that they did not have things nearly as well in hand as they might like, and that the battered but stubborn British were not nearly done with this fight.

LIFE DURING WARTIME



famously damp and foggy climate help. Coal smoke had long ago turned London's thick fog into an even more bleak smog. What might be forgiven as a picturesque charm during peacetime became grim and depressing during war.

If often grim, most British found wartime life generally tolerable. They quite simply endured. With its industry and transport system under aerial bombardment, and its vital searlanes under U-boat siege, the country introduced strict rationing. Fuel was largely unavailable for casual travel, and food was, at times, dull. Food rationing was competently managed and often supplemented by vegetables grown at home in previously ornamental gardens. The diet and health of the most impoverished Britons actually improved during the war.

As seen in other nations, rationing led to the creation of a thriving black market. Countless people who considered themselves law-abiding citizens made some questionable contacts in search of a few small luxuries. Many – including several famous individuals – found themselves

From 1940, visitors to the United Kingdom would have had no doubt that this was a country at war. The evidence was everywhere: ubiquitous air-raid precautions, scarce resources, a nightly blackout, pillboxes dotting the countryside, and the various staff shortages and dislocations of mass mobilization.

The effect was only heightened by the existing look and feel of the countryside. The smoke of 150 years of coal-burning industrialization had blackened British towns, and the Great Depression had left its mark in neglect. The cramped and twisting streets of the cities, and even the narrow country lanes, became hard to navigate in blackouts. Nor did the

briefly imprisoned for infringements of the especially tight fuel-rationing rules. The “spiv” (p. 48) – a rogue and petty criminal making a profit from the black market and other scams – became widely tolerated as a useful contact, more so than most people would admit.

When U.S. troops arrived – “overpaid, oversexed, and over here” – their ready access to goods (especially nylon stockings and good chocolate) gave them a distinct social advantage.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

Before the war, theorists and popular writers had predicted dreadful carnage from modern air raids, so civil-defense measures were introduced in 1939. Because fully lit towns and cities would make easy targets for night bombers, a comprehensive blackout program was introduced. Windows were fitted with heavy blackout curtains or painted over, and crisscrossed with masking tape to reduce the danger of glass shattering in explosions. Motor vehicles were fitted with shrouds over their headlamps to reduce their visibility from above when driving at night.

Part-time civilian ARP (Air Raid Precautions) wardens enforced these rules with the cry “Put that light out!” upon spying the faintest glimmer. They also watched for bombs and fires during raids, and kept an eye out for paratroops.

Poison gas was widely expected at the start of the war. *Everyone* carried a gas mask and drilled regularly in donning it quickly. The precaution fell into disuse as the war continued; the cases began to serve as briefcases and handbags.

Meanwhile, bomb shelters became a feature of every town. On the private level, a simple room under the stairs often sufficed – the triangular structure combined with the general sturdiness of British homes of the period made this a fairly secure option in the event of the house collapsing. Cheap internal Morrison shelters (a sturdy table-like structure with mesh screens) and external Anderson shelters (made

from corrugated iron and reinforced with earth) were available for purchase, and some families built concrete shelters.

Public buildings were equipped with shelters open to anyone; social-welfare activists would sometimes lead groups into expensive hotels when the sirens sounded. Although initially resisted by the government, the London Underground railway stations quickly became de facto public shelters.

Not everyone marched off to the shelters when the sirens sounded. Some – due to latent claustrophobia, fatalism, an instinct not to leave one’s home undefended in time of peril, or just youthful high spirits – refused to take shelter during a raid. Instead, they would simply move to the lowest room in the building (generally the kitchen, or a ground-floor flat in an apartment block). Some, especially youths of both sexes, would just roam the streets watching the searchlights, anti-aircraft fire, and falling bombs.

Despite the shelters, air raids were dangerous business. The first urban firestorm in history occurred in the Southwark docks in London in September 1940, killing 306. In November of that year, 60,000 buildings in the heart of Coventry were obliterated in a massive raid, killing 550. In May 1941, an attack on London killed 1,436 in one night.

The threat lessened with the end of the Battle of Britain and the turning of the tide in the war. Still, the V-1 and V-2 (see pp. W:IC25, 123) added new terrors in 1944, and the threat of death from the sky never entirely vanished until the end of the war.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Allied soldiers and resistance fighters of just about every stripe could find themselves in the United Kingdom intermittently during the war. Sailors delivering goods across the Atlantic might find themselves at just about any British port, though those on the North Sea coast would only be visited under dire need. Soldiers who fled occupied countries such as Poland to fight again usually formed new units and trained there before returning to the continent to fight. The SOE trained its operatives in London and sites around the countryside before shipping them home, and key agents often shuttled back and forth across the channel. The buildup before D-Day, and extended leaves afterward, would find U.S. troops roaming the streets and fields. The locations they can visit are diverse.

The largest U.K. country, England, consists mostly of rolling hills and small plains, rising to high moors and low mountains in the north and west. Having been farmed for millennia, all but the wildest countryside areas comprise open fields dotted with an occasional small forest.

London, in the southeast – at the lowest crossing point on the River Thames – was the capital of the entire empire. During WWII, the metropolis also was an important port and transport hub. This made it a primary target of Luftwaffe bombers based in France. Other urban centers (and bomber targets) included the numerous large and small ports around the coast (e.g., Liverpool in the northwest, Hull in the northeast, Southampton in the south), and the

great manufacturing towns of the Midlands and north, such as Birmingham, Coventry, and Manchester. The north of the country provided much of the nation’s coal; the hill country of the Pennines was punctuated by “pit villages” (company towns for coal mines) that suffered badly during the Great Depression. By contrast, the southeast, with its light industry and commercial wealth, came through the depression in relative comfort.

Wales, to the west, was a mountainous country politically united with England. It had coal mines in the southern half, and its chief city, Cardiff, was a substantial port.

Scotland, to the north, rose from the hills and moors of the Borders to the rugged Highlands, and had a bit more independence, including its own legal system. Edinburgh, near the east coast, was the capital, but its greatest industrial center was the shipbuilding city of Glasgow, to the west.

The province of Northern Ireland also had a fair amount of self-rule, almost entirely in the hands of its Protestant majority at this time. It was run from the industrial and port city of Belfast. North Atlantic shipping under distress – whether pursued by U-boats or outrunning one of the countless nasty storms – often would make for the relatively close Irish ports. Even support vessels “exclusively” based in Canada – such as tugs and fishing boats – might find it more prudent to run the risks of mines, U-boats, and overzealous Allied patrols while approaching Ireland rather than fight their way back home through a storm.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY



By 1944, the war in the desert was long over, and the most precarious days of the Italian campaign well in the past as well. Britain had become the staging ground for a massive Allied invasion of the European continent.

U.S. soldiers worked and lived with British soldiers; U.S. pilots flew sortie after sortie from British bases. The social consequences of this “friendly invasion” were rich and varied – British troopers might join the side of African-American service troops caught in a barroom brawl with U.S. southerners, for instance – but the considerable rivalry within Anglo-American ranks still took a back seat to the formidable task of returning to the continent in the D-Day invasion. That campaign is described on pp. W30-34 and *GURPS WWII: Dog-faces* treats it in detail.

VE DAY

Britain joined the Allied world in celebrating Victory in Europe (VE) Day on May 8, 1945. During the celebrations that followed, Churchill and his colleagues appeared on the balcony of the Ministry of Health in Whitehall, and made brief speeches. “God bless you all,” Churchill began. “This is your victory!” The crowd roared almost as one: “No, it is yours!”

It was a triumphant moment in British history, one still not forgotten. As Churchill himself continued in his speech that day: “It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this. Everyone, man or woman, has done their best. Everyone has tried. Neither the long years, nor the dangers, nor the fierce attacks of the enemy, have in any way weakened the independent resolve of the British nation. God bless you all!”

The man who had best expressed the nation’s will to fight in 1939 also best captured its satisfaction in 1945.

Aftermath

As the war came to a close, Britons around the world celebrated. Churchill was tremendously popular and many viewed him as Britain’s savior. In July 1945, he called an election, hoping to capitalize on his new popularity. But Britain had 400,000 dead (many of them civilians), had lost two-thirds of its merchant fleet, and had war debts of 4.2 billion pounds. In August 1945, the Bank of England declared a “fiscal emergency.” The people wanted someone to manage their political and economic affairs, not a military leader.



So while the voters cheered Churchill for saving their country, they voted Labour. Clement Attlee was voted in as prime minister with a 60% majority from Parliament. His new programs for reform promised social security, nationalization of industry and the Bank of England, and a national health system. Imperial militarism was out; socialism was in.

Britain had started the war determined to wipe out Nazi Germany. By 1945, the nation had accomplished that, but at great cost to itself. The once mighty British Empire was shattered. Germany and Japan had both displayed the ugliest facets of colonialism, and though Britain no longer ruled primarily at gunpoint, it would face strife and dissent in many of its colonies over the coming years, losing many to a worldwide wave of independence movements.

The empire was exhausted, having suffered terrible losses at home and abroad. But from the start of the war to the last battle, Churchill and his countrymen neither “flagged nor failed” and never once considered surrender.

TIMELINE



The following timeline describes many of the key events during Britain’s involvement in WWII.

1939

- September 1:** Germany invades Poland.
- September 3:** Britain and France declare war on Germany.

1940

- May 10:** Germany invades the Low Countries and France. Winston Churchill replaces Neville Chamberlain as prime minister.
- May 15:** Holland capitulates.
- May 26-June 4:** Dunkirk evacuation takes place (p. 10).

- May 28:** Belgium capitulates.
- June 10:** Norway capitulates to Germany. Italy declares war on Britain and France.
- June 14:** German tanks roll into Paris.
- June 22:** France capitulates.
- July 3:** The British naval Task Force H opens fire on French ships at Mers-el-Kébir, Oran, during Operation Cata-pult (see pp. 10, W:RH11).
- July 10:** The Battle of Britain begins (pp. 23-24).
- August 3:** Italians invade British Somaliland (pp. 14-15).
- August 23-25:** German bombers accidentally drop bombs on London; Royal Air Force bombs Berlin in retaliation (p. 24).
- September 7:** German Luftwaffe blitz (bombing of British cities) begins in earnest (p. 24).

September 13: Italian army invades Egypt (pp. 90-92).

November 10: RAF raid cripples the Italian fleet at Taranto (see p. W:GL45).

December 9: British counterattack Italians in North Africa (pp. 91-92). Sidi Barrani falls on the 11th; Sollum on the 17th.

1941

January 5: Australians capture Bardia and Libya (p. 92).

January 22: Tobruk falls to British and Australians (p. 93).

February 11: British forces advance into Italian Somaliland in East Africa (p. 15).

February 12: German General Erwin Rommel arrives in Tripoli, North Africa; first units of German Afrika Korps arrive two days later (p. 95).

February 25: British colonial forces capture Mogadishu, in Italian Somaliland.

March 7: British forces arrive to help defend Greece.

March 11: U.S. President Roosevelt signs the Lend-Lease Act (see p. W:D15).

March 30: Rommel begins offensive in Africa (p. 95).

April 3: Pro-Axis regime set up in Iraq.

April 14-May 1: Rommel attacks Tobruk.

May 10-11: Heavy German bombing of London; British bomb Hamburg.

May 15: Operation Brevity, the British counterattack in Egypt, begins (pp. 97-98).

May 24: *HMS Hood* sunk by the German battleship *Bismarck*. *Bismarck* damaged by the Royal Navy and sinks three days later (see p. W20).

May 29: Rommel pushes the British 8th Army back to Egypt (pp. 97-98).

June 4: British invasion of Iraq; pro-Allied government installed.

June 8: British armies invade Syria and Lebanon (p. 116).

June 22: Germany invades Russia.

July 12: Mutual-assistance agreement reached between British and Soviets.

July 14: British occupy Syria (p. 116).

July 25: From different directions but with a common plan, British and Soviet forces invade and occupy Iran (p. 117).

August 12: Churchill and Roosevelt sign Atlantic Charter.

November 13: German U-boat sinks British aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* near Gibraltar.

December 7: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor.

December 8: United States and Britain declare war on Japan.

December 10: Force Z, principal British fleet in the Pacific, is sunk.

December 16: Rommel begins retreat to El Agheila.

1942

January 12: Japan invades Burma.

January 21: Rommel counterattacks in North Africa (p. 100).

January 26: First U.S. troops arrive in Britain.

February 15: Singapore surrenders (p. 18).

May 30: Royal Air Force launches first 1,000-bomber raid on Germany.

June 21: Rommel recaptures Tobruk (p. 102).

August 7: Montgomery takes control of British 8th Army in North Africa (p. 103).

October 23-November 3: British army defeats the Afrika Korps at El Alamein.

November 8: Operation Torch, the combined Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, begins (pp. 105-106).

November 11: Axis forces occupy Vichy France.

November 13: Britain retakes Tobruk once again.

December 9-January 2, 1943: Australian and U.S. forces under MacArthur fight Japanese in New Guinea.

December 31: British and German ships engage in the Battle of the Barents Sea (p. 13).

1943

January 14-23: Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Casablanca.

January 23: British forces take Tripoli.

February 14-25: Battle of Kasserine Pass (pp. 109-110).

March 2: Rommel withdraws from Tunisia (p. 110).

May 7: Allied control of Tunisia becomes complete; remaining Axis troops surrender on May 13 (p. 111).

May 16: Royal Air Force begins bombing German industrial centers in the Ruhr.

July 10: Allied forces land at Sicily (p. 16).

July 25: Mussolini and his Fascist government are overthrown in Italy.

September 3: British troops land in Italy; the Americans land six days later.

September 8: Italy officially surrenders to Allies; Germany begins occupation (see p. W:GL11).

September 9: Allies land at Salerno and Taranto.

October 13: New Italian government declares war on Germany (see p. W:GL12).

November 28: Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin meet in Tehran, the first time that all three leaders meet in person.

1944

January 22: Allied landing at Anzio (p. 17).

June 6: D-Day (see pp. 10-11, 27 and *WWII: Dogfaces*).

June 13: Germany launches first V-1 rocket on England.

June 27: Allies liberate Cherbourg, France (p. W:D18).

July 9: Allies liberate Caen, France (see p. W:D18).

August 15: Allied landings in southern France (p. W:D18).

August 25: Allies liberate Paris (see p. W:RH16).

September 17: Operation Market-Garden, the airborne assault in Holland, begins (see p. W:D19).

October 5: British forces invade Greece.

October 14: Athens falls to British forces. In Germany, the former Afrika Korps commander Rommel commits suicide.

December 3: Japanese troops retreat in Burma.

December 16: The Battle of the Bulge rages in Belgium for the next month, with British troops under Montgomery counterattacking the Germans in January (see p. W:D19-20).

1945

February 4-11: "The Big Three" – Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin – meet at the Yalta Conference.

March 21: Allies take Mandalay, Burma.

May 3: Fall of Rangoon and end of Burma campaign.

May 7: Germany surrenders (see p. W:IC26).

May 8: VE Day (p. 27).

2. THE BRITISH ARMY



From 1939 to 1945, Great Britain mobilized more than 4.5 million men.

Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valor, and be in readiness for the conflict. For it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar

– Winston Churchill, in his first broadcast as prime minister, May 19, 1940, London

Along with its massive mobilization, Great Britain produced more than 130,000 aircraft, 28,000 tanks, 125,000 artillery pieces, and 3,500 naval vessels during the war years. These vast armies of men and machines had to be fed, organized, equipped, trained, and led into battle across three continents over the course of six years.

Compounding the problem was the vast variety of backgrounds of the men who made up Commonwealth armies. The British military system had to account for everything from old-school English officers to rugged Maori warriors.

Status

Not surprisingly, class distinction played an important role in the WWII-era army; although a determined soldier *could* rise from the ranks, a vast chasm often separated upper-class officers from enlisted troops of more humble birth.

Even within the officer corps, a top-notch officer who did not come from a top-notch *family* was unlikely to go far. Promotions came to officers that came from a noble or landed family, were schooled at a prestigious academy (p. 34), were devout supporters of the Church of England, and who played the game by British society's rules. Others, regardless of their tactical ability, were often overlooked. For example, General Richard O'Connor – an Irish Catholic who had fought with an Indian army – got very little credit for “Wavell's Offensive” in North Africa, despite the fact that it was really his doing. High-status British officers were also more likely to win more prestigious commendations.

Most enlisted men weren't particularly bothered by the arrangement. After all, it had worked for centuries – why try and change it? Enlisted soldiers fought for the empire and their regiment's honor. Though it had its many flaws, the empire still stood for the sorts of things that motivated other nations' troops, such as friends and family, king and country.

This sharp distinction of status often did not materialize in Commonwealth armies from outside the United Kingdom. For example, an ordinary shepherd from the outback might rise to command an Australian battalion. Only when such officers became eligible for higher commands did the British social structure stop them. Hence, many low- and average-status Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans jumped into the officer ranks, but few ever rose past lieutenant colonel.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

For much of the war, the United Kingdom was the most comprehensively mobilized of all the Western powers, among both Axis and Allies.

Germany often limited mobilization to preserve an illusion of normalcy, no matter how desperately its Wehrmacht needed men and factory capacity. The United States had abundant resources that allowed it to mobilize for war without making huge dents in its civilian economy. The British government compensated for a late start – in comparison to its first foe, Germany, if not its late-arriving ally, the United States – by exhaustively diverting personnel and industrial production to the war effort.

Conscription

Conscription for 20- and 21-year-olds was introduced in May 1939, the first clear example of peacetime conscription in the country's history. It was extended to men from 18 to 41 at the outbreak of war, resulting in manpower shortages in vital areas such as arms manufacture, food production, civil defense, antiaircraft gunnery, and non-combatant roles in the military. As a result, in December 1941, conscription was expanded to include unmarried women between 20 and 30; it was later expanded to include both single women and childless married women up to age 43.

Some male conscripts had to accept war work as coal miners rather than uniformed service; these men became known as the “Bevin Boys,” after the minister of labor who managed the system. Most conscripts hated the prospect of serving as miners rather than soldiers.

The Home Guard

In the summer of 1940, after France had fallen and most of the equipment of the BEF was lost in France, the part-time Home Guard was formed to assist in defending the country against invasion. It consisted of men too old, too young, or too infirm to serve in the military, as well as conscription-deferred men in “reserved” occupations such as engineering, mining, farming, medicine, and banking.

The Home Guard was last in the line for weapons and ammunition, at a time when such things were in desperately short supply. Some of its members drilled with farmers' shotguns, farm implements, or improvised spears, and wore only armbands for identification. Later, they received denim uniforms and surplus WWI rifles, but equipment remained limited throughout the war.



To some, it was a joke; others respected it, but only as a brave token gesture. Regardless, members did receive some useful military training, even if it would not have been enough. Some 40% were Great War veterans, and the Home Guard units occasionally joined regular units on exercises. In the event of invasion, they would have provided assistance to regular forces.

Churchill's Secret Army

The prime minister ordered the creation of a resistance organization in the southeast counties to work behind enemy lines in case of an invasion. Given fictitious unit designations such as XII Corps Observation Unit, this was filled with farmers, gamekeepers, gardeners, foresters, police, and others who knew the countryside intimately. They were vetted and trained in covert operations by SOE (see p. W:HS3). Once supplied with details of secret supply caches, hidden observation posts, radio stations, and so on, they were sent back to their regular jobs. Their life expectancy in the event of an invasion was 10 days.

Northern Ireland and Eire

At the outbreak of war, Ireland was divided into the 26 counties of Eire in the south and the six counties of Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland made a significant contribution to the Allied cause, serving both as a base for Atlantic patrols and as a training ground for Allied forces. Its industries produced warships and planes and more than 37,000 citizens served in the British armed forces. Its home regiments were the North Irish Horse, Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Fusiliers, and the Royal Ulster Rifles.

Eire, or the Irish Free State, went to extremes to maintain neutrality, even to the extent of censoring pro-belligerent comments in personal mail. Nevertheless, it made a contribution to the Allied war effort. Eire had no foreign enlistment act and Irishmen were free to join the British armed forces or work in their war industries. No attempt was made to limit or even monitor the movement of people to Britain. Though some joined for ideological reasons, the depressed economic situation also made service attractive. Although figures vary, the British government gave the number of men and women from Eire serving in the British armed forces in 1946 as 42,665. In the period 1939 to 1945, they won 780 decorations, including eight Victoria Crosses.

Though there were Irish units in the British Army, such as the London Irish Rifles and the Irish Guards, for the most part

THE BLACK WATCH

Six independent companies of soldiers were raised in Scotland in the 18th century, creating an elite regiment called the Black Watch after the dark tartan they wore. They were long-standing regiments with a colorful history and many traditions stretching two centuries. Unlike other Scottish units, many of the Black Watch, including the 51st Highlanders, were encouraged to wear their kilts into battle at every opportunity. A unit piper marched next to his platoon leader in every engagement.

During WWII, the Black Watch had nine battalions; six of them fought in every theater with the exception of Norway and the South Pacific. Several battalions (the 1st, 5th, and 7th) were attached to the 51st Highland Division, which fought a brave rearguard action at Dunkirk. The 51st went on to fight at El Alamein and in Tripolitania, helping break the Mareth Line in 1943.

The 2nd Battalion was transferred to Burma in 1941 and fought as part of the Chindits (p. 19). Several battalions fought in Normandy.

Black Watch soldiers developed a deserved reputation for steadiness under fire. At El Alamein, for example, a 19-year-old bagpiper with the 5th Black Watch Regiment was shot twice, but never faltered in his piping duties. His body was later found still clutching his pipes.

Other Commonwealth units were also affiliated with the Black Watch and allowed to wear the coveted tartan. These included the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, the New South Wales Scottish Regiment, the Transvaal Scottish Regiment, the New Zealand Scottish Regiment, and the Southern Rhodesia Regiment.

Irishmen served as individuals in British units. Their reasons for doing so were as varied as the men themselves. Men of the Protestant middle classes, such as Field Marshal Montgomery, fought because they had been born with Britain as their mother country; others joined to prove Ulster's loyalty to the crown, to feed their families or because, in the words of one member of the Irish Brigade, "We wouldn't want to see England beat . . . now."

Scotland

Scotland provided some of the toughest soldiers of the war. The 15th Infantry Division was primarily Scottish, comprising the 8th Royal Scots, 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers, several battalions of Highlanders, and more.

Early in the war, Highland regiments wore a kilt into battle, and skirling pipers were a part of every unit. As the war progressed, however, the kilt gradually gave way to the more utilitarian British battledress. A Scottish Tam O'Shanter was typical headwear, usually made of uniform khaki, but emblazoned with a piece of regimental tartan and a regimental cap badge. During formal dress occasions, the kilt returned. Instead of a tam, however, the soldier would often don a glengarry: a creased Scottish dress cap, usually with tassles in back. The regimental badge was pinned to the glengarry, but the tartan swatch was omitted.

Wales

Politically and socially, Wales was rather integrated with England during WWII. Nonetheless, there were a number of Welsh regiments with strong regional identities and distinguished histories.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Troops from Australia and New Zealand were initially raised as part of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF). The 1st AIF had been raised during WWI; the 2nd was named in their honor.

The 6th Australian Infantry Division was the first to be created; it left Australia in December 1939, expecting to be trained in the Middle East and to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. When Germany beat back the BEF in May 1940, thousands of Australians rushed to enlist. The 7th through 9th Australian Infantry and the 1st Australian Armored divisions were formed, all comprising both Australians and New Zealanders.

Australian and New Zealand forces (often collectively called ANZACs – Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) distinguished themselves during both WWI and II, earning a deserved reputation as tough, rugged soldiers. They initially gained attention fighting at Gallipoli during the Great War.

Between wars, the Australians and New Zealanders lost the ANZAC designation, but on April 12, 1941, General Thomas Blarney renamed the 1st Australian Corps as ANZAC Corps, reviving the popular acronym.

No matter their moniker, the ANZACs went on to distinguish themselves, especially during the desert war. The 6th Australian Division did much of the work against the Italians (pp. 91-94); the 9th Australian Division battled Rommel and valiantly held out at Tobruk (pp. 96-97); and the 2nd New Zealand Division was integral in breaking through the line at El Alamein (pp. 104-105).

Australian units were often referred to with the numeral 2 (for 2nd AIF) preceding their unit designation; e.g., 2/3rd Antitank Regiment or 2/1st Pioneer Battalion.

Maori Soldiers

With the outbreak of WWII, Sir Apirana Ngata petitioned to form a battalion of Maori soldiers, as had been done in the Great War. Ngata wanted the entire unit, including officers, to be created from Maori soldiers, but the New Zealand government opted to install non-Maori officers, drawing criticism from both politicians and Maori tribal leaders alike.

Nevertheless, the 28th (Maori) Battalion was formed under Major George Dittmer. Maori men were quick to sign up. The 28th was organized into companies based on geographic location. A Company included men from North Auckland; B Company from Bay of Plenty, Thames Coromandel, and Taupo.



The battalion sailed for Australia on May 2, 1940, and then to South Africa, where they got their first taste of South African racism. After training in England, the battalion was assigned to duty in Egypt, and then Greece where they first saw combat. They proved resolute fighters, showing excellent discipline under extreme fire. They later moved to Crete where they participated in the first Maori bayonet charge of the war at Maleme airfield.

They again distinguished themselves in North Africa, fighting with the New Zealand Division. They lost many soldiers during the treacherous battle for Takrouna Hill during the final weeks of the desert war (p. 111).

The Maori developed a reputation for ferocity. The Allies thought them fierce bayonet fighters; the Germans feared being killed by them if captured. After May 1941, Maori soldiers should get a +1 Reputation to their allies and a -1 Reputation from their enemies. In many cases, of course, this will only partially offset (or aggravate) Social Stigma penalties that they endure while dealing with racists.

CANADA

Early Canadian units were formed primarily as home defense units, in anticipation of the outbreak of war. The Canadian Active Service Force mobilized on September 1, 1939, under General Order 135 and comprised the 1st and 2nd Canadian Infantry Divisions. But like most British-style

“divisions,” both units were broken up from the start, with elements of each division being moved to different locations at different times.

For example, the Canadian 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Infantry Brigades of the 1st Infantry Division were sent to Britain late that year, but the tank and cavalry regiments, together with attached corps units, stayed in Canada. The 2nd Infantry Division remained in Canada, spread across the country, until the spring of 1940. With the fall of France, additional units were raised and shipped abroad.

The Canadian Armored Corps was formed August 13, 1940, and consisted primarily of the 1st Canadian Armored Brigade. Armored units were drawn primarily from smaller, already formed armored units all across Canada.

On November 7, 1940, the “Military Forces of Canada” officially became the Canadian Army.

Canadian units followed British tradition, with the regiment being the fundamental unit of the army (p. 36). Like their British counterparts, Canadian regiments acquired colorful names in addition to their military designations. Examples included the Sherbrooke Fusiliers (27th Armored Regiment), the Governor General’s Horse Guards (3rd Armored Reconnaissance Regiment), the 17th Duke of York’s Royal Canadian Hussars (7th Reconnaissance Regiment), and the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (4th Reconnaissance Regiment). See the box on p. 35 for more on regimental designations.

Canadian troops fought across the globe. Juno Beach was the purview of Canadian forces during the Normandy invasion. The Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada were part of the doomed garrison that surrendered Hong Kong to the Japanese (p. 17). Others fought tenaciously at the Battle of Caen during the liberation of France. The 5th Canadian Armored Division and 1st Canadian Infantry Division fought as part of the 8th Army in Italy (1943-44) then went on to liberate Holland in 1945.

Until 1944, only volunteer units were sent abroad; prior to that, Canadian conscripts were kept at home in Canada. In 1944, some 15,000 conscripts were sent to Europe.

INDIA

Indian troops had an entirely different disposition toward the war than did their British counterparts. They had very little personal interest in the war or in a British victory – many Indian soldiers craved a British defeat, because they resented British influence in their land. Most Indians fought out of obligation and honor. Fighting in obedience to authority – and distinguishing oneself as a warrior – was held in high esteem by Indian culture.

Indian soldiers were routinely discriminated against (see *Social Stigma*, p. 47). British officers usually commanded Indian units, but Indian officers grew in number. In 1939, about 10% of officers in Indian units were themselves Indian, with the percentage doubling by war’s end.

Despite their difficulties, Indian divisions distinguished themselves during the war. The 4th Indian Division fought valiantly all across North Africa. The 8th Indian Division helped clear the Gustav Line in Italy. Countless Indian units fought in the China-Burma-India Theater.

Gurkhas

Do you let your friend down in a time of need? If you win, we will win with you, if you lose, we will lose with you.

– Nepalese Prime Minister Judha Shamsher, speaking to Churchill

Gurkhas first gained fame in the 19th century during the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814. The British were so impressed by the fighting Nepalese that they began recruiting them into their army after the war. The Gurkhas proved their worth to the British during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, earning them several British honors.

In 1939, the Nepalese provided eight battalions to the British Indian Army for internal security and operations on the Northwestern frontier, eventually supplying more than 40 battalions – about 112,000 soldiers – over the duration of the war. Despite the poverty of their nation, Nepal also provided much-needed financial aid to Britain on several occasions, sending funds for the relief of bombing victims in London and for the purchase of fighter aircraft during the Battle of Britain.

The Gurkhas were usually formed into rifle regiments, though some served in parachute, garrison, and training units. Many were attached to the Indian 4th and 8th divisions. The training program for the Gurkha recruits lasted seven months, turning raw recruits – many of whom had never before seen cars or trains, or even worn boots – into skilled riflemen. Experienced Gurkha officers (usually Rank 2 or 3) were called back from pension or given extended terms of service in order to oversee this process and provide much-needed liaison with the brand-new British officers. The Gurkha officers were necessary; newly arrived British officers couldn’t speak Gurkhali.

The Gurkhas, already renowned from their previous history with the British Army, quickly reaffirmed their reputation, not only for their use of the kukri (p. 61), but also for their loyalty, courage, toughness, and willpower. They served with honor and distinction during the war, fighting in Syria, North Africa, Italy, Greece, and the CBI Theater. Gurkhas earned no fewer than 13 Victoria Crosses – an impressive feat considering their relatively limited numbers. Two Victoria Crosses and 16 lesser medals were awarded the 3rd Gurkha Rifles at Mogaung, Burma, alone, and the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles also earned many regimental honors for their heroic fighting. Several Gurkha battalions that suffered virtual destruction in heavy fighting were reformed, going on to serve with distinction.

Gurkhas generally enlisted at 16 to 19 years old, and were paid 16 rupees (\$5) a month. After 15 years of service, a Gurkha received a pension of about 5 rupees a month, or \$1.75.

Nepalese soldiers in the Nepalese army are not called Gurkhas; that name is reserved for soldiers in the British Gurkha brigades. A Gurkha template can be found on p. 50.

SOUTH AFRICA

During the first two years of the war, South Africa raised a number of units, most of which served in defense of their home country. The bulk of the forces that served abroad came from the pre-war Active Citizen Force, a group of 27 battalions formed into nine brigades, based on the province from which they had been raised.

At the start of the war, nine additional battalions were added. Sample battalions include the 2nd Witwatersrand Rifles and the 1st Pretoria Highlanders.

At the start of the war, South Africa had no armor. Several armored car, tank, and motorcycle companies were formed in 1940, and were eventually grouped together to form the South African Tank Corps.

South African forces served in North and East Africa. It was against the laws of South Africa for its regiments to fight outside the continent.

FOREIGN SOLDIERS

Soldiers of many nationalities banded together with the Commonwealth, usually to win back freedom that their country had lost.

Dutch, Belgian, Polish, Free French, Czechoslovakian, Greek, and Jewish ground units fought side-by-side with units made up of British nationals; Norwegian naval vessels operated out of the British Isles. Examples include the Carpathian Brigade made up of free Poles, the 1st Free French Brigade that held out at Bir Hakeim, and the Jewish Brigade that fought in the final battles against Italy.

Individual soldiers were also integrated into other units, not necessarily made up of their fellow countrymen. Some did not speak English, and had to learn it very quickly. Many German Jews joined the British army late in the war; most did so under false names.

MILITARY ACADEMIES

British officers prided themselves on their status, family heritage, and education. Part of any good officer's training included a stint at a military academy – the more prestigious, the better. Many high-ranking officers of the war had been trained at either Woolwich or Sandhurst.

RMA Woolwich

The Royal Military Academy at Woolwich – sometimes referred to as “The Shop” – opened its doors in 1741 to educate officers for artillery and engineer units; the two specialties were called the Ordnance Corps until 1856. In 1939, Woolwich was closed, with its senior students being commissioned into artillery, engineer, and signals units. Other students were transferred to the territorial Officer Cadet Training Units (OCTU).

RMC Sandhurst

The Royal Military College was established in 1800, with staff-officer training, officer training for gentleman-cadets, and a curriculum for the sons of enlisted men.

Like Woolwich, Sandhurst closed with the outbreak of WWII, sending many partially trained officers into cavalry and infantry units. Others were transferred to OCTU for additional training.

MILITARY ORGANIZATION



A general overview of British military organization can be found on pp. W39-41. The following information clarifies and expands on the original material.

A Flexible Force

One of the first things that must be understood about the British army is that it was extremely malleable and changed organizationally on a regular and frequent basis.

The largest unchanging unit in the British army was the battalion (regiments' roles are discussed on p. 36). Larger units – brigades and divisions – were usually formed from various regiments, pieced together to form a particular group whose components were subject to change with little notice. Below the regiment, units were fairly static and unchanging; above it they were combined into whatever configuration was needed.

Thus, British army organization was far more flexible than that of most militaries. British generals held few qualms about splitting off a brigade, or even a battalion, for a special assignment, or shifting a unit from one command to another on a temporary or permanent basis. Though this often led to problems with supply and communications, it did give the British army a great deal of fluidity and flexibility, and the ability to respond quickly to threats from unlikely fronts.

In some ways, the British division was more a guideline for patching together smaller units than a hard-and-fast military organization. It was a framework – a structure of command and

support elements to which various fighting units (the brigades and regiments) could be attached. This makes defining a “standard” British unit above battalion level difficult at best. The exception to this was the British infantry division. Its structure remained largely the same throughout the war.

THE ARMY

An overview of British army organization is found on p. W40. The following expands that description.

Infantry

The basic unit of British infantry was a section; it corresponded roughly to a U.S. squad. It consisted of seven riflemen and a three-man Bren machine-gun squad (a gunner, assistant gunner, and a lance corporal). The 10-man section was usually cut to nine men during the second half of the war. A section was generally commanded by a corporal.

The Bren gun was the heart of a section's firepower, and almost every infantry section carried one. Typically, the rifle squad and Bren squad would leapfrog over one another, advancing the Bren toward the enemy's flank whenever possible. The rifle squad would then attack from the opposite flank, trapping the enemy in crossfire. The rifle squad was generally armed with five or six Enfields and one SMG, usually a Sten or Thompson. The Bren squad carried the Bren and two Enfields.

Infantry platoons consisted of three infantry sections, designated by letter, with a small headquarters section, all commanded by a lieutenant. They generally included a single 2" mortar, which fired only smoke rounds early in the war, and either a Boys AT rifle (1939-1941) or a PIAT (1942+).

During the desert campaign – in which huge amounts of Italian equipment were captured – Italian SMGs and Breda LMGs were often integrated into British platoons. After the initial Italian defeat (p. 94), it would not be unusual to find a half-dozen confiscated Bredas in a platoon. The Italian Beretta Modello 1938A SMG (see p. W96) was highly sought after for its fine craftsmanship. Italian rifles were almost never used, since they were inferior to the British Enfield.

Specialized platoons were organized to fill specific needs: Mortar platoons were common, and included two 3" mortar teams and four Universal Carriers (p. 72). The Carrier platoon was even more mobile, and consisted of 10 Universal Carriers, each armed with a Bren gun. A signal platoon was responsible for communications and usually included a radio truck and two or more Carriers. Antiaircraft platoons were always armed with several Bren guns. Some of the other specialized infantry platoons included transport, administration, medical, and headquarters platoons.

A British infantry company included three platoons and a headquarters element, comprising about 20 officers and 270 enlisted men. One platoon was occasionally a mortar platoon. The company HQ had attached support troops, including headquarters staff and a staff car, a service section with a 3-ton truck, a sapper and demolitions section, medical staff (usually six enlisted men and one officer), and a handful of company armorers. A company-level rifle section, consisting of nine riflemen, was usually attached directly to the company HQ and doubled as security. Most regular companies were commanded by captains.

A headquarters company at the head of larger units generally consisted of an administration platoon, an antiaircraft platoon, a signals platoon, an antitank platoon, and a mortar platoon, as well as an expanded support staff. Headquarters companies were often commanded by majors.

A commando was a special-forces infantry unit made up of about 450 men. It consisted of a headquarters, five rifle troops, and a heavy weapons troop with three 3" mortars, two Vickers MMGs, and two Universal Carriers. The rifle troops often included a sniper and several Bren gunners, as well as a 2" mortar team. Even the HQ included two or three Bren guns. A Royal Marine commando was built along similar lines, but called its five rifle troops "assault troops." *GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel* provides a detailed look at British commandos and other special units.

REGIMENTAL DESIGNATIONS

Regimental designations are colorful, but sometimes confusing. Their roots lie in centuries of British regimental organization, and units that fought in WWII often carried the same designation they did when they were first formed hundreds of years earlier.

Numerical Designations: In 1751, existing regiments were numbered based on seniority. Some units retained the numbering over the years; others were numbered sequentially as they were raised. Examples include the 34th Border Regiment, 11th Devonshire Regiment, or 12th Lancers.

Geography: Some unit designations contained geographic or regional names, based on the area (often a county) from which the unit was originally raised. This convention started in 1782, when most existing units were assigned a territorial (county) name, but that had changed by the 1940s because regiments with specific place-names had added soldiers from all across the empire. Nevertheless, many units still held a place in the hearts of the people that lived in those regions. Examples include the Herefordshire Light Infantry, the Leeds Rifles, and the 12th Suffolk Regiment.

Duties: Early units were named according to their role. *Dragoons* rode into battle, but dismounted to fight; *guards* were originally used in a ceremonial role and acted to protect the royal family; *fusiliers* carried flintlocks to protect the artillery; *hussars* were light horsemen, etc. By WWII, the roles had largely changed; e.g., everyone used firearms, making the Fusilier designation almost pointless. But other designations were often still indicative of a regiment's combat role. Hussars were generally armored-car units, filling roughly the same role as they had hundreds of years before (reconnaissance, screening of forces, etc.). Lancers and Dragoons were almost always tank regiments, usually deploying fast-moving cruiser tanks.

It should be noted that posting to an armored regiment was often highly sought after by officers. Though the cavalry had switched from horses to tanks, the cavalry tradition remained. And as everyone knew, true gentlemen always rode into battle!

Examples of units named for their original (or current) roles included the Northumberland Hussars, the Welsh Guards, and the 20th Lancashire Fusiliers.

Royal Designations: In the 18th century, when colonels often owned and equipped their regiments, the title colonel-in-chief was held by royalty. Theoretically, the title and position helped common military soldiers feel part of the royal family, thereby forming a more united country. Units raised by the colonel-in-chief gained his name, and continued to bear that title even after the colonel-in-chief's death. Every regiment whose name contains the word King, Queen, Prince, Princess, Duke, and so forth, derives its title from a specific royal family member that held the colonel-in-chief title. Examples include the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, Queen Victoria's Rifles, and the Duke of Cornwall's 32nd Light Infantry.

It should be noted that the term "Royal," when used as a regimental designation, was not ceremonial. It was only given to a unit for distinction in battle; e.g., the 1st Royal Dragoons, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars. This does not apply to non-regimental (administrative) designations such as the Royal Logistics Corps, Royal Armored Corps, Royal Army Service Corps, etc.

A typical infantry battalion was made up of about 1,000 men, 48 machine guns, a dozen 2" mortars, and at least two 3" mortars. Most consisted of four infantry companies, with attached signals, engineer, Carrier, artillery, mortar, and motorized antiaircraft platoons. A medium machine-gun platoon (with four Vickers MMG gunners and 32 riflemen) was occasionally included.

The battalion was the primary military unit of the British army. It was usually commanded by a lieutenant colonel.

British regiments were administrative units, rather than tactical. Most consisted of two battalions plus support units. Individual battalions from the same regiment seldom fought together. Regimental organization was as much a matter of pride and honor as military hierarchy. British battalions attached to specific regiments developed a camaraderie and *esprit de corps* not found in other military organizations. Regimental membership was considered a badge of honor, with some battalions tracing their regimental ancestry back hundreds of years. The Honourable Artillery Company could trace its lineage back to its founding under Henry VIII in 1537, the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers to 1539.

A brigade generally consisted of three battalions and an HQ, often with an antitank section that fielded British 2-pounders or captured Italian or German guns. The Special Services Brigade comprised five battalions of about 1,000 men – two commandos – each.

The standard British infantry division consisted of some 17,500 men, of which about 8,000 were truly infantry, and included 72 artillery pieces (mostly 25-pounders), 48 anti-aircraft guns, 48 antitank guns, 850 machine guns, and 4,000 motor transports, including Universal Carriers and armored cars. The division comprised a headquarters company, three infantry brigades, an artillery unit (with three artillery regiments, an anti-aircraft regiment, and an antitank battalion), and one each heavy weapons, armored reconnaissance, engineer, and supply battalions. It was an effective fighting unit, and only underwent two changes during the war, both of which were aimed at increasing the support base and had little appreciable effect on the unit as a fighting force.

Mechanized/Motorized

British infantry units were often quite mobile. Even standard infantry battalions had enough Universal Carriers to transform one of their companies into mechanized infantry. Other specialized units used a combination of Universal Carriers and light and heavy trucks to create fully motorized units. Recon units added motorcycles and armored cars to the mix.

Recon platoons, also called scout troops, had an armored car section with five cars and two carrier sections with three Universal Carriers each. Recon companies usually included three recon platoons and an infantry (or assault) platoon.

Motorized infantry evolved during the course of the fighting. As the war started, the BEF was considered a "fully motorized" force, but they only achieved that in reality by requisitioning anything with wheels that wasn't already in use. Theoretically, the entire BEF should have been able to move quickly, but it proved to be a logistical nightmare. Parts weren't interchangeable, vehicles were poorly maintained,

and the mechanics had a horrific time keeping the army motorized. Future motorized forces attempted to maintain some level of consistency in their choice of vehicles.

A motorized-infantry platoon was similar to the Carrier platoon previously described. Late in the war, the platoon lost some riflemen, but added a machine-gun section with four Vickers MMGs. Three platoons formed a motorized-infantry company. A motor-infantry battalion included four motorized-infantry companies until 1941.

Beginning the following year, a battalion had only three infantry companies, but added an antitank company. Light trucks provided most of the transport, with Universal Carriers providing reconnaissance and light armor support. Light tanks also were attached at times.

A typical motor-infantry battalion included about 830 men, 100 MGs, 60 Carriers, four 3" mortars, and dozens of 2" mortars (and after 1941, up to 16 antitank guns); it was commanded by a lieutenant colonel.

Higher levels of organization followed the infantry pattern, with three battalions forming a brigade, and three brigades forming a division. As with the standard infantry, motorized units were often broken up and moved around as needed.

Armor

The British entered the war with two distinct concepts of armor. Cruiser tanks, used for recon and breakthrough, were fast but had little armor. Infantry tanks, designed to support foot soldiers, were slow but heavily armored. Cruisers made up most of the actual armored regiments (formerly mounted cavalry) while infantry tanks were found mostly in the Royal Tank Regiment. It was only with the Grant/Lee and later the Sherman (see p. W102) that Britain got an all-purpose tank.

During the war, British armored divisions underwent no fewer than seven major reorganizations. Early on, they were heavy on armor and light on infantry. Successive reorganizations decreased the amount of armor and increased the amount of motorized infantry in the division. In 1940, a full division had 2,650 infantrymen and 366 tanks. By 1942 the numbers had changed to 4,700 riflemen and 180-230 tanks. These armored units – in honor of their cavalry background – preferred using cavalry designations (troop, squadron, regiment) instead of infantry designations (platoon, company, battalion).

An armored troop (platoon) generally consisted of 3-5 tanks. A squadron (company) comprised three troops and a headquarters troop, which had three or four of its own tanks.

A battalion had three tank squadrons and an HQ squadron, with command tanks and a handful of recon armored cars. A tank battalion would be called, for instance, 7th Royal Tank Regiment – which actually meant 7th Battalion of the RTR.

Finally, a typical British armored division (in 1942) included an armored brigade made up of three armored regiments and a motor-infantry battalion, a motorized-infantry brigade, an armored-car recon regiment, two artillery regiments, an engineer battalion, antitank and anti-aircraft assets, and an attached supply unit. The division had 13,200 men of whom 4,700 were infantry, the rest serving 230 tanks, 48 artillery pieces (usually 25-pounders), 36 anti-aircraft guns, 36 antitank guns, 440 machine guns, and 2,800 transports.

THE BEF IN WWII

The British Expeditionary Force fielded 15 infantry divisions and assorted vehicles, tanks, and artillery under the command of Lord Gort. It included the 4th and 7th Royal Tank Regiments, and attached engineer and artillery units. They were supported by the Advanced Air Striking Force – made up of Hurricanes, Fairey Battles, and Blenheims – and the army's Air Component with Hurricanes, Gladiators, Lysanders, and Blenheims.

Many of the infantry divisions (the 12th, 23rd, and 46th, for example) were severely undertrained and under-equipped, and were never intended to see battle, but were used to bolster the existing British and French forces. The units were provided small arms, but few actually fired them in the Battle of France. They were given about one-third the normal complement of light machine guns, and most companies had half the Brens they would normally have received. Boys antitank rifles were rationed out, but no heavier weapons (such as mortars) could be found. Few officers received a pistol or binoculars, and compasses were scarce.

Tank units generally received what was available, not what they needed. Mixed tank types were commonly found, but an effort was made to match tanks at the troop level.

Artillery

As in most armies, organization of artillery units largely depended on the size of the guns. After the fall of France, the British usually organized field (light) and medium guns into batteries of eight, with three batteries forming a field regiment or two batteries forming a medium regiment, while heavy guns were formed in batteries of four, with four batteries per heavy regiment. The BEF in France used field regiments with two 12-tube batteries and heavy regiments with two 8-gun batteries.

A survey regiment was attached to most army corps, with troops specialized in flash-spotting or sound-ranging enemy fire, or terrain-surveying. A division in action could expect to have these specialists attached to improve fire accuracy.

Airborne

Airborne troops were a new development but used existing military organizational structure. At the highest level, a divisional HQ coordinated subordinate units, and included a number of attached support units.

Britain had two primary airborne divisions during the war, the 1st Airborne (formed in 1941) and the 6th Airborne (1943). Each included two parachute brigades and an airborne landing (or glider) brigade. Support troops included units from the Royal Army Service Corps for supply and transport, field ambulances with airborne medical units of about 100 men, engineers, field security personnel, a provost company that directed units to their landing zones and provided on-the-spot security, a glider pilot regiment, an air-landing artillery regiment, air-landing antitank batteries, air-landing

antiaircraft batteries, a signals regiment, an airborne armored recon regiment, and a company of pathfinders.

The pathfinders were a specialized parachute company inserted ahead of the regular drop to reconnoiter and secure the drop zone for the rest of the unit. They marked the landing zones with large colored cloth panels, smoke grenades, lights, and radio beacons, often doing so while in enemy territory.

For the 6th Airborne Division, this role was carried out by the 22nd Independent Parachute Company. The company included three platoons of three sections, or "sticks," each. Each stick used cloth panels to mark landing zones, laying out a T-shape on the ground. At night, Holophane lamps were used, with a green light at the base of the T and two orange lights on either arm. A pathfinder would use the green lamp to flash a drop zone code letter at incoming aircraft. The 1st Airborne's pathfinder company was similarly organized.

Each parachute brigade had three parachute battalions and a headquarters, with a parachute engineer squadron and a parachute ambulance attached to each battalion. Each battalion consisted of about 550 men, and included a battalion HQ, a mortar platoon with six 3" mortars, a machine-gun platoon with four Vickers MMGs, and three rifle companies.

Rifle companies were organized into three platoons of 36 men each, plus a company headquarters.

The divisions' air-landing brigades were larger than the parachute brigades and carried heavier weapons. They generally only arrived once the parachutists had secured a landing site – an airfield, or just a strip of flat land – and so could deliver heavy weapons and vehicles to support the lighter parachute brigades. An air-landing brigade consisted of a headquarters and three battalions. An engineer company and an air-landing field ambulance were attached, as well.

Each air-landing battalion had some 800 men organized into a headquarters company (including a reconnaissance platoon and an engineer platoon), four rifle companies, and a support company. The rifle companies each fielded about 150 men and included two 3" mortars. The support company included a machine-gun platoon with four Vickers, a mortar platoon with four 3" mortars, and an antitank platoon with eight 6-pounders.

The air-landing brigades' gliders were flown by the glider pilot regiment. Although not officially part of the airborne division, it would be attached for the duration of the operation. The regiment had two battalions, which were designated "wings" in 1943. Each wing had six squadrons of four flights each. Each flight consisted of 18 Horsa gliders, for a total of some 864 gliders. A Horsa could carry a small vehicle, a field-artillery piece, or about 30 men. Larger gliders, namely the mammoth Hamilcar, were often attached to carry heavy artillery or light tanks. (The British airborne crossing of the Rhine in 1945 utilized more than 50 Hamilcars to deliver airborne tanks.)

Pilots were volunteers from the army, navy, and RAF. They were trained on Hotspur gliders, then introduced to the Horsa. Selected pilots were trained to fly the Hamilcar once they were established with their squadron. Glider pilots were cross-trained in a wide number of skills, including heavy-weapons support, allowing them to join the battle once they'd landed the planes. They were rarely organized into ground units; most pilots simply attached themselves to the nearest fighting unit for the duration of the battle.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Royal Air Force was divided into four primary organizational units: Bomber Command, Coastal Command, Fighter Command, and Training Command.

The basic unit of planes was a squadron with 12 aircraft. Squadrons were organized into groups, and groups into wings. Organizational structure varied throughout the war; it was a much less rigid structure than the U.S. or German air forces. At times a group might have 10 squadrons, only to be expanded later to as many as 30. Later in the war, the organization solidified into a more static structure. Bomber Command maintained the most rigid structure of the four commands.

By the end of the war, more than 500 RAF squadrons had been formed, usually of the following types:

Army Support: Army support squadrons were usually a mix of aircraft that provided direct air cover during ground operations, transported troops, softened enemy targets, and so on. Fighter-bombers such as the Beaufort, Hurricane II, Liberator, and Thunderbolt were often very popular in such a role.

Bombers: The RAF used many different bombers throughout the war, including such staples as the Blenheim, Halifax, Lancaster, Mosquito, and Wellington. Targets ranged from industrial centers to entrenched ground units; bombers were also used to deliver propaganda (p. 9).

Fighters: British fighter squadrons were everywhere during the war, providing escort for bombers, intercepting enemy planes, and even lending ground support by strafing enemy targets. Famous British fighters include the Spitfire and Hurricane.

Reconnaissance: Small planes often flew miles behind enemy lines in an effort to determine troop dispositions, enemy strength, force buildups, and entrenchment levels. The planes were often unarmed and carried little, if any, armor. Reconnaissance squadrons used planes like the Avro Anson, Grumman Goose, and Martin Maryland.

Transport: Air transport squadrons were attached to different military units throughout the war. They included the glider squadrons that worked with the 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions (p. 37), planes of the Royal Air Supply Corps, and generic transport planes that simply moved men and machines from one place to another. Examples include the Albemarle, Bombay, Dakota, Harrow, and Skymaster.

Fighter Command

Fighter Command was formed on July 14, 1936, at RAF headquarters, Bentley Priory, Middlesex. Fighter Command's primary responsibility, early in the war, was the defense of Britain and the English Channel. Fighter bases scattered throughout southeast England launched wave after wave of fighter patrols in an effort to stem the German attacks. Fighter Command had only four groups (of varying sizes) during the Battle of Britain (pp. 23-24).

Bomber Command

Bomber Command coordinated the bombing efforts over Europe. Starting in late 1941, Bomber Command was given authority to bomb German cities. The bombing campaign that commenced continued through most of the war. Bomber

Command also coordinated the U.S. bombers that flew out of England starting in 1942.

Bomber Command suffered the highest losses of any command – British or otherwise – during the war.

Coastal Command

From the beginning of the war, the RAF's Coastal Command waged an unrelenting war against German U-boats that threatened British shipping. Using Sunderlands, Hudsons, Liberators, and Wellingtons, Coastal Command worked side-by-side with the Royal Navy to hunt down and destroy German subs. Due in part to advances in technology, the RAF managed to destroy 186 U-boats by war's end, a substantial percentage of the Kriegsmarine's total losses.

Training Command

Training Command was often called on to provide planes and pilots for emergencies. The quintessential example occurred at the Battle of Habbaniya when the RAF #4 Service Flying Training School defeated Iraqi forces using antiquated training aircraft (pp. 114-115). GMs may wish to start an air campaign with PCs playing novice pilots in training when the war breaks out. By the Battle of Britain, they will be facing live fire and skilled enemies, regardless of their level of skill.

The Western Desert Air Force

The RAF's Western Desert Air Force came into being in 1941, under the hand of Air Vice-Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham. It originally consisted of RAF #202 Group, and was expanded to include #253 wing (two squadrons of Hurricanes and one of Blenheims), #258 and #269 wings for operations over the front line, and #262 wing for defense of the Nile Delta. Wings #258 and #269 later became the nucleus of the Western Desert Air Force that aided the British in defeating Rommel. It was subordinate to General Headquarters RAF Middle East, in Cairo, Egypt, but maintained a tactical WDAF headquarters at Wadi el Natrun during most of the desert war.

In November 1941, the WDAF saw its first major operation, supporting ground forces during Operation Crusader (pp. 98-100) with Tomahawks and Hurricanes. As part of the operation, #80 Squadron was equipped with the new Hurricane II "Hurribomber" variant (p. 77).

Two years later, the Northwest African Allied Air Force was formed, reorganizing all air elements in the Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern theaters, including the WDAF. This new organizational unit included the Northwest African Allied Tactical Air Force commanded by Coningham. Subordinate to Coningham was the newly renamed Desert Air Force, formerly the WDAF, which went on to support Allied landings in Sicily after Rommel's defeat.

As the British 8th Army marched through Italy in late 1943, the DAF, under Vice Marshal Harry Broadhurst, developed a new form of close support, using fighter-bombers to patrol the front lines for enemy aircraft. Allied officers acting as forward observers could call down an air strike from the patrolling fighter-bombers at almost any time, allowing the DAF to perform double duty with only half as many planes. The DAF operated in Italy through May 2, 1945.

THE ROYAL NAVY

The Royal Navy was the largest naval force in the world, but sorely outdated by 1939. Britain had pushed for treaties limiting the size of naval guns, and even though other nations did not always abide by such a treaty, Britain did, limiting its warships. Although the British navy outnumbered the Germans, on a ship-by-ship basis many German vessels were more powerful boats. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were superior to British battlecruisers, and the *Bismarck* could defeat most any British battleship except perhaps the *Vanguard*. British cruisers, however, were generally better than their German counterparts.

The Home Fleet

The main British fleet – the Home Fleet – was based at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands. It was responsible for protecting Great Britain, hunting down German raiders in the North Atlantic, protecting convoys to Russia, and eventually taking back the English Channel prior to the D-Day invasion. A detachment from the Home Fleet – called Force H – moved to Gibraltar early in the war, operating in both the Mediterranean and the central Atlantic.

British Pacific Fleet

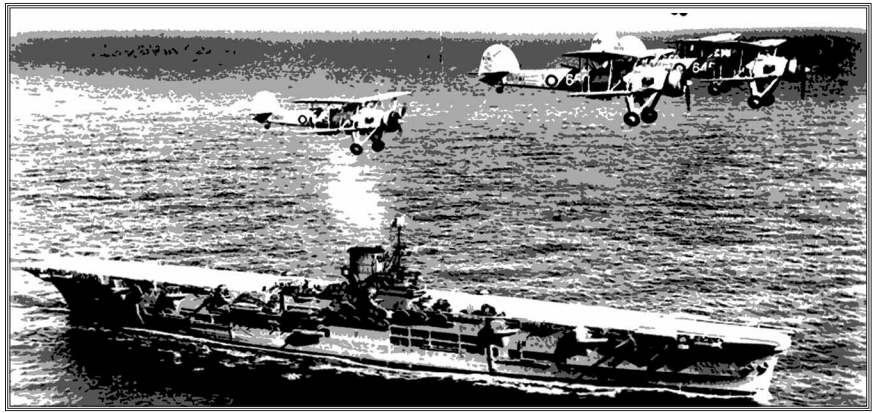
The British Pacific Fleet, or BPF, was commanded by Vice Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, with Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian in charge of aviation (see below). The U.S. Navy called the British fleet Task Force 57, but cooperation between the British and Americans was sporadic. American fleets could stay at sea for extended periods of time, but British ships and crews could not. Few British ships remained at sea for more than a week, while the U.S. Navy wanted its warcraft at sea for 20 days out of every month. The BPF struggled to meet the requirements, often borrowing fuel and ammunition from U.S. ships.

The BPF consisted of six new fleet carriers (*Formidable*, *Illustrious*, *Implacable*, *Indefatigable*, *Indomitable*, and *Victorious*), but not all were active at once due to refits and repairs. Two battleships (*King George V* and *Howe*) supplied the heavy guns, while six cruisers and a dozen destroyers rounded out the task force. Air crews from all across the Commonwealth flew mostly U.S. planes such as Avengers, Hellcats, and Corsairs.

Individual British warships were often attached to U.S. task forces for limited operations. For example, *HMS Victorious* operated with the U.S. Pacific 7th Fleet, Task Force 14, during May-July 1943. Anglo-American cooperative task forces in the Pacific always fell under U.S. command.

Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm

The Fleet Air Arm had its beginnings in the Royal Navy Air Service of WWI. By 1918, the RNAS was operating coastal patrols from 126 bases in Britain, but when the RNAS was integrated into the Royal Air Force, the bases fell under



RAF control. In 1937, the Fleet Air Arm was established and naval pilots used the bases once again. For much of the war, the FAA leased these bases from the RAF.

The FAA operated from carrier groups and land bases all around the world. They were not officially part of the RAF, but rather part of the Royal Navy. Land bases ranged all across Great Britain, including Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Pilots also flew from British and foreign airfields in such diverse places as Australia, Ceylon, Egypt, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, and the United States.

FAA squadrons even flew from U.S. carrier groups. For example, 804, 832, and 892 Squadrons operated from the *USS Saratoga* in support of the U.S. Marine landings in the Solomon Islands in 1943.

Regardless of their home base, the task of the Fleet Air Arm was always the same, and included interdiction of enemy shipping, submarines, and raiders; supporting naval and amphibious operations; air-sea rescue; and other naval air operations around the world.

The FAA flew more than 100 different models of aircraft during the war. Naval fighters included the Fairey Firefly, Gladiator, and Seafires. Antisubmarine planes included the Albacore, Swordfish, and Sunderland.

By the end of the war, the Fleet Air Arm had grown to include 59 aircraft carriers, 56 Commonwealth land bases, 3,700 planes, and 72,000 men.

Air-Sea Rescue

Throughout the war, many pilots ditched their aircraft and were rescued from the sea. Many such rescues were performed by escort ships assigned to the parent FAA carriers. At other times, the rescue was carried out by FAA aircraft themselves.

The primary ASR group of the war was 700 Squadron, which acted as a sort of headquarters for all catapult-launched planes on battleships and cruisers. A second squadron (701) operated out of the Middle East, and a third (Sea Rescue Malta) was based at Hal Far. ASR aircraft could be found at almost any coastal base in the world; RAF squadrons sometimes included ASR planes even when Fleet Air Arm squadrons were not present.

The Supermarine Walrus was the most common ASR aircraft during the war. ASR squadrons also flew Beauforts, Catalinas, Sea Hawks, Sea Otters, Swordfish, and even in some cases Wellingtons.

PRISONERS OF WAR

The early defeats in both West and East meant that thousands of British soldiers would spend up to five years in German POW camps, or nearly four years trying to survive the lethal Japanese work camps. These soldiers often led very isolated lives, with no news of the war's progress. To keep up morale, most stuck to the trappings of the military life that they had known.

The Germans always and Japanese usually sorted enlisted men from officers. The Germans also had distinct camps for branches of service. (*Luftstalags* held air-force personnel and *Marlags* held naval personnel, while *Oflags* held officers, etc.) German treatment varied from merely boring to inhuman (*Stalags* 2B and 17B were especially infamous), while the Japanese subjected POWs to starvation, cruelty, privation, and forced labor.

The Germans usually provided double-decker bunks in wooden or stone barracks, while the Japanese rarely provided this level of shelter. German camp commanders appointed an Allied soldier, called a man of confidence or MOC, who acted as a liaison between the prisoners and captors. In most cases, he greeted new prisoners, forwarded complaints to German commanders, and sometimes arranged escape plans!

SPECIAL UNITS

The following units fit, more or less, into the British military structure, but had distinguishing characteristics that bear further description.

The Territorial Army

In addition to the Regular Army, the British maintained a part-time reserve force called the Territorial Army, or TA.

By 1937, the TA had some 180,000 soldiers, and during the following two years it grew rapidly as Britain struggled to rearm in the face of the growing German threat. From 1937-1939, field divisions doubled in size; they were divided in half and told to recruit themselves full again. This often led to a great deal of confusion and poorly organized training, and the territorials' skills were in no way helped by their usually dreadful shortfall of equipment.

Some TA divisions – e.g., the 12th, 23rd, and 46th – were sent to France early in 1940, primarily to build and then to guard ammo dumps, airfields, military bases, etc. Since these units were not intended to see combat, they remained under-equipped and limited in size. Only the infantry and engineers of the TA units were actually sent over.

Royal Marines

The Royal Marines were founded in the 17th century. Since that time, they have fought in more land and sea battles than any other arm of the British military.

At the outbreak of the war, the Royal Marines had a single corps of about 10,000 men. From 1939-1942, most of their action took place on the high seas, though some Royal Marine units fought at Dunkirk, Norway, and in the Middle East.

Royal Marines were ready during naval attacks against *Graf Spee*, *Scharnhorst*, and even *Bismarck*, but they rarely had an opportunity to perform any actual boarding missions. In addition, Royal Marines acted as landing-craft crews and operated artillery and searchlight units during amphibious missions. When not on active operations, they functioned within the Naval Base Defense Organization, providing base security at British ports around the world.

In 1942, the first Royal Marine commando was formed and saw action in the raid at Dieppe. By 1944, there were nine Royal Marine units fighting in Europe, Sicily, and Italy, taking part in landings at Salerno, Anzio and Termoli. Others fought in the CBI Theater with the Chindits.

The D-Day landings involved 16,000 Royal Marines; most of the British landing craft were manned by them and each Royal Navy capital ship carried a full detachment. Royal Marine divers helped clear the shore, and five commandos (41, 45, 46, 47, and 48) landed during the initial assault.

By the end of the war, the Royal Marines had grown to 80,000 men. Royal Marine PCs are discussed on p. 48.

The Long Range Desert Group

On July 3, 1940, Major Ralph Bagnold of the Royal Signal Corps formed one of the finest long-range patrol groups of the war. Between December 26, 1940, and April 10, 1943, a total of only 15 days passed without an LRDG patrol operating behind or on the flanks of Rommel's North African lines.

When the unit was formed, Bagnold decided that good drivers and mechanics were critical. Since a large number of Australian and New Zealand soldiers had owned vehicles prior to the war, and many were already skilled mechanics due to living as isolated farmers, Bagnold approached General Blarney of the AIF to see about recruiting volunteers. Blarney demurred; he was under instructions from his own government to keep the AIF together, not allowing Australian soldiers to be dispersed randomly into British units.

Bagnold then turned to the New Zealand forces. Though the NZEF was under similar orders, their commander agreed, and soon New Zealander volunteers – together with some Southern Rhodesians and Indians – flocked into Bagnold's new unit.

The LRDG adopted the scorpion as their insignia, and due to the high concentration of New Zealanders, were soon known as the Kiwi Scorpions.

The LRDG was originally organized into four-truck, 12-man patrols, but it was soon discovered that a group half that size could travel more efficiently and still maintain cohesion. The LRDG specialized in reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering, acted as a pathfinding and transportation unit for SAS raids, and specialized in quick sabotage strikes on airfields, roads, enemy patrols, and lines of communication.

More information on the LRDG can be found on pp. W41 and W:HS12. A template appears on p. 51.



MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

An overview of military decorations and commendations can be found on p. W40. The following expands on that material, and is provided mostly as color and background.

Victoria Cross: Instituted in 1856, this was the highest and most prestigious British decoration of the war (bestowing a Reputation modifier of +4 on the recipient). It was awarded only for “most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or preeminent act of valor or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.” The 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ ” medal was often chemically treated to obtain a uniform dark-brown finish, and hung from a crimson ribbon. Details of the recipient were engraved on the back, including the recipient’s name, rank, and regiment, as well as the date or dates of gallantry.

The George Cross: Awarded to those not eligible for the Victoria Cross, this was the highest commendation for civilians. (It also bestows a +4 Reputation bonus.) The medal was instituted by King George in 1940, and replaced the previous Empire Gallantry Medal; EGM recipients were required to exchange their medal for the new GC. The medal is silver, with the words “For Gallantry” engraved on the warrant. It is worn suspended by a dark blue ribbon. The GC was manufactured by the Royal Mint, and engraved on the reverse side with the recipient’s name and date of action. The George Cross was awarded to the entire island of Malta in April 1942 (p. 16).

The Distinguished Service Order: Awarded to officers, usually above the rank of captain, this represented Britain’s second-highest award for gallantry available during the war (+3 Reputation). DSOs were awarded for meritorious or distinguished service during wartime, and were normally given out for service under fire or under conditions equivalent to actual combat with the enemy. The medal was a silver cross, with a gold crown in the center and convex ends; it was suspended from a crimson ribbon with dark blue vertical stripes on either side.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal: This was awarded to enlisted men, but was otherwise the equivalent of the Distinguished Service Order (+3 Reputation). The award itself was a circular medal with an engraving of the reigning monarch on its face. The medal was suspended from a crimson ribbon with a dark-blue vertical stripe down the middle. A silver bar with laurels was added for multiple citations.

The Military Cross: Awarded to soldiers below the rank of captain (and worth a +2 Reputation), late in the war receipt of this honor gave the recipient the right to use the initials “MC” after his name. It was awarded for “gallant and distinguished service in action” and could be won by naval or air-force personnel provided such action took place on the ground. It took the form of a symmetrical cross with an engraved crown on each end, suspended from a white ribbon with a vertical crimson stripe in the middle.

Aviators could earn the roughly equivalent Distinguished Flying Cross (or Medal) for air action; the naval equivalent was the Distinguished Service Cross (or Medal).

The Most Honorable and Ancient Order of the Bath: This was awarded for service of the highest caliber. There was both a civilian and a military division, with three levels in each division: Knight Grand Cross (GCB), Knight Commander (KCB), and Companion (CB). The first two levels confer knighthood (Status 2 and a +1 Reputation bonus), and were only available to British subjects. The CB was presented to the military for service in WWII and was available to anyone in the Commonwealth; it provides no *GURPS* Reputation bonus.

The Order of the British Empire: Originally created in 1918 as a way to reward civilians for meritorious actions, this decoration was soon modified to include five levels of award. The top two make the recipient a Knight of the British Empire (Status 2 and +1 Reputation bonus) and are only available for British subjects; other Commonwealth members were not eligible. The bottom three – Commander, Officer, and Member – were available to any Commonwealth citizen; they confer no Reputation bonus. The order was awarded mainly for services to the empire at home or abroad, and any level could be awarded for gallantry as well as for outstanding service. Unlike many British orders, women were eligible.

Other Orders of Chivalry

A number of other orders of chivalry existed during the war. Most followed the same general conventions listed above, but were available – sometimes exclusively – to subjects in other parts of the British empire. Thus it is possible, for example, for an Australian or Canadian to have a knighthood, but in a different order.



The Special Air Service

The SAS was created in 1941 by Lieutenants David Stirling and Jock Lewes. The group's creation is generally credited to Stirling, because Lewes was killed on one of the early operations, leaving Stirling to receive the lion's share of the recognition; see their biographies on pp. 56-57 for more details.

The SAS was originally created as a 67-man desert raiding force, designed to weaken Rommel's North African supply lines and aircraft operations. It was officially called the "L-Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade" in order to convince the Axis that a full brigade of such men existed.

The first SAS raid, on November 17, was a disaster; of the 66 men that went in, 22 returned. (The weather was horrific and the team dropped miles from their intended LZ.) Stirling and Lewes learned much from their experience, and in December a second raid proved an unmitigated success. The mission resulted in the destruction of more than 60 aircraft at two separate fields. When the raiders ran out of explosives, they resorted to shooting out aircraft controls with small arms. Blair "Paddy" Mayne, a former Irish rugby player, even tore out key components with his bare hands. A total of five airfields were hit in December, resulting in the loss of more than 100 Axis planes.

A typical raid involved sneaking onto the airfield and quietly setting a number of explosives in aircraft, all timed to go off at roughly the same hour. Once the squad was out of explosives, they would sabotage the craft by hand, or simply open fire with small arms once the explosions began. In the ensuing confusion, they would slip away into the night, ideally taking very few casualties and leaving a wake of fire and mayhem.

As the war rolled on, Hitler began to recognize the threat posed by the SAS, noting that, "These men are dangerous." They worked closely with the LRDG, who often provided infiltration and exfiltration. The LRDG's intelligence-gathering also provided valuable information for future SAS raids.

When the German army began stepping up airfield security, a faster, more mobile strike was needed, so the SAS acquired a number of Jeeps, usually mounting twin Vickers MGs on them. The SAS began to rely less on the LRDG for transport and more for intelligence and for covering exit routes.

With the new vehicles, the style of SAS raids began to change. A squadron of Jeeps would suddenly appear out of the desert night, fan out on the airfield, and hurl thousands of

rounds of tracer-laden ammo into the parked aircraft. The bullets ripped the fragile craft to shreds, while the tracers helped ignite spilled fuel. Once again, in the ensuing confusion, the squad would speed into the night.

The SAS lost several Jeeps in these operations; some fell to enemy fire, but many were lost to mechanical breakdown after hard driving across rocky desert.

Stirling was captured in 1943. Paddy Mayne took over command of the 1st SAS, while Stirling's brother Bill commanded the 2nd SAS regiment. When the war in Africa ended,

the SAS was sent to Europe. They were often air-dropped behind enemy lines, in groups of four, where they would link up with French resistance fighters, SOE agents, and partisans, to coordinate future drops of supplies, weapons, ammunition, or communications equipment. (*GURPS WWII: Return to Honor* covers the French resistance movement in detail.)

They carried out daring raids on German supply dumps, rail and communications lines, airfields, and small military bases. As D-Day approached, they became critical in providing accurate intelligence for Allied planners prior to the invasion.

Hitler despised SAS soldiers; captives were tortured and almost invariably shot. Nevertheless, the squads continued to operate in Europe even after the war's end, helping ferret out SS and Gestapo agents attempting to hide from the Allies.

By war's end, the SAS had claimed more than 7,500 German casualties in Europe alone. They captured nearly 5,000 prisoners, and destroyed or captured 700 vehicles. Some 160 rail lines were cut, seven trains destroyed, and 33 derailed.

Additional information can be found on pp. W41 and W:HS11-12. SAS PCs are discussed on p. 48.

Special Operations Executive

The Special Operations Executive was formed on July 22, 1940, to "coordinate all action by way of subversion and sabotage against the enemy overseas." The executive director, Sir Frank Nelson, turned the fledgling organization into something resembling a cohesive military-intelligence operation. He appointed Brigadier Colin Gubbins as director of operations. Gubbins would later become executive director himself, and turn the SOE into an elite organization.

SOE staff originally met in Saint Ermin's Hotel on Caxton Street, but was soon moved to 64 Baker Street. They began calling themselves the Baker Street Irregulars, after Sherlock Holmes' ragtag bunch of street urchins. The SOE recruited, trained, organized, and equipped hundreds of men and women to operate behind enemy lines. The bulk of the operatives went into occupied France, but many were sent into other occupied countries as well.

Operatives underwent a rigorous selection and training process, and included many women. Training included gun and explosive use, sabotage, telegraphy, unarmed combat, and more. See pp. W:RH27-28 for detailed information.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

The Military Intelligence Division began as the Military Intelligence Section in 1917. Originally divided into eight numbered departments, the sections were poorly defined and changed several times before WWII.

By 1939, the MID had stabilized, but a shakeup in 1942 changed things once again. A new subdivision of the MID was formed: the Military Intelligence Service, with subsidiaries Administration Group, Intelligence Group, Counterintelligence Group, and Operations Group. On paper, the MID and MIS were two separate entities; in practice, they continued to work together throughout the war.

Together, the two departments operated under the various MI departments including MI-1 (administration), MI-2 (information), MI-3 (army section), MI-4 (counterpropaganda and civilian misinformation), MI-5 (counterintelligence), MI-6 (foreign operations), MI-7 (reconnaissance, maps, and photographs), MI-8 (codes and ciphers), MI-9 (military intelligence training), MI-10 (news censorship), MI-11 (passport and port control), MI-12 (postal and telegraph), and MI-13 (fraud).

A template for an MI-6 agent appears on p. 49. Additional information about intelligence can be found on p. W41.

Bletchley Park

Bletchley Park was an ugly manor house in Bletchley, Buckinghamshire, about 50 miles northwest of London. Purchased by the head of MI-6 in June 1939, using personal

funds, it housed the Government Code and Cipher School (also called the GCCS) throughout the war. It was the 10th in a series of special MI-6 establishments, and so was also called Station X.

Large pre-fabricated huts were erected on the grounds to house the military decryption and intelligence sections. Some were later replaced by concrete buildings.

Raw encrypted messages were intercepted by “Y stations,” large radio-listening posts. The largest of these held 1,200 operators working in shifts around the clock. The Y Service also had a number of small stations in Palestine, Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar, South Africa, and Singapore (the last example moving to Ceylon after the Japanese occupation). After D-Day, mobile units worked on the continent.

GCCS was highly compartmentalized; no one was allowed to discuss the operations of their hut with other personnel. For example, no staff outside huts six and eight even knew the name Enigma (see box, below), let alone that British intelligence had a working model of the German encryption device.

Women outnumbered men at Bletchley Park about 2-to-1. Volunteers from the ATS, WAAF, and WRNS (p. 44) filled many roles, and worked side by side with young university students with a propensity for languages or mathematics.

Bletchley Park was closed at the end of the war. All who worked at the site had signed the Official Secrets Act. This made them unable to speak of their experiences – even to their spouses and children – until the official records were declassified 30 years later.

CODES AND CIPHERS

The men at Bletchley Park broke countless Axis codes during the war. The most famous of these, Enigma, is almost legendary.

Enigma

The Enigma cipher had been the backbone of the German military codes since the 1930s. Germany thought Enigma was unbreakable; it was complex beyond any codes of its day. Encryption was accomplished by typing a letter into a small typewriter-like machine. A series of electrically rotated wheels lit up an encrypted letter on a panel above the keyboard. Decryption used a similar process. What made Enigma so difficult to break was that the wires in the machine could be configured to any number of combinations, thereby changing the encryption code with ease. The odds against breaking Enigma through guesswork were 150 trillion to 1.

In 1932, in an intelligence coup, Poland had managed to learn Enigma’s secrets. At that time, the wiring was only changed every few months. With the outbreak of war, Enigma began to undergo wiring changes daily, if not more often, locking the Poles out of the loop. In July 1939, they passed on the information to Britain and France, giving Allied cryptographers an edge in breaking the Enigma

code. A fundamental design flaw in the machine meant that no letter could ever be encrypted into itself; e.g., a “t” would never show up in an encrypted message as a “t.” That, combined with mistakes on the part of German signal operators, allowed the British to begin breaking the code in January 1940. Once the Allies had acquired a physical copy of the Enigma machine, they would break subsequent Enigma codes much more quickly.

Fish

Not all German Army messages were encoded by Enigma. Some were sent using teletypes fitted with their own ciphering machines. Since these were sent using high-speed binary signals, the design of the encoders was significantly different to Enigma’s, though based on the same process. They were decrypted by a separate staff at Bletchley Park. The characteristic “non-Morse” signal was called “Fish” at Bletchley Park; the teletypes were given the names “Tunny” and “Sturgeon.”

Early on, Fish decryption was performed by hand. In 1944, the Colossus Mk I – the world’s first programmable computing device – was created. It played a key role in decoding the German high command’s responses to the D-Day landings.

Tommies

British soldiers were often called “Tommies.” The tradition started in 1815, when the first pay book was introduced into the army, and the name Tommy Atkins was used in the sample, much like the American use of the name John Smith or John Q. Public. The name Tommy was soon applied to British soldiers everywhere.

BRITISH GLOSSARY

The following is a short glossary of terms used in *All the King's Men* and often heard in British military life.

ANZAC: Australian New Zealand army corps. Often used as a generic term for Australian and New Zealander ground forces in general (p. 32).

Andrew, the: The Royal Navy, as known to its sailors and Royal Marines.

ARP: Air raid precautions.

ATS: Auxiliary Territorial Service. The indirect descendant of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps of WWI. The majority of ATS jobs involved cleaning, mess duties, and driving. ATS personnel sometimes acted as military police, radio-intercept operators, and anti-aircraft-gun crews. As such, ATS women sometimes saw service on the continent after D-Day. Queen Elizabeth – though a princess at the time – served as a truck driver with the ATS.

blighty: Home, or a wound serious enough to get a soldier shipped there.

char: Tea. Also called “having a wet” or “brew,” but as often one would brew up some char.

civvie street: Civilian life.

Commonwealth: The sum total of Great Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa.

digger: An Australian slouch hat originally worn by ANZAC soldiers of WWI. Usually worn with one side turned up, and often pinned there by a regimental badge.

doggo, lie: To hide.

done over: Exhausted and/or wounded, generally out of the fight.

escarpment: A slope or cliff leading to a ridge or plateau.

Evacuation, the: Early in the war, much of the population in vulnerable areas likely to be bombed were moved to the countryside or to towns lacking strategic value. Evacuees included children, the elderly, and even pets. Families putting up evacuated children would be paid a small allowance by the government. For a time, it was illegal to turn away evacuees relocated by the state.

fag: A cigarette, of course.

FANY: First-aid nursing yeomanry.

foo: The British equivalent of the American “Kilroy was here” (see p. W:D40) was “FOO was here” or something similar. Perhaps derived from “fooe,” perhaps “forward observation officer,” likely from several sources.

fuzzy wuzzy: Racist slang applied to various dark-skinned troops or support personnel, such as baggage carriers.

GC: George Cross (p. 41).

Gurkha: A Nepalese soldier, usually attached to the British Indian Army (p. 33).

HMS: His majesty's ship.

kip: Sleep.

land girl: Members of the Women's Land Army – women sent to work as farmhands, freeing up men to join the armed forces.

LRDG: Long Range Desert Group (p. 40).

NAAFI: Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes. The official trading organization of the British armed forces. Responsible for canteens, shops, and entertainment.

NCO: Non-commissioned officer (i.e., corporals, sergeants, and the like).

pound sterling: Primary unit of British currency, equivalent to \$4.85 during the war.

sapper: Combat engineer, from the term “sap” – to dig a trench or tunnel for explosives or to undermine.

RAAF: Royal Australian Air Force.

RAF: Royal Air Force.

RASC: Royal Army Service Corps.

regiment: In British service, this often was an administrative, rather than tactical, grouping of established military units (pp. 35-36).

respirator: Gas mask. Technically a Great War version of the technology, but still used to refer to the WWII equipment.

RM: Royal Marine(s).

RMA: The Royal Military Academy at Woolwich (p. 34).

RMC: The Royal Military College at Sandhurst (p. 34).

RN: Royal Navy.

Sandhurst: The Royal Military College (RMC) at Sandhurst (p. 34).

SAS: Special Air Service; a small group of elite commandos formed during WWII (p. 42).

shilling: 12 pence (or pennies); 20 shillings made a pound sterling.

VC: Victoria Cross (p. 41).

WAAF: Women's Auxiliary Air Force. The WAAF formed a vital backbone of the fighter-control system, staffing the radar posts, plotting aircraft in sector-control rooms, and serving as ground controllers for Allied aircraft.

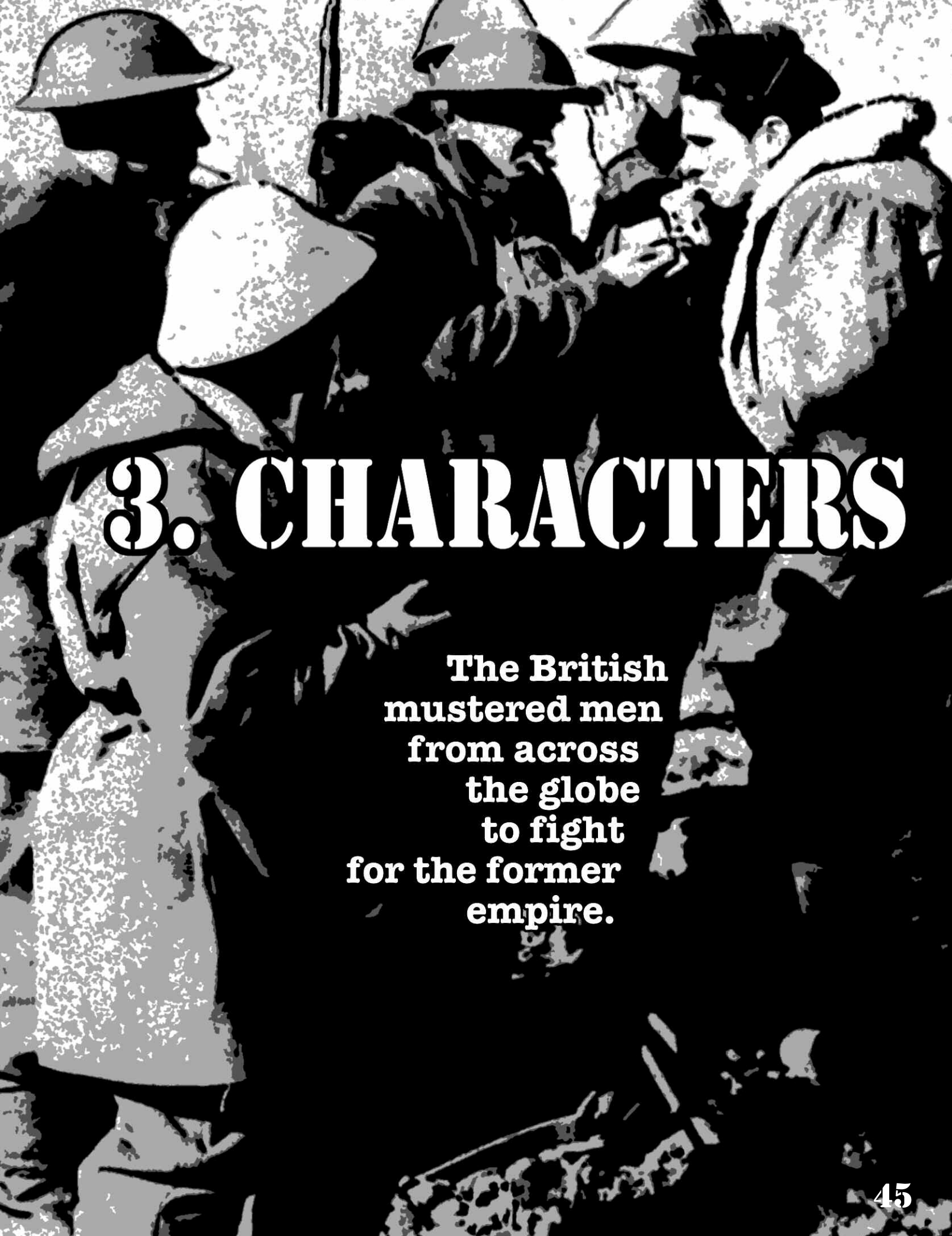
wadi: A riverbed that only contains water during heavy rains, common in the deserts of North Africa.

Wavy Navy: Used by regular naval officers to refer to reserve personnel, based on their curving cuff insignias.

Woolwich: The Royal Military Academy (RMA) at Woolwich (p. 34).

WRNS: Women's Royal Naval Service, popularly known as “Wrens.” Took over many shore duties from the men, including radio interception, radio direction finding, electronics maintenance, and support jobs. Many thousands served overseas, though always in support roles and always in shore installations, never aboard warships.

WVS: Women's Voluntary Service. Originally the Women's Voluntary Service for ARP (see above), the WVS was formed from women unable to enlist in the armed forces. Its duties included organizing the evacuation of children, providing care for refugees, finding homes for those displaced by the Blitz, and organizing thrift drives. They played a critical role in supporting civil-defense efforts, as well.



3. CHARACTERS

**The British
mustered men
from across
the globe
to fight
for the former
empire.**

CREATING A CHARACTER



This is a war of the unknown warriors; but let all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.

– Winston Churchill, BBC broadcast, July 14, 1940

GURPS WWII contains information on creating British characters. This chapter expands upon those options.

More than in most armies, a British subject's social background largely will determine what kind of unit that he would join. Men from the upper classes became officers and those from the lower classes joined the ranks. Men with ancestors in the Royal Navy tended to join "the Andrew," while those whose forefathers might have served with Wellington joined the army. Those with conservative backgrounds tended to join the "respectable" core forces – the navy and the army's armor, infantry, and artillery arms. Of course, exceptions existed. An aristocrat seeking more action might be found in special forces; men of humble birth but mercilessly solid intelligence sometimes did rise in the ranks. Still, any British character's story needs to consider the relationship between who he is in the war and who he was before it.

Most British campaigns will have little reason to deviate from the starting-points suggestions on p. W62.

DAUGHTERS OF BRITAIN, EVERY ONE

Many British women volunteered to serve their country. Later in the war, others faced conscription (p. 30), though this very rarely led to a place on the front lines.

In all, more than 500,000 would wear the uniforms of the various services. The Woman's Royal Naval Service generally placed women in administrative and support jobs. The

Women's Auxiliary Air Force employed some as pilots ferrying planes from base to base, often under challenging conditions. The Auxiliary Territorial Service had incorporated the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry of Great War fame, and placed women in support roles across all army theaters, even as truck drivers. A handful of women moved from the regular auxiliary services into roles as SOE agents (see p. 42 and p. W:RH27-28).

Those outside the services also served; in fact, by mid-war more than 90% of single and 80% of married women performed some work for the war effort. Nursing, of course, was a traditional supporting role, while the Women's Land Army organized British women as farmhands. Others built weapons in factories, filled Civil Defense posts, directed traffic as military police, and manned antiaircraft guns at home. Those with a background in theater often joined the Entertainments National Service Association, performing both at home and for the troops abroad.

While performing these services, even British women at home had to deal with being relocated to the country or bombing raids in major cities, tough wartime rationing, negotiating their evening commutes in the pitch black during air alerts, and sometimes losing homes or loved ones to the bombs. There was nothing easy and little glamorous about their lives.



ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES AND SKILLS

See pp. 62-71 in the **WWII** core book for the core advantages, disadvantages, and skills used in building a soldier.

ADVANTAGES

The following adds particularly British content to some staple advantages for military characters.

Rank see pp. W62, W179

Given the relationship between Military Rank and Status generally found in British subjects, it will not be uncommon for officers of high Rank to purchase more Status than the default value discussed on p. W66. In general, the British rarely bestow Rank more than three points higher than Status

unless the soldier is a "regular" who entered the service as a career and comes from an old military family. Regular soldiers may obtain Rank up to five points higher than their Status – which is generally Status 1 but can vary by 1 point in either direction – before too many eyebrows are raised.

In a similar vein, minorities such as Indians will rarely be found in any position above NCO, at least in the regular Commonwealth forces. (Special forces might make exceptions.) The only native officers in most Indian and Gurkha regiments were experienced NCOs promoted to serve as adjuncts to the British officers. They were called junior commissioned officers and treated much like warrant officers (see p. W62). The three JCO ranks were naib-subedar, subedar, and subedar-major; all are Military Rank 3 in **GURPS** terms.

GURPS British Military Ranks

MR	Army (Royal Marines)	Royal Navy	Royal Air Force	Indian Army
8	Field Marshal	First Sea Lord	Marshal of the RAF	Field Marshal
8	General	Admiral of the Fleet	Air Chief Marshal	General
8	Lt. General	Admiral	Air Marshal	Lt. General
7	Major General	Vice Admiral	Air Vice Marshal	Major General
7	Brigadier	Rear Admiral	Air Commodore	Brigadier
6	Colonel	Captain, Commodore	Group Captain	Colonel
5	Lt. Colonel	Commander	Wing Commander	Lt. Colonel
4	Major	Lt. Commander	Squadron Leader	Major
4	Captain	Lieutenant	Flight Lieutenant	Captain
3	Lieutenant	Sub-Lieutenant	Flying Officer	Lieutenant
3	Subaltern, 2nd Lieutenant	Midshipman	Pilot Officer	2nd Lieutenant
2	Staff (Colour) Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer	Flight Sergeant	Havildar-Major
2	Sergeant, Lance Sgt.	Petty Officer	Sergeant	Havildar
1	–	Leading Seaman	–	–
1	Corporal	Ordinary Seaman	Corporal	Naik
0	Lance Corporal	Able Seaman	Leading Aircraftman	Lance-Naik
0	Private (Marine)	Junior Seaman	Aircraftman	Sepahi (“Sepoy”)

Reputation see pp. W179, B17

The British generally take a man’s reputation seriously. (The GM might model this by adding an extra -1 reaction penalty for a negative Reputation among old-school British NPCs, while bestowing an extra +1 bonus for a positive Reputation.) Soldiers may begin the war with a Reputation, or develop one during its course. Sometimes simply belonging to a particular regiment brought a positive Reputation in general, but possibly a negative Reputation among rival regiments. (A GM who wants to steep his campaign in regimental colors will want to research the various rivalries elsewhere. British regimental history is too complex to condense here.)

See p. W63 and p. 41 for information on commendations and medals and the Reputation bonuses that they bestow.

DISADVANTAGES

The following adds a British flavor to some of the disadvantages often found among soldiers.

Code of Honor see p. W64

The British placed a great deal of emphasis on their sense of honor during WWII, so many Commonwealth troops will follow either the Enlisted Man’s or Officer’s Code of Honor. In general, the British sense of honor placed emphasis on sticking by one’s mates or fellow officers, even if their performance seemed subpar and could conceivably threaten the unit as a whole. It sometimes could require an outlandish display of incompetence to prompt a honorable British soldier to notify a superior of a problem with one of his contemporaries.

The hostile desert environment encountered in North Africa – which prompted Churchill to remark that if a man were to be interrogated about his deeds in the war, it would be enough to say that he had served with the 8th Army – created additional rules for those with either version of the standard

military Code of Honor. These included: Do not light fires after sunset; do not park your vehicle near another’s foxhole; do not borrow water or fuel; do not give directions you have not tested yourself; do not leave any mess that will breed flies; do not ask another to carry a message, your equipment, or yourself, unless it’s his job; drink lightly from another man’s canteen; make sure your friend has plenty of cigarettes before you borrow one; never run down another man’s commander; be hospitable and courteous to all.

These rules simply flesh out the military Codes for desert service, while adding nothing to their point cost.

Social Stigma see p. W180

Many British leaders – most notably Churchill himself – retained rather Victorian concepts about various peoples’ place in the world. This racism did not always manifest itself as hostility toward dark-skinned people, and almost never reached the viciousness that a German Nazi or U.S. Southerner might display. Often, it took the form of a patronizing attitude toward the “simple souls” in undeveloped countries, who could get very worked up about being viewed in this fashion while the British exploited their natural resources.

This stubborn Victorian strain in the British social outlook of the times requires that most dark-skinned Commonwealth subjects take a Social Stigma at -10 points for being a minority group. An Indian or other subject with a particularly pale complexion might be able to buy off -5 points of this disadvantage, while having a positive Reputation as a scholar or similarly learned professional might also allow buying off -5 points.

Additionally, a small but visible minority of British officers will display Intolerance toward their Indian or other dark-skinned troops. This might manifest as cruel treatment at all times, or more subtly as the officer sends his colonial units into the most dangerous fighting of every battle (then steals the credit should they cover themselves in glory).

CHARACTER TEMPLATES



Most British soldiers can be built using the templates on pp. W72-84. The following section offers some notes expanding on those corebook templates, and introduces new character templates that illustrate less conventional alternatives.

Additional Template Notes

Marine: The Royal Marines should add Sailor and Seamanship to the optional skills on p. W75. Many units spent a great deal of time on ship and were more thoroughly invested in routine ship functions than their counterparts from other countries. Some investment in Boating, and possibly Powerboat, would also be very common. Some Royal Marines received cross-training in functions more akin to special forces, especially in preparation for clearing the underwater obstacles at Normandy). This training would be represented by a 5-point package that would add Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-9, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-9, and Underwater Demolitions (M/A) IQ [2]-11, while increasing Demolitions to IQ [2]-11.

Commando: The Special Air Service (see p. 42 and pp. W:HS11-12) uses the template on p. W80. As the reputation and influence of these special forces grew, however, the SAS received an unprecedented opportunity to train for a wide variety of warfare methods. To reflect this training, add any of the following 5-point packages to the Commando template:

Boating: Add Boating (P/A) DX [2]-13, Navigation (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9, Powerboat (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-11, and Surveying (Beach) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9/15. Increase Swimming to DX+1 [2]-14.

Climbing: Add Survival (Mountain) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10 in addition to the Survival skill taken under *Secondary Skills*; realistically, the existing specialization would be Survival (Desert) in most cases. Increase Climbing to DX+1 [4]-14, Jumping to DX [1]-13, and Throwing to DX-1 [2]-12.

Demolitions: Add Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10 and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10. Increase Demolition to IQ+1 [4]-13.

Desert: Add Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12 and Mechanic (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11. Increase Orienteering to (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11 and take Survival (Desert) under *Secondary Skills*, increasing it to (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10 and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10. Increase Demolition to IQ+1 [4]-13.

Heavy Weapons: Spend a total of 4 points on any *three or more* of the following: Gunner (Cannon), Gunner (Mortar), Guns (Flamethrower), Guns (Grenade Launcher), and Guns (LAW). Increase Gunner (Machine Gun) to DX+2 [2]-15*.

Parachuting: Add Parachuting (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14. Increase Camouflage to IQ+1 [2]-13 and Jumping to DX [2]-14.

SPIV



The spiv – a rogue and petty criminal making a profit from black markets and petty scams – is a stock figure of 1940s and '50s British urban life. Replete with a fur-collared coat, waxed moustache, and the demeanor of a weasel, the spiv was not popular among law-abiding citizens, but most tolerated his ways because they might need his services to acquire items that they could otherwise not find . . . though usually at an exorbitant markup.

20 POINTS

Most spivs were draft-dodgers – usually doing so out of some legal, but dubious means – and could be found slumming in most metropolitan areas during the war. The spiv ran the gamut from fast-talking confidence man to seedy, switch-blade-wielding profiteer.

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 11 [10], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: 10 points in Contacts, plus 5 points in any of Acute Vision [2/level]; Alertness +1 [5]; Charisma +1 [5]; additional Contacts [Varies]; Favors [Varies]; Reputation (for Usefulness) [Varies]; Sanctity [5]; or Sensitive [5].

Disadvantages: A total of -15 points from any of Code of Honor (Stays Bought) [-5]; Cowardice [-10]; Greed [-15]; Laziness [-10]; Reputation (as Shady Character) [Varies]; Secret (Illegal Activities) [Varies]; or Weak Will [-8/level].

Skills: Holdout (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Merchant (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Streetwise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; and 4 additional points used to increase any of the above, or assigned to any of Accounting, Acting, Area Knowledge, Brawling, Carousing, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Filch, Forgery, Intimidation, Knife, or Scrounging.

Customization Notes: This template can be combined with others, including both civilian and military types, reflecting the spiv's past careers or current sideline occupations. The opportunist "fixer" – with high levels in Scrounging and Merchant – is a recognized figure in many military circles.

INTELLIGENCE AGENT

70 POINTS

This template represents an agent for MI-6 (see p. W41 and p. 43), the British foreign-intelligence agency that also calls itself the Secret Intelligence Service. These agents comb the four corners of the wartime world, often undercover as a British diplomat, while recruiting spies, promoting resistance efforts, and gathering data to improve London's understanding of affairs in other nations. Thus, they can play a key role in almost any adventure. An entire campaign could be run in some semineutral setting such as Spain or Switzerland. A lone agent might be tasked with infiltrating enemy lands and spiriting away top-secret German plans, though this would be considered a huge risk, because in 1939 the Germans greatly embarrassed MI-6 by snaring two agents in the Netherlands. A spy in North Africa may find the LRDG useful in getting him where he wants to be – or away from where he doesn't!

Most agents will be urbane, upper-class men belonging to the agency's "old boy's network." Their motives could be based more on class than country; for instance, it's alleged that Stewart Menzies – MI-6's wartime director-general – joined other agents in a 1924 bid to topple Britain's own Labour government. SIS personnel will be tempted to hinder their rival the Special Operations Executive (see pp. 42, W41 and W:RH27-28), even if those efforts hurt overall intelligence-gathering.

Part of this hostility stems from the SOE's tactics; it leans toward military-style raids and raising a ruckus, which often imperils discreet MI-6 operations. Also, some SIS resentment probably stemmed from the success of SOE and other rivals. The SOE's resistance fighters tore up railroad tracks, the domestic security service MI-5 turned German agents to feed false information to the enemy, and the Bletchley Park initiative (p. 43) wasn't a pure MI-6 operation. The old-school spies really had no coup to claim as all their own, although Menzies himself did slip into Warsaw just before the war began to help obtain the Enigma machine that proved so crucial to British code-breaking.

Menzies' other great venture – a bid to turn German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (see p. W50) – never worked out. As director-general, the man known simply as "C" (rather than the "M" of James Bond fame) should be eager to support another espionage triumph originating from within his department.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers [5]; Legal Immunity [5]; Military Rank 3 [15]; Status 2 [0]*; Wealthy [20]; and 10 points in *National Advantages* (see p. W68).

* Free from Military Rank and Wealth.

Disadvantages: Duty [-15]; Secret (Agent) [-10]; and -20 points in *National Disadvantages* (see p. W69).

Basic Skills: Acting (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Administration (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Area Knowledge (Any) (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Electronics Operation (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Leadership (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Orienteering (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11 (or Navigation-10 for those with Royal Navy backgrounds); Research (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+2 [0]-15*; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ-1

[1/2]-12; Tactics (Any) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11; and a language (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

* Defaults from Status.

Secondary Skills: Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-12*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-12*; Holdout (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Shadowing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Streetwise (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-11; Sailor or Soldier (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Optional Skills: Spend 2 points on any of Stealth (P/A); Scrounging (M/E); Demolition, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Lockpicking, or Photography (all M/A); Cryptography, Detect Lies, or Forgery (M/H); or additional foreign languages (usually M/A).

Customization Notes: This template is intended for a realistic campaign, and hence does not include such cinematic spy combat skills as Garrote, Poisons, Karate, etc. These can be easily added for a bit of genre-mixing.

The Secret for being an MI-6 agent is of low value because, by this point, any serious player in a country's espionage community knows which British diplomat postings are fake jobs used by agents. For instance, the chief MI-6 agent in a given country usually masquerades as the embassy's "passport control officer." Still, any serious breach of cover can result in a diplomatic fuss followed by the Secret being traded for an Enemy or negative Reputation or some other appropriate fallout. At this time, the British government maintained the polite fiction that the MI agencies did not actually exist, so the Secret may require maintaining this clumsy deceit in the face of overwhelming evidence . . .

Agents purchase a low-level Legal Immunity (see p. CI27) rather than full Diplomatic Immunity because, after all, there's a war on. The advantage will not help at all in Nazi-occupied territories, and most non-combatants will bend the rules as they see fit if they think a British agent is trying to get them involved in the fighting. Diplomatic pouches generally lost their sanctity during the war years, so the GM should consider carefully before allowing an agent to purchase that 5-point addendum.

The SOE had even more of a military cast; most of its agents would be built on combat-experienced military templates, then have a few espionage skills added to them. They also trained ordinary people from lands under Nazi occupation as field operatives in Britain, then slipped them back into their homelands; see p. W:RH36 for a French operative of this nature. The life expectancy of these SOE operatives could be very short, a point that probably came up in many MI-6 barbs. SOE personnel sometimes called MI-6 the "bastards of Broadway," because the agency's headquarters were in the London street of that name. The chiefs of MI-6 repeatedly tried to get SOE subordinated to them or disbanded.

MI-5 agents would be rather similar personnel; from late 1940, a former MI-6 officer even ran the domestic security service. The major difference is that MI-5 agents move the points in Legal Immunity (which isn't needed) into increasing Legal Enforcement Powers to the 10-point version. For most of the war, a great many MI-5 resources chased German spies that, for the most part, simply did not exist.

GURKHA SOLDIER

Through their military services stretching back well before WWII, the Gurkhas have surrounded themselves with legends about their bravery and prowess. This has led some of their enemies – and probably a few British officers – to fear and condemn them as “savages.” Most of their British paymasters, however, came to appreciate their rugged rural values and loyal service, even if they sometimes became squeamish about the Gurkhas’ methods . . .

Gurkhas took great pride in being courageous, as well as accomplished mountaineers, scouts, and melee fighters. They preferred to use their blades over their rifles, when possible sneaking up on an unwary enemy and decapitating him. If getting that close just wasn’t that feasible – and it would have to be suicidal for a Gurkha to think it not feasible – they preferred to quietly set up for a single expert shot rather than blast away in a contest of weight of lead. In short, they were serious about the aesthetics of killing their fellow man.

Most Gurkhas took naturally to military discipline, but still considered themselves individuals and volunteers. In general, they would follow a competent leader to certain death, but walk away from an incompetent without any sense of obligation or duty.

Gurkha regiments were attached to the Indian Army, and so used Indian Army ranks (pp. 46-47). Due in part to restrictions imposed by the Nepalese government, and in part to British prejudice, Gurkhas were rarely promoted above the rank of subedar— see *Rank*, p. 46. In more than 200 years of Gurkha military service, very few Gurkhas had been promoted to Rank 4. Exactly two reached Rank 5.

More information about the Gurkha regiments can be found on p. 33.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Fearlessness +2 [4], Fit [5]; Reputation +1 (Gurkha, small group) [3]; and 15 points from Alertness [5/level]; Acute Senses (any) [2/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Military Rank (up to Rank 3) [5/level]; Night Vision [10]; Reputation (for commendations or fearlessness) [Varies]; Strong Will [4/level]; Toughness 1 [10]; additional levels of Fearlessness [2/level]; or upgrade to Very Fit [a net +10].

Disadvantages: Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]; Reputation -1 (Gurkha, small group) [-3]; Sense of Duty (Comrades and Competent Officers) [-10]; Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10]; and -15 points from any of the following: Bloodlust [-10]; Callous [-6]; Gregarious [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Primitive (TL4) [-5]; Selfless [-10]; Semi-Literacy [-5] or Illiteracy [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Truthfulness [-5].

Basic Skills: Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-13; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-11; Climbing (P/A) DX [2]-13; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Gurkhali (M/A) IQ [0]-11*; Guns (Light Auto) (P/E) DX+1 [1]-14**; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+2 [2]-15**; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX-1 [1/2]-12**; Hiking (P/A – HT) HT [2]-11; Jumping (P/E) DX



75 POINTS

[1]-13; Knife (P/E) DX+2 [4]-15; Shortsword (Kukri) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14; Soldier (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-14; Spear (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11.

* Native language.

** Includes +1 for IQ.

Secondary Skills: Acting (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9; Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9; Demolitions (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; NBC Warfare (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9; Orienteering (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Scrounging (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Survival (Mountains) (M/A) IQ [2]-11; Tracking (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Traps (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9.

Optional Skills: Spend 5 points on any combination of Guns (Flamethrower, Grenade Launcher, LAW, or Pistol) or Swimming (both P/E); Boating, Gunner (Cannon or Mortar), or Riding (all P/A); Carousing (PA – HT); Cooking or Savoir Faire (Military) (both M/E); Electronic Operations (Communications), English, Forward Observer, Intimidation, Streetwise, or Teamster (all M/A); or Animal Handling, Engineer (Combat), or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (all M/H).

Customization Notes: The Gurkha may take up to another -15 points in personal disadvantages and -5 points in Quirks for additional points to invest in skills, etc.

The Gurkha’s preferred melee weapon – the *kukri* – can be found on p. 61.

Gurkha units were organized along the same basic lines as most other British units, so some Gurkhas will have received specialized training in demolitions, heavy weapons, first aid, driving, and so forth. Other military templates can provide guidelines for this sort of advanced training.

Any Gurkha with a tendency or reputation for cowardice will be considered *very* unfavorably by his fellows. For a Gurkha, Cowardice is a -15-point disadvantage with a -3 reaction modifier.

Many, but not all, Gurkhas will have some training in English; the army had language schools for them. Most Gurkhas of Military Rank 2 will have at least a half-point in the language, and it’s almost impossible to advance to Rank 3 without a rough fluency. British officers serving in India did not tend to learn Gurkhali; they were expected to take up Urdu, instead.

The small investment in Acting skill represents that Gurkhas generally are close observers of character, with a lively sense of humor. One of their favored forms of humor is to mimic each other, their British officers, and so forth. The GM probably should allow this as a specialization of the skill, at +5 for comic impersonation but -1 for any other application.

The template portrays a realistic Gurkha; cinematic or especially heroic campaigns will require a higher point level, with most of the additional points going toward increased ST and DX, Toughness, and higher Knife and Shortsword skills.

LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP TROOPER 75 POINTS

The Long Range Desert Group acted as a reconnaissance and raiding group in the Western Desert during the North African campaign. The men were not exactly commandos (see p. W80) nor simply recon troopers (see p. W76) Rather, they had an informal combination of both skill sets, highly specialized to the tough environment in which they operated.

The soldiers were volunteers, many chosen from New Zealander units due to the high prevalence of mechanical, driving, and outdoor skills. Like many elite units, they developed a high level of camaraderie, sticking closer to one another than family. Most LRDG soldiers observed the desert rules for the soldier's Code of Honor (p. 47).

They also enjoyed a great deal of individuality in their unit. None of the LRDG officers demanded that their men go by the book – there was no book describing how to drive into the desert for days, lurk behind enemy lines and record everything that you saw, then get back again, all while avoiding the watchful eyes of the Luftwaffe and the 1,001 ways in which the desert would try to kill you. The men wore irregular clothes and equipped their vehicles (see p. W:HS27) much as they saw fit. A clean shave would be noticeable among them.

Perhaps their greatest privilege was the special ration that their commander, Major Bagnold (p. 52), obtained for them. It contained extra food . . . and the rum that had disappeared from other units' rations decades earlier.

More LRDG information is on p. 40 and p. W:HS12.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Fit [5] and 15 points in *National Advantages* (see p. W68). As part of their *National Advantages*, LRDG soldiers may take Daredevil [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; or upgrade Fit to Very Fit [a net +10 points].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Enlisted Man's or Officer's) [-10]; Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]; Sense of Duty (Mates in the Troop) [-5]; and -15 points in *National Disadvantages* (see p. W69).

Basic Skills: Area Knowledge (Western Desert) (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Cartography (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Climbing (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-10; Driving (Truck) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14*; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14*; Hiking (P/A – HT) HT [2]-11; Knife (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Mechanic (Gasoline Engine) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Navigation (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Soldier (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; Spear (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Survival (Desert) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Tactics (Guerrilla) (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Secondary Skills: Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-12; Demolitions (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Electronics Operations (Communications) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-13*; Jumping (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Scrounging (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Traps (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Optional Skills: Spend 5 points on any of Guns (Flamethrower, Grenade Launcher, or LAW), Parachuting, or Swimming (all P/E); Boating, Gunner (Cannon or Mortar), or Powerboat (all P/A); Carousing (P/A – HT); Area Knowledge (any), Cooking, or Telegraphy (all M/E); Forward Observer (officers and NCOs only), Gambling, Intimidation, NBC Warfare, or Tracking (all M/A); Engineer (Combat) or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (both M/H); or foreign languages (usually M/A).

Customization Notes: LRDG troopers were a varied lot, and did not undergo specialized training like most elite units, such as the SAS commandos. GMs should therefore allow a fair amount of leeway in customizing individual soldiers, making certain that appropriate skills are added or increased depending on the soldier's typical role in the patrol. Some may act as gunners, others as medics, and at least one member in each LRDG group should be an NCO with appropriate leadership skills. See the SAS specializations on p. 48 or pp. W:HS11-12 for suggestions on additional skill sets.

Conversely, the LRDG could do without a comprehensive training regime because it recruited men with extensive experience from their civilian lives. The GM should encourage players to add appropriate non-military background skills to round out this sort of character. The New Zealanders in the LRDG usually had a rural upbringing, and included a high percentage of farmers and shepherds; they might purchase Agronomy, Riding, Animal Handling, Meteorology, etc. Other LRDG recruits would hail from all corners of the empire, and some would possess urban backgrounds, instead.

REFUGEE CHARACTERS

As the Axis powers expanded their persecution of minorities and began their conquests, they drove countless refugees ahead of them. Many ended up in the United Kingdom. Some struggled to find a place to live and survive, while others fought as soldiers or airmen alongside British forces.

A typical refugee will resemble many other civilian or military characters, with the addition of at least -20 points of disadvantages drawn from among Age [-3/year]; Chronic Depression [Varies]; Confused [-10]; Edgy [-5]; Fanaticism (Native Country) [-15]; Flashbacks [-5/-10/-20]; Guilt Complex [-5]; Honesty [-10]; Nightmares [-5]; Pacifism [-15 or -30]; Poverty (Struggling to Dead Broke) [-10/-15/-25]; Secret [Varies]; Sense of Duty [-5 or -10]; Shyness [-5/-10/-15]; Unluckiness [-10]; or Youth [-2/year].

Any accent that sounds German to untrained British ears (especially if it *is* German) could give the equivalent of a Social Stigma, although this might be bought off once the character convinces the Britons he meets of his true nature. Most refugees will have, or soon add, a point or so in English.

MAJOR PERSONALITIES



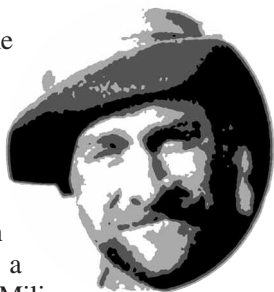
Ralph Bagnold

Army Major who founded the Long Range Desert Group, 1896-1990, a tough and wiry British soldier-engineer with expertise in desert survival.

The son of a British Army Royal Engineer, a young Ralph Bagnold followed suit, and after a short training period at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, he joined the engineers as an officer in 1915. He spent three years in France, then followed up his military experience by enrolling in the engineering program at Cambridge University, where he graduated with honors. While stationed in Cairo and India during the interwar years, Bagnold began exploring the deserts. Using personal vehicles and vacation time – and later, with help from the Royal Geographical Society – he and his cohorts drove thousands of miles through the Transjordan, the Sinai, and the Sahara, learning everything they could about the infamous wastelands. Bagnold retired from the army in 1935, and four years later wrote *The Physics of Blown Sand and Desert Dunes*, which earned him election to the prestigious Royal Society of London.

He was recalled in 1939, to the Signal Corps, and found himself in Cairo once again, where he suggested to Wavell that a small group of men be given desert trucks and supplies to act as both scouts and skirmishers in northern Libya and Egypt. “How about some piracy on the high deserts?” he quipped. Wavell responded positively, and the Long Range Patrol Unit – later to be called the Long Range Desert Group – was born. Bagnold’s desert survival skills were integral in the formation and doctrine of the small unit. He is credited with several innovations and inventions that made the LRDG a success, including a sun compass and a closed cooling system for vehicles. See pp. 40 and 51 for more information on the LRDG.

Bagnold should be portrayed as physically, mentally, and morally tough. He would have IQ and HT 13, and probably 11s in ST and DX. Advantages and skills would include Reputation +1 (to British learned society), Strong Will +2, Toughness DR 1, Driving (Automobile)-13, Survival (Desert)-16, Piloting (Single Engine Prop)-12, and Area Knowledge skills at level 13 for the deserts mentioned above.



(1923-24, 1931-37), before succeeding Stanley Baldwin as prime minister on May 28, 1937.

Believing that Germany had been ill-treated by the Allies following the Great War, and that German grievances were legitimate and deserved attention, Chamberlain adopted a policy of appeasement. Individuals in his Conservative government who did not agree with his policy were dismissed and replaced by those who did.

On September 29, 1938, Chamberlain met with Germany’s Hitler, France’s Edouard Daladier, and Italy’s Mussolini, signing the Munich Agreement, which transferred the Sudetenland to German control. Chamberlain declared that the agreement had established “peace with honor – peace in our time.” Six months later, Hitler ignored the agreement and invaded Czechoslovakia and later Poland.

In 1939, Chamberlain dropped his appeasement policy, but it and its failure clung to his reputation as the nation hurriedly prepared for a war that he had declared would not come. With almost all parties agreeing that a wartime Britain needed a more martial spirit at its helm, on May 10, 1940, Chamberlain resigned as prime minister. Churchill appointed him as lord president of the Council, but ill health forced him to resign that office, as well. He died of natural causes on November 9.

While Chamberlain’s appeasement policy seems nearly unforgivable in hindsight, at the time it offered far more hope for success and represented the wishes of the majority of British citizenry. Chamberlain would have Administration and Diplomacy skill at a minimum of 12; his Politics skill could be viewed as very low or fairly high, depending on how one weighs what he knew at the time against what turned out to be the realities of European policymaking.

Sir Winston Churchill

British prime minister, 1874-1965, a stocky bulldog of a man, nearly as famous for his wit as his abilities as a leader.

Churchill was born the son of a Conservative politician in Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, England, in 1874. After being educated at Harrow and the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, he fought with the 4th

Hussars in India and the Sudan. He supplied battle reports for the *Daily Telegraph*, and had established himself as a writer before the turn of the century.

He held several political posts throughout the early part of the century, including president of the Board of Trade (1908-10), home secretary (1910-11), first lord of the Admiralty (1911-15), minister of War and Air (1919-20), colonial secretary (1921-22), chancellor of the Exchequer (1924-29), and more. By 1930, Churchill was one of the few British politicians who openly opposed Hitler. “If a dog makes a dash for my trousers,” he said, “I shoot him down *before* he can bite.” In 1933, Churchill became a staunch supporter of rearmament,



Arthur Neville Chamberlain

British prime minister, 1869-1940, a tall and angular man with graying hair and moustache.

Most well-known today for his prewar policy of appeasement, Chamberlain spent most of his adult life engaged in business and politics, entering Parliament at age 49. He was minister of Health (1923-29, '31) and chancellor of the Exchequer



openly criticizing Chamberlain's appeasement policy. In 1939, he offered up the suggestion that Britain and France should ally with Russia, which was highly controversial at the time. When war broke out that fall, he was reappointed first lord of the Admiralty, and on the morning of May 10, 1940, he replaced Chamberlain as prime minister. The same day, Germany began its invasion of the Low Countries and France.

Churchill developed a strong relationship with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt – at the time, much was made of the fact that they were distant cousins – leading to the policy of Lend-Lease. He was known not so much for his abilities as a military leader, but as a motivator of people, keeping the average Briton encouraged and fortified to withstand the horrors of war, including the Blitz on England itself. He was personable if he liked you, irascible if he did not. But he was respected for his courage and determination, and held a place dear to the hearts of most Britons.

Churchill should be played with a high IQ (14) and excellent skills in speaking and writing. He could have Bard-16, Diplomacy-14, Writing-14, Stubbornness, and two levels of Charisma. Some may consider him a prime candidate for Impulsiveness and a level of Odious Personal Habit (Crotchety and Irascible), as well. Alternately, a complete write-up is provided in *GURPS Who's Who 2*, on pp. 102-3.

Sir Andrew B. Cunningham

Brilliant admiral famous for his successes in the Mediterranean, 1883-1963, a short and pleasant-looking man of middle years usually encountered in Royal Navy dress blues.



Andrew Cunningham performed outstandingly as a Great War naval captain, winning the DSO with two bars, and was acting as commander in chief in the Mediterranean at the outbreak of WWII. His command encompassed some of Britain's most important naval fleets and

bases, including Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria. The Mediterranean fleet under Cunningham's command saw battles at Taranto (November 1940), Cape Matapan (March 1941), Crete (May 1941), and more.

In 1943, he was appointed to serve as Eisenhower's naval deputy, and succeeded in establishing Allied naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. In October of that year, he was transferred to London where he became first sea lord. He acted as Churchill's principal naval advisor for the rest of the war.

Cunningham was not a fluent public speaker, but he had a quiet sense of compassion and charisma about him (Charisma +1). He showed tremendous personal interest in his men, visiting even the smallest ships in his fleet. He was a brilliant naval strategist (Operations skill 18 and perhaps Strategy-17), and a good diplomat (Diplomacy-14) as shown by his skill in dealing with Churchill and with Vichy France. His DSO with bars merits Reputation +3.

Cunningham is considered one of the top five admirals in British history, along with Drake, Nelson, Jellicoe, and Beatty. His bust now stands in Trafalgar Square.

King George VI

Shy but beloved king of Great Britain, 1895-1952, once notably described as a "slim, quiet man with tired eyes."



Born Albert Frederick Arthur George, the second son of George V and Mary of Teck had not planned on being king, nor was he educated for the role. A victim of childhood gastritis and a persistent stutter that plagued him most of his life (HT 9 and the Stuttering disadvantage), he turned a love of the sea into a professional naval career. At age 21, he served as a sub-lieutenant at the Battle of Jutland, but left the navy after the war over health concerns.

Made duke of York in 1920, he began assisting his father with ceremonial duties. In 1923, he married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, who bore him two daughters: the future queen, Elizabeth II, in 1926 and Margaret in 1930. During the '20s he toured the empire and managed to subdue his stutter with the aid of an Australian speech therapist.

Jerked from a quiet life by his brother Edward's abdication, he was unprepared to be king, but performed quite ably. During WWII he served as a rallying point for the British people. He boosted morale by touring factories and visiting military units, even on the front lines. (GMs may wish to assign George a -10-point Sense of Duty to his people; this may have contributed to his constant worry and tendency toward overwork that would qualify as the Workaholic disadvantage.) He steadfastly endured the bombing of Buckingham Palace, and continued to be a strong leadership figure throughout the war (Strong Will +2).

By 1945, King George was an able and greatly beloved monarch; GMs should give him a Reputation ranging from +1 in the early years of the war to +3 by war's end. Soldiers whom he personally visited usually will react at +1 in addition to his general Reputation.

George died of cancer in February 1952.

Sir Percy Hobart



Major general with flair for invention, 1885-1957, bushy-browed and appearing something like a mad scientist in uniform . . .

Percy Cleghorn Stanley Hobart was a military engineer in the Royal Tank Corps during the 1920s, and was one of the handful of men that envisioned the role armor would play in coming wars. "Hobo," as he was called by his friends, was a brilliant, insightful man (IQ 15) and a student of military history, literature, painting, architecture, and more. His diverse background and far-reaching visions led him to discuss tank theory with men such as Major General J.F.C. Fuller and Captain B.H. Liddell Hart. Where Hart and Fuller theorized, however, Hobart put into practice. "Wars cannot be fought with dream stuff," he said.

Static-minded, socially oriented British military thinkers dismissed Hobart's work. By 1940, the 55-year-old major-general was no longer in the tank corps; he was serving as a *corporal* in the Home Guard (pp. 30-31). When Churchill discovered Hobart's predicament, he demanded that the engineer be reenlisted in the Army. "He is a man of quite exceptional mental attainments," Churchill said, "with great strength of character . . . although he does not work easily with others." Churchill decreed that Hobart be given command of an armored division. The 79th Armored Division Royal Engineers was formed to fill this order.

Under Hobart, the 79th invented all manner of innovative, special-purpose tanks, including behemoths fitted with flails, mobile bridges, bulldozer blades, and flamethrowers. Many of these so-called "Hobart's Funnies" saw use during the invasion of Normandy. The 79th's insignia, a black bull's head with flaring red nostrils superimposed over a yellow triangle, was painted on every vehicle.

Hobart should be played as an eccentric but brilliant man. He was Single-Minded and had Bad Sight, peering through impressive glasses. He should be given high levels (14+) in Engineering (Vehicles) and History (Military). He will also have skills in the 11-13 range in Literature, Art Appreciation, Writing, and Architecture (with a specialization in Churches). GMs running a cinematic campaign may wish to give him the Gadgeteer advantage, as well.

Bernard Law Montgomery

Field marshal famous for besting Rommel in North Africa, 1887-1976, a small and wiry man with hawkish nose and pale blue eyes.



Born in London and educated at Sandhurst, in 1908 Bernard Law Montgomery joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and served in India and France. He was hospitalized in October 1914 for a gunshot to the chest, returned to the Western Front in 1916, and within two years was chief of staff of the 47th (London)

Division. He remained a career military man, teaching at Camberley starting in 1926. In late 1938, he was sent to command British forces in the Middle East.

At the outbreak of the war, he was sent to France with the BEF, evacuating with the 2nd Corps at Dunkirk. He commanded the 5th Corps (1940-1941), 12th Corps (1941), and the Southeastern Army (1941-1942) before being sent back to the Middle East to command the British 8th Army against Rommel (see p. 103). Montgomery and the 8th Army later went on to fight in Sicily and Italy, and he was later given command of the Allied land forces during the invasion of France.

Despite his successes against Rommel, Montgomery had his errors, most notably his failure to close the Falaise Gap and famously going "a bridge too far" in Holland. A considerate GM might give him Operations-15 and Strategy-16 when allowed to work in his own deliberate way, but impose a stiff penalty when he attempts to get things done in the more quickly paced American fashion. He spent a lot of time with

the troops, even changing his approach to try and fit in with them, and should have Leadership-14, but his Glory Hound habits rubbed his U.S. allies the wrong way, so he suffered a Reputation -2 among those troops. An austere man who did not drink nor smoke, he might qualify for an Odious Personal Habit -1 because he actively disapproved of those who did. (There was a strong sentiment at the time that you might as well enjoy yourself, because the war was going to get you long before alcohol or tobacco did.) Montgomery probably would qualify as Single-Minded, focusing on military matters to the exclusion of most everything else.

If the GM allows it, Monty should have Luck or Serendipity. He was transferred just before the debacle at Dieppe (p. 10), and put in charge in the desert just as the stage was set for a major British offensive.

Charles Orde Wingate

Major General who founded the Chindits and other special forces, 1903-44, a handsome but intense young officer.

Charles Orde Wingate was born in India, the son of religious parents, and grew up as a firm believer in the Bible. He graduated from Woolwich in 1923 and was commissioned in the Royal Artillery. He studied briefly at the School of Oriental Studies in London, then served in the Sudan Defense Force during 1928-33.



In 1936, he joined the intelligence staff in Palestine, where he trained and organized Jewish paramilitary squads (see *Special Night Squads*, p. 113) to combat Arab terrorism.

His strong religious convictions varied from those of his Scots Presbyterian upbringing, and he developed close ties with the Yishuv and Haganah (pp. 112-113), learned Hebrew, and gave immense support to the Jewish cause. The Yishuv called him "Ha-Yedid" – the friend. Wingate's Zionist policies were considered controversial by the British, and in 1939 he was transferred to Ethiopia. His passport was stamped with a restriction forbidding him from entering Palestine again.

In Ethiopia, Wingate formed Gideon's Force – another guerrilla group of a few hundred men that infiltrated Italian lines with great success.

He is perhaps most famous for his formation of the Chindits (p. 19), yet another guerrilla group, that fought with great distinction against the Japanese in Burma.

Wingate was a natural leader (Leadership-14) and outdoorsman (Absolute Direction and Survival (Desert and Jungle)-14). His dedication to the Jewish cause might qualify as Fanaticism. He had both Contacts and a Reputation (+3, small group, all the time) with the Yishuv and Haganah. He also had Hebrew-11, Tactics (Guerrilla)-13, and Theology (Judeo-Christian)-13. His Appearance (Attractive) generally was offset by an Odious Personal Habit (Unkempt).

He was killed when his plane crashed into a hillside during a storm on March 14, 1944. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, in Washington, D.C. Several sites in Israel are named in his honor.

OTHER FIGURES

Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, 1883-1963. Ulster-born Alan Brooke distinguished himself as a BEF commander in France, earning quick appointments as commander in chief of home forces, then chief of the Imperial General Staff in December 1941. This placed him among the highest British decision-makers, despite a marked weakness for talking behind people's backs. (On Churchill he said, "Winston had 10 ideas every day; only one was good and he did not know which it was.") This less-than-pure loyalty suited him for the crucial job of keeping field commanders free from undue meddling from London. Brooke generally can be found at Churchill's side, a remote and terrifying personage (possibly worth Reputation -1 in some circles) who can disarm with his charm (Charisma +2 and Savoir-Faire-14) when he chooses. He adopted the title Baron Alanbrooke of Brookeborough in September 1945 and became Viscount Alanbrooke a year later.

Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, 1891-1969. Another BEF commander in France, Alexander directed the retreats at Dunkirk (1940) and Burma (1942), and as head of the Middle Eastern Command directed battles in both Sicily and Italy. In 1944, he was promoted to field marshal and made Allied commander in chief in the Mediterranean. He was a charismatic man (Charisma +2) and – in the British tradition of soldier-artists – an accomplished painter (Artist-12).

Field Marshal Claude John Eyre Auchinleck, 1884-1981. In May 1940, Auchinleck commanded 25,000 troops in Norway (pp. 11-14); a year later he replaced Wavell as head of British troops in the Middle East and turned the tide against Rommel's Afrika Korps (pp. 98-99). After losing the port of Tobruk in 1942, "the Auk" was replaced and found himself without assignment for nearly a year. On June 20, 1943, he once again replaced Wavell – this time as commander in chief in India. He was knighted and promoted to field marshal in 1945.

General Sir Thomas Blarney, 1884-1951. In February 1941, Blarney was called up to command Australian forces in the Middle East, and later that year took command of the ANZAC corps in Greece. He served as deputy commander in chief Middle East, then returned to Australia in 1942. There he served under General MacArthur (see p. W:D64) as commander of Allied land forces, Southwest Pacific. MacArthur, critical of Aussie troops, did not like Blarney; rumors abound that he even bullied him on occasion. Nevertheless, Blarney served under him for the duration of the war, supervising the recapture of Buna, commanding Australian land forces in New Guinea, and overseeing operations to recapture Borneo.

General Sir Alan Cunningham, 1887-1983. First commander of the British 8th Army, Cunningham was a man of quick temper (Bad Temper) and quick smile (Charisma +1), and considered innovative and skilled in the use of mobile desert warfare, due to his resounding defeat of the Italians earlier in the war. He had little experience in commanding armor, however, and when faced with Rommel's fluid desert tactics,



the 8th Army met a defeat of its own (p. 100). Cunningham was replaced in November 1941, and while he no longer actively commanded troops, he maintained a position with the British military administration during and after the war; he was to become British high commissioner of Palestine. He was the younger brother of Admiral Andrew Cunningham (p. 55).

General Miles Dempsey, 1896-1969. As a lieutenant colonel, Dempsey led the 13th Infantry Brigade during the Battle of France and was awarded the DSO when the 13th fought a rearguard action at Dunkirk. In December 1942, he was promoted to general and commanded 13th Corps of the 8th Army under Montgomery, assisting in the planning of the invasion of Sicily where he led the assault on July 10, 1943. In June 1944, he led the 2nd British Army at Normandy, facing off against Rommel and breaking through the beachhead at the end of July. The 2nd stormed through France, liberating much of Belgium and Holland and moving on to capture Hamburg on May 3, 1945. Dempsey was a tall, thin man, quietly competent and very unassuming.

Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie, 1879-1964. A Boer Wars veteran, Dobbie commanded the forces in Malaya from 1935 until his retirement in 1939. In April 1940, he offered his services to the government once again, and was sent to command the troops at Malta. Serving as both military commander and governor, he became a popular leader while turning the island into a fortress. Dobbie was steadfast in the face of any danger (Composed and Fearlessness +2). He was a stocky, humble man, loved by his troops (who called him "Old Dob Dob"); he had thick gray hair, heavy reddish eyebrows, and a short gray moustache. A Persian cat that he had rescued, Maurice, was his constant companion.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Caswell Tremenheere Dowding, 1882-1970. Dowding oversaw the development of both the Spitfire and Hurricane, and was a driving force behind the development of radar. He was appointed head of Fighter Command in 1936, and is credited with winning the Battle of Britain (pp. 23-24) – he was awarded the Knight Grand Cross for his work. In November 1941, he was removed from his post and sent to the United States to work with the Ministry of Aircraft Production. He retired in July 1942; the following year, he became First Baron Dowding of Bentley Priory. Dowding was a brilliant man but dour and uncharismatic; others called him "Stuff" early in his career.



Field Marshal Lord John Gort, 1886-1946. Gort commanded the British Expeditionary Force in France, and was appointed as aide-de-camp to the king in 1940, a post he held for four years. He served as governor of both Gibraltar (1941-42) and Malta (1942-44), and was appointed high commissioner of Palestine in 1944.

Viscount Halifax, 1881-1959. Born into the aristocracy, Halifax became a Conservative MP in 1910, then served in the army in WWI despite having been born with an atrophied left arm with no hand. He had a distinguished political career, including a period as viceroy of India. His deep religious faith apparently enabled him to work effectively with Gandhi, and he assisted the process of Indian constitutional change. He inherited his family title in 1934. In 1938, he became foreign secretary, and when Chamberlain resigned, he was widely expected to become prime minister and to negotiate peace with Hitler. Uncertain that the Commons would accept him, Halifax did not pursue that option. He eventually became ambassador to the United States (1940-46). Although widely remembered as a conventional establishment figure and appeaser, Halifax held a vital position during the war and also attended the inaugural meetings of the United Nations.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur T. "Bomber" Harris, 1892-1984. In February 1942, Harris took over RAF Bomber Command and began the first British saturation bombings of the war. He was openly criticized for this decision for years to come (Reputation -2; large class of people, all of the time). In March 1945, Churchill ordered a halt to the campaign. Harris became a marshal of the RAF in 1946, but soon retired due to heavy criticism of his wartime methods. Harris was a man of deeply entrenched opinions, and ruthless in his execution of them (Stubbornness and Callous). He distrusted innovation, believing that the tried-and-true ways were best (Hidebound).

Captain Basil Liddell-Hart, 1895-1970. A brilliant militarist (Tactics-17), Liddell-Hart was a WWI veteran but left the army in 1924. He wrote several books on cutting-edge military strategy, and was a military correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* (1925-35), *The Times* (1935-39), and the *Daily Mail* (1939-45). His theories on the use of armor to penetrate enemy lines and dominate the battlefield were unorthodox and largely ignored by British military leaders, but Germany's Rommel and Guderian paid close heed, adopting many of Liddell-Hart's brilliant tactics into their new doctrine of warfare, to become popularly known as *blitzkrieg*.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, 1892-1944. In command of #12 Fighter Group, Leigh-Mallory believed that RAF fighters should be sent to meet German planes before they reached England during the Blitz. His beliefs brought him into conflict with other air leaders such as Dowding and Vice Marshal Keith Park. Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal agreed with Mallory, and both Dowding and Park were removed in November 1941. In 1942, Mallory became head of Fighter Command. A year later, he was knighted, and became commander of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force for the Normandy invasion. His attempts to control the bombing campaign, however, brought him once again into conflict with others. This time, it was Mallory who was removed from his post. He was appointed commander in chief of the air force in Southeast Asia, but was killed on November 14, 1944, when his plane crashed en route to Burma.

Lieutenant John "Jock" Lewes, 1913-1941. Australian-born Lewes was educated at Oxford, and joined the British army at the outbreak of WWII. Despite his lack of military background, Lewes proved a brilliant leader, tactician, and trainer. Originally a member of the Welsh Guards, Lewes went on to found the SAS together with Lieutenant David Stirling.

Though Stirling is generally credited with forming the unit, he himself said that Lewes “could far more genuinely claim to be the founder.” Lewes was killed on December 30, 1941, during a deep SAS raid.

General Sir Richard McCreery, 1898-1967. McCreery served with the BEF in France and was evacuated at Dunkirk. The following year, he became Auchinleck’s chief of staff in the Middle East, but was dismissed due to a stormy relationship with his commander. In May 1942, he returned to Africa, this time as Alexander’s chief of staff, and was instrumental in planning the battle of El Alamein (pp. 103-105). He commanded 10th Corps at Salerno and Monte Cassino, and was promoted in November 1944 to lead the British 8th Army in Italy.

Lord Louis Mountbatten, 1900-79. The great-grandson of Queen Victoria, Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas, Prince of Battenburg, was commanding a destroyer flotilla in 1939, and fought both in the Norwegian campaign and off Crete. He shortly jumped several ranks and was promoted to both general and air marshal and named head of combined operations. He oversaw several commando raids, including Dieppe and St. Nazaire. His most famous role was that of Allied commander in Southeast Asia, where he accepted the Japanese surrender on September 12, 1945. Irish Republican Army terrorists killed him in 1979, exploding a bomb aboard his boat in Donegal Bay, Ireland.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park, 1892-1975. Park commanded the RAF at Dunkirk, gaining air superiority over the Luftwaffe despite having only some 200 planes at his disposal. He then led 11th Fighter Group during the Battle of Britain, protecting the southeastern approaches to London. Due to conflicting opinions on tactics (see *Leigh-Mallory*, p. 56), Park was removed from his post in November 1940, and was transferred to Egypt in 1941. He oversaw air operations at Malta, Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy. In January 1944, Park was appointed supreme commander of air in the Middle East. Park was tall (6’5”) and imposing, and carried a Reputation +2 after the Battle of Britain for his role in it.

Lieutenant General Arthur Percival, 1887-1966. A BEF divisional commander, Percival was put in charge of three divisions in Malaya in Spring 1941. By January 1942, Japanese forces forced him to retreat Singapore; on February 15, he surrendered his 138,000 men in one of Britain’s most humiliating defeats. Percival and his soldiers remained POWs for the duration.

Admiral Bertram Home Ramsay, 1883-1945. Though Ramsay retired in 1938, with the outbreak of war he was recalled as flag officer at Dover. It fell to him to command the evacuation at Dunkirk in May 1940, a feat for which he was knighted. Ramsay later helped oversee the Allied invasions of North Africa and Sicily, and acted as Allied naval commander at Normandy. He died January 2, 1945, at Toussus-le-Noble, France, when his plane crashed on takeoff.

Major General Neil M. Ritchie, 1897-1983. In November 1941, in a controversial move by Auchinleck, Ritchie was given command of the 8th Army. Despite a 2-to-1 advantage over Rommel, Ritchie and the 8th fared badly, losing first Gazala and then Tobruk. In June 1942, he was transferred to the 52nd Division in Britain. He later commanded 12th Corps during D-Day. He was the youngest British general of the war.

Field Marshal Lord William Slim, 1897-1970. Slim was a tough, determined man (Toughness 1 and Strong Will +2). By WWII, he had been promoted to brigadier general, and was given command of the 10th Indian Brigade in the Sudan. He was wounded in 1941, and after recovering was assigned to Wavell’s Middle Eastern command, where he led campaigns in Iran and Syria. In March 1942, Slim was transferred to Southeast Asia, where he fought in Burma and India throughout the rest of the war.

Admiral Sir James Somerville, 1882-1949. Forced to retire due to tuberculosis in 1938, with the outbreak of war Somerville returned to active duty, serving briefly under Admiral Ramsay at Dunkirk (p. 10). Appointed to command Gibraltar-based Force H, which included the carrier *Ark Royal* and the battlecruiser *Hood*, Somerville is best known for his role in attacking the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir (see p. W:RH11) – an attack with which he disagreed – and in the sinking of the *Bismarck* (see pp. W20, W:IC93). Somerville commanded the Eastern Fleet at Ceylon (later Kenya) from 1942-44.

Colonel Sir David Stirling, 1915-1990. Prior to the outbreak of WWII, the Scotsman Stirling had been a university student at Cambridge and was training in hopes of conquering Mount Everest. He joined the Royal Scots Guards, and later volunteered for the #8 (Guards) Commando and was sent to the Middle East. While undergoing parachute training, Stirling was injured and laid up for two months. During his recovery, he worked with Jock Lewes (p. 56) on the creation of a small group of elite men trained to infiltrate enemy lines and wreak havoc. Stirling hobbled into British headquarters without an appointment and convinced Chief of Staff General Ritchie of the validity of his theory – specifically, that specially trained commandos could destroy Axis aircraft on the ground in North Africa. Soon Stirling and Lewes founded the L Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade (p. 42). The 6’5” Stirling was captured in 1943, and escaped four times but was recaptured each time. He was transferred to Colditz until the end of the war. Stirling was later called “the most under-decorated man of the war.” Knighted in 1990, he died a few months later.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur William Tedder, 1890-1967. An award-winning historian, Tedder became commander of the air force in the Middle East in 1940, playing an important role in Rommel’s defeat there. After successes in Tunisia and Sicily, he replaced Leigh-Mallory (p. 56) at the head of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force and acted as deputy Allied commander under Eisenhower, helping plan the D-Day invasion. On May 8, Tedder led the Allied delegation that accepted the German surrender.

General Sir Archibald Wavell, 1883-1950. Wavell enjoyed a reputation as a bold and brilliant strategist, but was quiet and sensitive off-duty, and often wrote poetry to relax. On August 2, 1939, he was put in command of the British forces in North Africa and the Middle East, commanding forces in Egypt, the Sudan, East Africa, the Suez, and the oil-rich deserts of the Persian Gulf – an area of almost 3.5 million square miles. A disgruntled Churchill transferred him to India in November 1941. He was appointed Allied commander in the Pacific shortly thereafter, but resigned in February 1942. He returned nearly a year later, and was promoted to field marshal.

4. THE BRITISH ARMORY



Churchill put it plainly in a 1941 BBC address: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job."

PERSONAL GEAR



The British kit varied from theater to theater, and from role to role, but much of it did not vary in any great degree from the “generic” examples found in *GURPS WWII*. GMs and players can use the descriptions on pp. W87-90, together with the following suggestions and sample kits, to determine what any given British soldier might be carrying.

Sample Kits

Basic Kit – Almost every British soldier carried some kind of haversack with roughly the same kind of gear in it. Such a kit would include spare gray wool socks, a hand towel, a spare water bottle, a mess kit (including a tea mug), a ground sheet and bedroll, a “housewife” (small sewing kit), two packs of emergency rations, a collapsible stove, some fuel blocks, water-purification tablets, and personal-hygiene items. Most troops were given a “soup-plate” helmet (see *Helmet, British*, on p. W87). Many soldiers carried a gas mask or respirator, especially early in the war. A bandolier was occasionally worn, moving ammo out of the P/37 pouches, allowing the soldier to carry more clips or magazines, grenades, or even 2” mortar shells.

Rifleman – The infantry carried the basic kit described above along with a rifle with 100 rounds in 5-round stripper clips, bayonet in scabbard, two grenades, a pocket knife, water bottle, and an entrenching tool with cover or a general service shovel or pick. (Historically, fairly standard shovels and picks outnumbered military entrenching tools 2-to-1). Most carried two magazines for the section’s LMG or two 2” mortar shells for the section’s mortar.

Rifleman, Operation Torch – These troops carried the basic kit, a rifle with 100 rounds in 5-round stripper clips, bayonet in scabbard, two grenades, pocket knife, water bottle, entrenching tool or shovel, mosquito netting, dust mask, sun goggles, salt tablets, a simplified French phrase book, a small pocket guide to North

Africa, and a variety of candies, including gum and chocolates.

Bren Gunner – These men carried the basic kit, their LMG, an MG tool kit (see *Bren Gun Maintenance*, p. 64), six spare magazines, a handgun with spare ammo, two grenades, and an entrenching tool or shovel.

NCO (Section Leader) – These non-commissioned officers carried the basic kit, an SMG with seven spare magazines, two grenades, water bottle, and entrenching tool or shovel.

Officer – The men leading larger units were fitted out as for an NCO, above, except they did not usually carry an entrenching tool or shovel but did carry a handgun with spare ammo, compass, and binoculars.

Paratrooper – These men carried the basic kit, a rifle with 100 rounds in 5-round stripper clips, bayonet, maroon beret and cap badge, camouflage face veil, a “flick” knife (which was important for cutting away parachute cord and a unalloyed copy of the German gravity knife found on p. W:IC59), and water bottle. Paratroopers wore special rimless steel helmets (similar to the *Fallschirmjäger* helmet on p. W:IC57).

Web Gear

The British army used tightly woven cotton web with brass fittings to support their gear. The Pattern 1937, or P/37, came in many colors (khaki green for Europe, white for military police, etc). The standard P/37 web gear consisted of a belt and shoulder straps, two basic pouches (usually used for ammo), a slot for bayonet and frog, a water bottle carrier, a shovel carrier, and a small pack. \$3, 5 lbs.

Rations

British rations were tough and relatively tasteless. They often included helpings of “bully beef” – canned, boiled, corned, or pickled beef – hard-tack biscuits (crackers), small dollops of jam, some powdered milk, and whenever possible tea and sugar. Soldiers often found innovative ways to vary their meals. They might grind the

crackers into flour and mix them with the beef, cooking up the resultant patties, or combine the flour with the jam and create a pastry-like dessert.

Whenever possible, soldiers ate local cuisine or looted enemy supplies for foodstuffs to break the monotony of the British ration.

LEND-LEASE

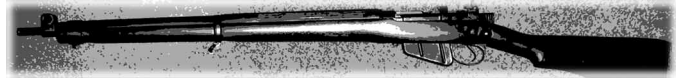
In 1941, President Roosevelt decided to help Britain without actually entering the war. He engineered the Lend-Lease Act guaranteeing almost \$6 billion in aid to the besieged nation. This gave the United States the ability to send tanks, planes, ammunition, trucks, and food to Great Britain without violating the United State’s official position of neutrality.

The Lend-Lease program supplied many thousands of tons of supplies to the British. For the most part, U.S.-built or -produced equipment was simply integrated into existing supply chains. For that reason, many British units might be using American substitutes for some of the usual British gear.

The frequency of Lend-Lease substitution varied from item category to category. For instance, British units never wore U.S.-style helmets; they found them very hard to distinguish from the German helmet (a problem that the actual German and U.S. soldiers rarely shared . . .) and did not want to be mistaken for the enemy. Lend-Lease did provide some small arms, including service rifles, SMGs (or “machine carbines”), revolvers, and grenades. The U.S. aid more often provided mundane fare – such as tents or the chocolate sometimes found in British rations – and military vehicles – such as jeeps, tanks, destroyers, and so forth.

More information on Lend-Lease can be found on p W:D15.

SMALL ARMS



The standard arms issued to British troops (as well as to other major combatants) are described on pp. W91-99. That chapter also explains the game mechanics for these various weapons and how they work in play.

The following provides information on weapons that were not issued as frequently, and are not as well-known. The GM can use these to add color to a British campaign, and options to the PCs' arsenal.

Ammo Table

Also see p. W91 for the most commonly used ammunition.

Common Name	Modern Name
.22 Long Rifle	5.6×16mmR
7mm British	7×43mm
.455 Webley	11.55×19mmR
.455 Webley Auto	11.55×23mm
.500 Vickers	12.7×81mm
16 gauge	16.8×70mmR
14½ gauge	18×73mmR
10 gauge	19.7×89mmR

BRITISH SMALL ARMS TABLE

Pistols – Use Guns (Pistol) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Hold	Cost
Colt M-1911, .455 Webley Auto	Crit.	2d+	10	2	160	1,700	3	0.6	3~	7+1	10	-2	-1	\$30
Colt-Browning M-1903, .32 ACP	Crit.	2d-1	10	2	100	1,300	2.25	0.25	3~	8+1	8	-1	0	\$15
HAFDASA Ballester-Molina, .45 ACP	Crit.	2d+	10	2	175	1,700	3	0.6	3~	7+1	10	-2	-1	\$25
Star Mod B, 9mm Parabellum	Crit.	2d+2	10	3	150	1,850	2.8	0.4	3~	9+1	9	-1	-1	\$25
W&S MP Mk I, .32 ACP	Crit.	2d-1	10	2	100	1,300	1.5	0.25	3~	8+1	8	-1	+1	\$10
W&S Mk I, .455 Webley Auto	16	2d+	10	2	160	1,700	3.1	0.6	3~	7+1	10	-2	-1	\$30

Revolvers – Use Guns (Pistol) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Hold	Cost
S&W Victory, .38 S&W	Crit.	2d-1	10	2	120	1,600	2.2	0.2	3~	6	8	-1	-1	\$25
Webley #1 Mk VI, .455 Webley	Crit.	2d+	11	2	170	1,700	2.7	0.3	3~	6	10	-2	-1	\$25
Webley Mk IV, .38 S&W	Crit.	2d-1	10	2	120	1,600	1.8	0.2	3~	6	8	-1	-1	\$20

Shotguns – Use Guns (Shotgun) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Hold	Cost
Greener Farkiller F35, 10g	Crit.	5d	12	5	25	150	8.9	0.4	2~	2	13	-4	-7	\$160
Greener Police Gun Mk III, 12g	Crit.	4d	12	5	25	150	8	0.15	1/4	1	13	-3	-6	\$30
H&H Royal Game Gun, 12g	Crit.	4d	11	5	25	150	6.8	0.3	2~	2	13	-3	-7	\$150

Rifles – Use Guns (Rifle) or (Light Auto) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Hold	Cost
Enfield #9 Mk I, 7mm British	Crit.	6d	11	11	600	2,500	9.25	1.4	10*	20+1	10	-1	-5	\$150
H&H #4 Mk I (T), .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	15	11+1	1,000	3,800	11.5	1	1	10+1	12	-2	-6	\$45
SMLE #1 Mk III, .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	14	10	1,000	3,800	9.2	1	1	10+1	12	-2	-6	\$30
S&W Carbine Pattern 40, 9mm P.	Crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	9	0.8	3~	20	10	-1	-5	\$30
Winchester #3 Mk I, .303 Brit.	Crit.	6d+2	14	10	1,000	3,800	9.4	0.3	1/2	5+1	12	-2	-6	\$30
Winchester M-1917, .30-06	Crit.	7d+1	14	10	1,000	4,600	9.3	0.3	1/2	5+1	12	-3	-6	\$30

Submachine Guns – Use Guns (Light Auto) or (Rifle) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Hold	Cost
BSA Welgun Mk I, 9mm P.	Crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	8.2	1.4	12*	32	10	-1	-4	\$20
Diecasters AUSTEN Mk I, 9mm P.	Crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	10.3	1.4	8*	28	10	-1	-4	\$40
Enfield MCEM2, 9mm P.	Crit.	2d+2	10	5	150	1,850	5.8	0.8	16*	18	10	-2	-3	\$20
Enfield Sten Mk V, 9mm P.	Crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	10	1.4	9*	32	10	-1	-5	\$20
H&H M-1928A1 Sup., .45 ACP	Crit.	2d+	10	6	100	1,000	14	1.25	11*	20	10	-2	-5	\$150
Sterling Patchett Mk I, 9mm P.	Crit.	3d-1	10	6	160	1,900	10	1.4	9*	32	10	-1	-4	\$40

Machine Guns – Use Guns (Light Auto) on Bipod or Gunner (Machine Gun) on Tripod

Weapon	Malf	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt.	AWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost
BSA Faulkner Mk I, .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	18	8	1,000	3,800	24.3	2.8	10*	30	13B	-1	\$120
Enfield Bren Mk III, .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	18	8	800	3,800	22	2.8	8*	30	13B	-1	\$110
Hotchkiss #2 Mk I, .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	18	8	800	3,800	27	2	8*	30	13B	-1	\$150
Lewis M-1917, .30-06	Crit.	7d+1	18	10	1,000	4,600	31.2	4.2	9	47	13B	-1	\$100
Marlin M-1917, .30-06	Crit.	7d+1	18	10	1,000	4,600	39	15	10	250	13B	-1	\$100
Vickers G.O. Mk I, .303 British	Crit.	6d+2	18	8	1,000	3,800	31.5	11	20	96	–	-1	\$300
Vickers Mk II, .500 Vickers	Crit.	11d+2+	20	14	1,000	6,500	77/147	15	7*	50	29T	-1	\$800

Light Antitank Weapons – Use Guns (LAW) Skill

Weapon	Malf	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	EWt.	AWt.	RoF	Cost
Northover Projector Mk I, 2.5”	16	Special	20	5	100	250	74	variable	1/4	\$30

Hand Grenades

Weapon	Damage	Wt.	Fuse	Hold	Cost
Gammon #82 Mk I	6d×4	1.8	0	-3	\$10
Mills #69 Mk I	2d+1	0.7	0	0	\$10
SIP #76 Mk I	Special	1.2	0	-2	\$5
WP #80 Mk I	2d [2d]	1	3-4	-1	\$10

Mines

Weapon	Damage	Wt.	Cost
Hawkins #75 Mk I	5d×4	2.3	\$10



WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

See pp. W94-99 for more commonly used weapons for British and other forces.

Melee Weapons

Kukri: The kukri is a heavy-bladed knife or shortsword used by the Gurkhas. Its blade curves inward (toward the sharpened edge) in the middle. To the uninformed, a kukri bears some resemblance to a boomerang.

Gurkhas generally took great pride in these blades. If keeping track of weapon quality (see p. B74), some of these knives would qualify as *Fine*. Rumors among non-Gurkha troops had it that, once he drew his kukri, a Gurkha refused to sheathe his blade without drawing blood. If an enemy was not present, he would nick himself to honor the tradition.

A small kukri weighs 1.5 lbs. and does swing-1 cutting damage; otherwise treat as a bayonet (see p. W193) that imposes a -1 to damage and -2 to skill on thrusting attacks.

A large kukri weighs 2 lbs. and does swing+1 cutting damage; otherwise treat as a long bayonet (see p. W193) that imposes a -1 to damage and -2 to skill on thrusting attacks.

Pistols

Semiautomatic pistols – including the Colt M-1911A1 and Canadian-made Browning High Power #2 Mk I, (see pp. HT108, W94) – were much less common than revolvers, and were typically issued only to commandos, some air crews, SOE agents, and other specialists.

Colt M-1911 (1916): Identical to the early production M-1911 (see p. HT108), but chambering the British .455 Webley Auto cartridge; it could also fire the .45 ACP, but not vice versa. Adopted during WWI, a few thousand of these

were still in service with RAF and Royal Navy pilots, and standard issue for the crews of sea-rescue planes from 1942.

Colt-Browning M-1903 (1903): A compact pistol, 2,200 of which would be acquired during the war. Many were issued to SOE agents, worn in a shoulder holster or jump-suit pocket (see p. W:RH37).

HOME GUARD WEAPONS

The Home Guard (pp. 30-31) was issued primarily obsolete and nonstandard weapons, many of them provided by the United States under Lend-Lease. A modest supply of #3 Mk I and M-1917 rifles became the backbone of the Home Guard's arsenal, but most men – especially early in the war – were armed with a meager selection of fowling pieces, elephant rifles, obsolete revolvers, and melee weapons such as pitchforks, pikes, and assorted antique blades. Molotov cocktails were common; in the beginning, even air guns and catapults were fielded.

Most American-delivered weapons were chambered for cartridges not normally used by the British. To avoid potentially dangerous mismatching of ammunition, these weapons were painted with red stripes or other markings. Ammo was also scarce; rifles were initially issued with only 10 rounds apiece.

The only standard weapons available to the Home Guard units were some Sten submachine guns (see pp. HT116, W96) and a supply of #36M grenades (see pp. HT117, W97), and those only after 1941.



HAFDASA Ballester-Molina (1938): An unabashed and only slightly modified copy of the Colt M-1911A1 (see pp. HT108, W94), between 8,000 and 10,000 of this Argentine pistol were acquired and issued to commandos and SOE agents from 1942. There is no unfamiliarity penalty if the shooter is used to the American original.

Star Modelo B (1934): Another copy of the Colt M-1911A1, this was a Spanish pistol designed for commercial sale. Some 2,000 were acquired in the early 1940s. There is no unfamiliarity penalty if used to the American original.

Webley & Scott MP Mk I (1906): This small pocket pistol was standard issue for many police forces in the British Empire (including London's Metropolitan Police and police agencies in Adelaide, Australia; Cairo, Egypt; and Dublin, Ireland). It was also issued to the King's Royal Bodyguards. Some were used by British officers and secret agents.

Webley & Scott Mk I #2 (1915): A heavy single-action pistol chambered for the unique .455 Webley Auto round. Adopted by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in 1915, and still in limited service during WWII.

Revolvers

Revolvers were carried by officers, NCOs, and specialist ranks only. All British revolvers (and a few British semiautomatic pistols like the Webley & Scott Mk I #2) featured a lanyard ring below the grip to attach a lanyard line, which makes

it easy to retrieve the weapon if it is knocked away or fumbled in close combat. While regulations required the lanyard to be worn around the neck, many wore it around the waist instead, rather than invite strangulation.

Smith & Wesson Victory (1940): With more than half a million supplied by the United States, this commercial design was a variant of the standard Military & Police (see pp. C63, HT110, W:D71) and in widespread use with the British military. Those supplied to the British differed mainly in being chambered for the .38 S&W (also called the .38/200) rather than the .38 Special, but also sported a rougher finish and plastic rather than wooden grips.

Webley #1 Mk VI (1915): This double-action break-open design was the last of the classic heavy Webley revolvers (see p. HT110), superseded by the Enfield #2 Mk I (see p. W94). Still widely used by the British military and the principal colonies during WWII, it was also a standard weapon of the police in Canada, the Irish Republic, and South Africa.

Webley Mk IV (1923): This weapon had lost a service competition to the Enfield #2 Mk I (see p. W94), to which it was very similar (no unfamiliarity penalty). During the 1920s and '30s, it was offered commercially and supplied to various police agencies in the Empire. From 1940, large numbers were acquired by the British military, since Enfield could not produce enough guns, and in an interesting twist of wartime arms acquisition, Webley also made thousands of #2 Mk I revolvers under license from Enfield.

Shotguns

Greener Farkiller F35 Large-Bore (1893): This was a double-barreled, hammerless shotgun in a heavy caliber, hand-made to individual order by one of Britain's finest gun manufacturers. Such a weapon could be encountered in the hands of an English lord on the hunt or as part of the Home Guard. It is perfectly fitted to its original owner; SS +1 for anybody else firing it.

Greener Police Gun Mk III (1932): A single-shot breech-loading piece based on the action of the old Martini-Henry rifle (see p. HT113). It was in service with the Home Guard and police forces all over the British Empire, including England, Hong Kong, and South Africa. The older *Greener Police Gun Mk I* (1918) had been developed especially for the Egyptian police and was chambered for a unique 14¹/₂-gauge shotshell in order to prevent its use with commercially available ammunition (same stats). Criminals who had stolen such guns soon found out that it could fire standard 16-gauge shells wrapped with paper (Malf 16, damage 3d), which in the 1930s led to the introduction of a Mk III especially for the Egyptians. This was chambered for another special 14¹/₂-gauge shell (same stats), this time bottlenecked to prevent any illegal tampering.

Holland & Holland Royal Game Gun (1922): Another double-barreled, hammerless shotgun, made to individual customer specifications and thus perfectly fitting its owner (SS +1 for anybody else). Due to their cost, such guns were only made for the famous, the wealthy, and the royal. In addition to 12 gauge, it was also available in 16 gauge (same stats), 20 gauge (damage 3d, Rcl -2), and 28 gauge and .410 gauge (damage 2d-1, Rcl -1).

Rifles

Enfield #9 Mk I (1945): Beginning in 1945 and continuing through the late '40s, British designers (with the help of Polish immigrants) tried to produce a bullpup assault rifle, with the magazine behind the pistol grip and a consequently short overall length (similar to the modern Enfield L85A1, see p. HT115). Several patterns were tested, most being based on advanced German designs such as the Rheinmetall FG 42 (see p. W95) or the Mauser StG 45 (see p. W:IC63). One of these, the REM2, was historically adopted as the #9 Mk I in 1951; prototypes dated back as early as 1945, and such a rifle might have reached service earlier in an alternate-history campaign. A non-magnifying optical sight was integrated into the carrying handle.

Holland & Holland #4 Mk I (T) (1942): The famous maker of hunting weapons supplied more than 25,000 sniper rifles to the military, based on the standard Enfield #4 Mk I service rifle (see p. W95). It had a raised cheek piece and was fitted with a 3× telescopic sight. It was issued in a wooden transit case to protect it while traveling.

SMLE #1 Mk III (1907): The last of the famous Short Magazine Lee-Enfield line that began in 1889 (see p. HT114), this rifle was the direct predecessor of the Enfield #4 Mk I (see p. W95). The #1 Mk III continued in production until 1943, despite nominally being made obsolete by the later rifle, and saw front-line service for the entire conflict. It was also made in Australia and India.

Smith & Wesson Carbine Pattern 40 (1939): A semiautomatic carbine developed in the United States before the war. It met with no success, but from 1940, Great Britain was desperate for arms, and the Royal Navy took the entire production run of 2,000. These were probably never used in combat.

Winchester #3 Mk I (1916): This bolt-action rifle was originally known as the Enfield Pattern 14 and made for the British during WWI by Eddystone, Remington, and Winchester in the United States. From 1939, almost 700,000 were taken from stores, overhauled, and used for training and for issue to the Home Guard.

Winchester M-1917 (1917): A remnant of WWI, this was the U.S. Army version of the #3 Mk I, differing only in chambering. From 1940, more than 100,000 were supplied under the Lend-Lease program and issued to the Home Guard.

Submachine Guns

The British military didn't like the term "submachine gun," which was seen as tainted by the use of these weapons in the U.S. gangster era. It instead classified them as "machine carbines." The most common machine carbines in the British army were the Enfield Sten Mk II (see pp. HT116, W96) and the Auto-Ordnance M-1928A1 (see p. W96), the latter having been acquired in huge numbers from the United States.

BSA Welgun Mk I (1944): This gun, like the Welrod (see p. W:HS20), received its name because it was developed at the SOE workshop in Welwyn Garden. BSA was prepared to make it in quantity, but by that time the military had enough Stens to fill its needs, so the Welgun was not adopted and never saw combat. The weapon had a pistol grip and folding stock. It used the Sten magazine.

Diecasters AUSTEN Mk I (1944): Based on the Sten Mk II but fitted with the pistol grip, folding stock, and some internal mechanics of the German ERMA MP 40 (see pp. HT116, W96), the AUSTEN Mk I was in service with the Australian forces, but never as common or popular as the Owen Mk I (see p. W96). Sensibly, it did *not* use the magazine of the Sten.

Enfield MCEM2 (1945): This experimental model was a design for a compact machine pistol. It fed from a magazine in the pistol grip and could be stored in its detachable shoulder stock (made of steel wire and canvas). This could be worn like a shoulder holster or on the belt. Without the stock, use Acc 2, Wt 4.9, Rcl -2. Development continued throughout the late 1940s, but it was never adopted; in an alternate world campaign, however, it might become a standard weapon of commandos, vehicle crews, airborne troops, and staff personnel, much like the modern personal defense weapon concept.

Enfield Sten Mk V (1944): The best of the Stens, first used in the Normandy invasion, the Mk V was much more robust, although the main reason for the Sten's unreliability, the magazine, was left unchanged. It was fitted with a wooden shoulder stock and pistol grip; up to June 1945, it also had a pistol foregrip. Airborne troops sometimes removed the stock; thanks to the foregrip, it was still controllable (Wt 9, Rcl -2, Holdout -4). It could be fitted with the Enfield #4 Mk I rifle's knife bayonet (see pp. W89, 193).

The *Sten Mk VI* (1944) was the same weapon fitted with an integral sound suppressor similar to the Mk IIS (see p. W:HS20); Damage 2d, 1/2D 100, Max 1,000, Wt 10.9. The suppressor makes it -4 to hear to the usual +20 for a net +16 (see pp. MF16, W:HS19). It did *not* mount a bayonet.

Holland & Holland M-1928A1 Suppressed (1943): The British Commandos had a small number of Auto-Ordnance M-1928A1 Tommy Guns fitted by Holland & Holland with an integral sound suppressor (-4 to hear to the usual +20 for a net +16). In all other ways, they were identical to the production weapons. The British mainly employed 20-round magazines and 50-round drums (AWt 4.9) in their Tommy Guns.

Sterling Patchett Mk I (1944): Patented in 1942, this submachine gun did not reach large-scale service during WWII, but a few trial weapons did see combat with airborne troops toward the end of the war. The gun had a folding stock and the magazine well on the left side. In the 1950s, further development led to the famous Sterling L2A3 (see p. SO116).



BREN GUN MAINTENANCE

The Bren LMG (see pp. HT119, W96) was the standard machine gun for infantry sections throughout the war. The weapon came complete with a spare-parts cache and a “wallet” containing even more material to keep the workhorse weapon functioning.

Each Bren had a compartment built into the butt of the gun that contained a rod for cleaning the barrel and cylinder. Outside was a spare breechblock (if issued); a mop, wire brush, and double pull-through for cleaning; gun oil; and the spare-parts wallet.

Inside the wallet proper was a combination tool, an oil can, a single pull-through flannelette for cleaning, and a spare-parts tin that held a clearing plug, extractor, extractor stay and spring, firing-pin spring, and wire gauzes.

All Armoury (Small Arms) rolls to maintain and repair the Bren are at +2, assuming the tools and components in the gun’s compartment and wallet are present.

Machine Guns

Apart from many obsolete or obscure weapons from WWI, the United States and Canada supplied thousands of Browning M-1917A1 (see pp. HT118, W97), M-1919A4 (see pp. HT118, W97), and M-2HB (see pp. HT119, W97) machine guns.

BSA Faulkner Mk I (1943): This was a light machine gun designed to take the place of the Bren (see pp. HT119, W96); the War Office was concerned that bombing raids on the Royal Ordnance Factory at Enfield could destroy their only British source for a light machine gun. Therefore, BSA in Birmingham prepared to start production of the Faulkner Mk I, which was similar in form and function, and even used the same magazines as the Bren (there is no unfamiliarity penalty firing this weapon). Enfield was never damaged to any extent, so the Faulkner never entered production. Originally called the BESAL Mk I, it was soon renamed to prevent confusion with the BESA Mk I (see p. W130).

Enfield Bren Mk III (1944): This weapon was a shortened and lightened version of the standard Bren Mk II (see pp. HT119, W96). It could be mounted on the lightened Mk II tripod designed for airborne troops. After every 300 rounds, the barrel should be changed, which took 3 seconds; a spare barrel was 5.1 lbs.

Like all Bren models it could use a 100-round drum magazine (AWt 11.9) that had been developed for antiaircraft fire because the capacity of the standard box magazines was too restricting. This drum was not very common, because of its weight, and mainly used on vehicle-mounted guns.

Hotchkiss #2 Mk I (1916): A light machine gun of pre-WWI vintage, made under license from Hotchkiss of France (see p. HT118). It fed from a strip from the right side. The weapons were held in reserve during WWII, and issued to the Home Guard and Merchant Navy.

Lewis M-1917 (1917): A variant of the Lewis Mk I (see pp. HT118, W96), made under license by Savage in the United States and chambered for the .30-06 cartridge. It was supplied in 1940-41 to the Home Guard and Merchant Navy and used alongside the British version.

Even larger numbers of the American *Lewis M-1918* (1918) aircraft model were also supplied; these fed from a 97-round drum, but had to be fitted with stocks and mounts for ground service; use the same stats except for Wt 30, AWt 11, RoF 12, Shots 97.

Both standard Lewis Mk I and Lewis M-1917 guns were modified to the *Lewis Mk IISS* (1942) variant, which was intended for shoulder-shooting from a pedestal mount on ships. These had their radiator shrouds and bipods removed, the stock shortened, and a muzzle brake added. Installed on a ship, treat as a Ground LMG (see p. W130).

Marlin M-1917 (1917): This was an obsolete American aircraft machine gun which was supplied in large numbers to the British; fitted with makeshift stocks and bipods, they were used by the Home Guard.

Vickers .500 Mk II (1932): A HMG based on the smaller Vickers Mk I (see pp. HT118, W96), scaled up in size. It was water-cooled and chambered for the .500 Vickers cartridge, which was less powerful than the .50 Browning. The gun was mounted on a (very scarce) 70-lb. tripod or in an armored-vehicle turret. A few were installed on LRDG and SAS trucks (see p. W:HS27) in North Africa. In the desert, oil rather than water was used for cooling.

The *Mk IV* (1933) and *Mk V* (1935) were installed in some early British armored vehicles, while the *Mk III* (1932) was used in much larger numbers for antiaircraft fire on ships. It had an increased cyclic rate for higher effectiveness in shooting down aircraft.

Vickers G.O. Mk I (1937): This gas-operated weapon (commercial designation Mark K) fed from a large pan magazine on top of the receiver. It was originally designed as a flexible defensive gun for aircraft (see p. W130), but soon became obsolete in that role. From 1942, it was used by British raiding and reconnaissance units like the LRDG and SAS, mounted on their trucks and jeeps for antiaircraft fire (see p. W:HS27). There was also a very rare 60-round pan magazine that weighed 7.5 lbs.

The .303 Mk VIIIz Machine-Gun Cartridge

In 1942, the .303 Mk VIIIz machine-gun cartridge was introduced. This fired a fully streamlined bullet with a more powerful charge, not only increasing damage to 7d-1, but also allowing for an indirect fire range of 4,500 yards. It was only used in the Vickers Mk I machine gun (see pp. HT118, W96), which also received a special dial sight adopted from the 3” mortar to allow effective indirect fire. This round should not be fired from rifles; if it is, reduce Malf. by one level.

Light Antitank Weapons

Northover Projector Mk I (1940): This simple weapon consisted of a steel tube resembling a drainpipe mounted on a tripod. It fired a #68 Mk I antitank rifle grenade (see p. W99), #36M fragmentation grenade (see pp. HT117, W98), or SIP #76 Mk I molotov cocktail (see below) using a small black-powder charge. The weapon was not very reliable (mostly due to its ammunition), and only issued to the Home Guard and certain RAF units guarding airfields in England. It was never used in combat.

Hand Grenades and Explosives

Gammon #82 Mk I (1943): The “Gammon Bomb” was a satchel charge filled with plastic explosive and fitted with an impact fuse. It was hurled like a grenade and used to blow up vehicles, bunkers, etc. Most of the armored vehicles destroyed at the Battle of Arnhem were victims of this charge and the very brave paratroops who deployed it.

Mills #69 Mk I (1940): A concussion grenade made of unpainted Bakelite with an impact fuse.

SIP #76 Mk I (1940): The Self-Igniting Phosphorous grenade was a variant of the molotov cocktail (see p. W98): a glass bottle filled with a mixture of gasoline, white phosphorous, and crude rubber. Upon impact on a hard surface, the glass shattered and the gasoline (made sticky by the dissolved rubber) was ignited by the phosphorous. Those fitted with a red cap were intended for hand throwing; those with a green cap had slightly thicker bottle walls intended for being fired from the Northover Projector (see above). It was very dangerous to use, and it was not unknown for the bottle to burst either in or as it left the barrel of the projector (which ruined the weapon and could endanger the crew).

WP #80 Mk I (1943): This was a white-phosphorous grenade; use it like the *M-15* (see p. W98).

Mines

Hawkins #75 Mk I (1939): This mine was designed to break the treads of a tracked vehicle, and could also be used against personnel. It was small enough to be thrown like a hand grenade into the path of a vehicle. Many of those left behind at Dunkirk (see p. W15) were later used by the Germans as the PzMi 429/1(e) on the Atlantic Wall.

VEHICLE DESIGN

The vehicle writeups in this book are based on the design system from *GURPS WWII*. Some particularly rare components or design techniques are based upon information presented in other supplements, such as *Iron Cross*. Where these are used, they are noted and succinctly explained.



Autocannons

40mm Short Ground Autocannon: Represents the British 40mm (“2-pounder”) Vickers Mk VIII, a water-cooled weapon used for AA on ships.

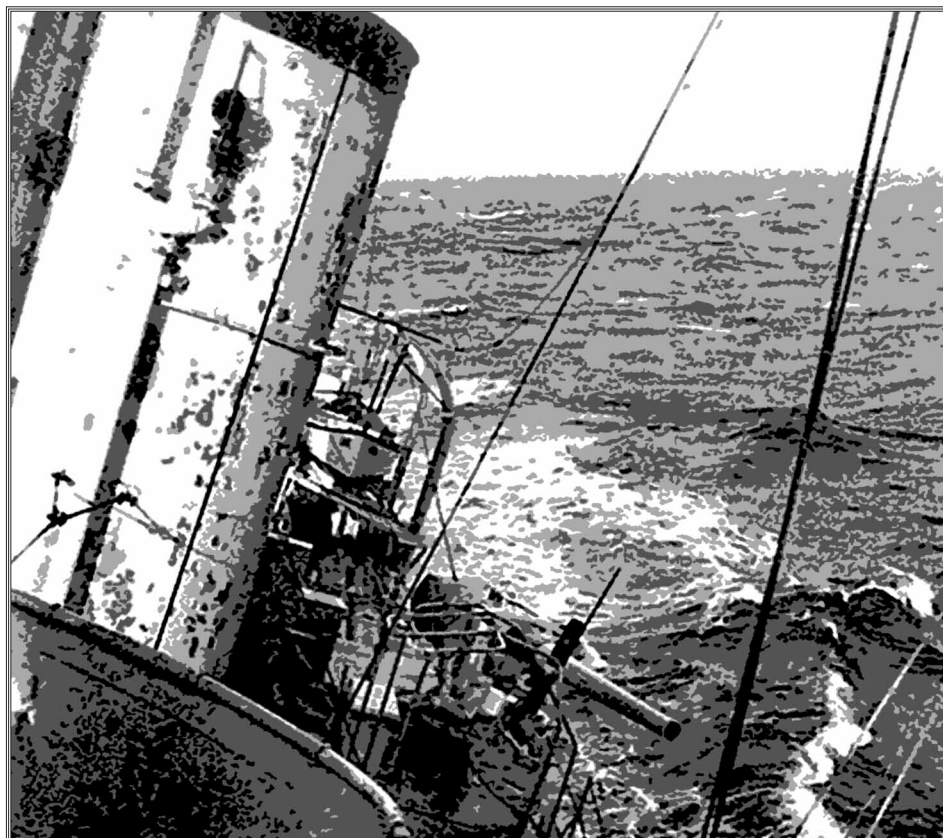
NEW WEAPONS

The following introduces new weapons not previously available for vehicles in the *GURPS WWII* system. All of these weapons were distinctly British fare, but sometimes could be found in the hands of other troops as exported arms.

Machine Guns

Long Ground HMG: A water-cooled weapon principally used for antiaircraft fire on ships. It represents the British 12.7mm (.500) Vickers Mk III. The less common tank versions had slower fire rates (RoF 7* for the Mk II and Mk IV, and RoF 9* for the Mk V).

15mm Very Long Ground HMG: A heavy machine gun mainly used in armored vehicles by the British. Represents the British BESA Mk I and the Czechoslovakian 15mm vz.38 (ZB60), on which the British design had been based.





57mm Medium Ground Autocannon: Represents the British 57mm (“6-pounder”) Molins Mk IIA used on ships and the 57mm Molins Mk I used on aircraft.

Tank and Antitank Guns:

40mm Medium Tank Gun: Represents the British 40mm (“2-pounder”) Rifled Ordnance QF Mk IX and Mk X. Can also be used for the British 40mm ROQF Mk II antitank gun. For historically accurate campaigns, it’s important to note that the HE shell wasn’t available until 1943.

57mm Medium Tank Gun: Represents the British 57mm (“6-pounder”) Rifled Ordnance QF Mk III and ROQF Mk V. Can also be used for the British 57mm ROQF Mk II and ROQF Mk IV antitank guns, as well as the American 57mm M-1 antitank gun.

76.2mm Very Short Howitzer: A howitzer installed in the hull of certain tanks for close support. Represents the 76.2mm (“3-inch”) Howitzer Ordnance QF Mk I. All historical installations were incapable of reaching Ind range because they were fitted into low-angle mounts.

87.6mm Short Howitzer: This was a howitzer used in field mounts and some self-propelled guns such as the Sexton and Bishop. Represents the British 25-pounder.

95mm Short Howitzer: Mounted on some British tanks for close-support. Represents the British 95mm (“3.7-inch”) Tank Howitzer Ordnance QF Mk I.

Mortars

51mm Vehicle Mortar: Represents the British 51mm (“2-inch”) Bombthrower Mk I and Mk IA as well as the U.S. 51mm (“2-inch”) M-3. It was only used with smoke rounds, and had three fixed ranges regulated by a gas valve: 35, 75, and 150 yards. It was breech-loaded and trigger fired.

Naval Guns

120mm Medium DP Gun: This gun represents the British 120mm (4.7”/L45) Mk I, Mk II, Mk XI, and Mk XIII; the British 120mm (4.7”/L50) Mk XI; the Italian 120mm Mod 31, Mod 36, Mod 37, and Mod 40; the Japanese 120mm 3 Shiki, 10 Shiki, and 11 Shiki; as well as the Soviet Union’s 120mm M-1905.

130mm Medium DP Gun: Represents the American 127mm (“5-inch”) Mk 16, British 134mm (“5.25-inch”) QF Mk I, German 127mm SK41, Japanese 127mm 3 Shiki, and Soviet 130mm M-1936.

140mm Naval Gun: Represents the British 140mm (“5.5-inch”) BL Mk I ship gun.

WEAPON MODULES TABLE

Weapon Type	VSPs	Weight	Cost
Machine Guns			
Long Ground HMG	0.3	65	\$400
125 rounds of Solid	0.1	[25]	[\$5]
125 rounds of AP	0.1	[25]	[\$25]
15mm Very Long Ground HMG	0.5	125	\$800
125 rounds of Solid	0.2	[50]	[\$10]
125 rounds of AP	0.2	[50]	[\$50]
Autocannons			
40mm Short Ground Autocannon	3.6	900	\$2.8K
70 rounds SAPHE	0.9	[210]	[\$85]
70 rounds AP	0.9	[210]	[\$210]
57mm Medium Ground Autocannon	7.2	1,400	\$4K
20 rounds of AP	1	[250]	[\$250]
20 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
Tank and Antitank Guns			
40mm Medium Tank Gun	1.2	290	\$1.2K
55 rounds of AP	1	[250]	[\$250]
55 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
57mm Medium Tank Gun	3	750	\$2.4K
20 rounds of AP	1	[250]	[\$250]
20 rounds of APDS	1	[250]	[\$400]
20 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
76.2mm Very Short Howitzer	1.3	330	\$1.3K
19 rounds of WP	1	[250]	[\$100]
19 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
87.6mm Short Howitzer	4.5	1,100	\$6.6K
7 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
95mm Short Howitzer	3.5	870	\$2.7K
10 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
10 rounds of HEAT	1	[250]	[\$250]
10 rounds of WP	1	[250]	[\$100]
Mortars			
51mm Vehicle Mortar	0.1	30	\$850
10 rounds of Smoke	0.1	[25]	[\$10]
Naval Guns			
120mm Medium DP Gun	26	6.5K	\$17K
3 rounds of HE	1	[250]	[\$100]
130mm Medium DP Gun	38	9.5K	\$24K
5 rounds of HE	2	[500]	[\$200]
140mm Naval Gun	60	15K	\$38K
2 APEX rounds	1	[250]	[\$250]
2 HE rounds	1	[250]	[\$100]

VEHICULAR WEAPONS TABLE

Machine Guns – Use Gunner (Machine Gun) Skill

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
Long Ground HMG	Crit.	Solid AP	11d+2+ 11d+2 (2)	20	14	1,000	5,000	6,500	11*	0
15mm Very Long Ground HMG	Crit.	Solid AP	16d+ 16d (2)	20	14	1,200	5,400	9,300	7*	0

Autocannons – Use Gunner (Cannon) Skill

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
40mm Short Ground AC	Crit.	SAPHE AP	6d×4 (0.5) + 2d+1 [4d] 6d×4 (2)	25	13	700	3,900	6,800	2	0
57mm Medium Ground AC	Crit.	AP HE	6d×7 (2) 4d-1 [4d]	25	13	1,300	5,600	10,600	1	0

Tank and Antitank Guns – Use Gunner (Cannon) Skill

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
40mm Medium Tank Gun	Crit.	AP	6d×6 (2)	25	13	1,100	5,100	8,000	1/3	0
57mm Medium Tank Gun	Crit.	AP APDS HE	6d×7 (2) 6d×12 (2) 4d-1 [4d]	25	13	1,300	5,600	10,600	1/3	0
76.2mm Very Short Howitzer	Crit.	HE	6d×2 [6d]	20	11	400	2,500	4,000	1/4	1
87.6mm Short Howitzer	Crit.	HE	6d×5 [6d]	30	13	1,000	4,900	10,300	1/5	1
95mm Short Howitzer	Crit.	HE HEAT	6d×6 [10d] 5d×2 (10)	20	12	540	3,300	6,000	1/5	1

Mortars – Use Gunner (Mortar) Skill

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
51mm Vehicle Mortar	Crit.	Smoke	Spcl.	20	5	–	150	150	1/3	0

Naval Guns – Use Gunner (Cannon) Skill

<i>Weapon Type</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Ind.</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Ldrs</i>
120mm Medium DP Gun	Crit.	HE	6d×13 [10d]	22	15	1,800	6,900	22,000	1/6	1
130mm Medium DP Gun	Crit.	HE	6d×16 [10d]	30	15	1,900	7,500	24,000	1/6	1
140mm Naval Gun	Crit.	APEX HE	6d×18 (2)+6d×4 [10d] 6d×10 [10d]	25	16	2,000	4,000	18,500	1/5	1



THE MOTOR POOL



The following pages describe a few of the British vehicles commonly encountered in just about any Commonwealth forces. Additional examples can be found in *GURPS WWII*.

VEHICLES KEY

The military vehicles in this section are presented in the following format:

Descriptive Text

Each vehicle writeup begins with general descriptive text, which usually includes some of the finer details of using the vehicle, such as fuel consumption, turret rotation speeds, etc.

Subassemblies

This lists the chassis and each subassembly, with any options applied to each, followed by the size modifier to see or target that particular structure. Note that the remainder of the writeup will use this structure name or an abbreviation in brackets to indicate the placement of other components. For instance, [OM 1] means the item in question is housed in the subassembly designated Open Mount 1 in this passage. If no placement is described, the item is assumed to be in the vehicle's body.

Powertrain

This describes the vehicle's engines, transmission, and electric motors (if any), fuel tankage, and batteries carried either as motive power sources or simply to turn over the engine and to power accessories such as radios.

Occupancy (Occ)

This describes where and how the vehicle seats its occupants. (Again, unless otherwise designated, all crew stations are assumed to be in the body.) A "CS" is a crew station while a "PS" is a passenger station. An "SR" would indicate standing room used as makeshift passenger space. An "X" prefix means the station is exposed, while an "M" prefix means the station is a motorcycle seat. Long-term accommodations such as bunks will be covered in the descriptive text. Note that many vehicles in this chapter assign a crew station to their gun loaders, even though they don't have to (see p. W141), to give them a place to sit when not actually performing their job.

Cargo

This heading includes *all* empty space within the vehicle except bilges and access space, but it almost always will be design "waste" space rather than a true cargo hold of some sort. Unless specific cargo space is assigned under *Equipment* (see below), assume that the largest single item that this space could hold would be just 10% as big as it is. For instance, a vehicle with 27 VSPs of empty space not truly dedicated to a cargo hold could not fit another crew station, because its single largest "nook" would be only 2.7 VSPs in size. The remainder of the space is scattered about the vehicle in other "crannies" of similar size. Unless the vehicle is specifically designed to haul cargo, the GM should feel free to place these restrictions on any empty space.

Armor

This lists the armor values on each face of each vehicular structure as PD value followed by DR value. (Note that motive subassemblies will always have uniform values on all facings unless the GM is using design rules beyond the scope of this setting; that value is still repeated for each facing simply as a convenience.) A "W" following the armor value denotes that it is wooden. An "S" denotes that it includes DR 15 of standoff armor (see pp. W140-141). A "C" indicates cloth armor. Any special notes are below the armor values.

Weaponry

This lists each weapon (or set of identical weapons), its placement, and its ammunition stores. Any special notes are below the listings. See pp. W133-135 (and additionally pp. W:IC66-68) for weapon statistics.

Equipment

This lists each structure with general equipment installed, followed by the equipment within it. See pp. W136-140 and pp. 75-76 for descriptions of general equipment.

Statistics

Size gives the length, width, and height of the vehicle. *Payload* is the weight of a standard load of fuel, personnel, ammunition, and cargo. *Lwt.* is loaded weight. *Volume* is the amount of space the vehicle would take up if stored within another (presumably larger) vehicle. *Maint.* or *MH* describes either the maintenance interval in hours (p. W144) or the number of men required to keep up maintenance working eight-hour shifts on a long-occupancy vehicle. *Cost* is the vehicle cost, rounded. (Note that a "retail" price might be *much* higher; this figure is "cost of production." In addition, conversion rates were highly subjective during the war, so this should not be mistaken for a historical reference. It is of more use for comparing the values of various pieces of equipment.)

HT measures how robust the vehicle is; see p. W144. *HPs* measures the hit points of each structure; see p. W156.

gSpeed, etc. provide the vehicle's performance characteristics in each of its routine modes of travel; see pp. W145-149. Special characteristics for each mode are described under the general statistics line.

Design Notes

To facilitate usage of these vehicles as examples for the *GURPS WWII* design process, these notes indicate where components were purchased and then modified to historical values, or where any particularly notable "fudging" of calculated data to historical values had to take place.

Variants

While the description covers the general vehicle type, the statistics are for one particular variant. This section describes some or all of the other subtypes of the vehicle, with appropriate supporting statistics if the variant is much more complex than swapping one component for another.

25-POUNDER TOWED ARTILLERY

The 25-pounder artillery piece, sometimes called the "Gunhow," was designed in the '30s to replace the 18-pounder and the 4.5" howitzer that had served in the Great War. (British guns were historically designated by the weight of the shell that they fired, hence the term 25-pounder. Of course, different types of shell for the same gun could vary in weight, but the figures were rather generic to begin with.)

British gunners were not truly content with the 25-pounder, when compared to the German guns and armor that they faced. Nevertheless, it was a sturdy, dependable weapon, and was easy to handle, even for a reduced gun crew. The carriage proved stable during cross-country travel, and the gun gave a dependable performance throughout the war.

For instance, during the 12-day Battle of El Alamein (pp. 103-105) some 800 25-pounders fired more than 1 million shells into the German and Italian lines!

Germans forces put captured 25-pounders into service, forming entire regiments of 25-pdr Mk IIs, which they designated 8.76cm FK 280(e). Many were deployed for coast defense along the Normandy beaches. At one point, the entire artillery of the 90th Light Division of the Afrika Korps was made up of a mix of captured 25-pounders and Soviet guns.

The 25-pounder underwent very few (and very minor) changes during the course of the war. A muzzle brake was added to ease the strain on the carriage during firing, and the breech ring was strengthened to prevent cracking. By the end of the war, more than 12,000 had been built in Britain alone.

The weapon had a circular base plate that allowed it to be rotated at 3° per second for every crew member that pushed. The crew was usually five or six, though the gun could be operated by as few as four gunners with no penalty.

The 25-pounder fired a high explosive (HE) shell. Other rounds (AP, smoke, etc) were available, but were rare and should be considered nonstandard. The GM may consider imposing a penalty as high as -3 to the Gunner (Artillery) skill of 25-pounder crews firing these rounds, because they so rarely practiced with them. The alternate rounds usually had slightly different weights, as well as shapes, so they had different ballistic characteristics. A well-equipped gun crew will have the firing tables for each type of shell, nullifying any penalty. An indifferent gun crew called upon to fire a smoke mission for the first time in months might not be able to locate its firing tables, or be unable to recall the most essential data from memory, incurring the penalty . . .

The gun normally was towed along with a small ammunition limber that carried 32 rounds and equipment for deploying the gun. The limber costs \$100 and weighs 1.4 tons when fully loaded.



Royal Ordnance QF 25-Pounder Mk II

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2; full-rotation Small AFV open mount [Body:U] +2; 2 wheels +1.

Occ: -

Cargo: See below.

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body, OM:	4/25	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Weaponry

87.6mm Short Howitzer/How. QF Mk II [Body:F] (0 rounds).

Statistics

Size: 11'x8'x5' Payload: - Lwt: 2 tons
Volume: 18 Maint: 77 hours Cost: \$6,800

HT: 9. HPs: 85 Body, 55 Open Mount, 28 each Wheel.

gSpeed: * gAccel: * gDecel: * gMR: 1.25 gSR: 2
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

* Use that of the towing vehicle, after adding the weight of the gun and (in standard deployment) the ammo limber.

Design Notes

This carriage includes a heavy pedestal, upon which the gun can be rotated 360° once the wheels have been moved out of the way. To model this, the design uses an open mount for the reverse of its usual role: This one carries the body of the vehicle instead of vice versa. To do so, it must be larger than is normally allowed, but that exception can be made for this role.

A fairly high DR has been applied to all elements of this design to represent that the gun had a reputation for giving particularly good service even in rugged conditions.

Technically, a good deal of cargo could be stacked on the trails of this carriage, but it would have to be lashed down.

BEDFORD CARGO TRUCK

The Bedford OY was produced by Vauxhall Motors, a General Motors subsidiary in England. Beginning production in the late 1930s, more than 72,000 were produced by the end of the war. Several hundred were captured by the Germans after Dunkirk, with many seeing service on the Eastern Front. Like the U.S. 2½-ton truck, it was the largest cargo truck that could be easily mass-produced by the British motor industry.

The Bedford burns 2.4 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel costs \$3.60.

Bedford OY 3-Ton 4×2 Cargo Truck

Subassemblies: Medium Wheeled chassis +6, four heavy wheels +3.

Powertrain: 54-kW standard gas engine with 54-kW wheeled transmission and 31-gallon standard tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 2 CS Cargo: 109.8

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Equipment

Body: 85-VSP exposed cargo hold with 85-sf canvas cover.

Statistics

Size: 20'×7'×10' Payload: 4.5 tons Lwt: 7.5 tons
Volume: 150 Maint: 303 hours Cost: \$435

DAIMLER SCOUT CAR (DINGO)

The Daimler Scout Car served throughout the war with the British. Its small size allowed it to hide behind most terrain features and its high speed allowed it to run away if spotted. Due to a good power-to-weight ratio and excellent four-wheel-drive capability, it made a good off-road vehicle and was often prized by field officers as a staff car. Given its light armor and armament, it needed all the mobility it could get.

The Dingo erroneously took its name from the Alvis Dingo, a 1938 competitor. The name stuck despite the mistake.

The car had a driver and commander. It used 1.8 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$30.

Daimler Dingo Scout Car Mk I

Subassemblies: Very Small Wheeled chassis +2, four off-road wheels +1.

Powertrain: 41-kW gasoline engine with a 41-kW all-wheeled transmission and 22-gallon standard fuel tank; 4,000-kWs batteries

Occ: 2 CS Cargo: 0.5

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/45	4/45	4/45	4/45	4/45
Crew:	+0/40	+0/20	+0/20	+0/20	+0/0

The crew armor also protects the radio and Bren gun.

Weaponry

Ground LMG/Bren Mk II [Body:F] (600 rounds).

HT: 9. HPs: 330 Body, 55 each Wheel.

gSpeed: 31 *gAccel*: 2 *gDecel*: 10 *gMR*: 0.5 *gSR*: 4
Ground Pressure High. 1/4 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Fuel tank purchased as 30 gallon but historical amount used. Design weight increased 17% to match historical weight of 2.95 tons. Design *gSpeed* of 42 mph was reduced to historical. The payload assumes a normal load of 8,500 lbs. Theoretically, much greater weight could be stacked in the bed.

Variants

The OYD was the standard military version, with a slightly more rugged body and dual rear wheels. Early versions had wooden armor. The OYD was used in practically every capacity, from troop transport to mobile workshop. It proved inadequate for towing artillery, but that didn't stop some desperate units from trying!

The OYC was a tanker, carrying a 960-gallon (32-VSP) standard tank of fuel or water.

Perhaps the most unusual version carried the Armadillo portable bunker, which was similar in concept to the pre-made systems used by the Germans (see *Mobile Pillbox*, p. W:IC59). The bunker is a Small TD subassembly with DR 30 wooden side armor and DR 20 wooden top armor. It weighs 7,296 lbs. and costs \$405.

Equipment

Body: Medium radio transmitter and receiver.

Statistics

Size: 11'×6'×5' Payload: 0.25 tons Lwt.: 3.4 tons
Volume: 18 Maint.: 125 hours Price: \$2,500

HT: 9. HPs: 85 Body, 13 each Wheel.

gSpeed: 55 *gAccel*: 3 *gDecel*: 20 *gMR*: 0.75 *gSR*: 4
High Ground Pressure. 1/4 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Design speed was 56 mph; 21-gallon fuel tank and 500 MG rounds were purchased. Historical values have been used.

Most crews kept the top compartment open to improve visibility, reducing top DR to 0 when this is done.

The Bren gun was stowed on the floor of the crew compartment and fired out of the open hatch or commander's vision slot when needed. It used standard 30-round magazines.

Variants

Most modifications involved the armored hatch; by the Mk III, it was simply removed as it was rarely used. The Canadian version was known as the Lynx. Loosely based on an enlarged Daimler Scout Car chassis, the Daimler Mk I armored car had a turret with a 2-pounder ROQF Mk II (40mm Medium Tank Gun) and 7.92mm BESA Mk I (Ground LMG).

HUMBER ARMORED CAR

Some 5,400 Humbers were made (with about 500 of the Humber I models), making the line the most successful of the British armored cars. Humbers were widely used by Commonwealth nations, including Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa. Germany used captured examples as the PzSpähw 209(e).

Based on the Guy Wheeled Light Tank Mk I, the Humber was nearly identical save for the armament. Though it was officially built by Karrier Ltd., the name was changed to avoid confusion with vehicles that served in the *role* of carrier.

The armored car had very few mechanical difficulties, though the engine had a relatively short lifespan. British officers preferred it as a command car, because it was roomier than the Daimler.

The turret seated the commander (who also operated the radio) and gunner. The gunner fired both the 15mm BESA Mk I and the coaxial 7.92mm BESA Mk I machine guns. The driver was seated in the body. The Humber I burned 3 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage; the engine was in the rear. The turret was manually rotated by the gunner at 4° per second. Fuel and ammo cost \$90.



Armored Car Humber I

Subassemblies: Small Wheeled chassis with Heavy option +3; full-rotation Large Weapon turret [Body:T] +2; four off-road wheels +1.

Powertrain: 77-kW standard gasoline engine with 77-kW all-wheel drive transmission and 78-gallon fuel tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 2 CS Turret **Cargo:** 9.2 Body, 2 Turret

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/75	4/50	4/30	4/15	4/15
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
Turret:	4/50	4/50	4/35	4/15	—

Weaponry

15mm VL Ground HMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (600 rounds).
Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (2,925 rounds).

Equipment

Turret: Medium radio and transmitter; four smoke dischargers (two each on R, L facings).

Statistics

Size: 15'×7'×8' **Payload:** 0.8 tons **Lwt:** 7.5 tons
Volume: 46 **Maint:** 124 hours **Cost:** \$2,600

HT: 12. **HPs:** 500 Body, 90 each Wheel, 120 Turret.

gSpeed: 45 **gAccel:** 2 **gDecel:** 10 **gMR:** 0.75 **gSR:** 4
Ground Pressure Very High. 1/6 Off-road Speed.

Design Notes

The chassis' heavy option, from p. W:IC65, gives the body and wheels more HPs. Cost is \$250 and weight 4,500 lbs.

Designed with 625 rounds of 15mm and 3,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammo, the historical values were substituted; gSpeed was lowered by 6% to historical values.

To reflect the sloping on the historical Humber, body front and rear armor have been increased by 50%. This is a heavier solution than the real-life sloping (which would of course use a thinner armor plate, though one of considerably greater surface area), but the design was light, anyway (at some 6% under historical weight).

Realistically, the real-life sloping would reduce the cargo space given here, but the Humber had a considerable number of handy storage boxes and racks so it didn't feel right to penalize this statistic. Despite the thought put into the crew's stowage needs, the rule about the car carrying no single item larger than 10% of its overall cargo capacity (p. 68) certainly does apply.

Variants

The Guy Wheeled Light Tank Mk I (1939) was mechanically almost identical, but armed with a .500-caliber Vickers Mk V (Long Ground HMG) with 400 rounds and a .303-caliber Vickers Mk IV (Ground LMG) with 2,500 rounds, both water-cooled; 101 were built. Some were used in

France in 1940, but they were soon relegated to training.

The Humber III (1941) had a larger turret (Small AFV) with a crew of four, adding a radio operator but retaining the same armament; loaded weight was 7.8 tons.

The Humber IV (1942) had a larger turret (Small AFV) armed with a U.S.-supplied 37mm ROQF Mk I tank gun (37mm Medium Tank Gun) and a coaxial 7.92mm BESA Mk I. It had a crew of three, with the commander doubling as loader; loaded weight was 7.8 tons.

The Humber AA (1943) was armed with four linked 7.92mm BESA Mk I machine guns in a universal mount, intended for AA protection at regiment level.

The Armored Car Mk I Fox I (1941) was a copy made by General Motors of Canada. It differed mainly in its armament, a .50-caliber Browning M-2HB (Very Long Ground HMG) and a .30-caliber Browning M-1919A4 (Ground LMG). It had a crew of four. Some 1,500 were built.

BREN (UNIVERSAL) CARRIER

The Bren Carrier was derived from an early 1930s light artillery tractor. In 1940, the design was slightly modified and the vehicle was renamed the Universal Carrier, but the vehicle was still often referred to by its old name.

The Bren Carrier was not an armored personnel carrier, although it is often called one. It was intended to carry a Bren gun crew through hostile machine-gun fire and dismount them to support advancing infantry. It was also used to resupply troops in combat, evacuate casualties, and for artillery observation. Unofficially, it was often used as both a scout and assault vehicle. Some were modified to act as flamethrower carriers, mortar carriers (3" and 4.2" mortars), and even carriers for scaling ladders (colorfully called the Praying Mantis).

Most Carriers mounted the Bren gun in the hull front, in addition to (or instead of) the open-mount LMG. In some cases, a .55 Boys AT rifle was mounted, instead. Some Carriers mounted a heavier MG, such as the .303 Vickers Mk I, on the open mount. Two more men could be carried in the superstructure, if required, but the fit was tight.

The major limitations of the Bren/Universal Carriers were the lack of overhead protection for the occupants and the small size, which limited the uses to which the vehicle could be applied. Regardless, by the end of the war a Carrier platoon of 13 vehicles was part of the support company for most infantry battalions.

The Bren Carrier has a crew of three or four. The commander and driver sit in the body, with the commander operating whatever body weapon is mounted. A gunner and (sometimes) assistant gunner sit in the superstructure. The Bren Carrier uses 2.8 gallons per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$14.

Bren Carrier

Subassemblies: Very Small Tank chassis +2, Large Weapon superstructure [Body:T] +2, limited-rotation Mini open mount [Sup:T] +0, tracks +2.

Powertrain: 63-kW standard gasoline engine with 63-kW tracked drivetrain and 18-gallon standard fuel tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 2 CS Body, 2 XCS Sup **Cargo:** 2 Body, 6 Sup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body, Sup:	4/20	4/20	4/20	4/20	4/20
Tracks:	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/15
OM:	0/0	-	-	-	-

Weaponry

Ground LMG/Bren Mk II [OM:F] (1,000 rounds).

Equipment

Body: Medium radio receiver and transmitter.

Statistics

Size: 13'x7'x5' **Payload:** 0.5 tons **Lwt.:** 4.9 tons
Volume: 42 **Maint.:** 137 hours **Price:** \$2,100

HT: 12. **HPs:** 400 Body, 120 Superstructure, 135 each Track.

gSpeed: 36 **gAccel:** 3 **gDecel:** 20 **gMR:** 0.25 **gSR:** 4
Ground Pressure Very Low. Full speed off-road.

Design Notes

The design weight has been increased 13% to match historical weight. To represent the light build, chassis cost, weight, and HPs have been divided by two; this also reduced track HPs and DR by half. This is a legitimate design approach as long as HPs are divided by the same amount as weight and cost.

The Bren ammo is in standard 30-round magazines.

Variants

Capturing the Universal Carrier in a single set of *GURPS* statistics is impossible. It was an extremely popular platform from the start, spawning several variants each with only minor differences. Since it was economically and practically unfeasible to produce each variant to any large degree, the Bren Carrier was redesigned as the Universal Carrier. This new vehicle incorporated a number of small modification packages, and allowed the vehicle to fill a number of roles. A handful of popular variations follow, but countless others existed.

Several engines also appeared in the Universal Carrier, including some British, some Canadian, and some American. The performance numbers varied, but not to a significant degree. Most Carriers designed from 1943 onward were equipped with a Stacey towing attachment, allowing them to tow light artillery over short distances.

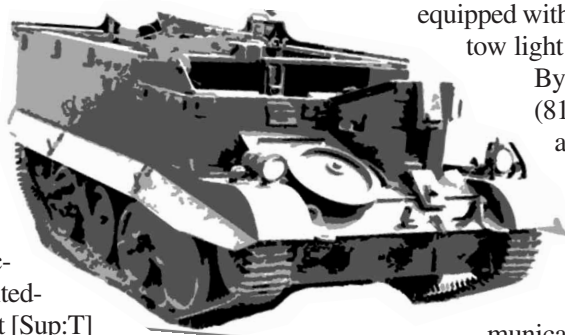
By 1942, Carriers could be modified to fit a 3" (81mm Vehicle) mortar, 52 rounds of ammunition, and the mortar crew. The mortar tube was stowed toward the back and the base plate was carried on either the front or rear of the vehicle. A large variety of models existed, each with different stowage arrangements.

The OP Carrier variant carried extra communications equipment (wires, telegraph gear, wireless sets, phones) and was used as a command post, artillery forward-observation post, or in general reconnaissance.

The Lloyd Carrier version was primarily a troop carrier that could accommodate up to eight soldiers. It was then further modified and found its way into other roles and other countries, as well. There are almost as many varieties of Lloyd Carrier as the Universal Carrier, itself.

The Wasp variant saw the main gun and crew replaced by a Medium Vehicle Flamethrower in the body and its fuel tank in the superstructure. The Canadians improved on this with the Wasp II, which mounted the flamethrower fuel on the rear hull, allowing two soldiers to sit in the superstructure again.

A U.S. version known as the T-16 could actually float if not loaded too heavily. Flaws in the design stage meant that, in general, the T-16 couldn't carry as much as the Universal Carrier, nor was it as reliable. Few were built.



LIGHT TANK MARK VI

The Light Tank Mk VI was a culmination of designs dating back to the late 1920s. While the British light tanks were useful in policing their colonial empire in the 1930s, they were hopelessly outclassed in combat in North Africa from 1940-1942. Unfortunately, a shortage of tanks forced them to be used on the front line, rather than for scouting, usually with disastrous results.

The Mark VI has a crew of three. The commander sits in the turret and mans the AA machine gun. Also in the turret is the main gunner, who loads and fires both turret MGs. The driver sits in the body. The turret manually traverses at 5° per second, operated by the gunner. The Mark VI uses 3 gallons per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$63.

Light Tank Mk VIB

Subassemblies: Very Small Tank chassis +2, full-rotation Large Weapon turret [Body:T] +2, limited-rotation Mini open mount [Tur:T] +0, tracks +2.

Powertrain: 66-kW standard gasoline engine with 66-kW tracked drivetrain and 88-gallon standard fuel tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 1 Tur, 1 Both **Cargo:** 0.7 Body, 1.3 Tur

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/55	4/45	3/15	3/15	3/10
Tracks:	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/15
Turret:	4/45	4/40	4/35	3/10	–
OM:	0/0	–	–	–	–

INFANTRY TANK VALENTINE

In 1938, Vickers was asked to create an infantry tank similar to its A10 Cruiser. The resulting design was fairly trouble-free, thanks to the experience with the A10, and its reliable and sturdy nature led to large quantities being produced.

The prototype debuted on February 14, 1940 – St. Valentine's Day. The tank entered service later that year. By 1941, it was the primary British infantry tank. Though outmatched by German panzers, 8,275 were made by early 1944.

Infantry Tank Mk III Valentine III

Subassemblies: Medium Tank chassis with mild slope +3; full-rotation Small AFV turret [Body:T] +2; track +3.

Powertrain: 98-kW diesel with 98-kW tracked transmission and 42-gallon standard fuel tanks; 4,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 1 CS Tur, 2 Both **Cargo:** 16.5 Body, 1.3 Tur

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/165	4/165	4/165	4/55	4/19
Tracks:	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40
Turret:	4/65	4/60	4/65	4/20	–

Weaponry

40mm Med. Tank Gun/ROQF Mk IX [Tur:F] (79 rounds).*

Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (3,150 rounds).*

* Linked.

Weaponry

Ground LMG/Vickers Mk IV [Tur:F] (2,500 rounds).

Long Ground HMG/Vickers Mk IV [Tur:F] (400 rounds).

Ground LMG/Bren Mk II [OM:F] (600 rounds).

Equipment

Turret: Medium radio receiver and transmitter; two smoke dischargers.

Statistics

Size: 13'×7'×8' *Payload:* 0.7 tons *Lwt.:* 5.2 tons

Volume: 42 *Maint.:* 114 hours *Price:* \$3,100

HT: 12. **HPs:** 400 Body, 120 Turret, 135 each Track.

gSpeed: 36 *gAccel:* 3 *gDecel:* 20 *gMR:* 0.25 *gSR:* 4
Ground Pressure Very Low. Full Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The design purchased 87 gallons of fuel tanks and 500 rounds of HMG ammo. The historical values have been used, instead. To reduce weight, and also represent the light build, chassis cost, weight, and HPs have been divided by two.

Variants

Earlier models had a crew of two and a single .303 Vickers Mk I in the turret. Only one smoke discharger was mounted.

The Mark VI lacked the Bren AA machine gun.

The Mark VIC received the 15mm BESA Mk I (15mm Very Long HMG) and 7.92mm BESA Mk I (Ground LMG).

Equipment

Body: Medium radio transmitter and receiver; 1-kW traversing gear for turret.

Statistics

Size: 18'×9'×7' *Payload:* 0.9 tons *Lwt.:* 19.5 tons

Volume: 95 *Maint.:* 46 hours *Price:* \$15,835

HT: 12. **HPs:** 1500 Body, 150 Turret, 540 each Track.

gSpeed: 15 *gAccel:* 2 *gDecel:* 20 *gMR:* 0.25 *gSR:* 5
Low Ground Pressure. 2/3 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Design weight was lowered 13% to historical weight. Historical top speed is used.

Variants

Early marks had different engines, including 98-, 101-, and 103-kW diesels. Also, Canadian-built Valentines received different marks than otherwise identical British versions.

The Valentine VIII mounted a 6-pounder ROQF Mk V (57mm Medium Tank Gun). The Ground LMG was deleted and 1 CS deleted from Turret/Body. The Valentine IX and X had similar weapons, but included improved engines.

The Archer tank destroyer – with its distinctive rear-facing 17-pounder (75mm Very Long TG) gun in a fixed superstructure – was based on the Valentine chassis.

CRUISER TANK CRUSADER

Designed by Nuffeld as A15 to meet the “1938 Class Medium” requirement, the Crusader was chosen in April 1939 as the standard “heavy cruiser” tank. It used many of the same components as the A13 Covenant, including the Christie suspension, so that it could reach production faster. It also offered better trench-crossing capability than the A13 and had better armor than other contemporary designs.

The initial order was completed in March 1940; within a few months the order was increased first to 400, then to 1,062. When production ceased in 1943, 5,300 had been built.

Given the urgency of the fighting at the time, production was rushed. This created some mechanical unreliability; early models’ engines often would overheat in the desert after the cooling fan broke. Action reports resulted in some changes, such as removal of the auxiliary machine-gun turret on the hull and upgrading of the main weapon to a 6-pounder ROQF Mk V. Even so, the tank quickly became obsolete.

The Crusader first saw combat at Fort Capuzzo, Libya, in June 1941, then went on to served a prominent role in North Africa (with the 6th Royal Tank Regiment and 22nd Armored Brigade) until May 1943, by which time it had been largely phased out in favor of U.S.-built tanks. The Germans respected the Crusader’s speed, but the Panzer III (see p. W:IC79), its primary foe, was superior in armament, armor, and reliability.

The turret rotates hydraulically at 18° per second, or manually at 2.5° if operated by gunner and commander.

Cruiser Tank Mk VI Crusader III (A15)

Subassemblies: Medium Tank chassis +3; full-rotation Medium AFV turret [Body:T] with mild slope +2; tracks +3.

Powertrain: 254-kW aerial gas engine with 254-kW tracked transmission and 132-gallon standard fuel tanks; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 1 CS Tur, 1 Both Cargo: 6.3 Body, 4.1 Tur

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/210	4/90	4/90	4/35	4/30
Tracks:	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40	4/40
Turret:	5/170	4/190	4/115	4/40	–

Weaponry

57mm Medium Tank Gun/ROQF Mk V [Tur:F] (65 rounds).*
Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (4,500 rounds).*

* Linked.

Equipment

Body: Fire extinguisher; medium radio transmitter and receiver; 3-kW traversing gear for turret; four smoke dischargers.

Statistics

Size: 20'×9'×7' Payload: 1.4 tons Lwt.: 22.1 tons
Volume: 106 Maint.: 45 hours Price: \$20,340

HT: 10. HPs: 1500 Body, 200 Turret, 540 each Track.

gSpeed: 27 gAccel: 3 gDecel: 20 gMR: 0.25 gSR: 5
Low ground pressure. 2/3 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The design weight is increased by 9% to historical weight. Historical top speed is used. The design HT is reduced to reflect reliability issues. (These byproducts of the tank’s rushed production could be used as examples of failed rolls in a weapon-design campaign, as described on pp. W:IC121-122.)

The Crusader had a governor installed to limit operating speed (historically, about 25-30 mph) and subsequent engine and transmission wear (or failure). Tampering with the governor was strictly forbidden, but removing it will increase gSpeed to 37. Such vehicles are prone to breakdown and halve the maintenance interval; such halving is in addition to modifiers for desert use (p. 89), cutting the maintenance interval of an ungoverned Crusader in the desert to just over 11 hours.

To offset the relatively small fuel tanks, an additional 36-gallon tank was often mounted on the rear hull. The extra tank requires no skill roll to mount or remove.

Variants

The first Crusader tanks were delivered to British troops in Britain during the winter of 1940/41. They arrived in Egypt with the Tiger convoy on May 12, 1941. They were equipped with a 2-pounder ROQF Mk II (40mm Medium Tank Gun) with 130 rounds and coaxial 7.92mm BESA Mk I machine gun in the turret, and a second, hull-mounted BESA to the left of the main gun. Initially, the Crusader had an armor thickness of only 40mm (reduce hull and turret DR by 20%), though some models had extra armor plates welded on after production. Crusader I models included a hull gunner to the left of the main weapon, a commander at the rear of the turret (near the wireless), and a loader (who also operated the smoke dischargers) to the right of the gun.

The Crusader II began arriving in North Africa in early 1942. The auxiliary bow machine gun was removed from these models, eliminating the hull-gunner position. The main weapon and coaxial BESA remain the same.

Both the I and II had close-support variants mounting a 76.2mm Very Short Howitzer as a main gun.

Antiaircraft versions began appearing in 1943. The Crusader AA I replaced the main gun with a Bofors gun (40mm Medium Ground AC) in an open-topped turret. The AA II had two 20mm Oerlikon Mk IVs (20mm Long Ground ACs).

Inspired by the Germans, the British created the Armored Recovery Vehicle version of the Crusader in 1942. The turret was replaced with a winch and a 5-ton A-frame jib for tank recovery. This variant found little success and was rare.

The Crusader ID had a 1.5-ton anti-mine roller attachment (AMRA) that consisted of four heavy rollers on a frame. An electrically fired fuse could quickly detach the AMRA. On sand, the rollers would detonate most antitank mines. On harder ground, extra weight could be added by removing a cap and filling the rollers with dirt, water, or whatever was handy.

An engineering vehicle was built on the Crusader chassis. The turret was replaced with a winch and jib, and a dozer blade was added to the front of the vehicle. A small crane was added to some models, and used by the Royal Ordnance Factory for bomb disposal.

INFANTRY TANK MATILDA

Designed to replace the much lighter Infantry Tank Mk I Matilda I (A11), which was only armed with a single machine gun, the Infantry Tank Mk II Matilda I (A12) was an infantry-support tank mounting the 2-pounder ROQF Mk II antitank gun, which was a very effective weapon at the time of introduction. In the summer of 1940, it was superseded by the Infantry Tank Mk IIA Matilda II (A12), which carried a more modern machine gun. This became the main production model.

The Matildas were heavily armored and proved invulnerable to the light German AT guns employed during the Battle of Arras in France and the early campaign in North Africa – thus the nickname, “Queen of the Desert.” The vehicle’s main problems were the twin engines and cooling systems, which were a nightmare to keep maintained and balanced.

As the war progressed, the Matilda became obsolete given larger German antitank guns and its own inadequate armament – the 2-pounder being no match for the heavier German tanks. The British relegated it to training duties after its last action at El Alamein in 1942, and exported large numbers to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and, via Lend-Lease, the U.S.S.R. Of the 2,987 of all versions built, more than one-third were sent to the Soviets; about a fourth of those were lost in transit. The Australians and New Zealanders received several hundred from 1942 and made good use of them against the Japanese.

The turret seats the commander, gunner, and loader. The gunner fires both the 2-pounder ROQF Mk IX gun and the coaxial 7.92mm BESA Mk I. Some add a .303 Bren Mk II machine gun with 600 rounds in drums at the commander’s hatch for antiaircraft fire. The turret is powered and rotates at 18° per second, or 1° if manually turned by the gunner. The driver is seated in the body.

The Matilda II burns 5.2 gallons of diesel per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$390.

Infantry Tank Mk IIA Matilda II (A12)

Subassemblies: Medium Tank chassis +3; full-rotation Small AFV turret [Body:T] +2; tracks +3.

Powertrain: two 65-kW diesel engines with 130-kW tracked transmission and 57-gallon tanks; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body, 3 CS Both Cargo: 12.6 Body, 5.4 Tur

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/300	4/180+90	4/215	4/75	4/65
Tracks:	4/40	4/40+90	4/40	4/40	4/40
Turret:	4/290	4/290	4/290	4/75	–

Weaponry

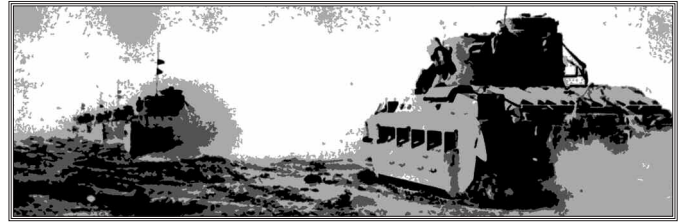
40mm Med. Tank Gun/ROQF Mk IX [Tur:F] (93 rounds).*

Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (2,925 rounds).*

* Linked.

Equipment

Body: Fire extinguisher. Turret: 8-kW traversing gear; medium radio and transmitter; four smoke dischargers [two each L, R facings].



Statistics

Size: 18'x9'x8' Payload: 0.9 tons Lwt: 29.7 tons
Volume: 103 Maint: 37 hours Cost: \$30,000

HT: 10. HPs: 1,500 Body, 540 each Track, 150 Tur.

gSpeed: 15 gAccel: 2 gDecel: 20 gMR: 0.25 gSR: 5
Ground Pressure Low. 2/3 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Designed with 110 rounds of 40mm and 3,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition, the historical values were substituted instead. Design gSpeed is 21, but this tank was infamous for its lumberingly slow top speed.

The tank carried far more protection for its tracks than any other contemporary design. This is purchased as six increments of extended standoff armor (see pp. W140-141) for each side.

Variants

The Infantry Tank Mk II Matilda I (1938) mounted a coaxial .303 Vickers Mk VI water-cooled machine gun (Ground LMG) with 4,000 rounds, but was otherwise identical.

An odd variant was the Matilda IICDL (1941). CDL stood for “Canal Defense Light.” It replaced the turret with a DR 215 version mounting a 7.92mm BESA Mk I machine gun and a powerful searchlight, which projected through a narrow slit in the armor (-2 to hit). A 9.5-kW auxiliary engine was installed to power it. Crew was reduced to two. The CDL was intended to blind opponents (see p. W139). Despite very successful tests, none of the 300 conversions were ever employed that way; however, some were used for simple illumination (as “Monty’s Moonlight”) during the Rhine and Elbe crossings in 1945.

The Matilda III (1940) had slightly more powerful 70-kW engines, which did little to improve motive performance. The Matilda IIICS (1940) close-support version mounted a 3” Howitzer QF Mk I (76.2mm Very Short Howitzer) with 42 shells as a main gun. These were assigned at a rate of two per 17-tank company, and mainly fired smoke rounds.

The Matilda IV (1940) featured minor automotive improvements; the IVCS (1940) was the howitzer version.

The Matilda Scorpion I (1942) was a standard tank fitted with a mine flail (see p. W137), first used in North Africa. Two 22.5-kW auxiliary engines were mounted externally to power the flail. The operator of the flail sat exposed on the outside; this was remedied on the Matilda Scorpion II (1943).

The Matilda Frog I (1943) was an Australian conversion mounting a Medium Tank Flamethrower in place of the main gun. Internal fuel sufficed for 75 shots, and an external fuel tank for a further 50 shots could be carried on the rear. Every 5 shots the weapon had to cease firing for 20-30 seconds, to allow the pump to build up pressure again. Crew was reduced to three. Some 25 were converted and used in New Guinea.

INFANTRY TANK CHURCHILL

The Churchill was designed with trench warfare in mind and was perhaps the prototypical British infantry tank. When a German invasion seemed possible in 1940, several hundred were rushed into production, which resulted in major reliability problems. While some Churchills were used in the Dieppe raid in 1942 (where they performed poorly), the tank did not reach widespread service until 1943.

The Churchill was one of the most heavily armored Allied tanks, although it was also one of the slowest. While the type of battle it was designed for failed to materialize, the Churchill proved to be very capable, in no small part thanks to its thick skin.

Aside from its use as an infantry tank, the Churchill was used as the basis of a wide variety of engineering vehicles, including mine-clearing and mat-laying variants.

The Churchill has a crew of five. The commander sits in the turret and mans the AA machine gun. Also in the turret are the main gunner (who fires both the tank gun and MG) and the loader. The driver sits in the body. Next to him is the hull MG gunner. The turret manually traverses at 1° per second, operated by the gunner.

The Churchill uses 11.7 gallons per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$1,110.

Infantry Tank Mk IV Churchill IV A22

Subassemblies: Large Tank chassis +3, full-rotation Small AFV turret [Body:T] +2, limited-rotation Mini open mount +0, tracks +3.

Powertrain: 260-kW gas engine with 260-kW tracked drivetrain and 180-gallon standard fuel tanks; 16,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 2 CS Body, 1 Tur, 2 Both Cargo: 12.2 Body, 3.1 Tur

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/350	4/300	4/250	4/75	4/75
Tracks:	4/45	4/45	4/45	4/45	4/45
Turret:	4/290	4/290	4/290	4/110	—
OM:	0/0	—	—	—	—

Weaponry

Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Body:F] (2,325 rounds).
57mm Medium Tank Gun/ROQF Mk V [Tur:F] (84 rounds).*
Ground LMG/BESA Mk I [Tur:F] (4,600 rounds).*
51mm Veh. Mortar/Bomb Thrower Mk I [Tur:T] (30 rounds).
Ground LMG/Bren Mk II [OM:F] (300 rounds).

* Linked.

Equipment

Body: Fire extinguisher. Turret: Medium radio receiver and transmitter.

Statistics

Size: 24'x8'x11' Payload: 1.7 tons Lwt.: 43 tons
Volume: 127 Maint.: 36 hours Price: \$31,200

HT: 9. HPs: 1,800 Body, 600 each Track, 150 Tur.

gSpeed: 13 *gAccel*: 3 *gDecel*: 20 *gMR*: 0.25 *gSR*: 6
Ground Pressure Moderate. 2/3 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The design purchased 87 gallons of fuel tanks, 7,500 rounds of LMG ammo, and 90 rounds of TG ammo. The historical values have been substituted. The design weight was increased 12% to match historical.

Design *gSpeed* 25 was slashed to the historical. Given that this is a general trend in British-built tanks (though rarely so drastic as in this example), it would be safe to assume that many of these vehicles have their engines governed to protect a relatively fragile transmission that the designers do not trust.



Variants

Many variants were based on the Churchill hull, most of them engineering vehicles based on the Churchill AVRE. Only the most noteworthy are mentioned here.

The initial Churchill I mounted a 2-pounder (40mm Medium Tank Gun) in the turret and a 3" howitzer (76.2mm Very Short Howitzer) in place of the hull MG, with 58 shells. They had several reliability problems (effective HT 7). Around 300 were built and a small number used (and lost) at Dieppe.

The Churchill VII mounted the 75mm Medium Tank Gun introduced in the Mk VI. Armor increased to DR 490 on the turret front, DR 310 on the turret sides, and DR 540 on the hull front. The hull sides dropped to DR 225 and rear to DR 200.

The Churchill Crocodile was a Mk VII equipped with a forward hull flamethrower. The 480 gallons of fuel were carried in a quick-release trailer. An earlier version, named the Oke, was based on the Mk II.

The Royal Engineers used many variations of the tank; the Churchill ARVE was the most important. The turret armament was replaced with a 290mm spigot mortar for destroying fortifications. The hull MG and ammo racks were also removed and replaced with assorted gear. Crew was increased to six. Loaded weight was 41.5 tons and *gSpeed* was 16 mph.

The Black Prince was essentially an enlarged Churchill mounting a 17-pounder (75mm Very Long Tank Gun). The project was dropped at the end of the war, with only six prototypes built. The Black Prince weighed 50 tons and traveled at 11 mph. It was armored per the Mk VII.

HAWKER HURRICANE

While the Spitfire (p. 78) received most of the glory in the Battle of Britain (pp. 23-24), the more numerous Hawker Hurricane accounted for more German losses than the legendary Spitfire, in some part because its pilots often were assigned to tackle bombers while Spitfires duelled their fighter escort. The highest-scoring pilot during the Battle of Britain, Josef Frantisek with 17 kills, flew a Hurricane.

The Hurricane was the RAF's first monoplane fighter, debuting in 1937. It was also the first RAF fighter to break 300 mph. Though this made it a bit dated even as the war began, the workmanlike design served through most of the fighting.

The Mark II debuted in North Africa in 1941. The cannon-armed IIB and IIC versions were used extensively in destroying German convoys and tanks. The Mark IV first saw action in Burma.

Modified production Hurricanes served on aircraft carriers until 1943. A less common naval Hurricane was catapult-launched from certain merchant ships designated CAM for catapult-aircraft merchantmen. Unfortunately, the ship had no way to recover the plane, so the pilot was forced to ditch after a sortie launched in this fashion (p. 20).

When the Hurricane was no longer able to compete with the latest German fighters, it was equipped with cannons and rockets and used for ground attack.

Counting all versions, some 14,500 Hurricanes were built.

The Hurricane I used 34.6 gallons of fuel per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$47.

Hawker Hurricane I

Subassemblies: Medium Fighter chassis +3, high-agility Light Fighter wings +2, three retractable wheels +0.

Powertrain: 768-kW aerial HP engine with 768-kW prop and 85-gallon self-sealing fuel tanks [Wings and Body]; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS

Cargo: 8 Body, 0.8 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4
Cockpit:	0/+10	0/+10	0/+20	0/0	0/+10

Weaponry

8×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Wings:F] (334 each).*

* Linked to fire in pairs; additional link fires all eight at once.

Equipment

Body: Medium radio transmitter and receiver; navigation instruments; autopilot.

Statistics

Size: 31'×40'×13' Payload: 0.5 tons Lwt.: 3 tons
Volume: 200 Maint.: 47 hours Price: \$17,900

HT: 9. HPs: 120 Body, 90 each Wing, 12 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 320 aAccel: 13 aDecel: 25 aMR: 6.25 aSR: 2
Stall speed 69. -2 mph aSpeed per loaded hardpoint.

gSpeed: 283 gAccel: 12 gDecel: 10 gMR: 0.25 gSR: 3
Extremely High Ground Pressure. No Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The design aSpeed is 288 mph. The historical speed, as well as wing area (257 sf), have been used, instead. Unloaded weight was increased by 11%.

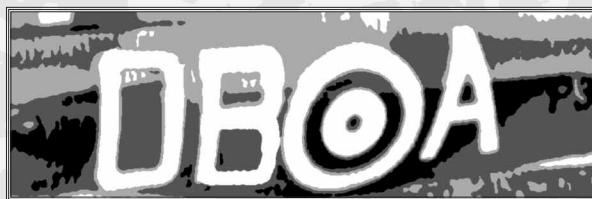
Although most of the tail was cloth-covered, the aircraft used metal tubing as part of the frame (and lacked any important components in the tail) and has been given metal armor over all of the body.

Variants

The Hurricane II "Hurribomber" was mainly used for ground attack. It could reach 340 mph and carry either two 500-lb. bombs or eight rockets underwing. It retained the eight machine guns. The IIB mounted six LMGs per wing. The IIC carried four 20mm Hispano-Suiza Mk II cannons (20mm Long Aircraft ACs) with 60 rounds per gun.

The IID was armed with a 40mm Vickers Mark S (37mm Medium Aircraft AC) with 15 rounds and one LMG in each wing, seeing action in North Africa.

The Hurricane IV was fitted with a 1,208-kW engine. It could be equipped with 40mm cannons and bombs or rockets. Up to four rockets per wings could be carried.



AIRCRAFT MARKINGS

British planes were emblazoned with indicators that identified the plane's position within Fighter Command.

A large British nationality marking (called a roundel) was centered on each side of the plane's fuselage: a red dot inside concentric rings of white, blue, and yellow. To the left of the roundel (forward, if you were looking at the left side of the plane; aft if you were looking at the right side) was the plane's squadron two-letter (or two-number) identification code (e.g., LK for 87 Squadron, UP for 605 Squadron, 5A for the 329 French Squadron).

To the right of the roundel (forward or aft, depending on which side of the plane you were viewing) was a single plane-identification letter, to distinguish individual aircraft within a squadron. Behind the plane letter was a serial number, usually printed in much smaller letters, and found under the tailplane or on the fin.

British colors (vertical stripes of red, white, and blue) adorned the tail in what was commonly called the fin flash. Given all these devices, it usually was easy to identify an aircraft's nationality, squadron, and individual plane number, even from a distance. Training aircraft were only issued a single-letter plane-identification code; a squadron designation was never assigned.

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE

Perhaps no other aircraft is linked more with Britain than the Spitfire. Debuting in service in 1938, the sleek, oval-winged fighter was derived from a championship racing seaplane. Built to the same general specifications as the less-famous Hurricane (p. 77), the Spitfire is widely considered, if perhaps somewhat incorrectly, the plane that saved England in the summer of 1940.

The Spitfire and Bf 109 were generally a balanced match before the Battle of Britain; the Spitfire was more agile and faster climbing while the Bf 109 was faster and better in a dive. Two factors broke this tie. First, the Bf 109 had only a limited amount of fuel for combat over England. Secondly, the Spitfire switched to higher octane fuel, which measurably improved performance.

The Spitfire was the only Allied fighter in continuous production throughout the war.

The Spitfire IA burned 34.6 gallons of fuel per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$47.

Supermarine Spitfire Mk IA

Subassemblies: Medium Fighter chassis with good streamlining +3, high-agility Light Fighter wings +2, three retractable wheels +0.

Powertrain: 768-kW aerial HP engine with 768-kW prop and 85-gallon self-sealing fuel tanks [Wings and Body]; 2,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 1 CS Body **Cargo:** 5.6 Body, 0.4 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4
Cockpit:	0/+10	0/+10	0/+20	0/0	0/+10

Weaponry

8×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Wings:F] (350 each).*

* Linked to fire in pairs; additional link fires all eight at once.

Equipment

Body: Autopilot; IFF; navigation instruments; medium radio transmitter and receiver.

Statistics

Size: 30'×37'×11' **Payload:** 0.45 tons **Lwt.:** 2.9 tons
Volume: 200 **Maint.:** 47 hours **Price:** \$17,900

HT: 9. **HPs:** 120 Body, 90 each Wing, 12 each Wheel.

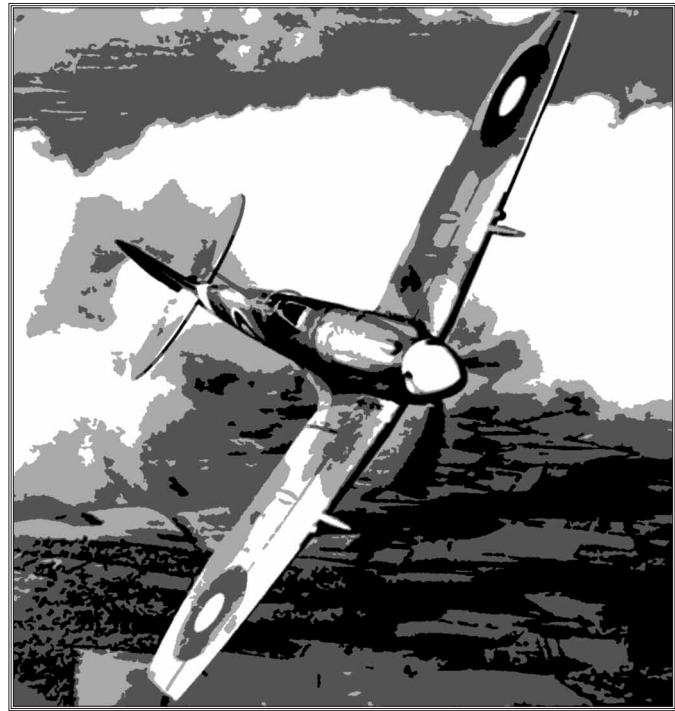
aSpeed: 355 **aAccel:** 13 **aDecel:** 26 **aMR:** 6.5 **aSR:** 2
 Stall speed 70.

gSpeed: 287 **gAccel:** 13 **gDecel:** 10 **gMR:** 0.25 **gSR:** 3
 Extremely High Ground Pressure. No Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

The design aSpeed is 358 mph. The historical speed, as well as wing area (242 sf), have been substituted.

Early Spitfires sometimes had their carburetor flood when performing negative-G maneuvers (which could happen often in dogfights), causing the engine to cut out. GMs can inflict this on Spitfire pilots as the situation demands.



Variants

Some 24 variants of the Spitfire were built. Notable examples include the Spitfire IB (1940), which was a rare variant with two 20mm Hispano-Suiza Mk IIs (20mm Long Aircraft ACd) with 60 rounds per gun and four .303 Brownings with 350 rounds each in the wings, introduced during the Battle of Britain. The cannons were notoriously unreliable (Malf 16) and this model was disliked by pilots. Some 1,600 Spitfire Is of all subtypes were built.

The Spitfire II (1940) introduced a 877-kW engine, increasing top speed to 370 mph, and added self-sealing tanks and +10 DR to the cockpit rear; 921 were built.

In the Spitfire VB (1941), the engine was again upgraded (to 1,074-kW) with weight increasing to 3.4 tons. Top speed was 374 mph. It had the same armament as the Mk IB. A hard-point was provided for one 500-lb. bomb under the fuselage. Some 3,900 were constructed. The VC added a 250-lb. hard-point under each wing and a “universal” wing able to take various armaments. About 2,400 VCs were built.

Rushed into service to face the Fw 190 (see p.W:IC85), the Spitfire IX (1942) was generally similar to the V series, but with a strengthened airframe and the latest engine. Armament consisted of two 20mm Hispano-Suiza Mk Vs (20mm Long Aircraft ACs) with 120 rounds each and two .50-caliber Browning A.P. Mk IVs (Long Aircraft HMGs) with 500 rounds each. Top speed was 408 mph. Some 5,665 were built. A photo-reconnaissance version of the IX was built (numbering around 470), without armament or wing fuel tanks.

Plans to use the Spitfire as a carrier-based aircraft were initially scrapped. After the failure of alternative solutions, however, the Sea Spitfire (commonly abbreviated to Seafire) was adopted. The most common model – the Sea Spitfire III (1943) – was based on the Spitfire VC production line, but added manually folding wings and an arrestor hook for the body; 1,220 were built.

DE HAVILLAND MOSQUITO

Developed privately by the de Havilland company in 1938 as a light bomber, the Mosquito relied on high speed and small size to survive. The aircraft languished in obscurity until 1939, when the Air Ministry became attracted to its low cost and particularly its all-wood construction. Unlike other aircraft, the D.H. 98 could be built by woodworking factories, one of the few British industries that had resources to spare in wartime.

Late in 1940 the first prototype Mosquito was built, a mere 11 months after design started. Bomb ordnance was limited to only a ton, but the plane's budget-conscious and simple construction meant that several could be assembled for the cost of one Lancaster.

The Mosquito was an extremely successful aircraft and spawned more than three dozen variants, some remaining in production until 1950. More than 7,000 Mosquitos were built during the war; 2,584 of those were Mk VIs.

The Mosquito used 122 gallons of aviation gas per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo costs \$4,330. Payload includes loaded bomb bay and hardpoints.



de Havilland Mosquito VI (Series 2)

Subassemblies: Light Fighter-Bomber chassis +3, Medium Fighter-Bomber wings +3, two Small AFV pods [Wings:F] +2, three retractable wheels +1.

Powertrain: two 1,220-kW aerial HP engines with two 1,220-kW props [Pods] and 544-gallon self-sealing fuel tanks [Wings and Body]; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 2 CS **Cargo:** 7.3 Body, 4 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	3/5W	3/5W	3/5W	3/5W	3/5W
Cockpits:	0/+10	0/+10	0/+0	0/+0	0/+0

Weaponry

4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Body:F] (2,000 each).*
 4×20mm L. Air. AC/Hispano-Suiza Mk II [Body:F] (150 each).*

* Linked to fire in pairs; additional link fires all four at once.
 Another link fires all eight weapons at once.

Equipment

Body: 1,000-lb. bomb bay; medium radio transmitter and receiver; IFF; navigation instruments; autopilot. **Wings:** 500-lb. hardpoint each.

Statistics

Size: 41'×54'×13' **Payload:** 3.3 tons **Lwt:** 10.5 tons
Volume: 312 **Maint:** 28 hours **Price:** \$51,000

HT: 7. **HPs:** 165 Body, 330 each Wing, 150 each Pod, 15 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 367 **aAccel:** 7 **aDecel:** 23 **aMR:** 5.75 **aSR:** 2
 Stall speed 93. -2 aSpeed per loaded hardpoint.
gSpeed: 211 **gAccel:** 11 **gDecel:** 10 **gMR:** 0.5 **gSR:** 2
 Extremely High Ground Pressure. No Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Design aSpeed is 354; historical values were used for it and wing area (454 sf). The *Wooden* armor option is used to represent the plane's all-wooden construction. DR is punched up a bit to represent the historical durability of this design. Also, in real life, a side benefit of the wooden construction is that combat damage is relatively easy and quick to repair.

Variants

The Mosquito was a versatile aircraft, rivaling the Ju 88 (see p. W:IC87) in sheer number of variants. Some notable variants include:

The Mosquito I was an unarmed photo-reconnaissance variant with two Merlin 21 918-kW turbocharged/supercharged HP gas engines. It carried an additional 80 gallons of aviation fuel in a fuselage tank, in addition to three vertical (and one oblique) recon cameras. This variant lacked the wing hardpoints and bomb bay.

The Mosquito II, a fighter variant, used non-targeting AI (Air Intercept) Mk IV or Mk V radars with a 3-mile range. A few were equipped with the Turbinlight 5-mile searchlight. Their matte black paint added so much weight and drag that the top speed dropped by almost 25 mph. Also, the flame dampers often failed to function. Some were repainted, keeping the black paint only on their undersides. This model lacks the wing hardpoints and bomb bay.

The Sea Mosquito, a naval variant, had folding wings and an arrestor hook. It included a 5-mile non-targeting surface-search radar in place of the LMGs. A cradle under the Mosquito was a 4,000-lb. hardpoint for carrying a single torpedo. This variant usually carried rockets on the wing hardpoints.

An anti-shipping variant called the Tse-Tse Fly mounted a single 6-pounder Molins Mk I (57mm Medium Ground AC) with 23 rounds. The Tse-Tse Fly also added a 78-gallon fuel tank for increased range. Only 27 were produced.

AVRO LANCASTER

The Lancaster became the most important heavy bomber used by Britain. Some claim it was the best heavy bomber of the war, criticizing its U.S. counterparts for carrying too many guns and gunners and not enough bombs.

Ironically, the highly successful plane evolved from the failed twin-engined Manchester medium bomber. Fitted with four new Rolls-Royce Merlin engines among other modifications, it rapidly became Bomber Command's workhorse after its August 1942 debut.

That bombing mission, conducted in broad daylight, proved successful but at sobering cost, with seven of the 12 participating planes lost. As became general British policy, the Lancaster squadrons began to focus on night operations shortly thereafter.

Lancasters dropped the heaviest bombs of the war, including the 12,000-lb. Tall Boy and 22,000-lb. Grand Slam. Perhaps most noteworthy among its large specialist bombs was a cylindrical dam buster that was skipped across the water into the target in a low-level bombing run; p. W:IC20 describes the results of a raid employing these specialty munitions.

More than 7,300 of all types were built and accounted for 69% of the tonnage of bombs dropped by the RAF. Only one Lancaster was lost per 132 tons of bombs they dropped, better than twice the survival rate of other British heavy bombers.

The Lancaster has a crew of seven: pilot, co-pilot, bombardier/nose gunner, navigator/radio operator, flight engineer, dorsal turret gunner, and tail gunner. The Lancaster burned 172 gallons of fuel per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo (excluding bombs) costs \$660.

Avro Lancaster I

Subassemblies: Heavy Bomber chassis +5; Large Bomber wings +4; four Small AFV pods [Wings:F] +2; two limited-rotation Medium Weapon turrets 1-2 [Body:F,B] +2; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret 3 [Body:T] +2; three retractable wheels +2.

Powertrain: four 955-kW aerial HP engines [Pods] with four 955-kW props and 2,586-gallon self-sealing fuel tanks [Wings]; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 8 CS Body Cargo: 91.8 Body, 1.2 Wings, 3.4 each Pod

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	3/5	3/5	4/20	3/5	3/5
All Else:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

The pilot is protected with an additional DR 15 U.

Weaponry

2×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur1:F] (1,000 each).*
 4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur2:F] (2,500 each).*
 2×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur3:F] (1,000 each).*
 14×1000-lb. Bombs [Body:U].

* Linked to fire in pairs (or all four together in Tur2).

Equipment

Body: Autopilot; backup driver option; 14,000-lb. bomb bay; bombsight; IFF; precision navigation instruments; large radio transmitter and receiver. *Tur 1-3:* Universal mounts.

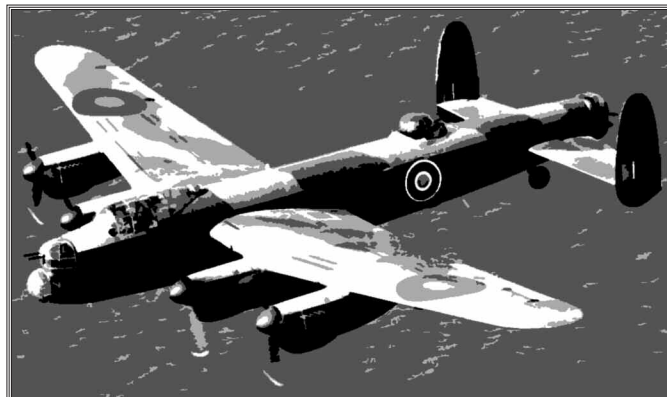
Statistics

Size: 69'×102'×21' *Payload:* 7.9 tons *Lwt.:* 28.9 tons
Volume: 1,840 *Maint.:* 22 hours *Price:* \$81,400

HT: 9. *HPs:* 1,100 *Body,* 825 each *Wing,* 75 each *Turret,* 150 each *Pod,* 100 each *Wheel.*

aSpeed: 287 *aAccel:* 3 *aDecel:* 18 *aMR:* 6.25 *aSR:* 2
Stall Speed 89.

gSpeed: 148 *gAccel:* 6.5 *gDecel:* 10 *gMR:* 0.25 *gSR:* 3
 Extremely High Ground Pressure. No Off-Road Speed.



Design Notes

The design *aSpeed* is 259 mph. The historical speed, as well as wing area (1,297 sf), have been used, instead.

With larger aircraft, the design system assumes that the "root" portion of the wings is bought with the chassis, because with larger wings the amount of volume available for fuel tankage increases drastically as compared to the amount of space usable for other gear such as weapons. For this reason, in the design 432 gallons of fuel is carried in the body, though historically it was all wing tankage.

The rear armor does not represent a thickened skin, per se, but actually represents armored bulkheads strategically placed throughout the rear fuselage.

When carrying Grand Slam-sized bombs, standard practice was to remove the bomb-bay doors and hang the ordinance partially outside the plane. This would, of course, negate any benefit from the plane's usual underside DR, and would justify a reduction in *aSpeed*, as well.

The plane had a real 1943 price of 43,000 pounds (\$203,700). Per p. 68, the difference between design price and this could be taken as production cost vs. "retail" with overhead. The manufacturers were supposed to take only a modest markup, but the definition of modest is subjective.

Variants

The Lancaster VII (1944) replaced the dorsal turret with a slightly larger one mounting two .50-caliber Browning A.P. Mk IVs (Long Aircraft MGs) with 1,259 rounds each.

The Lancaster II upgraded the engines to 1,277-kW versions. Some added a ventral turret with two Browning Mk IIs (Aircraft LMGs) and 500 rounds each. Such ventral-turreted planes were rare. A total of 300 B.IIs were built.

HANDLEY PAGE HALIFAX

The Short Stirling was the first heavy bomber to enter British service, followed shortly by the Halifax, then a year later by the Avro Lancaster (p. 80). Each plane was better than the one that had come before, but although the Lancaster got most of the praise heaped upon this RAF heavy-bomber triad, the Halifax was nearly as dependable and proficient in its primary role. It flew more than 75,000 sorties beginning in March 1941 and dropped nearly 228,000 tons of bombs during the war years, second only to the Lancaster.

It also may have been the most versatile of the trio, given that many of the 6,176 Halifaxes manufactured during the war ended up in missions other than bombing. These included maritime reconnaissance, transport duties, and glider towing. (The Halifax was the only plane in British service capable of towing the mammoth Hamilcar glider.)

Given this workhorse nature, a Halifax would make an excellent setting for a campaign based on playing RAF bomber crewmen. Though it would be a little bit unrealistic – various Halifax squadrons tended to specialize in one role or another – the plane’s crew could be pressed into a variety of missions with only their low risk of survival in common. One session might find them over Germany on a moonlit night, evading deadly nightfighters (see p. W:IC88) and flak. The next might place them in the path of a killer storm over the North Atlantic, hunting a U-boat that is in turn stalking a crippled Liberty ship. Then they might be impressed into tugging an overloaded glider over the front lines in France, where getting shot down probably would result in accompanying the glider pilots as they find an infantry unit to join. Only the GM’s imagination would limit the amount of variety that could be offered in this sort of campaign.

The Halifax has a crew of seven: pilot, co-pilot/flight engineer, bombardier/nose gunner, navigator, radio operator, dorsal-turret gunner, and tail gunner. Both turrets are power-operated and traverse at 48° per second.

The aircraft burns 225 gallons of fuel per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$700, plus bombload.

Handley Page Halifax III

Subassemblies: Heavy Bomber chassis +5; Large Bomber wings +4; four Small TD pods [Wings:F]; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret (Body:T) +1, limited-rotation Large Weapon turret (Body:B) +2; three retractable wheels +2

Powertrain: four 1,250-kW aerial HP turbocharged engines with four 1,250-kW props [Pods 1-4] and 2,400-gallon tanks [Body and Wings]; 8,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 7 CS Body **Cargo:** 30 Body, 1.4 Tur1, 2.4 Tur2, 42 Wings

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>Tur1-2:</i>	4/25	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
<i>All Else:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3

Weaponry

Aircraft LMG/Vickers G.O. Mk I [Body:F] (291 rounds).

4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur1:F] (600 each).*

4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur2:F] (2,500 each).*

* Linked.

Equipment

Body: Environmental control; large radio receiver and transmitter; autopilot; IFF; navigation instruments; bomb-sight; 13,000-lb. bomb bay. **Wings:** Three 500-lb. bomb bays each (see *Design Notes*, below). **Tur 1:** 1-kW traversing gear. **Tur 2:** 1.5-kW traversing gear.

Statistics

Size: 71'×104'×21' **Payload:** 13.3 tons **Lwt:** 31 tons
Volume: 1,840 **Maint:** 22 hours **Cost:** \$91,400

HT: 8. **HPs:** 1,100 **Body,** 1,000 each **Wing,** 75 **Tur1,** 120 **Tur2,** 100 each **Wheel.**

aSpeed: 282 **aAccel:** 4 **aDecel:** 23 **aMR:** 5.75 **aSR:** 3
Stall Speed 95.

gSpeed: 172 **gAccel:** 9 **gDecel:** 10 **gMR:** 0.25 **gSR:** 3
Extremely High Ground Pressure. No Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Design aSpeed is 257 mph. The historical speed and wing area (1,275 sf) have been used, instead. The design purchases 12,500 rounds of MG ammo and 3,093 gallons of fuel, but the historical amounts were substituted.

Technically, the engine pods are about 0.1 spaces short of space; the extra space has been taken from the wings.

As for the Lancaster, some of the historical wing tankage is placed in the design’s body, though this is considered to be the “wing root” space just adjacent to the wings proper.

The dorsal gunner’s crew station is half in the turret, half in the body.

Note that the plane could not take off with both a full bomb load and a full fuel load. Its auxiliary wing tanks hold 692 gallons in six wing cells. Alternatively, each cell could be loaded with 500 lbs. worth of bombs.

In models operated by the Coastal Command, the .303 machine guns were replaced with the .50-caliber Browning A.P. Mk IV (Long Aircraft HMG) whenever possible.

Variants

The original Halifax I (1941) had 955-kW engines and replaced the nose gun with twin .303 Browning Mk II MGs with 1,000 rounds each in a turret, and the dorsal turret with a single hand-aimed Browning in either side. Loaded weight was 30 tons and aSpeed 265. This original version had a serious flight-handling problem that stemmed from a poorly designed tail section. If handled too roughly, the Mark I would enter a vicious and unrecoverable spin. In game terms, reduce the aSR of this model to 2.

The Halifax II (1941) had 1,037-kW engines and the same armament as the Halifax III except for the dorsal turret, which mounted twin .303 Browning Mk II MGs with 1,000 rounds each. Loaded weight was 31.5 tons and aSpeed 270.

The Halifax V, VI, and VII upgraded the landing gears and engines, with the latter two also increasing fuel capacity. The Mark V served with Coastal Command in a reconnaissance role, while the Marks V and VII were used along with the Mark III as paratroop transports as well as glider tugs.

SHORT SUNDERLAND

Designed as a military version of Short's Empire or C-class flying boat, the Sunderland entered squadron service in 1938. By war's end, it was Coastal Command's standard flying boat, equipping 28 squadrons in all theaters of the war.

The flying boat soon gained a reputation for sterling service. Weeks after the war began, on September 21, 1939, two Sunderlands were able to rescue all 34 crew members from a torpedoed freighter. The planes would return to this air-sea-rescue role many times over during the evacuations of Greece and Crete in the Mediterranean fighting.

A Sunderland also was credited with Coastal Command's first U-boat kill on January 31, 1940, although technically it played little more than a supporting role. (The submarine's captain scuttled his vessel at the plane's approach.) In future engagements, however, the Sunderlands would inflict often fatal damage on unwary U-boats, to the point that the presence of the big plane loitering over a convoy often was enough excuse for the German marauders to seek easier prey.

The flying boat also could hold its own in some aerial duels. On April 3, 1940, for instance, a Short Sunderland was attacked by six Ju 88s (see p. W:IC87). One Ju 88 was shot down and one was forced to land in Norway due to extensive damage; the other four retreated from the plane that soon became known as the "Flying Porcupine."

During later fighting, Sunderland pilots sometimes would fly extremely close to the water, protecting the vulnerable underside from which the crew could not return fire. This would have the disadvantage of conceding the edge in maneuverability to an aerial attacker, but the flying boat was never going to outperform many competitors in a contest of agility.

The flying boat's crew size ranged up to 13. A pilot, copilot, and navigator would be minimum personnel, with three gunners, a radio operator, and a radar operator being common additions. Longer flights might include backup personnel, carried in the bunks while off-shift, while rescue missions might leave behind crew members so as to cram more rescued personnel aboard. (Giving over all cargo space, bunks, and extra crew stations to passengers might see the Short Sunderland fitting as many as 40 passengers aboard for a very brief and cramped flight.)

The following assumes a crew of 10. The powered turrets rotate at 46° per second. The plane burns 159 gallons of aviation gas per hour. A full load of fuel, ammunition, and provisions costs \$725 before adding dropped ordnance (see below).

Short Sunderland III

Subassemblies: waterproofed Heavy Bomber chassis +5; waterproofed Heavy Bomber wings with STOL option +4; four waterproofed Large Weapon engine pods [Wings:F] +2; two Large Weapon pontoons [Wings:U] +2; two limited-rotation Medium Weapon turrets 1,3 [Body:F,B] +2; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret 2 [Body:T] +2.

Powertrain: four 795-kW aerial turbocharged HP gas engines with four 795-kW aerial props [Pods] and 3,037-gallon self-sealing tanks [Body, Wings]; 12,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 7 CS Body, 3 Tur, see below. **Cargo:** 27.1 Body

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>Body and Pontoons:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	3/5
<i>Wings and Pods:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
<i>Turrets:</i>	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

Weaponry

2×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur1:F] (1,000 each).*
 2×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur2:F] (1,000 each).*
 4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Tur3:F] (1,000 each).*
 4×Aircraft LMG/Browning Mk II [Body:F] (1,000 each).*
 Up to 4,960 lbs. of bombs, mines, or depth charges.

* Linked at each position.

Equipment

Body: Two winches; two medium radio transmitters and receivers; two large radio receivers and transmitters; very large radio transmitter and receiver; large radio direction-finding receiver; 20-mile non-targeting surface-search radar; five CS formed into bridge with back-up driver controls for a single CS; six bunks; 27.1-VSP cargo hold; 20 man-days of provisions. **Turrets:** 1.5-kW traversing gear each. **Wings:** 2,000-lb. hardpoint each.

Statistics

Size: 85'×113'×32' **Payload:** 12.5 tons **Lwt.:** 29 tons

Volume: 1,840 **Maint.:** 16 hours **Price:** \$152K

HT: 9. **HPs:** 1,100 Body, 1,100 each Wing, 120 each Pod or Pontoon, 75 each turret.

aSpeed: 213 **aAccel:** 3 **aDecel:** 27 **aMR:** 6.75 **aSR:** 3
 Stall Speed 70. -1 aSpeed with both hardpoints loaded.

wSpeed: 22 **wAccel:** 3 **wDecel:** 5 (6.5) **wMR:** 0.05 **wSR:** 5
 Flotation 36 tons. Draft 2.6'.

Design Notes

The design aSpeed 200 was increased to the historical, and the real wing area of 1,487 sf was used. Excess space in the engine pods was used to hold fuel tankage; even so, 39.3 VSPs of tankage were moved to the body (see p. 80). The turret crew stations are shared between turrets and body.

The plane carried its ordnance in the cargo hold. The ordnance was winched onto a rail, then slid through side doors to a hardpoint between the inner engine pod and body. The bombs used against U-boats sometimes bounced back toward the aircraft. Mines were also carried. From early 1943, special depth charges greatly improved the plane's antishipping lethality. Note that only 2,660 lbs. of ordnance is assumed in the write-up. Any greater weight (up to the rated 4,960 lbs.) will require dropping fuel to remain within rated maximum takeoff weight.

As designed, the aircraft needs a headwind to lift off; however, historically it allegedly could take off in dead calm.

Variants

The Mk I had 754-kW engines and no top turret. Two Aircraft LMGs were included in open mounts [Body:T] and Long Aircraft HMGs on each side. Ninety were produced.

A dorsal turret on the Mk II replaced the open mounts. Only 43 were produced.

HMS Hood

In March 1920, *HMS Hood* entered service as the world's largest warship. In the following interwar years, she showed the flag around the world, her combination of grace and size reminding all exactly who had the final say on the high seas.

As WWII began, *Hood* had returned to the Home Fleet. On September 26, 1939, German aircraft inflicted minor damage. The aging ship was quickly refitted with additional anti-aircraft weapons. She was the flagship for Force H during the attack on Mers-el-Kebir on July 3, 1940 (p. 10). The *Hood* served her final days in the North Sea countering German surface raiders; by this time, her engines were in dire need of overhaul (reducing her top speed) and she had continuing problems with her antiquated gun mountings – her career as a showpiece had put her far behind in her upgrades. The design here reflects her final refit in 1941.

Hood was destroyed during the pursuit of *Bismarck* (see pp. W20 and W:IC93) on May 24, 1941. A massive explosion ripped her apart, leaving only three survivors. The exact cause remains a mystery, but the most accepted theory has *Bismarck* hitting the ship's magazine or a boiler with a plunging 15" shell.

Each main turret holds two 15" guns; they are hydraulically traversed at 2° per second, or rotated at 0.07° per second with 10 men furiously cranking on the manual backup. The secondary weapon turrets are dual-mounted cannons that were primarily used in an AA role; they could traverse at 35° per second, or be manhandled by four of the crew at 0.7° per second. The main "pom-pom" AA gun mounts had eight autocannons per mount and traversed at 16° per second, or could be manually cranked by the gun section (six men) at 4° per second. Finally, the quad-mount MGs, which were fired remotely, could traverse at 22° per second; if necessary two men could move the mount at 9° per second.

The *Hood* burned 6,480 gallons of fuel oil per hour at routine usage. Fuel, ammo, and provisions cost \$2.7 million. Despite fuel capacity exceeding 4,500 tons, only about 400,000 gallons was typically carried. About 1,400 men served the ship.

HMS Hood

Subassemblies: Medium Battleship chassis +11, waterproofed Small Ship superstructure [Body:T] +7, four waterproofed limited-rotation Small Naval turrets 1-4 with mild slope [Body:T] +5, seven waterproofed limited-rotation Small TD turrets 5-11 [Sup:T] +3, three waterproofed full-rotation Large AFV open mounts 1-3 [Sup:T] +3, four waterproofed full-rotation Small Weapon open mounts 4-7 [Sup:T] +0.

Powertrain: four 27,000-kW steam turbines with four 27,000-kW screws and 1.6 million-gallon standard fuel tanks.

Occ: 300 CS Body, 10 CS Sup **Cargo:** 26,400 Body, 131 Sup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/1,080	4/1,100	4/1,080	4/280	4/360
Sup:	4/400	4/400	4/400	4/200	–
Bridge*:	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500
Tur 1-4:	5/900	4/600	4/600	4/600	–
Tur 5-11:	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100	–

* Armored station for 10 crew members.



Weaponry

8×15" Naval Guns/BL Mk I [Tur1-4:F] (120 rounds each).*
 14×105mm Med. DP Guns/BL Mk XVI [Tur7-11:F] (250 each).*
 24×40mm Med. Gr. AC/Vickers Mk VIII [OM1-3:F] (720).**
 16×Long Gr. HMG/Vickers Mk III [OM4-7:F] (2,500 each).†

4×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Body:F] (2 Mk VIII or Mk IX each).

* Each turret has linked pairs.

** Pairs linked at each station, with additional links firing four or all eight at station at once.

† Pairs linked at each station, with additional link firing all four at station at once.

Equipment

Body: 90,000-VSP bilge; 5,000-VSPs cargo; 200 bilge pumps; 11 searchlights; 20 fire extinguishers; 2.5-ton cradle; six 5-ton external cradles; three 15-ton cradles; brigs and restraints for 10 bunks; 1,200 bunks; 100 cabins; 56 environmental control; 10 halls; 255,500 man-days of provisions; two surgeries; 10 workshops. **Sup:** Autopilot; 10 fire extinguishers; 920-VSP cargo; very large radio transmitter; five very large radio receivers; large radio direction finder; four navigation instruments; 10-mile targeting surface-search radar; 8-mile nontargeting air-search radar; 3-mile targeting air-search radar; sound detector; four fire-direction centers (one for each Small Naval turret); two mainframe targeting computers (one for main batteries, one for secondary); 20 cabins; two luxury cabins; environmental control; five halls. **Tur 1-4:** 60-kW traversing gear. **Tur 7-11:** 40-kW traversing gears; universal mounts. **OM 1-3:** 5-kW traversing gears; universal mounts. **OM 4-7:** 1-kW traversing gears; universal mounts.

Statistics

Size: 860'×104'×118' **Payload:** 4,701 tons **Lwt:** 41.5K tons
Volume: 565,726 **Maint:** 1.5 hours **Cost:** \$15.9M

HT: 7. **HPs:** 720,000 **Body,** 6,600 **Sup,** 1,900 each **Tur 1-4,** 285 each **Tur 5-11,** 225 each **OM 1-3,** 90 each **OM 4-7.**

wSpeed: 34 **wAccel:** 0.4 **wDecel:** 0.1 (0.3) **wMR:** 0.02 **wSR:** 6
Draft 33'. **Flotation Rating** 51,600 tons.

Design Notes

The design draft of 37.7' was reduced to the historical deep displacement draft. Design wSpeed of 30 was raised to the historical value. A total of 17,624 rounds was purchased for the 40mm autocannons, but the historical figure is given.

There is a significant amount of empty space that represents roomier access spaces and the large amount of general cargo space. This is represented by 50 VSPs of access space for each of the 1,400 crew, plus 100 VSPs of bridge access for the superstructure crew stations. Additional access space was added to many components.

KING GEORGE V-CLASS BATTLESHIP

Construction on the *King George V*-class battleships began during a time of uncertainty. Naval treaties limiting the size of ships verged on collapse, and the Japanese were believed to be building behemoths with 18" guns. Regardless, the Admiralty decided to build smaller ships that conformed to the treaties, with underpowered 14" guns but advanced armor protection that would stand up to much larger broadsides.

This made the battleships the most lightly armed of their era. Worse yet, the guns' mountings proved flawed, resulting in many delays and breakdowns, particularly during early battles. Despite those setbacks, as the only truly modern battleships that the Royal Navy would float during WWII, the *KGV* class (including *King George V*, *Prince of Wales*, *Duke of York*, *Anson*, and *Howe*) performed steady and sometimes spectacular work. It was the *Prince of Wales* that damaged *Bismarck* on its initial sortie, while the *King George V* played a key role in destroying the dreaded German raider. *Duke of York* proved vital in the battle against *Scharnhorst* in December 1943. Throughout these engagements, the ships endured topside attacks stoically, but their underwater defenses may have been suspect. A modest torpedo crippled *Prince of Wales* in December 1941, leading it to become the only *KGV* lost in battle.

King George V carries three main turrets; the two large fore and aft turrets hold four 14" naval guns each, with the smaller foremost turret holding two. They have a power traverse for 2° per second; a 10-man section can manually turn the large turrets at 0.04° per second and the smaller turret at 0.08° per second. The secondary 5.25" turrets rotate at 25° per second, or 0.3° per second with a five-man team using the manual systems. The AA gun mounts traverse at 16° per second, or were manually cranked by the gun section (six men) at 4° per second.

The battleship burns 6,480 gallons of fuel oil per hour at routine usage. Only 1.2 million gallons of fuel oil is typically carried. A full load of ammo and provisions and a typical load of fuel oil costs \$4.9 million. Crew size averaged 1,400.

HMS King George V

Subassemblies: Medium Battleship chassis +11, waterproofed Small Ship superstructure [Body:T] +7, two waterproofed limited-rotation Large Naval turrets 1-2 with mild slope [Body: T] +6, waterproofed limited-rotation Small Naval turret 3 with mild slope [Body:T] +5, eight waterproofed limited-rotation Small Secondary turrets 4-12 [Sup:T] +4, four waterproofed full-rotation Large AFV open mounts 1-4 [Sup:T] +3.

Powertrain: eight 10,250-kW steam turbines with four 20,500-kW screws; 1.7 million-gallon standard fuel tanks.

Occ: 400 CS Body, 10 CS Sup **Cargo:** 33K Body, 52 Sup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/840	4/1,050	4/630	4/350	4/400
Sup:	4/400	4/400	4/400	4/200	-
Bridge*:	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500	0/+500
Tur 1-3:	5/750	4/500	4/500	4/500	-
Tur 4-12:	5/300	4/200	4/200	4/200	-

* Armored stations for 10 crew members.



Weaponry

10×14" Naval Guns/BL Mk VII [Tur 1-3:F] (200 each).*

16×130mm Med. DP Guns/QF Mk I [Tur 4-12:F] (150 each).**

32×40mm Sh. Gr. AC/ Mk VIII [OM 1-4:F] [(2,700 each)].***

* Each turret has linked pairs, plus link firing all four Tur 1-2.

** Each turret has linked pairs.

*** Each mount has linked pairs, plus link firing all four.

Equipment

Body: 90,000-VSP bilge; 10,000-VSP cargo; six searchlights; 200 bilge pumps*; 20 fire extinguishers*; 10 5-ton external cradles; 10 15-ton external cradles; brigs and restraints for 10 bunks; 1,200 bunks*; 100 cabins*; 56 environmental control*; 10 halls; 255,500 man-days of provisions; two surgeries; 10 workshops*; **Sup:** Autopilot; 10 fire extinguishers; very large radio transmitters; five very large radio receivers; large radio-direction finder; four navigation instruments; 10-mile targeting surface-search radar; 8-mile nontargeting air-search radar; 3-mile targeting air-search radar; sound detector; six fire-direction centers; two mainframe targeting computers (one for main batteries, one secondary); 30 cabins; luxury cabin; environmental control; five halls. **Tur 1-2:** 100-kW traversing gears. **Tur 3:** 50-kW traversing gear. **Tur 4-12:** 90-kW traversing gears. **OM 1-4:** 5-kW traversing gears; universal mounts.

* Full access space allotted.

Statistics

Size: 700'×103'×100' **Payload:** 8,612 tons **Lwt:** 49.5K tons

Volume: 566,875 **Maint:** 1.4 hours **Price:** \$17.8M

HT: 6. **HPs:** 720,000 **Body,** 6,600 **Super,** 3,000 each **LN Tur,** 1,900 each **SN Tur,** 560 each **SS Tur,** 225 each **OM.**

wSpeed: 25 **wAccel:** 0.3 **wDecel:** 0.1 (0.25) **wMR:** 0.02 **wSR:** 6 **Draft** 29'. **Flotation Rating** 51,600 tons.

Design Notes

The design draft of 39' was reduced to the historical. This version represents a 1943 refit removing two spotter aircraft previously carried while adding more AA guns.

See the design notes for the *HMS Hood* (p. 83) for as discussion of excess volume used as access space.

SOUTHAMPTON-CLASS CRUISER

In the escalating naval-arms race of the '30s, even the treaty-conscious British had to blink. With the U.S. and Japanese navies unveiling powerful new cruisers capable of contributing meaningful fire to a fleet engagement, the Royal Navy decided that it, too, needed something to give pause to capital-ship captains rather than tend herd on a merchant convoy. As in the development of the *King George V* class (p. 84), the British wanted to both stay within the treaty limits and be capable of standing toe to toe with "outlaw" rivals, so compromises were made. As tempting as the 8" firepower traditionally carried by heavy cruisers might have been, they stuck to treaty-mandated 6" weapons, but placed as many as feasible onto their latest cruiser hull.

As the namesake of this new *Southampton* class entered service in 1936, it became the fifth vessel to bear the name, with the first *HMS Southampton* dating back to the 17th century. (A sixth entered service in 1981.) The WWII incarnation participated in many notable engagements, including the evacuation of British forces from Norway in 1940 and a naval battle against the Italian fleet later that same year.

This noble career would be cut short, however, when the ship met a threat on the other end of the size scale from the fleet forces that it was built to worry. While escorting a convoy to Malta during January 1941, the *Southampton* was attacked by a flight of Ju 87 Stukas (see p. W114). The dive-bombers mortally wounded the cruiser and it had to be scuttled, with a loss of 81 hands.

The four main turrets mount three 6" naval guns each; they traverse at 5° per second, 0.8° per second with a five-man team using the manual cranks. The four secondary turrets each have dual 4" naval guns and rotate at 7° per second, or three men can manhandle one at 1.5° per second. The AA gun mounts are manually traversed by a two-man team at 11° per second.

The *Southampton* burns 3,360 gallons of fuel oil per hour at routine usage. Only 642,000 gallons of fuel oil is typically carried. A full load of ammo and provisions and a typical load of fuel oil costs \$423,500. Crew size averages 750.

HMS Southampton

Subassemblies: Medium Cruiser chassis +10, waterproofed Large Ship superstructure +7, four waterproofed limited-rotation Large Secondary turrets 1-4 +4, four waterproofed limited-rotation Large TD turrets 5-8 +4, four full-rotation Large Weapon open mounts 1-4 +2.

Powertrain: four 14,000-kW steam turbines with four 14,000-kW screws and 675,000-gallon standard fuel tanks. Also 4,000 gallons of aviation gas for seaplanes.

Occ: See below.

Cargo: See below.

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/400	4/400	4/400	4/165	4/200
Sup:	4/330	4/330	4/330	4/165	-
Bridge:*	0/+100	0/+100	0/+100	0/+100	0/+100
Tur 1-4:	4/205	4/85	4/85	4/120	-
Tur 5-8:	4/80	4/60	4/60	4/60	-

* Armored stations for five crew members.



Weaponry

12×150mm Medium DP Guns/BL Mk XXIII [Tur 1-4:F] (200).*
 8×105mm Medium DP Guns/BL Mk XVI [Tur 5-8:F] (250).**
 8×40mm Med. Gr. ACs/Vickers Mk VIII [OM 1-4:F] (2,700).**
 6×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Body:F] (2 Mk VIII or Mk IX).

Ammunition listed per weapon.

* Each turret: three links fire alternating pairs, or all at once.

** Each turret or open mount has linked pairs.

Equipment

Body: 16,000-VSP bilge; 1,000-VSP cargo hold; 30 bilge pumps; 20 fire extinguishers; two 20-ton cranes; two 5-ton external cradles; five searchlights; 750 bunks; 30 cabins; 30 environmental control; two halls; two surgeries; two workshops; 14,000 man-days of provisions; 50 CSs, two equipped with backup driver controls.
Sup: Autopilot; launch catapult; 500-VSP hangar bay; five fire extinguishers; two very large radio transmitters; two very large radio receivers; large radio direction finder; two navigation instruments; sound detector; four fire-direction centers; 25 CSs, with five grouped as bridge; two cabins; luxury cabin; two environmental control.
Tur 1-4: 24-kw traversing gears; 3 CS for gun crews each.
Tur 5-8: 12-kW traversing gears; universal mounts; CS for gunner each. **OM 1-4:** Universal mounts.

Statistics

Size: 558'×62'×48' **Payload:** 2,400 tons **Lwt:** 12.5K tons
Volume: 167K **Maint:** 3.4 hours **Cost:** \$3.5M

HT: 8. **HPs:** 312K **Body,** 8,700 **Superstructure,** 900 each **Tur 1-4,** 450 each **Tur 5-8,** 120 each **OM 1-4.**

wSpeed: 37 **wAccel:** 0.7 **wDecel:** 0.1 (0.45) **wMR:** 0.02 **wSR:** 5
Draft 18'. **Flotation Rating:** 14,760 tons.

Design Notes

Design wSpeed 32 was increased to historical and design Draft 25' was decreased to historical. The payload assumes 50 tons of spotter planes, life rafts, spare parts, etc. are carried.

Southampton-class cruisers usually carried three seaplanes; model varied from cruiser to cruiser and year to year. See p. 39 for more information about the Fleet Air Arm.

As usual with large ships, the design has leftover volume dedicated to improving crew and access space.

Variants

Later ships in the class gained larger engines, more AA guns, and considerable weight. Most removed the seaplanes and some had one of the main turrets removed.

G-CLASS DESTROYER

The workhorses of any navy, destroyers are small warships that carry, for all practical purposes, no armor. They rely on oversized engines and armament to defend themselves. In turn, maritime nations such as the United Kingdom relied upon destroyers to see their all-important cargo ships safely home.

The naval-limitations treaties of the prewar years limited destroyers to no more than 1,850 tons (with the caveat that ships routinely are defined in 2,240-lb. long tons, which would make this limit 2,072 tons under the 2,000-lb. ton used here). Additionally, the Royal Navy required that all their destroyers carry torpedo tubes – giving them one-shot-kill potential against the largest targets – to be worthy of the name.

The Admiralty ordered its destroyers in lettered classes, with each ship's name beginning with that letter. Thus, for instance, the C-class destroyers included *HMS Cavendish* and *Childers*, among others. The G class was little different from the destroyers that came before it during Britain's 1930s rearmament, except that the Admiralty briefly toyed with the idea of increasing the standard loadout of four torpedo tubes both fore and aft to five in each direction. As it was, only *HMS Glowworm*, launched on July 22, 1935, received the upgrade.

Glowworm's prewar career included Mediterranean escorts during the Spanish Civil War and the Munich Crisis, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Gerard Roope, a competent and well-liked officer. His crew often called him "Old 'Ardover" due to his propensity for sudden course changes. During this period, both ship and captain came under a cloud. In May 1939, *Glowworm* struck a fellow G class, *HMS Grenade*. After the war began, in February 1940, the destroyer collided with yet another ship, the Swedish *Rex*. The crew began favoring the moniker "Rammer Roope," instead.

Little did they know. On the night of April 7, 1940, in heavy seas, a sailor fell overboard and *Glowworm* became separated from its flotilla while searching for him. The next morning, the ship encountered a German destroyer. The *Glowworm* promptly placed a 4.7" shell through its bridge, and gave chase when the Kriegsmarine ship fled into the fog.

Behind the fog waited the cruiser *Admiral Hipper* and its escorts. The *Glowworm* fired its torpedos, to no effect, as the cruiser's 8" shells began pounding the little warship into pieces. Roope turned *Glowworm* around and laid a smoke screen, but as the destroyer retreated it became clear that it was taking on water and too greatly reduced in speed to escape. His torpedos used up, Roope ordered his vessel back around.

As the *Hipper* charged through the smoke screen, instead of a fleeing victim it encountered an oncoming combatant. The cruiser opened up with all guns, but *Glowworm* crashed into the German ship's side and inflicted a crippling wound (p. 12). The collision flipped the destroyer and it sank quickly, taking Roope among the 117 hands lost.

The turrets mount a 4.7" gun each; they traverse at 10° per second, or 0.7° with four men cranking manually. The gunners manually rotate the four twin-.50 AA mounts at 24° per second.

The *Glowworm* burns 1,520 gallons of fuel oil per hour at routine usage. Only 145,000 gallons were typically carried. Fitting out with that amount of fuel, plus ammo and provisions, costs \$121,500. The crew complement was 145.

HMS Glowworm

Subassemblies: Light Destroyer chassis +8; waterproofed Large Conning superstructure 1 +5; four waterproofed limited-rotation Medium TD turrets with mild slope +3; four full-rotation Small Weapon open mounts +0; two Medium Secondary superstructures 2-3 +4.

Powertrain: two 12,681-kW steam turbines with two 12,681-kW screws; 154,000-gallon standard fuel tanks.

Occ: 30 CS Body, 5 Sup 1, see below. **Cargo:** See below.

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/40	4/60	4/40	4/35	4/35
Sup 1:	4/60	4/60	4/60	4/35	–
Bridge:*	0/+50	0/+50	0/+50	0/+50	0/+50
Tur 1-4:	5/105	4/70	4/70	4/70	–

* Armored stations for five crew members.

Weaponry

4×120mm Medium DP Guns/QF Mk IX [Tur 1-4:F] (250 each).

8×Long Ground HMG/Vickers Mk III [OM 1-4:F] (2,500 each).

10×533mm Torpedo Tubes [Sup 2-3:F, B] (Mk VIII or Mk IX).

Equipment

Body: 280-VSP bilge; 400-VSP cargo; five bilge pumps; five fire extinguishers; two 5-ton external cradles; five searchlights; 50 bunks; five cabins; six environmental control; hall; surgery; workshop. **Sup 1:** Autopilot; fire extinguisher; very large radio transmitter and receiver; navigation instruments; sound detector; luxury cabin. **Tur 1-4:** 12-kW traversing gear; 2 CS each. **OM 1-4:** Universal mounts.

Statistics

Size: 323'×33'×18' **Payload:** 545 tons **Lwt:** 1,506 tons

Volume 20,408 **Maint:** 8.2 hours **Price:** \$596,000

HT: 10. **HPs:** 75,000 **Body,** 1,500 **Sup 1,** 360 each **Tur,** 45 each **OM,** 750 each **Sup 2-3.**

wSpeed: 41 **wAccel:** 2.5 **wDecel:** 0.3 (1.5) **wMR:** 0.05 **wSR:** 4 **Draft** 10'. Flotation Rating 1,800 tons.

Design Notes

The design wSpeed 39 was increased to the historical and design Draft 12.5' decreased to the historical.

The large cargo hold is filled with 40 WWI-style Vickers H Mk II mines for deployment. These weigh 0.36 tons and require a 0.5-ton sinker each. Weight, but not cost, is included under payload. Should one detonate, it will do 6d×640 damage.

With its huge engines, fuel tanks, and mine stores, the ship is very cramped. In fact, access space for the turbines is reduced to the standard for ground vehicles (see p. W128). This will create serious difficulties if major repairs must be attempted at sea.

Variants

Other G-class destroyers only carried eight torpedos, and eventually the four aft tubes were usually replaced with a 3" gun mount. Minelaying stores almost always gave way to depth charges and various throwing devices later in the war.

FAIRMILE MOTOR LAUNCH

In the Great War, the United Kingdom had gotten good usage from several patrol boats purchased from the United States, even if the U.S.-built auxiliaries had proven less than ideal for the often choppy waters of the English Channel. As WWII began, Fairmile proposed to build some more appropriate hulls and resurrect the “mosquito fleet” zipping about the shores of the island kingdom and challenging all comers.

The boats debuted in early 1940, fitted as sub chasers to meet the primary perceived threat of the day. Their hulls proved to have their own shortcomings – they attempted to bull through waves best negotiated with more style – so modifications began on the production line. Meanwhile, with the fall of France, the original sub chasers were reconfigured as minelayers – perceived threats had changed drastically – and the next boats carried deck guns to sink barges and troop transports.

The Fairmiles themselves did some spot service as troop transports. Fifteen were fitted with extra fuel tanks and standing armor topside to deliver commandos to the St. Naziere raid (see pp. W:HS4-5). With the plating primarily intended to protect the troops, the add-on fuel tanks proved vulnerable to small-arms fire. Only seven boats got away from the raid site, and two of those sank on the return voyage. Regardless, the Special Air Service and Special Operations Executive continued to use the stealthy crafts to deliver small commando teams or agents onto hostile shores. The boats also did service as minesweepers, air-sea rescue craft, ambulances, and in other roles. They also shipped off to far duties in Indian, African, and Mediterranean waters on their own, rather than as cargo in a transport.

As with the U.S. PT boat fleet, the Fairmile went to war as a particularly expendable asset. In combat, they were intended to strike hard and first; getting back out in one piece was something of a secondary objective. More than 75 Fairmiles were sunk or damaged beyond repair during the war.

Depending on armament and mission, a Fairmile crew generally ranged from 12 to 16 men. This vessel burns 40 gallons of gasoline per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel, ammunition, and provisions costs \$19,300.

Fairmile Type B Motor Launch

Subassemblies: Medium Cutter chassis +6; waterproofed Small TD superstructure with mild slope [Body:T] +3; full-rotation Small Weapon open mount [OM 1 Body:T] +0; two full-rotation Mini OMs [OMs 2-3 Body:T] +0.

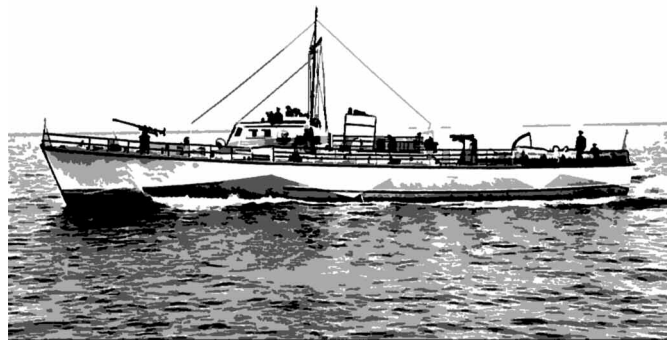
Powertrain: 2x448-kW standard gas (petrol) engines with 2x448-kW screws and 2,305-gallon standard fuel tanks; 12,000-kWs batteries.

Occ: 4 CS Sup and see below. **Cargo:** 100 Body, 10.5 Sup.

ARMOR	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	4/15W	4/15W	4/15W	4/15W	4/15W
Sup:	5/23	4/15	4/15	4/15	–
OM 1:	4/25	–	–	–	–

Weaponry

3-Lbr. Vickers QF Mk I/47mm Short TG [OM 1:F] (120).
2xGround LMG/Lewis Mk IIS [OMs 2-3:F] (5,000 each).
12xDepth Charges [Body:T].



Equipment

Body: 143 bilge; two bilge pumps; 16 bunks; 100 cargo; five fire extinguishers; 4.5 tons of hardpoints (for depth charges) [T]; 280 man-days of provisions; 1-mile active sonar; five smoke dischargers [T, facing B]. **Sup:** Autopilot; navigation instruments; two medium radio transmitters and receivers; searchlight.

Statistics

Size: 112'x18'x37' **Payload:** 20.3 tons. **Lwt:** 80 tons
Volume: 1,079 **Maint:** 51.2 hours **Cost:** \$15,250

HT: 12. **HPs:** 5,400 **Body,** 285 **Sup,** 45 **OM 1,** 30 **each OMs 2-3.**

wSpeed: 23 **wAccel:** 1.7 **wDecel:** 0.3 (1.2) **wMR:** 0.05 **wSR:** 3
Draft 4'9". **Flotation Rating** 96 tons.

Design Notes

Design wSpeed of 25 has been reduced to the historical, while the design weight has been increased 20%. The above payload assumes that the Fairmile is carrying 5 tons of cargo, rafts, and various other miscellaneous equipment either on deck or in its cargo areas. Seaworthiness will begin to suffer as more cargo weight is brought aboard.

The boat does not really have a relatively spacious cargo hold – much less deck hatches large enough to just drop in a single 100-VSP item – but in a pinch the flip-up bunks could be stored away and a surprisingly large area opened up in the forward accommodations. Actually filling this with anything like 100 VSPs of cargo would require the crew to find alternate places to sleep, but that would still count as Bunk space, so in the end both capacities are available at once.

The powerful fire-extinguisher system was fitted because the Admiralty realized gas engines were less than ideal in a combat naval vessel. They had a reputation as life-savers.

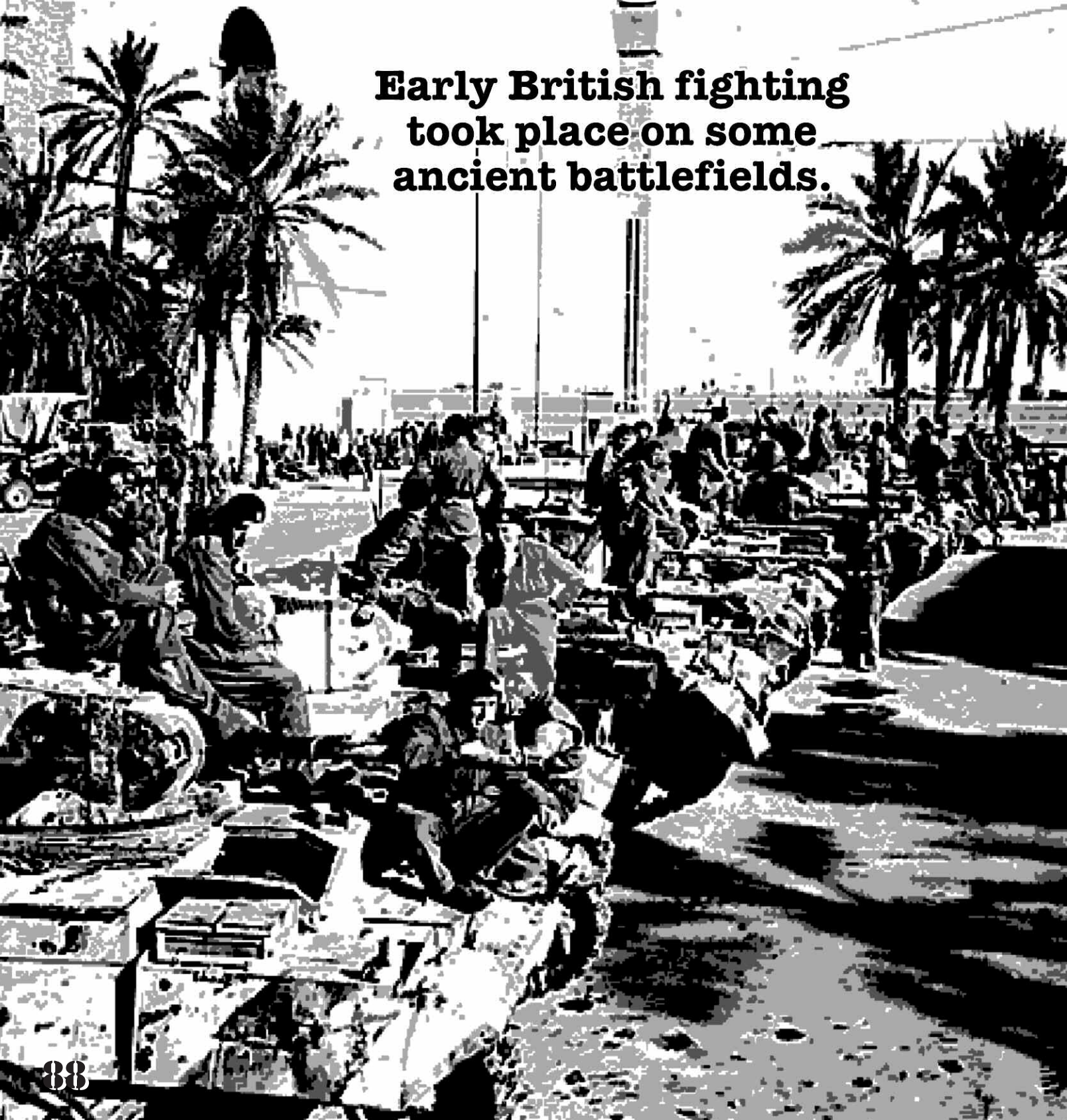
Variants

The considerably lighter (65-ton) Fairmile A and C boats employed three gas engines delivering 1,342 kW but still only managed 25 mph (22 knots). The massive Fairmile D, at 101 tons, featured four gas engines delivering 3,728 kW for a speed of 33 mph (29 knots).

All of these hulls could fit a variety of weaponry – not to mention auxiliary equipment such as radar sets, much larger smokescreen gear, etc. – and indeed it would be rare to find a boat with nothing but the “standard” loadout aboard. Whether or not officially added for a mission, or scrounged up and bolted on by the crew, additional armaments could include 20mm AA cannons, 533mm torpedo tubes, and more.

5. THE AFRICAN CAMPAIGNS

Early British fighting took place on some ancient battlefields.



While the British fought all over the globe, they dominated no theater for the Allies more than the stretch of southern Mediterranean coast across the top of Africa and through into the Middle East. From the well-publicized struggles

against Rommel's Afrika Korps in Libya and Egypt to the far less well-known fighting in Iran and Iraq, this chapter provides additional detail for setting adventures in these campaigns where the land itself could be a formidable foe.

NORTH AFRICA

The desert is a tactician's paradise and a quartermaster's hell.
— Erwin Rommel

The primary battles of the North African campaign were fought in the Western Desert (including both Egypt and Libya) from El Alamein in the east to El Agheila in the west. The Mediterranean coast delineated the northern edge, and the Jarabub and Siwa oases provided occasional refuge some 150 miles to the south. A 500' escarpment, accessible only through a handful of passes, marked the northern coast, making such passes key tactical points in any battle.

A single road – called the Coast Road by the Allies – ran the length of the coastal strip. The Trigh el Abd, the Trigh Capuzzo (both little more than half-marked dirt tracks), and a handful of smaller routes snaked through the rest of the region. But most of the Libyan plateau was a blank expanse of treacherous rock and featureless sand. Most vehicles could traverse the entire region with some difficulty, but finding one's way was often nearly impossible.

Landmarks were few and far between, and orienteering was done as if at sea – with compass and sextant. Even the so-called roads that snaked along the northern coast – including the Coast Road itself – were often lost along the flat stretches of rock and sand. Empty steel fuel barrels were painted white to mark the way in these vast wastes.

Nature presented its own challenges. Howling winds, blinding sandstorms, deadly heat, freezing cold, poisonous scorpions and vipers, and clouds of biting insects made life in the desert miserable. Machines racing across the hard, rocky surface were often fortunate to arrive in one piece; broken treads, snapped axles, destroyed springs, and flat tires were commonplace. Italian vehicles, with their solid tires, suffered horrible losses due to desert abuse alone. Aircraft were vulnerable to sand in their engines and chassis, leading to an increased breakdown chance, as well. Vehicles operating in this region have their maintenance interval (see p. W144) halved.

DESERT WARFARE

War in the desert was unlike any other fighting during WWII. The vast, open regions provided little in the way of cover and concealment. The occasional dry creek bed provided some cover for men and the more nimble machines, but for the most part infantry stood out almost as well as armor.

It also was a land almost devoid of civilians, leaving the generals to conduct their campaigns with almost no political considerations of any real significance. They moved their units around the region much as in a giant, deadly game of chess. This nearly "pure" military environment would rapidly come to prove the merit, or folly, of each side's tactics and equipment. Most of all, it would test their chains of supply to their limits, and well beyond.



LIFE IN THE DESERT

Successful soldiers respected the desert and worked with it, not against it. The desert changed men; men did not change the desert. Desert colors were adapted for vehicle camouflage, sand was used to scrub oil and sweat from clothes, and slit trenches offered warmth on cold nights.

During the spring months, winds up to 90 mph could do serious damage to anyone caught without shelter. Anyone exposed to the *khamsin* (called *scirocco* by Europeans) will take 1d-3 damage even *with* a successful Survival roll; failure will result in a full 1d of damage. Mechanical equipment (including guns and vehicles) was also susceptible to damage; see p. CII6.

Unlike the war in Europe, here there was no such thing as living off the land. Armies had to carry everything they needed, including water. Daily water rations were generally less than 1 gallon of water per man; that gallon had to be stretched not only for drinking, but for cooking, bathing, shaving, and washing clothes as well. A war correspondent once remarked, "The great problem in the mornings was to decide whether to make tea with the shaving water or to shave with the tea." Any leftover water was poured into vehicle radiators.

Armies along the coast could distill salt water from the Mediterranean. Though it functioned as a coolant and for cleaning, its taste was less than satisfactory. The British boiled it for tea; when milk was added, it curdled and sank to the bottom.

Supply Lines

Desert armies consumed vast quantities of food, water, and oil. Keeping vehicles moving and hundreds of thousands of men fed would have been a daunting task anywhere. But the war in North Africa – for both sides – was a long way from the home front. Supplies were often delayed, interrupted en route, or stalled in transport across the vast distances of the desert.

Fast-moving armies often outran their supply lines and ended up making advances with armor running on little more than fumes. Other advances simply halted while the armies waited for fuel oil or water to arrive.

The tenuous supply link can be the source of many adventures. PCs may be sent on skirmishes and raids to disrupt the enemy's lines, or assigned to protect convoys of precious supplies being delivered to their own commanders. Air and naval campaigns can be built around attempts to protect or disrupt supply lines along the coast.

Naval Support

Coastal war along the North African coast was mainly a matter of controlling supply and communication lines rather than one of amphibious warfare and invasions. Not until the Operation Torch landings late in 1942 (p. 105) did either side have enough superiority for large-scale assaults from the sea.

For most of the desert war, neither side had air superiority, thus limiting opportunities for unhindered naval bombardments and amphibious warfare. Most amphibious operations were limited to deploying small recon and commando-like groups behind the constantly moving front lines.

With a few key exceptions, the desert fighting was about destroying enemy units rather than seizing and holding key real estate. Therefore, opportunities to navally bombard

enemy troops were rare; most of them could simply move inland and out of range. Naval artillery was inflicted on troops at Benghazi, Tobruk, and other key sites, but ships most often served in a supply or interdiction capacity.

During the siege of Tobruk (pp. 96-97), numerous British vessels were lost either protecting or attempting to resupply the port. Often these losses came in violent close-range night actions against Italian naval forces. In one instance, Italian forces used makeshift lights to lure a British captain toward shore, where he ran aground. Often the easiest way for a captain to navigate to Tobruk was to steer for the glow caused by whatever bombardment was going on that night.

The North African coastal war may have been unglamorous, but it was always dangerous and often critical.

BATTLE FOR CYRENAICA



The North African campaign was a long time in the making. Italy's Benito Mussolini had ordered the invasion in June 1940, but Governor General Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, chosen by Mussolini to lead the attack, had dragged his heels for months (see pp. W:GL5, 8). From his balcony in Rome, Mussolini viewed North Africa as a plum ripe for picking. Egypt, with her fertile Nile delta, the strategic value of the Suez Canal, the great cities of Cairo and Alexandria – all these beckoned the *Duce*, but Graziani demurred.

Cautious by nature, Graziani had already faced the British Western Desert Force more than once. Only days after Italy entered the war, the 11th Hussars had swept along the Egyptian-Libyan border, seizing forts and ambushing Italian patrols. On June 14, the 7th Hussars captured Fort Capuzzo while the 11th moved on Fort Maddalena. Two days later, an Italian scouting force was ambushed by the 7th and 11th; the Italians lost 17 tanks, a field artillery battery, and more than 100 men; the Hussars suffered no casualties. Such skirmishes continued throughout the summer, only heightening Graziani's trepidation.

Although the Italians outnumbered the Allies (250,000 Italians vs. 36,000 British), Graziani knew that his army was lacking in many of the essentials of desert warfare. Tanks, antitank guns, cargo trucks, and other vehicles were all in short supply. Graziani continued to put off the invasion, using

Il Duce's own orders as an excuse. Mussolini had written: "As soon as the first German soldier sets foot on the British Isles, march into Egypt and conquer it!" Since Operation Sealion had yet to transport a single German soldier to Britain, Graziani had not ordered an Italian soldier into Egypt.

Mussolini was less than pleased. By September, Graziani had lost 3,500 men and Mussolini had lost his patience. On September 13, 1940, at Mussolini's behest, Graziani finally sent the 10th Army rolling into Egypt. The long-delayed North African campaign had begun.

The Italian 10th Army

The Italian 10th Army, under General Italo Gariboldi, consisted of two infantry divisions (1st and 2nd Libyan), two semi-motorized infantry divisions (*Marmarica* and *Cirene*), and a fully motorized Blackshirt division (*23 Marzo*). Besides these five divisions, the army fielded smaller attached units including the *Babini Group* (Libyan Tank Command) and the *Raggruppamento Maletti* with its two Libyan motorized regiments, camel battalion, and artillery group. Motorized units such as the Blackshirts and the Libyan regiments did not "own" their trucks; Italian transports were held at a higher level and farmed out as needed, which often meant stripping them from one unit in order to transport another.

Despite fielding such a large force, the army was woefully short on armor. The total armor complement included the *Marmarica* and *Cirene's* 62nd and 63rd Light Tank Battalions (with a total of about 90 L3/35 light tanks), the Libyan infantry's 9th Tank Battalion (40 L3/35s), the *Babini Group* (74 L3/35s and 42 M11/39 medium tanks), and the 4th Tank Regiment (33 M11/39s). The Italian tanks were not only too few but too puny. The L3/35 (see p. W:GL31) carried 8mm machine guns; the M11/39 mounted a heavier 37mm gun.



The *Regia Aeronautica* had some 550 planes positioned in Libya. Of these, about 190 were non-operational, with planes ranging from barely flyable to barely salvageable. Another 70 were aged planes, useful only for training and rear-area operations. So about 290 planes were truly available for the invasion. This included about 140 bombers (mostly SM79s and SM81s), 90 fighters (mostly CR32 and CR42 biplanes; see p. W:GL34), and 60 attack and recon aircraft (including a mix of Ba65s, Ca309s, Ca310s, and Ro41s).

See *GURPS WWII: Grim Legions* for more information on Italian forces.

The Western Desert Force

The Western Desert Force, later renamed British 13th Corps, fell under the command of Lieutenant General R.N. O'Connor, who himself answered to Commander in Chief Archibald Wavell. It was an experienced desert fighting force that had been harassing the Italians for months. The WDF was small, but well equipped and seasoned, making the troops ideal for guerrilla-like raids and quick strikes at enemy weak points. It consisted of the 4th Indian Division, the British Infantry Brigade (attached to the 4th Indian), Selby Force, the 6th Australian Division (which would not participate in the battle at Sidi Barrani, below), and the 7th Armored Division.

The 4th Indian started the campaign with two infantry brigades, the 5th and 11th Indian. It would be reassigned to East Africa after the battle at Sidi Barrani.

The 16th British Infantry Brigade was attached to the 4th initially, but switched to the 6th Australian when the 4th Indian was relocated. The 16th operated with an attached battalion of motorized Free French Marines during the fighting.

Selby Force was a mixed unit that had been part of a garrison at Mersa Matruh. It consisted of a machine-gun company, an infantry battalion, and some attached artillery with a total of about 1,750 men.

The 6th Australian, an elite force of ANZACs, did not participate in the initial fighting; they first saw action at Bardia (p. 92) when they replaced the 4th Indian.

The focal point of the WDF operations in the desert was the 7th Armored Division. An experienced, highly mobile force, the 7th had about 150 tanks (Cruiser A9s and A10s, Matildas, and Light Tank Mk VIs; see Chapter 4) and another 150 mixed vehicles (mostly armored cars and Bren Carriers). Support troops included several units of horse artillery (the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 106th Royal) with a total of about 80 25-pounder guns (p. 69).

The insignia for the 7th Armored was the red silhouette of a jerboa (a small desert rodent), which would come to earn them the nickname "Desert Rats." (Although the name is often applied to anyone that fought in the desert war, it is most appropriately applied strictly to the 7th Armored.)

The WDF had little in the way of air cover available to them, but Wavell ordered planes brought in from as far away as Sudan and Aden. The British took the field with only 48 fighters (mostly Gladiators and Hurricanes) and 116 bombers (Blenheims, Swordfish, and Wellingtons) – roughly half the number of planes flown by the Italians. See p. 38 for more information on the Western Desert Air Force.

THE ITALIAN INVASION

The Italian 10th Army crossed the Libya-Egypt border on September 13. Motorcycles led the massive army, followed by tanks, armored cars, trucks, and marching columns of men. Motorized and transportable infantry followed in swarms of trucks, and lines of sun-helmeted Italian infantry stretched out of view in the vast desert. Graziani's reluctance to invade seemed unfounded as the Italians advanced nearly unhindered by British opposition. A British rearguard (part of the 7th Armored) shelled the invaders before retreating, but no attempt was made to seriously deter the Italians.

Wavell hoped to force the Italians to stretch themselves thin and extend their supply line, making it vulnerable to naval and air attacks from the Mediterranean. He had ordered the British army to pull back to the ancient sponge-fishing village of Mersa Matruh, the terminus of a narrow-gauge British railway that would ensure the Brits stayed in supply, while forcing the Italians to overextend.

Graziani, however, chose to halt at the village of Sidi Barrani, only 60 miles from the Egyptian border. Sidi Barrani was no more than a small collection of mud huts, and a single mosque. Nevertheless, Italian media invented reports of the great advance, claiming, "Thanks to the skill of the Italian engineers, the tramcars are again running in Sidi Barrani!"

Graziani planned on using Sidi Barrani as a forward base of operations, bringing up supplies (especially precious water and fuel) and striking deeper into Egypt in the future. Enlisted accommodations were dismal, and the average soldier was disgruntled with both the advance and the halt. Officers were content and confident; despite the dismal conditions, they slept on sheets, ate the best food, and were determined to take Egypt as a prize for their leader.

The weeks passed. Graziani made preparations in Sidi Barrani and Wavell consolidated his forces at Mersa Matruh. At the Brenner Pass Conference in October, Hitler and Mussolini discussed sending German aid to North Africa. Mussolini was adamant that Italy could handle the desert alone, though German panzers would be welcome for the final leg of the assault, an advance from Mersa Matruh to Alexandria.

Despite *Il Duce's* prodding, Graziani continued to stay put. He'd requested three motorized battalions, some additional armor, and water trucks, but no reinforcements were arriving. By December, the Italians still had not moved. General Wavell, however, felt ready to oust them from Egypt.

OPERATION COMPASS

Graziani had deployed the 10th Army around Sidi Barrani in a less-than-ideal configuration. The Libyan divisions were encamped along the coast, while *Maletti Group* had entrenched at Nibeiwa, some 15 miles away. With two Libyan native divisions along the coast, and the 4th Blackshirt Division (*23 Marzo*) at the west (rear) of town, Graziani had left an undefended hole (the Enba Gap) in his defenses. Italian forts and camps were scattered north and south, too far apart for mutual support. Wavell and O'Connor planned a simple, straightforward raid, pushing the 7th Armored and the 4th Indian straight up the middle.

The British staff planners had detailed photo mosaics of the defenses, thanks to reconnaissance flights of the 208 Squadron, using Lysanders and Hurricanes. Practice exercises began in earnest, using mockups of Italian camps; soldiers were forbidden any passes for leave, so as to keep the entire operation quiet.

On December 6, O'Connor's forces moved out, traveling west along a 2,000-yard front. They moved day and night – sometimes at a crawl due to the horrible terrain – stopping to pick up caches of supply buried ahead of time by early scout teams. The true nature of the operation had been kept secret, even from most of O'Connor's men; most believed they were on another training exercise.

By December 9, using the cover of RAF attacks to hide the noise, British ground forces had slipped between the Italian camps. At 7 a.m., British artillery began pounding the Italians at Nibeiva. Matildas soon rolled into the camp, followed by the bayonet-wielding Rajputana Rifles and bagpipe-skirling Cameroon Highlanders. Nibeiva fell in less than two hours, with some 2,000 Italian soldiers taken prisoner.

O'Connor had achieved total surprise, splitting the Italian defenders in two. That afternoon, the 7th Armored roared northward, taking one Italian camp after another in quick blitzkrieg fashion. By the following day, Italian prisoners were being taken faster than they could be counted. At Sidi Barrani, a British officer with the Coldstream Guards reported guarding “five acres of officers and 200 acres of other ranks.” Lines of prisoners marched eastward in double columns that stretched from one horizon to the other.

The small British air force performed admirably, attaining air superiority within days. The British Gladiator vs. Italian CR42 duels were some of the last biplane dogfights in history, pitting two of the best biplanes in the world against one another. Both sides gave an excellent showing, but the Italian biplanes became prey when Hurricanes appeared in the sky.

By December 10, the Blackshirts and 1st Libyans were surrounded. Sidi Barrani was captured at 4 p.m. that afternoon, but only after a pitched battle in a howling sandstorm. Thanks to O'Connor's brilliant planning (and Graziani's less-than-brilliant defense), by December 12, Italy had been driven out of Egypt. O'Connor had taken 38,000 prisoners – more than the number of soldiers Britain had started with – and captured more than 240 artillery guns and 70 tanks.

Knowing the battle was going wildly in his favor, O'Connor pushed the attack. He set his sights on the port city of Solum (where he could be supplied by the Royal Navy) and on Fort Capuzzo, the white brick fortress guarding the road into Libya. Graziani knew he could not hold either position, so he ordered his forces to retreat to Bardia. By December 20, an exhausted 7th Armored Division had captured both cities.

Italian forces, under the command of General Annibale “Electric Whiskers” Bergonzoli (so-called for his bristling red beard that reputedly gave off sparks), holed up in the port fortress of Bardia and waited for the inevitable British attack.



FROM BARDIA TO BENGHAZI

If you lika da spaghetti, KEEP GOING! Next stop, TOBRUK – 27 kms.

– Hand-painted British sign on the rout from Bardia to Tobruk, January 1941

Bergonzoli had established a respectable defense at Bardia. He'd gathered four full divisions, miscellaneous border and fortress troops, and countless stragglers from other units. The city itself sat some 350' above a circular harbor. It boasted a 12' antitank ditch, concrete blockhouses, steel-reinforced gun emplacements, minefields, and barbed wire. Bergonzoli had managed to gather 40,000 men, more than 400 artillery pieces, and a full brigade of M11/39 tanks.

While Bergonzoli prepared his defenses, O'Connor's Western Desert Force underwent some changes. It was renamed 13th Corps on January 1, 1941, and Wavell ordered the 4th Indian to Sudan. The 6th Australian was moved toward Barida in their stead. Several squadrons of aircraft had been destroyed or relocated (to Greece, to fight the Germans), and the 7th Armored had dropped to 108 Light Mk VI and 59 mixed Cruiser tanks, most of which were well beyond their suggested maintenance intervals, particularly for their treads.

Though O'Connor faced the same dire problems as all desert commanders in keeping his men supplied with food, water, fuel, and ammunition, the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) lightened his load with heroic – if unglamorous – service to the fighting units. RASC men would receive numerous mentions in dispatches and medals.

O'Connor pressed onward. On January 2, the Royal Navy (including Cunningham's flagship, *HMS Warspite*) began shelling Bardia from the Mediterranean, pounding Italian fortifications for nearly 24 hours. Wellington bombers and British artillery added to the attack.

At 7:30 the following morning, using a massive artillery barrage as cover, the 16th and 17th Brigades of 6th Australian Division assaulted the western and southwestern defenses. They used wire cutters (which arrived only the night before) and bangalore torpedoes to destroy the barbed wire, followed by machine guns and grenades to assault Italian entrenchments. The Australians carried heavy packs and wore a light

leather jerkin, which the Italians thought was body armor. By midday, they had driven a wedge into the Italian defenses that was 12,000 yards wide and 3,000 yards deep.

British tanks followed the Australian infantry. Twenty-two heavy Matilda tanks confronted a dozen Italian M13/40s (see p. W:GL32), backed by a few L3 light tanks and a handful of antitank guns, but as in previous confrontations the Matildas' heavy armor was almost invulnerable to the light Italian shells.

On January 4, an entire section of the escarpment that supported the town collapsed and roared into the sea, taking several gun emplacements with it. Bergonzoli, sensing defeat, slipped out of the city dressed as an Italian private, passing close enough to British camps to smell their food. Some Italian gunners fought valiantly, but the Australians had mobility and armored support. By evening, the 16th Brigade was exhausted; the 17th was scattered. The 19th Brigade, backed up by the Northland Fusiliers, moved in and finished the operation.

The battle was over by the morning of the 5th. Again, British forces were overwhelmed by the number of POWs. The British claimed 45,000 captured; the Italians said 38,000. (Many prisoners were "captured" more than once in the post-battle confusion.) The 13th Corps had captured more than 100 tanks (mostly L3 tankettes), 400 Italian guns, and 700 trucks, which they quickly added to their own inventory. Bergonzoli fled once again, pulling back to the deep-water port of Tobruk.

The Italians at Tobruk

Graziani fell into a depression, pleading for Luftwaffe and armor support. Hitler did not want to become entangled in the North African campaign, but chose to support his ally nonetheless. The 10th *Fliegerkorps* was dispatched to Sicily, and Hitler began discussions with Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and General Rommel. German armor – the soon-to-be-formed *Afrika Korps* – was slated for a mid-February intervention.

Meanwhile, O'Connor ordered the 7th Armored to pursue the fleeing Italians, cutting off their retreat. The 13th Corps was exhausted and short on supply. Tanks had thrown treads; trucks had been battered to pieces. The Australian Divisional Cavalry had been reinforced with captured M13 tanks (painted with a white kangaroo symbol to prevent friendly fire), and Australian troops had looted the Italian base for food, water, boots, and other supplies (they ignored the antiquated Italian weapons).

By January 18, the Australians had punched through a weak Italian rear guard and reached Tobruk. Bergonzoli had only 25,000 men, 45 light tanks, 20 medium tanks, and 200 guns. The city's 30-mile perimeter of defenses (antitank ditches, mines, strongpoints, and two fortresses) was strengthened with more barbed wire and booby-traps. Guns from the Italian cruiser *San Giorgio* (grounded in the harbor after being bombed by the RAF) bolstered the fort's defenses as well.

Severe sandstorms delayed the attack for three more days, but on the morning of the 21st the 16th Australian Brigade began their assault. The 17th followed up, with the 19th held in reserve to exploit openings created by the first two brigades. Once again, the ANZACs performed admirably and British Matilda tanks proved unstoppable. By noon, British forces had overrun Fort Pilastrino and Fort Solaro (purported to be key defense forts, but which the Australian attackers found seriously lacking in actual defenses).

By the end of the day, it was clear the battle was nearly finished. A black pall hung over the fortress, fed by raging fuel and ammunition fires set by fleeing Italians. Thousands of prisoners had already been rounded up, and more were streaming toward British lines. Behind the Australian front, a group of 8,000 POWs lit fires to keep warm. That night, Italian SM79s dropped bombs on the prisoners, believing the fires belonged to Australian troops; hundred of Italians were killed.

The following morning, the Australians delivered the final blow, attacking along a wide front. Italians surrendered in droves, and by evening British Very flares indicated that Tobruk had fallen. An Australian soldier replaced the fort's red, green, and white Italian flag with a Digger's hat. Victorious Australian soldiers gorged themselves on tinned Italian food, lit their cigarettes with Italian money, and paraded through the streets wearing captured Italian swords and medals. Bergonzoli had escaped – again – and the Australians vowed to catch up to him, to prove once and for all whether or not his beard truly emitted sparks.

As in Bardia, the 13th Corps had captured a veritable mountain of troops and supplies: some 20,000 POWs, 20 tanks, 200 guns, 200 trucks, as well as the valuable port, airfield, and seawater distilleries.

WHY DID THEY LOSE?

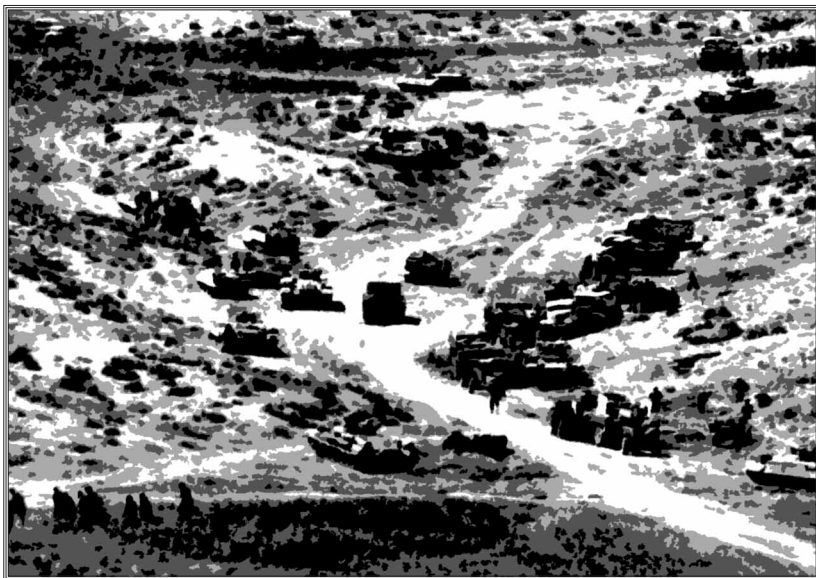
Graziani's 10th Army was not only defeated, but solidly *trowned* by the numerically inferior British 13th Corps – much as Graziani had predicted.

As he knew, the Italian army was ponderously slow and unable to react to British mobility, especially as demonstrated by the 7th Armored. The same *blitzkrieg* tactics that Germany had used in France proved the undoing of the Italians in North Africa. Italy's chain of command was positively Byzantine by British standards, and a lack of radios (only 1 out of 30 tanks had a wireless) hampered their ability to respond even more.

To make matters worse, Italy was equipped with antiquated weapons and vehicles. The Italian tanks were frequently taken out by the highly criticized British Boys antitank rifles (see p. W95) – a feat that astounded both the Italian defenders and the Australian gunners!

Despite the horrific losses, there were many examples of individual Italian bravery and courage. Surrenders usually occurred *en masse* because Italian defenders had been demoralized by relentless naval bombardment, found themselves surrounded by fast-moving mobile troops, been hammered by British artillery, and/or discovered they could not penetrate the heavy armor of the British Matildas.

In displaying so much reluctance before beginning the campaign, Graziani had been more of a realist than a defeatist. The Italian 10th Army was unprepared to fight a modern war in the desert, while the British had a pretty good idea of how to go about it, and the equipment to do the job. Of course, in a short time, a man with even better ideas would take the field against them . . .



Derna

Bergonzoli had pulled back to Derna, a small port city along the Coast Road, trying to organize his troops to face the pursuing Brits. He commanded the 60th *Sabratha* Division, 17th *Pavia* Division, and 27th *Brescia* Division at Derna, moving the *Babini* Group (which was down to 70 tanks) to cover the Mechili crossroads to the south.

At his bunker in Cyrene, Graziani was frantic. He wired Rome pleading for reinforcements, claiming he was facing 17 British divisions, but help was a long way off.

O'Connor sent the 6th Australian Division along the coast road to Derna, while the 7th Armored raced overland toward Mechili where they would sweep northward to catch the Italian forces in a pincer.

On January 23, the 7th Armored met the *Babini* Group at Mechili. The Italians battered the 11th Hussar's light tanks, and scattered the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment. Graziani was pleased at the progress, and ordered *Babini* to attack the British flank, but poor communication and the confusing chain of command struck again, and Graziani received a report that *Babini* was facing some 150 tanks. Graziani demurred, and withdrew his armor from Mechili.

Meanwhile, the 6th Australian threw itself against Bergonzoli's defenses at Derna. By now, the Australians were growing weary. Bergonzoli had prepared a solid defense, and the Australian troops struggled to make headway. The Italians put up a rugged defense, fighting a pitched battle with the 19th Brigade at the airfield. Despite a determined defense and the growing lack of British supplies, the 6th Australian persisted. On January 27, Graziani ordered the "speedy disengagement" of his troops. The following morning, the Australians rolled into a deserted town.

Pursuit seemed impossible. The 6th Australian had lost nearly all their trucks in the previous battles, and 7th Armored was down to 50 cruisers and fewer than 100 light tanks. (They'd lost more tanks to the desert than to the Italians.) O'Connor feared his offensive was going to stall, giving the Italians time to regroup and reinforce. He ordered the exhausted 6th Australian along the Coast Road, while the 7th

Armored, under Major General Sir Michael O'Moore Creagh, prepared for a dash across the desert to intercept the fleeing Italians at a small coastal town to the southwest: Beda Fomm.

The Race to Beda Fomm

On February 4, 7th Armored tore across the rocky desert in a determined effort to stop the Italian retreat. The Desert Rats would have to cover 150 miles of horrific wasteland in only 30 hours. The first 50 miles was treacherous and rocky, and tore up the battered division even further. They left behind a trail of broken treads, blown out tires, empty water and fuel cans, and shattered vehicles. The debris trail was so appalling that O'Connor, following behind them some hours later, exclaimed: "My God! Do you think it's going to be all right?"

The hard rocky stretch was followed by mounds of thick and extremely soft sand that bogged vehicles down to their axles.

The Rats plodded onward, stopping only long enough to move men and supplies from one vehicle to another when the desert took another truck or tank from the force. They reached Beda Fomm at noon the next day, battered and exhausted, but ahead of the Italians. Only 30 minutes later, plumes of dust marked the advance of the first Italian column!

From February 5-7, the ensuing battle raged in blinding sandstorm and driving rain, with the full force of the Italians bearing down on the bone-weary British tankers. Bluff and misdirection began to count as much as force; even non-firing vehicles remained manned simply to give the appearance of a strong force. Skirmishes and feints abounded, with fierce fighting broken by long, eerie silences. During lulls in the battle, camel-riding Arabs would sell eggs to both sides.

After two days of intense, often point-blank fighting, the Italian army finally surrendered. Graziani had fled to Tripoli. Bergonzoli was captured, telling O'Connor simply: "You were here too soon." (Much to the disappointment of the vociferous Australians, he was ushered off to Cairo before they could determine the electrical qualities of his beard.)

Wavell and O'Connor's campaign had been an amazing success. The British 13th Corps – with fewer than 40,000 men – had advanced 500 miles, taken 130,000 prisoners, captured nearly 400 tanks and 1,000 artillery guns. Total casualties for the British: fewer than 2,000 killed, wounded, and captured.

Bergonzoli's words turned out to be more accurate than he realized. The Italian 10th Army was decimated, but the defeat had taken place too early. Only a few months later, most of the Wehrmacht would have been tied up in Russia, and the North African front would have been a distant memory. As it was, Graziani and Mussolini had convinced Germany that intervention was necessary. On February 9, word reached the Italians that a panzer division and a light mechanized division were being dispatched to Tripolitania, a Libyan province west of Cyrenaica.

On February 12, 1941, Erwin Rommel stepped off a transport onto a Tripoli airfield. Germany was coming to North Africa.

ROMMEL IN THE DESERT



Rommel's arrival in Tripolitania was kept secret from the British for as long as possible. For several weeks, he was simply referred to as "General X." By mid-March, his identity had become known, causing no little consternation in Cairo and London. Hitler had sent the infamous commander of the "Ghost Division" (the 7th Panzer) that had stormed through France, appearing and disappearing seemingly at will. In addition to the newly arrived commander, Hitler had promised Mussolini an armored and a mechanized-infantry division.

The Deutsche Afrika Korps

German forces began arriving in Tripoli shortly after Rommel. The 5th Light Motorized Division began its transfer in mid-February, and was mostly complete within a month. It packed more punch than its name implied. It was a fully self-contained fighting force, complete with infantry, armor, artillery, and AA and AT guns. Included was the 5th Panzer Regiment, with its 150 tanks (80 of them Panzer III and IV tanks; see pp. W:IC79-80), all of them fresh and ready for desert action. When ships containing the 5th Light Motorized Division began to arrive, Rommel ordered the unloading operations to continue even during the night, a risky maneuver since the lighted docks would make easy targets for British bombers.

Rommel had also been promised the 15th Panzer Division, but its arrival wasn't scheduled until several weeks later. His orders directed that he wait for the 15th Panzer to arrive before making any attacks, but Rommel knew that the British were weak. He was convinced that any delay in attacking would only allow British forces to regroup and prepare defenses. Time was of the essence and Rommel was determined to strike soon.

The British 13th Corps

Several changes had taken place in Cyrenaica. O'Connor had been promoted to commander of the British troops in Egypt and replaced by Lieutenant General Philip Neame, a courageous soldier unfamiliar with desert warfare.

The 7th Armored had returned to Egypt for rest and refit. Their role in the desert had been assumed by the newly arrived – and inexperienced – 2nd Armored Division. Likewise, the hardened ANZACs of the 6th Australian Infantry Division had been replaced by the undertrained and poorly equipped 9th Australian Infantry. To make things worse, trouble in Greece (p. 16) had opened the way for British aid there, and Churchill had jumped at the opportunity. Much of these military reinforcements came from the newly arrived divisions, leaving the British western desert defended by untrained, poorly equipped, and reduced-strength units.

Rommel's First Moves

Within hours of arriving in Tripoli, Rommel flew reconnaissance flights over the desert east of the city. (He often flew his own plane – a Fiesler Storch – and took his own pictures). He decided to establish a forward base near Sirta, a village along the Coast Road that stood midway between Tripoli and

El Agheila, where the British had halted their advance. The following morning, February 13, two Italian infantry divisions together with the *Ariete* division began moving toward Sirte. Less than 48 hours later, two German battalions (one recon, one antitank) followed suit.

Rommel wanted to convince the British that the German position in the desert was stronger than it truly was. He ordered dummy tanks created from painted plywood and canvas and mounted atop Volkswagen staff cars to enable the Germans "to appear as strong as possible and to induce the maximum caution in the British."

By mid-March, the remainder of the 5th Light had arrived and was deployed to Rommel's forward base. Rommel flew to Berlin on March 19 to ask permission to attack the British immediately, before Wavell had a chance to fortify his tenuous hold on Cyrenaica. He was flatly told no.

He attacked, anyway. Rommel rationalized that since the British forces at El Agheila had been harassing his supply lines to a German-Italian outpost at Marada, 90 miles to the south, it was imperative that he dislodge them. At dawn, on March 24, the 5th Light Motorized Division began their drive on El Agheila.

Rommel arrayed the tanks and armored cars of the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion along a wide front, to give the appearance of a deeper, stronger armored column. Imposter tanks (the "Cardboard Division") were interspersed with actual armored vehicles, making the unit look even more formidable. At the back of the column, transport trucks swerved and spun tires in a frenzy to stir up "dust, nothing but dust" as per Rommel's command. The result was an impressive spectacle, and quite enough to convince the British garrison at El Agheila to beat a hasty retreat.

Rommel paused. Reconnaissance suggested that the escarpment at Mersa Brega, to the east, could be easily fortified and defended. He could wait for the arrival of the 15th Panzers, but by then the British might have settled into Mersa Brega to stay. So on April 1, the Germans pushed west and north along the Coast Road, led by the Panzer IVs of the 5th Panzer Regiment. British resistance was strong, and by mid-day the advance had ground to a halt. A machine-gun battalion circled north through rolling sand dunes and struck the defenders in their flank, dislodging them. By evening, the British were once again in retreat.

In the next few days, the 5th Light had pushed through to Agedabia and was driving on Benghazi. Rommel split his forces into three columns, sending one along the coast road and the other two across country, one east toward Maaten el Grara and Ben Gania, the other up the center to Antelat and Msus. The German forces drove the British out of Agedabia and pressed on to Benghazi, finding it evacuated.

Rommel wrote to his wife that the British were "falling over each other to get away." His words were not far from the truth. British forces were fleeing en masse, much like the Italians had only weeks earlier. They were mobile enough to avoid capture, however, and in many cases retreated well in advance of Rommel's force.

Typical British calm was absent due to sleepless nights and ignominious travel conditions – soldiers were often packed 30 to a truck – and everyone’s nerves were worn thin. In Msus, a captain ordered his entire divisional fuel dump destroyed when he was informed that Rommel’s column was fast approaching. Only too late did he discover it was not Rommel, but a returning Long Range Desert Group patrol.

On April 2, Wavell ordered O’Connor back to the desert, but the veteran officer declined to resume command. He claimed that stripping Neame of his command would accomplish little but confusion; in truth, he knew the battle was already lost. He stayed on as Neame’s advisor, but his assessment was correct. Britain was going to lose the Western Desert.

The 5th Light, 5th Panzer Regiment, and the 3rd Recon Battalion surrounded the 2nd Armored Division at Mechili, pouring in from three different sides, while other elements of Rommel’s forces drove the 9th Australian out of Derna.

Neame and O’Connor withdrew their HQ and headed for Tmimi. In the night, their driver took a wrong turn. At 3 a.m., Neame awoke in the back seat to find their car had joined a convoy that was slowing down to enter a city – the city was Derna; the convoy was German. Both generals were captured.

At Mechili, the trapped British forces (the 2nd Armored Division, the 3rd Indian Motorized Brigade, and a handful of mixed units) finally surrendered. Rommel, watching General Gambier-Parry’s truck being unloaded, snatched up a pair of oversized sand goggles, smiling. He pulled them onto his gold braided hat and grinned. “Booty,” he said, “Permissible I take it, even for a general.” The British goggles would become a trademark of the Desert Fox for decades to come.

From April 8 to 14, Rommel bypassed Tobruk and chased fleeing British units east through Fort Capuzzo, Bardia, Solum, and Halfaya Pass. In only three weeks, he had managed to take back all of Cyrenaica, save the fortified port of Tobruk. “We must attack Tobruk with everything we have, before Tommy has time to dig in,” he said. Considering his prior successes, it seemed an easy enough task. But it would be a thorn in his side for months.

THE BATTLE OF TOBRUK

As Rommel swept through North Africa, Wavell ordered that Tobruk be held. The Italian defenses were still in place. As long as the British held Tobruk, Rommel could not continue his advance across the desert for fear of the garrison slicing his supply lines and because Tobruk was the only suitable port in Cyrenaica east of Benghazi. The *Afrika Korps* needed over 1,500 tons of water and supplies *each day*. Without an accessible port, the supplies would have to be trucked across the desert – a daunting task that was sure to slow Rommel down.

Holding Tobruk would not be easy for the British. Their supplies would all necessarily arrive by sea, and would be vulnerable to Axis naval intervention and Luftwaffe attacks in port; Germany had air superiority over the city. But if Tobruk fell, there would be little to stop Rommel from charging across Egypt clear to Cairo.

Tobruk had over 200 square miles of defenses. A 30-mile perimeter – called the Red Line – bristled with barbed wire,

antitank ditches, tank traps, mobile field artillery, and nearly 150 concrete strongpoints holding 20 soldiers each. Two miles back was a secondary line of defense (the Blue Line) made up of a dense minefield, more barbed wire, and additional strong points. The Commonwealth defenders (mostly Australians) fell under the command of Australian Major General Leslie James Morshead, known to his troops as “Ming the Merciless” after the villain in the *Flash Gordon* serials and comics. Morshead’s forces included six infantry brigades, four artillery regiments, two antitank units, 75 AA guns, and 45 tanks.

Rommel probed the city on April 11 and 12, but the German forces were hit hard by British artillery. Two days later, at the break of dawn, tanks from the 5th Light Motorized blew a gap into the barbed wire south of the city. Australian defenders simply stayed in cover, allowing the tanks to pass through unhindered. When German infantry followed, the Australians manned their defenses and raked devastating fire into the soldiers from behind; the 8th Machine Gun Battalion took 75% casualties. The panzers, oblivious to the carnage taking place behind them, continued deeper into the city as the Allies moved artillery toward the invaded sector. Soon the German armor was taking heavy fire from both flanks. Antitank guns and field artillery fired from less than 1,000 yards away, blowing into the tanks with amazing success. Soon the armor was in retreat; the panzer crews took more losses fighting their way back through the British gantlet.

Rommel was furious at the defeat. He took direct command of the assault, and on April 16 led two Italian divisions against Tobruk’s western defenses. When the Italian tanks came under fire, they fled into a wadi and refused to continue the attack. Most of the infantry, taking heavy fire from Australian defenders, surrendered. More than 800 Italians were taken prisoner; the *Ariete* Division lost 90% of their tanks, mostly to mechanical failure.

No Dunkirk Here

While Rommel pounded Tobruk, Australian, Indian, and British defenders held tenaciously to their ground. Morshead was adamant about holding the city. “There will be no Dunkirk here,” he said. “There is to be no surrender and no retreat.”

Life in the port was turned upside down. Axis snipers posed a deadly threat to anyone caught above ground during the day. British soldiers breakfasted at dusk; their “day” ran from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. Footprints leading to underground bunkers were brushed away with camel’s thorn branches to deter bombing attacks. Still, bomb and artillery attacks took their toll. The flat white desert around the city was soon covered in burned-out tanks, trucks, and spent ammunition. One observer said it appeared as if a “junk merchant had set up shop on the moon.”

Despite the Axis siege, Morshead refused to remain passive. He found great success in sending 20-man patrols out each night to strike at the Axis troops. Such patrols give PCs an excellent opportunity to engage in stealthy approaches and intense firefights throughout the siege.

Ships from the Western Desert Light Flotilla struggled to keep Tobruk supplied, but Stuka attacks made their task difficult; the men of the WDLF joked that their unit’s initials stood

for “We Die Like Flies.” Soon the harbor was littered with the hulks of British supply ships, and still the WDLF continued their dangerous work. Britain lost 34 mixed warships and supply vessels keeping the city supplied.

Along the perimeter, Axis and Allied troops shared a sort of camaraderie. Both sides faced immense hardships in the desert, and both sides often dropped their conflict long enough to help each other out. Enemy soldiers sometimes assisted troops in collecting wounded and dead. Meals and drinks were even exchanged from time to time.

Despite any camaraderie on the part of individual soldiers, Rommel was still determined to take the port. On April 30, he struck a third time. Stuka and artillery pounded a small hill (Ras el Medauer) at 6:30 p.m., while tanks from 15th Panzer drove toward the defenders from opposite sides. In only three hours, the Germans had taken the hill and penetrated two miles into the defenses, bypassing several strongpoints in favor of taking ground rather than bogging down in a protracted firefight.

The Australian defenders in those bunkers were tenacious; many of them continued fighting even after sustaining grievous injuries. The British counterattacked the following morning, not long before a raging sandstorm engulfed the city. The thrust and counterthrust of the forces, combined with horrific visibility, made it difficult to tell who was winning the battle, but within a few days it seemed Rommel might succeed after all. A final British counterattack was broken off on May 4, leaving the Axis in control of a wedge of Tobruk territory three miles wide and two miles deep. That day, a message arrived from Germany’s commander in chief forbidding Rommel from making any further offensive moves either in Tobruk or into Egypt. Rommel was again outraged, but followed the order. Whether he would have continued to hold his ground is uncertain, for the British troops were about to mount an offensive of their own. Rommel had proven his ability to mount an effective attack, but his defensive skills were about to be tested.



Interlude

While Rommel fortified his new position outside Tobruk, Churchill was busy formulating a bold plan to mount a British offensive in Cyrenaica. A convoy of British ships carrying British tanks and planes was preparing to leave for Egypt by way of the horn of Africa and the Suez Canal. Churchill proposed that the convoy cut through the Straits of Gibraltar and run the Mediterranean gantlet straight to Alexandria, thereby cutting some 40 days off the journey. British transports had not risked such a transit since January, when the Luftwaffe had gained air superiority there. Despite such well-founded fears, *Tiger Convoy*, as it was called, lost only a single ship (to a mine) and arrived in Alexandria in early May, delivering 238 tanks (135 Matildas, 82 Crusaders, and 21 Mark VI Lights) and 43 aircraft (mostly Hurricanes) to Wavell’s forces. Churchill was ecstatic and predicted the end of the North African campaign by June 30.

Wavell was not nearly so optimistic. The tanks and fighters needed plenty of work before they could be used in battle; for example, none of the tanks had sand filters for their engines and many had cracked gearboxes and irreparable damage to their tracks. Churchill was sorely disappointed, but Wavell was not simply dragging his heels. He was determined to make headway against Rommel, even without the *Tiger* reinforcements.

WAVELL STRIKES BACK

Wavell’s forces in Egypt had been severely depleted over the previous months. Despite Rommel’s presence in Cyrenaica, Wavell had sent forces all across the Middle East – revolts were put down in Iraq and Syria (pp. 114-116), the Italians had been defeated in East Africa (p. 15), and forces on Crete had been reinforced (p. 16). Wavell was struggling with too many fronts and not enough army. In an effort to placate Churchill and to gain a “jumping-off point” for a larger offensive, Wavell organized Operation Brevity.

Operation Brevity

On May 15, three armored columns (with about 30 Cruiser tanks and 24 Matildas) rolled across the Libyan border under the command of Brigadier W.H.E. Gott. Two moved inland toward separate destinations: Sidi Azeiz and Fort Capuzzo. The third moved along the shore toward Halfaya Pass, a gap in the escarpment leading up to the Libyan plateau that controlled access to and from the Coastal Road.

Initially, the offensive was a smashing success. Fort Capuzzo and Halfaya Pass both fell quickly, and all three columns were advancing on Sidi Azeiz. Rommel counterattacked the following morning, using the 8th Panzer Regiment. Gott withdrew to Halfaya Pass.

Fighting around the pass was intense. On May 27, *Kampfgruppe Herff* assaulted the British position, while the 8th Panzer Regiment circled around to hit the pass from the east. Gott had no choice but to withdraw.

Brevity had cost the British 23 tanks and more than 300 casualties, and gained nothing. Rommel had captured nine guns, seven Matilda tanks, and several much-needed trucks.

Operation Battleaxe

Wavell mounted a second offensive, much like the first but on a larger scale, when the newly arrived tanks had been made ready for action. He planned to use the 7th Armored, now rested and refitted, to spearhead the attack atop the plateau. The 4th Indian Division, back from East Africa, would travel along the coast and assault Halfaya Pass at the same time.

Rommel had reinforced the pass since Brevity. Instead of a motorcycle battalion, Halfaya Pass now held an artillery battalion, commanded by Capt. Wilhelm Bach (an Evangelical minister later called “the pastor of Halfaya”) and an Italian artillery battery. Bach ordered his men to hold their fire as the British tanks approached. He had entrenched 88mm guns in the cliff face and leveled them at the attackers. Even after the British forces began firing on the Pass, Bach’s guns remained silent. Then the 88s opened up on the British tanks. In minutes, 11 of the 12 Matildas were either aflame or torn apart; the twelfth turned to retreat and drove through a minefield, blowing off its tracks.

Five times the British drove on the pass; five times they were repulsed. From that day forward, Halfaya Pass would be known to the British as Hellfire Pass.

Atop the escarpment, British forces fared no better. British tanks in the center drove the Germans out of Fort Capuzzo, but the left flank stalled at Hafid Ridge when they encountered a tenacious German defense that included more deadly 88s. Rommel had held the 5th Light Motorized in reserve, as well as a large part of the 15th Panzer. On the morning of June 16, he sent the 5th Light to the south where they struck the British flank near Sidi Omar. After a fierce battle against an element of the Desert Rats, they managed to break through and drove east, attempting to cut off the British forces in a pincer.

At the center, Rommel’s 15th Panzers pounded at the British forces at Fort Capuzzo, but could make no headway. Rommel ordered the 15th to withdraw, and join the 5th Motorized in their flanking move. By June 17, the combined force had reached Sidi Suleiman and was driving north toward Halfaya Pass.

At the same time, the commander of 4th Indian at Halfaya had lost contact with headquarters, and took it upon himself to order a general withdrawal of British troops. His action saved the British from an even more humiliating defeat, but he himself later said, “I thought Wavell was going to sack me.” Wavell’s only comment was mixed, “You were right to withdraw in the circumstances, but orders should have come from Western Desert Force.”

By the end of Battleaxe, Britain had lost 90 tanks (compared to Germany’s 12), 40 aircraft, and nearly 1,000 men. Wavell wired London with a simple, “Am very sorry for failure of Battleaxe.”

Churchill already had been considering swapping Wavell with his commander in chief in India, General Sir Claude

Auchinleck. The failure of the first major British offensive since Rommel’s arrival clinched it. On the morning of June 22, 1941, a messenger delivered a wire from London while Wavell was shaving. “The victories which are associated with your name will be famous in the story of the British Army,” it said. “But I have come to the conclusion that public interest will best be served by appointment of General Auchinleck to relieve you in command of armies of Middle East.” Wavell lifted his razor to his cheek and gallantly said, “The prime minister is right. This job needs a new eye and a new hand.”

SPECIAL FORCES IN THE DESERT

From June to November, while Rommel and Auchinleck both readied their troops for a major offensive, small groups of elite forces continued to strike at the enemy using stealth and cunning.

Germany’s Brandenburger (see p. W:HS14) struck at the flanks and rear of the 8th Army, sometimes penetrating nearly to Cairo!

The British Long Range Desert Group (p. 40) haunted German ports and supply routes, monitoring troops movements and strengths, and attacked supply dumps and isolated German patrols. One such group even raided Rommel’s headquarters in November, in an attempt to capture or kill him. Rommel was away at the time, and most of the LRDG patrol was captured or killed.

The British SAS (p. 42), created after Battleaxe, ranged as far as 350 miles behind German lines, menacing Rommel’s supply lines and airfields. They blew up fuel and ammo dumps, mined primary roads, attacked convoys, and destroyed both airfields and any aircraft they held. In a little more than a year, the SAS counted more than 250 Axis planes destroyed, mostly using a specialized device for the job called a Lewes Bomb.

Such operations make for an ideal environment for PCs to play elite soldiers operating relatively free of the normal restrictions imposed by life in a “normal” unit. **GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel** offers an in-depth look at such operations and is invaluable for GMs wishing to run a special forces campaign. Templates for SAS and LRDG characters are found in Chapter 3.

OPERATION CRUSADER

Tanks and supply columns maneuvered like great squadrons of vessels at sea.

– War correspondent Alan Moorehead,
writing about Operation Crusader

When Auchinleck arrived in Cairo, he began to reorganize the Western Desert Force, which had tripled in size since the beginning of the war. He renamed it the 8th Army and placed General Alan Cunningham (p. 55) in charge.

Cunningham seemed a good choice for the position, but he had little experience in commanding armor and was unimaginative when it came to creating new military doctrine – something that would prove a serious liability when fighting against the highly mobile Rommel.

Auchinleck put off Churchill's demands for another British offensive, making it clear that he would not launch an attack until November, when the 8th Army had received plenty of reinforcements. Churchill was not happy, but Auchinleck was steadfast in his resolve.

By November, Cunningham was planning the largest British desert offensive yet: Operation Crusader, named after the newly arrived British tank. Crusader was a massive undertaking with lofty goals. Cunningham planned to attack with 118,000 men, 700 tanks, 600 guns, 200 antitank guns, and 650 aircraft. Nearly half of Cunningham's armor was made up of the new Crusader tanks, which were fast and well-armored, but would prove mechanically unsound in the desert. The United States had supplied a number of Stuart tanks as part of the Lend-Lease program. The Stuart proved a hit with the British tankers, who called it the Honey. (During a British test drive, the driver had pronounced the vehicle "a real honey" and the name stuck.)

While Auchinleck prepared his offensive, Rommel reorganized. He had scraped together miscellaneous units across North Africa and created the 90th Light Division, also called the Africa Division. The 5th Light Motorized had been renamed the 21st Panzer Division, though it had undergone no organizational changes whatsoever. Rommel's forces in North Africa were renamed Panzer Group Africa, and now included both the *Afrika Korps* (comprising the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and the 90th Light Division) and six Italian divisions which provided the bulk of Rommel's infantry.

The British RAF and Royal Navy struck at convoys bound for Libya, knocking out almost a third of Rommel's seaborne supplies in September and double that amount in November. For the first time in months, Rommel would be at a numerical disadvantage, fielding 119,000 troops, but only 550 planes and 400 tanks. About a third of Rommel's tanks were obsolete Italian models; another 70 were German Panzer II lights mounting only autocannons (see p. W:IC78). Panzer IIIs made up most of the remainder. Rommel only had about 35 of the more effective Panzer IVs.

Rommel only had an edge over the British in antitank guns. He fielded about 35 of the powerful 88s that could tear a Matilda to pieces from a mile away, and nearly 100 of the standard German 50mm antitank gun that beat the British 2-pounder in both range and firepower.

Despite Rommel's plight, Hitler refused to send reinforcements. Most of the German army was tied up in Russia.

Cunningham in Action

Crusader called for the 30th Corps, with most of Cunningham's armor, to drive southwest, outflanking German defenses at Sollum and Bardia, and drawing Rommel into a massive tank battle halfway between Tobruk and the 8th Army's headquarters at Fort Maddalena. After defeating the German armor, they would strike east to finish off the Germans and then west to relieve the garrison at Tobruk. Meanwhile, the 13th Corps (now consisting of the New Zealand Division, the 4th Indian Division, and 135 supporting tanks) would move south and east of the main line, attacking Rommel's infantry troops after the 30th had dealt with the panzers. Together, the two corps would then hit Tobruk and drive Rommel across Libya. Crusader even called for driving the Axis powers all the way out of Tripolitania.



On November 17, the 30th Corps moved into place amidst a terrible thunderstorm. Tanks and armored cars slithered through thick mud as British troops huddled against the wind and rain. The following morning, the rain lifted, but storm cloud continued to threaten as the 30th crossed the Libyan frontier in a broad, heavy assault. They met almost no resistance, and by the end of the day had reached Gabr Salef.

Cunningham was worried. His intention had been to draw Rommel into a tank battle, and as yet there was no sign of any German movement. For his part, Rommel failed to react because he had been caught by surprise. British intelligence had screened the gathering forces so well that Rommel believed the 30th Corps to be only a limited probe or even a diversion for a greater attack along the coast. He was also preoccupied with planning an assault on Tobruk that he intended to mount only three days later.

Despite his previously laid plan, Cunningham split his armor, sending two brigades west and rerouting a third to defend the 13th Corps' infantry. On November 19, he split his armor even further – Operation Crusader was already falling apart. The 7th Armored Brigade was tasked with capturing the airfield at Sidi Rezegh, capturing 19 Axis aircraft on the runway, while the 22nd Armored Brigade struck south to attack Italian entrenchments.

Rommel had begun to doubt his first assessment of the British attack, and sent an armored column south to probe the British forces there. The 4th Armored Brigade became embroiled in a pitched battle that cost them 50 tanks; the Germans lost 30.

With the British attacking across the board, Rommel shelved his plans to attack Tobruk and prepared to unleash the full might of two panzer divisions in a counterattack.

Sidi Rezegh

On November 22, a portion of the 21st Panzer headed west toward Sidi Rezegh, only some 10 miles from the German forces besieging Tobruk. The 4th and 22nd Armored Brigades took to pursuit, believing the *Afrika Korps* was in retreat. The panzers bore down on the airfield, using a rear guard with heavy antitank guns to delay the 4th and 22nd. By the end of the day, the *Afrika Korps* broke off the attack, short on fuel and ammunition. The 7th Armored Brigade was down to 28 tanks, but they still held the airfield.

For two days, the battle raged back and forth, with neither side gaining any appreciable ground. The fighting was chaotic and confused. The air around Sidi Rezegh was thick with smoke from burning vehicles and dust from the swirling battle, and soon the airfield was littered with burning hulks and pockmarked with scars of war. German forces were reinforced by elements of the 15th Panzer Division, while Britain's 4th and 22nd Armored Brigades eventually arrived as well. Unfortunately, the two brigades showed up one after another, allowing Rommel time to tackle each brigade in succession. He later quipped, "What difference does it make if you have two tanks to my one when you spread them out and let me smash them in detail?"

November 23 was a German holiday – *Totensonntag*, Sunday of the Dead – honoring the loss of German soldiers in the Great War. At dawn, Rommel hurled his armor against the remaining defenders, smashing through one unit after another. Worst hit was a South African infantry brigade that lost 3,400 out of 5,700 men. By nightfall, the battlefield was lit by the burning hulks of the 30th Corps' armor and the battle at Sidi Rezegh was over.

Rommel's Counteroffensive

Rommel knew he had beaten the British defenders locally, but he also knew that the 13th Corps was moving north against his forces further to the east. In a move that defied normal battlefield logic, and shocked his generals, Rommel ordered the *Afrika Korps* to regroup and sally east through the remaining British forces, rather than mopping up and consolidating his hold on Sidi Rezegh. Rommel planned to punch through to the British rear and strike the 13th Corps before they could do any appreciable damage to the German defenders at Fort Capuzzo, Bardia, and Halfaya Pass.

Facing Cunningham's lack of experience with armor, it seemed an acceptable gamble. But Rommel did not know that Auchinleck had flown in to Fort Maddalena and had begun directing the battle himself. Auchinleck believed that Rommel's forces must be as badly beaten and exhausted as his own, and insisted that Crusader not be abandoned completely.

Still, Rommel's attack was so sudden and ferocious that the British rear echelons panicked and fled. The rout was total, harkening back to Rommel's first successes in Cyrenaica. Both sides blazed across the desert for half a day in what war correspondent Alan Moorehead called "a stampede." Neither side was totally sure where they were or whether the dust clouds on the horizon were friend or foe. One British soldier directing traffic was surprised to find that the vehicles he was directing had suddenly become German!

Rommel drove 15 miles into Egypt, but on November 26 he had to recall his panzers to Bardia to repair and refuel. With the Germans strung out across the desert, Auchinleck ordered the New Zealand Division of the 13th Corps to make a run for Tobruk. They linked up with the Australian defenders on November 27, lifting the siege.

To the south, at Sidi Rezegh, the remains of the armored brigades had regrouped and salvaged several tanks (both British and German) from the hulks scattered across the airfield. Hence, when Rommel's forces at Bardia were recalled to fight once again at Tobruk, British armor intercepted them and another hectic tank battle ensued. Rommel's retreat ground to a halt until British forces withdrew to resupply.

With Germany pulling back and British forces regrouping, Auchinleck paused. Many viewed Cunningham's desire to retreat after early losses as a sign of weakness. Auchinleck feared leaving the general in charge, and likewise feared the effect on morale if he were replaced in the middle of the campaign. "It has to be done," he concluded, "rightly or wrongly." He replaced Cunningham with 44-year-old Major General Neil M. Ritchie, Auchinleck's deputy chief of staff.

By this point in the battle, however, the operation was largely under the control of brigade commanders who took it upon themselves to grab every available piece of land in their vicinity. Rommel's forces besieged Tobruk once again, but without proper supplies and reinforcements, they were driven back by the 8th Army within a week.

Rommel fell back to the Gazala Line, a series of fortifications prepared by the British months before. Ritchie began striking at the line, sending an armored brigade around the southern end in an effort to flank and encapsulate the Axis forces. Rommel spotted the maneuver, and though it meant leaving non-motorized (Italian) infantry behind, he pulled his forces out before Ritchie could spring the trap. By early January, Rommel had been driven clear to El Agheila. Italian forces trapped in Cyrenaica (mostly near Bardia and Halfaya Pass) surrendered by the middle of the month.

Despite heavy losses, Operation Crusader was a British victory. They had lost about 15,000 men and hundreds of tanks, but managed to capture more than 30,000 prisoners and destroy 300 Axis tanks. More importantly, they had relieved the besieged forces at Tobruk and driven Rommel from Cyrenaica.

Rommel refused to accept defeat. On January 21, he mounted yet another counterattack, taking the British (and Axis high command) by surprise. He drove Ritchie's forces back from El Agheila and feinted toward Benghazi. Fearing the oncoming attack, Ritchie abandoned the port, allowing Rommel to recapture it and annex tons of badly needed supplies. In two weeks, Rommel had driven Ritchie back across half of Cyrenaica to the Gazala Line, only 35 miles west of Tobruk.

ROMMEL'S SECOND CAMPAIGN

The winter weeks passed slowly as 1942 began, with the horrible weather giving way to equally horrible spring, such as it was in a landscape where very little bloomed. Ritchie's 8th Army faced Rommel's newly designated *Panzerarmee Afrika* across the 60-mile Gazala Line.

Ritchie gathered reinforcements, including more than 150 heavy American Grant tanks with their 75mm gun, and a hundred new British 6-pounder artillery guns, though he lacked enough AP ammunition to properly field all the 6-pounders.

Rommel's *Panzerarmee* relied on Panzer IIIs, including a score of the new Panzer III Ausf J tanks (see p. W:IC79) – usually called the Panzer III Special in British circles – mounting a long-barreled 50mm gun. His Italian tanks remained unimproved; even the Italian crews despised them, calling them “motorized coffins.”

All told, Rommel fielded about 550 tanks, Ritchie 850. The Luftwaffe and RAF were roughly equal.

THE GAZALA LINE

The Gazala Line started at Gazala on the coast, and ran some 40 miles to the southeast before jogging northeast for another 20 miles. It was a series of six fortifications (called “boxes”) laid behind a thick string of mine fields. Each box was surrounded by barbed wire, trenches, pillboxes, gun emplacements, and antitank ditches, taking up one or two square miles. Some of the boxes (like Bir Hakeim) carried Arabic names, while other were simply named by their British occupants (e.g., Knightsbridge, Commonwealth Keep).

British armor roamed up and down behind the Gazala Line, watching for German probes and dealing quickly with any incursions.

Ritchie felt certain the line would hold, and began planning a British attack for June, tentatively called Operation Buckshot. Rommel, however, was preparing an attack of his own, and beat Ritchie to the punch.

At nightfall on May 26, 1942, under a brilliant moon and a clear sky, 10,000 vehicles rolled toward Bir Hakeim, the southern anchor of Ritchie's Gazala defenses. Although the box at Bir Hakeim notified the 8th Army of the attack, British headquarters was slow in analyzing and reacting to the report (partly due to a feint attack on the northern portion of the line). Italian forces stayed behind, attacking the box at Bir Hakeim, while Rommel's tanks circled the line and rolled northward. About five miles northeast of the box, Rommel's tanks surprised British units eating breakfast, and soon the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade was shattered. By mid-day, three more armored and motorized brigades had fallen and a motorized HQ was overrun.

Rommel's attack seemed destined for success, until he met the Lend-Lease Grants. The 28-ton tanks with their heavy guns caught the Germans by surprise, blowing through panzers left and right. By the end of the second day (which was marked by fighting up and down the line and a heavy sandstorm), Rommel had lost a full third of his tanks to dogged British resistance and unrelenting 75mm fire. His supply

troops floundered as they struggled to continue to curl their lines around Bir Hakeim.

Rommel knew his attack was stalling. Rather than withdraw, he pulled his troops into the center of the Gazala Line, holing up with a British minefield between him and Tripolitania. He used Italian sappers to open a path between him and his badly needed supplies to the east, but British artillery soon began shelling the supply corridor, rendering it less than effective. The area around Rommel's defenses came to be known as the Cauldron, due to the roiling and heated battles that soon took place there.

LILI MARLENE

*Outside the barracks by the corner light,
I'll always stand for you, and wait for you at night,
We'll create a world for two, I'll wait for you,
The whole night through,
For you Lili Marlene,
For you Lili Marlene.*

– English translation of “Vor der Kaserne”

“Vor der Kaserne” was originally a poem written in 1918 by Hans Leip to depict the sorrow of a young soldier separated from his love. German composer Norbert Schultze set the poem to music in 1938. It was a commercial failure until Rommel heard it in 1941 and asked Radio Belgrade to add it to their broadcasts. They first aired the song on August 18, 1941, and soon began using it as their signoff, playing the poignant (though almost militaristic) ballad at 9:55 p.m. each night.

Despite being banned in Germany for its “portentous character,” the song – now called “Lili Marlene” – was an immediate hit with the German troops. The ballad soon caught on with British soldiers as well, who were reprimanded for singing along in German.

Each night in the desert, soldiers from both sides tuned in to Radio Belgrade to hear Lale Andersen (whose real name was Lieselotte Helene Berta Bunnenberg) sing the final song of the night. It became an unofficial anthem for the soldiers in the desert, and the most popular war song ever recorded. It has been translated into 48 languages, including English, French, Russian, Italian, and even Hebrew.

GMs running a desert campaign are encouraged to find a copy of the song to play for their players at the close of each session.

Ritchie demurred making a counterattack, and Rommel used the lull to regroup his forces. On June 1, he tore a bigger hole in the Gazala Line, allowing him to reinforce and resupply his troops with ease. The thrust yielded 3,000 prisoners from the 150th Infantry Brigade and eliminated the Got el Oualeb box they had held.



Ritchie drew up a plan to hit Rommel where he lived, assaulting the Cauldron from several directions at once in an unnecessarily complicated (and ineffectual) offensive. Called Operation Aberdeen, it was a disaster – like “sticking one’s arm into a hornet’s nest,” a historian later said. British armor brigades lost 118 tanks – half their strength – and an Indian infantry brigade was trapped in the fighting and annihilated.

After he had routed the British at the Cauldron, Rommel turned his attention south to Bir Hakeim.

Bir Hakeim

Bir Hakeim was the key to Ritchie’s Gazala defense. It was manned by the 1st Free French Brigade, commanded by French General Pierre Koenig. From June 2-10, the Luftwaffe flew more than 1,000 sorties against the Bir Hakeim box. Ground forces shelled the box day and night, but Koenig’s men held fast. Rommel offered surrender several times, but Koenig refused. By June 10, the defenders were nearly out of food. On orders from Ritchie, Koenig ordered a breakthrough retreat, taking over two-thirds of his 3,600 soldiers to safety. Rommel later said, “Seldom in Africa was I given such a hard-fought struggle.” See p. 12 of *GURPS WWII: Return to Honor* for more details.

Once Bir Hakeim had fallen, Rommel’s forces moved north and took out the Gazala Line one box at a time.

Knightsbridge

As Rommel drove up the Gazala Line, the brunt of the British defense fell to the troops at a box called Knightsbridge. On June 11, the *Panzerarmee* drove back through the Cauldron and came down on the Knightsbridge box like a hammer on an anvil. The British fighting was fierce and confused, and British armored brigades were demolished in rapid succession, leaving the desert strewn with Crusaders, Grants, and Stuarts, some of them only lightly damaged but out of fuel. In only three days – June 11-14 – the British lost 260 tanks, making Knightsbridge one of the most devastating British losses of the war.

Tobruk

By late June, Rommel had achieved a 2-to-1 armor advantage over the British. With the Gazala Line destroyed, he turned his attention once again to Tobruk. Ritchie tried to withdraw to Tobruk once again, but it was too little, too late. Rommel chased the fleeing Gazala defenders, in what became known as the “Gazala Gallop,” hitting the fleeing columns hard with Stuka attacks and armor battles.

Churchill insisted that Tobruk be held, but it was not the fortress that had balked Rommel the year before. Its minefields were depleted, its antitank ditches filled with drifting sand. And when Rommel cut off the fleeing British army, he destroyed any chance of reinforcing the limited garrison there.

On June 20, while Auchinleck and Ritchie struggled to come up with a plan to hold the port, Rommel struck. More than 200 German and Italian planes blanketed the defenses, and massive artillery strikes pummeled what remained. Elite German engineers cracked the perimeter, allowing infantry to pour into the gap, followed by tanks from the 15th and 21st Panzer divisions. By nightfall, the 21st Panzer was in the city proper. The garrison’s South African commander, Major General H. B. Klopper, ordered the city’s supplies destroyed, and soon a pall of black smoke hung overhead.

The following day, the Tobruk defenders surrendered. Rommel captured 32,000 British troops, 2,000 vehicles (including 30 tanks), 400 guns, and a mountain of supplies. Despite Klopper’s best efforts, Rommel captured more than 3 million daily rations and 500,000 gallons of gasoline.

Rommel’s successes were impressive, but he was still not satisfied. While his troops rooted through the supplies left behind – gorging themselves on Irish potatoes, English beer, and South African pineapple – the German commander made plans to continue his advance. “Fortress of Tobruk has capitulated,” he told his generals. “All units will reassemble and prepare for further advance.”

Hitler also was pleased with the results. He promoted Rommel to field marshal shortly thereafter. With perhaps a bit of false modesty, Rommel commented to his wife, “I would rather he had given me one more division.”

Mersa Matruh

What remained of the 8th Army pulled back to the Egyptian border. Ritchie decided that his best bet was to pull back and force Rommel to stretch deep into Egypt if he wanted to confront the Brits any time soon. He chose Mersa Matruh, some 120 miles inside the frontier, to make a last stand. The 8th would fight at Matruh, he resolved, and die there rather than retreat.

But Auchinleck had other plans. He himself flew to Mersa Matruh, where he took command of the 8th Army himself. He had barely arrived when Rommel attacked.

The *Panzerarmee* was much smaller than when it had begun its 1,000-mile trek across Libya and Egypt. The two armored divisions had 44 tanks between them, the Italians 14 more, and two-thirds of the unit’s trucks were British built, running on British fuel. Infantry units were bare skeletons of what they’d once been, averaging about 2,500 Germans and 6,000 Italians each.

Still, in true Desert Fox style, Rommel used guile and cunning to convince the British his forces were more powerful than they truly were. On June 26, he drove his troops straight through a gap in the 8th Army's defenses, using the 90th Light Division to screen their movement from the British 10th Corps. By nightfall, the *Afrika Korps* was in a dangerous position, but British intelligence put the German armor at 400% of what it really was. The intelligence mistake, combined with Rommel's reputation and mystique, convinced General Gott that the battle was lost and he ordered his armor to withdraw. The British defense at Matruh collapsed, and soon the Gazala Gallop was in full swing once again.

Auchinleck was not amused. He ordered the beaten, but determined, British forces to retreat to El Alamein, another 120 miles east and only 60 miles from Alexandria. Panic struck in Alexandria and Cairo, with civilians fleeing in droves. Government officials burned so many records that a pall of smoke and ash covered the cities; July 1 became known locally as "Ash Wednesday."

Auchinleck's actions were noble, but it was not enough for Churchill. The British government was clamoring for changes in North Africa, and on August 13, General Sir Harold Leofric Rupert Alexander replaced Auchinleck as commander in chief Middle East, and Lieutenant General Bernard Law Montgomery took over the 8th Army. Churchill originally chose Gott to command the 8th, but he was killed when his plane was shot down en route to Cairo.

Rommel stretched his supply line some 1,400 miles to reach El Alamein, and for a time the German and British forces fought in a half-hearted battle fraught with confusion and missteps. Both sides were exhausted and low on supplies, and mistakes plagued the battle. A newly arrived British armored brigade routed under artillery fire and blundered into a friendly minefield, losing 93 out of 104 tanks. The Italian *Ariete* division was surprised by an ANZAC attack that forced them to flee without their artillery.

As the skirmishes continued, Montgomery set in motion a plan to drive the Desert Fox out of Egypt once and for all.

THE BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

Go down to the desert and destroy Rommel.
— Alexander's order to Montgomery, August 12, 1942

When Alexander and Montgomery took the helm for the British forces in the desert, things began to change. Both men had solid reputations – Alexander had fought the Germans in France and the Japanese in Burma; Montgomery fought with the BEF and evacuated at Dunkirk – but Montgomery went a step further. He spent the early days of his command with the troops, sizing up the situation, winning their confidence. Soon a new spirit began to flow through the battered 8th Army: Montgomery was here, he was in charge, and he was going to give Rommel a beating.

The Germans were beginning to struggle and were losing the battle for supplies. Rommel's supply line stretched more than 1,000 miles and was open to British attack. Montgomery was receiving a stream of troops from Britain and tanks from America, by way of the Horn of Africa. In August 1942, Rommel received 13,000 tons of supplies; that same month, Montgomery received 500,000 tons.

Rommel knew he would have to move quickly, or the shifting weight of supplies would overwhelm him and he would stand no chance at all. On the night of August 31, Axis forces attacked the southern end of the British defense, driving through near the Qattara Depression. Unfortunately for Rommel, the British had mined the region heavily, and it took most of the night for his forces to clear a path.

The next morning, as they turned to drive north behind the British, they met heavy resistance from British bombers and artillery. Grant tanks entrenched on Alam Halfa Ridge pounded his troops mercilessly. By September 3, the offensive had stalled and was in serious danger of collapsing. Rommel had already lost 43 tanks; he could not afford to lose more.

That evening, Axis forces wisely withdrew, leaving them wide open for a British counterattack. Montgomery, however,

did not follow up, claiming the British army was in no condition to drive "headlong into the enemy."

After the Alam Halfa offensive, both sides continued receiving improved arms. Rommel increased the number of Mark III Specials (with the new longer gun) and added some 30 Mark IV Specials, each mounting the new 75mm long-barreled gun. He also had 86 of the deadly 88s, and nearly 100 antitank guns captured from the Russians that were nearly as good.

THE DREADED 76.2s

Throughout the desert war, German 88mm guns (see p. W:IC71) wreaked havoc on Allied tanks, and it seems that every entrenched "big gun" fired at Allied tankers was credited with being one of the dreaded 88s. In truth, by 1942, Germany was using a mixture of 88mm guns and captured 76.2mm Russian guns. Germany captured so many of the 76.2mm guns that they began manufacturing ammunition for them.

Allies facing heavy antitank fire were prone to credit all such devastating fire to the 88s, and from a tanker's point of view the end result was the same. The 76.2mm Russian guns were devastating at point-blank range, and nearly impossible to tell from their larger 88mm cousins, especially in the heat of battle.

Inexperienced American soldiers, new to the region, were especially prone to these kinds of mistakes. To many, every antitank gun was an 88 and every enemy tank a Tiger. GMs may wish to play on this sort of paranoia, keeping his players in the dark about the truth of their attackers, especially in low-light conditions such as darkness, heavy rain, or dust storms.

The 8th Army continued to receive shiploads of new tanks. The latest arrival was the new American Sherman with its 75mm gun (see p. W102). Roosevelt ordered some 300 Shermans slated for American use diverted to the British as part of the Lend-Lease program; they proved to be an indispensable part of Montgomery's arsenal.

By October, Monty had a massive edge in almost every respect: manpower, tanks, artillery, antitank guns, and air power. The time was ripe for him to strike.



Operation Lightfoot

The line at El Alamein was unlike anything either side had faced in the desert. Instead of the open plains that allowed mobility and fluid warfare, El Alamein was a 38-mile gap of heavy defenses situated between the Mediterranean on the north and the impassable Qattara Depression to the south. In that gap, Rommel had packed the entire *Panzerarmee Afrika*.

Between the opposing forces, Rommel had planted 500,000 mines in a vast wasteland of potential death and destruction that his men called the Devil's Gardens. Vehicle mines, antipersonnel mines (S-mines), and even massive 250-lb. aircraft bombs rigged to trip wires were scattered into horseshoe-shaped fields that protected barbed-wire defenses, machine-gun emplacements, and concrete strongpoints.

Operation Lightfoot called for British sappers to clear the minefields at night, and for the 8th Army's best infantry – the ANZACs and Scottish Highlanders – to clear out any strongpoints. By morning, British armor would move up and form a shield around the foot soldiers, protecting them from any Axis counterattacks.

The main thrust of the attack would come in the north, with elements of the 13th Corps attacking in the south. To keep the operation concealed from the enemy, Montgomery ordered the creation of vast armies of dummy soldiers, vehicles, and guns. These cardboard, wood, and canvas replicas were scattered throughout the British line to cover shifting

troops and armor movements. The deception allowed Montgomery to mass his troops at the main point of attack without raising Axis suspicions. By late October, Montgomery was ready to move.

At 9:30 p.m., on October 23, British bombers moved in from the east to strike enemy positions and airfields. A hush fell over the British line as men waited patiently for zero hour. At 9:40 p.m., the call went out: "Troop, fire." A massive barrage of artillery shells from 882 field guns roared through the night. It was the largest artillery barrage since WWI; the explosions were heard 60 miles away, in Alexandria. Artillerymen up and down the line reloaded time and again, hurling a deadly rain into the night, until the barrels of their guns glowed red. By the end of the battle, they would rain more than 1 million shells on the German positions.

In the German camps, under the massive 900-round-per-minute assault, German and Italian troops fell dead from concussion waves alone. Blockhouses were obliterated; trenches collapsed and filled with sand. Shells smashed into the Devil's Gardens, exploding thousands of mines and sending geysers of rock, sand, and barbed wire hurtling into the air.

As the artillery fire continued, ANZACs and Highlanders moved forward and began clearing the minefields, assaulting enemy positions as they

went. Despite their success, the German mines still claimed hundreds of men and scores of vehicles. Small orange and green lamps marked cleared pathways, and miles of white tape delineated lanes of traffic. By morning, the advance had stalled, and Axis gun emplacements behind the minefields were raking the attackers with deadly fire.

Meanwhile, behind German lines, chaos reigned in the command structure. Rommel had flown to Austria for a medical procedure, and the *Panzerarmee* was currently in the hands of General Georg Stumme. Unfortunately, during the initial artillery barrage, Stumme had suffered a massive coronary and been lost in the ensuing attacks. No one knew he was dead, only that he was missing. For a time, the German army acted solely under local command. In time, General Ritter von Thoma, commander of the *Afrika Korps*, took over, but communications were damaged, making it difficult to conduct a coordinated defense. (Thoma was captured by the end of the fighting, and later reviewed the battle with Montgomery over dinner.)

The following night of October 24-25, a British column was hit by a Luftwaffe attack that set the supply trucks ablaze. The orange glow attracted one attack after another, as artillery, antitank guns, and a German bomber targeted the remaining vehicles. The Staffordshire Yeomanry Regiment was hammered by a cluster of 88s and lost 27 Grants, one after another, "as if someone had lit the candles on a birthday cake."

By 3 a.m., British commanders were convinced that Lightfoot was a failure. Despite standing orders to the contrary,

Montgomery was awakened from his sleep and an early morning meeting was convened. Montgomery met with his generals, listened to their pleas, then shook his head. Despite the horrendous losses – the 8th Army had lost more than 6,000 men already – he insisted that the plan be followed. Operation Lightfoot would continue, for better or worse.

On October 25, Rommel flew back to the front. If the situation for the British seemed hopeless, the German condition was even more so. Though the *Panzerarmee* had prevented a complete breakthrough, Montgomery's better-supplied forces were steadily grinding the Germans down. The 15th Panzer Division had taken the brunt of the British assault, and had lost 88 of its 119 tanks. Using forces up and down the line, Rommel attempted counterattacks, but the British defenses were too strong. It was a war of attrition, and Montgomery was winning.

By October 26, the Australian 9th Division had driven through most of the Devil's Gardens and had hooked northwest toward the coast. Montgomery wanted to exploit the 9th's gains, and so began pulling New Zealand units off the front for rest and refit, planning on throwing them in behind the 9th in an effort to capture the Coast Road and cut off Rommel's supply line completely.

Rommel was aware of the Australians' gains, and brought up the 90th Light Division from reserves and moved the 21st Panzer north some 30 miles from their position in the south. When Montgomery became aware of the reinforcement moves, he shifted his plan.

Rather than driving hard to the north, the 8th Army would attack ferociously some 5 miles south of there, near where the German and Italian armies adjoined one another. The elite 2nd New Zealand Division would lead the attack, which would begin with another concentrated artillery barrage. The 9th Armored Brigade and 1st Armored Division would follow up, punching through the remaining defenders, overrunning German and Italian artillery, and breaking through behind Rommel's lines.

Operation Supercharge

The British attack began on November 2 with a rolling barrage of artillery shells so thick that one commander said it seemed his men could lean up against it. The barrage walked through the minefields, covering about 100 yards a minute. The ANZACs that followed stayed so close to the barrage that many were overcome by the noxious fumes of the explosives. British gunners used up 15,000 shells that night alone.

As the New Zealand infantry overcame German entrenchments, the 9th Armored began their assault. Its commander, John Currie, had been told that he had to break the Axis gun line or take 100% casualties in trying. The 9th charged the waiting antitank guns at dawn, when a line of 20 German 88s opened fire. The carnage was tremendous, knocking out 103 of 123 British tanks. The division overran 35 smaller gun emplacements, but had not touched the massive line of 88s.

As the 1st Armored Division entered the fray, a massive tank battle began that would last all day and into the night. Losses were heavy on both sides, but the weight of overwhelming odds was on Montgomery's side. By November 3, Rommel began to withdraw his infantry, despite an order from Hitler that he fight to the last man.

The next day, the *Panzerarmee Afrika* was in general retreat. A string of vehicles over 40 miles long choked the Coast Road, leaving behind hundreds of acres of blackened, tangled wrecks, burning trucks and tanks, pulverized entrenchments, and a bed of fine dust 2' thick from the artillery barrages. Rommel lost 32,000 men, 450 tanks, and 1,000 guns. The cost to Britain was great as well, with some 13,500 troops killed and another 10,000 wounded. The 9th Armored Brigade survived with only 12 tanks.

Montgomery and Churchill were elated. The bloody battle at El Alamein – the most horrific battle of the desert – had seen the end of the Desert Fox. Across Britain, from one end of the country to the other, church bells rang throughout the day, proclaiming victory in the sands.

OPERATION TORCH



While Montgomery was fighting Rommel at El Alamein, a massive task force was gathering for one of the largest amphibious operations of the war.

For months, Roosevelt and Churchill had been planning a cooperative invasion of North Africa. Their target was not Libya or Egypt, where Britain and Germany had been chasing each other back and forth for two years. It was the Vichy-controlled French colonies to the west.

The invasion, called Operation Torch, was intended to gain control of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, allowing Anglo-American troops to strike at Rommel's back and put the Allies in control of all of North Africa once and for all.

The original plan called for the Allies to invade Vichy North Africa, then drive into Tunisia before the Germans could reinforce. But the landings would be difficult; the terrain was treacherous and nobody knew what the French might do.

The Vichy Question

Many Frenchmen harbored hard feelings toward Britain. Some viewed the British evacuation at Dunkirk as an abandonment of France. The British fleet's attack at Oran (p. 10) was still a sore point and deGaulle's Free French government, set up in London, was considered traitorous and unpatriotic.

France did not want to give Germany an excuse for occupying the rest of the mainland, and yet many French soldiers genuinely wanted to help the Allies. Combining those conflicting desires with inordinate French national pride made the mix volatile and impossible to predict.

Churchill and Roosevelt reasoned that if British forces went ashore in Vichy-held territories, the Vichy likely would resist. But if *American* forces made the landings, perhaps the defenders would surrender without a fight, joining sides with their American liberators to drive the Nazis from their shores.

In an effort to predict the French reaction to a North African invasion, the Allies flooded the region with spies and established an elaborate radio network to keep the information flowing. The early days of Operation Torch make an excellent backdrop for British or U.S. intelligence agents operating in exotic locales.

An American Operation

In an effort to forestall Vichy resistance, it was decided that every soldier in the mixed Anglo-American force would wear an American flag on his shoulder. Even purely British units would carry the Stars and Stripes ashore. Vichy soldiers, it was hoped, would see the flag and lay down their arms without a fight. But it was not to be so.

Only days after Rommel's defeat at El Alamein, a massive concentration of more than 500 British and American ships – from as far away as Scotland, Canada, and the United States – moved into position along a 900-mile front ranging from Morocco to Algeria. More than 100,000 U.S. and British soldiers prepared to storm the beaches near key ports, supported by naval shore bombardment and carrier-based planes.

The attack was scheduled for November 8, 1942, with troops assembling and beginning landing procedures as early as 11 p.m. the night before. H-Hour was officially 1 a.m. Most forces began anchoring or assaulting beaches anywhere from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. By dawn, Operation Torch was under way.

Defending Forces

The targeted region consisted of more than 1 million square miles and was defended by about 120,000 Vichy soldiers. Most were colonial units, made up of native soldiers commanded by French officers, that proved themselves solid fighters both during and after Torch. The defenders also included a mix of Foreign Legion units, French units (*Chasseurs d'Afrique*), and Zouaves (Frenchmen born in Africa). Armored forces included about 250 outdated tanks (including the H35 and R35) and 150 armored cars.

The French air force in North Africa consisted of about 500 planes. Most were of intermediate quality, but the fighters were superior to the carrier-bound planes used by the Allies.

Although the bulk of the French fleet was based at Toulon, France still maintained a moderate naval presence in North Africa. In addition to a smattering of destroyers and small craft, the Allies would have to contend with the unfinished

French battleship *Jean Bart*. The boat was moored in the harbor at Casablanca and was unable to move. But her massive 15" guns were operational and could prove lethal to invading Allied ships. The port would have to be taken by land, after amphibious assaults north and south of the harbor.

In addition, the French battleship *Richelieu* was stationed at Dakar (off the western tip of Africa) along with three cruisers. The small task force could have interfered with landings in Morocco, but it did not set sail.

WESTERN MOROCCO

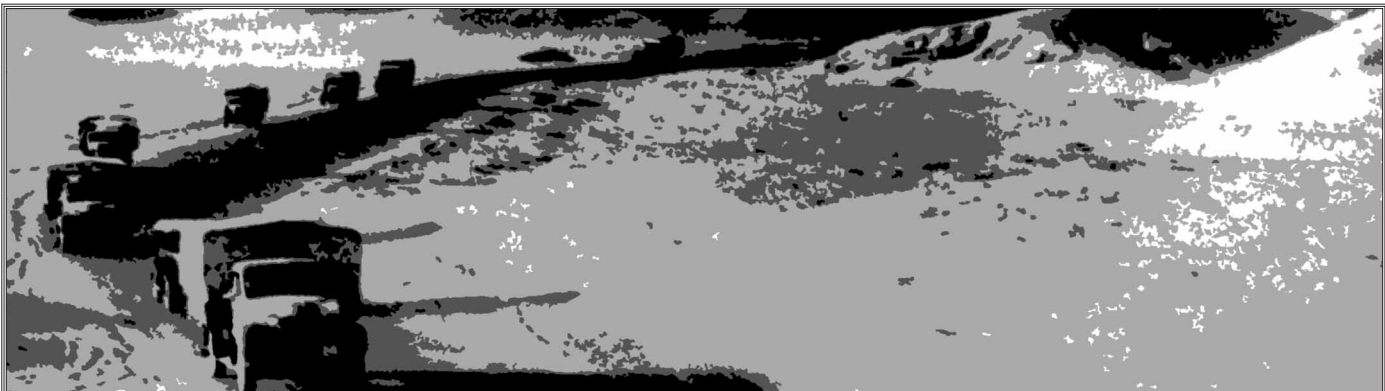
General Patton commanded the Western Task Force, which was made up solely of American troops and was tasked with taking key objectives in western Morocco. It was the only Task Force that launched from the U.S. mainland – the other two task forces sailed from Scotland.

Patton's ground forces included the U.S. 3rd and 9th Infantry divisions (minus the 39th Combat Team, which went to Algiers); the 2nd Armored Division; the 70th and 756th Tank Battalions; the 603rd, 609th, and 702nd Tank Destroyer Battalions; the 71st and 72nd Signal Companies; and the 36th Combat Engineer Regiment. The naval force (also American) included five aircraft carriers, three battleships, seven cruisers, 38 destroyers, and dozens of support and transport ships.

The western landings were among the most difficult, with high seas making it nearly impossible to land men or vehicles without mishap. Landing craft in this area could flood, capsize, miss their intended landing zone, or suffer some other mishap. (See *Control Rolls* on pp. W151-152 and apply a penalty of -2 for choppy water; most helmsmen will have skill 13.) Soldiers burdened with 60-lb. packs drowned as they struggled to shore in high water. Vehicles were even lost due to simple mistakes; a landing ramp was lowered too early at one site, and an officer simply drove his jeep into 8' of water.

Even climbing down cargo netting into rolling landing craft was dangerous, requiring a successful Climbing-2 roll. Failure could drop a soldier into the sea, possibly trapping him between the two vessels and crushing him, or at the very least toss him ungracefully into the landing craft for 1d damage.

Patton's force made three landings around Casablanca. Operation Blackstone landed near the port of Safi, some 140 miles southwest. Operation Goalpost landed at Port Lyautey 60 miles northeast. The third landing, Operation Brushwood, landed at Fedala, a small port just northeast of the city.



Operation Blackstone

The troops at Safi had to get ashore quickly, take the small port there, and then begin a 140-mile trek northward to Casablanca. Shortly after midnight, scouts in rubber boats moved in to mark the harbor, but were spotted and took heavy fire. Although they were inexperienced, most of the troops made it ashore, only to be pinned down by Vichy sniper fire. General Ernest Harmon personally went ashore and rallied the troops, who then dealt with the French snipers.

At dawn, two stripped-down destroyers (the *Bernadou* in front, the *Cole* behind), each carrying 147 soldiers, steamed straight into the harbor. Crew members of the *Bernadou* set off a patriotic red, white, and blue fireworks display, but only a single gunner stopped firing his 75mm gun. The other artillery units simply used the fireworks as targeting aids.

The first destroyer returned fire and steamed straight toward shore. It scraped a rocky outcropping and nosed into a sandy beach, battered, but with cargo intact. The *Cole* faced less opposition – the *Bernadou* had softened the French guns considerably – and managed to tie up at a dock. Some 300 soldiers stormed the port, taking it quickly.

Fighters from the escort carrier *Santee* were dispatched to attack a column of trucks filled with French reinforcements, and by midday the port at Safi was in Allied hands.

Operation Goalpost

The landings near Port Lyautey also had difficulties. The soldiers were to seize both the port and an airfield some 3 miles to the north. The commanding officer, Major General Lucian Truscott Jr., sent scouts toward the shore who soon flashed him a warning signal: The defenders were alerted to the attack. Truscott's original plan had been to land four battalions at five different locations along the beach, then detach a unit of 75 men to take the airfield. But several of Goalpost's ships had been delayed, and the ship-to-ship radios were malfunctioning. Truscott delayed the attack, and an unknowing President Roosevelt radioed a demand to the French to capitulate, further warning the Vichy defenders of an imminent attack.

As the men of Goalpost went ashore, they were hit hard by artillery and machine-gun fire. Chaos reigned across all five beaches. Communications were down, landing craft capsized or missed their beach assignments, green troops panicked and froze, and a British reconnaissance plane was shot down by American anti-aircraft fire. Once ashore, the troops faced the daunting task of assaulting the Casbah – a heavy concrete French fortress that was a nest of French snipers. At Truscott's bidding, Wildcat fighter-bombers destroyed the Casbah gates, and the men of Operation Goalpost assaulted the fortress, capturing some 250 Frenchmen. Soon, a small group of men reached the airfield and captured it, as well.

Operation Brushwood

Major General Jonathan Anderson worked directly under Patton to command the landings at Fedala. His battalion lost contact with Patton during the landings, and the inexperienced American soldiers panicked and stalled. French mortar and artillery fire forced the attackers to entrench and wait for reinforcements. Despite an offshore naval battle, which included

heavy fire from the dry-docked *Jean Bart*, Patton eventually made the beach, where – in a fit of anger – he organized the cowering troops and established a secure beachhead. By November 10, the Brushwood force had surrounded Casablanca and planned to attack at dawn. An hour before the assault, the French capitulated and Patton entered the city.

GREEN U.S. TROOPS

For the most part, the American troops in North Africa had never seen combat. Most were fresh from training and found themselves thousands of miles from home, assaulting a foreign beach under hard conditions.

In a realistic campaign, American soldiers in Operation Torch will be low-point characters; few (if any) should have Combat Reflexes. Fright checks should be frequent and may stem from things like climbing cargo netting into a landing craft in 15' seas, trying to swim to the surface after your landing craft capsizes, assaulting the beach while taking machine-gun or mortar fire, being pinned down in urban fighting, or the sight (or sound!) of incoming Axis armor. Even simple things like the roar of incoming aircraft may trigger a Fright Check – even if it turns out to be an Allied plane!

Some Torch troops (e.g., experienced British soldiers, American Rangers) may be higher-point characters or have game bonuses such as Combat Reflexes) to help them stand firm during such incidents.

ORAN

Like Patton's group in Morocco, the ground forces at Oran were also completely American. They consisted of the 1st Infantry Division, 1st Armored Division, 1st Ranger Battalion, 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, 105th Coast Artillery Battalion (which acted as an anti-aircraft unit), and the 106th Separate Coast Artillery Battalion. The naval group – made up of ships from the Royal Navy – included two escort carriers, two cruisers, 23 destroyers, and assorted other ships.

The initial landings were made by a small armored task force disembarked near Mersa Bou Zedjar, while the U.S. 26th Combat Team landed at Andalouses Bay. To the east of the city, a mixed force (the 1st Ranger Battalion, 16th and 18th Combat Teams, and a few tanks) assaulted the region around Azrew.

Unlike the Moroccan landings, ground forces at Oran met little resistance. Once ashore, forward elements encountered mostly light resistance along roads and in villages (an armored car here, a machine-gun nest there). Several French emplacements were simply taken by surprise. At Saint Cloud, a large village of stone and concrete, machine-gun and artillery fire stalled the advance for some time, but even that was eventually overcome. Moderate fighting also occurred at Misserhin (a key road junction) on the heights above the city proper and at the main airfield. An airborne operation to capture the airfield failed miserably, with most of the British and U.S. paratroops landing far from their drop zone.

In a valiant if ill-conceived naval effort called Operation Reservist, British-captained ships – former U.S. Coast Guard cutters renamed *HMS Walney* and *Hartland* – attempted to break through harbor booms and land 400 soldiers from the 6th Armored Infantry directly in the port. Both ships were damaged and sunk by shore batteries and Vichy destroyers. Captain Peters and 17 crew members of the *Walney* swam ashore and were captured; they were liberated from a prison cell on November 10. Peters was awarded the Victoria Cross, albeit posthumously; he was killed in a plane crash the following day.

ALGIERS

The Allies believed Algiers was the key to winning over French North Africa. It was hoped that French resistance would be light. Mixed British and American troops assaulted the beaches. America provided the 34th Infantry Division and the 39th Regimental Combat Team, while Britain supplied the 1st and 6th Commandos and parts of the 78th Infantry Division (11th Brigade and a recon squadron). The landings were supported by the Royal Navy with two carriers, three cruisers, 13 destroyers, and a mix of landing and support ships.

The British 11th Infantry Brigade landed near Castiglione while the 1st Commando and U.S. 168th Regimental Combat Team took Sidi Feruch. Sixth Commando landed just west of Algiers, capturing Fort Duperre. To the east, 1st Commando and the U.S. 39th Regimental Combat Team landed near Ain Taya and drove west to Fort D'Estrees, then inland to the airfield near Maison Blanche.

Almost none of the forces at Algiers met serious resistance, not so the naval forces. As in the harbor attack at Oran, two British destroyers rammed the booms at Algiers, breaking into the harbor. The *HMS Malcolm* was badly damaged, and did not make it to shore. The *HMS Broke*, however, managed

to land about 250 troops at the port. She was pounded by shore batteries on the way out and sank the next morning.

The offloaded soldiers faced heavy machine-gun fire from French Senegalese troops. The attackers held their ground but ran dangerously low on ammunition. About 11:30 a.m., the French machine-gunners were reinforced by tanks and armored cars. Surrounded, outgunned, and with no hope of reinforcements, the Allied soldiers surrendered shortly after noon.

Despite the failed port attack, nearby ground assaults made good progress. Heavy fighting took place in only a handful of locations. At the village of El Bier, the 168th Regiment engaged in intense house-to-house street fighting, much of it in the town's marketplace. Most of the rest of the region was taken quickly.

SUCCESS

Despite the difficulties, by the end of the day Operation Torch had achieved most of its objectives. Most Vichy soldiers – even those who fought tenaciously – were glad to see the Allies, and willingly surrendered their weapons once they had put up a “proper” defense. Fighting for Vichy France was a matter of honor, but once that honor had been defended, most Frenchmen welcomed the American soldiers.

Soon the northwestern coast of Africa was back in Allied hands. American soldiers handed out literally tons of candy and gum, and shared their smokes with their newfound French companions. Many American donated their milk rations to local children, and the growing Franco-American camaraderie prompted a run on French-English dictionaries.

Operation Torch was mostly a success, though the Allies had failed to reach Tunisia before the Germans could reinforce. U.S. and British troops could now move east and trap the Desert Fox between the Torch forces and Montgomery's 8th Army.

LAST STAND IN TUNISIA



Once Allied forces were firmly ashore, they began racing for Tunisia. No one knew how many troops Rommel had stationed there, nor how quickly the Desert Fox himself might arrive. But the Allied troops were told, “Get there, and get there quickly.” American Rangers and British SAS Commandos raced across the rocky terrain in an effort to hit Tunisian defenders hard and fast; swarms of infantry followed them.

By mid-November, the Allies were well into the rugged, mountainous country, but soon they faced stiff opposition. Hitler was pouring soldiers into Tunisia at 1,000 men per day, a rate the Allies could not match. The Luftwaffe struck at advancing Allied columns as the Americans struggled to develop a solid supply line. Rommel had hurried the 5th Panzer Army toward Tunisia, and now the American 2nd Corps was facing the German armies for the first time.

Then the rains came. Winter in Tunisia is a time of icy rains that turn the deserts into an ocean of sticky mud. Almost overnight, the entire region became a giant quagmire. The Tunisian mud had a “flypaper quality all its own,” said Hollywood producer Darryl Zanuck, then a colonel in the Signal Corps. “There are no puddles, and you don't slip or splash;

you just sink in sort of gentle-like and stay there.” Vehicles sank to their axles and could not be moved, men mired down in the mud made little headway, and motorcycles caught in the thick substance were impossible to extract.

U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was now commander in chief of Allied forces in North Africa, and he was not happy. His advance had stalled, and there was nothing to do but wait out the miserable Tunisian winter.

The stalemate in northern Tunisia was bloody and frustrating. Much like the siege at Tobruk, the battle consisted of a series of probes and skirmishes that resulted in neither side gaining much of anything. Instead of heat and dust, the armies battled wet, icy rains. It was a miserable, monotonous winter.

By mid-February, the U.S. 2nd Corps was spread out along the Tunisian border. Eisenhower wasn't impressed. The U.S. troops were green; few had seen any combat other than the brief fighting during Torch. Major General Lloyd R. Fredendall, 2nd Corps' commander, had spread his troops haphazardly across the mountainous front, rather than creating a mobile reserve to plug any holes the German forces might exploit. It seemed the American were holding their line by pretense rather than power.

Rommel had brought most of the *Panzerarmee Afrika* to Tunisia in January 1943. Montgomery had chased him the entire way, coming to a halt at the Mareth Line (p. 110). Rommel had stopped Montgomery's pursuit, leaving a rear guard to hold the British army at bay while the rest of the *Panzerarmee* advanced on Eisenhower's 2nd Corps. Rommel planned on joining his army to the 5th Panzer Army, wiping out the Torch invaders, then turning the full might of the Italian-German combined armies on Montgomery once again while the 8th Army dangled at the end of a 1,500-mile supply line.

Rommel flew to Berlin to discuss the situation with Hitler. The resulting conversation stunned the Desert Fox as Hitler launched into a furious rage. It was then that Rommel realized that, "Adolf Hitler simply did not want to see the situation as it was, and that he reacted emotionally against what his intelligence must have told him was right." Rommel returned to Tunisia in February, determined to support what was plainly a lost cause.



KASSERINE PASS

Tunisia is split by two ridges of mountains that run north-south through most of the country. Early Allied victories had allowed the Americans to push as far as the eastern range, called the Eastern Dorsal, but the German 5th Panzer Army had pushed them back to the Western Dorsal. Access to western Tunisia was possible through five passes in the Western Dorsal.

Rommel argued with 5th Panzer's commander, Colonel General Jürgen von Arnim, as to what steps the combined armies should take. Rommel wanted to drive through the western mountains, taking advantage of the poorly arranged U.S. defenses there. Arnim argued in favor of a static defense while the German armies resupplied. The argument lasted for weeks, during which time Fredendall vacillated over which of the passes to reinforce most heavily. In time, Field Marshal Kesselring arrived to settle the dispute; the Axis armies would attack through the passes.

By February 18, aerial reconnaissance had convinced Fredendall that Kasserine Pass would be Rommel's intended target. It was only lightly defended by a single battalion and an

engineer regiment that had never seen combat. The 26th Infantry Regiment was moved from the south to reinforce, arriving at almost the same time as Rommel.

Hourglass-shaped and narrowing to only 1,500 feet wide, the pass opened to the west on a broad plain, with the road splitting off to the north and south. The Americans set up their defenses in the basin, intending to allow the Germans to enter the pass, but not exit it. On the afternoon of February 19, 1943, German panzers poured into the pass, but were hit hard by waiting British artillery and antitank guns. As dusk fell, the *Afrika Korps'* commander decided to take the pass by guile and stealth, rather than sheer force.

Under the cover of night, small patrols of German infantry hiked atop the hills overlooking the pass, quietly took out advanced British reconnaissance nests, and dropped into the basin unnoticed. By midnight, they had killed, captured, or routed most of the British defenders, opening the way for another German advance. Only the timely arrival of another U.S. infantry battalion and a small British armored force of 11 tanks prevented a German breakthrough.

By morning, the Allies still held the pass. Rommel was not happy. British probes along the Mareth Line to the east had become increasingly frequent. Rommel expected a full-scale attack from Montgomery at any time. He would have to deal with the Americans quickly, or be caught in a nasty two-front battle that he could not win. On February 20, the Germans mounted a ferocious attack at Kasserine, pounding the American and British defenders with Nebelwerfer rockets and flooding the pass and basin with tanks and men. By midday, the British armored force had lost its last tank; the American engineers fell back in disarray. At 4:30 that afternoon, men and tanks from the *Afrika Korps*, Italian *Centauro* division, and the 10th Panzers poured through Kasserine in victory. Scouting patrols to the north and south reported no resistance, but Rommel stopped the offensive fearing an Allied counterattack.

Allied troops took the time to reinforce both roads, stubbornly digging in. The U.S. 1st Armored Division rushed to the pass and entrenched nearby, waiting for Rommel to make his move. The next morning, February 21, the American units dug in along the southern Tebessa road, while British troops tried to consolidate a hold to the north along the Thala road.

Rommel struck hard. The better equipped and newly reinforced Americans held tenaciously to the south, but the 10th Panzers drove the British from their position, sending them retreating back to Thala village. That afternoon, after a hard four-day march over muddy mountain roads, the U.S. 9th Infantry Division's artillery battalions arrived at Thala. The exhausted soldiers spent all night setting up their 105mm howitzers, inspiring the battered British soldiers. At dawn, as German tanks assaulted the Allies, the 9th Infantry's artillery opened up, raking fire up and down the advancing German column. The initial attack broke off. A second one was planned for that afternoon, but Rommel demurred. The once valiant Desert Fox had become disheartened at the quantity and quality of American supplies and reinforcements, and decided that the flow of Allied materiel was too much for his battered forces.

On February 23, he pulled his troops back from Kasserine Pass, turning his attention to Montgomery and the Mareth Line in a last-ditch attempt to win in Tunisia.

THE MARETH LINE

The Mareth Line was a 25-mile gap between the rugged Matmata Hills of the Eastern Dorsal range and the Mediterranean coast. The gap was easily defended and lined with French fortifications built in 1939 to prevent an Italian invasion of Tunisia: concrete blockhouses, gun emplacements, barbed wire, and mine fields.

After pulling out of Kasserine, Rommel drove his troops southeast, abandoning his Tunisian gains to link up with the remainder of his army by early March. On the 6th, near the town of Medenine, 25 miles southeast of the Mareth Line proper, Rommel launched a preemptive strike against the British defenders. Air reconnaissance had warned Montgomery of the coming attack, and the British had carefully concealed a line of antitank guns around the prospective battlefield. In a mirror image of the attack at Halfaya Pass, British gunners held their fire until the last minute, opening up on the German tanks in a barrage of fire and steel that annihilated the attackers. Tank after tank burst into flames or was ripped apart; the German attack ended before it had even begun.

Carrying the humiliation of the defeat, Rommel returned to Berlin, never to set foot in Africa again. He was a broken man, emotionally depressed and physically ill. Hitler ordered him to take sick leave and turned over command of Army Group Africa (the 10th Panzers and Rommel's *Panzerarmee Afrika*) to General Arnim.

TUNIS

The final days of the desert war were critical for both the Axis and Allies. British units in North Africa had become hardened, elite fighting units; the French had gelled into a cohesive fighting force; the ANZACs had proven their mettle and gained a reputation as an elite group of soldiers; even the Americans had faced combat and were ready for more. But hardened Allied units were needed in other parts of the world. If Montgomery and Eisenhower could wrap up the desert war, the North African veterans could be shipped off to Sicily and Italy for a massive assault on that Axis stronghold.

Arnim faced exactly the opposite problem. He needed to tie up the Allied troops for as long as possible, holding them in North Africa while Hitler figured out how to defeat Russia. Army Group Africa had dug in along a ragged 125-mile semicircle that stretched from Bizerte to Enfidaville, expecting an Allied attack at any moment. They planted mines in the valleys, fortified the ridges, and used air-powered drills and hammers to carve dugouts from solid rock.

Alexander had planned to use the British 1st and 8th armies to mop up the Germans, referring to the Americans as "ignorant, ill-trained, and soft." U.S. 2nd Corps



commander Patton and deputy commander Major General Omar Bradley were outraged. They flew to Algiers and confronted Eisenhower, who, as commander in chief of North Africa, could override the British plan. Eisenhower ordered the 2nd Corps moved north of the British 1st Army, and told Alexander to revise his plan, allowing the Americans to attack Bizerte by themselves.

On April 19, 1943, the final offensive of the desert war began, codenamed Operation Vulcan. The British 8th Army struck near Endifaville to take two strongly defended heights: 1,000' Djebel Garci and 500' Takrouna Hill. The 4th Indian Division slogged up the slopes and crevasses of Djebel Garci for two days, suffering heavy losses. They had only secured the southern flank of the hill before being ordered to hold.

The New Zealand Division, including the 28th Maori Battalion, struck at Takrouna and met equally fierce resistance. The sides of the hill were peppered with caves in which German and Italian soldiers were entrenched. The high ground allowed the defenders to throw, or roll, grenades down the slopes and into the attackers with ease. The New Zealanders roped themselves together like mountaineers, using telephone wire from field telephones, and pressed forward, even scaling a sheer 20' cliff face while under heavy fire. More than 500 New Zealanders were killed.

The treacherous fighting at Djebel Garci and Takrouna was only a taste of things to come, for the entire region was full of mountainous terrain. But the 8th Army's attack had not been intended to win Tunisia. They were only to draw German defenders away from the thrust of the real assault, which would be made by the British 1st Army to the north.

Longstop

On April 22, the British 1st Army began a slow advance through equally treacherous terrain. One especially notable peak was called Longstop. Longstop sat astride two key roads to Tunis and had become a sore point for the Allies in December; they had lost 500 men trying to take it from the Germans. While the 1st Army could bypass many German entrenchments in their drive to Tunis, Longstop had to be taken.

The British pounded the hill with artillery for a full day, but the defenders were dug in deep and simply waited for the barrage to clear. Under the cover of dark, two battalions of the 36th Infantry Brigade crept up the western slopes. German infantry simply poked their heads from their entrenchments long enough to rain down heavy fire on the attackers, then once again went to ground. The skirmishes continued all night, and by morning the 36th had only managed to take the lowest of Longstop's slopes.

The following morning, the 8th Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders started up the hill. They were met with a rain of bullets that left their commander dead. John Anderson, a young major, stood upright in the face of the German barrage and rallied his men to follow him. The Highlanders charged, shouting and shooting. They scrambled through barbed wire and returned fire against the Germans even as they ran. The battalion reached the top, victorious, but at horrendous cost. Only 30 men remained, but the tide of the battle had been turned.

Hill 609

North of Longstop, the U.S. 2nd Corps had its own difficulties. They too had been stalled by a key elevation, this one called Hill 609 (named for its height in meters, as marked on French maps). Hill 609 towered over the Tine River valley 5 miles to the south. The valley provided a direct route to Mateur and the coastal plain, which was part of the 2nd Corps' objective. Unfortunately, German artillery on Hill 609 and across the river pounded the 2nd Corps when they tried to pass through the valley. The U.S. soldiers began calling the valley "the Mousetrap."

For four days, the U.S. 34th Infantry Division tried to take Hill 609, but German defenders tenaciously held their ground. As in other places, the defenders hurled and rolled grenades toward the attackers, and counterattacked whenever U.S. troops gained any ground. Their entrenched mortars and artillery made short work of almost every assault the Americans mustered. Strongpoints fell only after close combat using pistols, bayonets, knives, and even fists.

Then Bradley offered the 34th the use of 17 Sherman tanks. On April 30, the armor began crawling up the slopes of Hill 609 with the soldiers of the 34th Infantry following close behind. The tanks blew the German strongpoints to pieces, and by May 1, Hill 609 belonged to the Americans. Once again, the cost was high – 200 were dead, 1,600 wounded, 700 missing – but the 34th savored the victory after being manhandled at Kasserine Pass.

AFTERMATH

As the Americans cracked Hill 609 and the British conquered Longstop, Montgomery's 8th Army drove through the Mareth Line at last. Arnim demanded reinforcements from Sicily, but the operation met with disaster as Allied fighters shot down scores of German transports over the Mediterranean. Arnim pulled back to the high ground near Tunis and Bizerte, but it was too late.

On May 6, behind a rolling artillery barrage and a deafening bomb run by the RAF, the final German defenses shattered. Allied troops burst into Tunis and Bizerte on the afternoon of May 7. The Desert Rats were the first into Tunis, their vehicles still emblazoned with the famous red jerboa. That same day, the Americans rolled into Bizerte. Both cities were exuberant, as the native French residents had been none too happy with the German and Italian troops that had occupied their streets for the past six months. They showered the British and U.S. troops with roses, lilacs, poppies, kisses, and cries of "Vive!"

With Arnim's line broken and the key cities of Tunisia captured, Axis troops began surrendering by the thousands. During the last week of the offensive alone, more than 275,000 troops were taken prisoner. Most simply stacked their weapons and rode into Allied custody by the truckload.

During the Tunisian campaign, Britain lost 17,000 killed or missing, the United States 13,000, and France 9,000. But on May 13, 1943, Alexander cabled Churchill with the news: "The Tunisian campaign is over. We are masters of the North African shores."

THE MIDDLE EASTERN FRONT

We entered into the land to which you sent us out, and it is indeed flowing with milk and honey.

– Numbers 13:27

The Middle East was a strategically significant region that provided the shortest air routes from Britain to colonial holdings in the Pacific. In an effort to keep these air routes open, Britain maintained airfields and military forces in the region, even in countries that had officially gained independence (see *Iraq*, pp. 114-115). It was also home to the Persian Gulf Corridor – a land route from Iran into Russia that would later allow Allied supplies to bypass the dangerous, and often frozen, northern route into Murmansk and Archangel.

Maintaining control of the region and preventing the Axis from using it as a forward base was of paramount importance to British success in the war.

PALESTINE

At the turn of the century, Palestine – comprising modern Palestine, Jordan, and Israel, as well as parts of Syria and Lebanon – belonged to the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. During WWI, Britain promised to support the growing Arabic independence movement in exchange for Arab support against the Turkish army. The Arabs rallied behind Lawrence of Arabia, and Britain gained control of much of the region. But Britain did not hold up their end of the bargain, and continued to promote Jewish immigration.

To the Jews, the land was called Eretz Yisrael – “land of Israel” – and was the land God had promised to Jacob (Israel) and his descendants. In the 1930s, Jewish immigration increased dramatically as European Jews fled the growing Nazi regime. There were fewer than 100,000 Jews in the region during WWI; by WWII, that number had increased to half a million.

The Yishuv (“dwellers”), or local Jewish residents, welcomed the fleeing European Jews into Palestine, but Arab residents had no intention of handing over the land. So while Hitler was proceeding with his extermination campaign in central Europe, Arabs in the Middle East were waging their own war against the Jewish community in Palestine.

Arab Revolts

From 1936 to '39, Palestine was the site of Arab revolts that included sabotage and terrorism. The newly formed Arab Liberation Army instigated the revolts, but soon Haj Muhammed Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, took up the cause, forming the Arab Higher Committee to expand the fighting. There are claims that both Germany and Italy supported the mufti, funneling funds and arms into Palestine. PCs will encounter Arab rebels armed with

Oil

The Middle East also contained vast oil fields that were needed for civilian and military progress. Once the threat of war loomed on the horizon, the need for oil became even more pressing. Germany also eyed the precious resource, diplomatically courting many countries, including Iraq and Iran. Additionally, internal unrest gave rise to sabotage of the oil fields and pipelines. Throughout both the Middle Eastern and African campaigns, local dissatisfaction with British oversight often provided a small measure of aid to the Axis cause.

Possession of the Persian Gulf ports in Iraq and Iran was critical. Refineries in the Middle East prepared the crude oil for shipment, and tankers distributed it throughout the empire. Without the oil fields, the refineries, and the ports, the British military machine would grind slowly to a halt.



weapons from several different countries, including both Britain and Germany.

Arab sabotage was rampant. In a typical sabotage attempt on the crucial pipelines, a dozen Arabs would attack the infrastructure at some remote point with picks and shovels. Occasionally, some carried a mishmash of small arms. (In a group of a dozen saboteurs, use 2d-6 to determine how many carry firearms.) The saboteurs would dig around the sand-covered pipeline (a task which takes 3d+30 minutes), shove paraffin-soaked rags into the hole to provide greater-than-normal flame temperatures, set the rags ablaze, and then shoot or punch holes in the pipe. A successful sabotage attempt would create gouts of flame some 50' high.

Besides sabotage, the revolt included rioting and general strikes, terrorist attacks, and even assassination. It was, in many ways, a Palestinian civil war. In response to the revolt, Wavell authorized Orde Wingate to create the Special Night Squads (p. 113).

THE PEEL COMMISSION

In 1937, Britain charged Lord Peel with the task of finding a solution to the “Palestine problem” – the escalating conflict between Jewish and Arab factions. On July 7, Lord Peel’s commission recommended the partitioning of western Palestine into two states, one Jewish, one Arabic. Jerusalem would remain under British rule.

Some of the Jews in the region, headed by David Ben-Gurion, accepted the principle of partition, but the plan was not enough for most Jews and far too much for most Arabs. Almost everyone rejected the plan outright, and the Arab revolts continued unabated.

The White Paper

On May 17, 1939, Britain published a critical white paper: Parliamentary Document 6019. It stated that Britain intended to establish “an independent Palestinian State” that would “provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries” within 10 years. In order to maintain a primarily Arabic population, Jewish immigration was to be restricted, limiting the total Jewish population of the new country to less than one-third.

It seemed no one was happy with the solution. Many people in Britain, concerned with the Jews’ plight in Europe, saw it as a reversal of their country’s previous Zionist support. Arabs rejected the idea because it did not create an independent country immediately, nor did it prohibit Jewish residency there. And the international Jewish community saw it as an abomination, citing Britain’s apparent “moral collapse” in the face of Arab terrorism. Much of the world was simply horrified at the impact the policy would have on European Jews trying to flee an openly anti-Semitic regime in Germany.

THE HAGANAH

Earlier Arab uprisings (1920-21) had convinced Palestinian Jews that British support in the region was unreliable at best, and local defense groups sprung up in towns both large and small. Further rioting in 1929 congealed those groups into a coherent fighting force of thousands, with a comprehensive training program, underground production of weaponry, smuggling of small arms from Europe, and central arms depots.

The prewar revolts of 1936-39 finally transformed the paramilitary militia into an army – the Irgun Haganah (“Defense Organization”). Britain did not officially recognize the Haganah; Palestine’s senior RAF officer, Arthur Harris (p. 56), even called them “local toughs.” Despite the official non-recognition policy, Britain cooperated with the Haganah in creating civilian militias (Jewish Auxiliary Police, or *Notrim* – “guards”) and in establishing special military units.

With the release of the British white paper (see box, above), the Haganah threw its considerable support behind

illegal immigration and began organizing demonstrations against the British anti-Zionist movement. They continued to cooperate with the British military, viewing the empire as the lesser of two evils. In the summer of 1938, the Special Night Squads were formed. In 1941, the Haganah organized a full regiment of commandos, the *Palmach*.

PCs dealing with the Haganah may meet a young Moshe Dayan (p. 114), who served with it from 1929-39.

Special Night Squads

The Special Night Squads consisted mostly of Haganah soldiers, with a sprinkling of British volunteers, creating an odd and volatile mix. Despite the potential for disaster, the squads were a considerable success, partly because they acted on Haganah intelligence sources that the Brits had been unable to cultivate. The squads’ primary mission was countering Arab saboteurs and terrorists, but in reality their actions extended beyond simple self-defense.

The squads often went on 20-mile night patrols, walking lengths of pipeline and patrolling perimeters of refineries. The teams regularly made preemptive attacks on Arab terrorist hideouts, often along the Syrian and Lebanese borders. Many onlookers frowned upon the more proactive elements of the squads’ counter-terrorism – there were reports that the squads engaged in torture and assassination – but no official action was taken against them.

Despite the odd mix of personnel, PCs working in the Special Night Squads will find high levels of camaraderie between the Haganah and British soldiers. Patrols of 9-15 men were common, and usually took place from about 7 p.m. to midnight. Local food was better than the tinned rations found in the regular British army, and civilian Palestinian Jews welcomed the teams, treating them well wherever they went.

After the Special Night Squads began interfering with sabotage attempts, the Arab combatants went on the counteroffensive, setting up ambushes for the SNS. Several full-scale firefights, sometimes involving scores of Arab ambushers, took place around Kakab al Hawa, where the pipeline descended into the Jordan valley.

The Special Night Squads relied on surprise and mobility, stealth and guile. They were, in many ways, precursors to the soon-to-be-formed British commando units.

The Palmach

On May 19, 1941, Yishuv leadership established a regiment of commandos drawn mostly from veterans of the Special Night Squads. Working closely with the British military in Palestine, nine *pelugot machaz* (“strike companies”) were formed. The group came to be known as the Palmach – from the Hebrew acronym for *pelugot machaz*.

The new companies were made up of experienced soldiers, many of them trained by Orde Wingate himself. They were further trained and equipped by the British army in Palestine, and were designed to fill a dual role. First, they were to act as the backbone of a Palestinian defense force to protect British interests in the Middle East. Additionally, more than 600 Palmach troopers participated in the invasion of Syria and Lebanon (see *The French Levant*, p. 116).

MOSHE DAYAN

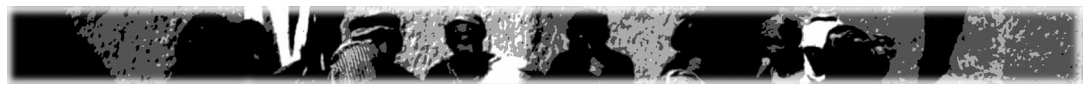
Moshe Dayan joined the Haganah in 1929 at the age of 14. He learned guerrilla warfare from Orde Wingate, and went on to serve with both the Special Night Squads and the Palmach. During the Arab riots, he served with the special police force in the Jezreel Valley and Galilee, but was arrested by the British in 1939 for Zionist activities. After serving two years in prison, he joined the British army, serving with it in Syria and Lebanon, where he lost his left eye. He worked closely with British intelligence in establishing a radio network for clandestine operations, should Palestine fall to the Axis. He continued to serve with the Haganah until 1948, then went on to distinguish himself in Middle Eastern politics for decades to come.

Forty hand-picked soldiers entered Vichy territory a day early, where they provided advanced reconnaissance information for the British, and sabotaged key Vichy communication and transportation lines by blowing bridges and railways, and cutting telephone and electrical lines.

The other Palmachniks went in with the main assault force, acting as pathfinders and guides for the Allied forces. The territory was well known to many of the veterans; some had operated along the Syrian frontier for years.

The Palmach eventually expanded to include a total of 12 companies, organized into the *Harel* (Jerusalem Corridor), *Yiftach* (Galilee), and *Ha-Negev* (Negev) brigades.

IRAQ

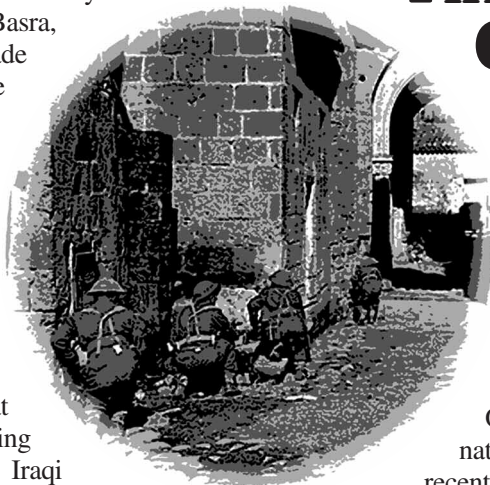


As with much of the Middle East, Britain seized Iraq from the Ottoman Empire during WWI and ruled it as a colony for nearly two decades. In 1932, the British formally recognized its independence, but maintained heavy political and economic influence. They held lucrative oil contracts and maintained military airfields at Habbaniya (on the Euphrates, west of Baghdad) and Shaibah (near the port of Basra). They also retained rights to move troops through the country. Iraqi nationals were not happy with the arrangement.

Despite their displeasure at British occupation, Iraq broke off official relations with Germany in September 1939. The following spring, anti-colonialist Rashid Ali became prime minister. Though he and his “Golden Square” (see box) had little love for Nazi Germany, they recognized that German support might mean an end to British control of Iraq. When Italy entered the war in June 1940, Iraq did not cut off diplomatic ties. It was Britain’s turn to be unhappy.

In January 1941, Britain removed Ali from power, replacing him with General Taha el Hashimi. The Golden Square seized power in a violent coup, installing Ali as the chief of the National Defense Government. Under the guise of troop movements to Palestine – as per their treaty – Britain began shipping troops into Basra, including the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade and 10th Indian HQ Division. With the port city firmly under British control, Churchill ordered additional troops diverted to Iraq.

On April 27, Ali refused to allow any additional British troops into the country until the existing ones had moved on. Britain immediately shifted part of the 1st King’s Own Regiment from Shaibah to Habbaniya, and Britain informed Ali that additional British troops would be arriving soon. On the night of April 29, 1941, Iraqi troops moved on the British airfield at Habbaniya.



THE GOLDEN SQUARE

Iraqi leader Rashid Ali el-Gailani took power in Iraq in 1940, but was removed by the British. He returned to power in 1941 by means of a violent coup instigated by a coalition of four pro-Nazi Iraqi colonels called the Golden Square: Salah ad-Din as Sabbagh, Kamil Shabib, Mahmud Salman, and Fahmi Sa’id.

The colonels were *extremely* anti-British, and willing to back up their sentiment with violence. Ali represented little more than a front man for the 1941 coup as the Golden Square and their military resources proposed, initiated, and arranged the coup.

The colonels were rounded up and three were executed shortly after Britain regained control of the country. Sabbagh managed to survive until 1945.

THE BATTLE OF HABBANIYA

Habbaniya was a small, picturesque airstrip along the Euphrates River about 60 miles from Baghdad. It was a lush, green compound, replete with eucalyptus trees, hibiscus, oleander, rose gardens, and green lawns. The compound was home to the pilots and families of RAF #4 Service Flying Training School, which consisted of about 60 antiquated aircraft (mainly Audaxes and Oxfords). It was guarded by a battalion of native levies, 18 RAF armored cars, and 400 recently arrived men of the King’s Own.



When Iraq moved against the base, ground crews hastily prepped the training aircraft for combat, and turned the nearby polo pitch into a secondary airfield.

Iraqi gun emplacements had been established on the escarpment about 1,000 yards to the south, and overlooked the airfield. Iraq had four divisions in the area, one at Kirkuk, two in Baghdad, and one south of Baghdad. They brought about 9,000 men, 50 guns, and several armored cars to Habbaniya.

Iraq warned the base commander, Air Vice Marshal H.G. Smart, that any attempt to take off would be met with artillery fire. In an attempt to forestall the coming Iraqi attack, a surprise bombing and strafing run commenced at first light on May 2. The Iraqis responded by shelling the airfields, damaging several aircraft, opening up with antiaircraft fire on the attackers, and even calling up fighters from Baghdad. That same day, Ali appealed to Hitler for military support.

Despite overwhelming odds, Iraq made no move to take the airfield in a ground assault. Using outdated aircraft flown by instructors and students, Britain gained air superiority within 24 hours. The small British group began sending out raiding parties, and by May 5, they had stormed the Iraqi position and driven them back from the escarpment. Two days later, the Iraqis withdrew from the region. The newly formed Habbaniya Air Striking Force had been a success.

IRAQI SURRENDER

As British troops pushed the Iraqis from the battlefield, Hitler was making arrangements to send Axis war materiel into the region, via Vichy holdings. On May 9, Axis aircraft began landing in Syria, and four days later the first German aircraft and first trainload of war supplies arrived in Mosul.

Britain continued to press the air attack, with bombing runs from Habbaniya striking at Iraqi airfields in Al Rachid, Mosul, and Baghdad, and against the Euphrates flood barriers near the Fallujah Plain. German Me 110s (see p. W:IC88) and He 111s attacked Habbaniya beginning May 12, but with little success.

On May 18, the British 4th Cavalry (Motorized) along with elements of the Transjordan Frontier Force and the Arab Legion arrived at Habbaniya, but the base was secure well before then. The following day, the British contingent – rechristened as Habforce – left Habbaniya and began a ground advance to Baghdad.

On May 28, Italy sent a dozen Fiat CR.42s (see p. W:GL34) to bolster the flagging Royal Iraqi Air Force, but it was to no avail. By May 30, Habforce reached Baghdad. Though the British forces were no match for the full division of soldiers guarding the city, Rashid Ali fled to Iran and requested a truce. By the 31st, Iraq was beaten, and a pro-British government was installed. Italy managed to extricate its small air force without incident; Germany left behind 14 Me 110s and five He 111s.

Iraq, firmly under British control, joined the Allies two years later, but Iraqi military units did not participate in the war.

MIDDLE EAST FORCES

Although they did not experience nearly the buildup seen in nations more directly involved in the fighting, the indigenous forces of the Middle East did evolve and expand throughout the war. GMs can use the following information as a general guide on military capability for campaigns set in the region. More information on French forces in the region appears on pp. W:RH13, 20-21.

Iraq

1939: Four infantry divisions; a coastal/river flotilla, including the royal yacht and coastal tug on the Persian Gulf and four motor patrol boats on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers; and three air wings, two composed of British aircraft, one of Italian.

1941: Six infantry divisions with increased motorized support; the same coastal/river flotilla; and six air wings with a total of 56 aircraft, mostly British and American.

Iran

1939: Nine mixed divisions and five independent brigades; two sloops, five patrol boats, and several motor patrol boats on the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; and three air regiments comprising about 200 planes, mostly Hawkers and de Havillands.

1941: Iran added an independent mechanized brigade containing tank, AT, and infantry regiments, and increased the army personnel to 120,000 men. The armed police force fielded a corps of seven mixed regiments and 15 mixed battalions that served as internal security and border patrols.

Lebanon

1939: Two French infantry battalions (*Bataillons de Chasseurs Libanois*) and one cavalry squadron. They all fought with the Vichy army after the French surrender.

1941: After the Vichy surrender in Lebanon, all French troops changed their allegiance to Free French. Three infantry battalions were added.

Syria

1939: Seven French infantry battalions, 17 squadrons of cavalry, three light mounted/mechanized desert warfare companies, three sapper companies, and one unit of artillery. A regiment of French Foreign Legionnaires (the 6th *Régiment Etrangère Infanterie*) was stationed in Damascus. All Syrian troops came under Vichy control after the fall of France in 1940.

1941: After the Vichy surrender in Syria, all Syrian troops changed allegiance to Free French. The resulting force consisted of nine infantry battalions, a cavalry regiment, three units of shock troops, two artillery units, and a tank battalion.

THE FRENCH LEVANT



Following the French surrender in 1940, both Syria and Lebanon fell under Vichy control (see p. W:RH14). Germany began to build airfields in Damascus, Palmyra, and Rayak, with the hope of supporting a pro-Axis coup in Iraq. In response to the Axis buildup, Churchill resolved to liberate the region from Vichy control. Churchill and DeGaulle expected a quick victory; what they got was a tough battle against determined Vichy troops.



was marked by dangerous reconnaissance patrols and deadly firefights at short ranges.

Bitter fighting took place in the city of Merdjayoun during the week of June 19, including a heavy counterattack involving Vichy armor. Holding onto Merdjayoun and the nearby pass was critical, for it could provide the Vichy forces an easy withdrawal route into Palestine – something the Allies could not afford. Only after intense street fighting under the leadership of Lieutenant A.R. Cutler of the 5th Australian Field Regiment was the battle won. Merdjayoun was recaptured on June 25 and held until the end of the invasion. Cutler was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Damascus was garrisoned by the elite Vichy French *6th Régiment Etrangère Infanterie*. The attacking Free French 13th DBLE paused when they encountered their brother legionnaires on the city's outskirts – were the defenders friend or foe? After a long pause, the 13th sent out a reconnaissance patrol, which was promptly captured by the 6th REI; in a chivalrous, typically legionnaire gesture, neither side had fired a single shot. Sadly, both brigades knew that the battle had begun, and after fierce, bloody fighting – including bayonet charges – the 6th fell back and Damascus soon belonged to the battered but victorious 13th Demi-Brigade. Prisoners were treated more like brother legionnaires than POWs; the dead were buried together, side by side.

OPERATION EXPORTER

On June 8, 1941, Commonwealth and Free French forces invaded Syria and Lebanon in Operation Exporter. Allied forces included two Australian infantry brigades (the 21st and 25th), two Free French brigades (*1e* and *2e Brigade d'infanterie*, composed mostly of Senegalese troops), the Indian 5th Infantry Brigade, and the Free French *13ème Demi-brigade de Légion Etrangère* (13th DBLE – a half brigade of the French Foreign Legion). The Allies faced Vichy French troops (see box, *Middle East Forces*, p. 115) that were under-equipped, but tough and well trained. Many of the defenders were also Senegalese, pitting not only Free French against Vichy, but Senegalese against Senegalese. At Damascus, legionnaire fought legionnaire for the first and only time in history.

The Allies sustained heavy casualties, thanks in part to Vichy air support. The 1st Royal Fusiliers, a battalion of the 5th Indian Brigade, was cut off by a Vichy counterattack and destroyed. Australian forces attempting to cross the Litani River met with stubborn resistance. Vichy destroyers had sailed upriver and were shelling the Australians' positions. Only a return bombardment by Australian artillery finally drove off the Vichy boats. Once across the river, the fighting turned into a cat-and-mouse game played amidst the jagged peaks and ravines of the mountainous terrain. Such fighting

As the weeks wore on, the Free French forces – especially the Senegalese – tired of battling their countrymen. The British began to view them as hesitant and unreliable, so the final part of the battle fell primarily to Commonwealth troops. In early July, the Australian 17th Brigade broke off from Habforce (p. 115) on its return from Baghdad and came to reinforce the British attackers.

By mid-July, the battle had been won. The Commonwealth had sustained almost 5,000 casualties – nearly a third of them Australian. Some Vichy troops allied themselves with the Free French after the battle. Others were evacuated by the Allies, most to their home territories in North Africa.

About 1,000 men from the Vichy 6th REI joined the Free French 13th DBLE after Damascus.

Aftermath

On July 12, 1941, the last Vichy French troops surrendered to the Allied invasion and a cease-fire was called; an armistice at Acre was signed two days later. DeGaulle's Free French government (see p. W:RH12) recognized the newly liberated countries' independence, but continued to occupy both Syria and Lebanon. The latter declared war on Germany on February 27, 1945. Both countries became charter members of the United Nations later that year.

IRAN

Persia became officially known as Iran in 1935, but throughout the war was still popularly called Persia. It was an important cross-road, a corridor through which supplies could be shipped from Britain to colonial holdings in Southeast Asia.

Iran had officially declared neutrality with the outbreak of the war, but its neutrality was questioned by Britain in the early years of the war when a treaty between Iran and Russia allowed the transit of goods from Iran to Germany through Russian territory. When British troops moved on Baghdad (p. 115), Iraqi leader Rashid Ali fled to Iran, tipping the scales of Iran's neutrality even more toward Germany. When Germany attacked Russia in 1941, Russia joined Britain in protesting German support in Iran. British intelligence claimed more than 2,000 German nationals lived in the country and that 700 held positions in the Iranian government. Iran claimed the figure was greatly exaggerated.

Regardless of the true figures, Iranian leader Reza Shah Pahlavi believed Germany would win the war. He continued to support Hitler's Germany, even if in subtle ways. Churchill decided something had to be done.

While British military forces prepared for armed invasion, British politicians broached the subject to the Russians and found them amiable to a combined military effort aimed at keeping the vital Persian corridor open. A joint plan of action was worked out in late July, and an ultimatum was presented to the shah on August 17: expel Germany from Iran or face the consequences.

The shah's response was less than satisfactory to Churchill and Stalin. Iran would reduce the number of Germans in Iran, but they would retain the technical and communications specialists – a group that the Allies were especially eager to see removed. More drastic measures were begun.

OPERATION COUNTENANCE

At dawn on August 25, 1941, British forces destroyed the Iranian fleet at Abadan and attacked with ground forces along a 600-mile front that extended from the Persian Gulf to Turkey. Russia attacked simultaneously, bombing targets all the way to Tehran and swarming over the border with tanks and infantry. Stalin's men were in retreat from the Nazi invasion, and yet he chose to send thousands of men in three mechanized columns into the small Middle Eastern country – control of Iran was that crucial if he was to receive enough British and American supplies in the coming months.

About 2½ British divisions, some 19,000 men, attacked from Basra and other bases in Iraq. Indian infantry units used motorboats and paddleboats to slip down the Shatt al Arab river from Basra and capture the Abadan refinery and several



ports along the Persian Gulf coast. Major General William Slim (p. 57) drove his forces into Luristan, grabbing Iranian oil fields en route to Tehran.

Despite the size of the Iranian army, neither British nor Russian troops encountered any serious resistance. The Iranians were ill equipped and undertrained, and by August 27 the invasion was over. Iran began negotiating for an armistice, and British and Russian troops met along a pre-designated occupation line running east-west across northern Iran. The line centered on Tehran, and divided the country into Soviet and British occupation zones. (Britain later shared control of southern Iran with the U.S. Persian Gulf Command.) Tehran wasn't occupied until September 17; Iran was allowed to maintain control of both the city and a small circle of land around it.

Britain removed Reza Shah from power and installed his 22-year-old son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, in his place. The deposed shah fled to Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean.

Iranian loyalists continued to protest Britain's invasion, claiming it was a blatantly unprovoked attack and comparing it to Hitler's conquest of Poland in 1939. The new shah sided with the Allies throughout the war, allowing transit of materiel to Russia and providing oil to the Allies at discount prices. As early as October 1941, British supplies began to trickle into ports along the Persian Gulf, travel overland via the Iranian state railway (a single-track system finished in 1938), truck convoys, and barges along the Shatt al Arab river. From there, the supply route crossed into the Soviet Union via both the land border and the Caspian Sea; U.S. Lend-Lease supplies began arriving there in early 1942. A total of 6 million tons of supplies would make their way into the U.S.S.R. through the Persian corridor by war's end, more than the tonnage transported via Murmansk and Archangel combined.

Oil from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. had continued to flow even during the battle for occupation. The day after Iran surrendered, oil was again shipping at the rate of 200,000 barrels a day. Oil tankers in the gulf delivered the oil to British ports around the world. Had this oil ended up under Hitler's control, the war might have taken a very different turn. (See p. W:IC112 for a discussion of the Nazis' fuel shortages.)

The Anglo-Russian occupation of Iran had another, unplanned benefit. In 1942, Russia began sending former Polish POWs, both civilians and soldiers, south from Krasnovodsk, Turkmenia, to Bandar Pahlavi, a small Iranian port on the Caspian Sea. This mass relocation – some 120,000 Polish men and women – not only provided freedom for thousands of Poles viewed very suspiciously by their Soviet hosts, but also swelled British ranks with Polish volunteers, many of whom went on to serve with distinction during the Allied invasion of Italy.

6. CAMPAIGNS

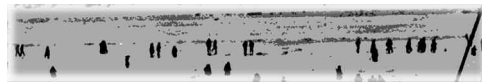
The British experience offers a wide variety of color and locales.



Never give in – never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty. Never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

– Winston Churchill, October 29, 1941

CAMPAIGN STYLE



GURPS WWII adventures can take on many tones, as noted on pp. W158-162. The following discusses features of British campaign as they relate to different campaign styles.

WAR IS HELL!

British soldiers routinely faced the deprivations of war in various fronts all around the world. At times they barely had enough food or water to get through the day.

Especially gritty campaigns should focus on the day-to-day problems listed on p. W158. Templates found on pp. 48-51 can be used in this type of campaign, but even elite units like the LRDG or SAS will find their operations deadly and often unsatisfying. SAS troops may find they have missed the landing zone or landed in high winds, creating nasty penalties on their Parachuting rolls. LRDG groups may be relegated to intelligence-gathering or ingress/egress duties for other forces. Royal Marines might be mowed down on the beaches by the score.

Some colonial forces had reputations for brutality – an Indian patrol once brought back a bag of enemy ears to prove their successes in the desert. The gritty realism of war can be brought home to players in such simple, if graphic, ways.

German soldiers will be especially brutal to captured POWs; SAS commandos were usually tortured and then shot. Chindit forces caught behind enemy lines will be in for a horrific ordeal at the hands of their Japanese captors.

Specific theaters brought specific difficulties. Details follow for running a gritty campaign in North Africa.

War in the Desert

Desert war brought with it its own particular difficulties, ranging from cold, muddy winters to scorching summers (see p. 89). Native insect life, including biting flies and stinging scorpions, made daily living difficult, and blowing sand found its way into everything. Wounded soldiers were especially susceptible to infection or wounds that refused to heal (due to sand insinuation), and GMs should use the advanced healing rules on CII155-157 to make the situation more realistic. Even small wounds – cuts and scrapes caused by daily life in the army – had to be cleaned and covered with a bandage to keep the sand out. Uncovered wounds became infected and lasted indefinitely.

Water was always an issue in the desert, and in a gritty campaign, GMs should make the lack of water a daily concern. At times, daily water rations were cut to only a *pint* per man – far less than what is really needed to survive. Even when more was provided, it still was needed for washing, shaving, and cooking, as well as drinking. Clothes were often scrubbed in sand to help remove grease and sweat stains.

Both the corebook and other nationbooks can be used to create adventures for Commonwealth soldiers in various theaters around the world. Specific details for running an Anglo-centric campaign follow, with particular emphasis on the North African and Middle Eastern theaters.

Desert war was noisy and confusing, and infantrymen near a tank battle were caught in clouds of choking dust that burned eyes and lungs and limited visibility. Gritty desert campaigns should always emphasize how easy it was to get lost in the desert – even in the middle of a battle.

Rules for extreme temperatures can be found on pp. B130 and CII140. Dehydration is covered on p. B128. See Chapter 6 for general information on the desert war.

BRITISH UNDERSTATEMENT

A continual source of confusion between Americans and Britons is the British gift for understatement. British soldiers – and Britons in general – tend to be less emotional and less expressive than their American counterparts, often wryly mentioning the obvious or seriously diminishing the horrible reality of a situation.

For example, a British commander might radio his American counterpart because his men are “having a spot of bother.” In truth, he might mean, “We’ve taken 50% casualties and are about to be overrun.” Any British officer hearing the former would request additional information; an American might well assume that everything is under control and ignore the report.

Americans may view this knack for understatement as an annoying lack of communication skills; the British tend to think that Americans are dreadful hyperbolists.

GMs and players can make good use of this difference in extended campaigns. To a somewhat lesser extent, the same problems crop up when conversations with the Germans are in order.

REALISTICALLY GRITTY

Most of the information in this book fits a realistic campaign with little modification. Troops will find their lives a tedium of day-to-day routine, punctuated by the horrors of combat. PCs should be allowed opportunity to distinguish themselves at some point in the battle, but not at the cost of realism.

The templates on pp. 48-51 should be used as is. Elite forces will still face mundane difficulties and seemingly pointless missions, but should be given the opportunity to strike at enemy forces from time to time, taking out ammo dumps, light recon patrols, airfields, and so forth.

Realistic narratives of SAS and LRDG missions can be found in many places, and make excellent fodder for realistic campaigns centered on elite units.

Realistic adventures in the desert campaign should still feature struggles against nature; the North African desert was always a tremendous obstacle to overcome.

HIGH ADVENTURE

The daring exploits of elite British units like the SAS and the LRDG make excellent opportunities for heroic roleplay. Some missions read almost like a movie script, and running such a campaign will require very few changes from actual missions. A cinematic campaign should simply focus on missions that gave commandos their reputation, and skip over the more mundane or pointless adventures. *GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel* should be used in commando campaigns; it provides excellent information on the weapons, vehicles, missions, and tactics of commando groups.

PCs in more traditional units can still experience the exhilaration of high adventure during such critical battles as Dunkirk and El Alamein, simply by being given the chance to be heroic in the course of a battle. GMs running a cinematic campaign centered on average troops should provide plenty of opportunities for heroism – beleaguered Australians fending off Rommel’s incursions at Tobruk, brave British sappers

moving deep into minefields to clear enemy obstacles, a machine-gun squad moving to an enemy’s flank to free their pinned-down comrades, even the 51st Highlanders bravely holding the beaches at Dunkirk until the last boat is away.

CINEMATIC RULES

Some British combatants were colorful, eccentric types who seemed larger than life by nature of their personality. Some believed in a world where the cinematic rules on pp. CII176-177 apply. Perhaps they do, in your campaign. Even if not, the GM may wish to apply some cinematic license to staging their campaigns, not fully deviating from history, but skirting along the edges. Elite British units such as the LRDG or the SAS can be capable of extraordinary feats of heroism simply by applying a bit of extra drama to their missions. For example, the LRDG historically spent many long weeks in the desert mapping the terrain and observing troop movements. With a little imagination, however, the LRDG can become a highly mobile striking force bent on harassing enemy flanks at every turn. Or perhaps while out spotting, the unit encounters a stranded archaeologist who provides a love interest for one of the PCs . . .

CAMPAIGN UNITS



The British army was a diverse group, and that diversity allows for a great mixture of character and campaign types.

HIS MAJESTY’S MEN

Soldiers fighting under the Union Jack came from all walks of life and many nations. Players are encouraged to keep a broad mind in terms of creating characters, and not simply fall back on the prototypical British infantryman. Australians and New Zealanders make rugged and sometimes outrageous fighters; Scottish pipers add color and flair to an otherwise dreary war; determined Gurkhas can allow for heroic, but edgy, gameplay; or a group of Polish expatriates fighting to regain their country can make for a top-notch campaign.

British soldiers may find themselves stuck at home in the Territorial Army or the second-line Home Guard, only to be thrust into battle with little notice. Starting characters as 50-point foot soldiers, and allowing them to progress as the war wears on, can be particularly rewarding.

SPECIAL UNITS

The British may have been more enthusiastic about small, elite fighting units than any other combatant in WWII, thanks in no small part to Churchill’s romantic enthusiasm for the image of a few steely men turning the tide of battle. These units are the most logical candidates for a cinematic campaign, but they certainly will fit in with any style of play. The following describes some of the units that practiced an irregular and usually highly skilled style of warfare.



Gurkhas

Gurkhas were known as ferocious, often savage fighters. They were experts at infiltrating sleeping enemy camps and taking out soldiers with their *kukris* (p. 61). A group of Gurkhas could work as an elite squad dispatched to take out sentries or even assassinate enemy officers; such a unit would work especially well in a cinematic campaign. Details on Gurkhas can be found on p. 33; a template appears on p. 50.

The Red Berets

The elite Red Berets – British paratroopers – make an excellent home for PCs seeking high adventure and dangerous missions. They were formed early in the war and fought in campaigns ranging from the North African desert to the liberation of France. Character creation can be done using the paratrooper template on p. W77; elite commando paratroops may be built using the commando template on p. W80 with or without the SAS modifications on p. 48, together with a few points in Jumping and Parachuting.

See *Airborne*, p. 37, for more details.

Special Air Services

An excellent campaign can be created by putting soldiers into North Africa early in the war, introducing them to Lewes and Stirling (p. 57), and allowing them to have a part in the formation of the SAS. Perhaps they will be some of the lucky few that survived the initial, botched raid. Losing friends in such an assault could provide fodder for excellent roleplay as the teams struggle to reform and rethink their tactics.

GMs running an SAS campaign should pick up any of the excellent books on the subject, and include as many real life NPCs as feasible (especially Stirling, Lewes, and Mayne). Lewes can be played up as a heroic, inspiring leader, prior to his untimely death on one of the SAS's first raids. Could it be that his death was due to some action (or inaction) on the part of one of the PCs . . . ?

HILL 71

A small band of elite soldiers is tasked with a difficult mission. A group of firmly entrenched enemy soldiers holds the high ground near a major road; this ground, marked on the map as “Hill 71,” has proven impossible to take. And yet, as long as the enemy remains, the bulk of the British forces in the region are unable to move.

Three assaults have failed – the enemy is strongly entrenched and has heavy guns. It is up to the PCs to climb the treacherous hill in the first hours of the morning, and take out the defenders in a quick, silent strike.

This adventure can be set in the CBI theater, where the PCs probably would represent a small squad from a Chindit regiment or a group of Gurkhas whose *kukri*-wielding skills will be put to the test. It could also be set in Italy, Greece, or North Africa, perhaps with the PCs portraying SAS commandos, although Gurkhas or other exotic troops can be placed in these theaters, too.

SILENCING THE GUNS

With D-Day just around the corner, Allied operations in occupied France are in full swing. A team of Jedburghs is scheduled to drop just beyond Merville, where they will meet up with the PCs at dawn. (The PCs should play a mix of SOE operatives, escaped British POWs, French resistance fighters, or even a lone British MI-6 spy trapped without means of escape.)

As the Jedburghs' plane passes overhead, German anti-aircraft fire opens up nearby, filling the morning twilight with clouds of flak clouds. The PCs may try and find the AA guns and put them out of commission, resulting in a skirmish with German soldiers, but their efforts are in vain; the Jeds' plane is hit and explodes in a ball of fire. A lone parachute blossoms in the night, again drawing fire from entrenched Germans. If the PCs did not intervene before, perhaps they will now.

The lone survivor is a Dutch Jedburgh, *Eerste Luitenant* Jan Rijnhart. He is injured and will die if not given medical aid. He carries a map and roughly sketched plans detailing the destruction of a string of German 88mm guns that protect the region just beyond Sword Beach (the landing site of the British 3rd Infantry). The British 6th Airborne needs those guns cleared before they airdrop into the area. With the Jedburghs out of commission, it falls on the PCs to take down the mighty German guns.

Special Executive Operations

The SOE also provides many opportunities for cinematic roleplay, and may appeal to players who prefer more stealth and intrigue than straight combat. Most SOE soldiers will operate alone or in very small groups, but dropping an SOE operative into an existing French resistance campaign can be loads of fun. Both GMs and players are encouraged to read pp. W:RH24-29 and W:RH46-47 for a detailed look at the SOE and the French resistance.

Long Range Desert Group

Long Range Desert Group patrols are ideally suited for small groups of players in a long-term campaign. A typical LRDG patrol was six men in two trucks, who often operated for weeks without any contact with their superiors. Six PCs make an ideal team, with one or two specialized mechanics, a medic, a wireless operator, and a pair of heavy gunners. Such a team would normally be led by a sergeant or a lieutenant.

GMs running an LRDG campaign should take care to vary the missions. The LRDG mostly served in reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering roles, but sometimes had opportunity to act as a flanking and striking force that could wreak havoc on supply lines. Even mining the North African coast road can be hazardous duty, especially if the project is interrupted by an onrushing German armored column – or even worse yet, a German fighter cruising overhead.

Desert Rats

Operation Torch is just days away; the Battle at El Alamein is in full swing (pp. 103-105). A courier plane, dispatched from Alexandria, has gone down behind Rommel's lines, somewhere southwest of the Qattara Depression. It would be just one more aircraft lost in thousands, but an MID courier was delivering fleet dispositions to the British port at Gibraltar. Those plans, though encrypted, could spell disaster for the *Torch* landings if they fall into German hands.

The Allies can't spare many men, but neither can Rommel. As a pair of LRDG trucks sets out to find the downed plane, it becomes a race against a small group of Germans, looking for the same plane. No matter who finds it first, a skirmish is sure to ensue as one side begins to hunt down the other in the vast wastes of the Western Desert.

Mixing SAS and LRDG soldiers in a North African campaign works as well, with the LRDG providing the transportation and reconnaissance, while the SAS commandos do most of the actual fighting.

Royal Marines

Royal Marine PCs should be used later in the war, when the RM actually saw amphibious and land-based operations. (Although an early Marine assault on a German capital ship might be in order, if the campaign strays a bit from historical reality.) Marines also played a key role in the D-Day landings (see p. 40 for more details).

A historical campaign mounted by the Royal Marines that is ideally suited for roleplaying involved Force Viper, an elite group of about 100 Royal Marines dispatched into Singapore (p. 18). The Force Viper operations lasted for several weeks, so with a little effort could provide the setting for an extended roleplaying campaign.

CAMPAIGN THEATERS



Although British forces fought all across the globe, no single unit ever fought in every theater. Then again, GMs may choose to alter history just a bit, and ship the PCs' regiment from one battle to the next as he sees fit, making it possible to play an entire WWII campaign from the Battle of France through North Africa and the Far East, winding up back in France once more.

FRANCE

France was the site of intense fighting both early and late in the war. The BEF fought alongside French troops during the Battle of France, and Commonwealth troops from around the world stormed the eastern beaches during the Normandy invasion. In the interim, the French resistance, supported by British SOE, Jedburghs, American OSS, and others, fought a quiet war to win back their country.

A detailed look at occupied France is found in *Return to Honor*; the D-Day invasion is detailed in *Dogfaces*.

SCANDINAVIA

The British engagement in Scandinavia was limited – and ultimately dismal – but plenty of opportunities for roleplaying exist. PCs may be among the initial troops that landed at Narvik on March 13, 1940, or they may be part of the force that attacked Namsos or Åndalsnes. The attack on Spitzbergen Island (see *Operation Gauntlet*, p. 14) makes an excellent adventure seed for a small party of raiders. Any campaign set here probably should stress an overriding sense that the fighting was ill-planned and many British lives were lost for nothing. Norway left a bitter taste for many soldiers.

Blitzkrieg!

May 18, 1940. Rommel has pierced the Ardennes, Antwerp has fallen, and the Boche is across the Somme. A small group of British soldiers, cut off during the retreat, is now surrounded by advancing German columns of armor and artillery. They are outgunned, outnumbered, and nearly out of ammunition. To take on the German forces would be suicide, but rumor has it that the Allies are soon to evacuate from Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk.

Will the PCs be able to get back to the French coast in time, or will they spend their last free days wreaking havoc on German supply and communications? What will they do if they arrive at Calais or Boulogne, only to find them in German hands? If they miss the Dunkirk boats, will they end up in a POW camp or fighting with the French resistance?

THE MIDDLE EAST

Political intrigue and small-unit actions abound in the Middle East. Chapter 5 contains information on the Special Night Squads, which would make an excellent starting point for adventures there.

PCs may find themselves serving with the Night Squads early in the war, only to be recruited for other “special services” as the war progresses. GMs might bend history a bit and allow Orde Wingate (commander of the squads) to request the transfer of the PCs to his new Chindits, or transfer the PCs to the LRDG or SAS in the Western Desert.

GMs who want to run a campaign that mildly bends history, without disgruntling well-read players, or GMs who want to strike a balance between military and “off the clock” roleplaying, also will find this an ideal setting for their campaign. The operations here are little-known – making them easier to bend – and the often irregular forces engaged in the fighting usually had to deal extensively with the exotic civilian populations around them.



NORTH AFRICA

An entire *WWII* campaign can begin and end in the deserts of North Africa. It was one of the largest, longest-running British battles of the war. GMs can begin the campaign with fresh PCs facing the Italians in Libya, allowing them to grow into battle-hardened desert veterans by the time that Rommel is driven back to Tripoli.

The most likely candidates for characters in such a grand campaign are Australian soldiers fighting with the 6th or 9th Australian Divisions. The 6th entered the war just after the battle for Sidi Barrani (p. 91) until Rommel's arrival; the 9th took their place and fought to the end of the desert war. Although historically, soldiers would not have fought with both units, GMs may choose to move the PCs' regiment from the 6th to the 9th in early 1941, allowing them to play out the entire campaign. Suggestions for a partial campaign centered on Tobruk appear in the box on p. 124.

PCs attached to the 7th Armored Division (Desert Rats) will also see extensive combat in the desert war before moving on to other theaters. See Chapter 5 for a detailed look at the North African campaign.

BEGINNING OF THE END

At 0016 hours on D-Day, gliders containing Company D, 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (commanded by Major John Howard) touch down near bridges on the Orne River and Caen Canal – vital exit points from the beaches for the British 3rd Infantry Division. The PCs, as part of Howard's commandos, must take the two bridges quickly, before the Germans can mount a solid defense, then hold them until the following day. German counterattacks should be disorganized but fierce. The bridges are vital to the D-Day landings at Sword Beach the following morning.

GMs who prefer a less structured adventure may simply allow the PCs to be part of the paratroop regiment that dropped in that same region. Many of these soldiers were scattered, and yet managed to find other elements while destroying several bridges over the Dives River and stalling German reinforcements.

See also *GURPS WWII: Dogfaces* for more details.

TOBRUK: A DESERT CAMPAIGN

Suggestions follow for running a mini-campaign centered on the British army's conflict with the *Afrika Korps* around Tobruk. PCs should be part of the newly arrived (and inexperienced) Australian 9th Infantry Division, allowing them to begin the campaign as fresh recruits.

Retreat from El Agheila

The campaign begins with the Australian 9th's arrival at El Agheila. The PCs should spend the first session learning the ways of the desert while being sent on reconnaissance patrols or minor harassing raids. At dawn, on March 24, 1941, the British lines will be stormed by tanks and armored cars, and the PCs will soon be in retreat. Several small battles ensue, with the PCs trying to fight a rear-guard action, only to be pushed back time and again.

Near Mersa Brega, they can spring a number of ambushes and traps, perhaps with local success, but Rommel's momentum is too great. They're forced back to Tobruk.

The Defense of Tobruk

Players should be made aware of the importance of this port city (p. 96). They should be given important missions including probing the German lines, defending against incursions, and ambushing Axis forces that penetrate too deeply into the Tobruk defenses.

For example, the PCs' squad is given an antitank weapon or two and enough riflemen to deal with ground troops, and told to hold a key route into the city. As a small armored force breaks through the outer defenses, the PCs must knock out the tanks, and deal with both infantry and dismounted tank crews in a game of hide-and-seek in the ruins of an old Arabic village.

The PCs should also be sent on nighttime missions to probe and reconnoiter German lines. Such missions may include a stealthy incursion past sleepy German sentries, or the destruction of a German supply dump in the wee hours of the morning. Of course, getting back to the Allied lines may be the most difficult part!

Death in the Howling Sand

On April 30, Rommel attacks Tobruk full-force, bypassing Australian defenders in concrete bunkers in favor of penetrating deeper into the British lines. The PCs, resting up in such a bunker after an especially rigorous night mission, find themselves trapped behind the advancing German lines, and surrounded by armor and infantry. Stukas pound their position, and artillery shells make every moment a deadly one.

But by the morning of May 1, a massive sandstorm has blown in, limiting air operations and restricting visibility to almost zero. Though the sand tears at flesh and metal alike, it may be the PCs' only chance to pull back and find reinforcements. Do they risk leaving the shelter of their bunker, in hopes of hiking a full mile or more to a secondary defensive line? With Vision and Hearing modifiers of -1 per

3 yards of distance, they're sure to be almost on top of the enemy before they know it. The GM should throw in surprise encounters with tanks, German machine-gun squads, a German forward command, and even a friendly squad or two. Mistaken identities will be a serious problem, given the conditions; other British blockhouse defenders may well open up on the advancing PCs before they realize their mistake.

Escape!

Adventures in Tobruk can continue for several sessions; the players may tire of being trapped in the port town, but such sentiments are appropriate in a gritty or realistic campaign. By fall, however, their liberation is nearly at hand.

On November 17, the entire region is inundated with a massive thunderstorm. The PCs, in the midst of one of their many night raids against German lines, end up moving *away* from Allied lines in an effort to avoid German detection. By the time that the night is over, they find themselves covered in thick mud, trapped behind enemy lines, with the bulk of Rommel's forces between them and Tobruk. Whether they view this as a good thing or not will depend on the players!

The following morning, under a dry but dark sky, distant explosions echo across the desert. British and German forces are engaged somewhere to the southeast. The soldiers stand no chance of breaking through the German lines in broad daylight; their only chance is to link up with their allies a dozen miles away. The trek is fraught with danger – lack of food and water, muddy terrain (treat as *Very Bad Terrain*, pp. B187-188), biting flies, limited ammunition, and skirmishes or near-misses with German patrols. Eventually, they run smack into a raging battle at Sidi Rezegh airfield (p. 100). The GM should play this battle out in detail, with the exhausted PCs being temporarily attached to the New Zealand Division of the 13th Corps.

13th Corps

Once the battle for Sidi Rezegh has ended, the PCs will have the opportunity to fight with 13th Corps in counterattacks to relieve Tobruk. Rommel's drive into the 13th's flank (p. 100) will rout the previously victorious army, and the PCs will find themselves on the run once again. On November 26, however, most of Rommel's tanks return to Bardia to refuel, and the New Zealand Division gets the order from Auchinleck: Race to Tobruk and lift the siege!

The battle for Tobruk should be a fierce one, with the PCs personally called before the division's commander. Their experience and advice is invaluable in planning the assault on Tobruk. They may be asked to lead recon patrols or act as pathfinders, marking key entry points for the New Zealand forces. In a cinematic campaign, they may even be tasked with taking out key German defenses on their own. In any event, it is their chance to liberate their valiant Australian comrades once and for all.

The battle for Tobruk is described on pp. 96-100.



THE MEDITERRANEAN

Commonwealth forces in the Mediterranean may be members of the RN or RAF, or may see ground action in Greece, Crete, Sicily, or Italy (pp. 15-17). Toward the end of the war, they will be coordinating with American forces. GMs looking to mix British and American soldiers in their campaign may find this an ideal opportunity.

CHINA-BURMA-INDIA

Units in Southeast Asia faced the dreaded Japanese forces, with their reputation for ferocity and cruel treatment of prisoners. The Chindits (p. 19) make a good organization for PCs, though they only operated on two significant missions. With a little tweaking of historical reality, though, an entire campaign could be formed with the PCs working as part of an elite subgroup of the Chindits, infiltrating Japanese lines time and again.

Pp. 18-19 provides some background on the CBI theater; the *Force Viper* box on p. 18 gives additional information.

THE AIR WAR

The Battle for France makes an ideal starting place for British pilots. The GM can start the air war in May 1940, and allow the PCs to face German Stukas and Bf109s over France before covering the evacuation at Dunkirk. Dowding's decision to hold his fighter pilots back during that evacuation may not sit well with the PCs, but they will have plenty of opportunity to face the Germans during the coming months.

PCs acting as bomber pilots and crews will have a chance to work together. Any airmen forced to ditch behind enemy lines will find plenty of adventure in finding their way back, evading capture, or even escaping from a German *Luftstalg*.

THE HIGH SEAS

For a naval-oriented campaign, PCs may wish to create naval officers, allowing them to command individual vessels. A group of PCs working as the crew of a small support boat (such as the *Fairmile* on p. 87), could work Channel patrol, fending off German boats in small skirmishes. A *Fairmile* crew could even find themselves stranded on an enemy shore while delivering or picking up an SAS squad, allowing naval personnel to get into a firefight or two!

Royal Marines may be stationed aboard a British warship, awaiting a chance to board damaged vessels. The Norwegian naval campaign provides such boarding opportunities.

THE HOME FRONT

A campaign set in England during the war can be played in several different ways. Home Guard units (pp. 30-31) armed with little more than second-hand weapons supplemented with pitchforks, axes, cleavers, and so forth, may need to deal with downed German pilots during the Battle of Britain . . . or even called upon to defend their homeland against invasion in an alternate-history campaign.

A non-military campaign that takes place during the blitz (pp. 23-24) can be played out in England, as well. PCs may be involved in solving a mystery, working in counter-espionage, or even hunting a werewolf in a *GURPS Horror* campaign, with even their target's howls drowned out by the whistle of falling bombs and roar of explosive destruction. PCs undergoing such a bombing attack should make Fright Checks (at penalties of up to -5 early in the campaign, but only -4 to -2 once they've become accustomed to the attacks).

An air-war campaign set in Britain should include not only an opportunity for dogfights against German invaders, but momentary interludes of relative normalcy. Pilots swapping war stories in a local pub might find themselves involved in any number of non-military adventures between sorties.

WOLF HUNTERS

The PCs have risen through the ranks of the navy over the years, and now find themselves aboard a new U.S.-provided destroyer tasked with escorting British convoys across the North Atlantic. They may simply be crewmen, or a combination of crew and officers. (Obviously, having a PC captain makes it easier for the players to influence the ship's actions.)

The sailors may continue on escort duty, or be assigned to a warship task force, allowing them to face more and larger surface raiders. As they progress, they will be tasked with more (and more difficult) duties and may find themselves involved in tracking down German warships as part of a larger task force, escorting critical supplies to key locations in the empire, or even taking on top-secret raiding parties and delivering them to and from enemy-occupied territory. This last sort of mission may find the sailors taking on strange tasks, themselves.

If the PCs' ship is sunk, they may find themselves taken prisoner aboard a German naval vessel, and eventually put into a *marlag* deep in German territory, beginning a campaign with an entirely different flavor!

REFERENCES

Along with many of the references cited in *GURPS WWII*, these sources stood out in the research for *All the King's Men*:

Books

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Battle of Britain (Guy Hamilton, 1969). Classic film detailing the air battle during 1940. Stars a young Michael Caine.

Bedknobs and Broomsticks (Robert Stevenson, 1971). An amateur witch, a con artist, and three children take on a German raiding force in WWII Britain. A fantastical movie originally intended for children, but provides some nice game elements.

The Dam Busters (Michael Anderson, 1954). The story of Britain's bombing campaign aimed at shattering Germany's dams using bombs skipped along the water.

The Desert Rats (Robert Wise, 1953). A story of the ANZAC forces at Tobruk.

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Enigma (Michael Apted, 2001). A fictional story that provides an excellent look at life at Bletchley Park. Dougray Scott and Kate Winslet star.

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Hope and Glory (John Boorman, 1987). Semi-autobiographical look at a young child growing up during the Blitz.

In Which We Serve (Noel Coward, 1942). The story of *HMS Torrin* is told in flashbacks, as survivors cling to a life raft.

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