NORTHERN VICTORIAN ARMS COLLECTORS GUILD INC.

More Majorum

2023 ISSUE 2

Right: German AT crew members doing drill practice with their 2.8 cm *schwere Panzerbüchse* 41

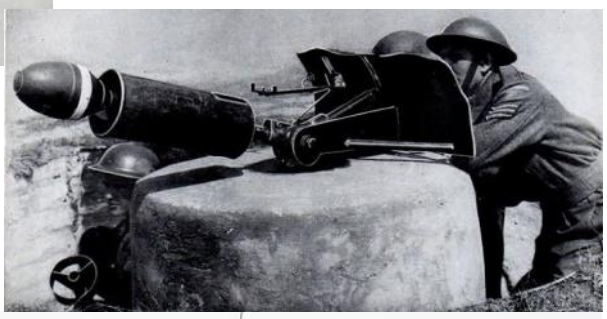
Left; we see Australian 6th div troop examining a captured 2.8 cm *schwere Panzerbüchse* 41

Above; is Sd.kfz250/11 half-track mounting a 2.8 cm *schwere Panzerbüchse* 41

Above; Is a Blacker Bombard showing the 3 man crew in the prone position.

Right; is a Blacker Bombard mounted on one of the hundreds of concrete pedestals made during ww2.

Below Right; MkII ACE with the larger 3-man 6 prd turret



2023 EXPIRING MEMBERSHIPS DUE Please Read Membership Secretary's Message Page 2

Below; Mk I ACE with turret from a Valentine tank

Guild Business

N.V.A.C.G. Committee 2022/23

EXECUTIVE	GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS
President / Treasurer: John Mc	John H.
Vice Pres / Safety Officer: John M.	Scott J.
Secretary: Carl W.	Simon B.
Membership Secretary: Graham R.	Peter R.
Newsletter: Brett M.	Rod D.
Sgt. at Arms: Rob K.	Terry S.

**** If you don't read this, then don't phone up and say you didn't know !!!!!!!! ****

MEMBERSHIP

If you are one of the 60 members whose membership expires in 2023, subscriptions are due by the 30th of June 2023. How will you know? The expiry year is on your membership card. If you receive your newsletters by post you will receive a printed account with your newsletter. If you receive your newsletter by email you will receive an separate account by email. If accounts are not paid by 30th of June 2023, you will receive a reminder. If we have received no correspondence by the 31st of July 2023, you will be removed from the active membership list and on the 31/05/2024 the police will be notified that your membership has expired. So there you go three reminders, and 12 months leeway, there really isn't an excuse, but still we have chase a few.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Friday 11th of August 2023 at the SSAA Shotgun Club Rooms - Sporting Shooters Association of Victoria - Shepparton Branch, 1170 Midland Hwy, Pine Lodge VIC 3631. The list of executive positions is at the top of this page. Come and have your say, and/or volunteer for a position.

NVACG GUN SHOW

The annual Shepparton Militaria & Collectables Expo 2023, held for the first time at the McIntosh Centre Shepparton Showgrounds, was a resounding success due to many members helping to setup and clean up after. The majority of stall holders and public have claimed it was a good show. We have booked the venue again next year for March 2nd and 3rd 2024.

G.C.C.A. BENDIGO - ARMS & COLLECTABLES SHOW

26th & 27th August 2023, Bendigo Multi Sports Complex 1-3 Waterson Crt Golden Square
http://www.collectorsbendigo.com.au/annual-show.html

NEED YOUR COLLECTORS LICENSE APPLICATION OR RENEWAL ENDORSED BY THE GUILD?

There are the three members authorised to endorse applications:

John Mc	Mob: 0402 367 055	Email: majormac@bigpond.com
Graham R.	Mob: 0417 137 232	Email: membership@nvacg.org.au
Ricky S.	Mob: 0400 567 353	Ricky can be found behind the counter at Trelly's Shepparton, but phone him first to make an appointment, and bring your current membership card.

SNIDERS WANTED

Hi all. Several members are looking for a .577 Snider in good working order with good barrel. Most are after Mk 3's, but if a good Mk 2 is available that will be good also. Order of preference is: Military carbines, two band short rifles, three band long rifles, then sporting Sniders.

Please contact John H. on 03 58213192 or email jobah450.577@bigpond.com
Or John M. on 0427 303 357 or Brett M. at bnmaag@gmail.com

LOOKING TO BUY

Several items namely:
(A). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Yataghan Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.
(B). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Cutlass Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.
(C). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Elcho Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.

If you can help with any or all of these Bayonets contact John H. on 03 58213192 or email jobah450.577@bigpond.com

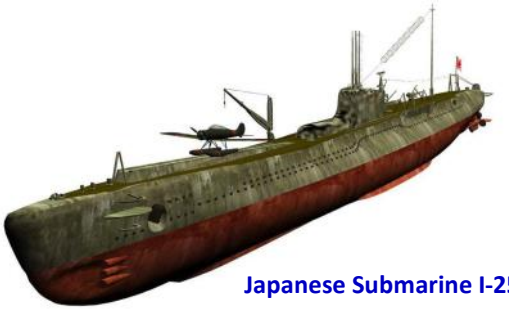
Flight of Fujita

For residents of the Borough of Queenscliff, WWII never felt all that far away given the amount of defence personnel that were stationed in the region's various army camps. Rumours swirled that there were as many 4-5,000 military men and women that resided in Point Lonsdale and Queenscliff during the second great conflict of the 20th century. While the fear of invasion was widespread in the Borough and indeed the country, a direct attack on Victorian land thankfully never came. There was one day in 1942, however, that threatened to contradict this fact. A day in which Australian military intelligence realised that the southern reaches of the continent were not immune from enemy infiltration. In the early hours of February 26 the I-25 submarine belonging to the Japanese Imperial Navy surfaced off King Island.

Yokosuka E14Y "Glen" Seaplane.

Undetected by Australian Navy patrols, the I-25 launched a tiny Yokosuka float plane which was commanded by experienced pilot Nobuo Fujita as well as his trusty observer Shoji Okuda. The reconnaissance plane flew to Cape Otway and followed the Surf Coast till it hooked inland over Point Lonsdale toward Melbourne. The daring Japanese duo were spotted over Queenscliff by soldiers at the Fort. Bombardier Stan Evans recalled this historic, yet little known, day in Australia's wartime history and remembered the event occurring whilst he casually conversed with a comrade as they watched other soldiers disassemble the anti-Aircraft guns for their morning maintenance. The conversation between the pair was suddenly interrupted by an aircraft engine and gazing skyward they spotted a "dark coloured seaplane approaching" at a height of "only a few hundred feet". The plane generated a great deal of panicked excitement after it was realised that it sported the "red filled identifying circles of Japan on its wings". Evans recalled clearly seeing the pilot (Fujita) and the observer (Okuda) as the aircraft soared over the Fort. The observer sat in the rear seat and, according to Evans, had his machine gun pointed directly at the stunned bombardier. The audacious pair continued and followed the Port Phillip Bay coastline observing Melbourne, St. Kilda, Brighton, Sandringham and Frankston in the process. On an intelligence gathering mission, they observed 6 warships, a light cruiser and 5 destroyers in the Bay. Fortunately for Victoria, this was considered a comparatively small amount of shipping which was lucky as the US Navy were known to dock far larger amounts of their fleet in the Bay at certain times. Had there been more Navy ships docked in Melbourne then it is highly likely there would have been a follow up Japanese attack like the ones that devastated Darwin. Their mission, however, was a success for the Japanese as the seaplane returned safety to its mothership off King Island with ample information on the layout of Victoria's defences. Fujita and Okuda, however, had no idea how lucky they were to return unscathed as during their flight over an AA battery at Williamstown they were noticed by the gunners on the ground. An argument played out amongst the soldiers as to whether it truly was a Japanese plane and by the time they all agreed that it was; the plane had sailed safely out of range.


Warrant Flying Officer Nobuo Fujita


Japanese Submarine I-25

Interestingly, these same two Japanese airmen in the same diminutive plane were the only enemy serviceman to successfully attack mainland America. In an effort to lure the US Navy out of the Pacific and back to protect the mainland, the I-25 surfaced off the coast of Oregon where the two practised airmen took flight but this time, they planned on making their mark on America. Carrying incendiary bombs, they released their load over the damp forests of Oregon on September 9 1942 a mere 7 months after their bold flight over Victoria. While the ensuing wildfires didn't achieve a whole lot militarily it was still a psychological boost for the Japanese and transformed the pair into heroes back home. In the years after the War, Fujita came to regret aspects of his war time service and he was invited back to Brookings, Oregon where he was greeted warmly and presented an honorary citizenship of the town by the local mayor. An interesting end to a little known chapter of Australian and American war time history.

No. 92 GRENADE; This teargas grenade was originally designed for use as a rifle grenade. The top accepts "Striker Mechanism No.6 Mk1". The base has the same shape as the No77Mk1 Detonator No.99 was used and therefore small shrapnel came of this gas-grenade.

To turn it into a rifle grenade, the normal fuse was discarded and "Tail Unit No.2 Mk1" was fitted. This had the same fuse as the No.85 Mk1 rifle grenade. This grenade was used between 1945 and 1957. From 1948 it was no longer in use as a rifle gre-

Militaria & Collectables Expo

Presented by - Northern Victorian Arms Collectors Guild Inc.

2023

March 4th & 5th

McIntosh Centre Shepparton

Something from your Collection

With each newsletter we would like to feature something special from a members collection, it doesn't have to be valuable or rare, just something you don't see every day. Members who would like to have an item featured can contact Brett M. or Graham R. If you can supply a digital photo and a short spiel it would be good if not, bring it along to a meeting and we will photograph it there and take notes.

Carls Collection

This Leave Pass I purchase from Ebay several years ago. It was not an expensive purchase but it is a good example on how a small item can be connected to more influenceable people and larger events.This piece of paper was written on the 10th August 1864. It gave a "Leave of Absence" to Colonel Henry Madill of the 141st Pennsylvania Volunteers. The 141st Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was a volunteer infantry regiment that fought in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The regiment served in the Army of the Potomac in the Eastern Theatre and was heavily engaged in the second day of fighting at the Peach Orchard outside of Gettysburg. The regiment was organized in August 1862, with Henry J. Madill as colonel, Guy H. Watkins as lieutenant colonel, and Israel P. Spalding as major. It was known as the "Bradford Regiment" because most of the men were recruited from that county. [1] It was sent to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where it was organized at Camp Curtin. After a couple of weeks, it was sent to picket the Potomac River in the area of Poolesville, Maryland.

The regiment became part of the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division of the III Corps. At the Battle of Fredericksburg, the regiment formed part of the force which engaged the Confederate right flank but lost few men. After the battle, the regiment went into winter quarters, but in the spring of 1863 was heavily engaged at the Battle of Chancellorsville, May 1–3, 1863, suffering over 50% casualties.

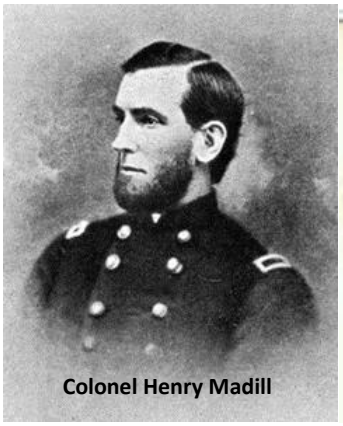
At the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, the unit was detached from the rest of the brigade and sent to the southern part of the Peach Orchard. There, the 141st helped repel the attack of Brigadier General Joseph B. Kershaw's South Carolina Brigade. However, shortly after this the Peach Orchard salient began to collapse. Separated from the rest of its brigade, the regiment never received orders to withdraw and stayed in line of battle near the Peach Orchard. Possibly because of the thick battle smoke, the regiment did not fire on the approaching brigade of Brigadier General William Barksdale. The 141st suffered a devastating volley at close range from one of Barksdale's Mississippi regiments, and after a brief resistance withdrew towards Cemetery Ridge with a loss of almost 70% of its members. Of 209 men present for roll-call earlier in the day, 149 were killed, wounded, or missing in action.

Following the Gettysburg Campaign, the regiment fought in the Bristoe Station Campaign, seeing action at the Battle of Auburn Bridge, one of the final actions fought by the III Corps before its incorporation into the II Corps. The regiment received many replacements over the winter. In 1864, the regiment fought in the Battle of the Wilderness (May 6–7, 1864), the Battle of Spotsylvania (May 11–12, 1864), and at the Battle of Petersburg (June 18, 1864). The regiment then took part in the Siege of Petersburg.

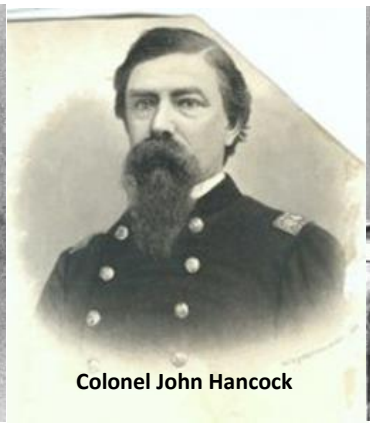
The 141st participated in the final campaign of the Army of the Potomac and fought at the Battle of Sayler's Creek on March 25, 1865, and again at the Battle of Farmville (April 6–7, 1865). The 141st was present at the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House. The regiment participated in the Grand Review of the Armies in Washington and was mustered out on May 29, 1865.

The letter was signed by an Official by the Name of Major John Hancock who was head of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division. Here rose to the rank of Colonel. John Hancock was the brother of General Winfield Scott Hancock. Winfield Scott Hancock ran for President in 1880, But lost to James Garfield who was shot in 4th March 1881 and died 79 later..

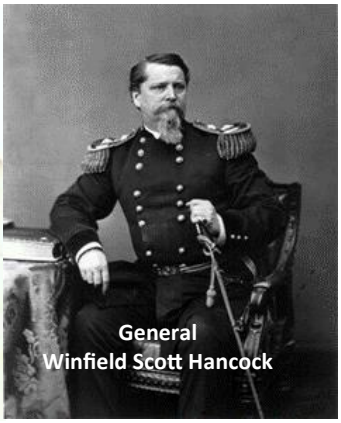
Colonel Henry Madill was brevetted Major General of volunteers on March 15, 1865. Madill was wounded three times and had six horses shot from under him.



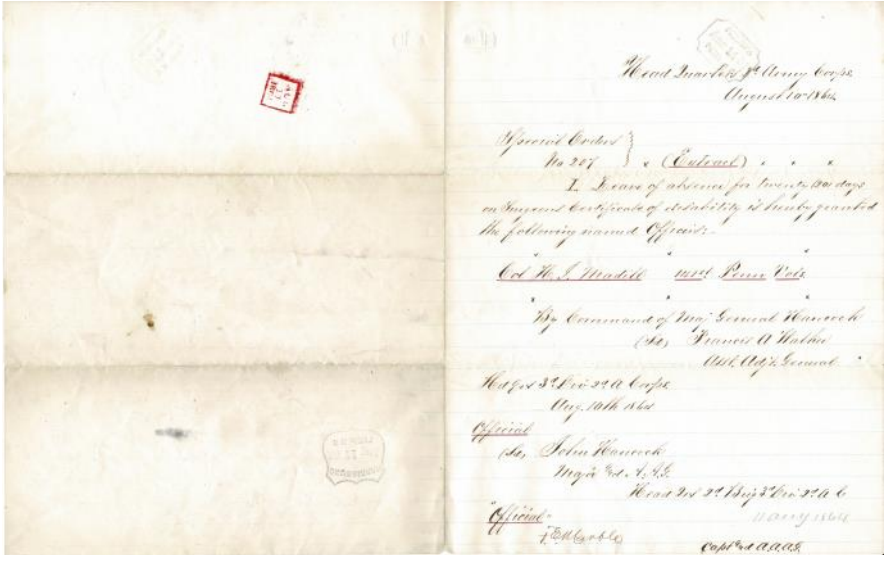
Colonel Henry Madill



Colonel John Hancock



General Winfield Scott Hancock



In service	**1941–1945**
Manufacturer	**Mauser-Werke AG**
Unit cost	**4500 Reichmark**
Produced	**1940–1943**
No. built	**2,797**
Mass	**229 kg (505 lbs)**
Length	**2.69 m (8 ft 10 in)**
Barrel length	**overall:1.73 m (5 ft 8 in) (with muzzle brake)**
Width	**96.5 cm (3 ft 2 in)**
Height	**83.8 cm (2 ft 9 in)**
Crew	**3**
Shell	**Fixed QF 28×187mm R**
Caliber	**28/20 mm (1.10/.78 in)**
Breech	**horizontal-block**
Recoil	**Hydro-spring**
Carriage	**Split trail**
Elevation	**-5° to 30°**
Traverse	**70°**
Rate of fire	**up to 30 rpm**
Muzzle velocity	**4,500 feet per second (1,400 m/s)[1]**
Effective firing range	**500 m (547 yds)**

2.8 cm *schwere Panzerbüchse* 41 (sPzB 41) or

"Panzerbüchse 41" was a German anti-tank weapon working on the squeeze bore principle. Officially classified as a heavy anti-tank rifle (German: *schwere Panzerbüchse*), it would be better described, and is widely referred to, as a light anti-tank gun.

Description; Although the sPzB 41 was classified as a heavy anti-tank rifle, its construction was much more typical of an anti-tank gun. Like the latter, it had a recoil mechanism, carriage and shield. The only significant feature the weapon had in common with anti-tank rifles was a lack of elevation and traverse mechanisms—the light barrel could be easily manipulated manually.

The design was based on a tapering barrel, with the caliber reducing from 28 mm at the chamber end to only 20 mm at the muzzle. The projectile carried two external flanges; as it proceeded toward the muzzle, the flanges were squeezed down, decreasing the diameter with the result that pressure did not drop off as quickly and the projectile was propelled to a higher velocity. The barrel construction resulted in a very high muzzle velocity - up to 1,400 m/s. The bore was fitted with a muzzle brake. The horizontal sliding breech block was "quarter-automatic": it closed automatically once a shell was loaded, but unlike semi-automatic guns, the fired shell had to be manually ejected by opening the breech block. The gun was equipped with an open sight for distances up to 500m; a telescopic sight, the ZF 1x11 from the 3.7 cm Pak 36 anti-tank gun, could also be fitted. The recoil system consisted of a hydraulic recoil buffer and spring-driven recuperator. The carriage was of the split trail type, with suspension. Wheels with rubber tires could be removed, making the gun significantly lower and therefore easier to conceal; the process took 30–40 seconds. The guns' construction allowed toolless disman-tling to five pieces, the heaviest of which weighed 62 kg.

Development and production history; The cone-bore principle was first patented in 1903 by a German designer, Karl Puff. In the 1920s and 1930s, another German engineer, Gerlich, conducted experiments with coned-bore barrels that resulted in an experimental 7 mm anti-tank rifle with a muzzle velocity of 1,800 m/s. Based on these works, Mauser-Werke AG developed a 28/20 mm anti-tank weapon initially designated *Gerät 231* or *MK.8202* in 1939–1940. In June–July 1940, an experimental batch of 94 (other sources say 30) pieces was given to the army for trials. They resulted in some modifications and in 1941 mass production of what became 2.8 cm schwere Panzerbüchse 41 started. One piece cost 4,520 Reichsmarks (for the sake of comparison, one 5 cm Pak 38 gun cost 10,600 Reichsmarks). The last gun was built in 1943; the main reason for the discontinuance was the lack of tungsten for projectiles.

Production of sPzB 41, pcs.				
1940	1941	1942	1943	Total
94	349	1030	1324	2797

Production of ammunition for sPzB 41, thousands.					
Shell type	1940	1941	1942	1943	Total
Fragmentation	-	9.2	373.3	130.1	512.6
Armour-piercing	156.2	889.5	270.0	278.1	1602.8

Organization and employment; The sPzB 41 was used by some motorized divisions and by some Jäger (light infantry), *Gebirgsjäger* (mountain) and *Fallschirmjäger* (paratrooper) units. Some guns were supplied to anti-tank and sapper units. The weapon was employed on the Eastern Front from the beginning of hostilities (the *Wehrmacht* possessed 183 pieces on 1 June 1941), until the end of the war and also saw combat in the North African Campaign and on the Western Front in 1944–45.

Variants Edit

2.8 cm sPzB 41 leFl 41 (2.8 cm schwere Panzerbüchse 41 auf leichter Feldlafette 41): a variant developed for paratrooper units. It used a lightweight carriage without suspension; the wheels were replaced by small rollers; the shield was typically removed. The resulting weapon weighed only 139 kg (118 kg without rollers). The carriage supported a 360° field of fire, elevation ranged from -15° to 25°.

2.8 cm KwK 42: tank gun modification intended for the VK 903 turret. A Versuchs-Serie (developmental series) of twenty-four were produced, of which ten were reported as available for the VK 903 project on July 1, 1942. A total of 200 guns were ordered, though there is no evidence to show these were completed, nor is there evidence showing this weapon was ever actually mounted in a turret.

Above; is 2.8 cm sPzB 41 leFl 41 in action with German paratroopers.

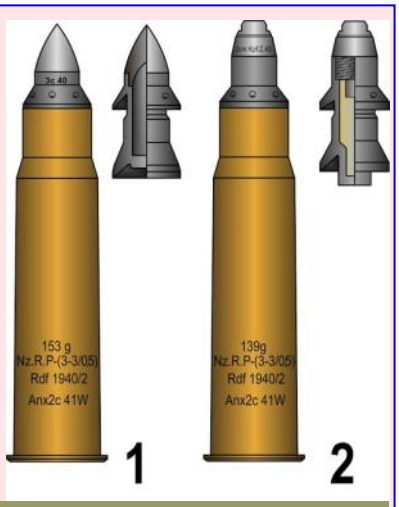
Below; is a Sd.kfz250/11 half-track on patrol

Self-propelled mounts

The sPzB 41 was also mounted on several vehicles, such as cars, half-tracks and armored cars: Sd.Kfz. 221 armored cars, Sd.Kfz. 250/11 half-tracks, Sd.Kfz. 251 half-tracks, Horch 901 4x4 cross-country passenger cars, Horch Typ 40 (Kfz. 15) 4x4 cross-country passenger cars.

Right; is a Sd.kfz 221 armored car

Service; Squeeze bore guns saw only limited use in World War II. Manufacturing such weapons was impossible without advanced technologies and high production standards. Besides Germany, the only country to bring such weapons to mass production was Britain, with the Littlejohn adaptor which, although not a gun in itself, used the same principle. An attempt by a Soviet design bureau headed by V. G. Grabin in 1940, failed because of technological problems. In the US, reports about the sPzB 41 inspired a series of experiments with 28/20 barrels and taper bore adaptors for the 37 mm Gun M3; the work started in September 1941 and continued throughout the war, with no practical success. The sPzB 41 combined good anti-armor performance at short range (for example, at least once a shot penetrated the lower front plate of the heavy IS-1) and a high rate of fire with small, lightweight (for anti-tank gun), dismantlable construction. However, it also had several shortcomings, such as:



- The barrel was hard to manufacture and had a short service life (about 500 rounds)
- It had a very weak fragmentation shell
- Its use of tungsten for armor-piercing shells
- Its short effective range
- Its relatively weak beyond-armour effect

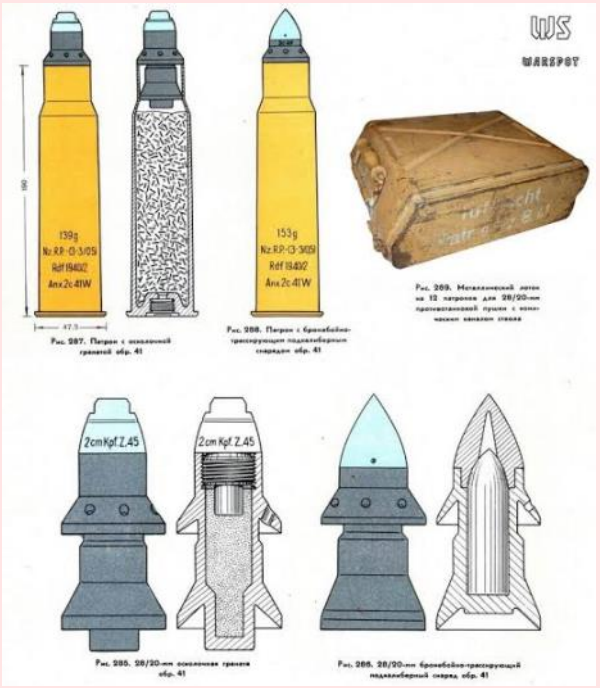
Some authors that criticize the sPzB 41 concentrate mainly on the short service life of its barrel. However, its chance of survival after 500 short-range shots was slim anyway. High-velocity guns with "normal" barrel construction also had a short service life, e.g. for the Soviet 57-mm ZiS-2 it was about 1,000 shots. In the end, the factor that brought production of the sPzB 41 to a halt was the shortage of tungsten.

Ammunition; There were two shell types for the sPzB 41: the armor-piercing *2.8 cm Pzgr.41* and the fragmentation *2.8 cm Sprg.41*.

The Pzgr.41 had a tungsten carbide core, a softer steel casing and a magnesium alloy ballistic cap. The core was 40 mm long and 10.9 mm in diameter

Available ammunition

Type	Model	Weight, kg	Filler	Muzzle velocity, m/s	Range, m
APCNR-T	2.8 cm Pzgr.41	0.125	-	1,430	500
Fragmentation	2.8 cm Sprg.41	0.093	5 g, phlegma-	1,400	1,000



Armour penetration table

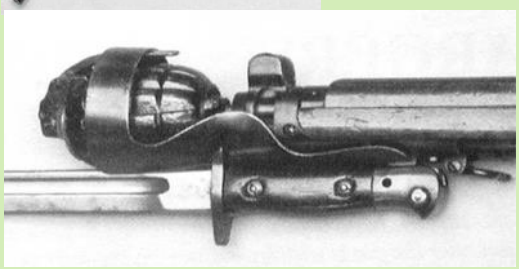
APCNR-T projectile 2.8 cm Pzgr.41		
Distance, m	Meet angle 60°, mm	Meet angle 90°, mm
100	52 – 69	75
300	46	
400		40
500	40– 52	

"Mills Bomb" No.23 was a rifle grenade adaptation of its predecessor the No.5 hand grenade. Soon after the introduction of the No.5 during WWI, reports from the field indicated a multi-purpose hand or rifle grenade was needed. Using a modified base plug, designed to accept a short rod along with a simple cradle-style cup launcher, a solution was readily achieved.

Unfortunately, the basic flaw in the rod grenade idea is that using it damages the rifle and its barrel. To minimize the stress to the firearm, a short rod was used, but that reduced the effective range.

Then there is the requirement of a cup (in this case a cradle) that needs to be attached to the rifle as well as the need for the bayonet to lock the cradle to the rifle! The only saving feature here is that the sights of the rifle are not obstructed by the launching cradle.

The No.23 Rifle grenade was not in service long. It was soon replaced with the No.36 grenade which used a cup launcher without the need for the rod.



Above, left to right are the No.5 with a typical base plug, the No.23 Mk I with an early threaded plug to accept a rod, and last a No.23 plug with reinforced rod mounting features.

Command post of the Australian 2/6th Field Regiment during fighting against the French in the Merdjayoun

Footnote in History ;

Battle of Merdjayoun took place during the Syria-Lebanon Campaign of World War II from 19–24 June 1941 between Vichy French and predominantly Australian Allied forces in and near the Lebanese town of Marjayoun.

Initial fighting; Australian forces advancing from the British Mandate of Palestine entered Marjayoun on 11 June 1941 against badly equipped defenders, after which the majority of the Australian 25th Brigade was diverted north to attack Jezzine, leaving a small force based around the 2/33rd Battalion to hold Merdjayoun. Following a strong Vichy French counterattack, this garrison was forced to withdraw south on 15 June. In the ensuing battle, Allied troops successfully defended the pass leading back to Palestine, and recaptured the town early on 24 June. The 7th Australian Division—commanded by Major-General Arthur "Tubby" Allen—was reinforced by units from the 6th Australian Division.

On 20 June, the French Information Office (*Office Francais d'Information*, OFI) of the Vichy French government announced: "Yesterday the British attempted unsuccessfully to attack Damascus and Merjayoun, Lebanon. Indian and British troops advanced in the area south and southeast of Damascus, but we succeeded in repulsing them in counterattacks by our armoured units and took 400 prisoners. Yesterday afternoon our troops warded off an enemy attack in the mountainous zone of southern Lebanon. We took 80 prisoners in this operation. Along the coast, the British fleet continued to bombard our positions."

The 2/3rd Battalion of the 6th Division was part of the column sent to relieve elements of the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade Group which had been cut off and surrounded in Mezze, a western neighborhood of Damascus, after the Battle of Damascus. They gallantly stormed the high ground near Mezze but in spite of their efforts the column were only able to fight their way into Mezze a few hours after the Allied defenders, out of ammunition and without food for the previous 50 hours, had been overrun. The 2/5th Australian Field Regiment was also part of the relief column. Lieutenant Arthur Roden (later Sir Roden) Cutler repeatedly engaged enemy tanks, enemy infantry, enemy anti-tank, and enemy machine posts with his 25-pounder field gun, his Boys anti-tank rifle, his Bren gun, or his .303 rifle. He later lost his leg during the Battle of Damour, but was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at both Merdjayoun and Damour. Cutler is the only Australian artilleryman to ever been awarded the VC.

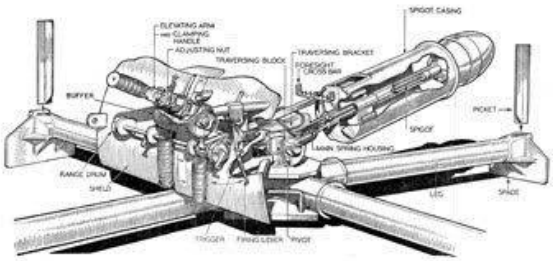
Follow-up; On 29 June, the Vichy French government announced in a communique: "The British Fleet has bombed our coastal positions in the Middle East. We have evacuated several of our bases in the mountains of southern Lebanon under cover of artillery fire which inflicted heavy losses on our assailants. Our aerial forces, supported by naval aircraft, repeatedly intervened in the ground fighting, especially around Palmyra (Syria). A British colonel and 40 men were captured." On 30 June, the Headquarters of Lieutenant-General Henry Maitland Wilson (Allied commander in Lebanon and Syria) announced: "The Allied offensive against Homs (Syria) is making substantial progress. An Australian squadron flying American-model aircraft, shot down a formation of six Vichy French Glenn Martin bombers in aerial combat. The Australians came back without losses to themselves."

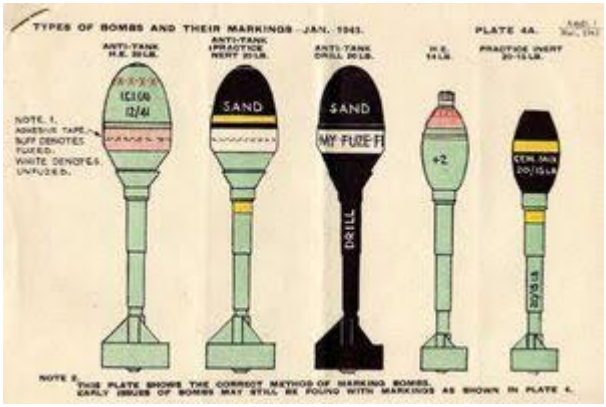
Below; Men of the Saxmundham Home Guard prepare to fire a Blacker Bombard during training with War Office instructors, July 1941

Blacker Bombard, also known as the 29mm Spigot Mortar, was an infantry anti-tank weapon devised by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart Blacker in the early years of the Second World War. Intended as a means to equip Home Guard units with an anti-tank weapon in case of German invasion, at a time of grave shortage of weapons, it was accepted only after the intervention of Churchill. Although there were doubts about the effectiveness of the Bombard, many were issued. Few, if any, saw combat.

Development; With the end of the Battle of France and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the port of Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June 1940, a German invasion of Great Britain seemed likely. However, the British Army was not well-equipped to defend the country in such an event; in the weeks after the Dunkirk evacuation it could field only twenty-seven divisions. (The German Army had more than 100 divisions at that time.) The Army was particularly short of anti-tank guns, 840 of which had been left behind in France, and only 167 were available in Britain; ammunition was so scarce for the remaining guns that regulations forbade even a single round being used for training purposes. Given these shortcomings, those modern weapons that were available were allocated to the British Army, and the Home Guard was forced to supplement the meagre amount of outdated weapons and ammunition they had with *ad hoc* weapons. One of these was the Blacker Bombard, designed by Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Blacker, the origins of which went back to the 1930s. During the early part of the 1930s, Blacker became interested in the concept of the spigot mortar. Unlike conventional mortars the spigot mortar did not possess a barrel, and instead there was a steel rod known as a 'spigot' fixed to a baseplate; the bomb itself had a propellant charge inside its tail. When the mortar was to be fired, the bomb was pushed down onto the spigot, which exploded the propellant charge and blew the bomb into the air. Blacker began to experiment with the concept in the hopes of creating a platoon mortar that was lighter in weight than the one used by the British Army at the time. This evolved into the Arbalest, which he submitted to the Army but was rejected for a Spanish design. Undeterred by this rejection, Blacker went back to the design and came up with the idea of an anti-tank weapon, although he was initially stymied in his attempts to design one because the spigot design failed to generate the required velocity to penetrate armour.

However he was eventually successful in creating an anti-tank mortar, which he named the Blacker Bombard. When the Second World War began, Blacker was a lieutenant-colonel in the Territorial Army. He had offered his Bombard to the War Office for two years without success but was introduced to the government department of Military Intelligence Research (MIRc) later known as MD1, which had been given the task of developing and delivering weapons for use by guerilla and resistance groups in Occupied Europe. Blacker showed his list of ideas to the head of MD1, Major Millis Jefferis, who was taken with the design for the Bombard. He argued that it could serve in an anti-tank and artillery capability, and claimed that it would have similar anti-tank properties to the 2 pounder anti-tank gun coupled with approximately the same range as the 3 inch mortar. Objections were raised by the Director of Artillery and other government officials, but on 18 August 1940 the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, attended a demonstration of the weapon. Churchill took a liking to the weapon and ordered it into full production. It would act as a temporary anti-tank weapon for the Home Guard until more 2 pounders could be supplied to them. It was decided by General Headquarters Home Forces that Bombards would be useful as an anti-tank weapon for use by regular forces, as well as the Home Guard. General Alan Brooke entertained doubts about the weapon's effectiveness, but believed that its simplicity would allow it to be used by younger soldiers. In Southern Command, 14,000 were ordered for use by forces in that area; twenty-four were to be issued to anti-tank regiments, twelve to troops assigned to guard aerodromes, eight per brigade and two for each Home Guard company. However, RAF personnel were forbidden from using the weapons, a restriction which was extended to the RAF Regiment when it was formed in 1942.





Design; The Bombard was a 29mm spigot mortar, weighing between 112 and 360 lb, placed on top of a swivel or pivot. It was able to fire a 20 lb high-explosive bomb to a range of approximately 100 yards; when the bomb detonated, it was able to inflict significant damage on a tank, although it was unlikely to actually pierce the vehicle's armour as the projectile was not able to gain sufficient velocity.[5] It was served by a crew of between three and five men The Bombard was considered to be most effective at short range, with targets being engaged with 'considerable success' at a range of between 75–100 yards. It was a muzzle-loaded weapon and therefore had a slow rate of fire, averaging between six and twelve rounds per minute; as such it was considered vital that the weapon be well-camouflaged and that it hit the target with the first shot. Two types of ammunition were provided for the weapon – a 20 lb anti-tank bomb and a lighter 14 lb anti-personnel bomb, with each weapon being issued with 150 rounds of the former and 100 of the latter. The anti-tank rounds were found to possess several problems. They had insensitive fuzes, which meant that they would often pass through an unarmoured target without detonating, and when they did explode fragments were often thrown back at the crew. The Bombard was either affixed to a large cruciform platform, or an immobile concrete pedestal; in either case would usually be placed in range of defensive positions, such as road-blocks. It seems that there was a preference for the Bombard to be used primarily in a static role, with extra mountings being built by the Royal Engineers to provide alternative positions from which the weapon could be fired. In a static position, the weapon was usually emplaced in a pit with ammunition lockers nearby.

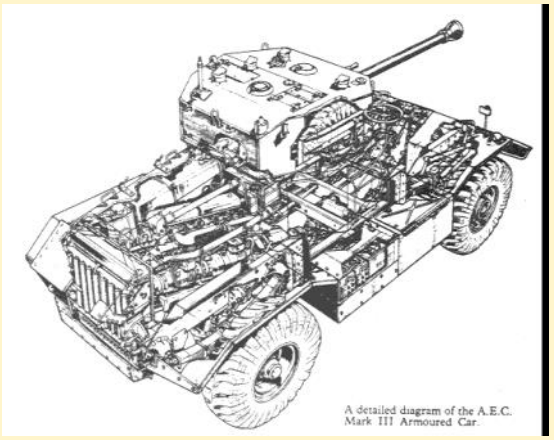
Operational history; The first Bombards appeared in late 1941, and were issued to both regular and Home Guard units; in Southern Command, no more were issued after July 1942. By that time, approximately 22,000 of the Bombards had been produced and issued to forces throughout the country. By November 1941, concerns were already being aired about the suitability of the weapon and it was unpopular with a number of units; some attempted to trade their Bombards for Thompson submachine guns or refused to use them at all. However, Mackenzie cites the argument of the historian of the Ministry of Food Home Guard battalion, who stated that the issuing of the Bombard meant that the Home Guard was being taken seriously by the government. Mackenzie also argues that the Bombard did have a positive side, as it equipped otherwise unarmed Home Guard personnel with a weapon, and was a 'public relations' success. It would appear that a number of Bombards saw action with the British Army, being used in an anti-personnel role in the Western Desert Campaign, although their use may have been limited due to their weight. The design of the Bombards was the basis for the Royal Navy anti-submarine weapon known as the Hedgehog. Large numbers of fixed concrete pedestals for Bombards were installed and a significant number survive in their original positions in many parts of the United Kingdom. The *Defence of Britain Project*, a late-1990s field survey of 20th century military landscape features by the Council for British Archaeology, recorded a total of 351 surviving pedestals.

Above; Home Guard soldiers training with a Bombard on a fixed concrete mounting (May 1943)

Right; abandoned Bombard emplacements, Brompton, Kent (2007)

AEC Armoured Car is the name of a series of British heavy armoured cars built by the Associated Equipment Company (AEC) during World War II.

Design and development; AEC of Southall, England was a manufacturer of truck and bus chassis and its Matador artillery tractor was used for towing medium field and heavy anti-aircraft guns. The armoured car based on the Matador artillery chassis was developed initially as a private venture and shown to officials in 1941 at Horse Guards Parade in London, where it made a favourable impression on Winston Churchill and 629 vehicles were produced from 1942–1943.



AEC tried to build an armoured car with fire power and protection comparable to those of contemporary British cruiser tanks. The first version carried a Valentine Mk II turret with a 2 pounder gun. Subsequent versions received a 6 pounder or a 75 mm gun in a custom built turret. The vehicle also carried a single Besa machine gun, a 2-inch bomb thrower (smoke grenade discharger) and a No. 19 radio set. Mark I vehicles had a Bren light machine gun for defence against aircraft, later vehicles received a "PLM" mounting one or two Vickers K machine guns. The turret was electrically driven with a manual traverse option. The driver was provided with two periscopes for vision when closed up; otherwise he could raise his seat to see over the glacis. The engine was mounted at a downwards angle reducing the angle on the transfer shafts and height over the rear hull deck. In normal on road use only the front wheels were driven.

Service history; The Mk I was first used in combat in the North African Campaign late in 1942, where a few vehicles were reportedly fitted with a Crusader tank turret mounting a 6 pounder gun. The Mk II and Mk III took part in the fighting in Europe with British and British Indian Army units, often together with the Staghound.

The AEC armoured car with 75mm gun replaced US half-track 75 mm self-propelled guns in the four fighting squadrons of some armoured car regiments. The vehicle remained in service after the end of the war until replaced by the Alvis Saladin. The Lebanese Army used the car at least until 1976.

Variants;

Mk I original version with turret from a Valentine tank, 129 built. Some in Middle East had 6-pounder gun fitted

Mk II larger turret for three man crew with a 6 pounder gun, redesigned front hull, 158 hp diesel engine.

Mk III *Close Support Armoured Car* a Mk II with 6 pounder replaced with the QF 75 mm gun.

AA Turret similar to Crusader AA tank turret with twin Oerlikon 20 mm cannon capable of high elevation to engage enemy aircraft. Prototype built in 1944 but did not enter production due to Allied air superiority in Northern Europe.

Left; Mk I with turret from a Valentine tank somewhere in North African.

Below; Mk II with larger 3-man turret

Below; Mk III Close Support Car with QF 75 mm gun

Below; AA Turreted ACE car with twin 20mm Oerlikon

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