

Four-Whee

The Staghound Armoured Car was unique in World War Two as it was the only vehicle designed and built in the US that did not serve in the American military



'The best solution to 'up-armouring' the Staghound came late in the war'

using speed and mobility to harass and probe enemy defences, the Staghound did not adapt well to Italy with its narrow, steep and often muddy roads where it was found too large and cumbersome.

One solution was the use of tyre chains and a rectangular opening was cut in the front mudguards and steel 25 pounder

During the Western Desert campaign in World War Two, British and Commonwealth forces made extensive use of armoured cars. They were used for scouting, finding, and shadowing Axis forces and reporting by radio their strength and location.

Also, armoured cars were used to attack enemy rear units and transport lines.

Some armoured car regiments such as the 11th Hussars (PAO) 'Cherrypickers' went on to achieve almost legendary status as desert warriors in this way.

Anticipating the North African campaign would last longer than 1942, the British saw the need for a long-range heavy armoured car. As British manufacturing was already stretched to the limit, attention turned to the US.

The result of this collaboration was the Chevrolet T17E1 armoured car. However, by the time it was ready for production the US Army had decided to limit its armoured car range to one, the M8. The British remained keen on the T17E1 calling it the Staghound. Production went ahead with most vehicles going to the UK.

The T17E1 was designed by Chevrolet, which saw off competition from the Ford

Motor Company's T17. The cast turret was like the one on the M3 'Lee' medium tank. The British asked for a minimum of two crew in the turret, one man on either side of the main armament.

To accommodate the British practise of locating the radio close to the commander, a turret rear bustle was added. The Royal Armoured Corps also stipulated a 2in smoke discharger should be fitted to the right top of the turret.

The Chevrolet T17E1 had a 4x4 configuration and weighed in at 27,200lb. Main armament was a 37mm M6 gun with a co-axial 0.30 calibre M1919 Browning machine gun, a second 0.30 calibre machine gun, which was located in the front right-hand side of the hull, and a third located on the turret top for anti-aircraft use.

The T17E1 was a sophisticated vehicle in its day. It had power steering and automatic transmission making the driver's job much easier. Power was supplied by two rear-facing six-cylinder engines. The automatic transmission fed a transfer case to both axles with four forward and one reverse gear.

Two- or four-wheel drive could be selected, and one engine could be shut down while in motion and taken out of the drive train. The hull was rigid enough not to need a separate chassis. Steering and suspension units were attached directly to the hull.

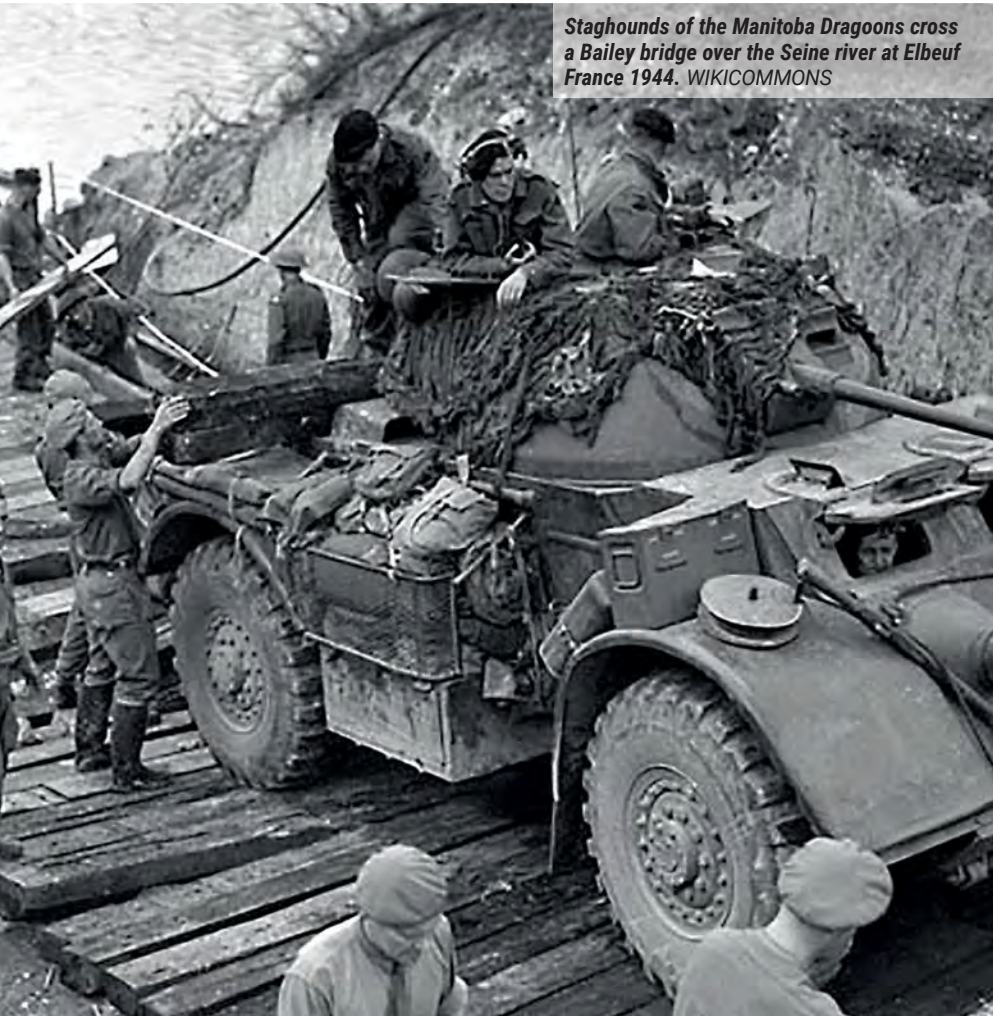
The Staghound was first ordered in March 1942 and arrived in Egypt in summer 1943. The British had developed an armoured car of their own, the Daimler Mark 1 which was smaller and lighter than the Staghound, but with a comparable 2pdr gun. When the North African Campaign ended, the Staghounds were prepared for combat in Italy.

Designed to operate on a flat desert plain



ABOVE: A Staghound I in the collection of the Australian Armoured Corps Museum, Puckapunyal. Interesting two-tone Australian camouflage scheme. WIKICOMMONS

led Muscle



Staghounds of the Manitoba Dragoons cross a Bailey bridge over the Seine river at Elbeuf France 1944. WIKICOMMONS



ABOVE: Some Staghounds were exported to Switzerland, one is preserved in the Armour Museum at Thun. Note the change of armament to a 20mm cannon. ALF VAN BEEM / WIKICOMMONS



A troop of Canadian Staghounds advance along a railway bed in the Hochwald forest. They are equipped with tyre chains. WIKICOMMONS

ammunition boxes welded on to store the chains. The 27th Lancers was the first British armoured car regiment to deploy to Italy using Daimlers and the other smaller armoured cars in the sabre squadrons. Staghounds were allocated to headquarters units where the more spacious interior was valued for the fitment of extra radios and map reading equipment. This would become established British practice for use of the Staghound.

One of the first units equipped with the Staghound had been the New Zealand 2nd Division. The New Zealander's liked the vehicle but thought the 37mm gun was too 'puny' to take on German anti-tank guns. Two New Zealand lieutenants had suggested substituting the main armament for a 3in Mark 1 howitzer. This was duly instigated for one car in each troop called a 'Staghound Mark II'.

Besides the British and New Zealanders, Polish and Canadian armoured car regiments were also issued with the vehicle. Both the Canadians and Poles liked the Staghound for its reliability, ease of driving, automotive durability, and ease of maintenance. Whereas the Daimler required one to three hours of mechanical checks a day, with the Staghound this was reduced to a few minutes. The Canadian's recommended that armoured car regiments drop the Daimler completely and re-equip with the Staghound. However, in the winter of 1943-44 Staghounds were confined to use on

mountain roads, which predicted their approach routes to the enemy and greatly reduced their deep reconnaissance role.

In the summer of 1944, the battlefields again opened and armoured car regiments using vehicles including the Staghound pursued the retreating Germans in the advance for Rome. But the following winter of 1944-45 saw conditions worsen as before, and a significant number of Staghounds were sent to the Middle East including Palestine and Iran.

The Staghound's other main area of service in World War Two was in North-West Europe. Here, as in Italy, opinions differed on the vehicle. The British liked its ruggedness but found it too large and unwieldy for reconnaissance work. The Canadians again preferred the Staghound for its ease of maintenance and reliability and equipped their armoured car regiments with the larger vehicle.

Initial fighting in the Bocage in Normandy hampered armoured car operations, but this changed following the breakout after August 8, 1944. Staghounds in Canadian service operated in the traditional cavalry role conducting deep reconnaissance operations, raiding enemy rear areas, and providing flank security for the Army Corps.

Canadian Staghounds of the Manitoba Dragoons (18th Armoured Car Regiment) provided security on the eastern flank of 21st Army Group during the advance on Falaise. The regiment helped to close the Falaise pocket meeting up with Polish troops and the Canadian's destroyed German units fleeing the pocket, knocking out lorries, half-tracks and even tanks.

A particularly satisfying result came when a Staghound destroyed a Sd.Kfz. 234 eight-wheel armoured car, its equivalent in German heavy armoured car types.

Later Canadian Staghounds overran German infantry equipped with anti-tank guns and Panzerfaust handheld anti-tank weapons. Most of the German transport was horse-drawn and provided easy targets for the roving Staghound squadrons.

These successes did not come without a cost though. The Manitoba Dragoons suffered a third of its wartime casualties during a few weeks of Normandy fighting.

Staghound vehicle casualties were mainly caused by anti-tank guns: the car's thin armour could not withstand the shots, but its strong construction at least reduced crew casualties.

Anti-tank shells tended to hit the wheels and running gear which constituted a



New Zealand Divisional Cavalry Staghounds.
Note tyre chain ammunition box storage on the front fenders. WIKICOMMONS



Always another river to cross, Staghounds of the 18th Canadian Armoured Car Regiment advance through France 1944. WIKICOMMONS



A New Zealand Staghound 'Pukeko' in Italy. WIKICOMMONS

'The Staghound was first ordered in March 1942 and arrived in Egypt in summer 1943'

large amount of the hull exterior. These hits usually blasted off wheels and suspension but did not often penetrate the hull to cause human casualties.

As the Canadians advanced through France into Belgium and Holland, they sought to improve the Staghound's firepower. The obsolete 37mm gun could not fire an effective high explosive round that was necessary to take on the enemy anti-tank guns. The Canadians had



Saumur Tank Museum's Staghound I complete with reserve fuel tanks and markings of the Guards Armoured Division. WIKICOMMONS

'Anticipating the North African campaign would last longer than 1942, the British saw the need for a long-range heavy armoured car'



The rear view of Saumur's Staghound I. WIKICOMMONS



A Dutch Staghound on display at the Overloon Museum Netherlands. WIKICOMMONS

already been innovative with Staghounds in Normandy, equipping some headquarters vehicles with fittings to carry 12ft sections of No 9 track bridge to help cross waterways, trenches, damaged bridges, and other obstacles.

The Canadians were also aware of British Guards' regiments mounting aircraft rockets on Sherman tank turrets called 'Tulips'. Launch rails and rockets were obtained from a Royal Canadian Air Force Typhoon squadron and mounted on a Staghound turret, two rockets on each side. Test firing exercises were arranged in front of senior officers, but the rockets were not accurate at long range and the

fuse failed to detonate the warhead at short range.

This was followed by fitting Land Mattress artillery rockets. Four rockets in a box were placed on each side of the turret, but the back-blast damaged the vehicle, so this was also abandoned.

An anti-aircraft version mounting four 20mm cannons in an open turret was also turned down for production due to overwhelming Allied air superiority and the vulnerability of the open turret during reconnaissance work.

The best solution to 'up-armouring' the Staghound came late in the war. Turrets were taken off obsolete Crusader tanks and equipped with a 75mm gun. These were mounted on Staghounds and given the designation Staghound Mark III. Only 32 cars were converted. The Mark III arrived in Europe in April 1945 and there was only time to deliver a handful to the Canadians before the end of hostilities.

About half of the 21st Army Group Staghounds were used by the Canadians. Small numbers served with the Polish 1st Armoured Division and the Belgian Brigade Piron. Several Staghounds were used by the Royal Naval 30 Assault Unit, a multi-service team tasked with conducting deep reconnaissance raids into German territory. This was the brainchild of Ian Fleming the author of the James Bond books. Perhaps the Staghound could have been thought of for 007's use?

Following the war, Staghounds remained popular, partly for their imposing bulk which could intimidate crowds. The British 4th Reconnaissance Regiment used Staghounds which saw action in the Greek civil war. The 1st King's Dragoon Guards used the armoured vehicle when performing peacekeeping duties in the French protectorates of Syria and Lebanon. Staghounds were also used by British troops in Palestine during the guerrilla war from 1946-48.

The Australian Army was equipped with up to 279 Staghounds from August 1943. They were not used in action but on occupation duties in Japan. Although largely retired from service in the 1950s, the Australian's retained 36 until 1970.

Denmark received eight Mark III Staghounds from Britain. The Netherlands took 108 from British stocks using them until the 1960s. After retirement, most were rearmed with a machine gun and the hulls and turrets encased in concrete to make pillboxes for airfield defence.

Italy was equipped with more than 100 Staghounds. After retirement from army use, the Italians turned them over to the State Police. The 37mm guns were replaced with a Breda Mod. 35



Staghounds from a British unit pass German prisoners at Gudow in Germany May 2, 1945. SGT. LAING NO.5 ARMY FILM AND PHOTOGRAPHIC UNIT /WIKICOMMONS

The command Staghound of Lt-Col HA Smith the commander of the 2nd Household Cavalry armoured car regiment of XIII Corps enters Brussels. Lt-Col Smith can be seen giving a confusing greeting to Belgian civilians. WIKICOMMONS



The crew of a 1st King's Dragoon Guard Staghound take cover from the sun. An Italian name is chalked on the turret side. WIKICOMMONS

machine gun and used by the Italian police until the early 1970s. Switzerland purchased 64 from the UK in the 1950s rearming most of them with 20mm cannon.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the UK exported its retired Staghounds to Middle Eastern countries. Egypt received 50, Syria 52 while others went to Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. As the Staghound III was not an ideal solution to improved firepower, turrets from the AEC heavy armoured car were mounted on Staghound chassis. Sixteen of these

were built for Lebanon and served with the Lebanese army. All fell into the hands of various militias. Israel obtained 112 de-militarised Staghounds between 1951 and 1953. Radios and 37mm guns were procured and the Staghounds served with reconnaissance battalions. The vehicle was not used in combat by the Israelis and was replaced by the AMX-13 light tank. The Israeli Staghounds were disposed of via arms dealers and some were obtained by Nicaragua and Cuba. Several were in action with Batista's army fighting Castro's rebels. The Cubans called



Staghound Mark I at Bovington Tank Museum. MAKIZOX/ WIKICOMMONS



A preserved Staghound Mark I at the Royal History Museum Brussels. WIKICOMMONS

SPECIFICATIONS

Origin US
Type Armoured Car
Manufacturer Chevrolet
Production October 1942 to April 1944
Number Built 3,844
In Service 1943 to 1980s
Armour 9mm to 44mm
Armament Mark I: 37mm M6 gun and three 0.3-inch Browning M1919 machine guns; Mark III: 75mm gun and two M1919 machine guns
Engine Two GMC 270 motors each capable of 97hp
Power to weight ratio 13.9hp/tonne
Crew 4, Commander/gunner, loader, driver and hull gunner
Range 450 miles (724km)
Maximum speed 55mph (89 km/h)

Dimensions (overall)
Length 5.49m
Width 2.69m
Height 7ft 9in 2.36m
Mass 14 tons

'Following the war, Staghounds remained popular, partly for their imposing bulk which could intimidate crowds'

their Staghounds 'las tanquetas'— the little tanks. Several were captured by the rebels and used by the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces after the war.

The Staghound arrived too late to fulfil its intended role as a long-range desert armoured car and was considered too large for a European reconnaissance vehicle by the British, although other armed forces valued its ease of maintenance and rugged reliability. Two indicators of a successful military vehicle are its length of service, and multitude of users, both which show the Staghound in a positive light.

For those wishing to model the vehicle, Bronco offers several including a Mark I, a modified Mark I with 60lb aircraft rockets, another Mark 1 with assault bridges, the anti-aircraft version and a Staghound Mark III. Italeri offers the Mark I, Mark III and AA versions. All of these are in 1/35th scale. ◀