



# A Russian Museum with a Difference...

The recently-opened Museum of Russian Military History is well worth a visit, says **James Kinnear**

There are museum collections around the world that one can visit once a year, or even once every ten years, and the exhibits have remained static in the meantime. In the Russian Federation however, several museum collections have been established in recent years that have grown rapidly from scratch, based on a heady mix of enthusiasm, patriotism and high-level business acumen.

These privately developed museums house world-class collections with an attention to detail in restoration projects that is second to none. One such museum is the recently-opened Muzei Otechestvennoi Voennoi Istorii (MOVI) - the Museum of Russian Military History - located in the village of Padikovo, in the western suburbs of Moscow.

The MOVI museum has been in existence for only three years, having officially opened on May 9, 2014, on the 69th anniversary of Victory in Europe, and yet has already amassed a superb collection of weapons and equipment. Although most exhibits are 'Russian standard' vehicles known to Russian adults and children alike, the museum has made a concerted effort to





*The main display hangar houses an eclectic mix of wartime and post-war Soviet armour*

gather together exhibits which are rare, unusual or in some cases entirely unique. So that, although the museum is not extensive, the collection is particularly interesting to those with a specific, rather than touristic, interest in the subject.

The collection started with the museum founders having a personal interest in historic small arms and edged weapons from the 19th and 20th centuries, and has already expanded exponentially to include the post-war Soviet-era and many armoured vehicles that are still in service with the modern Russian Army.

The location of the museum is, in itself, historic. The area to the west of Moscow where it is located, just south of Lenino-Snegiri, is where, in 1941, the Wehrmacht was stalled on the western outskirts of Moscow by the 108th Rifle Division under the command of General-Major I I Birichev, in what was known as the Battle of the Pavlo-Slobodsky bridgehead.

The division deployed nearly 10,000 men at the commencement of combat operations in late November. At the end of the battle on December 5, this had been reduced by combat losses to 800, a statistic which says more than words can possibly describe.

The MOVI museum complex consists of two purpose-built two-storey buildings, which house the World War Two and 19th Century to Soviet-era collections, a large open-sided storage hangar housing tanks and heavy armoured vehicles, and an open display area where World War Two and modern artillery is located. At first glance, the museum might appear to resemble many other recent museum collections in the Russian Federation and around the world, however besides the rarity of some of the exhibits, there are two other distinct differences to the collection, which provide an astounding resource for military researchers, historians and modellers.

The first nuance is that, almost without exception, nearly all vehicles in the museum have been restored to running condition. In the case of modern AFVs this is not such a major undertaking, as many of the relatively recent production vehicles have low service miles and spare parts availability. The majority of World War Two exhibits have also been restored to running condition however, using where possible mechanical components original to the vehicle type concerned.

The other specific is that almost all of the tanks and AFVs are displayed in 'combat order'. Rather than a collection of armoured vehicles which are externally complete but internally stripped out, the majority of the tanks are stowed with inert main and ancillary armament ammunition, small arms, sights, optics, and radios.

With approximately 30 tanks in fully-equipped and running condition, the museum as a private collection compares not unfavourably with the British Army's current combat readiness - which says more about the state of British government defence expenditure in recent years than it does about the museum under review!

The MOVI museum collection at Padikovo is a highly eclectic mix of small arms, armoured and softskin military vehicles, tanks and self-propelled and towed artillery. As mentioned, there are many rare and in some cases unique exhibits, including some weapons that the author had never personally seen before despite



*The T-20 'Komsomolyets' was a standard Red Army light artillery tractor in the late 1930s and the early months of World War Two. This example is restored to full running order*



*The 'Tachanka' was a horse-drawn machine gun cart used by the fledgeling Red Army during the Civil War that followed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and has been a standard feature of historic parades to the present day*



*The Padikovo museum's M3 Stuart is also in running condition*



*The IS-2 heavy tank, the ultimate symbol of Red Army armoured strength at the end of World War Two*

*The T-26 M-1933 was a Soviet development of the 'Vickers 6 ton' tank, mounting the same turret and armament as the BT-5 and early BT-7 fast tanks*





A unique and fascinating exhibit, an NKL-26 raider aerosan, restored from remnants salvaged from the region of the wartime Leningrad front



The 125mm 2A45 'sprut' was developed as an auxiliary propelled anti-tank weapon for VDV airborne forces, following the design principles of the similar 85mm SD-44 dating from the 1950s



Another rarity, a 20mm 'RES'M-1942 anti-tank rifle mounted on a purpose built ski sled. Approximately 200 of these weapons were manufactured. The museum at Padikovo has a rare surviving example of the type

**'The exhibits are remarkably well restored, and are thoughtfully displayed'**



The T-62 MBT was introduced into service with the Soviet Army in 1961, to complement rather than replace the T-54 and T-55 in a long-range over-watch role. It was widely exported to the Middle East



The T-60 located at the Padikovo museum is one of the few tanks at the museum which is not entirely original. It will be rebuilt in the near future



A 2S7, exploration of which answered the author's curiosity as to the internals of this huge vehicle, not least the layout of the compartment where the gun crew are seated during transit. Note the barely visible shell transport trolley



The BM-14 multiple rocket system (MRS), mounted on the ZIS-151 chassis, was a standard Soviet Army MRS in the 1950s



The 4x4 GAZ-61-73 all-terrain transport vehicle was built in small numbers at GAZ, but production was cancelled in the autumn of 1941 in favour of more urgent T-60 light tank assembly

having studied the subject for quite a few years.

The origin of some of the tanks and armoured vehicles is also interesting considering their current Russian location. The collection's PT-76B amphibious light tank is for instance from former DDR (East German) inventory rather than Soviet service, while the museum's IS-3(M) heavy tank is one of the rebuilt tanks originally exported by the Soviet Union to Egypt after they had been replaced by the somewhat less troublesome T-10 heavy tank series in Soviet Army service.

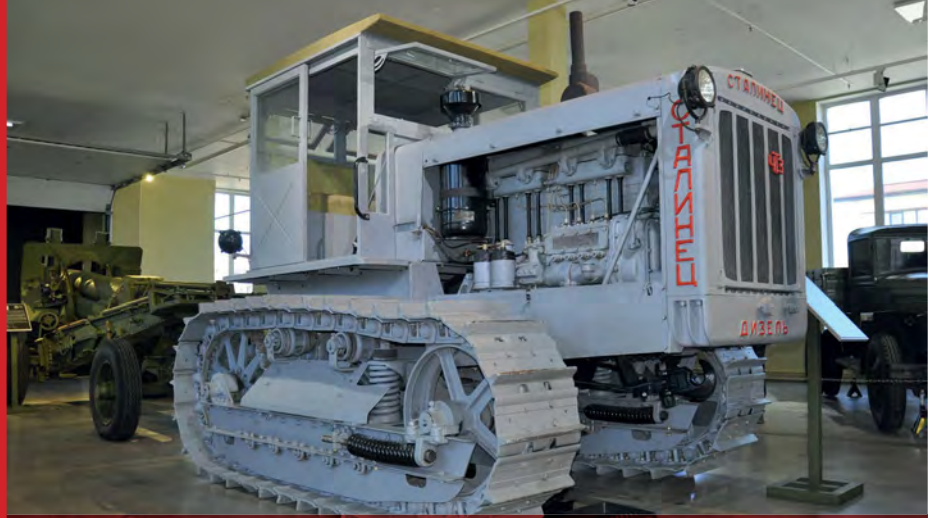
The MOVI museum also has a good collection of wartime tanks, armoured vehicles and softskins, complemented by the larger display of post-war tanks and vehicles. There are plans to add the early twin-turreted T-26 M-1931 and final single conical-turreted M-1939 variants to the existing T-26 M-1933 currently in the collection. Moving forward to very recent history, the museum has plans to add a T-80 MBT to its collection and may even acquire and display an early T-90 MBT, which would be the first current-service T-90 to be put on display in a museum collection anywhere in the Russian Federation.

The museum has a handful of foreign tanks and vehicles, which are representative of the lend-lease types used by the Red Army during World War Two. These include an M3 Stuart light tank, of which the Red Army received 340 together with 1336 later M3A1 variants, and a MkIII Valentine, of which 3,782 were delivered to the Red Army. With regard to rare Soviet types, two examples of the particularly rare and unique exhibits at the museum in Padikovo are a 4x2 ZiS-21 truck, designed to run on solid fuel and as such being more traction engine than truck, and an NKL-26 raider aerosan which had served on the Leningrad Front. The latter, largely wooden, vehicle has been rebuilt with meticulous detail by the museum, using new wood mounted on the recovered remnants of the original steel framework.

The MOVI museum in Padikovo is growing on a continuous basis, and has a full range of acquisitions and restorations planned for the foreseeable future. Within the museum is a large display table with model tanks, representing the museum's 'shopping list', with a red star being placed in front of each model once a real example has been procured, restored and added to the museum collection.

The MOVI museum in Padikovo is well worth a visit for anyone with an interest in Russian military history from 1800 through to the present day. The exhibits are remarkably well restored, and are thoughtfully displayed with enough space around them for photography purposes. The museum itself is well organised, there is a 'stolovaya' (canteen) serving excellent food (which also houses a huge indoor horse riding facility, one of the largest in Europe) and even the bathrooms are spotlessly clean! ◀

*The author would like to give his personal thanks to the general director of the museum, Dmitry Viktorovich Shersheev and his technical management team, who provided unprecedented access and assistance for our visit, during which, perhaps remarkably, nobody fell off anything or got their fingers caught. In tankers' terms, a successful day out!*



**An S-65 artillery tractor. This particular vehicle was used after World War Two as an airfield tractor, and is fitted with the 'de-luxe' wooden cab. Few wartime S-65 driver-mechanics had the luxury of protection from the elements**



**The '4M' quadruple 7.62mm 'Maxim' water-cooled anti-aircraft machine gun system was generally mounted on GAZ-AA and GAZ-AAA trucks for air defence purposes. This is believed to be the most complete surviving original 4M system**



### **Museum of Russian Military History**

*Muzei Otechestvennoi VoЕННОi Istorii – Padikovo*

**Address:** Ulitsa Konnaya, Dom 40, Padikovo Village, Istrinskiy Region, Moscow Oblast, Moscow

**Directions:** Buses run regularly from Strogino Metro station in western Moscow to the village bus stop (a 30-minute journey), from which it is recommended a local taxi is used to get to the museum itself, which is otherwise a 30-minute walk from the bus stop. The museum is on the territory of the Divnyy Equestrian Centre.

**Working hours:** Saturday & Sunday noon-4pm or see website

**Telephone:** +7 929 661 1849 or see website

**Website:** [www.kskdivnyy.ru](http://www.kskdivnyy.ru) or [www.voenist.ru](http://www.voenist.ru)



**The IS-3 had its public debut at the Allied Victory Parade in Berlin in September 1945, where its appearance caused consternation among Western military experts. This particular IS-3(M) tank was later exported to Egypt**