



Incorporated

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION INC

PO BOX 33 710, TAKAPUNA, AUCKLAND 9

NEWSLETTER No 81

March 1994

A Registered Publication

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 1994 are now due. Honorary and Life Members pay no sub. Lady Associate Members pay \$2-50; all other Members pay \$5-00. By Rule 4F any members over three years in arrears may be struck off strength unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case report to Secretary. To be financial to 31 Dec 94 you owe us \$. . . . If no amount is shown above you are financial.

LAST POST:

Mrs V.D. (Val) Baker, 3 Mar 94, at Auckland. (Associate Member).
1822 Captain E.L.A. (Les) Kitney, 23 Mar 94, at Auckland.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

WP Beveridge to 1 Warwick Crescent, Napier.
H. Fantham to 2/274 Burwood Rd, Christchurch 9.
Mrs E. Joplin to 49 Eversleigh Rd, Takapuna, Auckland 9.
Major General W.S. McKinnon to 27/19 Liston Avenue, Taupo.
Lt Col AJ Rivers to 108 Hendersons Line, Marton 5460.
Lt Col CC Stewart to 186 Vale Rd, Tauranga.
Major MJ Withers to 27 Wakefield St, Waiouru.

NEW MEMBERS:

G46420 Lt Col TR (Theo) Kuper RNZA, Commandant, ASI, Waiouru.
Sgt D (Damian) Nuku, 22 Bty RNZA, 6 Pattie St, Petone.
Lt IE (Irene) Rollo, 17E Michael Rd, Paraparaumu (Associate)
1773 Captain WH (Wally) Russell, 68 Mountbatten Ave, Glenfield, Ak 9.
X21135 WO2 KC (Solly) Solomon, 12 Taiping Tce, Linton MC (Revived m/shi)
Mrs K. (Kathleen) Kitney, 3/23 Byron Ave, Takapuna (Associate).

GONE NO ADDRESS:

LAST KNOWN LOC

RJ Bennett	21 Pope Ave, Berrara, NSW 2540, Australia.
S Sgt GJ Pickering	Fort Dorset
HJ Macown MBE	Umuroa St, Rotorua.

Any member knowing whereabouts of above please inform Secretary.

LIFE MEMBERS:

1627 NH (Noel) Lundon wef 25 Apr 93.
1565 AH (Sandy) Bissett wef 30 Jul 93.
1599 Major JD (Jim) Gibb wef 9Dec 93.
1639 HR (Hugh) Sigley wef 28 Dec 93.
1682 CJ (CLiff) Bragg wef 27 Apr 94.
35244 AG (Guy) Blackwell wef 14 May 94.
1645 WE (Emil) Jennings wef 27 Jul 94.

COMMITTEE MEETING: The next committee meeting will be held in the main lounge, Birkenhead RSA, Recreation Drive, Birkenhead, at 1000 hrs 16 April 94. Non-committee members welcome.

AUCKLAND GUNNERS DAY SOCIAL: Will be held at the Birkenhead RSA on Wednesday 25 May 94 from 1100 hrs. Out-of-town members welcome. An excellent lunch is available at \$7 main course. To keep caterers happy please inform Alf Smith on 410 4564 or Secretary on 445 3567 no later than Monday 23 May if you are going to attend.

CANTERBURY/MARLBOROUGH MEMBERS: Paul O'Connor, our Canterbury Rep. requests all Canterbury etc members to meet in the Christchurch RSA on the last Friday in each month to share in comradeship and enable him to gauge their interest for other activities. His phone number is 03/322 9011.

ARMY LEAVE CENTRES: These are situated at Paihia, Mount Maunganui, Rotorua, Acacia Bay (Taupo), Turangi, Napier, Wanganui, Waikanae, Wanaka, Hanmer Springs, Akaroa, and Tekapo. Eligibility: Retired RF personnel and dependants are top of Category 2, i.e. immediately after serving RF. For North Island centres contact Booking Clerk, HQ Support Command, Messines Army Centre, Private Bag 3, Upper Hutt, Ph 04/275 823. South Island: Booking Clerk, HQ Southern Region Support Unit, Burnham Camp, Phone 03/347 8011 Ext 7163. For further info see local Army Office.

HISTORY OF OFFICER CADET SCHOOL, PORTSEA: May be ordered from Major Chris Wrangle, Secretary, Major General Sir James Harrison Memorial Lecture Trust, Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT 2600, Australia. The price is \$A25.

REUNIONS: Army Servicewomen PAST AND PRESENT - 30 Sep 1-2 Oct 94 at Conference Centre, 27-37 Ohinerau St, Remuera, Auckland. Enquiries to Reunion Secretary, NZWRAC Assn, PO Box 44 083, Pt Chevalier, Auckland 2, or phone 09/846 0027 or 09/478 8215.

6 Field Regiment NZA: National reunion at Gisborne 8-10 Oct 94. Further details to be published later. Contact Secretary, Gisborne RSA, PO Box 149, Gisborne.

NZ 'J' Force and BCOF Golden Jubilee reunion, 11-13 Mar 95, Pascal St, Palmerston North. For registration and enquiries write Reunion Secretary PO Box 473, Feilding.

16 FIELD REGIMENT OPEN DAY 12 FEB 94; The day commenced with a Regimental Parade at which our Patron, Major General Ron Hassett CB CBE, took the salute etc. The rest of the day was given over to sport and skill at arms competitions, winners of which were as follows:

Gun Run, i.e. to dismantle and re-assemble a 105-mm pack howitzer and fire one round blank 163 Battery.

Skill at arms 163 "

Tug-of-war - Open 161 "

Catch weight 163 "

Tabloid sports 11(A) "

Those of us who attended were treated right royally by the Regiment, in particular by our members Lt Col Graeme Williams, WO1 Ian Foster,

and WO1 Gordon Forrester, who saw to our every want. On our part we were most impressed by the skill, knowledge, and enthusiasm displayed by all members of the Regiment with whom we came in contact. The static displays of gun, computer and survey equipment, and the Cymbeline mortar locating radar were intensely interesting. Long may the practice of the art so continue.

DIAMOND JUBILEE NZPFOCA: Do you realise our Association will be 60 years old this year?

On 10 July 1934 at the instigation of our first Secretary, 954 W02 TS (Tom) Power, retired members of the NZ Armed Constabulary, NZ Permanent Artillery, NZ Torpedo Corps, and serving members of the RNZA, were invited to attend a meeting in the Masonic Hall, Devonport, Auckland, for the purpose of forming an association to "... foster esprit de corps and to extend a helping hand to old soldiers in need." Twenty-seven retired and serving members attended.

At first they decided the Association be called the "Past and Present RNZA Association." However, Major General Sir George S. Richardson KBE CB CMG, who was elected our first President, at the next meeting proposed the present title. Having done his homework, Sir George - who had come to New Zealand in 1891 as a Master Gunner RA - pointed out that the RNZA was directly descended from the NZ Permanent Force, so named in 1885 during its formation from the NZ Armed Constabulary then being disbanded. Furthermore, in 1934 it was still the sole permanent force of soldiers in the country. His proposition was adopted.

The annual subscription was fixed at one shilling (10c)!

There is much more - too much for a newsletter. However, a complete history of the Association is available to any member who is interested on application to Secretary.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEE: A suggestion by one of our members that a Life Membership fee be introduced was considered at our last committee meeting, but having taken into account the experience of certain other organisations who had adopted such a scheme - and are now short of funds - the committee decided against it.

RESTORATION - FORT BALLANCE: Wally Fraser is investigating the possibility of old guns being buried at Fort Dorset, and that the RN buried a 6-in disappearing gun near the National War Memorial in Buckle St, Wellington. He is to request the assistance of the Bomb Disposal Squad to find them. Can any member assist?

NEWS FROM AROUND AND ABOUT:

Our condolences go to Tom Chapman, our Wellington/Hutt Valley Rep., who recently lost his good lady Margaret.

Congratulations to Jim and Dot Gilberd who celebrated 60 years of married bliss on 26 Feb 94.

Sandy Bissett, 119 St Martins Rd, Christchurch 2, has had his "ups and downs" in recent months with sundry ills and more recently has had 80% of his right ear removed. But Sandy can still tell a funny story like the time as a Traffic Officer he took a little old lady for a driving test in an Austin 7 with a Great Dane in the back, and how he had to tell her to get the dog out so he could get in! Sandy's good lady Joan has also had her troubles health-wise. We wish them both well.

Irene Rollo relates how as WO IC a parade of ATS girls in the UK she found dressing the ranks according to the book, i.e. by the front, just about impossible "... as they were all different shapes and sizes..." In desperation she eventually did the job by lining up their rears..... no, not by what you thought, but by the heels of their shoes!

Des O'Connor, who is Chairman of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Opera Society, has organised a Grand European Opera and Scenic Tour covering the period 14 June to 24 July 1994. Participants numbering 30 will attend operas at Stuttgart, Munich, Vienna, Graz, Milan, Verona, Orange, Paris, and London. As well as theatres and opera houses they will visit a selection of other establishments and areas of general tourist interest at these and other cities en route.

While Des is away Terry Transom will undertake the duties of Treasurer of the Association.

THE GUN

Continued from Newsletter No 80

By Wally Ruffell

MECHANISATION (Cont.)

SP FIELD AND MEDIUM GUNS:

The invention of the tank by the British in 1915 gave birth to many ideas for its use as a mobile platform for field, medium, and even heavy guns.

Early efforts in Britain in this direction were makeshift, e.g. the loading of a 60-pr on to a tank chassis to transport it to a gun area, then the unloading of it to bring it into action. Similar attempts by other nations were made during the last stages of World War 1 and the early 1920s.

France produced some promising prototypes. Indeed the French Inspector General of Artillery correctly foresaw the need for SP guns in the future but unfortunately at the time received no support from his colleagues. When in 1936 they admitted he was right and decided to act it was too late; World War 2 broke out before any useful equipments resulted.

In 1925 Britain produced the first true fully tracked SP gun by taking a standard Vickers medium tank chassis and mounting upon it an 18-pr Mark 5 gun. There were two versions: one operated as a straight field gun, while a later (1926) model which could elevate to 85° functioned in both field and AA roles. Known as the "Birch Gun" after General Sir Noel Birch, Master General of the Ordnance, who was responsible for its introduction, it was intended to be a model for the supporting artillery of an experimental armoured force but was short-lived.

Although the gun passed its trials satisfactorily a number of senior Officers were prejudiced against it; one even called it a 'monstrosity.' They argued about it: was it a gun or was it a tank? Should it be manned by Gunners or should it be manned by Troopers? Interest waned. Money for development was not forthcoming, so around 1930 the whole scheme was abandoned - and the equipments scrapped. Thus when World War 2 soon demonstrated the need for an SP field gun the British found themselves no better off than the French. An example of a Birch gun is shown in Fig. 29.

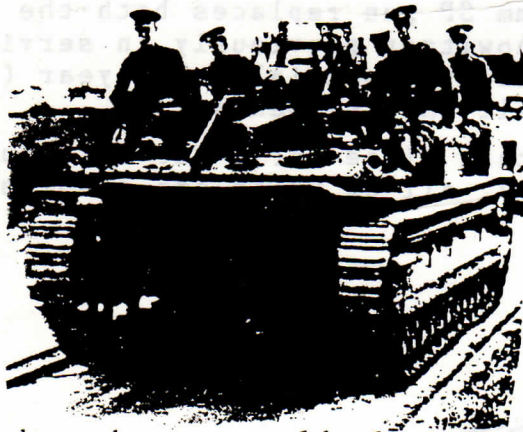


Fig. 29: The Birch gun. Another version had a turret which completely covered gun and detachment.

If field guns were to support tanks they had to have the same cross-count capabilities, i.e. had to be mounted upon tracked vehicles.

Once again Gunners were saddled with makeshifts. Late in 1941 the first appeared; it was the 'Bishop,' a 25-pr gun in a large steel box sitting on a Valentine tank chassis. It did not impress; due to the construction of

the box the gun could elevate no more than 15° which restricted range to 6400 yds (5850 metres) instead of the normal 13400 (12225). See Fig. 30

In November 1941 the Americans produced the 'Priest,' their standard 105-mm field piece mounted upon a modified Grant M3 tank chassis. Some say the resemblance of its machine gun cupola to a church pulpit gave rise to the ecclesiastical nickname, thus continuing the tradition begun with the Bishop. Being rather better engineered it proved a very successful equipment, having been used by the British as well as the Americans in all theatres of World War 2. See Fig. 32.

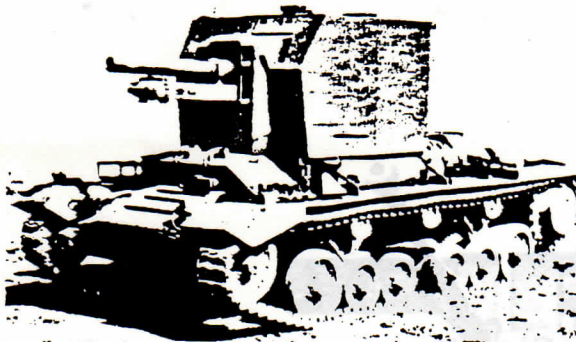


Fig. 30: The Bishop.

Britain wanted the Americans to build a 25-pr version of the Priest but they could not see their way clear to produce an equipment they would not use themselves. However, the Canadians set up a factory to make the Ram tank a local pattern version of the Grant M3 which proved suitable for mounting the 25-pr. This combination became the 'Sexton' which saw service until

the 1950s. See Fig. 31.

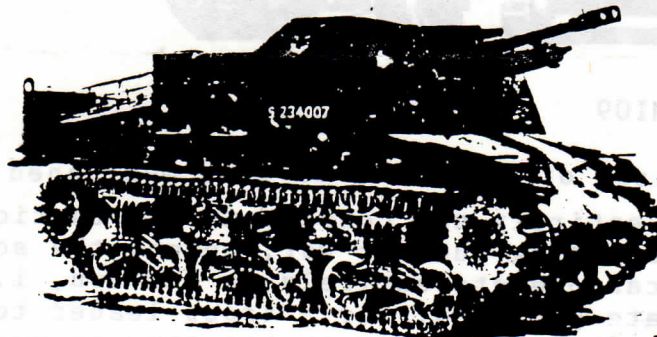
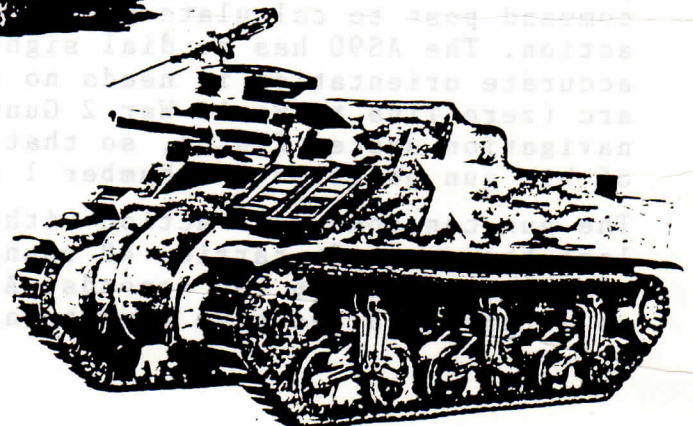


Fig. 31: The "Sexton."

Note the similarity of the chassis to that of the "Priest" in Fig. 32 below.

Fig. 32.

The "Priest."



The first British gun to be designed as an SP equipment from its inception is the "Abbot" carrying a 105-mm piece with a range of 17000m (18591^x). It entered service in 1964 but is now obsolete. The AS90 (Artillery System 1990) 155-mm SP gun replaces both the Abbot and the M109, an American 155-mm howitzer previously in service in the British Army. The AS90 is undergoing troop trials this year (1994) after which it will be issued to all RHA regiments.

Other SP equipments in use in Britain since World War 2 include the US M107 (175-mm), the M110 (203-mm), all of which are obsolescent.

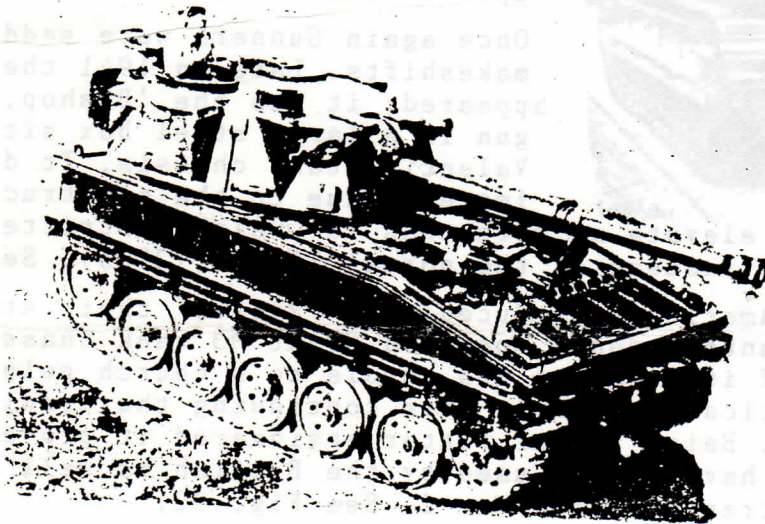
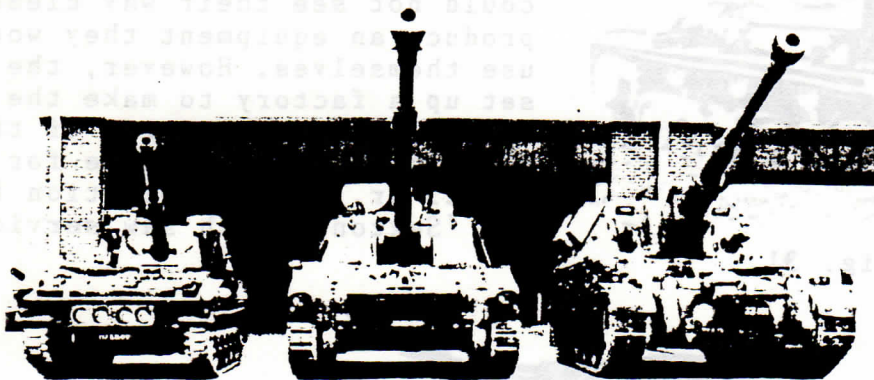


Fig. 32A: The Abbot.



• Abbot

M109

AS90

Fig. 32B: A comparison of the three SP guns mentioned above.

The AS90 represents an entirely new concept in the tactical employment of artillery in war, including nuclear war, beyond the scope of this paper to describe. It can operate entirely on its own, i.e. without a command post to calculate gun data, or a troop leader to lead it into action. The AS90 has no dial sight! As it has its own means of obtaining accurate orientation it needs no director to put it in the centre of arc (zero line to World War 2 Gunners). It is equipped with an inertial navigation system (INLS), so that having been given the grid reference of his gun position the Number 1 goes to it without further assistance.

The gun can come into action within 1½ minutes and be out of action in less than one. It carries 48 rounds of ammunition and can fire a burst of three rounds in ten seconds. A battery can put over a tonne of shell on a target in the same time to a range of 24700 metres.

TOWED FIELD ARTILLERY:

The early 1920s saw the first serious attempts to mechanise horse and field artillery. They consisted merely of replacing the limber pole with an engine draught connector, then hooking gun and limber in to an ordinary commercial-type truck or tractor as was done with the mediums during World War 1. Some vehicles had FWD which enabled them to cope with bad roads but their bodies and suspensions were not sufficiently robust for heavy cross-country movement.

Speed had to be kept down, especially on hard, rough roads, otherwise carriages (which had no springs), and the old wooden wheels of 4 feet 8 inch diameter (142 cm) suffered severely. To ease the strain gun and limber wheels were sometimes fitted with solid rubber tyres but speed still had to be limited to 15 mph (24 kph).

As a partial solution to the problem some countries exchanged their wooden wheels for heavy steel types of varying diameters and styles, and fitted them with solid rubber tyres. Carriages so equipped could be towed somewhat faster but still suffered from shock and vibration. Obviously the answer was to fit pneumatic-tyred wheels.

However, some objected to pneumatic tyres because they could easily be punctured by bullet or shell splinter, but this problem was solved by the introduction of 'run-flat' tyres which could be used for up to 50 miles while flat without further damage.

In Britain the RA adopted pneumatic tyres for field gun carriages when mechanisation commenced.

As an alternative to towing the French initiated the 'portée' method by transporting their M1897 75-mm guns and limbers on the backs of flat-top trucks - a system employed by British Commonwealth anti-tank units during World War 2. Wear and tear on carriages and wheels were thus virtually eliminated but the inconvenience of loading and unloading them proved irksome, even with the ramps provided. Fig. 33 will give some idea of the problem:

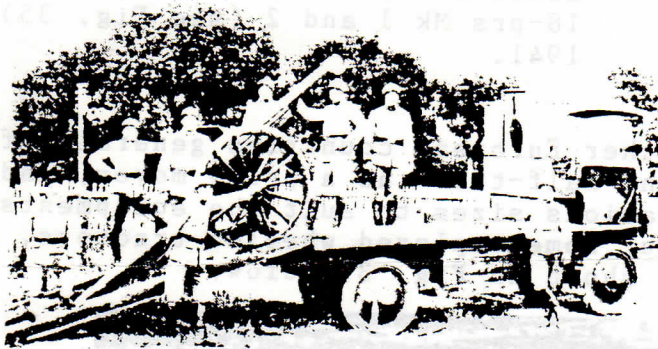


Fig. 33: Mechanisation in the 1920s the French way. The Germans went one better and fitted their truck with a winch to assist in loading and unloading the gun on to and off the flat-top.

For cross-country movement small tractors were sometimes carried for use when the gun-carrying trucks ran out of road. The tractors were then unloaded and used to bring the guns into action.

The RA tried the portee method during the 1920s but soon gave it up. The RNZA also tried it a decade later but were likewise unimpressed. On more than one occasion was heard the remark, "For Gawd's sake give us back the horses!" See Figs. 34 and 35.

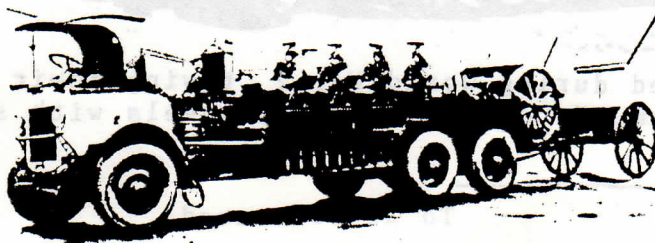


Fig. 34: RA experiment during late 1920s in trying to find an alternative to the dragon (see Fig. 36). The limber, which does not appear to be rubber-tyred, must have had a hard time!

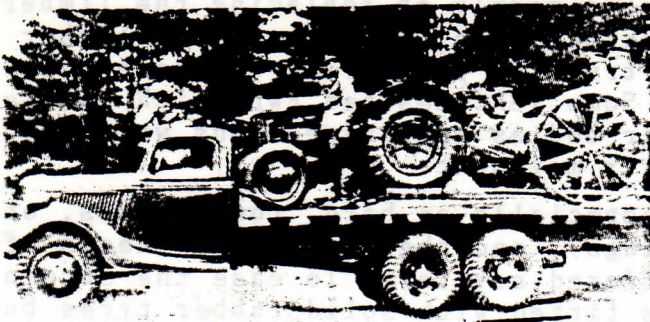


Fig. 35: RNZA experiment in mechanisation circa 1937. The truck is a 1936 model Ford V8 with body lengthened for the purpose. Would any member of NZPFOCA who recalls the experiment please supply details to writer including names of Gunners if remembered.

The first RA unit was converted from horse to mechanical draught in 1923 with the adoption of the 'dragon' (coined from the words 'drag gun'), as a gun tractor. It was a fully tracked vehicle designed to tow the 18-pr Mk 4 gun and limber, and carry its detachment. Both gun and limber were fitted with pneumatic tyres.

There were three 'marks' of dragon; Mks 1 and 2 (with variations) were for field guns, while the heavier Mk 3 was intended for mediums. A Mk 2 dragon is shown in Fig. 36 below.



Fig. 36: Dragon Mk 2 introduced in 1933. The gun is the 18-pr Mk 4, later (in 1935) converted to 25-pr after which it became known as the 25-pr Mk 1 or the 18/25-pr. New Zealand Gunners were still making do with 18-prs Mk 1 and 2 (see Fig. 35) until 1941.

Other European countries generally favoured the half-track as a prime mover, made in various sizes to suit the equipments hauled, but some employed wheeled tractors. A

typical German half-track is shown in Fig. 37 below.

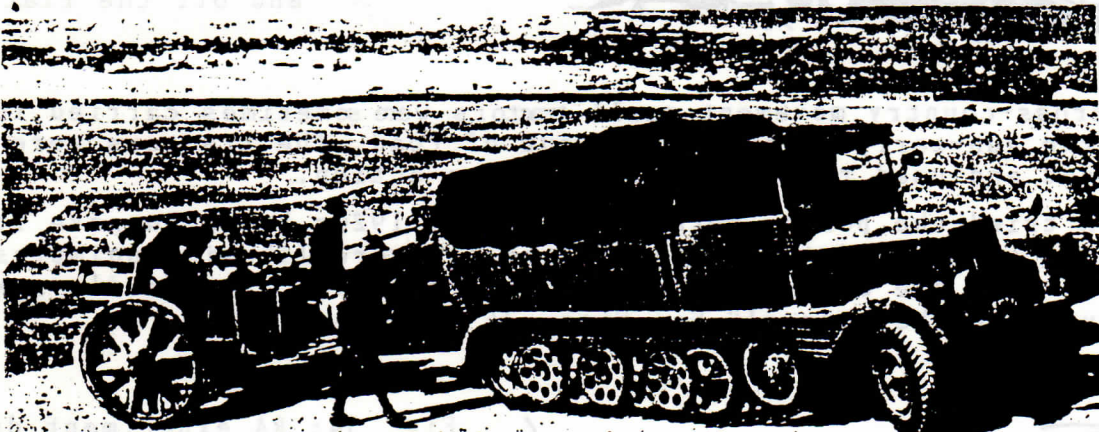


Fig. 37.

German half-track photographed during World War 2 towing their standard field gun, the 105-mm. Note special steel wheels with solid rubber tyres on gun.