

British lend-lease vehicles

My book review of the Polish "Lend Lease Vol. 1" made me find my English lend-lease material and the following story came out of it.

Churchill



The Churchill tank is from Airfix - a building kit with many years behind it.

The two models in my collection also belong to the veterans. They are from the terrible time when the belts were made of a material which - as it turned out many years later - was related to the plastic from which the tank is made. (Sort of the plastics world's answer to the tin plague.)

A nasty experience! The road wheels almost melted and became a sticky mass. If you wanted to fix the damage, there was therefore no other option than to take the belts off and throw them away.

After this, wheels and other parts that had been in contact with the belts had a long time to solidify again. And where do you get some new belts from?

On my tanks, it is the belts from Esci, a special mine clearance version of the Churchill tank. Because of the tank's distinctive fenders, it was possible to cut each belt in half, so that both of my Airfix models could get new belts. Fortunately, Airfix has switched to making belts from a different material which do not have the same flaws - or they just haven't shown up yet!

My contribution to the model: The tank commander which is from AB Figures and a radio antenna.

In Russian service, Churchill entered the tank in heavy armored regiments - and participated, among other things, at Kursk and as late as the liberation of the Baltic countries in the summer and autumn of 1944.

Mathilda



A Mathilda II from Airfix - in Russian service called *the English Worker* - rugged, enduring, reliable and a bit slow.

Basically, the building kit is assembled as intended from the factory side. I just added the log on the side of the tank - should it get stuck, a log is good to have on hand.

Furthermore, the radio antenna and the cam carriage commander (AB Figures) are my additions.

The kit is easy to assemble and is a good representation of this English tank.

The Russians classified the cam carriage as medium-heavy.

During the war various modifications were tried - a 76 mm gun instead of the standard 40 mm gun. Furthermore, the screen that hides the undercarriage was removed.

Behind the fenders, a lot of mud and snow could collect, which slowed down the already unimpressive speed.

Valentine



Another English tank which was supplied in large numbers was the Valentine.

The model shown is from Britannia Miniatures. I just added the propellant drum on the stern, radio antenna and tank commander (AB Figures).

The tank itself is cast in resin, while the belts, turret hatch, cannon and machine gun are in metal.

Britannia has intended the model to be used in North Africa, which is why so-called sand shields have been mounted over the road wheels.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to remove these before the model entered Russian service, but it is possible.

The Russians' nickname for this light tank was *the puppy dog*.

In Russian service the tank had a longer service life than in English service. Thus there were some units at Berlin in 1945 that still had Valentine tanks. For example, the 259th Armored Regiment, whose 1st Company consisted of 10 Sherman M4A2 and 2nd Company consisted of 10 units. Valentine Mk III.

The British largely stopped using the tank after the campaign in North Africa. Some served in North-West Europe as lead tanks in anti-tank divisions equipped with Archer tank destroyers and in Italy the tank was found in an amphibious version - the forerunner of the Sherman Duplex-Drive.

Universal Carrier



Universal Carriers were delivered to Russia in large numbers, where they were included in, for example, reconnaissance units and motorized infantry units.

Often both the English markings of the vehicles and the weapons with which the all-terrain vehicles were delivered - the Bren Gun and the Boys Anti-Tank Rifle - were retained. This must have caused many logistical problems, so many terrain vehicles were equipped with corresponding Russian weapons instead.

The assembly kit is from Airfix - it has been around since the mid-1960s and is still going strong.

My contribution to the models is a change to the running board and then the drivers, which appear to be from SHQ. (I switched to the figures and unfortunately did not save the piece of cardboard with the company name and catalog number.)

Originally, it was my idea that my Russian carriers should be from Britannia Miniatures and I had bought four. However, it turned out that they were a bit larger than the Airfix models - and worst of all (for me) they had a large resin "foot". That disqualified them somewhat in my eyes as I don't stake my vehicles.

I also had to state that the English all-terrain vehicle in scale 1:76 - for me - is inextricably linked to the Airfix model. There were also some pretty smart crews from Britannia, but they were also a little too big for the Airfix models, and didn't go well with my plastic figures.

Painting

Vehicles and figures are painted as described in my article "Painting Russian Wargame Units", published in Chakoten No. 3/September 2001.

Source

1. *Red Hammers, Soviet Self-Propelled Artillery and Lend lease Armor, 1941 to 1945*, Volume XII, i serien Soviet Order of Battle World War II, An Organizational History of the Major Combat Units of the Soviet Army, af Charles Sharp, Nafziger, 1998.
2. *Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks* by Dimitriy Loza, University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska 1996. ISBN 0-8032-2920-8. (Can be borrowed from the Royal Garrison Library.)
3. *Fighting for the Soviet Motherland* by Dimitriy Loza, University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska 1998, ISBN 0-8032-2929-1. (Can be borrowed from the Royal Garrison Library.)

Internet sources

Churchill: <http://www.battlefield.ru/library/lend/churchill.html>

Mathilda: <http://www.battlefield.ru/library/lend/matilda.html>

Valentine: <http://www.battlefield.ru/library/lend/valentine.html>

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