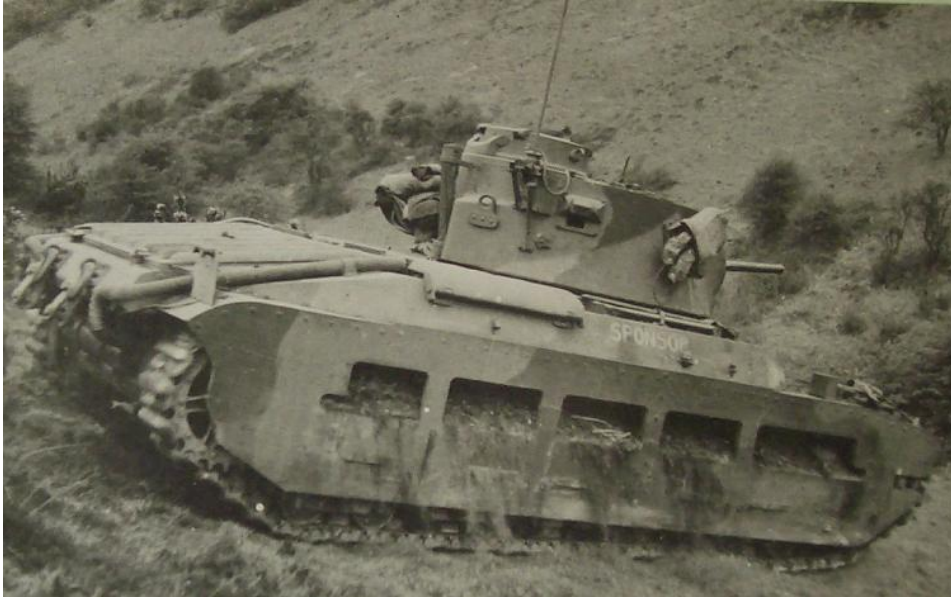


The Matilda II Infantry Tank (A.12)



In September 1936 investigations into a 3 man tank, similar to the Matilda II with 50mm of armour and a top speed of 10-15 mph were initiated, by November the armour requirement was increased to 70mm as well as the ability to cross a trench of 8 feet and a climbing capacity of 3 feet. Two A.E.C. 6.7 litre bus engines were chosen, drawings were undertaken by Vulcan foundry and the mock-up was approved in April 1937. The two pilot models were delivered in April 1938 and although trouble was experienced with the cooling systems to adapt it for hot climates production orders were given.

Compared to other British vehicles of the time the Matilda II was expensive and took longer to build, the first production models were completed in September 1939. The Matilda II used a riveted construction with both cast and rolled armour and was armoured with a 2pdr gun with a Besa 7.92 machine gun. Armour was extremely thick for the period being 75-78mm thick on the front and 65-75mm thick on the sides, this armour granted virtual immunity to nearly all anti-tank weapons of the time. The 2pdr gun could be replaced with a 3" howitzer which could fire both High Explosive and Smoke shells.

The Matilda II first saw action in the Battle of France where its thick armour caused the German 37mm Pak and tank guns to bounce off even at point blank ranges, only a handful of the tanks had been sent to France so they had little impact on the campaign. In North Africa the Matilda II has great success against the Italians who were unable to deal with the Matilda's thick armour, this protection was well liked by the crews of the Matilda II. It wasn't until the arrival of the Germans in North Africa in February 1941 that a weapon capable of dealing with the Matilda II was available - the 88mm Flak gun, it must be remembered however that the Germans did not have a tank capable of penetrating the Matilda II's armour at range until the Summer of 1942, after over two and a half years of war.

By 1942 the Matilda was being declared obsolete, the small

turret ring was incapable of mounting the 6pdr gun, in fact in the summer of 1941 it had been suggested that Matilda production should cease but it was pointed out that the Matilda II was the only tank at the time with a 3 man turret and 60mm of armour (Churchill tank's reliability problems had not been solved and the 3 man turret for the Valentine was not available yet), so it was decided to keep the Matilda II in production. Due to the usefulness of the Matilda II in the far east and the large numbers that were to be sent to Russia the Matilda was still in production in 1943.

Interestingly there was an attempt to install a 6pdr in the Matilda II, this involved enlarging the turret ring, modifying the hull and installing a Cavalier turret. I've recently come across some documentation that talks about a Matilda "Black Prince" project carried out in 1942 but then dropped, sadly it doesn't say what the modification is but considering the Churchill Black Prince project it could be the name for the 6pdr armed Matilda.

Name	Matilda II
Type	Infantry
Production Date	September 1939
Crew	4
(In turret)	3
Length	18'-5"
Width	

Matilda Mk II Infantry Tank (A.12)

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 31 December 2008 20:06 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 August 2012 13:48

	9'-4"
Height	7'-9"
Weight	26.5
Ground pressure	16.2
Ground clearance	1'-1"
Track type	Stamped
No per track	68
Weight of one Track	1440
Track width	14
Engine	2x A.E.C/Layland
B.H.P/Ton	6.55
Max road speed	15
Average road speed	11
Gear box type	
Gears 4	Forward/1 Reverse
Fuel consumption (road)	– MPG2
Fuel consumption (cross country)	
Oil capacity	46.5
Auxiliary capacity	30
Radius of action (road)	160
Radius of action (cross country)	80
Trench Crossing	7'
Vertical obstacle	2'
Fording height	3'-6"
Gradient	24

Matilda Mk II Infantry Tank (A.12)

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Main Armament	2 Pounder
Ammunition	93
Secondary Armament	Vickers .330 (Mk I)/Besa 7.92
Ammunition	2950
Transverse type	Hand & Hydraulic
Max elevation	20
Max depression	20
Turret Ring Size	54.3"
Optics	No.30
Armour	
Lower Hull Nose	78(I.T.90)
Upper Hull Nose	47(I.T.90)
Hull Front	75(I.T.90)
Hull Sides Lower	29(I.T.80) + 40(I.T.80)
Hull Sides Upper	70(I.T.80)
Hull Rear	55(I.T.80)
Hull Roof (Front)	20(I.T.80)
Engine Deck	20(I.T.80)
Hull Floor (Front half)	20(I.T.80)
Hull Floor (Rear half)	13(I.T.100)
Turret Front	75(I.T.90)
Turret Roof	20(I.T.80)
Turret Sides	75(I.T.90)
Turret Rear	75(I.T.90)

Production of Matilda II Tanks by year (UK Only)

Sept-Dec 1940 1941 1942 1943

Matilda II

-236816343

Matilda production by type

Type	Number
Mk. I	65
Mk. II	146
Mk. III	675
Mk. III C.S.	118
Mk. IV	1613
Mk. IV C.S.	283

Sources - AVIA 46 188, AVIA 22 456-514, WO 194