

Chapter 1 : Regimental Stories Catch up, The Royal Tank Regiment on BBC 4

The Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) is the oldest tank unit in the world, being formed by the British Army in during the Great War. Today, it is the armoured regiment of the British Army's 1st Armoured Infantry Brigade.

Tank Encyclopedia Cruiser Mk. The sense that they were better than erstwhile horse soldiers "smarter, more technically proficient and well led" was all very fine but did not sit easily with the late events in France. Some other battalions of the RTR had distinguished themselves just before Dunkirk with an effective counter-attack against the advancing Germans at Arras. But as far as the 5th Tanks was concerned, it had been a dismal campaign in which the battalion had been scattered with just a single claimed kill of an enemy tank. At Thursley the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Dinham Drew, therefore drove his men hard to put the regiment back on its feet and restore its confidence. He drove his young officers too, drilling them in the manoeuvres needed to bring a squadron into battle. In addition to moulding his men, the colonel also had to oversee the re-equipment of the regiment, and the tanks that arrived in Thursley had plenty of peculiarities. Just as the army struggled to create new regiments, so industry strived to step up production massively, while embracing the technological changes needed to meet the Germans. The 5th RTR had been built to a strength of fifty-two tanks. Four of these were being kept by the commanding officer and others in battalion headquarters, and sixteen went to each of the three squadrons. A Squadron, which had a reconnaissance role in the field, had been given tanks called A9s. B and C Squadrons were equipped with A13s. However, the steel plate on the front of the A9 was just 14mm thick, which was only enough to stop a rifle shot or shell splinters. The A13 had started with similar armour but been upgraded to 30mm. The A13 weighed in at thirteen tons and the A9 at twelve. They were designed for quick, decisive strokes rather than slugging it out. Getting to grips with the tanks for the first time, those who had come through the wartime training system would have been struck by the cramped interiors of the A9 and A The War Office had decreed that the tanks should fit on standard railway flatcars, and this made them narrower than some continental designs. When squeezed from the top down, because a lower profile meant a smaller target, this compressed the available space within the armoured shell. For this reason the V12 Nuffield engine in the back of the hull was very hard to work on, and the turret, for example of the A13, particularly small. Three men had to fit inside it: The gunner had no hatch of his own in the turret roof and could only observe the world through the narrow aperture of his gun-aiming telescope as he was bounced about. As those who had just been in France could testify, the design of these tanks added to the difficulty of maintaining them, and created a sense of claustrophobia, particularly if you worried about being able to get out quickly. The latter, as the name implied, were designed to support foot soldiers in battle. Consequently they were heavily armoured and slow-moving. The cruisers, by contrast, were to form armoured divisions that would be used for the more exciting stuff "racing forward to block a gap in friendly lines, or to exploit one in the enemy defences. The British theorists also expected the cruisers to do most of the tank-to-tank fighting, but the enemy could not be expected to adhere to these tactical distinctions decreed by the British General Staff. So when the Arras battle took place, in May , it pitted British infantry tanks against German armour with results that were cheering but a little inconvenient for those who believed in having two different types of vehicle. The Matilda "the infantry tank" was much better armoured than the cruisers, with frontal protection almost three times as thick as that of the A13, and the Germans encountered considerable difficulties knocking out Matildas. The tank had proven a success even if the campaign as a whole had not. All three tanks "Matilda, A9 and A13" shared the same gun, the two-pounder or 37mm tank gun. This weapon had been designed to drive a small metal projectile, weighing two pounds and roughly the size of a small pear, through the armour of an enemy tank. The whole round, comprising the projectile and a brass case containing an explosive charge that sent it down the barrel, was about eighteen inches long; it could easily be picked up with one hand. Knocking out an enemy tank with a slug this small required a gun that could shoot it at high speed, and in this respect the two-pounder, which sent its shell down range at feet per second, was good for its time the mids. The combination of a two-pound shot and this speed of travel was sufficient to pierce 50mm of armour angled at 30 degrees at a thousand yards. If it penetrated the enemy

vehicle the shot might pass through a man, disable a vital piece of equipment or, since it was often red hot, cause the explosion of ammunition or fuel inside. Gunnery instructors appreciated that this might not happen on the first shot; it might take many hits to knock out the enemy tank. The crews preparing their tanks for deployment from Thursley Camp had been taught that the two-pounder was their weapon of choice for dealing with enemy armour. If they came up against infantry, anti-tank guns or other resistance they were instructed to use the machine guns mounted on their tanks. There was no high-explosive shell for the two-pounder gun, a consequence of Tank Corps dogma that deemed a gun firing armour-piercing rounds only was sufficient to do battle with enemy ones, and of the practical difficulty of packing much power into so small a shell. The crews in any case were confident that their two pounders could sort out the Italian tanks in Libya – and in this particular matter their optimism was not misplaced. As for the build of these tanks, it had something in common with Bristols, Morgans and Rileys, the great British sports cars of the day: The A9 had a power traversing system to help the gunner lay his weapon more quickly onto the target – one of the first tanks so equipped. The A13 had a new kind of suspension that allowed it to travel more quickly and comfortably across country. British tanks also embodied, like their sports-car counterparts, craftsmanship. The War Office contracted big industrial concerns as part of the mobilisation of British industry. Tank production was also underway at several other factories that had previously made rolling stock or civilian vehicles. Many of the engineers were unused to working on tanks, and so production brought myriad challenges of fitting together components from suppliers they had not previously dealt with. There was no place for craftsmanship in an American production plant, even the presence of a vice or a bench in such factories was regarded as a sign of incompetence. Accuracy was invariably the enemy of craftsmanship. The fitters in 5th Tanks knew all too well what he was talking about. A complex machine like a tank was only as strong as its weakest component. Within weeks of getting their vehicles, soldiers were reporting frequent breaks in the tracks on the A9 as well as all sorts of problems with the fan belts and engine cooling on the A. These issues of reliability might have been overcome by deploying large numbers, but shifting production beyond the scale of a cottage industry proved problematic. But the British made a dozen different types, half of which were already obsolete, whereas the Germans concentrated production on a smaller number of more effective models. Crucially, they also insisted upon building to exacting engineering tolerances, reaping their reward in superior reliability. While training in Surrey the 5th had put on a number of demonstrations, one of them for some American visitors. The US army had gone even further than the British in its disarmament years, disbanding entirely its nascent tank corps. By October the feeling in southern England was that the country had weathered the worst that the Luftwaffe could do. Hitler had postponed the invasion of Britain, while the war was spreading worldwide. Italian forces were operating in East Africa, as well as launching bombing raids on Egypt, Palestine and Malta. Japan, meanwhile, aligned itself with Germany and Italy. The 5th Tanks had reformed itself and rediscovered a well-practised confidence in its tactical exercises. On 5 October the regiment was assembled in Thursley Camp for a short, sharp address. Colonel Drew told them the battalion had been ordered on overseas service. The Desert Lieutenant Arthur Crickmay, although callow in years and lacking seniority, understood the desert better than many of his brother officers. He had travelled to the Middle East three years earlier, while still a student, exploring the way through Egypt and northern Libya with a friend. Then, during early exercises he had polished his desert navigation skills to the point at which other officers had come to rely upon them. These abilities saw him posted to the reconnaissance section of 6th RTR, where by late he bore witness to a remarkable reversal of fortunes. The Italians, despite their great superiority in men and equipment, had been beaten and thrown back. Starting on 8 December, the British had launched what was meant to be a short-term counter stroke, moving westwards inland, bypassing the Italians at Sidi Barrani on the Egyptian coast and threatening their line of communication with Libya. The Italian army seemed a huge and menacing thing in those days. Having deployed into the field in April, Crickmay had already learned many of the lessons of soldiering in this wilderness that his comrades in 5th Tanks were about to undertake. Of course, the old hands tried to impart some of these pearls of hard-earned wisdom, but often their words were ignored or drowned out in the general flow of bumf and bombast from headquarters. The young lieutenant knew all about the savage variance of climate that boiled you one month and froze you the next. He

also knew about the problems of supply, which could push a man to his physical limits within days. In France, the 5th had been able to forage for food and drink in villages but here, with the exception of the odd Bedouin trading in eggs or poultry, there were almost no possibilities to find food or water if the system failed. The British War Cabinet had decided to reinforce the army in Egypt, so the quaysides were a scene of constant activity for weeks. The opinions of the British soldiery who stepped blinking into the Egyptian sunlight were frequently harsh. Many remarked on the squalor of the scene, the pushiness of the locals and the strangeness of the food. By the end of there were hundreds of thousands of British servicemen and women in Egypt. For the 5th Tanks, the pleasures or indeed the social humiliations of the Cairo social scene would have to wait. Both of the ships that carried them to the Middle East were commercial liners that had been taken up a short time before. Only the dancing girls and cabaret artistes had been off loaded before they became troop ships: The early days of were a period of intense activity, as tanks were modified in the workshops and painted in desert colours, and exercises began on the training grounds near camp. Those running 5 RTR soon found themselves having to organise a swap with the 3rd, which had also come over as part of their brigade. The 5th handed its A9 tanks over to the 3rd, and got A13s in return, so that each battalion had one main type of vehicle. Each new brainwave meant hours or days of hard work for the men. For A Squadron, who had manned the A9s before they went to the 3rd, this meant forgetting much of the preparation they had undergone at Thursley Camp and learning the peculiarities of a new wagon. But as the British pushed further into Libya, this caused worry as well as celebration for Lieutenant-Colonel Drew, the Commanding Officer. He knew that many of the A13s in his regiment had motored several hundred miles; the machines they had received from 3rd Tanks were particularly worn out. The way they had been put together, these tanks simply shook themselves apart if not regularly serviced. The first couple of hundred could be done by train, but the battalion faced the prospect of driving hundreds further before it could even come into action. From then on there was no choice but to push the tanks forward under their own power, up and over the Halfaya Pass and across the border into Libya, past Bardia and Tobruk. The first tank train had left Cairo on 27 January and they reached EI Adem, an aerodrome south of Tobruk, ten days later. There, machines were moved about within the unit. The A13s brought out from Britain ended up in C Squadron whereas the others, particularly A Squadron, got clapped-out machines from other regiments. People were shifted too, and to his delight Trooper Solomon was moved from the Left Out of Battle contingent to driving a tank belonging to the officer commanding A Squadron. Others lounged about, getting a run into Tobruk for a beer and a swim, or reading in between working on their tanks.

Chapter 2 : Royal Tank Regiment | Military Wiki | FANDOM powered by Wikia

The new and improved Royal Tank Regiment Association website will grow over the coming weeks as more pages are added. These will include information about the Association, Regimental History and the serving Regiment.

Edit Since the 19th century, an infantry regiment in the British Army has been a purely administrative unit, raising several battalions, which were more often deployed separately. In the First World War for example, it was common to see twenty or more battalions with a single regimental title. However, traditionally, a cavalry regiment did not have subordinate battalions; a "regiment" in the cavalry was in fact a battalion level operational unit, as well as a ceremonial and administrative one. This was not as confusing as it may seem, since where other armies would use "regiment" for a unit of two to four battalions, the British Army used "brigade". Hence, an infantry brigade could consist of three battalions of infantry but a cavalry brigade of equivalent size would have three regiments. In the inter-war period the British Army began to mechanise, with cavalry regiments giving up their horses in favour of armoured cars or light tanks. The first to do so was the 11th Hussars in 1918; the last was the Royal Scots Greys in 1920. As a result, it became common to refer to any armoured unit as a "regiment" rather than a "battalion" - the 11th Hussars were not merely an armoured-car battalion but the whole of the regiment. In 1920, this usage became formal; all armoured battalions were henceforth referred to as regiments. However, as a result of the above, both of its "battalions" are formally titled regiments. This can cause some confusion, with the regiment currently being composed of two regiments. When the Royal Tank Regiment is reduced to only one battalion strength unit in the upcoming arm restructuring, this will cease to be a matter of confusion. In particular, the vision apertures in a tank were so small that it was necessary to keep the eyes very close to them in order to get even a limited vision. Thus, any headdress with a peak was entirely unsuitable. A black beret was selected as it would not show oil stains. No change in uniform was possible during the war, but after a prolonged argument with the War Office, the black beret was approved by King George V on 5 March 1918. The black beret remained the exclusive headdress of the Royal Tank Corps until its practical value was recognised by others and its use extended to the majority of the Royal Armoured Corps in 1920. On the introduction of the blue beret in 1920, the Royal Tank Regiment reclaimed its right to the exclusive use of the black beret, which may not be worn by any other Regiment or Corps with the exception of the Berkshire and Westminster Dragoons Squadrons of The Royal Yeomanry. It stems from the Royal Review held at Aldershot in the presence of King George V on 13 July 1918 on which occasion black overalls were worn on parade by all ranks of the Royal Tanks Corps. The practice lapsed during World War II but was re-introduced in the 1930s. Officers of the Tank Corps used these sticks to probe the ground in front of their tanks testing for firmness as they went forward. Often the commanders led their tanks into action on foot. To commemorate this, officers of the Regiment carry Ash Plant Sticks instead of the short cane customary to other Arms. In November 1918 the eight companies then in existence were each expanded to form battalions still identified by the letters A to H; another seven battalions, I to O, were formed by January 1919, when all the battalions were changed to numbered units. The formation of new battalions continued and by December 1918, 26 had been created though there were only 25 battalions equipped with tanks, as the 17th had converted to armoured cars in April 1918. The first commander of the Tank Corps was Hugh Elles. The regiment continues to commemorate this annually. During the war four members of the Corps were awarded the Victoria Cross. Losses and recurrent mechanical difficulties reduced the effectiveness of the Corps, leading the Bovington Tank School to adopt a doctrine that emphasized caution and high standards of maintenance. Interwar period Edit After the war, the Tank Corps was trimmed down to a central depot and four battalions: It was at this time that the motto, "Fear Naught", the black beret, and the unit badge were adopted. With the preparations for war in the late 1930s, two more Regular Army Battalions were formed: In the latter half of 1939, six TA Infantry Battalions were converted to Tank Battalions; with a further six created in following the "duplication" of the TA.

Chapter 3 : Royal Tank Regiment | The British Army

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The Royal Tank Regiment, Tidworth Garrison. 20, likes Â· talking about this Â· were here. This is the official Facebook presence of The Royal.

Chapter 4 : Royal Tank Regiment Stock Photos & Royal Tank Regiment Stock Images - Alamy

Forged in the adversity of World War I, the Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) is the oldest tank unit in the world. Its arsenal includes the Challenger 2 battle tank, the Scimitar reconnaissance vehicle, and the Spartan armoured personnel carrier.

Chapter 5 : 1st Royal Tank Regiment - Wikipedia

The latest Tweets from Royal Tank Regiment (@RoyalTankRegt). We are The Royal Tank Regiment, the oldest tank unit in the world. #FearNaught. Tidworth, England.

Chapter 6 : Royal Tank Regiment Presentation Awards in Bronze, Painted or Silver | Ballantynes of Walker

The Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) is an armoured regiment of the British Army. It was formerly known as the Tank Corps and the Royal Tank Corps. It is part of the Royal Armoured Corps and is made up of two operational regiments, the 1st Royal Tank Regiment (1RTR) and the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment.

Chapter 7 : Royal_Tank_Regiment-KNOWPIA

The Regimental Shop's Tie range covers around British regiments, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force - the most comprehensive range anywhere.

Chapter 8 : 5th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment | Weapons and Warfare

The Royal Tank Regiment is an armoured regiment, previously known as the Tank Corps and the Royal Tank Corps. The RTR is part the Royal Armoured Corps and is made up of two operational regiments, the 1st Royal Tank Regiment and the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment. The corps has had more regiments over time.

Chapter 9 : Royal Tank Regiment - Regiment History, War & Military Records & Archives

Hi I have an old photo of my father in army uniform, the badge on his beret looks like that of the Royal Tank Regiment. I understand though that there are a number of these, unfortunately I can't be more specific than that.