

British Vehicle Camouflage 1939-45 Part 1.

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During the Second World War British AFV and vehicle camouflage was determined by a number of Army Council Instructions (A.C.I.s) and Military Training Pamphlets (M.T.P.s), with General Orders (G.Os) used in the Middle East. Colours used were supplied pre-mixed, matching two British Standards: BS.381C of 1930 and BS.987C of 1942, together with some non-standard paints for specific purposes. In the Middle East locally produced theatre colours that did not match these standards were introduced during 1942-43.

EUROPE

1939-41 - Bold horizontal/ diagonal patterns of two greens following M.T.P. 20 of June 1939. The most usual colours were a basic of Khaki Green No. 3 (BS 381C Middle Bronze Green No. 23) and Light Green No.5 (Light Bronze Green No. 22). Plain G3 or G5 were occasional alternatives. Infantry tanks Matilda I & II apparently only G3 and Dark Green G4 (Deep Bronze Green No. 24).

January 1941 - A variation of colour took place with A.C.I. 1559. Wood and metal bodywork was to be painted Khaki Green No. 3 and Nobel's Dark Tarmac No. 4 with canvas hoods and tilts in S.C.C. 7 and S.C.C 1A to the same pattern as M.T.P. 20 thus resulting in a green/ black-green and green/ brown scheme.

1941- 42 - Standard Camouflage Colour Shades (S.C.Cs.) from BS.987C came into use alongside and then supplanting, the greens, but in the same M.T.P. patterns. The basic shade was Khaki Green 3 or S.C.C. 2 with S.C.C. 1A over it. These browns were introduced as a result of a severe shortage

of a vital chemical agent used to produce strong greens.

1942- 44 - M.T.P. 46/4A introduce new toned schemes aimed primarily against aerial observation, usually using the BS.987C browns as laid down in A.C.I. 1160 of May 1942. The most common versions were variants of the 'Foliage' pattern and the 'Mickey Mouse' variant of the 'Dapple' pattern. Vehicles continued to be delivered and used in plain S.C.C. 2 following A.C.I. 1160 which gave S.C.C. 2 as "Basic Paint". In October 1943 A.C.I. 1496 authorised S.C.C. 14 (black) as the main shade over S.C.C. 2. For illustrations of this and M.T.P. 20 schemes see <http://milfax2003.tripod.com>

1944 - 45 The final change in colouring came in April 1944 when A.C.I. 533 authorised S.C.C. 15 Olive Drab for use as the new basic colour, partially to remove the need to repaint US supplied vehicles. S.C.C. 15 Olive Drab was used to cover the obsolete S.C.C. 2 in M.T.P. 46/4A patterns or on its own, particularly after the abandonment of disruptive painting with A.C.I. 1100 of August 1944 except on vehicles still in S.C.C. 2.

In Italy vehicles used Home Forces schemes as outlined above, but others showed the remnants of their final North African schemes or the new scheme introduced by General Order of April 1943 which used bold standard patterns of Blue-Black or dark olive green over a basic colour of 'Light Mud'.

Although some were repainted many Lend-Lease vehicles retained their base coat of U.S. No.9 Olive Drab.

Interiors of tanks were silver from 1930s until about mid-war when gloss white came into use. U.S. supplied tanks used gloss white. Softskin vehicles were the basic colour inside.

Softskins - As details above except;

Pre-war - 1941 - Tilts are a light canvas colour, in 1940-41 painted over with M.T.P. 20 bands in the darker colour used - usually G3. Tilts could also be dyed Khaki Green No. 3 over which G5 might be painted.

August 1941 - A.C.I. 1559 authorises the use of Khaki Green No. 3 and Nobel's Dark Tarmac Green No.4 on bodywork with bituminous emulsion of

S.C.C. 7 and S.C.C. 1A (dark brown) on canvas surfaces. The evidence available at present suggests that Nobel's Dark Tarmac Green No.4 is a very dark blue-green.

November 1941 - A.C.I. 1559 is cancelled by A.C.I. 2202. With M.T.P. 20 still specified all top horizontal surfaces are to be S.C.C. 1A or if unavailable S.C.C. 14 (black). S.C.C. 2 to be used to restore faded tilts. Photographs and film show this in use with M.T.P. 20 bands. They also show M.T.P.46/ 4A pattern overlaying a sharp straight line between a dark top and medium sides. New tilts and hoods were now manufactured from canvas dyed to a near match for S.C.C. 2.

August 1944 - A.C.I. 1100 - Tilts to be dyed S.C.C. 15 Olive Drab rather than S.C.C. 2. Bituminous Emulsion S.C.C. 7 (green) may be used on tents, penthouses and hoods where S.C.C. 15 was not available.

MIDDLE EAST

Middle East practice was determined by local General Orders and, due to supply problems, more variation is apparent than that in Europe.

1935 - 1939 In 1936 the 11th Hussars had Rolls-Royce and Crossley armoured cars together with support trucks in Silver with gloss Black disruptive bands. In the same year 6 RTC Vickers Medium tanks were in BS.52 Pale Cream with a fairly standard disruptive pattern of BS.46 Red Oxide applied. By 1937 this pattern had changed somewhat but was the same on every tank and used the same colours. The 11th Hussars meantime had adopted the same cream/ red colours and established a fairly regular pattern on their Rolls-Royce cars. This unit utilised other colours up to 1939 but the pattern remained. By this time various other units in Egypt has also adopted disruptive painting of various styles and colours.

1939 - 1940 - On 25 July 1939 G.O 370 specified a basic colour of BS. 62 Middle Stone with a disruptive patterning of 'Dark Sand' in style similar to M.T.P. 20. This scheme appears relatively common in Egypt in summer of 1940.

1940 - 1941 - By mid to late 1940 many newly arrived vehicles and tanks appear to be painted a plain overall colour, BS. 52 Pale Cream is cited for the 6 RTR new A9 cruisers, whilst the more normal colours seem to have been

Light Stone No.61 or Portland Stone No.64. However in November 1940 a new scheme was specified in G.O 297. This scheme comprised the tri-coloured disruptive designs now known as 'Caunter Scheme'. Very many AFVs and softskins carried this scheme of Portland Stone No.64 basic with Silver Grey No. 28 and Slate No.34 or Khaki Green No. 3 in angular disruptive stripes. Period G.Os specify Light Stone No.61 or Portland Stone No.64 at various times and a local variation substituted a mixed light blue-grey for Silver Grey No. 28. A scheme for use in the Sudan specified Light Stone No.61 with Light Purple Brown No.49 in patches or stripes.

February 1941 - G.O 63 calls for a single basic colour of Light Stone 61 with up to two disruptive colours applied over. These colours are specified as Slate 34 and Silver Grey 28 still in the angular disruptive stripes as before and cancelled GO 370 of 1939. This remained the predominant scheme during 1941.

October 1941 - A Signal 4/105 calls for one basic colour only, Light Stone No.61 to be used before issue to units.

December 1941 - GO 1272 now calls for a basic colour of Light Stone No.61 or Portland Stone No.64, according to supplies with one disruptive colour over at the discretion of Commands i.e. Palestine, Malta, Trans-Jordan etc. This cancels GO 297 of 1940 and GO 795 of 1941. At first this may have been Slate in patterns similar to Caunter but later possibly green, Silver Grey No. 28 and Black have been noted in apparently random patterns.

Malta adopted a distinctive design generally known as 'rubble', a series of light coloured blocks with a darker colour as 'cement' lines. This scheme varied immensely, from the neat appearance of stonework through crazy paving to straight lines like a chessboard. The colours varied from Khaki Green No. 3 lines with Light Stone No.61 or Portland Stone No.64 'stones' to darker lines painted over the original sand colour depending on country of origin.

1942. Over Light Stone 61 the single colour disruptive was still in force although many units did not employ it whilst others used a variety of schemes, designs and colours, some with black and/or white outlining.

October 1942. G.O.1650 cancels all previous patterns and colours and introduces standardised drawings for certain type and classes of AFV and vehicles as decreed by the Camouflage Directorate of GHQ ME (G(cam)). Colours to be used are :- Basic shade - Desert Pink Z.I. with a disruptive pattern in Dark (Olive) Green PFI. Black (S.C.C. 14), Very Dark Brown (S.C.C. 1A) or Dark Slate BS. 34 are alternatives. These designs are common on Shermans, Grants, Valentines, Crusaders, Stuarts and the Churchills of Kingforce (which were most probably Light Stone No.61 over Khaki Green No. 3 or S.C.C. 2 in the Crusader design). As Desert Pink was a new colour, Light Stone No.61 continued in use on vehicles with or without disruptive paintwork. Desert pink occurs on its own as a single shade on vehicles of no tactical value and ACVs disguised as 10 ton trucks.

Where dyed tilts were supplied from the UK and Commonwealth they were chemically bleached to a pale brown colour.

Although M.T.P.46 had provision for ME colours actual use of this type of scheme has not been confirmed.

April 1943 - G.O 1650 is cancelled by a new G.O with standardised drawings for certain type and classes of AFV and vehicles are decreed by the Camouflage Directorate including new colours for Tunisia, Sicily and Italy. Basic shade is 'Light Mud' with Black in standardised bold disruptive patterns for camouflage. Green seems to have been used too. All 'desert' colours to be overpainted. Lend Lease vehicles used 'Light Mud' over US Olive Drab as an alternative. By late 1943 European colours are common. In May 1944 S.C.C. 15 Olive drab is introduced to replace all earlier schemes.

FAR EAST

Until 1943 vehicles appear to conform to ME or UK standards. Late 1942 or early in 1943 S.C.C. 13 (green) is introduced for use in India and Burma as basic colour. There is a D.S.W & V. liaison letter of June or July 1944 in Italy, section III camouflage, regarding the discontinuation of disruptive painting. In this the subject of India and Australia using Scamic Camouflage Colour No.207 Very Dark Drab arises as used overall without disruptive paint. Due to coincidence of nomenclature this is evidence suggesting the use of S.C.C. 16 Very Dark Drab from the middle of 1944. It goes on to say

that this colour is too dark for clothing and personal equipment for the war against Japan. This conclusion probably led to the introduction of S.C.C. 19 for these purposes.

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