

# British & Indian Armoured Units Of the Burma Campaign: A Painting Guide

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## Introduction

Field Marshal 'Bill' Slim's XIVth Army is now well-known as the 'Forgotten Army', even though its deeds are well known by the public at large. However, the XIVth Army's campaign to defend India and then to liberate Burma from the Japanese, remains the 'Forgotten Wargames Period' of World War 2. I think that a very large part of the reason for this is that while the 'big picture' is easily accessible, information on the details of the War Against Japan remain elusive and very difficult for the average wargamer to research. One need only look at the gigantic, yawning disparity between the number of books available on the Normandy Campaign compared to the number available on the Burma Campaign.

The lack of books available on the subject is very sad, considering that Slim's final victory against the Japanese was quite possibly one of the greatest British military achievements of all time. From a wargamer's point of view, the campaign presents a wide variety of different tactical situations – many of them far removed from the pure jungle warfare that most people might expect.

I've made it my mission therefore, to shed a little light on the campaign, so that wargamers can join me in playing what I consider to be one of the most interesting aspects of World War 2. I've already made a start – the orders of battle and army lists for the XIVth Army, I Burma Corps and Japanese Burma Area Army are already available on the **Battlefront: WWII** website at [www.fireandfury.com](http://www.fireandfury.com) along with a number of varied scenarios.

Presented here then, is a guide to the paint schemes of the British and Indian armoured units of the campaign. There are still many pieces of the puzzle to discover, but in the meantime I've given them my best guess.

The common misconception is that British and Indian tanks in the Burma Campaign were usually just monotonous Jungle Green, devoid of markings. However, that view usually comes from people who have only looked at dust-smudged and stowage-covered vehicles in black and white photos. In reality these vehicles were often as colourful and interesting in their markings as their comrades in Normandy, though new photos do often throw up more puzzles than answers.

Collected here is the sum-total of my knowledge on the subject. I hope it is of use and encourages new players to join the 'Forgotten Army' of Burma wargamers. Please get in touch if you can correct my mistakes or add something new to the document.

# British & Indian Camouflage Paint Colours 1941-45

British and Indian vehicles in the Far East were painted a single uniform camouflage colour. There were no official disruptive camouflage schemes and to date I have not come across any confirmed examples of locally-adopted disruptive schemes. However, photographs of the 7th Armoured Brigade's Stuarts in 1942 do tend to suggest a banded camouflage in some photos. Some have suggested that this might be the remnants of their previous Middle Eastern camouflage, though records do state that the brigade repainted its vehicles in transit to the Far East. It may therefore be merely a trick of light, dust, damp or poor photographic reproduction.

The standard camouflage colours used by the British and Indian Armies were:

## Middle Bronze Green (a.k.a. 'Khaki Green No.3')

This was the standard colour for all British vehicles in the Far East in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The closest match is **Humbrol 80**, though note that prior to the Japanese attack, vehicles would normally be polished to a gloss, resulting in a deeper, darker tone. A suggested match is **Vallejo 895(88)**.

## Standard Camouflage Colour (S.C.C.) 13 'Jungle Green'

This colour replaced Middle Bronze Green on British vehicles in the Far East from 1943. It was a very drab and muddy green and darker than US Olive Drab. The title 'Jungle Green' was not official and it was significantly different to the Jungle Green dye used in uniform manufacture, which was rather bluish and faded to a greyish tone. S.C.C. 13 was however, used for weapons and personal equipment such as helmets.

Mix **Humbrol 159 + 155 + 33** in ratio 4:3:1. A suggested match is **Vallejo 893(95)**.

## S.C.C. 15 Olive Drab

This was introduced in April 1944 and although not officially used in the Far East, vehicles and equipment delivered from the UK or Canada would normally arrive painted in S.C.C. 15 and might not be repainted prior to deployment in the field. The colour was introduced to match US Olive Drab, which it did when fresh, though it faded to green unlike US Olive Drab, which faded to grey.

Mix: **Humbrol 150 + 159 + 33** in ratio 5:5:2. A reasonable match is **Humbrol 159 + 33** in ratio 8:1. A suggested match is **Vallejo 924(94)**.

## S.C.C. 16 Very Dark Drab

This colour was introduced in the Far East in 1944, though according to Dennis Oliver's work, does not appear to have been employed in the field until 1945 and possibly not in operations against the Japanese at all. It was a very dark, dull, dirty brown green. Darker than both S.C.C. 13 and US Olive Drab. It is also sometimes referred to as S.C.C. 207 and was recorded as being too dark to be used in the painting of personal equipment.

Mix **Humbrol 155 + 66 + 33** in ratio 10:2:1. A suggested match is **Vallejo 897(98)**.

## US Olive Drab

US equipment delivered directly from the USA would normally arrive painted in US Olive Drab and would often find its way into the field still painted in this colour.

The closest match is **Humbrol 155**. A suggested match is **Vallejo Brown-Violet 887(93)**.

# British & Indian Vehicle Markings

Listed on the following pages are the known marking schemes for the British and Indian armoured units in the Burma Campaign, as well as a few semi-educated guesses. By and large they followed the usual British marking regulations regarding placement and style of markings, but there were a few oddities:



# 7th Armoured Brigade

(I Burma Corps 1942)

## Arm of Service Signs for 7th Armoured Brigade

**60** HQ 7th Armoured Brigade

**61** 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars  
(Stuart I)

**62** 2nd RTR  
(Stuart I)

**76** 414th Field Battery (Essex Yeomanry),  
Royal Horse Artillery (25pdr)

**77** Battery, 95th Anti-Tank Regiment,  
Royal Artillery (2pdr)



### Notes

1. The 7th Armoured Brigade was transferred from the Middle East – originally destined for Singapore, it was diverted to Burma. Sources conflict regarding paint schemes, though one veteran's memoirs definitely state that the tanks were repainted in 'Jungle Green' (almost certainly Mid Bronze Green, as SCC 13 Jungle Green did not exist in 1942) and the red jerboa formation signs were painted green to match. A photo of a Stuart in Burma with the AoS serial '60' is identified as belonging to 2 RTR in most books, though research has shown this to be incorrect, as the Brigade HQ had 60, with 2 RTR having 62. Note that this system of AoS serials was made obsolete at the end of 1941, though 7th Armoured Brigade had probably not caught up with the latest AoS instruction while in transit to Burma.
2. Although they did not have any AFVs (apart maybe, from the odd Carrier), I have included the attached RA units in the above list.
3. There were many other AFVs involved in the Retreat From Burma – the Rolls Royce Armoured Cars of the Burma Auxiliary Force, the Universal Carriers of battalion Carrier Platoons and the Wheeled Armoured Carriers of some of the Indian infantry battalions. However, I have no idea what markings they may (or may not) have had. The few photos I can find of Carriers in Burma circa 1942 do not appear to have any markings.
4. Unusually, 7th Armoured Brigade painted its markings the 'wrong way round', with the formation sign (the Green Jerboa) on the right-hand side and the AoS marking on the left. Unfortunately I didn't realise this when I painted mine (see photos below)!

## Squadron Tac-Signs for 7th Armoured Brigade

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn
<b>7 H</b>				
<b>2 RTR</b>				

Troop numbers were often painted within the squadron tac-sign, in the same colour as the tacsig. The troop numbers were sequential through the regiment, so A Sqn would have 1-4, B Sqn would have 5-8 and C Sqn 9-12. I have not identified markings for Sqn HQ tanks, though 'HQ' was often used.







# 50th Indian Tank Brigade

(Indian XV Corps 1943-45)



19th Lancers 1945 marking

## Arm of Service Signs for 50th Indian Tank Brigade

**50** HQ 50th Indian Tank Brigade

**51** 25th Dragoons  
(Lee)

**52** 146th RAC (9th Duke of Wellington's Regt [West Riding])  
(Valentine in 1st Arakan Campaign, then Lee)

**53** Indian 19th (King George V's Own) Lancers  
(Sherman V)

**54** or **45** Indian 45th Cavalry  
(Stuart III)

### Notes

- In 1945 the AoS signs were changed from red/yellow to plain red.
- The markings shown here for 45th Cavalry are conjectural, as I have been unable to confirm the correct markings for the regiment and the 'gypsy caravan' arrangement of stowage in photos makes it impossible to identify markings other than the large Allied Stars on the turret. The regiment may have belonged to a higher organisation and only been on temporary attachment to 50th Tank Brigade and may therefore have been marked accordingly. Indeed, the regiment had previously been the Corps Armoured Recce Regiment for XXXIII Corps prior to its attachment to 50th Tank Brigade in September 1944 (see XXXIII Corps page). Alternatively, the regiment may have been marked as an Armoured Recce Regiment (the standard AoS sign for an Armoured Recce Regiment was blue/green with '45' serial, though I have no evidence to suggest that it was used in India/Burma).
- 146th RAC probably used an older AoS serial during their involvement in the First Arakan Campaign of 1942-43. However, I've no idea what this may have been.
- In 1945 the 19th Lancers also carried an additional marking alongside the 50th Tank Brigade sign (see above right). Note that the colours of blue and yellow are conjectural. This may have been the sign for the Indian XXXIV Corps (which was created in 1944 to be the XIVth Army reserve formation once XXXIII Corps was committed to the Battle for Imphal), though I have been unable to confirm this. The 19th Lancers at this time also carried unusual squadron tac-signs (see below) and do not appear to have carried AoS signs.

## Squadron Tac-Signs for 50th Indian Tank Brigade

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn		RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn
<b>25 D</b>					<b>19 L</b>				
<b>146 RAC</b>					<b>19 L (1945)</b>				
					<b>45 C (conjectural)</b>				

Numbers were painted within the squadron tac-sign which indicated the seniority within the squadron. SHQ would have '1' and the four troops would have 2, 3, 4 or 5. These numbers were painted in the same colour as the tac-sign, except for 19th Lancers in 1945, which painted the numbers in black. The squadron tac-signs were usually painted on the rear-quarters of the turret.





**Left: A Lee of 50th Indian Tank Brigade in the Arakan.**

**Below: Lees of 25th Dragoons at Ngakyedauk Pass ('The Admin Box'), 1944.**





**Above: Shermans of 'B' Squadron, 19th Lancers, in the Arakan in 1945.**

Note the non-standard squadron tac-sign and number '1' inside the tac-sign. In this instance, it indicates the 1st Troop of 'B' Squadron, which would probably be the regiment's No. 5 Troop.

**Right: A Sherman of 'B' Squadron, 19th Lancers near Kangaw in 1945.**

Note that all tanks of the 19th Lancers in 1945 seem to have carried bamboo poles and camouflage nets on the sides of the hull.





**Left: A Grant Mk I of 50th Indian Tank Brigade on Ramree island in 1945.**

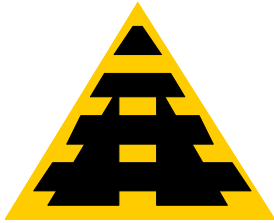
Grant Mk Is, with the larger, British-designed turret, were very rare in Burma and where present, were normally used as command tanks. Note also the Universal Carrier with extended, deep-wading sides for amphibious landing.

**Right: A Grant Mk I of 50th Indian Tank Brigade, photographed on Ramree Island in 1945.**

Note the Grant Mk Is only appear in photos of 50th Tank Brigade. They are not listed in any equipment or strength returns for XIVth Army.







# 254th Indian Tank Brigade

(Indian IV Corps 1943-45)



## Arm of Service Signs for 254th Indian Tank Brigade

**3** HQ 254th Indian Tank Brigade

**4** 3rd Carabiniers  
(Lee)

**5** 149th RAC (7th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry)  
(Lee – 1 Sqn with XV Corps in Sherman)

**6** 150th RAC (10th York & Lancaster Regt)  
(Lee)

**7** Indian 7th Light Cavalry  
(Stuart III)

### Notes

- I have not identified the 254th Tank Brigade's formation sign in any photos. The sign certainly does not seem to have been used by the Shermans of C Sqn, 149th RAC, which served with XV Corps in the Arakan. However, photos of Lees are often very indistinct and the tanks themselves are plastered in dust, mud and stowage, so it's often difficult enough to make out the huge Allied Stars painted on them, let alone formation signs.
- The 254th Tank Brigade used a unique system of AoS serials, as shown here, which it seems to have retained until the end of the war.
- There is one photo showing a Lee of 254th Tank Brigade with the number '10' (presumably an individual vehicle number) painted in white on the upper-front glacis plate (next to the driver's vision-port) and the same number painted on the turret-rear (see photo below).
- 150th RAC used X, Y & Z to identify its squadrons, rather than the usual A, B & C.

## Squadron Tac-Signs for 254th Indian Tank Brigade

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn	RHQ	X Sqn	Y Sqn	Z Sqn
<b>3 Carab</b>								
<b>149 RAC</b>								
<b>7 LC</b>								

Numbers were painted within the squadron tac-sign which usually indicated the seniority within the squadron. SHQ would have '1' and the four troops would have 2, 3, 4 or 5. These numbers were painted in the same colour as the tac-sign. The squadron tac-signs were usually painted centrally on the turret side.

However, photos of Stuarts from 7 LC show a dark (black?) centre to the tacsigs and the numbers '31', '32' and '37' in white. These were certainly individual tank numbers.



**Lee tanks of 'C' Squadron, 3rd Carabiniers, Imphal, 1944**  
15mm 'Flames of War' models by Battlefront Miniatures, painted by the author







**Above: A Stuart III of 'B' Squadron, 7th Light Cavalry, taken at Imphal in March 1944**

Note the dark (black?) centre to the squadron tac-sign and the contrasting (white?) number within the tac-sign. There is another photo of a tank with '31' and a 'C' Sqn tank with '37'. This clearly is not a troop number, so it is probably an individual tank number. RHQ probably had numbers 1-4 and assuming 15 tanks per sqn, 'A' Sqn had 5-19, 'B' Sqn 20-34 & 'C' Sqn 35-49.



A Valentine Bridgelaying tank of 2nd Independent Bridging Troop, RAC, which was attached to HQ 254th Indian Tank Brigade and is marked accordingly. 50th & 255th Indian Tank Brigades also had a troop of such vehicles attached. The model was converted from a Battlefront Valentine by Martin Small and was painted by the author.



**Above: A Lee of 254th Indian Tank Brigade at Imphal in 1944**

Note the number '10' painted roughly (in white?) on the upper glacis and again on the turret rear (the turret here is reversed). This is probably another example of an individual tank number.





**Above: Lee tanks of 3rd Carabiniers somewhere near Mandalay in 1945.**

Note the '4' Arm-of-Service serial on the rear-right corner of the nearest tank's hull and the very large star painted (badly) on the side of the 75mm gun sponson. This photo clearly shows how muted markings became with a good coating of Burmese dust and grime.





**Left: Lees of 254th Indian Tank Brigade support Indian infantry during the advance to Rangoon In 1945.**

Note the very large stars painted on the hull-sides. Although not very obvious, the name 'ANGEL' is painted on the side-door of the nearest tank.

**Right: A Lee of 254th Indian Tank Brigade at Imphal in 1944.**

An individual tank number ('16') is painted in white alongside the driver's port. The dark square visible on the transmission housing is probably where the Arm-of-Service marking or formation sign has been painted out as a camouflage measure.



**Left: Lees of 254th Indian Tank Brigade at Mandalay in 1945.**

Note the number '14' painted on the turret rear. This could be a troop number or an individual tank number. There does not appear to be a squadron tac-sign, but this may be due a lack of colour contrast to make it stand out on the black & white photo.

Note also the one of these tanks retains the commander's cupola.



**Left: A Lee of 'C' Squadron, 3rd Carabiniers, near Mount Popa in 1945.**

Note the squadron tac-sign painted on the turret, with the troop number ('12' – No.12 Troop) painted within, in white.

**Right: A Lee of 254th Indian Tank Brigade at Mandalay in 1945.**

Note the large star painted (very badly) on the side of the hull. Note also that this tank has a commander's cupola – these were normally removed.



**Left: A Stuart III of 'C' Squadron, 7th Light Cavalry, supports the 6th Gurkhas in the Irrawaddy Bridgehead, February 1945.**

As in the earlier photograph of a 7th Cavalry Stuart, this tank has an individual tank number ('37') painted within the squadron sign instead of the troop number normally painted on Lees.



**Left: A Lee named 'Caledonian' of 254th Indian Tank Brigade in Mandalay, 1945.**

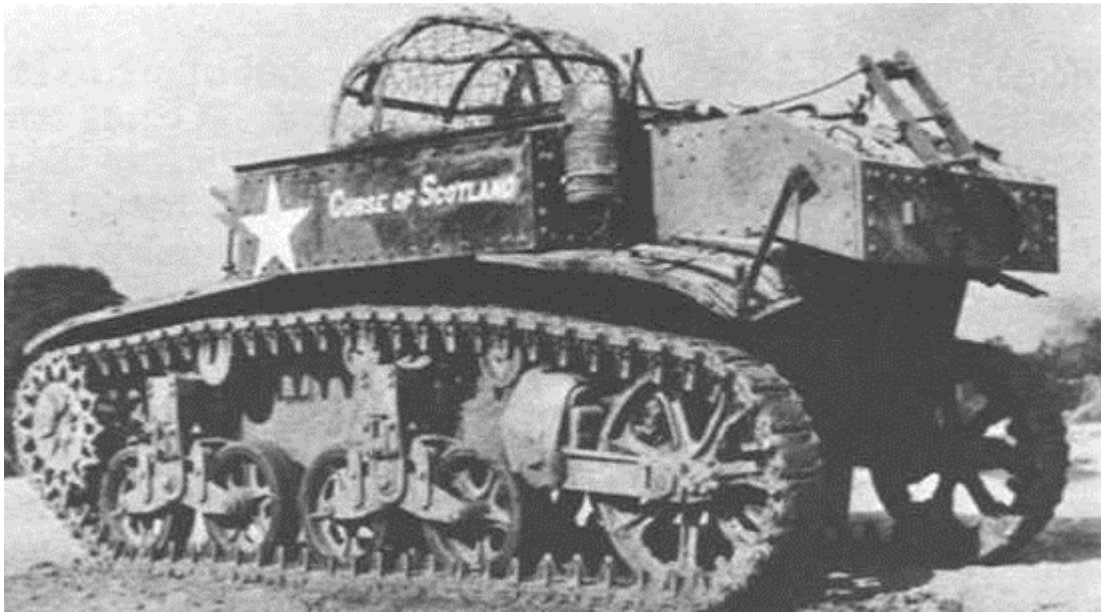
**Right: A Lee of 3rd Carabiniers near Kalewa in January 1945.**

Note the '4' serial and two-tone Arm-of-Service sign painted centrally on the transmission housing. This tank also retains the commander's cupola.



**Left: A Lee of 3rd Carabiniers crossing the Irrawaddy in 1945.**

The AoS '4' serial can just be made out on the rear-right of the hull.



**Above: A Stuart I 'Jalopy' of the Indian 7th Cavalry, named 'Curse of Scotland', photographed in 1945.**

This strangely-named tank (a reference to the 'Bonnie Prince' Charles Stuart) had originally been landed with the British 7th Hussars (7th Armoured Brigade) at Rangoon in 1942 and had fought with that regiment during the long retreat to the Chindwin River. It then became the only tank of that brigade to be successfully withdrawn across the Chindwin.

Later passed to the Indian 7th Cavalry, it had its turret removed and became the Commanding Officer's mount. In 1945 it came full circle and re-crossed the Chindwin, becoming the only Allied AFV to return to Burma after the retreat of 1942.

Note the elaborate anti-grenade mesh fitted over the turret opening.





# 255th Indian Tank Brigade

(Indian XXXIII Corps 1944-45)

## Arm of Service Signs for 255th Indian Tank Brigade

**50** or **50** HQ 255th Indian Tank Brigade

**51** or **51** 116th RAC (9th Gordon Highlanders)  
(Sherman V)

**52** or **52** Indian 5th (Probyn's) Horse  
(Sherman V)

**53** or **53** Indian 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse  
(Sherman V)

### Notes

1. The Arm of Service signs for 255th Tank Brigade changed to plain red in 1945, though the change was not universally applied.
2. The motto of the 255th Tank Brigade 'LARO AUR LARTE RAHO' is Urdu for 'To Strike And Strike Again'.
3. One recorded variation for the formation sign of 255th Tank Brigade was carried by 116th RAC, being simply a reversal of the sign's colours to a white bull on a black field:



## Squadron Tac-Signs for 255th Indian Tank Brigade

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn
116 RAC				
5 H				
9 H				

As can be seen, the 255th Tank Brigade used a somewhat unique system of squadron tac-signs. Numbers were painted within the squadron tac-sign which indicated the seniority within the squadron. SHQ would have '1' and the four troops would have 2, 3, 4 or 5. These numbers were painted in the same colour as the tac-sign, except for 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse, which painted the numbers in white. The tac-signs were normally painted centrally on the turret sides, though some of 116th RAC and 5th (Probyn's) Horse were photographed with the signs painted on the rear-quarters of the turret, while others of 116th RAC had no tac-signs at all.



**Left: A Sherman of 'B' Squadron, 5th (Probyn's) Horse supporting Indian infantry near Meiktila in 1945.**

Note the number painted within the squadron tac-sign, indicating the 3rd Troop of 'B' Squadron (which would probably be the regiment's No. 7 or No.8 Troop). The commander (a Sikh – indicated by the turban and beard) is wearing a much paler uniform than the infantry, which suggests that he is wearing Khaki Drill, while the infantry are wearing Jungle Green uniforms.

**Below: Another Sherman from the same troop at Pyinbongyi, near Rangoon, in 1945.**

Note the large tank number ('10') painted on the rear of the hull. These numbers seem to have been painted in the same colour as the squadron signs (yellow in the case of Probyn's Horse). Note that this tank is lacking the Allied star, which is strange, as the previous photo shows a tank from the same troop, at around the same time, with a star prominently painted on the hull.





**Above: The crew of a Sherman named 'CAIRNGORM', of 'C' Squadron, 116th RAC, carry out maintenance near Meiktila in 1945.**

Note the '51' serial on a two-tone Arm-of-Service sign, painted on the tank-phone box at the rear-right corner of the hull. The squadron tac-sign is also clearly visible on the turret side, showing the darker red ring inside the white outer ring. There does not appear to be a troop number, but if painted in red paint there might not be enough contrast for it to show up against the Jungle Green.

**Right: A close-up of 'Cairngorm'.**



**Right: A Sherman of the 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse at Meiktila in 1945.**

Note the two-tone Arm-of-Service sign, which is just visible behind some stowage, having been painted centrally on the upper edge of the transmission housing. The framework welded to the front to the tank was a common feature on Commonwealth tanks in Burma, being a mounting for barbed wire – the intention being to make it more difficult for Japanese infantry to climb on board.



**Left: A Sherman named 'BIDAR' belonging to the RHQ of the 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse, near Meiktila in 1945.**



**Right: A Sherman of No.4 Troop, 'A' Squadron, 116th RAC, undergoing maintenance in 1945.**

Note the '51' serial on a two-tone Arm-of-Service sign, painted on the tank-phone box at the rear-right of the hull.







**Above: A Sherman of 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse crosses a Valentine AVLB-laid bridge near Meiktila in 1945.**

Note the mysterious marking showing '20' on white square. It is thought that this marking relates to the capacity of auxiliary water tanks fitted internally. Although it's very difficult to see, the bridging weight mark ('30' on a yellow disc) is painted between the '20' marking and the track. The Arm-of-Service sign ('53' on a yellow-over-red square) is also just visible – painted on the central panel of the transmission housing, just to the right of the '20' marking.

Note also the stars painted on the deck of the bridge.



**Left: A Valentine Bridgelayer of No.3 Bridging Troop RAC, 255th Indian Tank Brigade, near Meiktila in 1945.**

**Right: A column, including Shermans of the 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse, advances from the Irrawaddy to Meiktila in 1945.**

The '53' AoS serial is clearly visible here – perhaps on a single colour (red) square rather than the more usual two-tone yellow/red square?

Note also the large callsign number painted on the rear of the hull. These seem to have frequently been painted in the same colour as the squadron signs (light blue for the 9th Horse).







Sherman V tanks of the 9th (Royal Deccan) Horse at Meiktila, 1945







# XIVth Army Troops

## Arm of Service Signs for XIVth Army Troops

**25** 18th Field Regiment (Self-Propelled), Royal Artillery  
(Priest & Sherman V)

**44** Indian 16th Light Cavalry  
(Daimler & Humber Armoured Cars)

### Notes

1. The XIVth Army sign took the circular form shown above when painted on vehicles. On uniforms it was in the shape of a shield.
2. The 18th Field Regiment had three batteries of M7 Priest self-propelled 105mm guns and was the only such regiment in XIVth Army. The Observation Post tanks were all Sherman V – Battery Commanders' OP tanks had the dummy-gunned variant, while the Troop Commander/FOO OP tanks retained their 75mm armament.
3. The vehicles of 18th Field Regiment also carried the usual (complicated) system of Royal Artillery tac-signs, which may be found [here](#). They would not carry armour squadron tac-signs.
4. While the AoS serial for the 16th Light Cavalry is recorded as '44', the colours and design are not known with precision. The colours were presumably the green-over-blue typical of armoured car/recce regiments. However, '44' was normally the serial allocated to a Corps Armoured Car Regiment and as such, would have a white bar above the '44', signifying a Corps asset. My guess is that the white bar here was moved to the bottom, which would signify Army Troops.
5. The 400th Independent Scorpion Squadron RAC, equipped with Valentine Scorpion flail tanks, also served as XIVth Army Troops, but I have been able to find no more information regarding the unit – least of all its markings.

## Squadron Tac-Signs for Un-Brigaded Regiments

RHQ    A Sqn    B Sqn    C Sqn

16 LC



The squadron tac-sign contained a number indicating the seniority of the Troop within the squadron (normally starting with the SHQ as '1').



**A Priest of 18th Field Regiment photographed in 1945.**

Note the circular version of the XIVth Army formation sign painted on the transmission housing.





**Above: Lees of the 254th Indian Tank Brigade, supporting 2nd Division, camouflage themselves among trees during their advance from Dimapur to Kohima in 1944. The Sherman is an OP tank for the M7 Priest-equipped batteries of 18th Field Regiment. Although it isn't easy to see in this photograph, the circular version of the XIVth Army formation sign is painted centrally on the transmission housing, as seen on the Priest in the previous photo.**



**Left: An M7 Priest of 18th Field Regiment on the Irrawaddy in 1945.**

This Priest has the name 'DEEPCUT' (the name of a garrison in the UK) painted on the side.



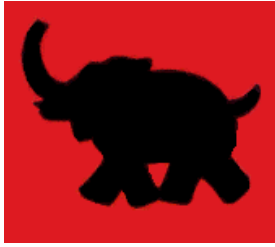
**Left: A Royal Artillery OP Carrier photographed in 1945. Exact unit unknown.**

Note the very large star painted on the side.

**Right: A battalion of the 6th Rajputana Rifles acquired this Japanese Type 98 So-Da Carrier in 1945. The star is the symbol of the Imperial Japanese Army and is not a newly-applied Allied Star!**

It is not known which Japanese unit owned this vehicle prior to the Rajputanas getting their hands on it.





# Indian IV Corps Troops

## Arm of Service Signs for Indian IV Corps Troops

44

**11th (Prince Albert Victor's Own [Frontier Force]) Cavalry**  
(Daimler Armoured Cars)

## Squadron Tac-Signs for Un-Brigaded Corps Troops

RHQ    A Sqn    B Sqn    C Sqn

11 PAVO



The squadron tac-sign would normally have either the Troop number painted within it, or would have a number indicating the seniority of the Troop within the squadron (normally starting with the SHQ as '1'). I don't have any specific information on the PAVO, but the 16th Light Cavalry used the latter system, showing seniority within each squadron.





# Indian XV Corps Troops

## Arm of Service Signs for Indian XV Corps Troops

44

### 3rd Gwalior Lancers

(Armoured Cars & Mounted Cavalry)

41

### 81st (West African) Reconnaissance Regiment

(Light Reconnaissance Cars & Carriers)

#### Notes

1. The 3rd Gwalior Lancers' armoured cars only took an active combat role during the 1st Arakan Campaign of 1942-43. After that, only the Mounted Wing of the regiment was engaged in the Arakan and I doubt the horses carries AoS signs!
2. The XV Corps formation sign symbolised three Roman numeral 5s (Vs), totalling 15, as well as the corps' three divisions moving forward. The Vs could also be black and the background could also be square, but when painted on vehicles it took the form shown – circular with white Vs.
3. Following the withdrawal of the Armoured Wing of the 3rd Gwalior Lancers, The 81st (West African) Recce Regiment took over the role of XV Corps Recce Regiment in December 1944. However, this was only a temporary attachment and the regiment's vehicles retained the formation sign of the 81st (West African) Division, namely 'Ananse' the spider in black, head downwards on a yellow background. The yellow background could be square or circular:



**Universal Carrier of  
'B' Squadron, 81 (West African)  
Reconnaissance Regiment**  
15mm model by Skytrex  
Painted by the author

## Squadron Tac-Signs for Un-Brigaded Regiments

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn
3 GL				
81(WA) Recce				

The squadron tac-sign would normally have either the Troop number painted within it, or would have a number indicating the seniority of the Troop within the squadron (normally starting with the SHQ as '1'). I don't have any specific information for these regiments, but the Indian 16th Light Cavalry used the latter system, showing seniority within each squadron.





# Indian XXXIII Corps Troops

## Arm of Service Signs for Indian XXXIII Corps Troops

**45** Indian 45th Cavalry  
(Stuart III)

**41** 2nd Reconnaissance Regiment  
(part-mechanised in Carriers)

**41** or **44** Indian 8th (King George V's Own) Light Cavalry  
(Daimler & Humber Armoured Cars)

### Notes

1. The 45th Cavalry was attached to 50th Tank Brigade from July 1944, but prior to that date had belonged to XXXIII Corps Troops. The AoS sign given is therefore conjectural, being the '45' on green/blue of an Armoured Recce Regiment, with the white bar of Corps Troops. See 50th Indian Tank Brigade page (above).
2. The 2nd Reconnaissance Regiment was the divisional Recce Regiment for British 2nd Infantry Division, which had retained some of its mechanised recce capability when that division was sent to Kohima. The regiment was often used as the de facto XXXIII Corps Recce Regiment, hence its inclusion here. However, the regiment's vehicles retained the AoS serial of '41', indicating an Infantry Division Recce Regiment, as well as the 2nd Division's cross-keys sign:



3. The 8th (KGVO) Light Cavalry arrived in XXXIII Corps as 19th Infantry Division's recce element. However, they were organised as an Armoured Car Regiment rather than as a Recce Regiment, so I am not sure if they used the '41' AoS serial for an Infantry Division Recce Regiment or the '44' serial for an Armoured Car Regiment. Whatever the AoS serial, they carried the formation sign for 19th Indian Division:



## Squadron Tac-Signs for Un-Brigaded Regiments

	RHQ	A Sqn	B Sqn	C Sqn
<b>45 C</b>				
<b>2 Recce</b>				
<b>8 KGVO</b>				

The squadron tac-sign would normally have either the Troop number painted within it, or would have a number indicating the seniority of the Troop within the squadron (normally starting with the SHQ as '1'). I don't have any specific information on these regiments, but the 16th Light Cavalry used the latter system, showing seniority within each squadron.



**Left: Carriers of 2nd Recce Regiment patrol between Kalewa and Shwebo in 1945.**

Note that the only marking visible here is a number '20' in front of the driver. The meaning of this marking is unknown.

**Right: Members of an unidentified unit of 2nd Division fire a 3-inch mortar from a Universal Carrier in 1945.**

Is this unique? The author has never seen any other examples of a Universal Carrier being used as a self-propelled mortar.



**Left: A Jeep-mounted patrol of 2nd Recce Regiment in 1945.**

Note the '41' Arm-of-Service serial painted on the far left of the bumper. The other numbers ('28-1433-A2') are a SEAC vehicle registration number.



**Left: Men of the 1st Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (5th Brigade, 2nd Division) remove an improvised and ingenious flotation device from their Universal Carrier after crossing the Mu River during the advance to Mandalay in 1945.**

Note the crossed keys formation sign of 2nd Division.

**Right: Another (overloaded) Carrier patrol of 2nd Recce Regiment pictured in 1945.**

Note the '20' painted on the two nearest Carriers, also seen in another photo of the regiment's Carriers (see above). As in the case of the '20' painted on Shermans, the meaning of this marking is unknown, though it has been suggested that it has something to do with auxiliary water tanks fitted to these vehicles.



**Left: Men of 2nd Division examine a captured Japanese gun in January 1945. In the background are two Universal Carriers fitted with deep-wading screens.**

# Other Indian & British Markings

## Allied Stars

Allied Stars began to appear in the Far East in late 1944, with them being almost universally applied by the time of the Meiktila and Mandalay battles.

They were invariably painted much larger than in NW Europe – those painted on Lee tanks often reaching the full height of the not insubstantial hull-sides of the Lee! The not-so-tall sides of Carriers often carried 'clipped' stars, as the stencils were clearly too large for the job.

When applied, Stars were invariably painted on the sides of the hull (or the turret, in the case of some Stuarts), which was not common in NW Europe and Italy due to the threat of enemy antitank guns. The main threat to British and Indian tanks in Burma was from Allied air power, so the idea was to make the tanks as visible as possible to aircraft, which meant painting stars on the sides as well as on top. However, they do not seem to have been painted on front or rear.

The star was meant to be surrounded by a wide ring when painted on upper surfaces (e.g turret-tops, engine decks or tarpaulins) as an air recognition measure. However, it is very difficult to assess how often this was done, as the vast majority of photos were not taken from above. Nevertheless, there are a few photos that show the circled star on turret-tops.

Lees are often seen in photos with the left-side star 'wrapping around' the front-left corner, so that it can be partially seen from the front as well as the side.

## Vehicle Callsigns

Vehicle callsigns were often painted on the rear of the tank's hull from 1944 onwards – especially in Sherman units. These were invariably a simple system of sequentially numbering the tanks in a squadron, starting with the Squadron Commander as No.1. I have not therefore come across a number higher than 15 in photos. However, some regiments (such as the 7th Light Cavalry) numbered every tank individually, starting with the regiment's CO as No.1.

In most regiments they were painted LARGE on the rear of the hull, in white or the regiment's squadron tac-sign colour. However, 254th Tank Brigade seems to have preferred a very small number (about the same size as an AoS serial number), in white, on the hull front and rear (or the turret rear).

## Bridging Discs

As elsewhere in the British Army, all vehicles carried a 'Bridge Disc' on the lower front-left of every vehicle's hull. This was typically a yellow disc, with the vehicle's weight class painted in black. However, low-visibility versions were also known, such as the disc being replaced by a yellow or black ring, or the disc and number being painted in outline only. The weight classes were typically '30' for Shermans, '32' or '33' for Lees, '15' for Stuarts, '4' for CMP 15cwt trucks, '2' for Jeeps and '4' or '5' for Carriers. Vehicles that normally towed trailers or guns would have two numbers – one over the other – separated by a thin black line: e.g. Jeeps had '3' over '2' and Quads had '8' over '5' (the higher number applied when towing).

## Unknown Marking

One unknown marking was universally applied to all Sherman tanks in the Far East – a white square with '20' in black, that was normally painted just above or below the Bridging Disc, with approximately the same dimensions. Dennis Oliver suggests that this was something to do with the extra water tanks that were fitted to Sherman and Lee tanks in the Far East (maybe extra weight when filled?).

## Tank Names

The tank and armoured car regiments of XIV Army were very keen on naming their mounts. In many cases (though not always) the initial letter of the tank name matched the squadron letter. 116th RAC, as an old Highland regiment, took Scottish place names such as 'Cairntoul' and 'Cairngorm' (both C Sqn). Probyn's Horse, as a proud old Indian cavalry regiment, had the names of its old chargers: A Sqn had 'Anzac', while B Sqn had 'Banyard' and 'Bluebeard'. The Royal Deccan Horse took Indian town names, though with no apparent link to the squadron letter: 'Bidar' (RHQ), 'Faridkut' (A Sqn) and 'Sagar' (C Sqn). An example from 19th Lancers doesn't appear to have any particular relevance – 'Manifesto' (A Sqn). Tank names were normally painted on the hull sides, in white or yellow, either halfway along or toward the rear. A Daimler Armoured Car of B Sqn, 16th Light Cavalry had 'Bols' painted on the upper edge of the turret, above the squadron tac-sign.

## War Department Numbers

WD Numbers were universally applied to all British and Indian Army vehicles. Tanks normally had a six-digit number, which was prefixed by 'T'. Carriers also had the T prefix. Self-propelled artillery pieces such as the Priest had the prefix 'S'. Armoured Cars and Scout Cars had the prefix 'F'. Jeeps and cars had 'M'. Light trucks such as the XIV Army workhorses - the CMP 15cwt and the Dodge Weapons Carrier series had 'Z'. Gun tractors had 'H'. Lorries over 1 ton had 'L'.

WD Numbers were always painted on the hull sides – usually toward the rear or half way along. On softskins they were usually painted on the sides of the bonnet or on the side-doors.