

Book synopsis:

## **Military briefs 6. Israeli Improvised Armoured Vehicles & Jeeps 1947-1949** ©.

John Myszka.



Mouse House Enterprises. Deakin, Australia. 2012. ISBN: 0-9577586-4-2

[www.mheaust.com.au](http://www.mheaust.com.au)

Of course, I have to say the book is excellent! It has armored vehicles, lots and lots of them, plus one tank (a Sherman M4A1, at the end of the book). But beyond the initial hype, John Myszka offers a good balance of historical and technical data, equipment improving and improvisation, and warfare adaptation from 1936 to 1949, a forty-two years span of critical interaction between dwellers (Jewish and Arabs), and rulers (British Mandate).

If these acumen of information were not enough, guess what “the cherry on top” would be: Accurate diagrams of some of the vehicles detailed in the book, and some resin conversions for them, all of those in 1/35 scale. Great!

The book begins with the “Historical Background” section, in which the author relates the need for the Jewish para-military organizations, supported by the Kibutzim, to design and build protection -and later offensive- wheeled and tracked vehicles for their cause, under the paradigm of “standardization”, whenever the circumstances and materials availability allowed to facilitate production speed and easiness.

Certainly, the book heavily relates to the 1947-1949 period as the scope of investigation, but many pictures included -and some side notes- implicitly extend the struggle for equipment needed decades before the focus. As an example of this, the book presents pictures dated on 1938, and stories of beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century about Jewish efforts to protect their people, specifically 1936, when Mr. Myszka establish the “*regular attacks on Jewish settlements*”. \* These particular years mark the decision by the Yishuv “*to armour their private vehicles*”\*.

\* Note: For speed of writing of this review, I will not set specific footnotes for the quotes used here. Thank you, very much. (I don’t think it’s necessary to say this, but it’s very Fernando



This section also describes the “limits” regarding weaponry, scheme colors, and usage of the vehicles allowed to operate at that time.

By the way, the book is also good at showing the different uniforms used by all parties involved; but that is meat for another meal.

Beginning on page 13, the “Sandwich Armor” section opens a well of information that Mr. Myszka wants to show us. It is established that armored vehicles have been used by all sectors of the Jewish community by around 1938, but the “Sandwich” concept, which is placing a non-metallic plate between two metallic ones in order to reduce weight on the vehicles, was established in January 1948. The author says that after some trial and error the Jewish authorities reached a suitable composition: “5mm thick outer plate with 1.5 inch (38-40mm) of plywood and a 3mm inner plate” \*. However, the quality of the materials and the availability would slightly change the outcome.

In this same section we learn that, first, any vehicle could be sandwiched; second, most of the vehicles acquired in this period could also be “turreted”; third, some design “variations” and different materials used were allowed to better suit the needs of different Kibutz depending their location and what they had at hand; fourth, that despite the importance of removing weight, pure plated vehicles were also fabricated; and finally, that one man’s trash is another’s treasure.

Most of the armored and improvised vehicles in the blooming State of Israel used at that time, were “supplied” by the British army in its willingness to abandon the Transjordan Territory. For this the British were auctioning old equipment and demilitarizing them. The Jewish used their network of old friendships, and money, to put all those trucks, cars, buses to good work in no time.

Here is the list of vehicles mentioned in the book:

#### **Bought Vehicles**

- Canadian Military Pattern (CMP) 15cwt & 30cwt
- Dodge ¾ ton Command Reconnaissance Vehicle WC56/57 and WC51/52 (The Beep)
- Scammell Truck (Tank Transporter)
- US 1.5 ton 4x4 Trucks
- US 2.5 ton 6x6 Trucks
- US M3A1 White Scout Car
- British Otter Mk.I Light Reece Car
- US M5/M9 Half-Tracked Car
- US Jeeps

#### **Captured Vehicles (All of them British)**

- Humber Scout Car
- Morris Recce Car
- Marmon Herrington MK. IV-F
- Bren and Lloyd carriers

Among the vehicles listed, the M3A1 White Scout Car deserves a special mention here due the combat ready role and the number of variations it received. In total 4 members of this family were fabricated, all with striking similarities, and all with their own personalities. They were called: Type 1, Type 2, Type 3, and Type 4.

Regarding small armament, the German MG34 was the principal gun used, followed by the “37mm” (French, American, or Czech), the Besa (British/Czech), Oerlikon Type S 20mm cannon, and Hispano-Suiza HS55 long barrel.

Big guns were represented by the British 6 pounder ATG, all placed on M5/M14 Half-Track. Only 4 of this combination were produced between October and December 1948.

Jeep Time. According John Myszka, “by February 1949 the IDF had armored a total of 240 Jeeps”. How the Israelis got so many, so fast one may ask? The answer is “loopholes”. Jeeps were in concept and design, a military tool, hence, forbidden for acquisition due the UN embargo at that time. But there is always a “but”, Willys, the manufacturer designed a post-war version, the CJ2, nicknamed named “Agri Jeeps”. So, the jeeps came as agricultural equipment. IDF did the rest. 8 Jeeps were even fully armored

Communications wise, the Israeli Military Forces preferred the use of the British No. 19 Radio set (cylindrical version, or conical mounted over inverted “L”).

Visual Identification varies depending the political moment in which the vehicle was fabricated or mainly used:

- 1) October 1936 to May 1948. Sand color with wide white horizontal band on the sides and back of the vehicle.
- 2) May 1948 to April 1949. Sand color without the white band, but with IDF numerical code (white numbers over black rectangle).
- 3) April 1949 and forward. Sand color with IDF numerical code and blue David star over white circle.

An unusual note in the book refers to “red painted half tracks ...” \*. Whose idea was this? How did this come to happen? Who knows, there is no further reference in the book, but I am heavily thinking to paint an M5 in red.

To finish the visual identification aspect, there are some tactical and brigade marks across the book, but they are not of much importance in relation to the scope of the narrative. Amen.

Until now, all the vehicles previously referred to are basically “work done” over a fully recognizable chassis or hull. But honoring the forward thinking of the Jewish culture in general, the book also presents two vehicles that were the forefathers of real Israeli armored vehicles. It seems that both designs have their roots right after the Independence War.

The first is “Vehicle 4828-?” (Here “?” is the Hebrew symbol “Tzadei”, sorry guys, I do not have a Hebrew keyboard. If you want to see that symbol → Google it!). This appears to be welded construction based on a British Humber. The second of those is “Vehicle 10626-?”. This is a riveted hull seemed to be based on a Canadian Ford Lynx scout car. Both vehicles are a mismatch of concepts. The author doesn’t offer a definitive answer about this.

Wrapping up. I am glad I got the book. It is the best organized information I have found so far to help me in my plastic model projects. My goal is to expand my collection of Israeli Armored vehicles. So far, I have 8 models, all mass-produced kits. Adding detail over detail, I realized that the ingenuity of the Israeli armed forces began before my oldest presented model: A M3A1 Half Tracked vehicle. I understood that beginning from zero was not an option (The Jewish forces did not have time to think about the future and hope for the best, they had to act quickly). So, they had to begin adapting something existing in their own land. And they did.

John Myszka was chronological in explaining the need, the process, the weapons produced, and the incidental result of the Jewish community: The Liberation of the Land, and their Independence. He did not deviate from the big picture in political, social, and military terms;

he stayed in the weaponry development. He did not get lost in the small details, such as engine types, ratios, etc. They are not important to historians and plastic modelers.

What the author did was to retrace the objective of the Hagannah and other paramilitary organizations under one commander - Ben Gurion: Protection of their people, secure the land, obtain a legal entity- the nation of Israel. Secondly, the author followed the acquisition path and usage of the best tools to accomplish the objective. It seems to me that the pages devoted to each topic were necessary based on the importance in relation to the scope of the title, and to the relation of the historical outcome presented.

Now, I have to say, that after reading the book and realizing that armored vehicles were not only a solution for the Jewish community, I also see that private companies were also forced to develop their protection programs to survive in that hostile environment. I found a picture of an armored vehicle that belonged to the electrical company Hevrat Hashmal in 1939. Here is the picture



So, how many other companies engaged in those preparations, what are their stories, their struggle? I do not know. Who will write the next book, John Myszka, or you? I do not have time for that research, but certainly I will be very interested in reading that book. So, go ahead, begin to think out of the box. Do something about it and send me the book when you publish it. I promise I will do the review as best as I can.

Best wishes,

Fernando Sánchez

**As result of reading this book I learned to properly use the following Key Words:**  
 Palmach, Haganah, IDF, Jewish Settlement Patrol (JSP), Notareem, Yishuy, Sandwich armor, Armored vehicles, Captain Orde Charles Wingate, Ben Gurion, British Mandate, donor vehicle, Burma Road, PIAT principle, Battle of Biet Natif.

Here is the list of other books written by John Myszka, and some of his friends. All published by Mouse House Enterprises:

### **Israeli Military Vehicles The First Fifty Years 1948-1998**

**John Myszka**

Published by Mouse House Enterprises (1998)

ISBN 10: [0646360027](#) ISBN 13: [9780646360027](#)

### **Australian M113A1 Family of Vehicles 1972-2013. Military Briefs 7.**

**Myszka, John with Gordon Branch & Rocky Hema.**

Published by Mouse House Enterprises (2019)

ISBN 10: [0957758677](#) ISBN 13: [9780957758674](#)

### **Australian Leopard AS1 Family of Vehicles (Military Briefs 5)**

**Myszka, John with Peter Jarratt, Phil Parkinson and Andre Scheitler**

Published by Mouse House Enterprises (2014)

ISBN 10: [0957758650](#) ISBN 13: [9780957758650](#)

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### **Military Briefs No.4 ASLAV Australian Light Armoured Vehicle**

**Myszka, John**

Published by Mouse House Enterprises (2009)

ISBN 10: [0957758634](#) ISBN 13: [9780957758636](#)

### **Australian Fire Support Vehicles (Military Briefs Series No. 1)**

**Myszka, John**

Published by Mouse House Enterprises (1999)

ISBN 10: [095775860X](#) ISBN 13: [9780957758605](#)