

German Ruses – From Army Training Memorandum No. 46 (1943)

During World War II, the British Army issued a series of **Army Training Memorandums (ATMs)**, along with complementary Military Training Pamphlets (MTPs) and Army Training Instructions (ATIs), to disseminate rapidly evolving combat lessons to officers. These documents, particularly the ATMs, focused on sharing practical experiences—such as lessons from the Western Desert and tactical handling of weapons—rather than just theoretical doctrine.

Some Key WWII Army Training Memorandums (ATMs)

- **ATM No. 23 (1939/40):** Focused on individual training.
- **ATM No. 24 (1939):** War training.
- **ATM No. 25 (October 1939):** Early war training guidance.
- **ATM No. 27 (December 1939):** Covered early war strategies.
- **ATM No. 28 (1940–1945):** This was a major series, often marked "War," which ran from the "dark days" of 1940 through 1945, updating doctrine based on operational experience.
- **ATM No. 36 (September 1940):** Issued shortly after the Dunkirk evacuation.
- **ATM No. 43 (May 1942):** Included lessons from the Western Desert, anti-tank defence, and sniper organization.
- **ATM No. 45 (1943):** Focused on updated tactical methods.

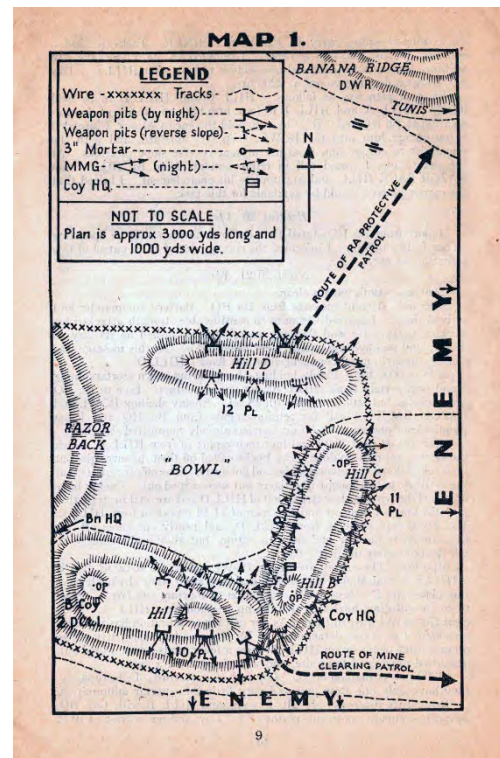
Content and Focus

The memorandums were highly practical and aimed at ensuring lessons from the front line reached commanders quickly. Common themes included: Lessons on the new "Battle Drill" techniques. Use of the Bren light machine gun, anti-tank training, and bayonet training. Analysis of actions in the Western Desert such as the action at BANANA RIDGE (right). Early in the war, some, like No. 28, were famously marked "Not to be taken into Front Line Trenches," suggesting concerns about them falling into enemy hands.

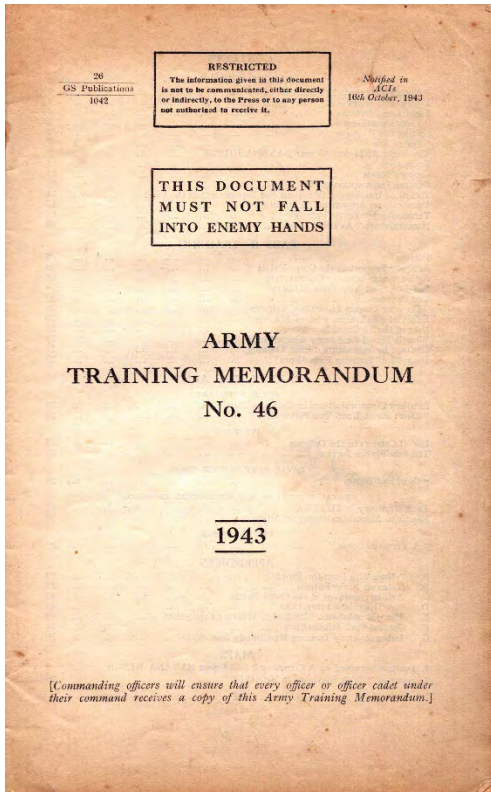
Related Training Publications

In addition to the ATMs, the Army used other series which were crucial for training staff officers.:

- **Military Training Pamphlets (MTPs):** Introduced just prior to the war in 1939, including "No. 3: Notes on the Tactical Handling of the New (1938) Battalion" and "No. 41: The Armoured Regiment".



- **Army Training Instructions (ATIs):** Included specialized instructions like "No 7, The Tactical Handling of Brigade Support Groups (1943)".
- **Middle East Training Pamphlets:** Specifically focused on warfare in the desert, such as "No. 2, Part 8: Tactical Handling of Armoured Divisions in the M.E.".



ATM No. 46 (left), was published in 1943 and I will occasionally be presenting articles based on information found in this publication, and others. The first one below is entitled **German Ruses**.

‘The following paragraphs are quotations from written reports received from officers serving in North Africa between January and March 1943. They are of considerable interest.

The enemy is apt to disguise a patrol as British, complete to the last button and led by English-speaking personnel. On one occasion a column of our tanks, returning to our lines through a minefield, was suddenly increased by five German tanks, three of which got through before the alarm was given.

Not once in a period of two months did a German patrol come into contact with our forces by night. Patrolling by the Germans seemed to be carried out by a reconnaissance group, which consisted of either three or four tanks or two

infantry sections, advancing along the most obvious approach in broad daylight. The object, here, was without doubt to pinpoint our positions by drawing fire and causing movement. Unless fire control is excellent and the “no movement by day” rule is thoroughly applied, he is always successful.

At SBIBA, the first intimation we, as a battalion, had of the German’s presence in front of us was the approach of a Sherman tank (right), followed by three Mark IVs. Fortunately, we all knew that he had captured some Shermans and so were not surprised.



At THALA, the Germans, in captured American tanks, followed an American withdrawal through our lines. They tailed on so closely that it was not until they were machine gunning our battalion headquarters that we realised what had happened. We lost 50% of the battalion on this occasion.

At DJEBEL ABIOD a German, dressed as a British gunner officer and pretending to be reconnoitring for gun positions, rode through our lines from the rear on a white horse. He was discovered before it was too late.



As always, security over telephone wires and wireless must be maintained, as the Germans are always listening in. An example of the speed with which they work can be seen from this occurrence. Our carrier platoon had been detailed to support an attack on an enemy position and it had not been able to withdraw before dark. The platoon commander was not sure of his whereabouts. He wirelessly to battalion headquarters to send up "a green Verey

light [flare], in five minutes to give us the right direction back clear of the minefield." In about four minutes a green Verey light went up in an unexpected direction, to be followed shortly after by another from the expected direction. The platoon commander led off in the direction of the second light, and they reached our lines safely. "It may have been a coincidence but I feel it to be probable that the Boche sent up the first one in an attempt to make the carrier platoon drive into their lines."

The Germans have on a number of occasions attempted to trick our patrols by calling out in English such phrases as "Come over here comrade," "Help, Tommy, I am wounded." Everyone knows we do not use these methods of speech and if anyone uses these phrases, or similar ones, the rule is to shoot first.

The use of Verey lights in conjunction with the movements of patrols is always attended with the risk that the patrol will be tempted into German lines by false signals. Many units now NEVER use Verey lights as signals, for the Boche has a habit of firing similar lights as soon as he sees our signals going up.

German Interception of RT

A German prisoner of war stated that he was the wireless operator in his regimental commander's tank. Frequently, his communications were interfered with by Allied sets on the same wavelength. On some occasions it was found that Allied conversations were insecure. When they were insecure, an English-speaking officer of the regiment was called up to sit on the commander's tank, listen to the interference, and to keep up a map showing Allied movements. His commander's temper always improved when information of this type was available.'

