

"A" and "B" vehicles and guns for the re-equipment of Eighth Army. During the same period they also manufactured a considerable quantity of special items such as Scorpions, mine detectors and beach carts. From February they carried out experiments at Kabrit in water-proofing "A" and "B" vehicles, guns, etc., as the information then available from the United Kingdom was very meagre. Experiments were also carried out with materials manufactured locally. Out of some 15,000 vehicles prepared in Middle East ports, United Kingdom materials were available for only 4,500; the rest were waterproofed with local materials.

105. Survey, also, had its share of production. From material provided by the War Office, augmented by air photography in so far as the very inadequate supply of the necessary specialist aircraft permitted, just under four million maps for Sicily were printed in the Middle East, including an urgently required set of charts for the Royal Navy.

106. Air-letter forms, copies of the "Soldier's Guide to Sicily", and pamphlets were other minor, but not unimportant, products of local manufacture.

107. Whilst Middle East Command was busy maintaining Eighth Army in Tunisia, planning for Sicily and re-forming and re-equipping formations for that campaign, it had also to provide and staff the training establishments necessary for the new type of warfare on which Eighth Army was about to embark.

108. Training involved the preparation of two brigade groups in each of the 5th and 50th Divisions, and the 231st Independent Infantry Brigade Group, for the assault role, and of one brigade group in each division for the follow-up role. In addition to these formations, certain army and corps troops, No. 1 Commando and some Royal Air Force personnel were to be trained in combined operations.

109. To implement this programme, five brigade groups, in addition to normal training, were assault-trained at the Combined Training Centre, while two brigade groups were trained at the Mountain Warfare Training Centre and in Dryshod training to act as follow-up brigades. Four beach bricks were also trained in their role.

110. The Combined Training Centre, Kabrit, had previously been on a care and maintenance basis. With the staff and facilities available, the utmost that could be done was to train one brigade group in four weeks. This was inadequate, as the programme envisaged not only the training of a brigade group in three weeks, but also the training of the four beach bricks. To cope with this, a new system of training had to be devised to accelerate the training of brigades, and the existing Combined Training Centre was enlarged and new establishments set up. To reduce the time spent by a brigade at the Combined Training Centre all training which did not require the use of craft was transferred to Dryshod training wings, which were set up as far as possible in the areas in which formations were concentrated. In these areas, mock landing craft and ships' sides were erected, and training consisted of lectures, Dryshod exercises, craft drill and precision driving. After fourteen days at a Dryshod wing, formations moved to Kabrit for fourteen

days' Wetshod training, culminating in a full-scale brigade landing exercise. In all cases brigades intended for assault roles did their training with the beach brick with which it was intended they should operate.

111. Considerable work was involved in providing facilities for Dryshod training and suitable beaches for Wetshod training. The latter involved very heavy dredging operations. The almost completed deep water quays at Adabiya Bay were taken over by the Royal Navy for berthing and maintaining landing craft and training their crews.

112. The Combined Training Centre was substantially increased, the bulk of the additional instructors being drawn from the United Kingdom. A Formations Combined Training Staff was organised primarily with the object of setting and running rehearsal exercises. In addition there were two increments for attachment to formations for advice on combined operations, planning and training.

113. A major exercise called BROMYARD took place for the 13th Corps in the Gulf of Aqaba in June, 1943. The convoy sailed from Suez on 10th June, and on 13th June all assaulting troops of the 5th and 50th Divisions, with associated beach bricks and special service troops, were landed on the beaches. Troops re-embarked on the following day. This involved the embarkation into twelve personnel and four M.T./Stores ships of 23,000 men and 350 vehicles; the stores ships were tactically stowed with dummy stores and non-operational vehicles specially issued for the exercise.

114. Bad weather prevented the rehearsal exercise of the 231st Brigade and 31 Beach Brick taking place at Sofaga. Accordingly the convoy was sailed to Aqaba, where a landing exercise was carried out after the conclusion of exercise BROMYARD.

115. The training of the anti-aircraft units was difficult because many of the units had only recently arrived from the United Kingdom or Persia and Iraq Command, and had not been in active employment for a long time. On the other hand, the Eighth Army units had been so continuously engaged in operations that they had not properly absorbed recent technical developments and drills. The sixty anti-aircraft batteries involved were concentrated in the Delta and during May and June a training programme was carried out by which every battery was put through a practice camp.

116. No Bailey bridges arrived in the Middle East until 24th May. From this date until the launching of the operation, cadres from as many units as possible were given one week's intensive training in the new equipment which they were to use to such an extent during the operation.

117. Courses for Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers personnel in water-proofing were held at Kabrit. These personnel were used as instructors for training cadres of unit personnel so that units could waterproof their own vehicles. This plan, however, was revised when it was shown by the exercises and the early loading of a ship that the state of training of unit personnel was not good enough to allow units to do their own water-proofing and that it would have to be carried out by Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers personnel at the ports.