

Restoration of Priest M7B1



BAIV BV | British American Infantry Vehicles

Titaniumstraat 11 | NL 6031 TV Nederweert | The Netherlands

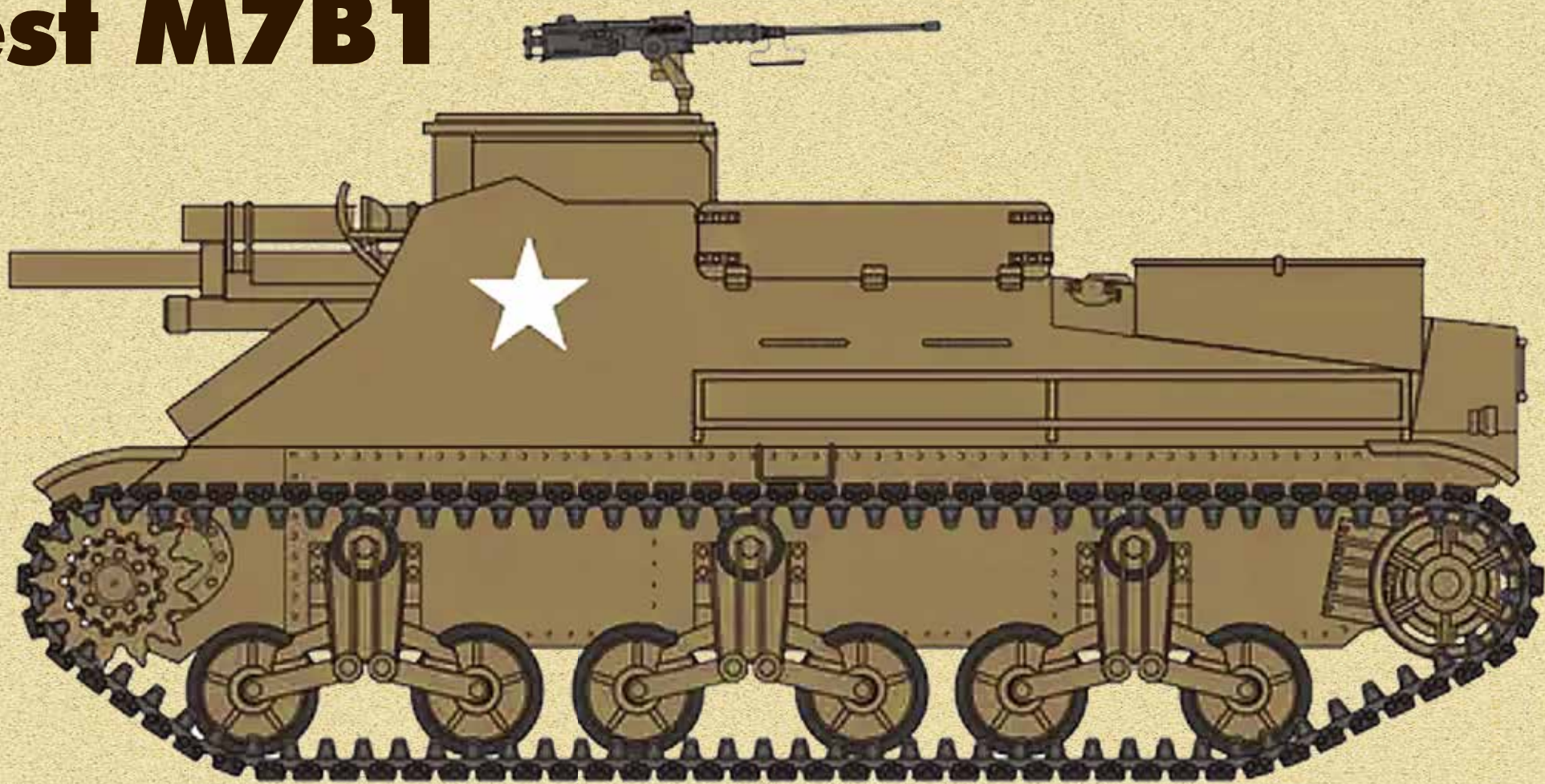
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Priest M7B1



Technical Specifications

Manufacturer: Pressed Steel Car Company
Chicago / Hegewisch Station, USA

Production figures: from March 1944 till February 1945: 826

Date of Acceptance: February 1945

Serial No. Hull: 4606

Original registration: USA 40172609-S

Weight: 22.700 kg (50,045 lbs)

Crew: 7 (Commander, Driver, Gun Crew)

Engine: Ford GAA, 8 cylinder, DOHC 60°V8 gasoline,
Displacement: 1,100 cu in (18 L)
Power output: 525HP at 2,600 RPM
Torque: 1,100 lbs. (1.400 Nm)

Transmission: Synchromesh, 5 speeds forward, 1 reverse

Steering: Controlled differential; steering levers

Speed: 25 miles/h (40 km/h) on hard ground,
15 miles/h (25 km/h) on soft ground

Range: 110 miles on hard ground
(fuel capacity 175 US gallons)

Dimensions: Length: 6,02 m (237")
Width: 2,87 m (113")
Height: 2,95 m (116")

Armament Main: 105mm howitzer M2A1 # 12812
Manufacturer: CHAIN BELT Company, USA

Secondary: 1x Cal .50 M2HB machine gun
3x Cal .45 machine gun

Ammunition Stowage: 105mm: 69 rounds
Cal .50: 300 rounds
Cal .45: 1,620 rounds

Armour: 108 mm max

Level of restoration: Class A

Introduction – A Journey of Restoration and Remembrance

The restoration of the Priest M7B1 from 1944 represents a remarkable milestone in the rich heritage of BAIV B.V., located in Nederweert, the Netherlands. This project is far more than a technical achievement. It is a story of passion, perseverance, and purpose. Through the resurrection of this unique piece of military history, BAIV once again demonstrates its commitment to preserving the mechanical and cultural legacy of the Second World War.



In this photo book, we invite you to follow the journey of the Priest M7B1 from forgotten relic to fully restored masterpiece and to witness the dedication of a team driven by craftsmanship, historical awareness, and respect for authenticity.

A Machine with a Mission

The M7 Priest was born out of necessity during one of the most defining periods in modern history. Developed in the early 1940s, it was designed to provide mobile artillery support to the fast-moving armored divisions of the Allied forces.

Built on the proven chassis of the M4 Sherman tank, the Priest was equipped with a powerful 105



mm M2A1 howitzer, giving it the ability to deliver devastating firepower wherever it was needed. The nickname "Priest" was coined by the British Army, inspired by the distinctive raised machine gun mount that resembled a church pulpit. But the Priest's purpose was anything but peaceful.

From the sands of North Africa to the mountains of Italy, and from the beaches of Normandy to the heart of liberated Europe, the M7 became one of the Allies' most trusted companions in battle. It offered a combination of mobility, protection, and fire support that proved essential in the fast-paced warfare of the mid-20th century. For thousands of Allied soldiers, the Priest was more than a machine, it was a symbol of hope and survival, a lifeline in the chaos of war.



Rediscovery in Germany

The story of this particular Priest M7B1 begins decades after the guns of Europe fell silent. In May 2018, BAIV's founders, Ivo Rigter Sr. and Ivo Rigter Jr., discovered the vehicle in Hollnich, Germany, on the grounds of collector Achim Wagner.

Though time had taken its toll, the vehicle was astonishingly complete. Beneath layers of rust and dust lay the bones of an American war machine; Hull Number 4606 (see picture at the right), produced in February 1945 by the Pressed Steel Car Company in Chicago (Hegewisch Station).



Historical research revealed that this Priest likely saw active service during the final months of World War II, as Allied troops advanced deep into Germany.

After the war, the vehicle was stored in a US Army depot in northern France. In the early 1960s, it was converted to a M7B2 specification by the French Atelier de Construction de Bourges (ABS) and subsequently served in the German Bundeswehr as a training vehicle, known as "Fahrschule."

Unlike many surviving examples, this Priest never ended up on a firing range or in a scrapyard. It was well-maintained throughout its service life, a fact that greatly benefited the later restoration.

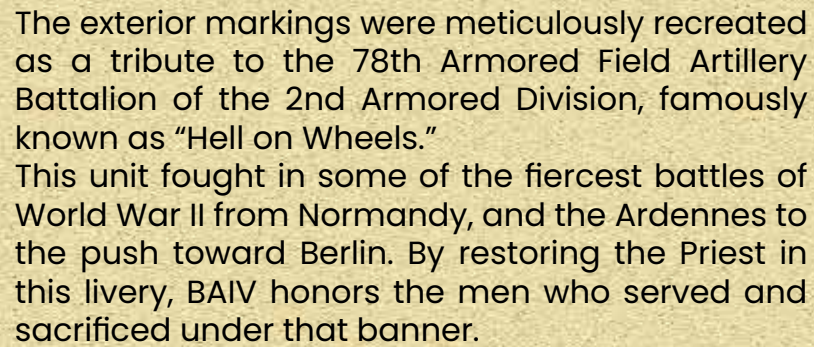
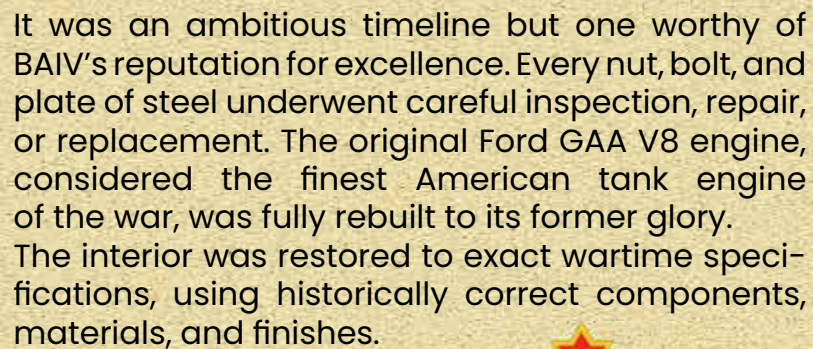
Transporting it to the Netherlands required years of patient effort to secure the necessary permits and export documentation. Finally, in late 2021, the Priest arrived at BAIV's workshop in Nederweert, ready for its second life.



Above: engraved the Hull Number 4606



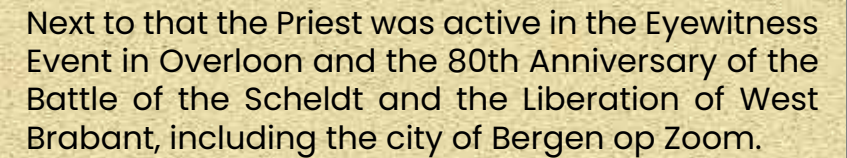
The restoration officially began in Q4 of 2022, with a clear goal in mind: to bring the Priest back to its original 1945 condition and to have it operational in time for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy in June 2024.



Over 3,850 hours of skilled labor were invested by BAIV's dedicated restoration team including Martijn van Kuijk, Leroy Broks, Maik van Boxmeer, Luc Wevers, Joël Daniëls, Eddy Huijterjans, and Quinten Janssen. Together, our team transformed a deteriorated relic into a living monument of history and engineering.

From Workshop to Battlefield Memory

In the summer of 2024, the fully restored Priest roared back to life. Not as a museum piece to be admired from a distance, but as a living, breathing machine of remembrance. It successfully completed its first major journey during the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, drawing admiration from historians, veterans, enthusiasts, and the public alike.



The final chapter of this extraordinary journey was written in March 2025, when the Priest found its new home at the prestigious Museu do Caramulo in Portugal. Through a unique government initiative requiring foreign investors in tourism to contribute to cultural heritage, the museum was able to acquire this rare piece of history. Surrounded by other iconic vehicles and works of engineering, the Priest continues its mission to educate, to inspire, and to remind future generations of the sacrifices and innovations that shaped our modern world. No longer a relic of conflict, the Priest now stands as a living monument of peace and remembrance. A symbol of how history, when preserved with care, can continue to move and connect people across borders.

This project encapsulates everything BAIV stands for: authenticity, craftsmanship, and respect for history. Each restored vehicle is more than just a technical exercise; it is a story brought back to life, a tangible bridge between past and present. With this restoration, the BAIV team has once again proven that passion and precision can revive even the most complex machines of war into timeless symbols of human achievement.

The Priest M7BI project serves as a reminder that behind every piece of restored steel lies not only engineering excellence, but also heart, teamwork, and a shared reverence for the stories these machines carry.

This photo book captures that journey; a story of transformation from decay to rebirth, from forgotten steel to living legacy. Every image tells part of that story: the discovery, the disassembly, the countless hours of meticulous work, and the triumphant moment when the Priest once again stood ready for service.

It is with great pride that BAIV presents this restored Priest M7B1, dedicated to all those who built, operated, and now preserve the machines that once shaped our freedom.

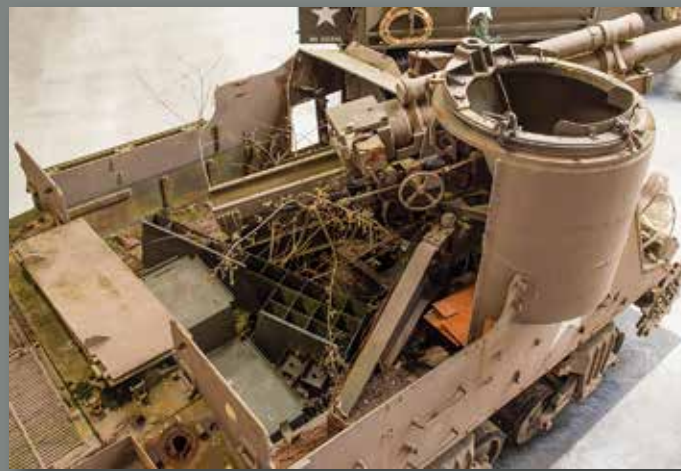
BAIV B.V. – Nederweert, The Netherlands
"At once and together – Semel et Simul".



The Find



*After display at BAIV's open day
in our workshop in Nederweert,*



we started dismantling the Priest M7B1 in July 2022.





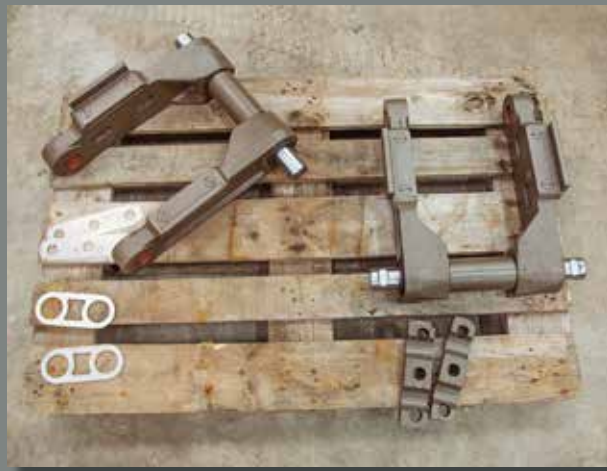






The start of the restoration

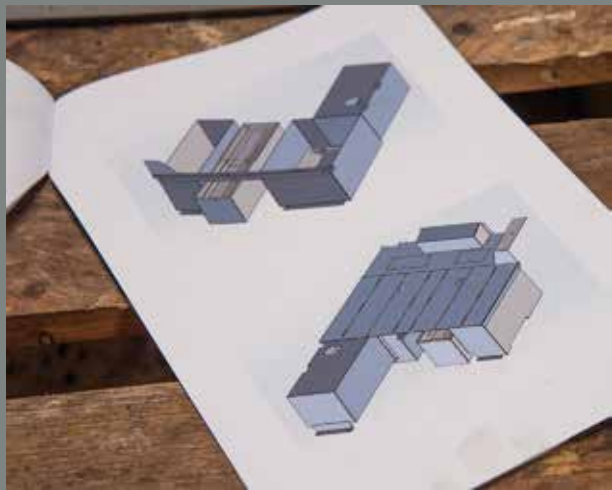






















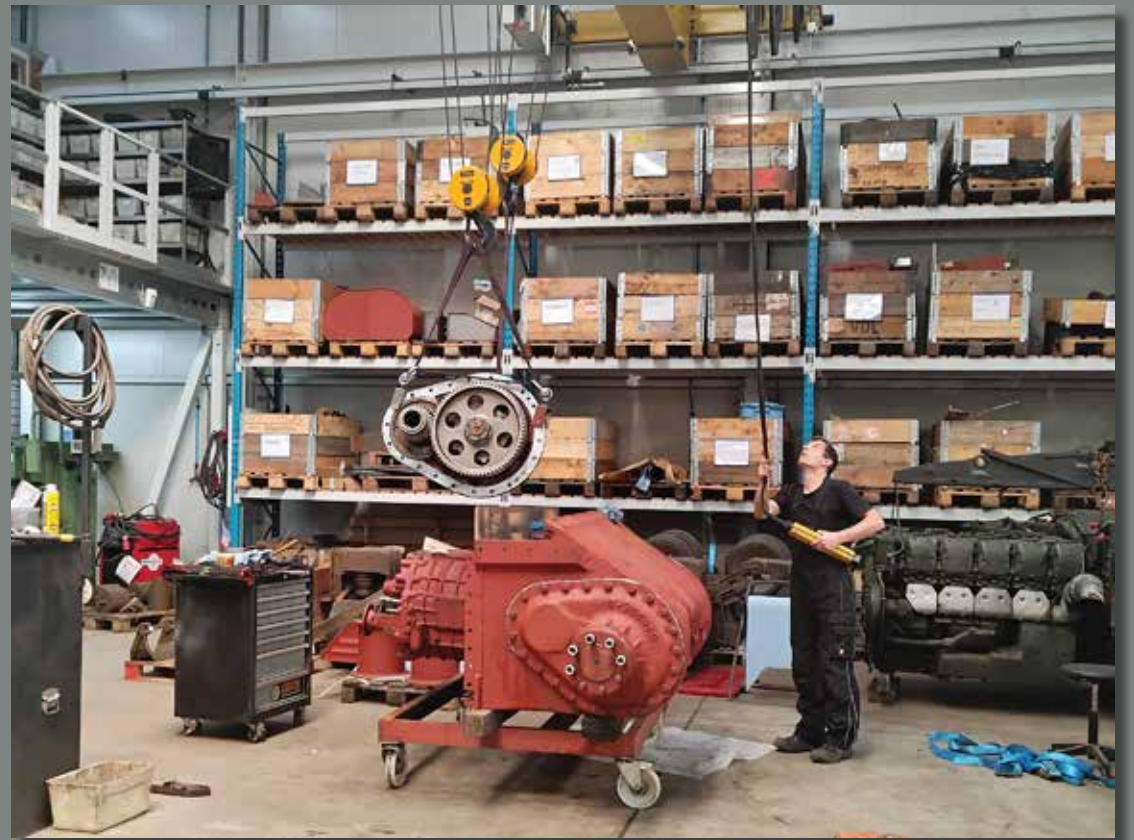












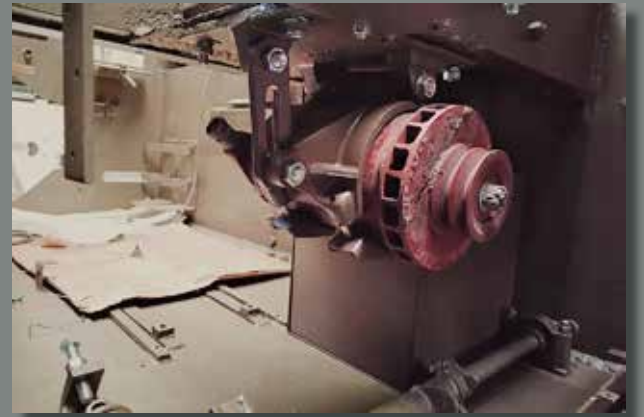
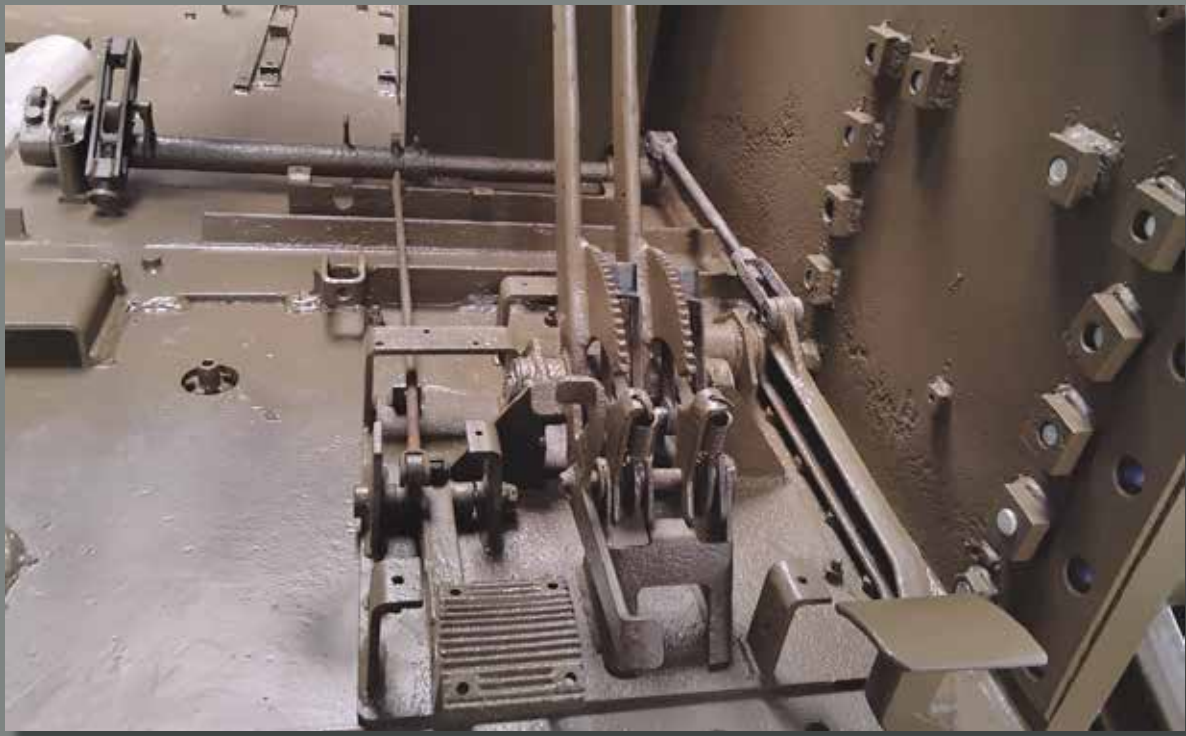






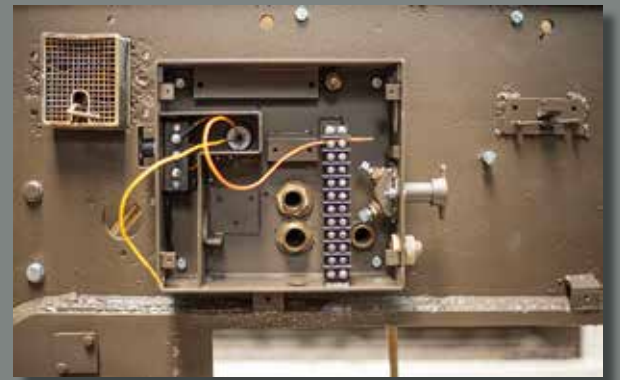
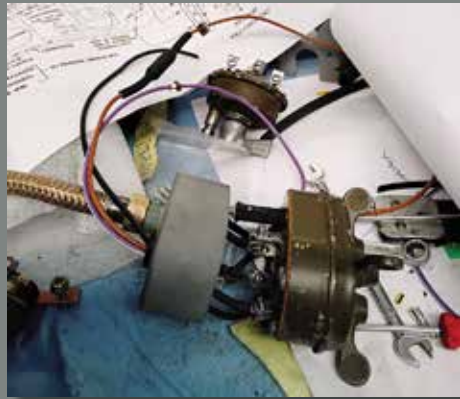












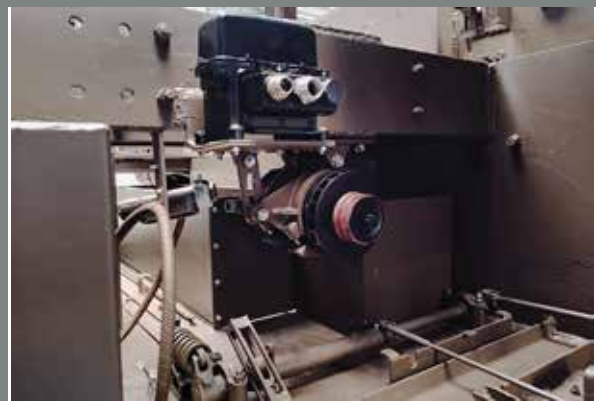
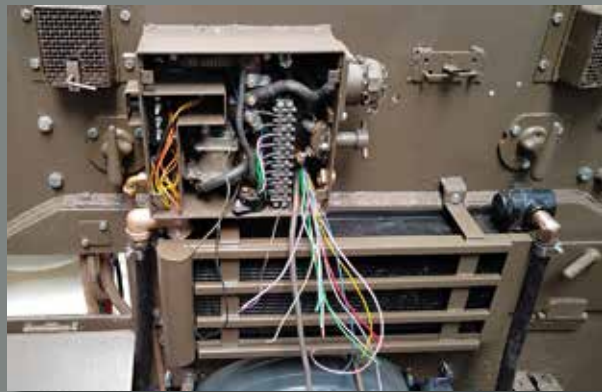
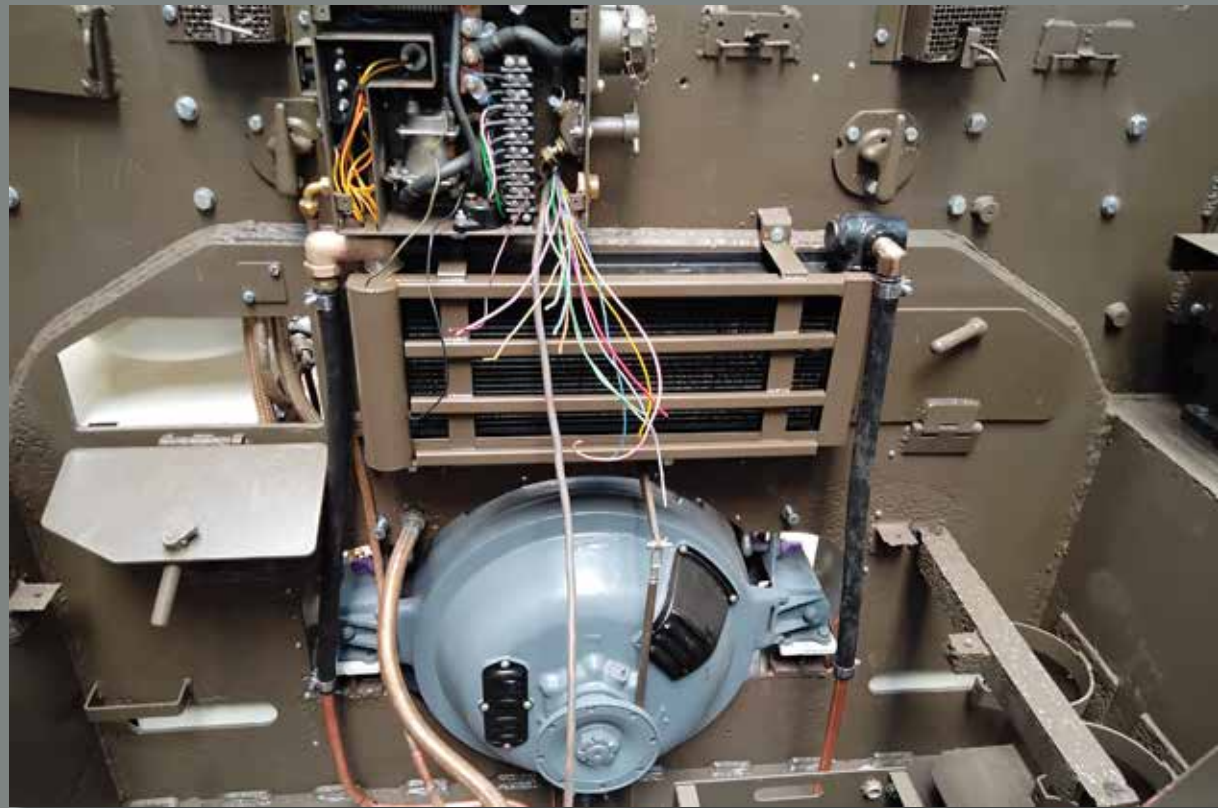




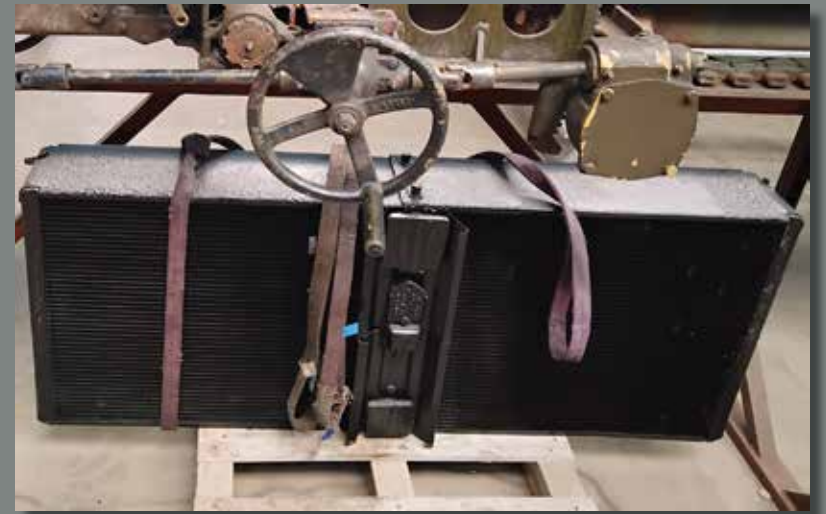






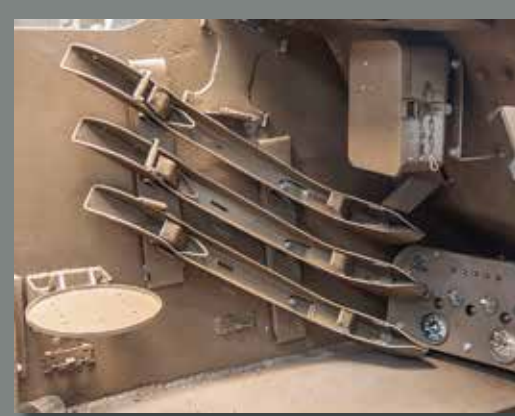
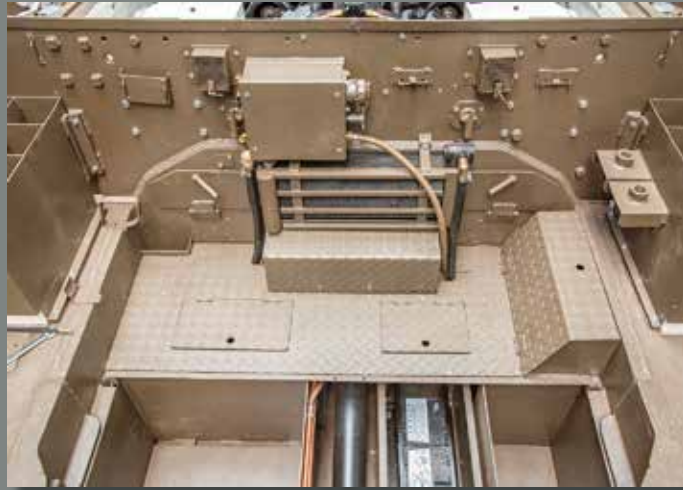


















Final result of the restored Priest M7B1 in January 2024

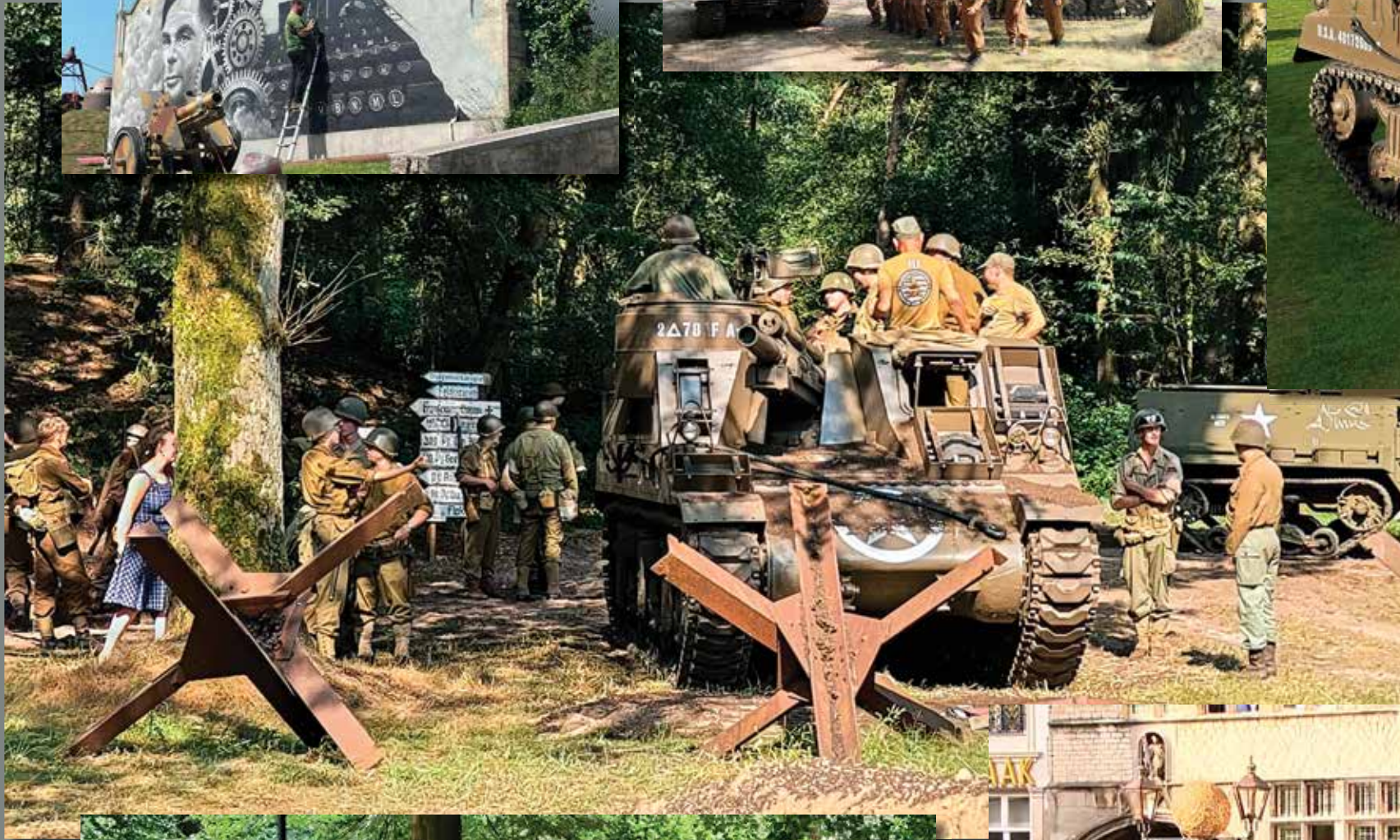


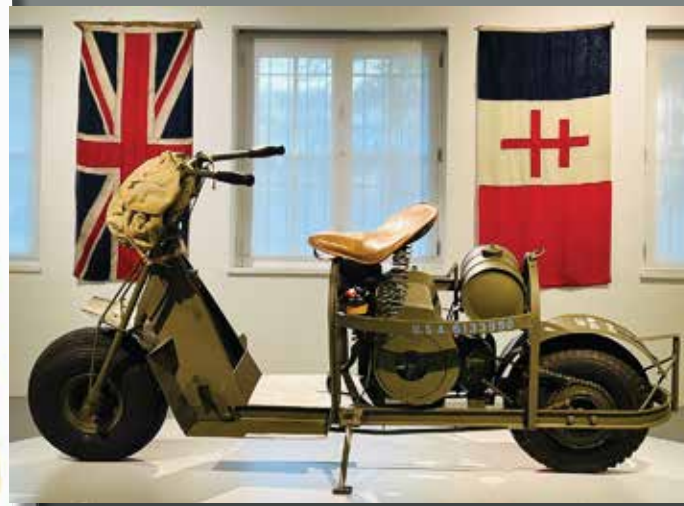
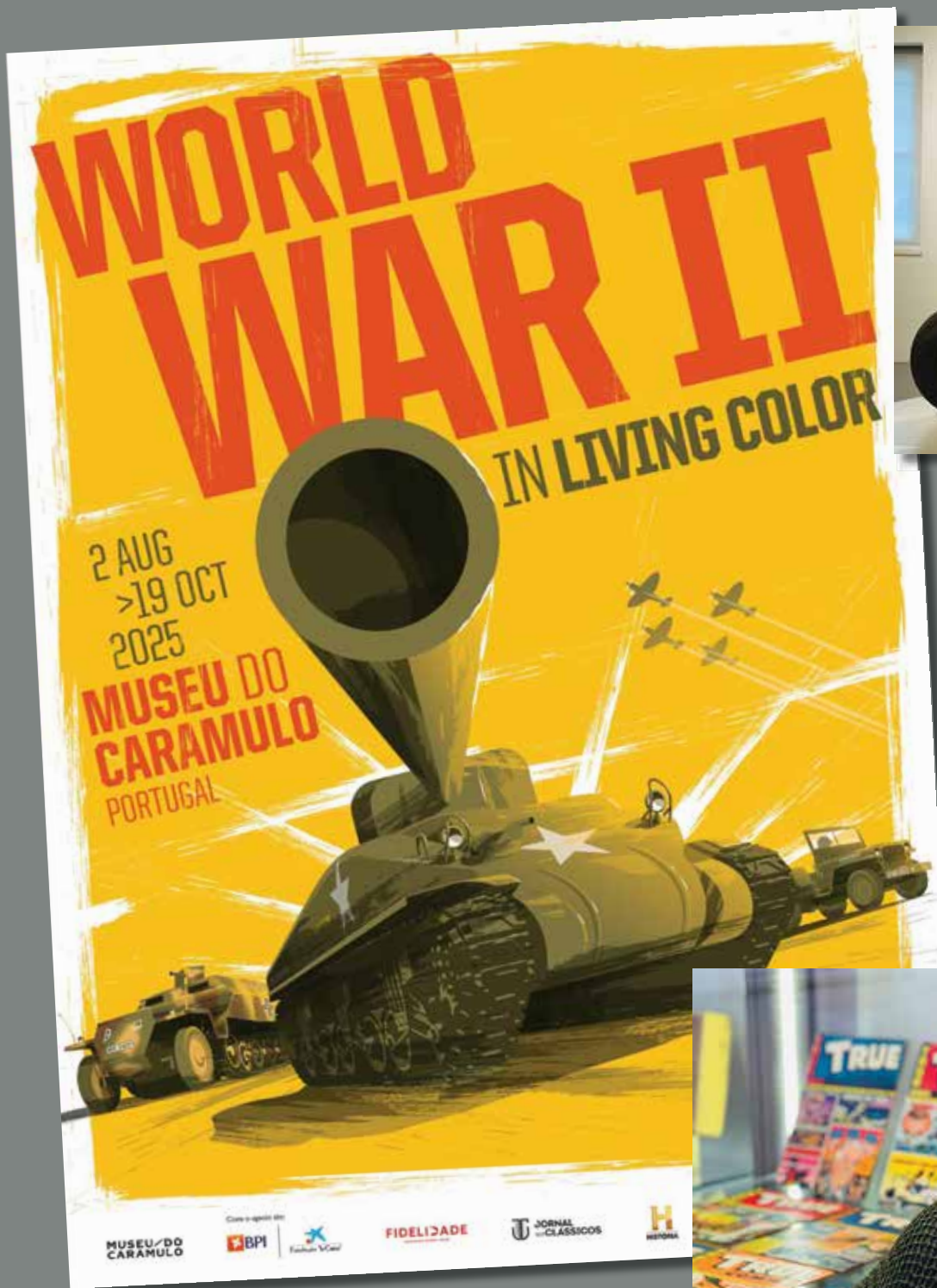


Time to commemorate the invasion



and celebrate the liberation of France, Belgium and the Netherlands





Time to visit Portugal





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