

The "Rat Patrol" Field Guide

DUNES

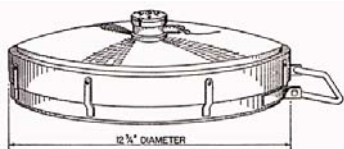
Volume One • Issue Three SEPTEMBER 2007

FREE e-publication

LANDMINES OF THE DESERT WAR (WWII)

by Norman E. Youngblood

Landmines were an integral part of desert warfare in North Africa during World War II. The Africa Corps used over 450,000 mines at the Second Battle of El Alamein (1942) alone—ironically, 180,000 of these were part of minefields that the British had abandoned earlier in the war. In all, it took German engineers the better part of three months to put their defenses in place and the minefields played a major role in slowing the British advance, though not enough to turn the tide of the battle.



Tellermine-35

Tellermines were the most used of the German antitank mines. In most cases, antitank mines are designed so that they will only explode with a significant amount of pressure such as that of a vehicle. Detonating the *Tellermine* 42, for example, required at least 495 pounds of pressure. As motorized vehicles were a key element of the desert waan efficient way to clear minefields was of paramount importance.

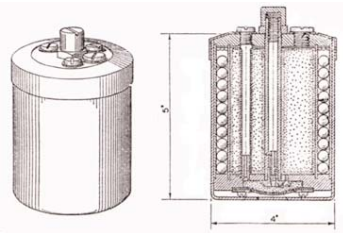
One of the more intriguing techniques the British tried was the Scorpion—a tank chassis with a rotating flail attached to the front. The



Matilda Scorpion flail tank

idea was to detonate the mines by pounding the ground with the flail. While the idea had promise, in the field exploding mines often damaged the Scorpions and the flails occasionally kicked undetonated mines onto the machine's deck. In the end, much of the mine clearance had to be done by hand.

The Germans also introduced one of the war's most feared antipersonnel mines, the *Sbrapnellmine* or S-mine. Nicknamed the "Bouncing Betty" by Allied troops, these mines were one of the first bounding mines. When triggered, the explosive part of the mine shot into the air around waist height, where it detonated, sending out 360 small metal balls in a radius of 150-200 yards. The design was so successful that it was adopted by a number of other countries including the United States, China, and the Soviet Union. Teddy Bottinelli, who served in the American army in Italy, recalled that "The thing I hated most were the minefields. That was the thing that put the fear of God in you. It's an eerie feeling because it's something unseen. It's there and it's not there, you know?"



Sbrapnellmine (S-mine)

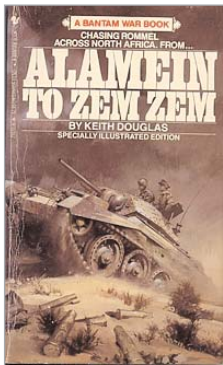
As the Rats prepare to try to keep hidden British stores out of Dietrich's hands in episode one, Moffitt remarks that desert is always shifting and reshaping. While this shifting made it difficult, but of course not impossible, for the Rats to find the supplies, it has complicated clearing the desert of landmines from the many wars fought there. Landmines dating back to World War II continue to surface in the region. In 2003, *Landmine Monitor* reported mines and other unexploded munitions from World War II still affect 500,000 people in the west Egyptian desert alone.

Norman (Ed) is the author of *The Development of Mine Warfare: A Most Murderous and Barbarous Conduct*, 2006, Praeger Security International, 280 p. ISBN-13: 978-0275984199



Book Reviews

Alamein to Zem Zem by Keith Douglas
illustrated by Tom and Greg Beecham -maps by Alan McKnight
Bantam Books 1985, 170p - Reviewed by Libby



Non-fiction books about the second world war can be as dry as the North African desert sands upon which many battles were fought. This is not one of those books. This book reads more like a second world war novel, transporting the reader, atop a tank, from the Battle of Alamein, fighting westward across the desert to Wadi Zem Zem (where the author was wounded) and beyond. More than twenty detailed pen and ink drawings illustrate some weapons, tanks, and fighter planes mentioned in the narrative, and two maps mark places of note.

One unique aspect of this book is the obvious fascination that Keith Douglas, a young British tank commander, has for the day-to-day minutiae of the soldierly life. Although he relays battle successes and setbacks, he spends almost as much time relating the fine grit of living and coping as a small troop of men in that place and time. The men around him, evaluated and described as they inch toward victory, give a realistic human face to the war. The reader comes to know them and care about their survival.

Even though it is a book about war, the narrative is not mired in sentimentality or locked on the horrific. The author maintains an air of detachment, but is neither cold nor dispassionate about what he experiences. He cares greatly about the soldiers, mourning their deaths, but frustrated that the troops seem to him to be the playthings of the military staff.

War is necessarily a nasty business, and Douglas describes in frank detail (some very explicit) many witnessed horrors. But he also relates stories that amuse, such as the time he 'borrowed' a fellow officer's jeep to complete a quick, but urgent, night time transport of a barrel of oil. His action led to a midnight berating from the officer, but Douglas left him swearing at the night air. Knowing the officer would be using the jeep before first light, he chose to 'forget' to tell him about the fresh puddle of oil on the passenger seat.

Keith Douglas had the training of a soldier, the heart of the 'other ranks', the language of a poet, the brashness of the young—and a maturity beyond his years. He lived a lifetime of war, but didn't live to a maturity of years. At age 24, two years after he climbed into his tank at the Battle of Alamein, he was killed.

This reviewer enjoyed *Alamein to Zem Zem* as entertainment and education, and recommends it to anyone with an interest in the nitty-gritty world of a tank troop under orders to chase Rommel out of North Africa.



The Rat Patrol #3 - In The Trojan Tank Affair

by David King - Paperback Library Edition, Feb 1967
Review by Libby



"You are the ones who can do it. You men know the desert. You know the enemy . . . You are the only ones who have a chance of survival." - Colonel Wilson, Rat Patrol Commanding Officer.

As a fan of the fantastic Rat Patrol, this reviewer can hardly disagree with that evaluation of them in this book, for the foursome had an astonishing reputation of success in every mission they attempted, no matter how difficult.

In The Trojan Tank Affair the Rat Patrol is ordered to gather information about a new and potent weapon being tested by the Germans in the deep desert. Naturally, the entire desert war hinges on their success. Although their orders are ultra secret, the patrol time and again runs into evidence that someone has ratted to the enemy. But who? And will the patrol be stopped before they reach their target and complete their mission? Well, what do you think?

Even though historical accuracy in the book seems muddled (quite in keeping with the TV series), David King does an admirable job of bringing military realism to the story through precise technical details scattered throughout. That flying thing attacking the patrol isn't just a plane or a fighter, but a *Messerschmitt Bf-109E!*

The reader is treated to an imaginative blend of raucous, blow-em-up RAT PATROL type action and quiet introspective times—mostly from Troy's point of view, but on occasion Moffitt's and Dietrich's. Such moments of unspoken doubts, personal history and introspection add welcome depth and humanity to the characters. King even finds time to include a smidgen of romance in the book, but this reviewer won't say who. Scenes through which the men of the patrol sidle, sneak, crawl and dash to save their lives and mission, are well-written, strong and sensory-rich.

It is the reviewer's opinion that King sat down to write this novel very early on in the TV series' history. The characters appear much as they were presented in the pilot episode ("Chase of Fire Raid"), but King makes certain assumptions that didn't match the entire series. For example, in this book Troy shares a jeep with Tully, and Moffitt shares with Hitch, placements that were seen only in the pilot. And King reports that all members of the patrol smoked, something that was not evident in the TV series, where only Troy smoked. In that this book title includes 'Affair' one might assume King and publisher did not then know that every single RAT PATROL episode would be a 'Raid'—never an 'Affair'. (Affairs were for THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.)

Small quibbles aside, this reviewer was entertained by this well-written story and enjoyed seeing the four lads (and Dietrich) again in action. A good read for a RAT PATROL fan.





LETTERS HOME by Barbo

06/12/42

Dear Mom,

I'm sorry it's been so long since I've written, but we are on a short leave and this is the first chance I've had. Our last tour was a long one - almost 6 weeks. We are all very tired but it was a successful mission.

The LRDP is working out well for me. I don't have to answer to too many people & we can run our own show most of the time. My men are great too. I've been working with Hitch & Tully for some time now and I trust them with my life! But, about 2 months ago we brought on a new sergeant to our unit. - a Brit. I was worried that he wouldn't fit, but he does. Moffitt has turned out to be quite an asset to our team. He speaks German & most of the Arab dialects. That has really helped.

Anyway, we are taking a well deserved rest. It won't be long until we are off again. We go really deep into the desert. I really like it out there. It's been a very rewarding experience so far.

Have you heard from David? I'm hoping our paths may cross, but with us out here I think it is unlikely.

That's it for now, mom. I hope everything is okay back home.

Love Sam

RAT PUZZLE PAGES

If you require a larger print version of the Anagram puzzle below, please email RPdunes@gmail.com and it will be emailed to you.

The Wildest Raid of All Anagram Puzzle

by Iris

Read the clue. Unscramble the letters in brackets. Write the answer on the dashes by the clue. Transfer the letters to bottom of the page to reveal a bonus phrase.

1. Rats are never this for long. (PARECUTD)

1 7 10 20 15 18 4 12

2. Rats are this type of artists (PEECAS)

4 17 1 7 10 4

3. Rank (TNHAMPUNA)

5 7 15 10 20 11 7 3 3

4. What Hitch was traded for (TRAWE)

6 7 20 4 18

5. Fake unit (NHRSEMAATSN)

17 5 4 18 11 7 3 20 7 3 19 17

6. A title is everything (SWLATEDRLIIDAFOLA)

6 21 2 12 4 17 20 18 7 21 12

9 16 7 2 2

7. Won (TYVIOCR) 8 21 1 20 9 18 14

8. Our Captain (ASHGSTGUDNEA) 5 7 3 17

13 15 12 4 13 7 17 20

9. This was the bomb (NTACENE) 1 7 3 20 4 4 3

10. Troy threatened to take these (LOTSNBEDABTSO) 22 4 2 20 17

7 3 12 22 9 9 20 17

Use the letters from the Anagrams above to find the answer to this bonus phrase.

6 9 2 16 13 7 3 13 10 18 4 21 17 17

7 17 13 4 3 4 18 7 2

8 9 3 5 4 2 11 18 4 21 1 5

ISSUE 2 - CROSSWORD ANSWERS

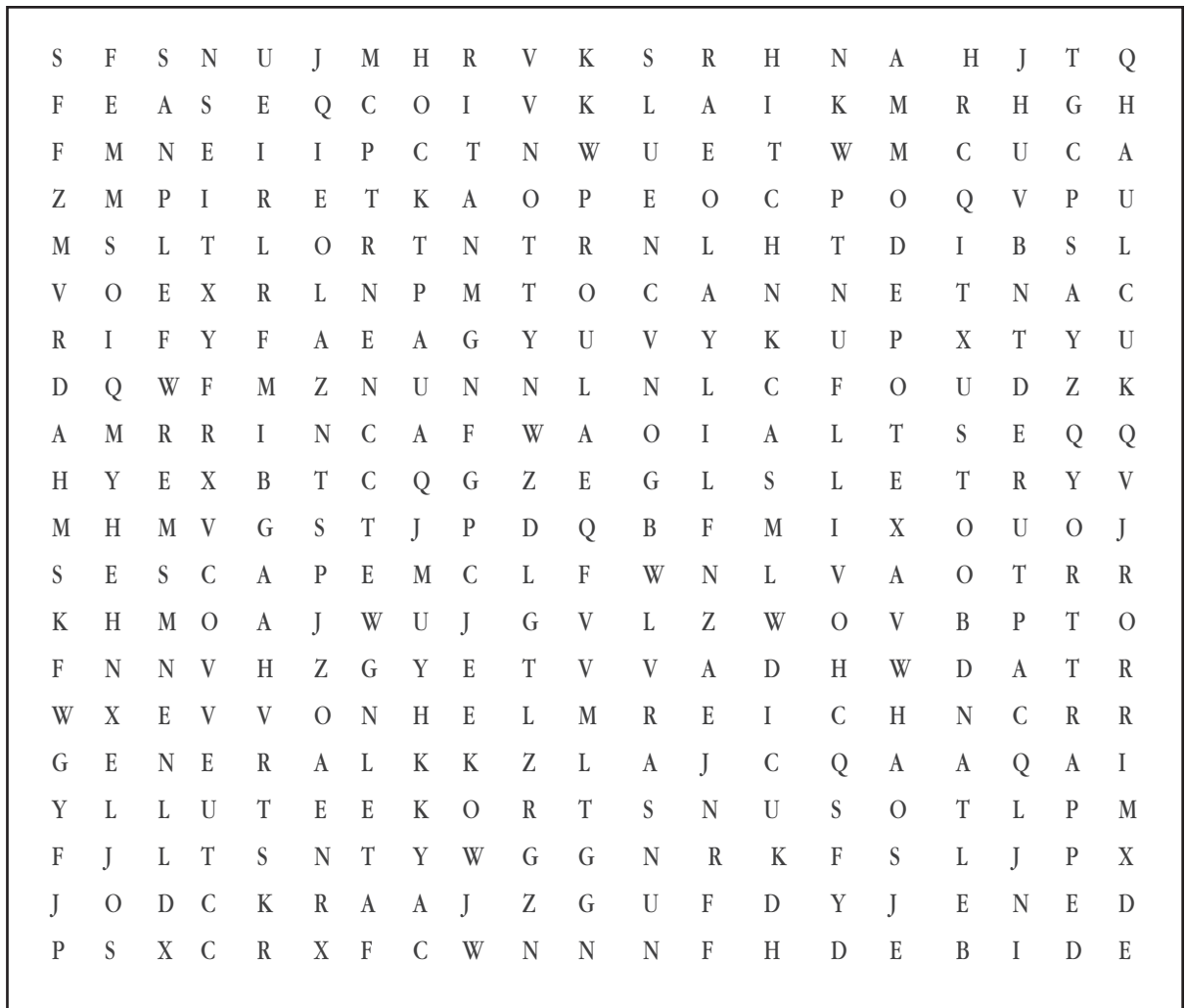
ACROSS: 2. paranoia; 3. two; 7. sick; 9. disagreeable.

DOWN: 1. hundred; 4. Asner; 5. Gestapo; 6. surgery; 8. coffin; 10. ether



WILDEST RAID OF ALL- word find

by Iris



AMMO DEPOT
ANTENNA
BELT AND BOOTS
CANTEEN
CANYON
CAPTURED
DIETRICH
ESCAPE
FUEL LINES
GENERAL
HAUPTMANN
HITCH
JEEPS

MIRROR
MOFFITT
MOTORCYCLE
SHERMAN TANKS
SUNSTROKE
TRAPPED
TROY
TULLY
TUNISIA
VICTORY
VON HELMREICH
WATER
WOLFGANG PREISS



LAP OF THE GODS

By Patricia Shaw

The desert sun was unforgiving at midday. No clouds marred the perfect azure blue of the sky. No living thing stirred on the desert floor. The heat haze shimmered, giving the impression the rolling sand hills were water, rippling waves on an ocean of sand. Sam Troy took off his army issue metal helmet and ran his fingers through his thick dark hair.

"I'd keep the helmet on if I were you, son," said the nearest Australian soldier to the young American. "Never know when the next wave of Jerries is coming."

Sam Troy slapped the helmet back on his head. "How come you wear that?" he asked, eyeing the wide brimmed felt hat of the Commonwealth forces. "It can't offer much protection against a bullet."

"Well, Sam," said a voice behind him, "Slim reckons anything that goes through that then has to go through his thick skull."

Sam Troy turned to see his friend Mike Miles grinning broadly. He tossed Sam his own hat. "Here, try this. It's much cooler."

Instantly Sam felt comfortable with the bush hat. It was much less cumbersome than the metal one his own army had issued. With the wide brim shading his eyes he raised his head to return Mike's smile, and watched in horror as the Australian grew a third eye in the middle of his forehead.

It was a brief fire fight. The small Australian road watch patrol was no match for the Afrika Korps unit and was soon rounded up by the Germans. The German commander was younger than Sam expected.

"Gentlemen you will be taken to a prisoner of war camp. For you the war is over." His English was perfect.

"What about our dead?" asked Troy, his instinct not to let the Germans see defeat strong.

The German cocked his head to one side before saying, "You may bury them, if you are quick about it."

The gruesome task done, Troy gave a last long look at the grave of his friend. Knocking sand from his pants' leg he followed the others to the truck as the young German commander approached.

"You there," he hailed Troy.

The German eyed Troy. Troy glared back, damned if he'd let the German walk all over them.

"The name's Troy, Sam Troy."

The German raised a dark eyebrow. "Private Troy, you forgot your hat." He pushed Mike's hat at Troy.

Troy looked at the hat for a long second, then glanced back at the sand mound where Mike's body lay before reaching for the hat.

"Thanks, Captain ...?"

"Dietrich," supplied the German. "Can't have you getting sunstroke, can we?"

"Sunstroke is the least of your worries, Captain Dietrich." Troy watched the German's eyes and smiled to himself. He'd unsettled the officer with his warning, and if Troy ever got another chance he'd do more than that. And he saw in the brown eyes that the German knew it.



TEA WITH TUT

by Con Featherby

Moffitt sipped his tea. Hot and wet, but not very good. Still, better than nothing on a cool desert night, and he was lucky to have it. Hitch had had to dig to the bottom of their supplies to find it. There was no more. Moffitt savoured the tartness of the liquid as it burned over his tongue. He looked up from his cup. Hitch was busy smoothing a crumpled piece of newspaper across his knee.

"Says here that there's a special King Tut exhibit in Cairo now," Hitch said. "Twenty years since his tomb was first opened." He looked at Moffitt, his glasses winking firelight. "You ever seen the Tut stuff?"

Moffitt took his left hand from his cup. A white scar zig zagged across the tanned skin of his thumb—a personal reminder of the boy king. He wrapped his hand around his cup again.

Some of it," he said. "What have you there?"

"Newspaper. Was stuffed around your tea cannister. We should go see the exhibit if we get to Cairo soon."

"May I?" asked Moffitt, leaning forward to take the paper. Two pictures, deformed with wrinkles, were printed side by side. One showed Tut's golden mask; the other, a photograph taken at the tomb opening with all the witnesses of that historic moment. He frowned at the fuzzy picture. The light was abysmal. He handed the paper back.

"I was there. At the opening."

Hitch's eyes widened. "No joking?!" He tipped the paper to the firelight, squinting at the old photograph.

Moffitt smiled. "No joking."

Hitch tapped the paper with his finger. "I don't see you."

"No," said Moffitt, "I don't expect you do. The press were to photograph the opening, not a boy bleeding on his father's white trousers." "Bleeding?"

"Lord Carnarvon, financier for the excavation, thought it apt to have the boy king's tomb broken open by a boy. As luck would have it, my father had been overseeing a dig nearby at the time, and Lord Carnarvon decided that I should be the boy. All it would take would be a few hammer strokes on a chisel. A child could do it. Such publicity. Photographers recording it for the world. Quite the accolade for a boy of ten and I was insufferably pleased." He took a sip of his tea.

"Not that I knew then what a disgraceful performance I was to give."

"Disgraceful?"

"An excited small boy swinging a large hammer is sure to spell trouble. Suffice it to say, my first blow was far from auspicious." He smiled. "Blood everywhere." He took another sip of tea. "My moment of fame was a trifle fleeting. They shuffled me to the side and someone else opened the tomb. If you look carefully at that photograph you might just glimpse my father bent over me, trying to stem the tide of blood and tears." He looked at his scar with a wistful smile. "I had my chance . . . and missed it."



THEY DON'T SHOOT HORSES, DO THEY?

by Tina Schlaile This vignette has been inspired by a pivotal scene in "The Dare Devil Rescue Raid."

Tully gazed out over the open desert. He had a fine vantage point from where he stood on the jeep leaning back against its 50 caliber gun mount. The action of the dry wind slipping across the sand like a soft massage, constantly creating a different landscape, had an intoxicating effect. Taking a deep breath, the private knew this peaceful moment wouldn't last. Soon, Sergeant Troy and Hitch would be returning from reconnaissance patrol and quickly realize Moffitt wasn't there. Tully's stomach tightened. He knew Troy would be mad, he just wasn't sure how mad.

Hearing the returning jeep's motor, Tully watched as it came into view while cresting a nearby sand dune. Hitch pulled up alongside of the parked jeep and cut the engine. Not surprisingly, Troy immediately noticed who wasn't there. Giving Tully a penetrating stare, he sharply asked, "Where's Moffitt?"

"He's gone."

"What do you mean, he's gone?"

"Just that. He's gone."

"You mean he took off to that Arab town?"

"Now that you mention it, he did say something about that."

"And why didn't you try and stop him?"

Tully knew what he wanted to say, but couldn't. For now Troy's demeanor prevented him from speaking freely. Not wanting to tempt a court marshal, he chose a response that luckily would result only in an ass chewing.

"Well, it's like this. You told me if he came close to the jeep, to shoot him. I was in this jeep all the time. He never came close to it."

Bracing for the sergeant's rebuttal, Tully thought about his last chat with Moffitt.

"Tully, I know what Troy told you, but I can't stay here. If that's called desertion, so be it. But the longer I wait, the less chance I have to find my father."

"Who's callin' you a deserter?"

"Troy. He said if I took off he'd shoot me for deserting."

Dumbfounded by Moffitt's reply, Tully quipped, "Well, suppose you went for a walk, looking for those relics you're always talkin' about. You wouldn't be deserting or gettin' close to any jeeps."

Gently smiling, Moffitt replied, "Hoped you'd might see it my way. Thanks."

continued on next page

JUST DINNER

by Stormchild03

Hitch looks like he's been run through the wringer—he's almost dead on his feet.

"Hey, you sit." I toss my helmet into the jeep and catch him by the sleeve. "I'll fix dinner."

"But it's my turn."

I take the crate out of his hands. "You cook tomorrow night."

Hitch drops to the sand beside the Jeep with a sigh. "It's been an ugly day."

"Yeah," I reply. "That grenade sure did a number on your Jeep." He's been favoring his left arm and I wonder how badly the explosion hurt him. He won't complain, but I ask anyway. "You sure you're okay?"

He looks me straight in the eyes. "I'm okay; I'm just tired."

I smile, knowing he's not lying to me. "Set up the stove?"

"Sure." He pulls himself up, wincing.

The sergeants, Moffitt and Troy, are busy arguing over some point on the map they have spread out on the hood of my Jeep. They don't even look up as Hitch retrieves the camp stove from the back.

"No D rations, okay?" Hitch jokes.

"Hey, that was going to be the main course," I protest. "Now what am I gonna fix?"

"Ham and eggs?" he says with a hopeful smile.

I shake my head. "You have a strange likin' for the one item on the menu Troy hates."

"He only hates it when I fix it. You have some kind of magic preparation secret that I am not privy to."

I laugh, knowing the only secret is in not overcooking them. I cut open the carton containing the pre-mixed meal and dump it into the pan Hitch dropped on the stove.

"Do you think we'll make it back to the line tomorrow?" Hitch asks as he pours water to boil for coffee.

"I dunno—that left rear wheel is makin' a right unpleasant noise." I toss the matchstick I've been chewing on for the last two hours, reach for a fresh one in my pocket and Hitch grins at me. I shrug and wink at him. We both have our fixations. He spits out his ever-present bubble gum and kicks some sand over it.

The sergeants have wrapped up their pow-wow and join us just as the ham and eggs are hot. Hitch passes the plates to me, and I fill them and pass them on, taking the last one for myself.

Troy looks suspiciously at his. "Hitchcock, you make this?"

"Huh uh, Sarge, it was Tully."

"Tully cooked last night," he rumbles, poking at the mounded eggs with his spoon.

"Hitch is wiped out, sir." I wink at my friend. "I took pity on him and cooked again tonight."

"All right." He digs in.

"Tea, anyone?" Moffitt offers, as he does every night.

There is the same chorus of "No." he gets each time he asks.

I pour a cup of coffee and pass it to Troy, who takes it with a nod of thanks. There's something to be said for the comfort of the routine of our evening meals.



THEY DON'T SHOOT HORSES, DO THEY?, CONT'D

"I've got you covered."

Tully felt justified. True, they were fighting a war, but even in war compassion had its place and Troy could have shown some to Moffitt. Now, as he expected Troy to grit his teeth and bark out an order, Tully was shocked when the only response was a silent but pained look that expressed hurt and sadness at his betrayal of orders. Spoken aloud, Troy's reply would have confessed he wasn't perfect, but being a ser-

geant made him ultimately responsible for everyone and their actions. Loyalty and trust was all he demanded. Compassion, a privilege by Troy's standards, existed only as a luxury - especially during a mission.

Tully scrambled for a graceful way to apologize.

"Guess I need that discipline in the ranks speech again, huh sarge?"

"Yeah Pettigrew, you and your missing partner. C'mon, let's go find him."



RAT RECIPE - *Moffitt's Scones with Dates* by Barbo

Sergeant Moffitt is rarely without his tea. And, what goes better with a cuppa than a freshly baked scone. When passing through Libyan villages, Moffitt often gathers what he needs to make a batch for himself and his "appreciative" comrades.

1 lb. camel butter	pinch of salt
1 cup flour	chopped pitted dates
1 cup water	pinch of sand (not optional)

Mix ingredients together and rollout flat. With handy utility knife, cut into 3" squares. Nicely, ask Tully for temporary use of his army helmet. Turn up-side-down and place dough squares into bottom. Cover with jacket and let sit in sun from noon until 1:00 pm. Serve warm with a strong cup of British tea. The ranks with love it! Ta ta.



THROUGH THE FIELD GLASSES



Dietrich's still into metal (even though it isn't tanks, kubelwagens or armoured vehicles).

Photo by Iris

2007 RAT CALENDAR

Just print out this page and cut out the squares. Or use all four months at once on the refrigerator, bulletin board or by your computer. Subsequent months will appear in future issues.

SEPTEMBER



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