Firing Now!: Tank, Anti-Tank and Self-Propelled Artillery Ammunicion UK USA 1939-1945 (Green Series)

Dick Taylor
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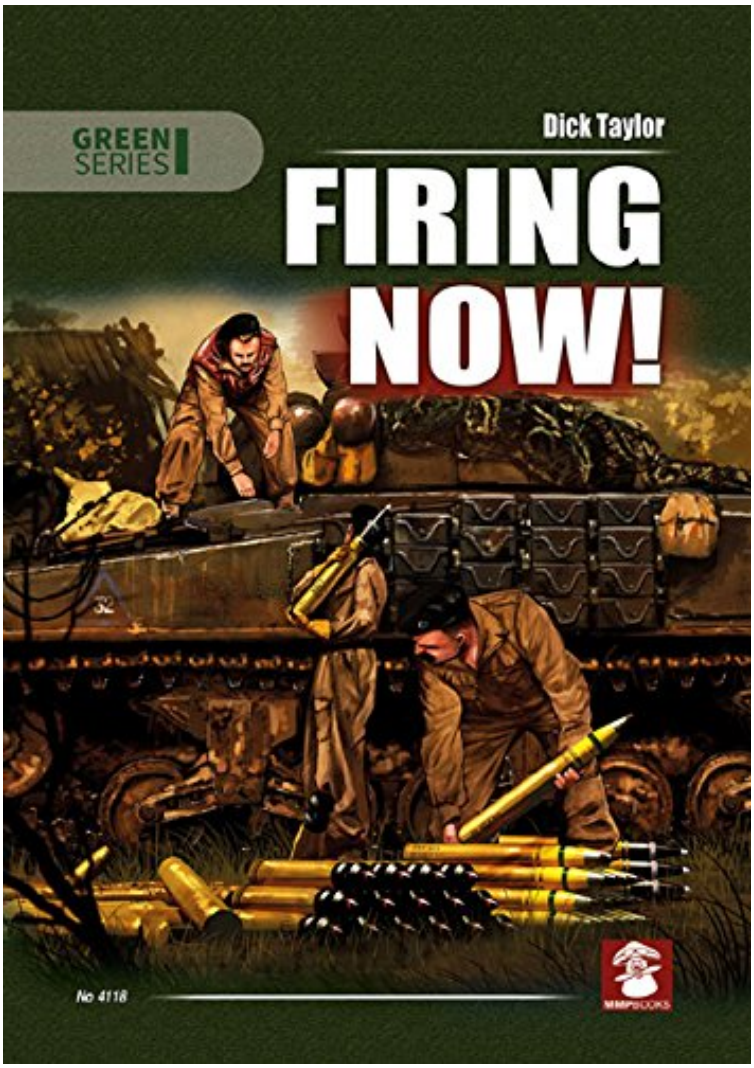

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Dick Taylor : Firing Now!: Tank, Anti-Tank and Self-Propelled Artillery Ammunicion UK USA 1939-1945 (Green Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Firing Now!: Tank, Anti-Tank and Self-Propelled Artillery Ammunicion UK USA 1939-1945 (Green Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Broad but not deep discussion and illustrations of the subject matterBy Joe Neal“Firing Now” by Dick Taylor (MMPBooks No 4120, 2016, paperback version) is a visual guide to ammunition identification for the antitank guns and rockets used by the British and United States during World War II.

There are plenty of photos and numerous color illustrations. It is not a hard core technical research resource; it is something midway between amateur and encyclopedic. The number of illustrations (and perhaps lack of resources) precludes the amount of data some people would want. Personally I have accumulated plenty of data elsewhere and needed something like this to fill in the gaps such as for the reasoning behind the British 3 inch and 3.7 close support howitzers. Let alone good illustrations of British cartridges.Pages 4 to 17 cover the bits and pieces of ammunition - fuses, cartridge cases, projectile designs, etc. Pages 18 to 24 summarizes some of the factors of antitank performance, borrowing data from John D Salt's "WWII Armor Penetration" resource (found free online as a pdf under different names) and other locations. Pages 25 to 30 discusses storage and shipping boxes and ammunition carried on major combat vehicles. All in brief.The basic development of each cannon or rocket launcher is described and then summary details are given for the ammunition it was loaded with, filling pages 31 to 135. I personally desired a succinct time line for each load, but no one has provided that yet, only brief notions. While some illustrations seem slightly off, I hope most are dimensionally scaled, which is what I need. Each weapon gets a page or so and its ammunition 3 or 4 pages depending on coverage, mostly being identifying illustrations and shipping/carrying boxes, etc. Covered are the British .55 Boys, 3 pounder and 3.7” close support howitzer (together as they were siblings), 3” close support howitzer, 2 pounder, French Hotchkiss 25mm used to supplant the shortage of 2 pdrs, 6 pounder and U.S. 57mm (also siblings), 17 pounder, 77mm, 95mm Close Support Howitzer, 25 pounder, 32 pounder, 29 mm Blacker Bombard, PIAT, and 290mm Petard. The U.S. weapons covered (pages 99 on) include the 2.36” rocket launcher “bazooka”, 37mm, 75mm (which spawned the British 75mm MV), 3inch, 76mm, 90mm, and 105mm. The 75mm howitzer used on the M8 Howitzer Motor Carriage is missing.The author of the book does not shirk the pros and cons of ammunition types, such as the reduced long range accuracy of some weapons on page 21 (although combat ranges were often close) and the fact that hot rounds like APDS were handy but not always the magic answer to the need (example page 59). Armor penetration performance data is is the bane of all scholars with quotes varying wildly and Mr. Taylor expresses that on page 22. Nor do ratings reveal actual performance against targets: Just because a projectile had a rating of xxx-mm does not mean it can be directly compared to other weapons. For example, the U.S. 90mm could penetrate the Panther's glacis at 500 yards or so (1,000 or more with improved T33 rounds which did not appear until the war's end) and the mantlet at around 1,000 yards; the 17 pounder could not penetrate the glacis with basic AP projectiles but could penetrate the mantlet at around 1,700 to 1,800 yards. HVAP and APDS rounds add in their own quirkiness. The 105mm HEAT shell with a rating of 4-inches/100-mm or so could penetrate the Panther's glacis reliably, but lacked accuracy beyond 350 to 400 yards or so.Taylor brings up the issue of the 6 pounder with better penetration with APDS rounds versus the 75mm with better HE shell. They were both obsolete cannon and needed to be replaced wholesale (for tanks) with a properly outfitted weapon in the 76mm and/or 77mm class as the basic tank gun by 1944 providing the same high explosive shell and better penetration. The U.S. M4 could easily handle anything; the British needed either the Comet or a lighter gun (similar to the 76mm) they could shoe-horn into the Cromwell and Churchill in place of the 75mm. The choice was not a poke in the eye or jab in the ribs but a better gun altogether. Backed up by the 17 pounder/90 mm.U.S. authors have this penchant for describing the 77mm as a “...shorter but fatter 17 pounder...” with just a “...little less performance...” When laid out in comparison to each other on the same scale one sees that the 77mm case is shorter and thinner than the 17 pounder. The 77mm had 11% to 12% less velocity than the 17 pounder resulting in 20 to 22% less energy and 14% or so less penetration. (Quotes vary unreliably and so would results.) The 77mm was pretty much midway between the 76mm/3inch and 17 pounder in performance. The U.S. 76mm/3inch generated maybe 800 foot tons/2,180 kilojoules of energy on firing; the 77mm 875 to 890 foot tons/2360 to 2,400 kilojoules; and the 17 pounder 1,100 to 1,150 foot tons/3,000 to 3,100 kilojoules. Vickers started the design of the gun that became the 77mm as a 75mm weapon to make use of plentiful U.S. 75mm projectiles (a symptom of the early lack of faith in English production resources it seems) but switched to the 3inch caliber to be compatible with the 17 pounder.U.S. HVAP ammo for the 76mm and 3inch gun was indeed supplied in quantity (though never enough; 26,000 rounds by the end of 1944, 77,000 by May 1945, and 95,000 by August 1945) and did indeed see service use during the war. The 76mm was not a useless cannon it was an abused cannon. The HVAP round which could tackle the Panther's mantlet at ranges of around 1,000 yards; it had even more power potential than the 77mm (940 foot tons/2530 kilojoules) but the U.S. Ordnance left that on the table for whatever reason.The overall length of U.S. cannon in calibers is used while the British caliber lengths are bore lengths. (Look at page 110 and do some math and you find a 75mm barrel 84” long is 28.5 calibers and 110.625 inches is 37.5 calibers in the bore). On page 53 the “2 pdr APCBC” photo looks like a sectioned HVAP or APDS round complete with the tungsten core.Technical historians might miss the background that placed weapons and ammunition into perspective: Discussions of cannon based on raw facts (armor penetration versus armor) and actual outcomes are two different things. By 1944 the Germans were so beat up fighting two fronts that the Soviets, U.S. and British may not have had the best tanks and cannon but what they had was good enough. The Germans did not possess the industrial might and manpower of the U.S. or Soviets let alone British. The fighting men deserved better but made out well with what they had.Stalin favored the military and tanks and hence the Soviets put a lot of money and time into tank design during the 1930s. When the Germans attacked in 1941 they encountered the most modern tanks of the era, the T34 medium and

KV1 heavy tanks. Hitler also favored the military and encouraged tank development with massive spending starting around 1935. By 1938 the German army was working on the 50mm gun and in 1940 began work on the 75mm Pak40/KwK40 intended for medium tank/antitank gun use. Those guns were in the field in 1941 and late 1942 respectively. Both nations built the foundations of a healthy tank and armored fighting vehicle design and production industry. Thus in 1942 the Germans could field the Tiger and in 1943 the Panther and the Soviets worked on various more modern designs including the Joseph Stalin series.The British and U.S. military forces were starved by penny pinching governments until just a year or two before the war. Their budgets did not blossom until the war itself. They were behind by 3 to 5 years and could neither hesitate nor waste time. But their key components were in the hands of fools. The British tank development system was a mess that failed to produce the tank the British Army wanted until the war was done and over; on the other hand, the ordnance types understood guns and thus by 1938 had started on the 6 pounder (which drug along until production conflicted with the 2 pounder in 1941) and in 1941 they decided on the 17 pounder which was knocked out rapidly and in the field by late 1942. The starvation budget had bred into their system the desire for small, compact tanks with small compact turrets that could only handle small, compact cannon, an issue that could be overcome (such as with the Comet) but was not done so in time. Hence the U.S. M4 Sherman was used to carry the 17 pounder at the end of the war. The Challenger worked but was not what they wanted and could not be provided in any numbers (production issues plagued the British at the end of the war). The Archer was a valiant attempt to make something from an obsolete design and the U.S. M10 (based on the adaptable M4) also carried the 17 pounder for the British. The British authorities threatened to end native tank development and produce U.S. designs if nothing better could be gotten than the too-small-too-late products being pumped out. They then set up their own government tank design system. Too late: the state-designed Centurion would not arrive until 1946 because it was begun too late.The U.S. did not enter the war until the end of 1941 (for all purposes, 1942) and not until then did the big budgets come rolling in. The U.S. designed the M4 Sherman via the M3 Lee/Grant in 1940-1942 but failed in guns - at the same time the Germans were working on the Tiger and Panther and the Soviets had the T34 and KV1 in the field. In the U.S., tanks were in the hands of the Infantry until 1940 and they did not want any gun but the 37mm on tanks until then. The Chief of Ordnance from 1938 to 1942 refused two requests to design a better lightweight cannon than the 37mm despite the need for one being all too apparent. The only tank/antitank guns developed during his reign were the old 75mm and 3inch designs adapted almost without change except for modern production. Both were obsolete by then. The Ordnance Department had lost 4 vital years of research time and played catch-up to get the 76mm into use as a better weapon than the 75mm. It was not designed to be a 17 pounder nor a long 75mm; it was designed to be light weapon directly mounted in the M4 tank in place of the 75mm. While that worked with tweaks, the Armored Forces in charge of tanks did not accept it as-is, and so the tragedy drug out until 1944 when it was the best cannon mounted on the M4 for U.S. forces. The British would have had to cut a deal with the U.S. to produce 17 pounders (like they did the 6 pounder) to get the 17 pounder in U.S. tanker's hands. U.S. Ordnance struggled to get the 90mm available for vehicle use as something better than the 75mm and 76mm even though it was not an optimized antitank weapon like the 17 pounder. The man in charge of the Army Ground Forces - General Lesley McNair - favored artillery and antitank guns and slighted tank gun development in favor of his own pet philosophy rather than encourage and press for a better equipped ground force.Neither the British nor the U.S. had the firm footing needed for developing major tanks, thanks to the years of budgetary starvation leading up to the war. The Soviets had the T34 and KV1 in 1941; the Germans could field the 88mm armed Tiger in 1942 and long 75mm equipped Panther in 1943 while the U.S. was switching from the M3 Lee/Grant to the 75mm armed M4 Sherman and the British were struggling to get anything better than the little 2 pounder and 6 pounder armed cruiser tanks into production. Reliability, numbers and useful (but not the best) cannon served the Allies well against the German military industry which had no chance under the best conditions.Designing and producing ammunition takes time - months. It has to be designed, approved, production planned, and production worked up - all time consuming. The British had issues getting simple 75mm ammunition early on, let alone proper 6 pounder ammunition because the projectiles needed had to be designed during the war. There were no modern projectiles on hand. The U.S. may have produced 6 pounders as 57 mm cannon for the British but not the HE rounds or other ammo types. When the U.S. adopted the 57 mm in mid-1943 its Infantry had to scavenge high explosive and APDS ammo from the British because the massive industrial capacity of the U.S. was simply not set up to supply them. The queer thing with high explosive rounds (let alone white phosphorous, etc.) for the 3inch guns/17 pounder was a direct result of failure to spend the time needed early enough to get a useful projectiles into production. The “high velocity” cannon were perfectly capable of being just as good as the 75mm for general ground fire but the time and effort needed to get there was not expended as needed.There was simply not enough time to get everything pretty, which explains the sort of ad hoc seat-of-the-pants developments the British and U.S. experienced in its World War II cannon and ammunition. But as mentioned: the cannon and tanks were not the best, but they worked well enough for the job they had to do in the hands of the men who used them against the enemies they went up against.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. and in great condition. This volume is chock full of photographs ...By Larry S. MorkThe merchandise arrived a little earlier than predicted, and in great condition. This volume is chock full of photographs and illustrations showing the appearances of various rounds of

tank and anti tank ammunition, with much history. The only thing lacking in my opinion, is ballistic data. I would have been happy to trade much of the info on shipping containers for more technical data.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Michael BristolA must have for any ordnance collector. Nothing else comes close.

This book explores the fascinating history of tank, anti-tank and self-propelled artillery ammunition used by the British and Americans in World War 2. As well as examining the major ammunition types in detail, the work also explains, for the first time in a book of this type, how ammunition functions and is made to be accurate. The guns and weapons used to fire the ammunition are also covered, as is a comprehensive lexicon of terminology and an extensive list of references. The whole is complemented by stunning artwork showing the ammunition and its associated packaging, with many period photographs of the ammunition in use.

About the AuthorDick Taylor is a serving British Army officer who has been deployed in many areas of the world. Since being commissioned in 2000, he has specialised in tank gunnery instruction. He has a First Class degree in History, and is currently reading for a Master's degree at Dundee University. He is married with two sons and lives in Blandford Forum, Dorset.