



In the late 1950s the Stridsvagn m/41 light tank were converted to APCs designated Pansarbandvagn 301. The vehicle is armed with a 20mm automatic gun. 220 vehicles were used by the Swedish Army between 1962 and 1970.

Swedish Armour

Svein Olsen visited the Pansarmuseet, the Swedish Armour Museum in Axvall

MUSEUM VISIT

Below: *Udes XX-20 was a 20-ton test vehicle of which only this prototype was built.*



Sweden was one of the first European countries to undertake domestic development and manufacture of AFVs. The history of AFVs in Sweden starts in 1921 when ten tanks were purchased from Germany. Gradually Swedish engineers acquired the skill and knowledge to design and manufacture their own AFVs. The turretless Stridsvagn 103 (S-Tank) of the 1960s is probably the best known, but the list of Swedish designs is long and interesting. Being the largest collection of AFVs in Scandinavia, a visit to the Pansarmuseet offers a unique opportunity to the AFV enthusiasts.

Most of the AFVs in the collection are Swedish designs and only used by the Swedish Army. Fortunately, as early as 1948 a decision was made to hand over one specimen of every AFV that had been

used by the Swedish Army to the Army Museum and by 1968 thirteen vehicles had been stored at Axvall. When the museum was inaugurated on the 25th August 1969 a total of twenty-seven vehicles were displayed. Gradually, the collection has grown to some ninety vehicles, mostly vehicles rarely seen in any other museums around the World. By 2004 a total of 400.000 visitors had visited the museum.

RARE VEHICLES

The oldest AFVs in the collection are the two German First World War designed tanks. In 1921 Sweden bought ten LK II tanks from Germany, two of which are displayed. A third tank of this type has been donated to Panzermuseum in Munster, Germany. In Sweden the LK II tanks were designated Stridsvagn m/21, and when modernised, designated Stridsvagn m/21-29.

The Swedish part of the collection contains several Landsverk designs and

Five Stridsvagn m/21s were modernised in the early 1930s and redesignated Stridsvagn m/21-29. In 1992 vehicle No.3 was donated to the Panzermuseum in Munster.



The Pansarbil fm/29 is a prototype armoured car that came to nothing.



Top right; in the 1930s Sweden bought a single Carden-Loyd Mk. V* tankette to test it pulling a 37mm anti-tank gun. It was used until 1939.

Above right; this Carden-Loyd Mk. VI was also evaluated as a tractor for pulling the 37mm anti-tank gun. It was used by the Swedish Army until 1939 when it was handed over to the Swedish Army Museum.

Above left; between 1967 and 1971 a total of 293 turretless Stridsvagn 103 were manufactured for the Swedish Army.

Far left top; designed during World War 2 the Luftvärms-kanonvagn fm/43 was as a self-propelled anti-aircraft vehicle armed with two 40mm Bofors L/60 guns.

Far left centre; twenty 8.7-ton Landsverk designed tank Stridsvagn m/39s were built for the Swedish Army. The tank is armed with a 37mm Bofors gun.

Far left bottom; a rare example of a West German Leopard 1 prototype.

Right, in the latter half of the 1930s Landsverk manufactured three L-10 light tanks for the Swedish Army and gave them the designation Stridsvagn m/31.

Below left, Stridsvagn m/28 is a Renault NC27 acquired for test and evaluation. It is thought to be the only vehicle of this type to have been preserved.

Bottom left, Sweden acquired several Shermans after 1945 for test and evaluation. This is a M4A2 Sherman III.

Below right, the Swedish Stridsvagn fm/31 is the prototype of a 11.5-ton wheel-cum-track tank designed by Landsverk in the early 30s.

Bottom right: Stridsvagn m/40 is a 10.9-ton Landsverk design. The tanks were manufactured in two batches, the L batch manufactured by Landsverk and the K batch manufactured by Karlstad mechanical industry.





Left; Panzerbil m/40 with Panzerbil m/31 parked behind it. 30 vehicles of each type were manufactured.

Below; this StuG IID was acquired by Sweden in 1947 from Norway and used for driving tests and to test anti-tank mines. It is probably the only StuG IID preserved in a museum. In the foreground is Golith demolition vehicle.

Left; like several of the other German AFVs in the collection this PzKpfw IA was used by the German occupation forces in Norway at the end of the Second World War. It arrived in Sweden in 1947.

Above far left; after the Second World War Sweden probably acquired two Churchill tanks, one of which is this Mk. III* preserved at the museum.



licence manufactured AFVs such as Stridsvagn m/37 (Czech AH-IV), Stridsvagn m/41 (Czech TNHP/German Panzer 38 (t)) and an assault gun based on the chassis of the latter. One of the first vehicles visitors see is a Stridsvagn 103C displayed outside the entrance. On the picnic area between the display halls and the storage halls is a Pansarbandvagn 301 tracked APC for the younger visitors to explore. The largest vehicle is the 155mm Bandkanon 1,



Left; this Panzerjäger II Ausf. C Marder II was acquired in 1947 from Norway where it had been deployed by German occupation forces during the Second World War.

Bottom left; the Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer on display is a genuine German vehicle manufactured during WW2 and acquired from Norway in 1947 for test purposes.



Top left: the Luftvärns-robotbandvagn 701 is an Infanteri-kanonvagn 102 or 103 converted to a self-propelled anti-aircraft vehicle armed with Robot 70 missiles. 48 such conversions were made.

Top right: the Landsverk L180 armoured car was manufactured mainly for export, five of which were bought by Ireland. The vehicle on display is an Irish vehicle acquired by the museum in an exchange of vehicles.

Above: the Luftvärns-kanonvagn 42 was joint Landsverk/Bofors proposal for a self-propelled anti-aircraft gun. The vehicle is armed with a Bofors 40mm L/70 gun. The project came to nothing and only two vehicles were ever constructed.

Right: the Stormartillerivagn m/43 is an assault gun constructed on the chassis of the Stridsvagn m/41 (Czech TNH/P/German PzKpfw 38(t)). The vehicle is armed with a 10.5 cm Bofors gun. 36 vehicles were manufactured.

a self-propelled gun of 53-tons; this self-propelled gun has been rated as one of the largest self-propelled guns in the world.

Both prior to and after the Second World War Sweden acquired foreign AFVs for test and evaluation. A surprising number of these have survived to be displayed in the museum. Among the rare foreign AFVs are a Renault NC27 tank, two



Carden-Lloyd tankettes, a Soviet T-37A amphibious tank captured during the Russo-Finnish Winter War 1939/40, a short barrelled StuG III D, an Israeli RBY Ramata and a Leopard 2 prototype armed with a smooth bored 105mm gun. More widespread AFVs such as T-72, Chieftain, BMP-1, and MTLB are also displayed. Some of these have been donated by foreign countries or museums or have been exchanged for Swedish AFVs.

RUNNING VEHICLES

In Addition to the Stridsvagn 103s the British Centurion tanks, of which 350 were acquired, was the most important MBT in the Swedish inventory during the Cold War years. In the storage halls several variants of Centurions with Swedish designation Stridsvagn 101, 102 and 104 can be seen. Among the exhibits is also a Centurion ARV, Swedish designation Bärningsbandvagn 81.

A large number of the vehicles are theoretically in running condition. At the 10-year anniversary of the inauguration of the museum in 1979 the Stridsvagn m/21, which is a German First World War design, was running. However, the lack of spare parts makes running difficult nowadays for the elder vehicles.

In addition the AFVs items such as engines, gearboxes, tracks, guns, ammunition, optics, and anti-tank weapons are displayed. Among the motors displayed is the Maybach engine of the sole King Tiger tested in Sweden after the Second World War. Unfortunately, the King Tiger itself was scrapped!



Above: this Chieftain Mk. 10 arrived in Sweden in 1993 in exchange for a Stridsvagn 103. The British registration number was 03 EB 67. Originally, the tank was a Mk. 2, upgraded to Mk. 6/2 and then later to a Mk. 10 with Stillbrew armour.

Top: one RBY Ramata was acquired from Israel for test and evaluation by the Swedish.



Since the inauguration the museum has been located in old military buildings in the village of Axvall. Originally, three display halls were open to the public, but now three additional storage halls are open as well. There is no restriction on photographing and several vehicles have hatches left open in order to let the visitor see the interior of the vehicles. The staff have made great efforts to let the visitor see as much as possible and have in-depth knowledge of Swedish armour.

The only problem a visitor will experience is due to the fact that the space available for the collection is too small for a collection of this size. As a result the vehicles are parked very densely and it can be a problem to get good side views, as you will see from some of my photos. There is a proposal to move the collection to Strängnäs near the Swedish capital Stockholm, but it is not certain that all vehicles now accessible to the visitors will be displayed at a new location. It will be sad if the unique prototypes and foreign AFVs are put into storage, however, the decision has yet to be made and in the meantime the collection is still accessible.

Finally, I would like to thank the director and the staff of the museum for their assistance in providing information for this article and during several visits over the last 30 years.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The museum is situated about 125 kilometres from Gothenburg in the direction of Stockholm, taking the E20. In Skara take the National road 49 towards Skövde for about 7km. From Skövde take the National road 49 for about 20km, then turn left. Look for traffic sign Pansarmuseet. In the village of Axvall you will find another traffic sign for Pansarmuseet. About 1km from Axvall centre in the direction of Varnhem on the "old road" you will find another sign, look for the red barracks from a former regiment location and you are there.

If you are going to visit the Swedish Armour Museum, please call any of these telephone numbers for further information about the museum: +46(0)511-62138 or +46(0)709-786969.

It is possible to get an answer only during opening hours, by the mobile telephone during working days between 0800-1600, not in June-August.

E-Mail: info@pansarmuseet.se

Internet site: www.pansarmuseet.se

Entrance fee: Adults 20 SEK, children up to 15 years 10 SEK.

Guided tour, 10 - 25 persons 100 SEK, weekends 100 SEK extra + entrance fee, duration 2 to 2.5 hours. Order at least two weeks in advance.

OPEN DAYS ARE:

January - April
Tuesday-Wednesday 0900-1500

May - August
Wednesday - Sunday 1000-1600

July - All days 1000-1600

September - December
Tuesday-Wednesday 0900-1500

(Information taken from the internet site)

by Svein Olsen

Above; the Pansarvärnskanonvagn m/43 is a self-propelled anti-tank gun on the same chassis as the Stridsvagn m/42. A total of 87 vehicles were manufactured in 1947.

Top left; in the 1950s Landsverk manufactured three batches, totally 117 vehicles, of fire support vehicles for the Swedish Army. These vehicles were given the designation Infanterikanonvagn 102 and Infanterikanonvagn 103 and were armed with a 10.5 cm howitzer. Later they were converted to carry either anti-tank or anti-aircraft missiles.



Left; the Bandkanon 1 is a 155mm self-propelled gun of 53-ton. 26 vehicles were used by the Swedish Army between 1967 and 2003. The vehicle shown is a prototype.