



NEW ZEALAND DIVISIONAL CAVALRY IN ITALY



Arriving in Italy in late 1943, the New Zealand Divisional Cavalry replaced their Stuart light tanks and carriers with Staghound armoured cars. The Staghound T19E1 was an American design sold to the British after it lost the competition to equip American armoured car units to the M8 Greyhound. The Staghound I mounted an M6 37mm main gun with a coaxial .30 cal machine-gun and a hull mounted .30 cal which was often removed and relocated in an AA mount on the turret. The troop commander's Staghound replaced the 37mm gun with a 3" howitzer and was designated the Staghound Mk II CS. This had been a New Zealand idea to provide more immediate HE and smoke support to the recce troops. Lieutenants Mack and Little on their own initiative fitted a 3" howitzer to the cradle and demonstrated it to NZ Divisional Commander General Freyberg. As a result additional conversions were approved.

The Staghound was well armoured and had great cross country movement in firm going, perfect for use in North Africa. However in Italy, with its prevalence of narrow winding roads surrounded by rocky terrain or boggy going, the Staghound proved to be subpar.

The Divisional Cavalry's first Italian operation, which commenced on 28 November 1943 was to scout ahead and map any fordable crossings across the Sangro River. C Squadron was tasked to escort 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment but was unable to cross due to rising river levels. The Divisional Cavalry would then spend the next day seeking more ways across the river. B Squadron finally getting themselves across when a Bailey bridge was constructed.

Following the fall of Castelverntano in early December, C Squadron explored down the old Roman road to find a way across the Moro River and on to Orsogna. It was during this

exercise that the rural New Zealanders became curious about some oddly made hay stacks that seemed unusually located, strangely small and poorly constructed to keep out heavy rain. Reconnaissance by incendiary .30 calibre machine gun rounds set the stacks on fire and disclosed the anti-tank gun each had hidden. Unfortunately no crossing of the Moro was found.

The Divisional Cavalry continued to probe the line trying to find weak spots but were repeatedly hampered by the terrain - the few possible gaps they located were well covered by German defensive positions.

Without a suitable breach, the Divisional Cavalry were put in reserve to wait for a breach in the German positions around Orsogna. However, as Orsogna turned into a stalemate the entire 2nd New Zealand Division was sent away to exploit a breakthrough around Cassino. With no breakthrough possible there, the Divisional Cavalry were dismounted and fought as 'Infantcavalry'.

After the battle the Divisional Cavalry were back in their cars racing down the Italian roads where mines took a huge toll. Several cars were knocked out, but crews managed to survive due to the thickness of the Staghound's armour - something which the crews were grateful for as a hit from a mine in a carrier would have guaranteed casualties.

B Squadron was to support the attack on Sora by the Maori Battalion but they were bogged down by the irrigation ditches surrounding the vineyards. Sora was taken, but the terrain and narrow roads leading to the next target, Avezzano, made it clear that the Staghounds were not an ideal fit. With the next attack on the Paula Line on 11 July 1944 the Divisional Cavalry were relegated to supporting the flank of the Maori Battalion.



NEW ZEALAND DIVISIONAL CAVALRY IN ITALY

It was not all gloom for the Divisional Cavalry. On 25 July C Squadron became part of an ad-hoc formation called 'Armcar' where they were joined by tanks from 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment, infantry from 22nd Motor Battalion and the 31st Anti-Tank Battery equipped with the M10 Wolverine self-propelled guns. They were tasked with capturing San Casciano but were unable to do so. Afterwards the Divisional Cavalry probed forwards along the Pesa River engaging forward mortar and machine-gun positions and forcing the bigger guns to retreat before the Staghounds could reach them.

When the attack on Florence came, the Divisional Cavalry were held in reserve. C Squadron was the only squadron being used in an active role removing over 100 mines under the nose of the Tiger tank that was covering the mine laying operation.

The Divisional Cavalry were next used to attack Ravenna, fighting small pockets of German defenders. The autumn rain turned the ground into mud and several impassable rivers saw the Divisional Cavalry being forced to dismount and fight as infantry. They only got back in their cars to assist the attack on the town of Pisignano.

With the poor terrain for armoured cars and a shortage of infantry. The Divisional Cavalry were finally permanently converted into infantry, becoming part of 9th New Zealand Brigade with 22nd Motor Battalion and 27th (Machine-gun) Battalion. As a tribute to their proud war time record they retained their name and were thereafter referred to as 2nd New Zealand Divisional Cavalry Battalion, and its companies retained their squadron titles.



2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION DIVISIONAL CAVALRY SQUADRON

The New Zealand Divisional Cavalry used the Staghound armoured car as well, but made modifications replacing the 37mm guns in some with 3-inch howitzers.

Your Force includes one Divisional Cavalry Squadron, which is a Formation containing:

- 1 Divisional Cavalry Squadron HQ with 3x Staghound (37mm) (LB308) & 1x Dingo scout car (LB119) for 5 points with 3x Staghound (37mm) for 4 points with 2x Staghound (37mm) for 3 points
The HQ does not have Spearhead.
- 2-5 Staghound Armoured Car Troop (LB308)
- 0-1 Divisional Cavalry Scout Troop

See Divisional Cavalry Scout Troop command cards.

**British, Build, Formation,
Limited, Title**

**0
POINTS**

TM & © 2026 Battlefront Miniatures Ltd.

2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION DIVISIONAL CAVALRY SCOUT TROOP

The New Zealanders used a Canadian Ford version of the Daimler Dingo, called the Lynx, as a scout.

This Unit has:

3x Dingo (LB119) for 2 points

**British, Build, Unit
(Daimler Armoured
Car Troop), Title**

**0
POINTS**

TM & © 2026 Battlefront Miniatures Ltd.