

Morris during World War Two

From 1942 tanks were produced at Cowley in the buildings of Morris Industries Exports (later Nuffield Exports). The Crusader tanks weighed 24 tons and carried six-pounder guns. Almost 650 tanks had been assembled by the end of hostilities. The Crusaders were assembled from 10,000 components and took a week to produce. Later MIE also produced the large amphibious craft called the 'Neptune'.

More than three-quarters of the regular Cowley workforce was called away for active service. Nevertheless, the workforce at Cowley during the war years swelled to over 10,000, more than double the peacetime number. A great proportion of that number was women, one of the more notable being Winston Churchill's daughter, Sarah, who was engaged in the production of brass shell casings.

Complete Tiger Moth aeroplanes were manufactured, one of the first examples of aeroplanes being produced using mass production techniques. Before the war, traditional methods of construction yielded no more than 200 aeroplanes per year. By applying Morris production methods, Cowley was able to turn out 40 Tiger Moths each week. As well as being (for a short time), responsible for the entire Civilian Repair Organisation, Cowley was no. 1 Civilian Repair Unit. Aeroplanes were salvaged and brought to Cowley where they were stripped and repaired, any components past repair being melted down and used in the production of new parts.

By the end of 1945 it had handled over 75,000 aircraft repairs. Cowley made, assembled, and repaired a vast array of wartime materiel, from torpedoes to Horsa gliders, jerry cans to aircraft radiators.

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