

ARMY SHOWS NEW WEAPONS

It's nearly half a century since this bus, known as "Old Bill", carried troops to the front in France. Perhaps it was War Minister John Profumo who had the idea of using "Old Bill" as a curtain raiser to an exhibition of modern and future weapons at which he is the official host; or perhaps the ingenious soldiery thought it up for themselves. Anyway, the show's not all like that. Here's a scout car with two guided missiles, for instance - a Stalwart 5-ton load carrier - and the Chieftian, a new 47-ton tank with a secret gun which the War Office say can sink a battleship.

Yes, that is a stretcher, and if you don't believe it, we'll have a closer look at it in a moment. Meanwhile, don't shoot at the comedy department - it's doing its best.

This is a 12-millimetre Wombat anti-tank gun - an improved infantry battalion weapon.

A 105-millimetre self-propelled gun.

What's tough going on foot may be easy for a tank; but what happens in places even a tank can't cross. The Centurion Ark is one answer. A modified tank with trackways fitted to its top, it can be driven into a shallow ditch, canal or similar obstacle to provide an assault crossing for other vehicles.

The Centurion Ark is operated by the Royal Engineers; for if the Sappers can't get you across one way, they'll manage it another.

And here's one of the stretchers we wanted to have a closer look at. It works on the Hovercraft principle - never actually touching the ground, but gliding along on a cushion of compressed air. It can be pushed or pulled over any kind of rough ground - or come to that, over water - without jolting the casualty. Here's the double version. It can be moved around by hand or towed behind a vehicle; and before we know where we are, the vehicle will be hovering, too.