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# Thanks for the Tanks! says: "Tommy Atkins"

## TANKS AND THEIR USES

In October 1915 picked men from the Derby recruits were constituted the Heavy Armoured Section of the Motor Machine Gun Service. At this time the Tank was a myth and the formation of this section further mystified the public.—There were no signs of cars, armoured or unarmoured, and the only training given the men was foot drill and machine gun practice.

However after some time spent in this training the Officer Commanding, after commending his troops for the excellent spirit they had shown, bade them be of good heart, as a wonderful new car, which would astonish them all, was shortly to be issued for service.

A camp was selected, fully screened from onlookers and guarded by sentries posted at intervals of 100 yards. Here the tanks were stationed and the men introduced to them fulfilling all expectations as to surprise.

### To Destroy Machine Guns.

At the close of 1914, when the contending armies had settled down to trench warfare, it became necessary to provide some means of defeating the machine gun of the enemy if our infantry were to carry out assaults with success. The idea of a self-propelled armoured car was given birth to and such an engine, recalling the turreted mobilis of Livy was created. The caterpillar tractor was the basis of the new weapon.

The War Office, urged by the Commander in Chief, in France, ordered investigation into the prospects of such a car and laid down certain conditions that had to be fulfilled. It should be able to climb a five feet parapet and cross a ten feet ditch. In weight and width it had to conform to the War Office standards also to railway transportation requirements. It must not be too high for reasons of visibility to the enemy. It must be protected against close range rifle fire and must be able to destroy machine gun emplacements.

### Admiralty Experiments.

A year was spent in experiments before a satisfactory machine was produced, the result of which we are most

of us familiar with. Well do we remember the first photographs published of the "tank"—how we questioned whether the whole thing was a hoax.

It was not until July 1916 that the first consignment of "tanks" arrived at the camp. There were machines of two different designs. One called the male, was armed with two Hotchkiss quick firing guns with machine guns for dealing, at close quarters with emplacements for machine guns. The other type, called the female, was armed with machine guns only for dealing with machine gun crews and riflemen.

### Crews Had Lots To Learn.

The members of the Heavy Section had, after arriving at the camp, a good deal of work in front of them before they could take their tanks on active service. They had to learn how to steer them, to repair them and to fire from them and even how to live at all inside them.

The cabin some nine or ten feet wide, thirteen feet long and four feet high, with a 100 horse power engine, two guns, three or four machine guns, provisions for three days, ammunition and equipment inside, provided but little accommodation for the crew. The noise of the engine made it impossible to hear an order so that signs had to be learnt and used. The rolling motion together with the heat and smell brought on symptoms not unlike those experienced by those not accustomed to sea voyages.

### Fifty Sent To France.

Training however proceeded and by the end of July 1916 a trial combat was staged on ground prepared to represent conditions at the front. This and later trials proved that the tanks answered the purposes for which they were designed. At the end of August fifty tanks were sent off to France in perfect secrecy.

They were painted on a basis of

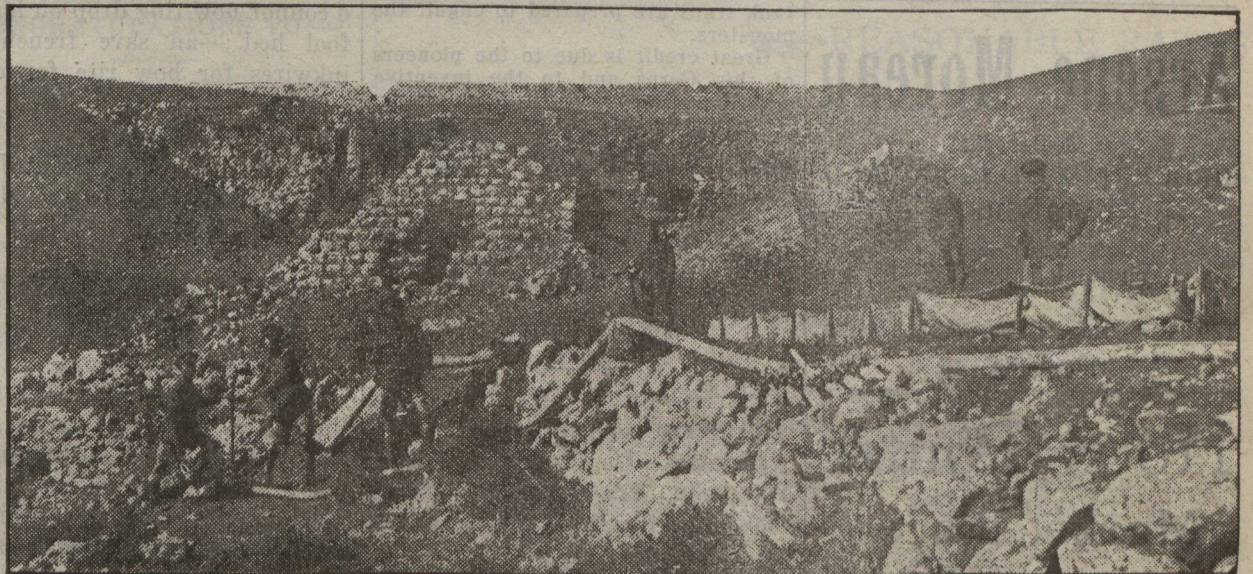
camouflage and were given fancy names by the men, amongst which may be mentioned:—His Majesty's Landships Cyclops, Chaos, Café au Lait, Creme de Menthe, Daredevil and Deadwood Dick.

### First Tanks in Battle.

On September 15 an offensive was started (a continuation of the Battle of the Somme) to drive the Hun out of high ground near Thiepval. The Germans were strongly entrenched and were well supported by machine guns in concrete emplacements, and it was the task of the tanks to put these out of action.

The mist of early morning covered the movements of these monsters and when the mist cleared the British soldier was no more surprised than the Germans were dumfounded. The Hun, in desperation directed all available rifle and machine gun fire against the tanks but the bullets fell from their sides harmlessly. We re-

## THE BRITISH IN JERUSALEM



The Spring at Solomon's Pool.

—Photo by courtesy of O. F. R.