

**Volume 1**

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## **Devil on Tracks**

**Lead: Trapped behind a trench line hundreds of miles long, the British turned to technology to break the impass.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: By the middle of 1915, hostile forces facing each other across No Man's Land on the western front had settled in to round after round of bloody, but indecisive battle to break the trench barrier. Faced with the awesome power of new artillery pieces and the machine gun, the armies of**

**Germany, France, England, Russia, Austria and Italy, did what armies had done for centuries. When faced with a new weapon, they dug a hole and jumped in it. Mile after mile of elaborate trenches, ripped up the beautiful French countryside.**

**Desperate to break this impasse, the British began looking for a technological breakthrough. First Lord of Admiralty Winston Churchill, became intrigued with the possibility of an armored mobile vehicle and formed the Admiralty Land Ships Committee, to explore various possibilities. The first idea was to stick a gun behind some armored plates on a farm tractor, but by September 1915, most of these wild ideas had been thrown out. The chosen design looked**

**a water container, and for the purpose of secrecy they chose the name "tank." Tank it was to remain.**

**After a year of preparation, in the late summer of 1916, fifty tanks began their journey to the French village of Fleurs. Only nine actually fought in the first battle but they worked. Faced with something that appeared invulnerable the Germans panicked and Tank number D-16 rumbled through the village and helped eliminate three battalions of German troops. One of the Germans shouted, "the devil is coming," and they were off.**

**By the end of October, most of the tanks had broken down, but at the**

**Battle of Fleurs they had proven themselves. The tank restored mobility to the battlefield. No Longer could armies hunker down in trenches and remain safe. The tank's contribution to the German defeat was a lesson they learned well and proved it over the same ground in the Blitzkrieg of 1940.**

**"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.**

### Resources

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