

THE MARK I TANK

The Mark I tank was the first British tank that was used during WWI. It is considered as the first operational assault tank in the world.

This tank was born in London amidst the Royal Navy under the control of the terrestrial vessels. After many unsuccessful trials, the main idea of the heavy tank on wraparound tracks was born into the mind of a war correspondent, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest D. Swinton. A wooden model was presented to the Committee on September, 15th, 1915 and the first prototype called « Mother » was tested on February 2nd, 1916 before the King and the high Government Authorities. There were 100 units of the tank ordered under the « Mark I » denomination and its building starts at the Elveden camp near Thetford. The British, concerned about keeping the secret, they were first called *Water Carrier*.

Several other names were envisaged before E.D. Swinton, on Xmas eve of 1915, used the « Tank » name. The first hundred units were planned to be equipped with the navy's six pound swift shot gun. On April, 1916 it was decided to build units that were uniquely equipped with machine guns (deemed *Female* as opposed to the *Male* tanks with guns), and they were destined to defend the *Male* tanks against enemy infantrymen.

The Mark I tanks were designed to pass a 4 m trench, but their top speed was hardly superior to the one of a marching man and every 80 kms the tracks had to be replaced. The Mark I entered into action during the battle of the Somme, on September 15th, 1916.

Specifications :

Dimensions : Length 9.75 m, Width 4.12 m, Height 2.41 m

Weight : 28 Ton.

Speed : 5.95 km/h

Range : 38 km

Armament : 2 off 6 pound guns and 4 machine guns or solely 6 machine guns.

Plaing : 6 to 12 mm

Crew : 8 men

