

Death at Licourt

An Historical and Visual Record of Five Fatalities in the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, 25 March 1918

Cameron Pulsifer

Major William Battersby, commander of "A" Battery of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, waited anxiously at Cizancourt on the west bank of the Somme Canal in France as the sky cleared in the early morning of 25 March 1918. The great "Kaiser's Offensive," by which the German high command hoped it would smash the Allies and win the war, had been battering away at the British Third and Fifth Armies in this region for six days. Battersby had come forward with "A" Battery's four armoured Autocars from the British 24th Brigade Headquarters around at 0400 hours to be in position to support a British counterattack scheduled for 0815 hours. Instead, masses of German attackers were now pouring across the canal.

German artillery bombardment had increased in intensity and as the dawn broke and the early morning mists dissipated, Battersby saw clearly that enemy infantry were already well established on his side of the canal and were pressing forward all around him. Meanwhile, parties of nearly panicking British infantry stumbled rearwards towards their lines, making it clear that a British retreat was in process, not an offensive. Battersby had no choice but to order his cars to get out of the area, along the road they had come that morning. One car, which had remained farther back, succeeded in getting away with relatively few difficulties. But the three others, which had



advanced closest to the canal, had no time even to turn around and were forced to back down the road in column. Battersby's car was the last to leave and hence the closest to the enemy assault. Inside were Battersby, 36 years old, from Tavistock, Ontario, sitting in the cab beside his driver, Private Robert Connell 24 years old, from Toronto.

Behind them, in the rear of the vehicle, were Sergeant Cyrill Vidal, 26 years old, from Jamaica and two machine gunners, Private John Begin, 26 years old, from Hamilton, Ontario and Private Donald Brooks, 20 years old, of Weymouth, Nova Scotia. They would not make it, their names being added to the seemingly endless list of First World War fatalities.

Battlefield death lies at the heart of war. Yet one would not necessarily know it from the visual record. Scenes of actual battlefield death are quite rare, perhaps especially so in the case of Canadian soldiers. To be sure, no nation has been especially zealous about publishing visual depictions of its battlefield casualties while the war was in progress, doubtless for reasons of national morale and the sensibilities of surviving family. Why more have not appeared since, however, when morale is no longer an issue and immediate family members have died, is an interesting question. One might well argue that the relative absence of dead and wounded from the visual record of our wars is a serious omission, which seriously distorts the depiction of our military experience. Historian Victor Davis



NAC PA 3015

A armoured car of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.

unfailing cheerfulness of the British Tommy, the minimilization of Allied losses, the belief in the inevitability of an Allied victory.³

Even the much-vaunted war art collection at the Canadian War Museum, also begun by Lord Beaverbrook, tends to eschew images of death and destruction, concentrating instead on scenes such as battlefield landscapes, troops preparing for battle, and daily routine. The major exception to this rule was future Group of Seven painter, Fred Varley, who, for his own reasons, in his painting *For What?*, actually did paint Canadian war dead.⁴

In the Winter 2001 issue of this journal, I published an account of the operations of the innovative First World War Canadian armoured units, the 1st and 2nd Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigades. This article focused most intensively on the services of these units in the last year of the war when, due to the presence of more mobile conditions of warfare than had prevailed during the pervious three years of relatively static trench fighting, they saw their most concentrated period of operational activity.⁵ Although the article emphasized that the units took heavy casualties, this was not reflected in the accompanying illustrations. Instead, the images consist of standard official Canadian War Records Office photographs showing the cars either at rest within a vehicle compound or moving along roads, their crews smiling and apparently enthusiastic. The harsh reality of war was entirely absent.

Not one of these photographs shows the cars under bombardment or, for that matter, emitting machine gun fire of their own against an enemy. None show the crews fighting for their lives. In particular, there are no after-action shots showing casualties. But since this first article appeared, three photos have come to light that fill the last of these gaps. They show Battersby's car with its dead crew inside only moments after they were killed. Significantly, they were taken not by Canadians but instead by the advancing Germans, eager no doubt to record their battlefield triumphs.⁶

Although taken during a lull in the battle, these photos convey a sense of the fury and

Hanson has recently argued: "Euphemism in battle narrative or the omission of graphic killing is a near capital offense of the military historian."¹

During the First World War, Sir Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, founded the Canadian War Records Office to create a documentary and visual record of Canada's involvement in the war. But, as Peter Robertson of the National Archives of Canada has shown, the line between the use of the images as historical records and as agents of propoganda was a very thin one indeed. Captain Harry Knobel, for example, the first photographer employed by Aitken, recorded that during an exhibition of his photographs held in London in 1916, the only thing that upset his boss was the fact that the body of a dead German had been covered up before being photographed. "Cover up the Canadians before you photograph them as much as you like," commented Sir Max, "but don't bother about the German dead."² Robertson's own summation of the photography produced under Aitken's Canadian War Records Office scheme is that:

Although there are occasional photographs which convey the real horror of war in a graphic manner..., the majority of the photographs present the official Allied version of events: the

devastation that took place as well as the cold hard fact of death. The following will attempt to assess the documentary importance of these photographs by discussing the nature of the fighting that these men faced when, for the first time since 1914, warfare on the Western Front was again becoming mobile. This article will examine the precise historical circumstances that led to their deaths and the photographs being taken, and by providing the stories of the men who were killed.

The last major German offensive of the war, the huge *Kaiserschlacht*, or "Imperial Battle," began in the spring of 1918. The Germans were determined to make one last attempt to knock the western Allies out of the war. Augmented by the addition of a large number of divisions transferred from the Eastern Front following the defeat of Russia, the Germans knew that the full might of the Americans was soon to be unleashed against them.⁷ Their first effort, operation "Michael," fell against the British Third and Fifth Armies in Picardy in front of the town of Amiens along the banks of the River Somme, where another huge battle had been waged two years earlier and yet another, the Battle of Amiens, was to be fought only four months later. Originating east of the German lines behind St. Quentin, the Somme meandered south-westwards through the German and British lines to the village of St. Simon, where it turned due west for a stretch until it reached the town of Ham. Here it turned north-northwest to flow on to Peronne, where it veered directly west to flow through Amiens. The most critical portion of the battle fought in March 1918 was along the 24 kilometre stretch of river flowing between the towns of Ham and Peronne. Along the west side of the river between these two communities ran the Somme Canal, one of the region's principal waterways, which was 17 metres wide and a couple of metres deep. The river, on the other hand, was only about 9 metres wide at this time of year and was easily fordable at some points as the water was so low.⁸

The first blow fell with the opening of a huge German artillery bombardment of high explosives and poison gas at 0440 hours on 21 March 1918. The British had adopted the German system of defense in depth, with forward, battle and reserve zones. Unfortunately,

they had misinterpreted the German doctrine and had too many men in the "forward" zone. These forces were cut off by the initial German assaults. Instead, they should have been in the "battle zone" further back, where they might have had time to react. Many units were decimated before the German infantry began to attack five hours later, led by special groups of storm troopers armed with light machine guns, light mortars, and flame-throwers. Using new tactics, they pushed the British back all along the front, surging as far forward as possible and flowing around pockets of resistance, leaving them behind to be cleared up later.⁹ Fifth Army, under General Sir Hubert Gough, held the front between Peronne and the River Oise south of Ham. It was spread too thin and its morale was still low from its experiences in the cauldron of Passchendaele, from whence it had been moved south only in January. It began to fall back in disarray and a German breakthrough threatened.

By the end of the first day, the Germans had captured more territory than the Allies had in 140 days of fighting in the First Battle of the Somme two years earlier.¹⁰ The German attack resumed on 22 March with equal intensity and even greater success. The previous day's withdrawals having lengthened their front, many Fifth Army units found themselves isolated and deficient in mortars and machine guns, which they had lost in the initial assault. Inadequately trained in conducting withdrawals, units began to crumble before the German onslaught. In some areas the troops panicked and were only held in position by military police or an officer's pistol.¹¹

By 23 March, the Germans had pushed Fifth Army's left flank back almost to Peronne. By the morning of 24 March, the situation was growing more perilous by the hour. To the north, German troops were penetrating northwest of Peronne. On the Somme itself, between Peronne and Ham, they were massing on the east bank, searching for spots to cross. Indeed, around Ham and on the far right on the Oise they had forced a crossing and were advancing with such determination that a gap threatened to open between British forces to the north and French units to their south. This was the situation when the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade (1CMMGB) entered the seething tide of battle.

The ICMMGB had just begun to emerge from a period of internal upheaval. In January 1918, its commander since the battle of Passchendaele in October-November 1917, Lieutenant-Colonel F.A. Wilkin, had been relieved of his command and sent back to England suffering from battle fatigue. In his place, temporary command was given to the unit's next senior officer, the 36-year-old Major William Battersby, MC. On 11 March, the corps commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, inspected the unit at its headquarters in the village of Verdrel, close to Vimy Ridge. He was not impressed, noting that night in his diary: "Rode to Verdrel to inspect the Motor Machine Gun Brigade - found it bad."¹² Battersby's days as commander were clearly numbered.

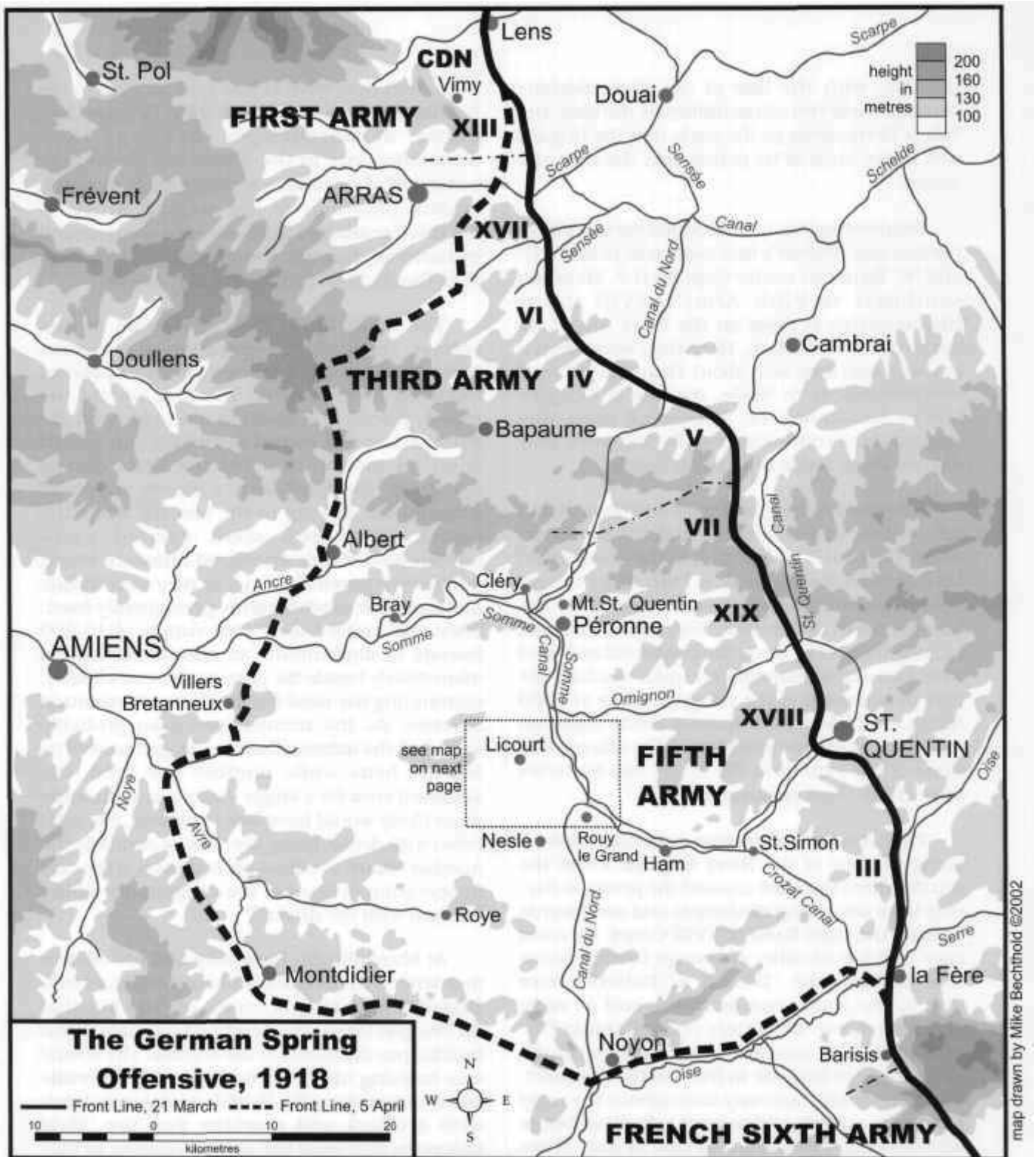
Five days later, Currie met with Brigadier-General J.E.B. Seely, commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, and the latter's subordinate, Major W.K. Walker, DSO, MC, the commander of the Cavalry Brigade's dismounted Machine Gun Squadron. Walker had a reputation as a strict disciplinarian and impressed Currie, who decided he was the one to head the Motor Brigade. Six feet two inches tall, weighing over 200 pounds, and known to most as "Tiny," Walker arrived at Verdrel to take command on 17 March with orders to tighten up discipline and reorganize. One of his first moves was to increase the number of batteries from four to five. The so-called "Sifton" Brigade, consisting of the eight original armoured Autocars with which the unit had first come overseas, was split into two, designated "A" and "B" Batteries. The Eaton, Borden, and Yukon Batteries, which had joined later and carried their machine guns in light Napier trucks, were retitled "C," "D" and "E" Batteries.

This reorganization had only just been implemented when, at 1500 hours on 22 March, Canadian Corps Operation Order No. 185 came through instructing the unit "to proceed tomorrow to Amiens and come under the orders of Fifth Army."¹³ Walker later claimed that General Gough had got the idea of using his unit from Brigadier Seely who, with his Canadian Cavalry Brigade, was then serving under Gough in the area of the River Oise.¹⁴ Certainly British High Command was looking everywhere for reinforcements to be sent to the scene of the crisis. Three Australian Divisions and one from

New Zealand were moved south from Flanders on 23 March and, on the same day, as a precautionary measure, 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were removed from Currie's command and placed, respectively, under First Army and General Headquarters Reserve. In the end, however, ICMMGB was the only Canadian unit actually to move south.¹⁵ Seely's own cavalry was heavily engaged and it is possible that he considered this motorized unit would be an additional help in a battle where the trench lines had broken down and for the first time since 1914 units were ranging widely over an open battlefield.

The Brigade set off from Verdrel on the road trip to Amiens at 0530 hours the next morning, with a message from Currie pronouncing: "The Corps Commander wishes you the best of luck and has every confidence that you will do more than well."¹⁶ Preceded by Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, driving in an open Vauxhall and then by the battery commanders in Fords, the procession consisted of the armoured cars of "A" and "B" Batteries, the Napier Light trucks of "C," "D," and "E" Batteries, equipped with two heavy Vickers machine guns each, plus 65 motorcycles for scouting, signalling, and communications duties.¹⁷ Also in the convoy were 20 3-ton lorries of the 2nd Canadian Ammunition Sub Park, which Currie had especially arranged to be attached to enhance the expedition's self sufficiency. They were to prove invaluable over the coming days.¹⁸ Travelling south through numerous French villages, the procession made good time, arriving at Amiens at noon. Delays experienced there, however, meant that it did not reach Fifth Army Headquarters, only a short distance to the east at Villers Bretonneux, until 1600 hours.¹⁹

General Gough and his staff had arrived only that morning, after retreating 20 km westwards from the town of Nesle nearer the Somme, and much confusion prevailed. Walker was distinctly unimpressed, recalling later that "Villers Bretonneux was a maze of staff officers coming and going" who came "cheaper by the dozen." Upon requesting much-needed maps of the area, he was informed that they were "all packed up" and he had to appeal to Gough's chief-of-staff to get hold of them. He had only a brief meeting with Gough, whom he found "cool but showing immense strain." He thought the general could



have taken a few moments to speak to the recently arrived men of the Motors, but although he at first was going to do so, he changed his mind. "His army, like himself, was crumbling," commented Walker.²⁰

Walker emerged from his meetings at Villers Bretonneux with very general instructions that

this unit was to be employed "in filling gaps occurring at any point along the army front".²¹ British commanders made clear to him their view that the "line of the River Somme between Ham and Peronne had to be held at all costs, and that should the enemy succeed in crossing the Somme, the situation on Fifth Army front would be very serious."²² It was within a rough

triangle, with the line of the River Somme between these two communities as the base and Villers Bretonneux as the peak, that the Brigade was to see most of its action over the next two weeks.

Establishing his own headquarters at Villers Bretonneux, Walker's first move was to send "D" and "E" Batteries under Captain H.F. Meurling southeast to Fifth Army's XVIII Corps Headquarters at Roye on the River Ancre, 37 km to the west of Ham. Here they were given a hot meal and then sent about 10 km up the road northeastwards to Nesle, the site of Gough's former headquarters. Threading their way against thick traffic that was fleeing west, they did not reach Nesle until 0200 hours.

A few hours after Meurling's detachment had left, Walker dispatched "B" and "C" Batteries, under Captain E.H. Holland, to the north to aid VII Corps on the left flank of Fifth Army to help stem a German advance on a passage of the Somme north of Peronne. They spent all night inching their way along the congested road and went into action immediately upon reaching the threatened point at the village of Clery at 0800 hours on 24 March. A furious battle raged all day long, by the end of which all the officers and most of the rank and file of the two batteries were either dead or wounded.

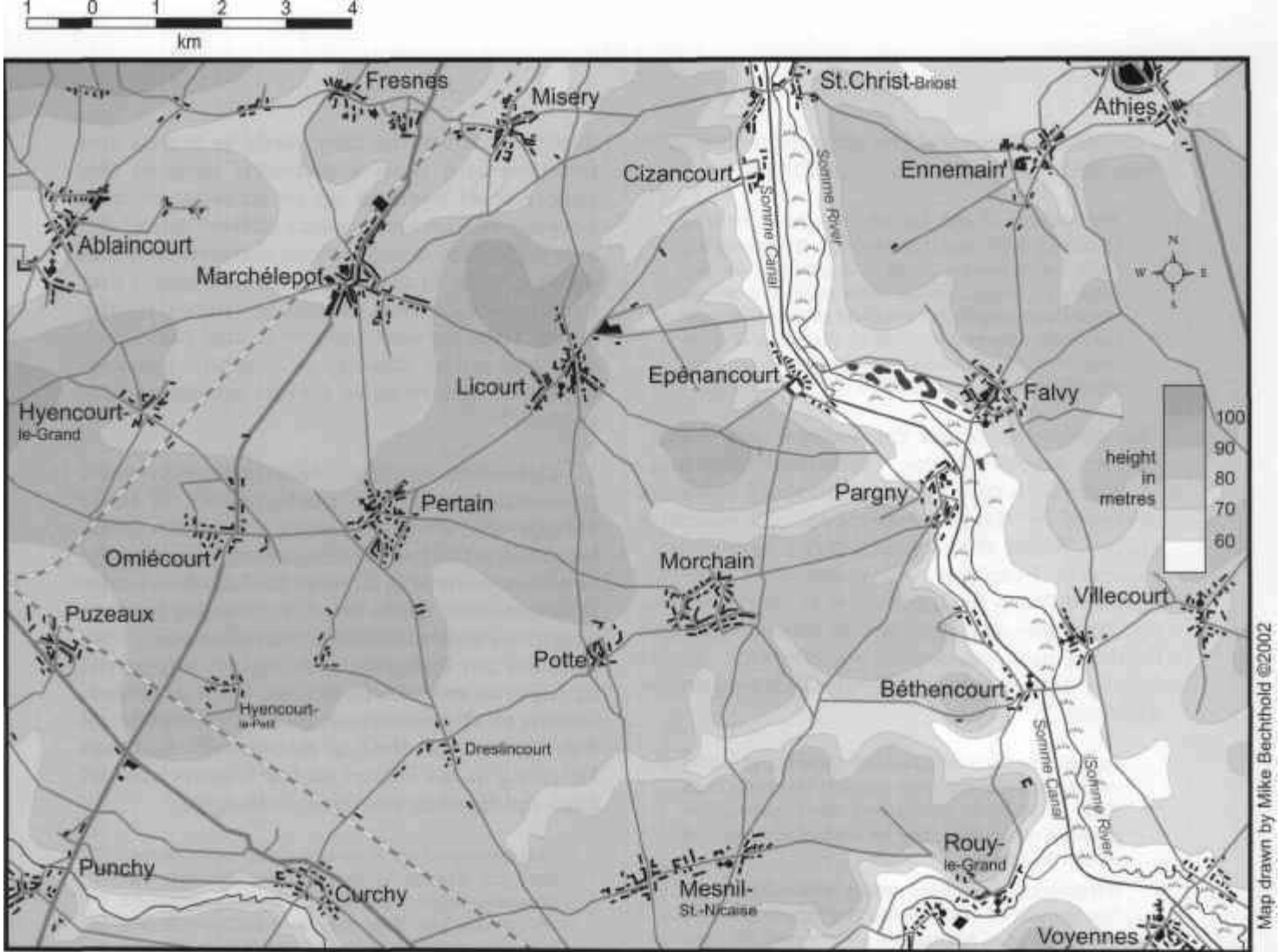
The Germans were now pressing hard all along the line of the River Somme. From the south, where they had crossed the previous day, they were advancing westwards and northwards against the right flank of XVIII Corps. By noon they had forced other crossings further north near Bethancourt. "D" and "E" Batteries were just to the southwest at Nesle, and at noon Meurling threw "D" Battery under Captain F.D. Harkness, MC, into a counterattack with the British 183rd Brigade in front of Bethancourt. The unit fought furiously throughout the early afternoon, suffering 50 percent casualties before withdrawing westwards. In one of only three references he makes to the presence of the Canadian Motors, the British official historian, Sir James Edmonds, noted that this attack held up the German advance in the area for about four hours.²³

In the meantime, "A" Battery under Major Battersby remained behind at Villers Bretonneux. It was not until 1300 hours on the

24th, that they were at last sent forward to the headquarters of the British 24th Brigade, XIX Corps, at Marchepot. Reaching their destination late in the afternoon, the battery consisted of a number of motor cycle dispatch raiders plus four of the original Brutinel-designed armoured Autocars, one commanded by Battersby himself, the others by Lieutenants W.H. Smith, W.G. Cuttle, and W.P. Adams.

The make-up of the car's crews is less certain. On land, the operation of a Vickers machine guns was a labour-intensive process requiring a crew of six. The first carried the tripod, placed it in position, and operated the gun in action; the second carried the gun, placed it on its mount, and fed the belts during operation; the third kept a steady supply of ammunition flowing to the second, while the fourth, fifth and sixth carried extra ammunition.²⁴ The armoured Autocars would not have required as many, as they were mobile and had their machine guns permanently fixed. They also carried their own supply of 10,000 rounds of ammunition in special containers immediately beside the guns on the rear chassis, eliminating the need for the three ammunition carriers. As the number two man probably supplied the ammunition to the gun as well as fed the belts while number one fired, the standard crew for a single Vickers in an Autocar most likely would have been only two, the total crew, with driver, being five. This is certainly the number shown in official photographs of the cars in operation in Europe, the commander sitting forward with the driver.²⁵

At Marchepot, Battersby and his officers met with 24th Brigade's commanding officer, Brigadier R.C. Haig (a cousin of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig), who described the main threat building on the banks of the Somme. The enemy was massing his forces on the east bank while constantly raking the British on the west bank with artillery and machine gun fire. Haig suspected that some had already crossed, as they indeed had in some places. Haig ordered Battersby to take two armoured cars 6 km east to the village of Cizancourt on the banks of the canal to appraise the situation and do what he could to stem enemy incursions. Major Battersby set off in command of one car and Lieutenant Cuttle in the other at 1730 hours. The cars possessed no cross-country capability and consequently had to take a road that ran about



Area of Operations: 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade 24-25 March 1918

3 km southeast to the village of Licourt and there turn left onto another that ran for a further 5 km northeast to Cizancourt.

At Cizancourt, they turned right and proceeded south down a road along the west bank of the canal towards the village of Epenancourt, which lay 5 km further south. Enemy aircraft were active over the front and just outside of Cizancourt one swooped down to attack them, but they drove it off with return machine gun fire. Soon afterwards, an officer of the British Sherwood Foresters Regiment came upon them and confirmed that the Germans were across the canal to the south. He urged Battersby to push his cars ahead to bring their twin Vickers to bear while his own unit attacked with Lewis guns. As he deemed the road too narrow for two cars to advance, Battersby and his crew went ahead alone. Just north of Epenancourt they encountered a column of

German infantry advancing north in the brush beside the road and immediately opened up with their Vickers, causing the surprised enemy to scatter. The Germans were close enough to hurl a number of hand grenades at his car, but the explosions deflected off its armour and caused no injuries. The Canadians remained in position for three more hours, expending about 8000 rounds of ammunition in raking the fields in front of Epenancourt and the opposite side of the canal. They then withdrew to rejoin Cuttle towards Cizancourt and proceeded back to Marchélepot to report to Brigadier Haig. One of Battersby's gun barrels was pierced but there were no casualties.²⁶ He and his crew would not be so fortunate the next day.

In a paper of the "Lessons Learned" from these days, Captain Meurling, commander of "D" and "E" Batteries, provides an interesting analysis of the conditions under which the

Canadian motor machine gunners operated in this, their first, mobile action of the war:

The nature of the fighting - a more or less "running fight" with the M/Guns never retiring until outflanked - made it impossible for the officer to communicate with guns not in his immediate neighbourhood and the comparative [sic] large targets presented by the crews of more than two guns retiring simultaneously caused, where tried, large casualties.²⁷

The enemy screened themselves with hand-thrown smoke-bombs, continued Meurling, behind which they advanced in small columns preceded by "large numbers of light machine guns." When they encountered opposition, especially from machine guns, they sent up coloured flares to signal their artillery to open up. The flares also signalled the infantry to begin flanking and enveloping movements, which "nearly always compelled our machine guns to withdraw."

Concealment is of primary importance. The enemy will not advance against Machine Gun Fire. As soon as he located the approximate position of our Batteries he worked around and outflanked them.

If the enemy is massing within reasonable range fire should at once be opened up, if not, the opportunity of killing the enemy may be lost, owing to the working around in such a number as to deny a good field of fire.²⁸

The enemy also employed large numbers of snipers for this task, which, Meurling asserted, caused 50 per cent of Canadian casualties.

As for the Canadian machine gunners' own tactics, Meurling wrote that they were,

of necessity very simple. They consisted simply in giving everybody as free a hand as possible to check the enemy wherever we could, inflicting as many casualties as we could and the only thing that rigorously was enforced was that no M/Gun was allowed to withdraw until outflanked and that communications with commanders *must* be kept up.²⁹

In a separate assessment, Meurling also argued that the "Armoured cars should have a loop-hold [sic] turret." This he deemed essential to protect the gunners, who had to expose their head and upper body above the cars' armour plating while firing their guns. He also recommended that the cars be equipped with

double drive so that they could be driven into position and then withdrawn without the necessity of backing up or turning around. Lacking such a mechanism, drivers found the cars difficult to manoeuvre on sunken roads and on steep hills. At the same time, he thought that the Vickers gunners should be trained on the Lewis Gun as well, and that the cars have attached either infantry or machine gunners equipped with rifles to protect against enemy snipers.³⁰

Canadian reports sometimes expressed frustration with the performance of their beleaguered British infantry colleagues. Even Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, within the politically sensitive content of a report to Canadian Corps Headquarters, wrote that "The infantry in some instances were exhausted with the results that at times our batteries were no [sic] supported by them as well as I would like." But he added: "taking all circumstances into consideration all has been done that is possible."³¹ Captain Meurling in his Report on the lessons learned from the fighting was more forthright.

The absolute lack of co-operation between not only the M/Gun service and the Infantry, but between infantry parties in the line compelled our guns to play their own game and co-ordinate wherever possible local systems of defense with M/Guns as natural strong-points

Lack of men, lack of fire power - the infantry sometimes had rifles, sometimes not, but more often than not no ammunition - and lack of success in forming any organized line, compelled the guns to be worked for days and nights by only two men as a crew, in order that firepower of some sort maybe obtained at critical points.³²

The Canadians were, however, consistently positive about the ready availability of supplies. In this task, the 3-ton lorries of the 2nd Canadian Ammunition Sub-Park provided by Currie had proved invaluable.³³ This was an indication of a fundamental Allied strength that would, in the end, be one of the factors that enabled their armies not only to stop the German offensives but to turn the tables on them and begin pushing them back in a retreat that would culminate in the Armistice on 11 November. For example, in an action report of 26 March, Walker reported that "I am in a position to draw plenty of new guns and belts etc." And in another of 29 March: "Supplies of new guns, tripods, spare parts etc.

are plentiful."³⁴ In his summary written later, Meurling was more effusive.

Rations, New Guns, Spare Barrels and Parts were delivered daily to each Detachment. In no case were the men without food, Reinforcements were dispatched expeditiously to any part of the front. Ammunition was easily rushed to any Battery or section. Dumps were established and distributed in depth in case of retirement.³⁵

This was of no help to the British on 25 March, however, when they lost the entire line of the River Somme between Ham and Peronne. As noted, the Germans had identified the most advantageous spots to cross and were advancing in hordes. Edmonds described the scene: "the divisions of the Fifth Army [were] now fighting and moving in small bodies, often composed of men of different units, frequently with parties of Germans mixed up with them."³⁶

The units of XIX Corps spent the night of 24-25 March preparing a counterattack eastwards towards the Somme, scheduled for 0815 hours the next morning which they hoped would drive the Germans back across the river. In preparation, Brigadier Haig's 24th Brigade moved forward from Marcheipot to Licourt for the planned assault. Some four hours earlier, well in advance of the intended counterattack, Major Battersby, with his four Autocars, plus some motorcyclists, had left 24th Brigade Headquarters for Cizancourt on the west bank of the Canal to be in a position to provide advance support for the brigade's counterattack.

The two cars under Lieutenants Smith and Cuttle stopped beside a factory halfway between Licourt and Cizancourt and waited while the other two cars, under Battersby and Lieutenant Adams, pressed forward to Cizancourt and then southwards along the Canal towards Epenancourt, along the same road that Battersby had taken with some success the night before. But, as has been seen, when morning came, the Germans struck first and the proposed British counterattack turned into a retreat. The men and cars of "A" Battery were left far forward without any infantry support as the enemy flooded around them and throughout the area.

Sometime after daybreak a German aircraft observed Smith and Cuttle's cars and communicated their range to artillery units,

which soon brought them under intense fire. Smith moved ahead into a sunken road for better cover while Cuttle went as far forward as the outskirts of Cizancourt. As parties of British infantry fled rearwards around them, at last a motorcycle dispatch rider arrived from Battersby bearing orders for them to move back to Marcheipot. Smith remained in position a little while longer, however, to provide cover for some British infantry. His fire halted the advance of a party of Germans moving down an old communications trench before he was wounded in the ankle and decided it was time to leave. But as he was heading towards Licourt word came through that Marcheipot had already fallen. Consequently, instead of turning right at Licourt to proceed on to Marcheipot, he kept going directly through Licourt southwest to the village of Pertain and from there further west to the village of Omiecourt, where he halted.

Meanwhile, Battersby and Adams had been forced back to Cizancourt, where they were reunited with Cuttle. Unable to turn around, the three cars were compelled to back down the road from Cizancourt to Licourt, their guns sputtering against the onrushing German storm troopers. Battersby's car had gone furthest in the early morning foray and was at the head of the procession, or closest to the enemy. Adams's car was next, with Cuttle's in the rear. They reached Licourt and followed the same route as had Smith earlier. It was as they were backing out of Licourt, down the road to Pertain when Battersby and his crew were killed. As described by Lieutenant-Colonel Walker in a post-war account, an enemy shell exploded close to their car that either killed or wounded the driver causing it "to be suddenly ditched." (In fact, it would appear to have veered off the road into a field.) "Seeing its predicament," wrote Walker, "numbers of the enemy quickly closed in on the car and overcame the personnel with hand grenades before assistance could arrive."³⁷

In the melee, Lieutenant Adams and his crew in the car behind rushed forward in an attempt to give their stricken colleagues a tow. But enemy fire drove them off and they continued the retreat southwest towards Pertain. Adams and Cuttle eventually made it through as far as Omiecourt where, sometime later, Lieutenant Smith found them. Adams was badly wounded from the action at Licourt and the car was now

commanded by his subordinate, the aptly-named Sergeant Vickers. Lieutenant Cuttle was also wounded, his car having been commandeered by a British brigadier to haul ammunition.³⁸

Adams's and Cuttle's cars must have only just disappeared down the road to Pertain when the German photographic crew showed up to take the three images shown here. **Photograph No.1** was taken the earliest, as the crew is still lying in the back. Only three bodies are visible, since those of Battersby and his driver would have been slumped down in the cab. Note the Lee-Enfield rifle positioned at the car's right front, which had been removed by the time photograph No.2 was taken. A German column is halted on the Licourt-Pertain road in the background, with a group of soldiers to the right examining the scene. It is impossible to tell whether the streaming ammunition belts and the helmets and ammunition boxes that litter the ground were caused by the explosions that accompanied the cars last moments or by some preliminary looting on the part of the Germans. Note that the boots of one of the dead Canadians have already been removed.

Photograph No.2 was taken some time after photograph No. 1. By this time, the Germans had had the opportunity to indulge in more serious looting, a noted feature of their conduct during the spring offensives. Indeed, their shock as they advanced into the rear areas at discovering the huge stores of supplies possessed by the Allied armies, in comparison to their own impoverished state, is sometimes cited as a root cause of their demoralization and ultimate failure.³⁹ The car has been rummaged through and the body of the man whose leg is draped over the side in photograph No. 1 has been pulled out onto the ground, thoroughly ransacked and his boots removed. In addition, the Lee-Enfield rifle has been removed from its perch at the car's front.

Photograph No.3, taken with the photographer standing in the cab and looking into the back, was probably shot last. By then, it would appear there was only one member of the dead crew left in the back, although it is difficult to be absolutely certain. Again his boots, as well as all web gear, are missing.

Who, then, were these men? The records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission indicate that five men serving with the 1 CMMGB were killed on 25 March, four of whom are memorialized on the Vimy Memorial, which indicates that their bodies were never found. The fifth is buried in the British Cemetery at Pargny on the Somme, only a few kms east of the scene of the action described above.⁴⁰ These must be Battersby and his crew. That they numbered only four indicates that the crew were operating one short of the usual number,⁴¹ with only three working the machine guns.

Major William Falconer Battersby, MC, was thirty-six years old at the time of his death. He was born in Tavistock, Ontario, the son of Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Battersby. He was a mining and mechanical engineer by profession and had served in the 38th Dufferin Rifles before enlisting at Montreal on 16 January 1915 in the Borden Motor Machine Gun Battery. He landed in France with his unit on 15 September 1915 as a lieutenant and was gazetted with the Military Cross on 14 November 1916 for action in the first battle of the Somme. According to the citation "he fought and handled eight machine guns with great courage and skill, inflicting heavy casualties on two enemy field gun batteries."⁴² He was promoted captain in November 1916 and major in January 1918, and, as has been seen, served as temporary commander of the 1 CMMGB for a brief period in early 1918. After being replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Walker, he remained the unit's second-in-command until his death. His body was never recovered and his name is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial.⁴³

Private Osmond John Culbert Begin was twenty-six years old at the time of his death, the son of Charles and Elizabeth Begin of 14 Florence Street, Hamilton, Ontario. Having served in Hamilton's 13th Royal Regiment, he

Opposite top: Photograph No.1 - The first photograph taken by the Germans soon after the action in which Battersby's car was blown off the road and its crew killed, (courtesy of Michel Gravel, Cornwall, ON)

Opposite bottom: Photograph No.2 - The second German photograph taken sometime later than photograph No. 1, after German soldiers had time to indulge their penchant for looting, (courtesy of the Tank Museum, Bovington, Surrey, UK).





Photograph No.3 - The last of the three German photographs taken with the photographer standing in the car's cab and looking backwards along the rear.

courtesy of the Tank Museum
Bovington, Surrey, U

re-enlisted on 10 September 1915 giving his profession as clerk. He arrived in England on 29 May 1916 and after briefly serving as an acting lance-corporal, reverted to the rank of private at his own request. He was posted to the 1CMMGB in France on 21 October 1916, and arrived there seven days later. On 24 April 1917, he was wounded in the arm and underwent medical treatment before rejoining his unit on 24 May. The only black mark on his record was that, on 20 September 1917, he was sentenced to five days Field Punishment No. 1 for overstaying a leave from 12 midnight to 7:20 the next morning while on active service. Begin's body was the only one recovered from Battersby's crew. He is buried in Plot 4, Row C, Grave 1, Pargny British Cemetery on the Somme.⁴⁴

Private Donald Douglas Brooks was twenty years old at his death, the son of A.H. and

Margaret Brooks of Weymouth, Digby County, Nova Scotia. Giving his profession as bank clerk and with no previous military experience, he enlisted in the 64th Battalion at Sussex, New Brunswick on 19 August 1915. He arrived in England on 4 April 1916, and on 23 April was transferred to the Canadian Machine Gun Service at Shorncliffe. He joined the 1CMMGB in France on 14 September 1916. On 8 August 1917, he was admitted to hospital suffering from the effects of an enemy gas attack and remained under care in hospital until returning to duty on 3 November.⁴⁵

Private Robert Walker Connell was born in Glasgow Scotland. Twenty-four years old at his death, he was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Connell, then living in Toronto. Although he had no previous military experience, Connell was one of the most senior members of the unit, having joined the 1st Automobile Machine Gun Brigade

in Toronto on 24 August 1914. His civilian trade being a chauffeur, Connell served in the unit as a driver. He had a varied career overseas. On 18 March 1915, he was admitted to hospital after being seriously injured in a motorcar accident in Kent. He nonetheless proceeded with his unit to France, but no sooner was he there than he was admitted to No. 12 General Hospital at Rouen suffering from gonorrhoea, forfeiting his special 3rd class pay as a driver in the process. In December, he was posted to Headquarters, First Canadian Division, still as a driver since, on 27 January 1916, he was sentenced to "30 days forfeiture of working pay for neglect of duty when in charge of a motor car." A number of other infractions followed, such as being subject to a stoppage of pay for the loss of a spoon and three days Field Punishment No. 1 for being absent without leave. Indeed, on 21 March 1917, he was struck off strength and returned to England to be discharged from the service. He evidently pulled himself together, however, for on 21 September 1917 he was in the Machine Gun Reinforcement Pool at Camiers in France. Taken onto the strength of the 1CMMGB on 25 September, he was soon reinstated as a driver, with a working pay of 50 cents a day.⁴⁶

Sergeant Cyril Vidal, was twenty-five years old and was born in Lucea, Jamaica, his mother, Mrs. A. Vidal, still being resident there. (His records do not indicate whether he was black or white.) Having had no previous military experience and giving his profession as clerk, he enlisted in the 20th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force at Toronto on 12 November 1914. He arrived overseas in England on 15 May 1915 and joined his unit in France on 12 December. On 26 April he was wounded in the neck and back at the battle of St. Eloi and had to be evacuated to England. After his discharge, he was posted to the Canadian Machine Gun Depot at Crowborough on 27 September and promoted lance-corporal on 6 January 1917. He was soon reduced to the ranks, however, and subjected to six days Field Punishment No. 2 for being absent without leave for a total of five and a half days. He also spent a spell in hospital suffering from venereal disease but he arrived back in France on 12 April 1917 and transferred to the 1CMMGB on 22 April. Here he proved resourceful enough to be appointed acting corporal in September and promoted sergeant on 11 January 1918. One can presume he was

in charge of the machine gunners in Battersby's car on 25 March.⁴⁷

A relatively 'unscientific' survey of this small group of men suggests that they were somewhat younger than average in the CEF, at least amongst those who had seen as much service, as the average age *on enlistment* for the CEF as a whole was 26.3 years. They also differed somewhat from the norm in that three, or 60 per cent, were Canadian-born, whereas the figures of native born Canadians in the CEF as a whole was never more than 51.2 per cent. They certainly did not meet the standard British stereotype of Canadians as mostly farmers, lumberjacks, or cowboys, as they were largely of urban rather than rural backgrounds. They were also slightly more educated or skilled than average, as one had been an engineer, three were clerks, and one a chauffeur, in their pre-war days.⁴⁸ Three had incurred their share of military infractions. Two had suffered the consequences, both physical and disciplinary, of sex-related disease, the average for the latter in the CEF as a whole, according to figures compiled by Desmond Morton, being one in nine.⁴⁹ The average length of their full military careers, including service in Canada, in England, and at the front, was three years, one month; their average length of service at the front two years, one month. Three of them had previously spent time in hospital from wounds, one in the arm, the second in the back and neck, and the third in a gas attack. Their length of service, the number of wounds and other experiences suggest that these five soldiers were by and large a hardened group of Canadian front fighters, such as Canada has never before or afterwards seen in any of its wars and military campaigns. Having been in and out of action at the front for more than two years, their reward at the end was to be killed by German artillery or hand grenades.

The battle in front of Amiens continued to rage for six more days after deaths of Battersby and his crew. The Germans made repeated attempts to break through and capture this important communications hub. They came to within a kilometre of Villers Bretonneux by the time their exhausted and frustrated troops stopped on 31 March. Throughout this period the batteries of the 1CMMGB were constantly engaged, rushing from spot to spot to fire on parties of advancing storm troopers and adding

their support to hastily prepared lines of defence. The enemy's halt on 31 March at last gave them a chance to rest after days of almost constant action and nights without sleep. The crews of 1CMMGB continued to patrol throughout these days and took more casualties, but the fighting seemed to be winding down. On 4 April, however, the German commander, General Ludendorff, made one last effort to break through to Amiens and the Canadian machine gunners were ordered to assist the British in holding Villers Bretonneux "at all costs."

Having been involved in intense action for nearly two weeks, their cars riddled with dents and holes from German bullets and armour-piercing shells, the stress levels in the unit can be well imagined. Indeed, Alex Lynch, in an account of the unit's role in the March Offensive that is based upon the testimony of his father, Vincent Lynch, a lieutenant with the Yukon Battery, records that when they received the news from Walker that they were to go back into the line, the members "reacted with violence" and were on the "point of mutiny." Their nerves were so completely shot, writes Lynch, that they "would break into tears at the slightest frustration such as someone sitting on their bed." Lieutenant Lynch, who clearly detested Walker, risked court martial by refusing to take any more orders from him and only a visit by Brutinel himself managed to calm the situation and convince the men to return to the fighting.⁵⁰ They did return and suffered four more killed and another 26 wounded before this last German offensive in the area was beaten off. Only on 10 April were they at last able to depart the Somme and return to rejoin their compatriots at Vimy.⁵¹ Total casualties during their 15 days on the Somme were 25 killed, 108 wounded, and 11 missing out of an original strength of about 330.⁵²

The 1CMMGB experienced a furious period of action and paid a heavy price in deaths and injuries. British and French "backs to the wall" attitude on one side and German miscalculations at the command level and exhaustion in the field on the other had brought the German "Michael" offensive to a standstill. Yet for a time, British Fifth Army was near collapse and the mobile firepower that the 1CMMGB brought to the scene doubtless helped them through a period of great difficulty, although a detailed historical appraisal

of the unit's contribution has yet to be written. In a report dated 1 April 1918, which indicates that the 1CMMGB was responsible for its own share of killing, Hamilton Fyfe, war correspondent of the British newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, wrote:

When the full story is told of the encounter of giant forces and of the successful withdrawal of the British Army in the face of immensely superior German strength, a very glowing page of it will have to be devoted to the splendidly gallant and useful part played by the Canadian motor machine guns. The other day [ie. 25 March]..., I saw some of their grey armoured cars come tearing down the road in clouds of dust evidently going into action hot foot. A little later I heard a tremendous tap, tap, tapping and knew they were engaged. They held up the German advance there as they did in a number of other places....Everywhere they went they steadied the line. They gave the Infantry fresh hope and courage.

The total number of Germans killed and disabled by them here and elsewhere must be very large. Indeed, nothing could have been more successful than the first appearance in action of this vastly useful unit. One more reason for the Dominion to be proud of her citizen soldiers. They saved many a situation from developing dangerously and they killed a tremendous lot of Boches. Both our troops and the French speak of them with the highest admiration and gratitude.⁵³

Yet their contribution *has*, for the most part, been forgotten. The role of the Canadian Motors is not mentioned at all in General Gough's self-justifying memoir, *The March Retreat*, and all but neglected in Edmonds's British official history and other historical accounts of the battle. As is perhaps to be expected, G.W.L. Nicholson in the Canadian official history does them the most justice in stating that their contribution was "far out of proportion to such a comparatively small unit" (although this still seems somewhat restrained).⁵⁴ Machine guns were, of course, much needed by the British in their March retreat because so many had been lost in the initial German attacks. Nonetheless, Ludendorff wrote in his memoirs that "machine gun posts had given us an undue amount of trouble and so caused delay." "Tiny" Walker's own modest assessment was that if his own unit's machine guns shared any responsibility for these delays "its visit to the Fifth Army was not in vain."⁵⁵

The photographs around which this article focuses serve as stark testimony to the services of the Canadian motor machine gunners during these tumultuous days on the Western Front. Taken by German photographers, doubtless with propagandistic purposes in mind, only moments after the soldiers had met their deaths, they convey a sense of the stress and furor of the fighting that these five Canadians endured. The photographs can serve beside the four names on the Vimy Memorial at Arras and the gravestone in Pargny Cemetery as an additional memorial to this group, who, in displaying such fortitude in carrying out their duties in this desperate moment for the Allied side on the western front, ultimately lost their lives. Their story now forms part of the documented, the commemorative, as well as the visual record of Canada's part in the "Great" War.

Notes

1. Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 7.
2. Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1978, p.5. I am grateful to my colleague Tim Cook, for bringing Robertson's observations to my attention. For a very thorough and stimulating examination of the role of Beaverbrook and his Canadian War Records Office in propagating the reputation of the Canadian Corps during the First World War, see Tim's forthcoming paper, "Documenting War & Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken, the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War," unpublished ms. 2002.
3. Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism," p. 14.
4. This painting was featured on the cover of *Canadian Military History*, Winter 2001. For more information, see Maria Tippett, *Stormy Weather: F.H. Varley, a Biography* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998), pp.83-124. Varley seems to have been drawn to the subject because it exemplified his personal conviction that the primary role of ordinary soldiers in the war was to serve as cannon fodder. *For What?* sums up his views by posing the question, and in ways anticipated the views of the war as futile slaughter expressed later by writers such as Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Edmund Blunden. It is interesting to note that Varley's other major canvas showing dead bodies, *The Sunken Road*, conforms more to Canadian War Records Office practice in that the bodies are German. In fact, Varley conceived and executed this painting in 1919, after the war had ended, basing it on a Canadian War Records Office photo of a dead German machine gun crew.
5. Cameron Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Units: Raymond Brutinel and the Canadian Motor Machine Gunners of the First World War," *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp.43-57.
6. Two of these photographs come from the collection of the Tank Museum at Bovington, Surrey, England, one having already appeared in a fine survey by that institution's librarian, David Fletcher, *War Cars: British Armoured Cars in the First World War* (London: HMSO: 1987), p. 72. The third, however, was not known to exist until recently, when it was purchased by Michel Gravel, an amateur military historian from Cornwall, Ontario, off an e-bay site where it was listed as a destroyed German armoured car! I would like to thank Michel, first of all for bringing the photograph to my attention, and for allowing me to publish it with this article and also David Fletcher and the Tank Museum for providing me with copies of their own photographs.
7. Martin Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle, 21 March 1918: The First Day of the German Spring Offensive*, (London: Allan Lane, 1978) p.34.
8. See the description in Sir James Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1918: The German March Offensives and its Preliminaries* (London: Macmillan, 1935), p.338.
9. See *Ibid.* pp. 145-160; John Terraine, *To Win a War: 1918, the Year of Victory* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978), pp.59-60.
10. Middlebrook, *Kaiser's Battle* p.309.
11. See Pitt, *Last Act*, pp.87-93.
12. Quoted in Alex Lynch, *The Glory of Their Times: 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, March 1918* (Kingston, Ont; Lawrence Publications, 2001), p.20. See also, the same author's earlier pamphlet, *Dad the Army and the Fifth Army Show* (Kingston, Ont.: The Printing Factory, 1978), p. 15.
13. National Archives of Canada [NAC], RG 9 Vol. 1487, File 627, War Diary, 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, 1 March 1918-1 April 1918
14. Walker makes this claim in his pamphlet *Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade with British Fifth Army, March-April 1918* (Ottawa: Privately Printed, 1957), p.4. It is lean credence by the fact that Seely's and Walker's meeting with Currie, at which the latter decided to place Walker in charge of the Motor Machine Brigade, took place only five days earlier. Thus Walker and his unit would have been fresh in Seely's mind. It should be noted, however, that in an earlier and much better piece on his unit's intervention on behalf of Fifth Army, Walker makes no reference to Seely. See "The Great German Offensive, March 1918, with some Account of the Work of the Canadian Motor Machine Brigade," *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1926, pp.309-412. Nor does Gough refer to it in his memoir, *The March Retreat*, which, in fact, contains no mention of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade at all. Nor does J.E.B. Seely, refer to the incident in his own memoir, *Fear and be Slain: Adventures by Land Sea and Air* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931).
15. For the dispositions of the Canadian Corps throughout this crisis, see A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Canadian War Museum, 1987.) pp. 102-107. As noted, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade was already there, as were about 400 Canadian Railway Troops, who were put to work building defensive positions in front of Amiens. On the employment of these latter troops see A.J. Kerry and W.A. McDill, *The History of the Corps*

- of *Royal Canadian Engineers* (Ottawa: Military Engineers Association, 1962), pp.268-273.
16. Quoted in C.S. Grafton, *The Canadian "Emma Gees": A History of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps*, (London, ON: Hunter Printing Co., 1938), p. 123.
 17. John F. Wallace, *Dragons of Steel: Canadian Armour in Two World Wars* (Burnstown, Ont.: General Store Publishing, 1995), p.52.
 18. Walker, "The Great German Offensive, March 1918". p.408.
 19. War Diary, 1CMMGB, 23 March 1918.
 20. Walker. *Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade with the Fifth Army*, p.5.
 21. Walker, "The Great German Offensive," p.404.
 22. *Ibid.* p.404.
 23. Edmonds, *The German March Offensive and its Preliminaries*, p.408. For the others, see *Ibid.* p.414, and the next volume in the series, sub-titled: *March-April The Continuation of the German Offensives* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p.23. Here, with reference to 24th Division of XIX Corps holding out near Rouvroy on 27 March, he states, although in a footnote, that: "Two Batteries of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Corps [*sic*] were with it and did conspicuous good service."
 24. See Bill Rawling, "Technology in Search of a Role: the Machine Gun and the CEF in the First World War," *Material History Review*, Vol. 42, Fall 1995, pp.89-90.
 25. See, for example, the present author's "Canada's First Armoured Units," *passim*.
 26. War Diary, 1st CMMGB, Major W.F. Battersby to Brig. Gen. Haig, 24 March 1918.
 27. NAC RG 9 III Vol. 3946, folder 65, file 3, "Lessons Learned from the recent fighting on the Somme," Capt. H.F. Meurling, 4 April 1918, p.1.
 28. *Ibid.* Appendix 30. The name of the author of the Appendix is not provided, but it is almost certainly by Meurling, as he wrote the report to which it is appended.
 29. *Ibid.* "Lessons Learned..." 4.4.18, p.4. It should be noted here that in Meurling's units the machine guns were carried unattached, in trucks, and were unloaded for use. Hence, they were accustomed to working with a greater number of men per crew than were those in the Autocars of "A" and "B" Batteries.
 30. *Ibid.* "Lessons Learned," 9.7.18.
 31. War Diary, 1st CMMGB, Appendix 12, W. Walker, Lt. Col. Commanding Corps Machine Gun Gun Brigade to Corps Machine Gun Officer, Canadian Corps, 26 March 1918.
 32. Meurling, "Lessons Learned", p.4.
 33. On this see Walker, "the Great German Offensive," p.408.
 34. NA RG 9 III Vol. 3946 Folder 26, Report by Lt. Col. Walker, 2.3.18.
 35. Meurling, "Lessons Learned," p.8.
 36. Edmonds, *Military Operations*, p.400.
 37. Walker, "The Great German Offensive," p.407. See also Logan and Levey, pp. 171-172.
 38. Logan and Levey, p. 195. A second Autocar, under Lieutenant R.H. Thompson, was lost to the Germans on 31 March on the Amiens-Roye road. It was hit by German artillery and became stuck in a shell hole, three of its crew being wounded. They managed to dismantle the machine guns before abandoning it, however. That night a party returned in hopes of retrieving the car, but it had been hit by more enemy fire and it was a burnt-out wreck.
 39. See, for example, B.H. Liddell-Hart, *History of the First World War* (London: Pan Books, 1970), p.396.
 40. I would like to thank Ms. Joanne Neville of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the Ottawa office for checking their data base for me, not once, but twice!
 41. Logan and Levey, "Canadian Machine Gun Corps," p. 176. Even Meurling's batteries, whose guns, as noted, had to be unloaded before operation, were, by 26 March, using two-man crews only, "owing to the small number of men available".
 42. In D.K. Riddle and D.G. Mitchell, *The Military Cross to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1915-1921* (Winnipeg: Kirkby-Marlton Press, 1991), p.23.
 43. NAC RG 150 1992-93/166 Box 510, File of Major William Falconer Battersby.
 44. *Ibid.* Box 593, File of No. 174221 Private Osmond John Culbert Begin.
 45. *Ibid.* Box 1102, File of No. 469021 Private Donald Douglas Brooks.
 46. *Ibid.* Box 1911, File of No. 45509 Private Robert Walker Connell
 47. *Ibid.* Box 9946, File of No. 57957 Sergeant Cyril Vidal
 48. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: the Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), p.200.
 49. *Ibid.* Appendix A , "Statistical Profile of the CEF," pp.277-279.
 50. *Dad the Motors and the Fifth Army Show*, pp.25-27. I should note that I have not seen this information corroborated in any other source, nor does Lynch repeat it in his recently-published, more celebratory account, *The Glory of their Times* (2001). Some corroborative evidence would be welcome.

51. See Logan and Levey, pp.195-201.

52. *Ibid.* p.201.

53. Hamilton Fyfe. "With the British Armies in France," extract from *Daily Mirror* [1 April 1918], in War Diary, 1 CMMGB.

54. G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-191* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1964), p.372.

55. Walker, "The Great German Offensive," p.412.

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USED BOOK SALE

The Friends of the Canadian War Museum is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to provide support for the Canadian War Museum. One of their main ongoing activities is to raise funds to assist the CWM. In this regard, the Friends have begun to sell used military history books, donated

from collections of members and others, over the internet. About sixty books have been listed as of the end of May, and more will go up as the time of volunteers allows. The current books have been categorized by the topics of naval, aviation, pre-20th century, biography/memoir and war novels. World War I books will go up soon. Please take a look at www.friends-amis.org/internetsales.html. All proceeds are used towards supporting the CWM.

