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# Edson's Unknown Soldier

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A Sergeant in the 1st  
Canadian Motor  
Machine Gun Brigade

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Galloway Station Museum

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In 1990, a uniform (comprised of the jacket, pants, belt, and puttees) was donated to the Galloway Station Museum. It was originally worn by a sergeant in Canada's 1<sup>st</sup> Motor Machine Gun Brigade during WWI. No further information is known about him at this time.

## A Brief History of The Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade

The Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade was a unit of the Canadian Army in service during World War I. Being the first fully motorized unit in service under the British Empire, the Brigade is thought to be the first of its kind created and used during WWI.<sup>1</sup> With the help of monetary donations from wealthy Canadian businessmen including politician Clifford Sifton - a grand total of about \$150,000 - the Canadian Automobile Machine Gun Brigade No. 1 was formed in September of 1914.<sup>2</sup> Initially, the unit was comprised of twenty vehicles: eight armoured machine gun cars, five trucks meant for carrying additional ammunition and supplies and one for gasoline, four trucks for transporting soldiers, a repair truck, and an ambulance.<sup>3</sup> The first commanding officer and major of the unit was Raymond Brutinel.<sup>4</sup>

In June of 1915, the Brigade had arrived to the fight on mainland Europe, and was given its official name of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.<sup>5</sup> By that time battles had settled into mainly trench warfare, and so for some time most of the unit's vehicles were left unused.<sup>6</sup>

During the following year, the unit was expanded. It consisted of the two original batteries, as well as three new ones.<sup>7</sup> In military terms, a battery is an "artillery subunit of guns, men, and vehicles."<sup>8</sup> Each

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit: Raymond Brutinel and the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigades of the First World War," *Canadian Military History*, 10, no. 1 (2001): 44-57, <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=cmh> (accessed January 22, 2015), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Baylaucq, and Dominique Baylaucq, *Brutinel: The Extraordinary Story of a French Citizen Brigadier-General in the Canadian Army*, (St. Albert: Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert, 2014), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit," 46.

<sup>4</sup> Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit," 47.

<sup>6</sup> Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit," 47.

battery was made of two sections, which included two armoured cars with two machine guns each, as well as supply vehicles and motorcycles. This new Brigade supported The Canadian Corps (who traveled by foot) in many famous battles, including those at Vimy Ridge and Arras in France, and Passchendaele and Ypres in Belgium.<sup>9</sup>

It wasn't until 1918 that the Brigade was used as a fully motorized unit. In March and April of 1918, the unit fought alongside French and English forces in both offensive and withdrawal operations, but played a significant role in halting the German offensive.<sup>10</sup> A second Motor Machine Gun Brigade was formed in June 1918, and in the following November Brutinel was named commander of all mobile units in the Canadian Corps; these units were known as Brutinel's Brigade.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of the war, the Brutinel Brigade grew from some 130 men to well over 8000. During the years fighting in France, 5777 men were killed in action.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit," 49.

<sup>8</sup> Oxford Dictionaries, online, s.v. "battery,"

[http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/battery?searchDictCode=all](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/battery?searchDictCode=all).

<sup>9</sup> Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Pulsifer, "Canada's First Armoured Unit," 51-52.

<sup>12</sup> Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 34.

## References:

Baylaucq, Dominique, and Jacques Baylaucq. *Brutinel: The Extraordinary Story of a French Citizen Brigadier-General in the Canadian Army*. St. Albert: Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert, 2014.

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