

Mark IV Tank – Cambrai 20th November 1917

we felt them before we saw them -
a great tremor under our feet, a rattle of chains a deathly beat
lumbering lurching crawling through the acrid smoke of the bleak November skies
blind man sway stopping at nothing crushing all before;
deep caterpillar track ploughing through
soft butter trenches
barbed wire barricades chewed and spat out
pressed into the corpse laden heavy mud below
feeble defences against this deadly demon
up and over and up and over
relentless, unfaltering
up and over and up and over
as far as the eye could see;
a mighty swarm that would end this war of wars.
the cannons roared and guns spat out shot after shot
but still they went on, churning barbarian beast
bullets and missiles served for a feast
swatted away as little flies
eyeless undaunting and on and on and on...
architects of war far away
in closeted club rooms
telegrammed praise for each other
to the sound of clinking glasses;
and as we dug in for another night
praying for sleep and to see the dawn
the Blighty bells rang forth
public house chatter and skip in the step
as newspaper presses churned out hope
and the fleeting bitter taste of triumph.