

lines. It did not define any assault objectives and grouped the points identified arbitrarily (for example, note that B16 is just south of C9).

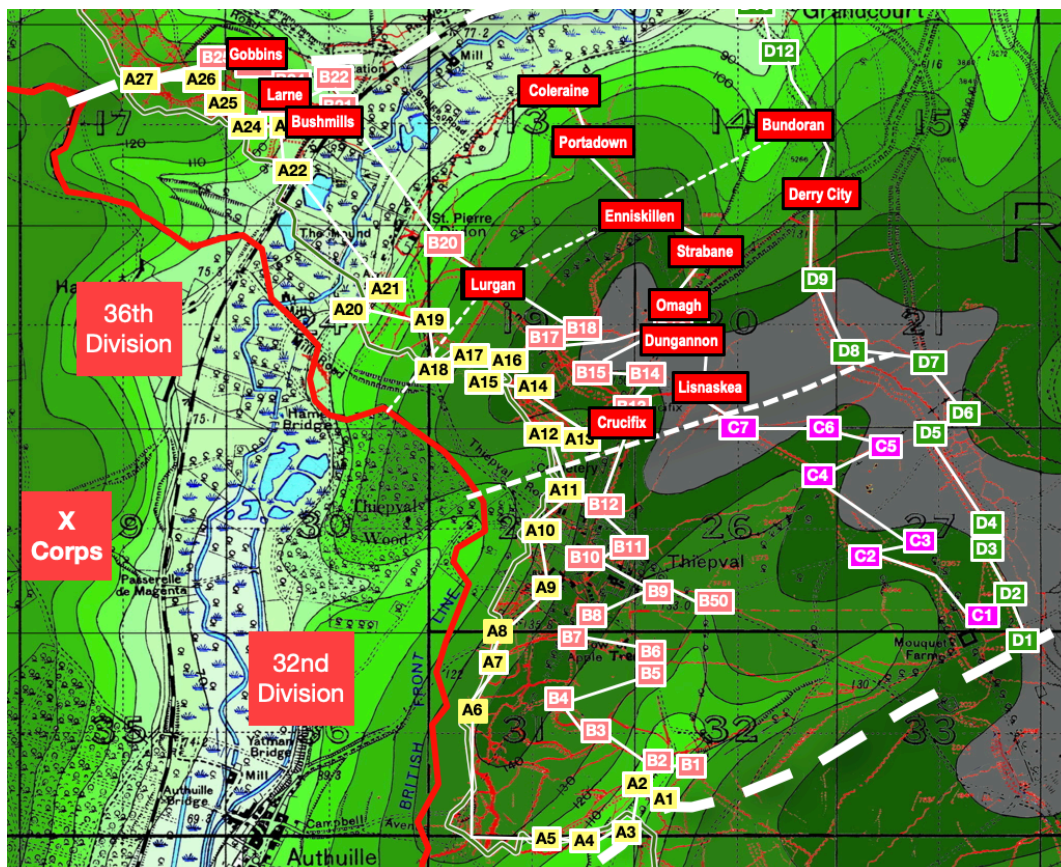


Figure 205 - X Corps | 36 Division | The points on the map overlaid with the planned strongpoints, named after Irish towns⁹²⁰

But from this map, objectives could be defined as strings of letters:

The task of the 109th Brigade in the Right Section is to attack the 'A' and 'B' lines within their section and to advance as far as a line drawn from C.8 (LISNASKEA) - B.16 (DUNGANNON) to the GRANDCOURT - THIEPVAL road at C.9 (exclusive).

Figure 206 - X Corps | 36 Division | Objective on page 3 of Place's plan of 14 June

The forces were grouped into four sections: Left, Left-centre, Right-centre and Right. The Left-centre section was astride the Ancre and no troops were allocated to it. The sections' starting points are shown below.

⁹²⁰ A. A. Montgomery wrote 'For our future map substitute letters and numbers for the Irish names & take them round to Place and see if he agrees', Undated memo in WO 95/2491/2.

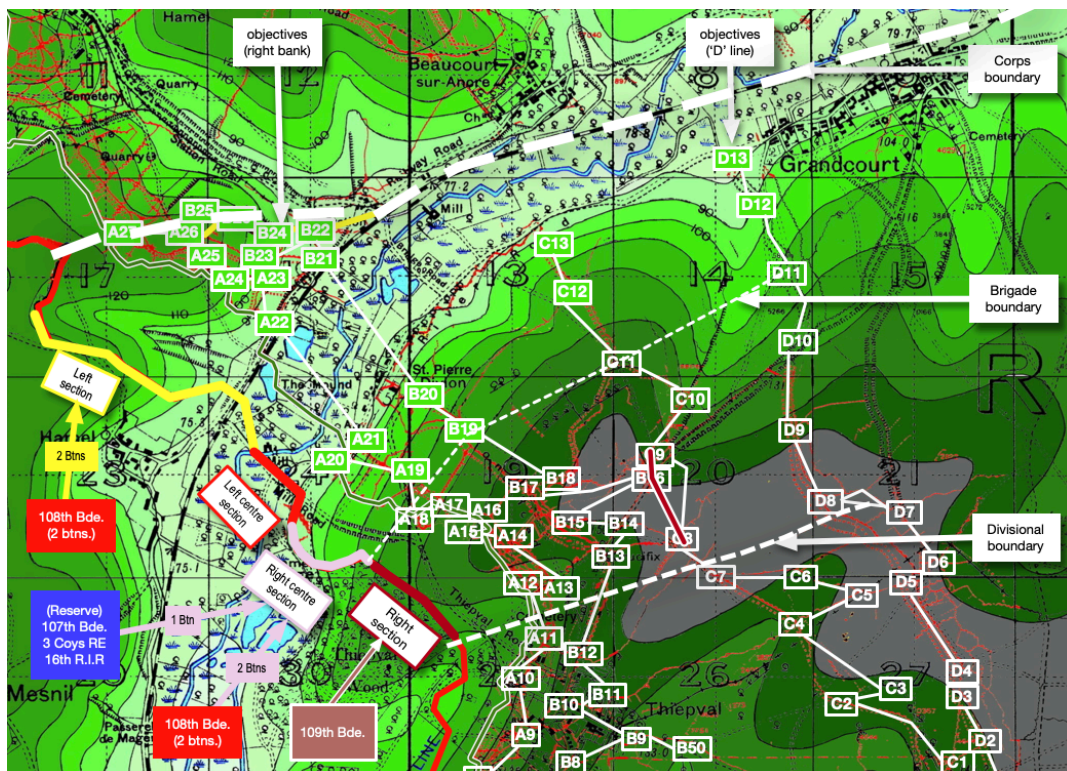


Figure 207 - X Corps | 36 Division | Place's plan of 14 June

Four attacks were planned. The first three were allocated to the sections. That of the Left section is shown below.

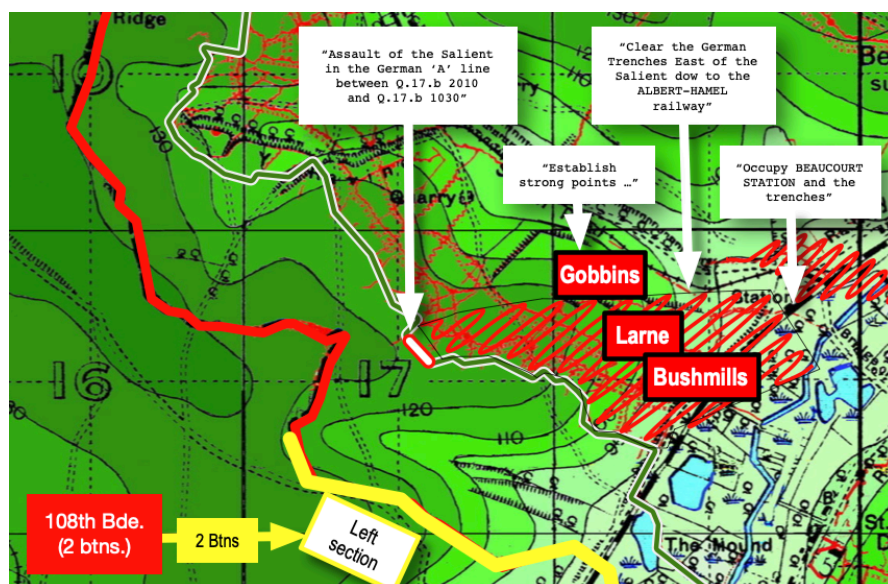


Figure 208 - X Corps | 36 Division | Left section's objectives in Place's plan of 14 June. The divisional plan's starting point is shown in red and white. The Brigade plan's starting point is shown in yellow

The Centre-right section..

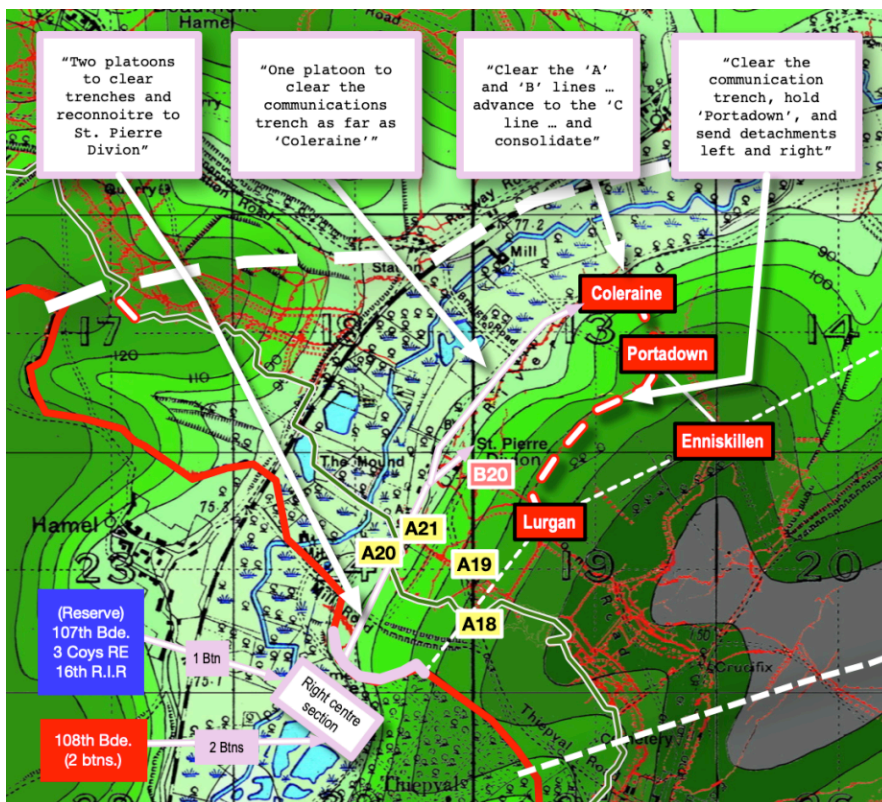


Figure 209 - X Corps | 36 Division | Centre-right section's objectives in Place's plan of 14 June

... and the Right section.

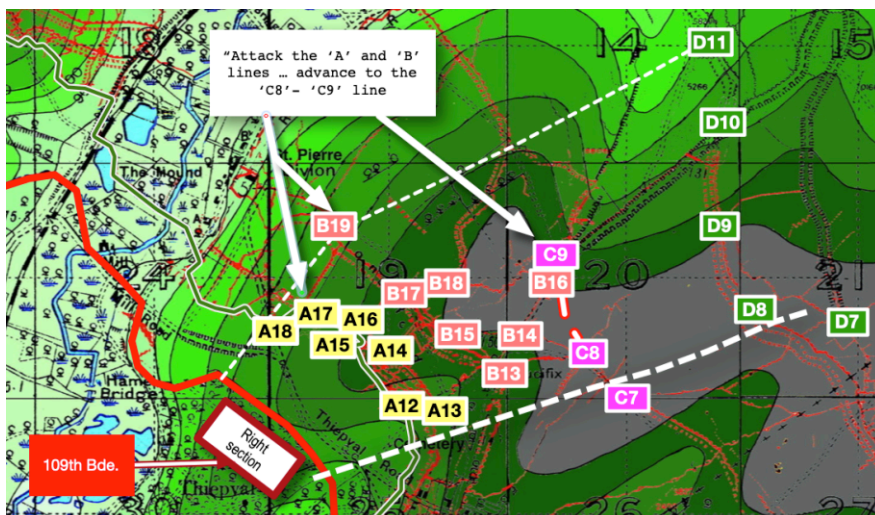


Figure 210 - X Corps | 36 Division | Right section's objectives in Place's plan of 14 June

The attack on the fourth objective is shown below.

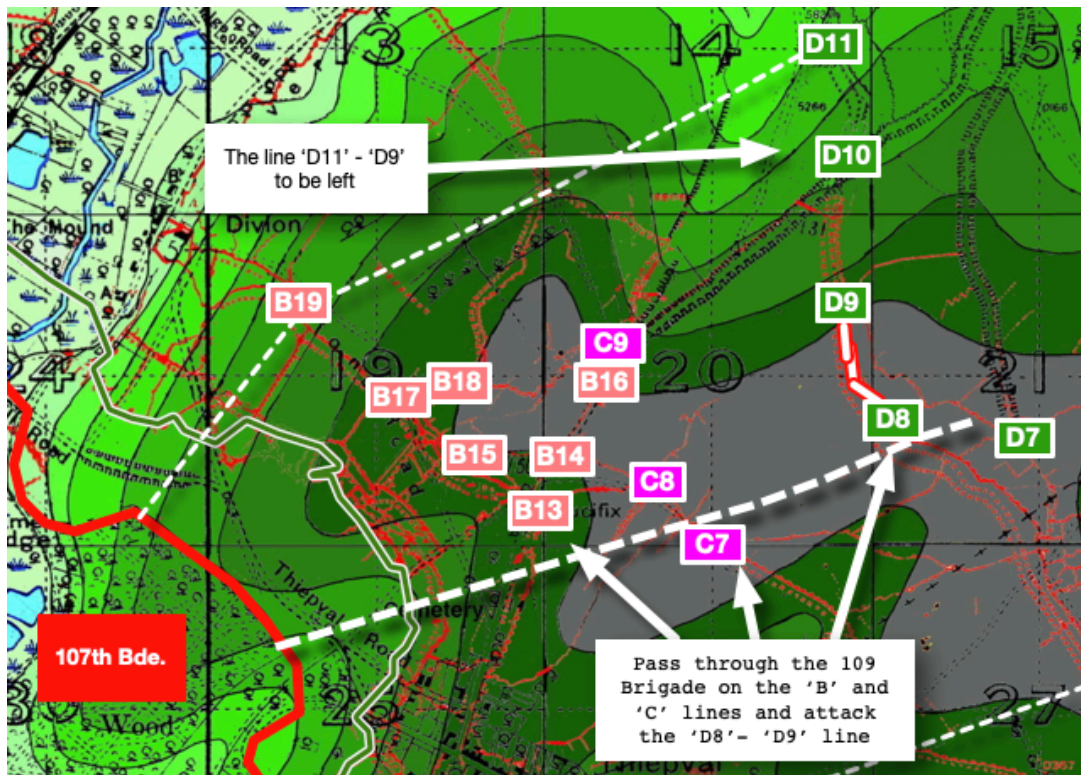


Figure 211 - X Corps | 36 Division | 107 Brigade's objectives in Place's plan of 14 June

Three battalions of the 107 Brigade would 'pass through' the 109 Brigade on the 'B' and 'C' lines and attack the 'D' line between points D8 and D9.

The attack approach had each battalion leaving the front trench under cover of the bombardment and lying on the ground, within 160 yards of the German front line, in the formations they would adopt for the attack. The timing is shown below

Time	Event
0.0	Artillery lifts off the front trenches and moves to the support trenches
0.3	Artillery lifts off the support trenches and moves to the B line ⁹²¹
0.18	Artillery lifts off the B line and moves to the C line
1.18	Artillery lifts off the C line and moves to the D line
2.38	Artillery forms a barrage behind the D line

Table 3 - X Corps | 36 Division | Artillery lifts in Place's plan of 14 June

⁹²¹ The lift off the support trenches and move to the B line was presumably to occur at 3 minutes and not 30 minutes past the hour.

The failure to identify the barrage lines led to the divisional Artillery adding a further 'Reserve' line to their plan onto which the artillery would lift at 0.18 and from which it would move to the C line at 0.28. This was not reflected in Place's plan or any amendment.

Of the four attacks, that of the Left section (Figure 208) would be unexceptionable save for the bizarre starting point whose choice was presumably due to Place's and Nugent's inability to read a map. The plan of the 108 Brigade identifies the limits of the starting point as being..

'From the Ancre to the left boundary of the divisional attack'
[Q.17.a.6.3½]⁹²²

That of the Centre-right section optimistically required a single platoon to clear a communications trench 1000 yards long. The Right section was not expected to attack any point north of C9, which would have left German forces occupying the northern trenches from C9 to C11 as unmolested as those in trenches from points D9 to D11 from the 107 Brigade. Perhaps realising this, Place ordered that having captured point D9 the 107 Brigade should 'extend to its left to D11' in preparation for an advance to D13, which would have taken it north of the Brigade boundary.⁹²³ There is no mention of the Schwaben redoubt anywhere in the plan although it was shown on the map (see Figure 204 on page 336) and 36 Division briefly captured it on July 1.⁹²⁴ The contents of the plan were otherwise conventional for the time, but sparse with 19 pages. Nugent was not p.s.c. but Place was and his many failings showed the limits of the Staff course.⁹²⁵

7.3.3 32 Division's Plans

Two views of the battlefield were found in 32 Division's war diary:

⁹²² Griffith, Operation Order No. 1, of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/2504/1.

⁹²³ Sharrock, C. S. Appendix E, 'Intensive bombardment and table of lifts' of 20 June 1916 in WO 95/2491/2.

⁹²⁴ One of four major German strongpoints near Thiepval. Edmonds, J. E., ... 1916, Vol I, p. 403.

⁹²⁵ Chasseaud, Peter, *Rats Alley*, Spellmount (Stroud, 2006), p. 307.

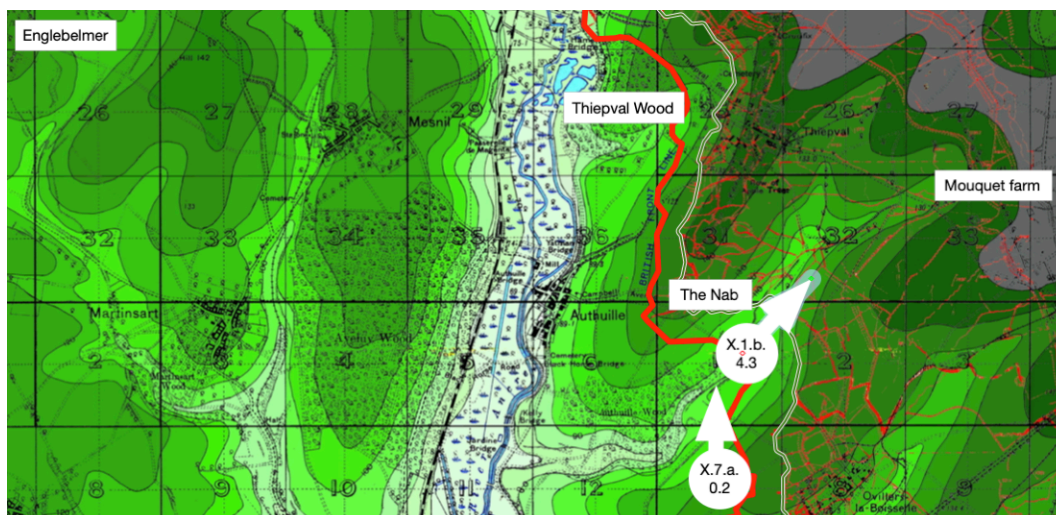
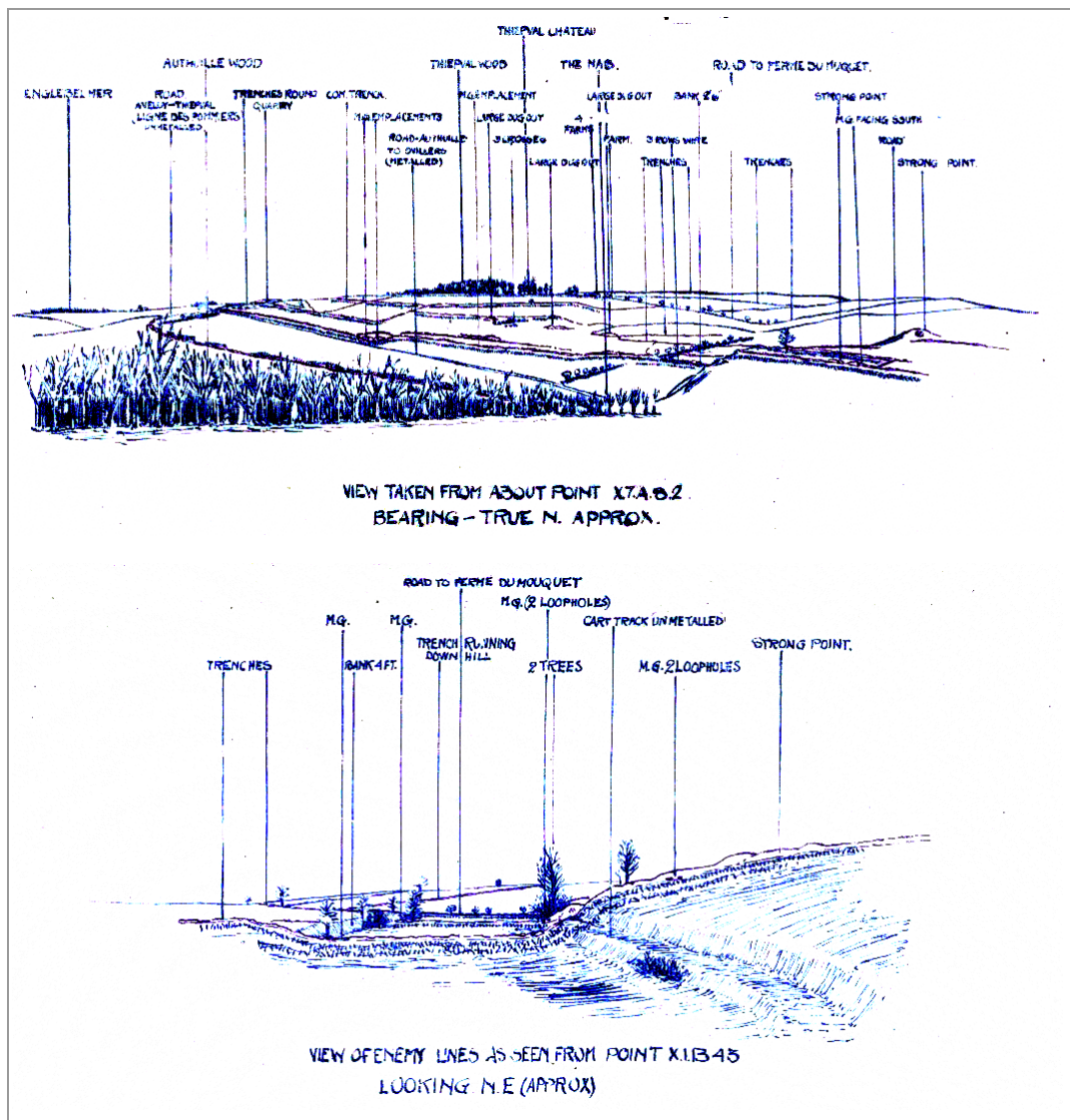


Figure 212 - X Corps | 32 Division | Battlefield view locations

32 Division's plan was released by Lieutenant-Colonel E. G. Wace on the on 18 May. It had 29 pages, well-supported by 14 maps.

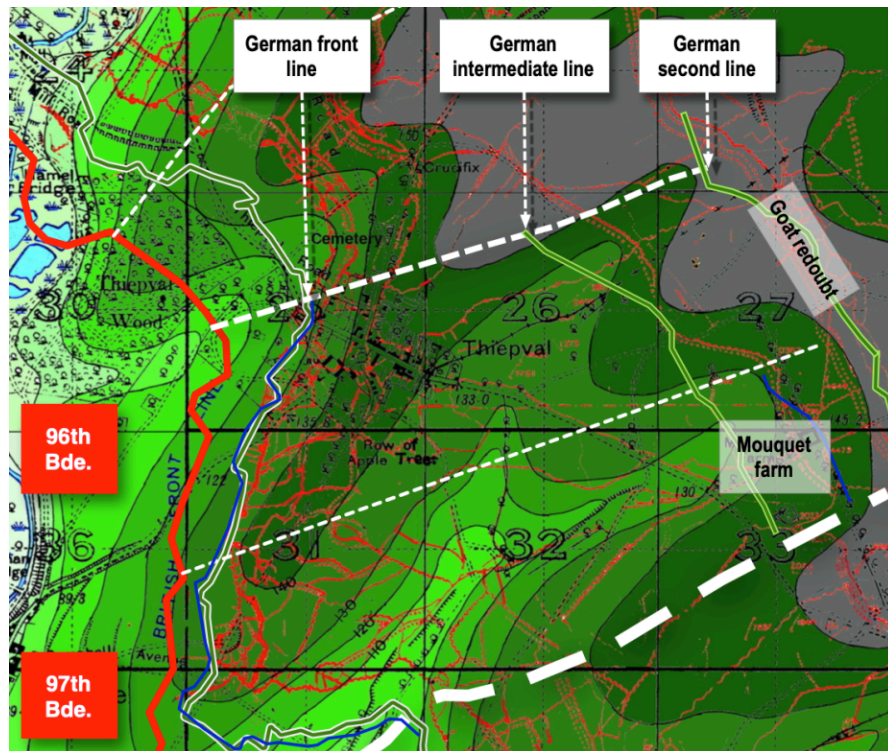


Figure 213 - X Corps | 32 Division | Objectives

The last of the objectives was mis-specified and began well into 36 Division's area. There were also careless inconsistencies between the infantry plan ... ⁹²⁶

(c) German 2nd Line System between R.34.a.o.9. and R.21.c.1.7.

... and the Artillery plan: ⁹²⁷

(o) German 2nd Line System between R.34a 0.9 and R.31c 1.7.

The Brigades would assault in columns each two platoons wide. 97 Brigade would be followed by 14 Brigade which would pass through it and attack the German second line under cover of a smoke barrage, while protected by artillery from counter-attacks by lifts J, K and L. ⁹²⁸ Once the positions were captured,

⁹²⁶ Wace, E. G., 32nd Division OO 24, Assault of 17 June 1916 in WO 95/2367/4.

⁹²⁷ Gibbs, 32 divisional artillery OO 22 of 22 June 1916 in WO 95/2375/2.

⁹²⁸ See page 325.

strongpoints would be established, most of them in 32 Division's area. Each would be defended with an MG and a mortar.

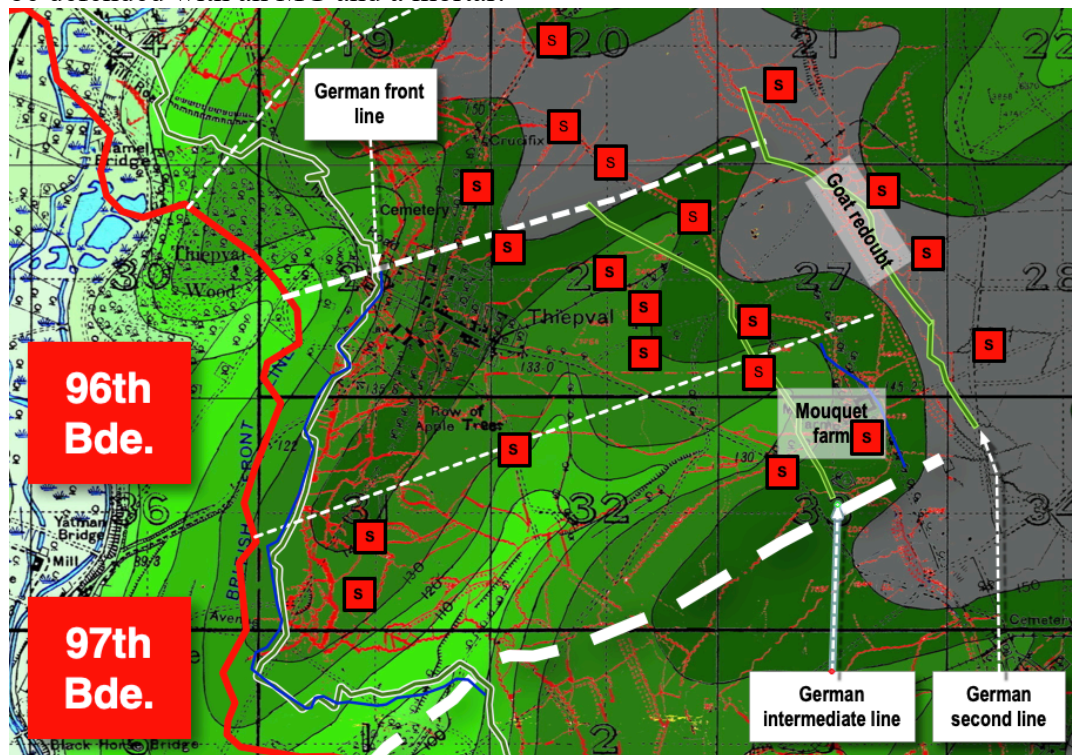


Figure 214 - X Corps | 32 Division | Strongpoints

The attack infrastructure was well-documented. Gas could be released if the Corps ordered it, but smoke would be used both to induce the enemy to man his parapets when they could be shot at, and to screen assaulting columns. Any undamaged wire would be cut with Bangalore torpedoes and wire-cutters. Signalling stations were properly-referenced in an extensive communications plan. Appendices with maps and correctly-formed map references covered supply dumps, transport, ammunition, water, rations, traffic control, prisoner management and intelligence. Unusually the plan also included details of the roads and wells behind the German lines, maps of Thiepval and the Ferme du Mouquet, and assessments of the local houses.

7.3.4 Artillery Plans

The attack would be supported by a series of artillery lifts.

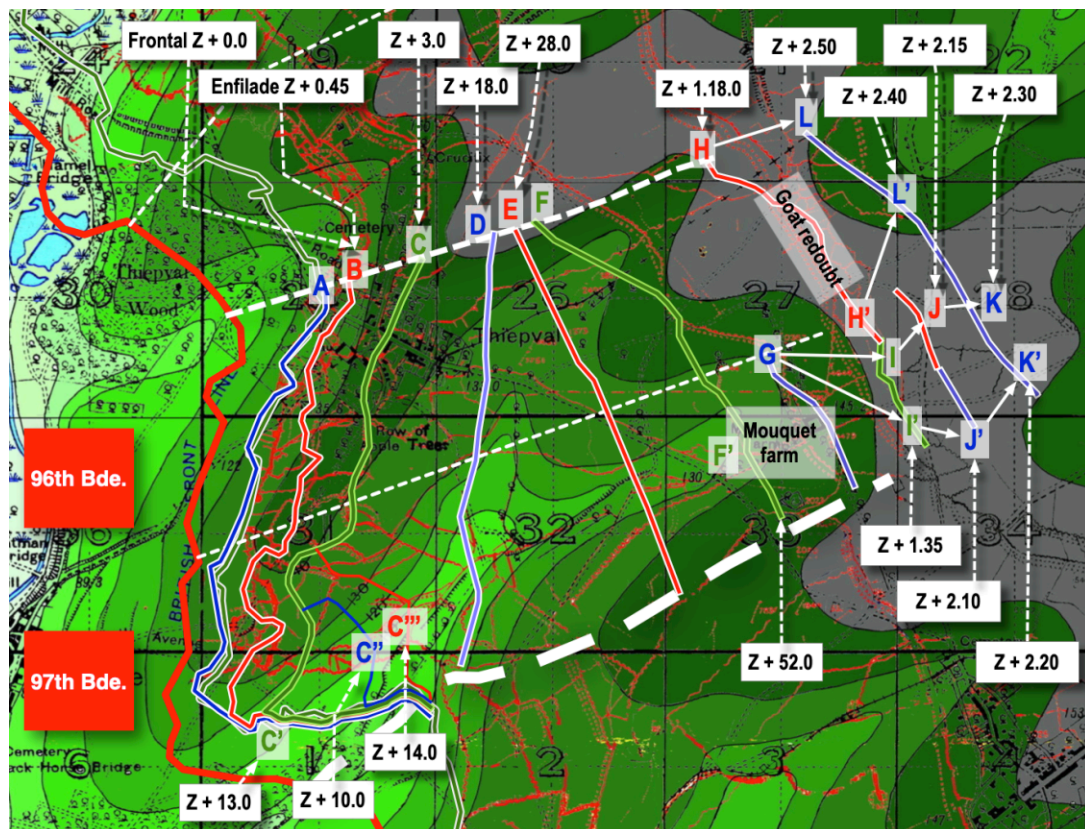


Figure 215 - X Corps | 32 Division | Timetable of artillery lifts⁹²⁹

The timetable of lifts shows the same unconcern that the troops might lose the barrage as did that of the 4 Division on page 320. The 1800 yards from lower D to lower E would require that troops ran at 10 miles per hour.⁹³⁰

While the sheer improbability of the troops maintaining the planned timetable would have been one factor in the attack's failure, another cause was that many battalions

‘never got any orders as to the time of the attack’ until two hours after it was planned to occur.⁹³¹ Figure 194 shows that while Captain L. W. Kentish (14 Brigade), Major R. S. Popham (96 Brigade.) and Major J. Horwood (97 Brigade.) had sent out their orders by 22 June, no plans

⁹²⁹ WO 95/2390/1 and WO 95/2375/2.

⁹³⁰ Current British Army Load March speed is 8 miles in under 2 hours. Coakley, Sarah L.; Myers, Stephen D; Walker, Ella F.; et al. 1.5 mile run time and body mass predict 8 mile loaded march performance, irrespective of sex', in 'Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport', Elsevier, (Philadelphia, 2020).

⁹³¹ Hall, Brian N., *Communications and British Operations on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (CUP), Citing 'Operations of 32nd Division, 1 July 1916', Fourth Army Records, Vol. 1, IWM.

can be found for eight of the battalions,⁹³² and only four wrote their orders in good time. Of these, the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers (96 Brigade) appears to have borrowed a copy of the 14 Brigade's OO 37 of 22 June to use as a template to the extent of echoing the 14 Brigade's OO number (37). The 19th Lancashire's copy is dated 26 June.

Of all the files of the entire Fourth Army, the only ones showing a response to A. A. Montgomery's call for a plan in the event of a breakthrough was that of 32 Division.

⁹³² WO 95/2394/1. The battalions were 5/6 Royal Scots, 16 Northumberland Fusiliers, 15 Lancashire Fusiliers, 16 Lancashire Fusiliers, 11 Border Regiment (Lonsdale), 2 KOYLI, 16 Highland Light Infantry and 17 Highland Light Infantry.

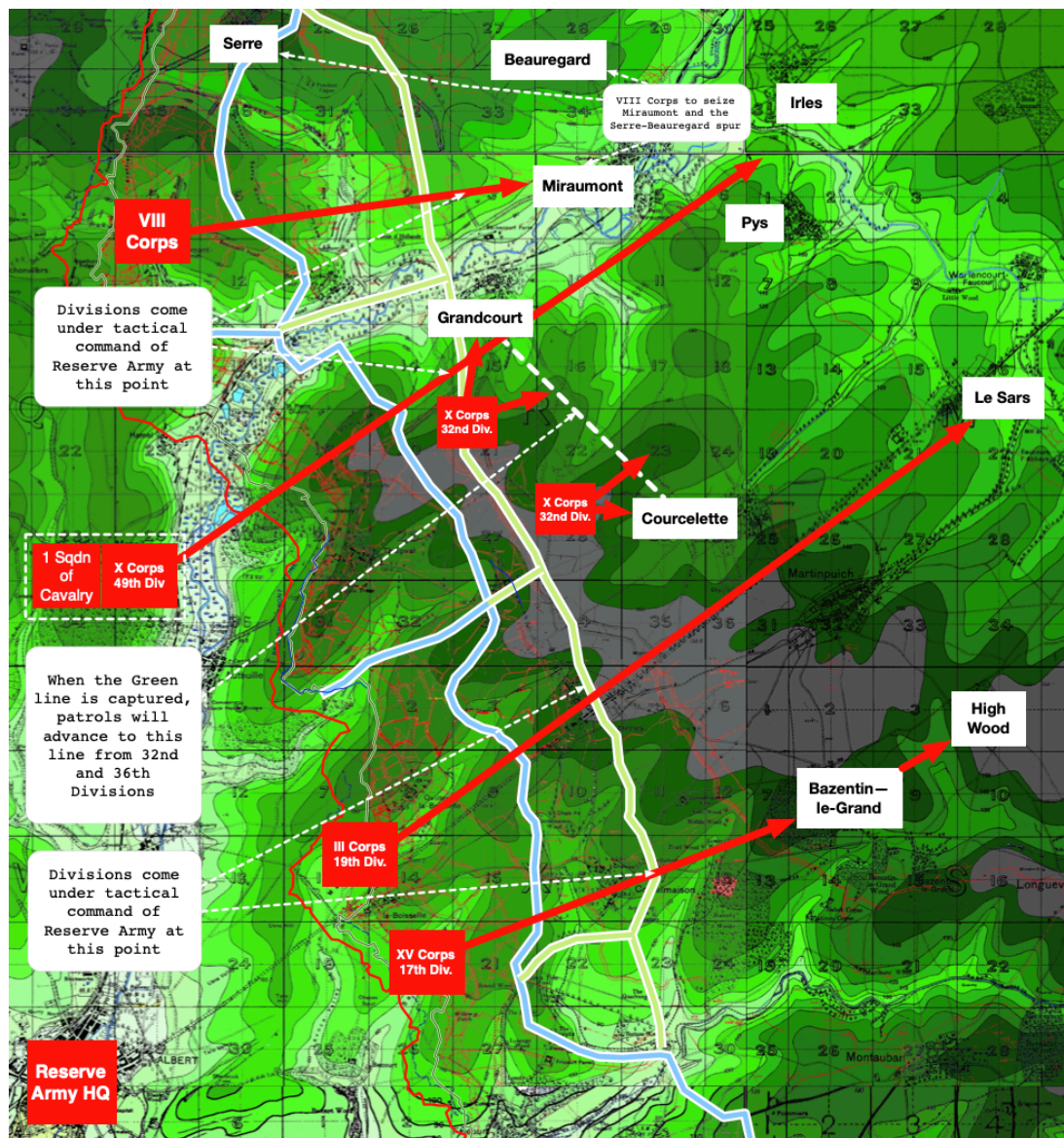


Figure 216 - X Corps | 32 Division | Proposed breakthrough plan

The breakthrough envisaged was clearly a complete collapse of the German forces along the Somme. The possibility of exploiting a break-in to create a breakthrough was not mentioned, nor was Bapaume. As a plan it lacked focus and egregiously ignored the principle of concentration of force and how such a breakthrough might be recognised and signalled.⁹³³

⁹³³ Wace, E. G., E. G., 'Action in the event of a breakthrough' of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/2367/4. The plan may simply have been created to satisfy Gough, of whom Rycroft was allegedly terrified. (Wace, E. G. to Edmonds, J. E., 30 November 1936 in CAB 45/238 Cited in Robbins, 'British generalship'. See also page 222.

7.3.5 49 Division's Plans

The 49 Division was held in reserve and its officers had more time on their hands.⁹³⁴ They wrote a series of scenarios and sent them to X Corps for approval. Each scenario was articulated by a situation, a solution and comments. These are the first examples on file of any unit in the BEF considering possible outcomes to a battle.⁹³⁵

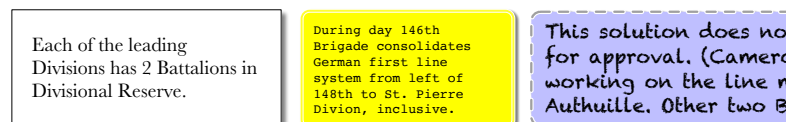


Figure 217 - X Corps | 49 Division | Examples of a situation, a solution and a comment

A situation can be seen as a problem statement and a solution as the actions to be taken to solve the problem. The text in each diagram is taken directly from the original. An example is shown below.

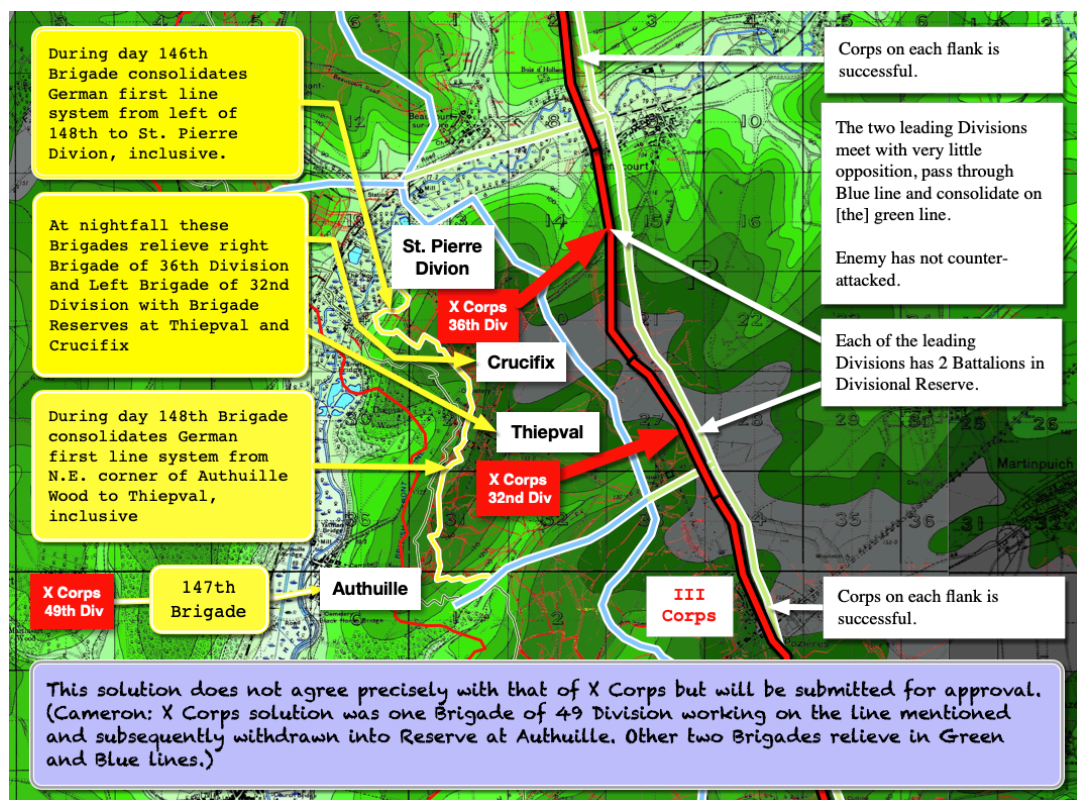


Figure 218 - X Corps | 49 Division | 1st scenario - success across the

⁹³⁴ Henley A. M., Lieutenant-Colonel, 49 Division OO 45 of 24 June 1916 in WO 95/2765/4.2.

⁹³⁵ Henley A. M. Lieutenant-Colonel, GSO1 49 Division, Memo to Cameron, A. R. BGGs, X Corps, 12 May 1916 in WO 95/2765/4.2.

board

All has gone well: all divisions have advanced equally.

The dominant concerns of these scenarios were consolidation, reliefs and movements; the morale of the enemy and of the British troops; the possibility of counter-attack, holding the front and ceding command to another division. Success implied that a line had been taken. No mention is made of preparation for an attack, what to do in the event of a breakthrough or the rôle of cavalry (the scenarios were written well before Montgomery issued his memorandum).⁹³⁶ The evident intent of these scenarios is to avoid losing a battle rather than to win one.

On 11 May Haig reviewed several commanders if not their plans. He believed General Morland of X Corps

‘thoroughly understands the nature of the operation’.
Rycroft of 32 Division

‘seemed to show more imagination of what the real situation required than ... other divisional Generals’.
but Pulteney of III Corps had

‘reached the limits of his capacity as a commander.’⁹³⁷
The next day Haig saw a demonstration of 18 Division, 53 Brigade, correctly ‘passing through’ (as required by SS 109) which provoked Haig’s ire:

‘I criticised the method of advance: each wave of troops was ordered to take a line of trench and consolidate it, while the wave next in rear moved through those holding the trench’ to the next line. This is difficult in peace and is not quite practical in war.’ Much valuable time is lost. Men should be trained to go forward to the maximum of their power, before the supporting unit is pushed through them.’⁹³⁸

SS109 states:

‘the assaulting column’ must go right through above ground to this objective in successive waves or lines, each ... carrying the whole forward to the objective. When a particular line ... [has] ... reached an objective ... it may be

⁹³⁶ Montgomery, A. A., Fourth Army No.32/3(G) of 14 June 1916 in WO 95/2765/4.2.

⁹³⁷ Entry of 11 May 1916 in Haig, Diary, WO 256/10.

⁹³⁸ Entry of 8 May 1916 in Haig, Diary, WO 256/10.

necessary to arrange for fresh troops to pass through others.’
 Either Haig had not read SS 109, or he failed to understand its implications.
 That he should have failed to notice or comment on the mis-formed map
 references of 32 Division implies either that he never read the plans, or that
 he did not realise that the officer who wrote them was incapable of planning.

7.4 III Corps Planning

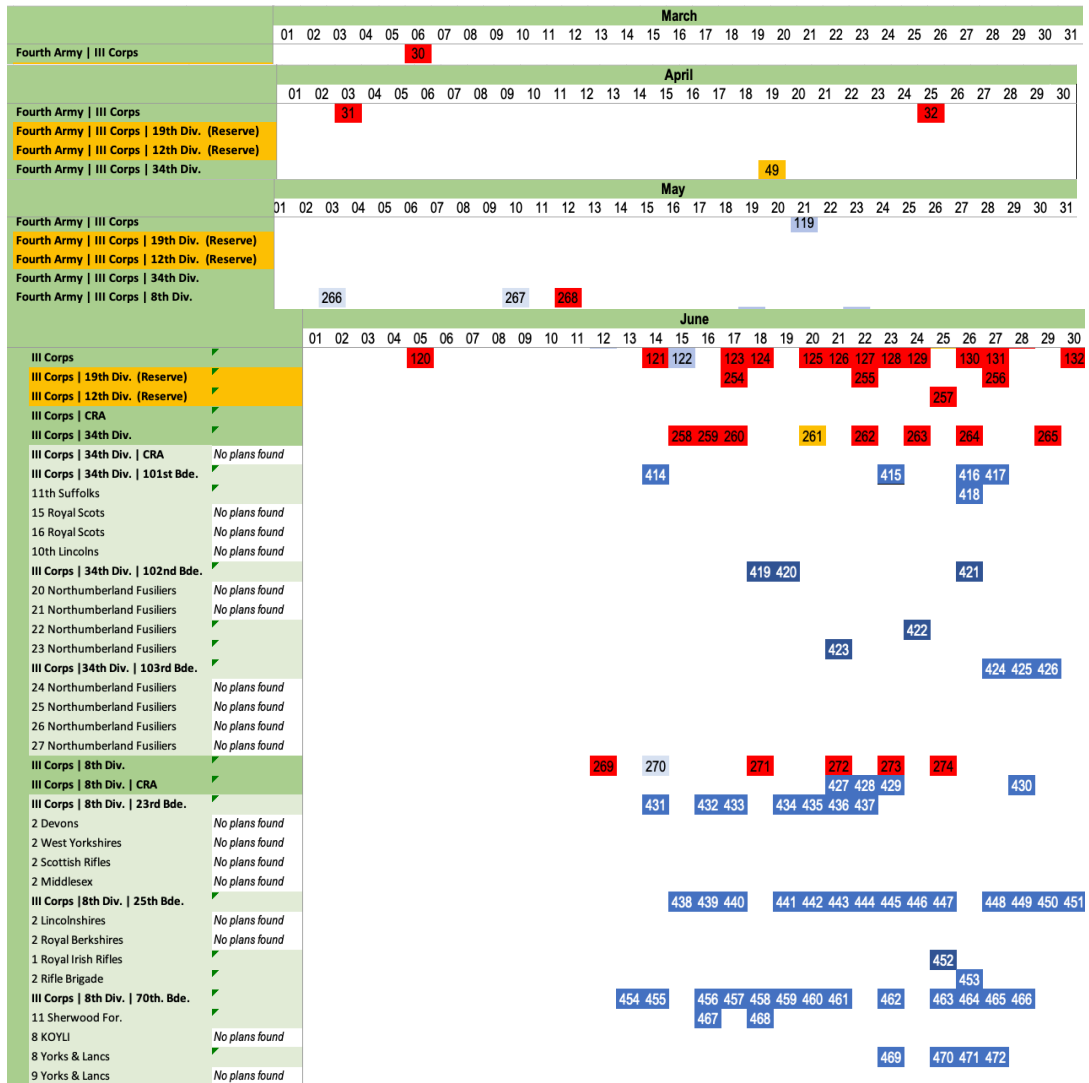


Figure 219 - III Corps | Planning timeline (see page 22 for the key)

III Corps became part of the Fourth Army on 25 March 1916.⁹³⁹ At some point it received a copy of GX3 from Rawlinson (annotated some time after 22 March) announcing the battle of the Somme, to show that III Corps was

939 WO 95/672/2.

involved.⁹⁴⁰ It then received the Fourth Army maps on 3 April,⁹⁴¹ which Rawlinson explained to the corps commanders on 16 April,⁹⁴² yet only on 20 June did Brigadier-General C. F. Romer call a Corps conference to discuss Operation Order No 70 of 14 June defining the III Corps rôle in the battle.

The conference itself seems to have achieved little other than providing A. A. Montgomery with a captive audience for his untimely requests, encouragements relayed from Rawlinson and platitudes:

We are rather in the dark in so far that we do not know what the enemy is going to do ...⁹⁴³

III Corps faced several problems including the terrain and the defences erected by the Germans.

⁹⁴⁰ [30] Montgomery, A. A., GX3, Somme battle warning of 3 March 1916 in WO 95/672/2.

⁹⁴¹ [24] As footnote 723

Rawlinson forwards first plan to GHQ: Haig, Diary, WO 256/9

Rawlinson sends plans (Montgomery in G.X.3/1 referred to in WO 95/672/4.

Montgomery, A. A., Heavy artillery tasks, tables of 3 April 1916 in IWM 7.

⁹⁴² [26] Pitt-Taylor, Fourth Army conference notes in IWM 5.

Montgomery, Notes from a conference of 16 April in WO 158/321.

⁹⁴³ [122] Montgomery, A. A., Fourth Army Conference report including Notes in WO 95/672/5.

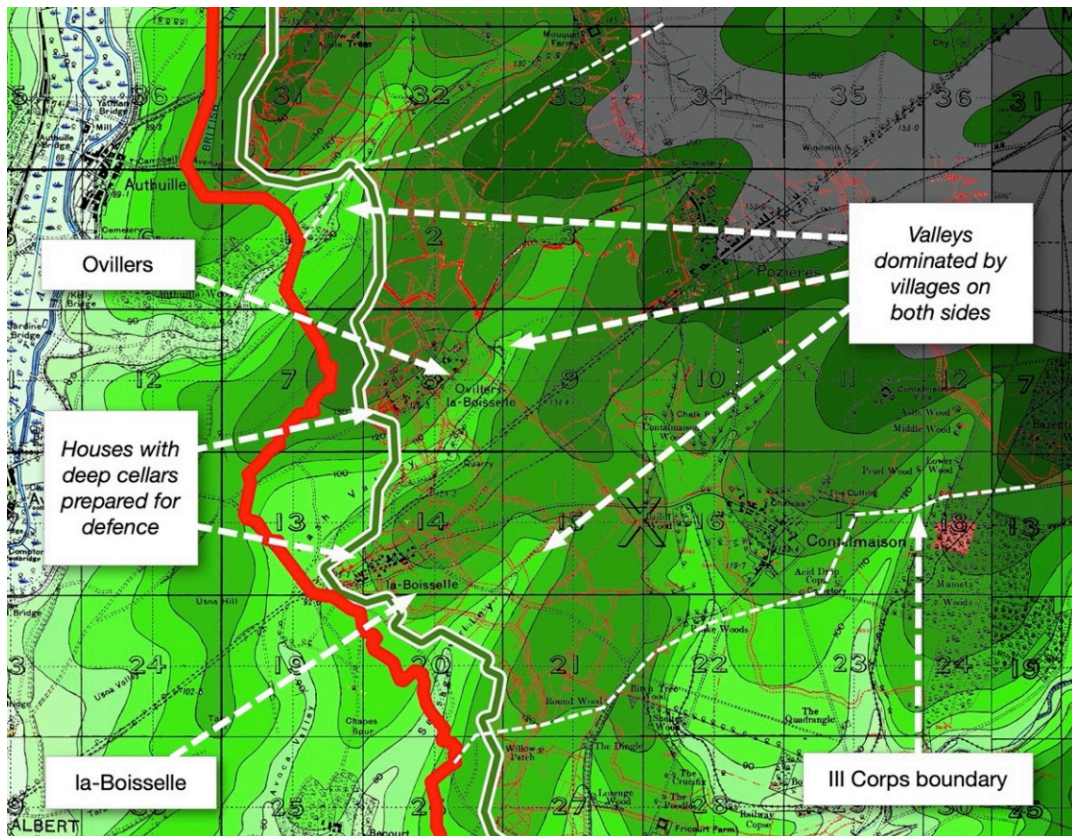


Figure 220 - III Corps | Terrain

Romer ignored these: in two pages and seven paragraphs his plan announced the names of the neighbouring Corps, the start line of the attack, the divisions involved, that mines would be fired and that cavalry, cyclists and a motor MG battery would remain behind.

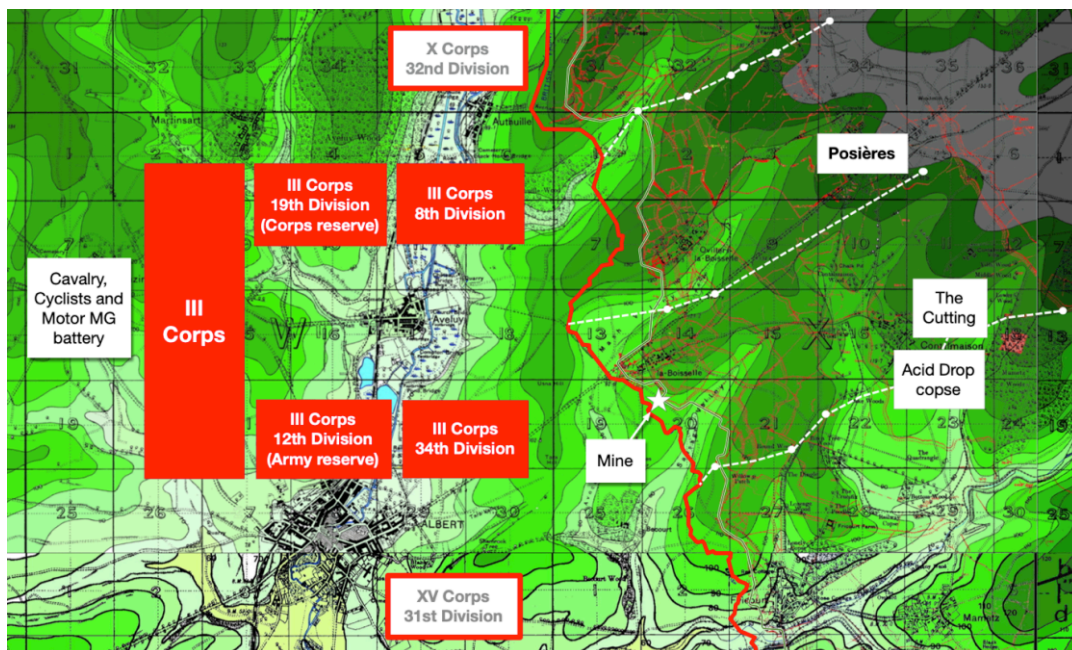


Figure 221 - III Corps | Operation order No. 70

The operations as described were simple: 34 Division on the right and 8 Division on the left would attack and seize Acid Drop Copse, the Cutting and Pozières. 19 Division was in Corps Reserve and 12 Division in Army Reserve (but the 12th might be sent south). No details of artillery support were mentioned. Each division would take a piece out of the front before it. Artillery details had previously been distributed 'to all concerned'.⁹⁴⁴ The delay in distributing the plan to divisions and Brigades led presumably to the lack of orders in the war diaries of 17 of the 24 battalions.

On 17 June Rawlinson..

‘went around III Corps and discussed their schemes with Corps and divisional commanders. All seems in order ...’⁹⁴⁵

This extraordinary failure to issue adequate plans in a timely manner appears to have provoked enough shame within III Corps for the production of a series of mostly undated and unsigned documents in the war diary for July listing the

‘principal points requiring preliminary preparation’ approximating to elements of a battle plan. These were generic in nature, unrelated to the Somme battlefield and seem entirely ‘pour l’histoire’ in purpose.⁹⁴⁶ Notably only 28% of the documents in the III Corps war diary of June 1916 derived from III Corps HQ. This compares with 100% of VIII Corps 92% of X Corps, 100% of XIII Corps and 94% of X Corps: III Corps had a major initiative problem.

⁹⁴⁴ [125] Anon., III Corps artillery plan change in WO 95/690/1.

Romer, III Corps operation order No. 70 of 20 June 1916 in WO 95/672/5.

⁹⁴⁵ Rawlinson, Diary, 17 June 1916, CHUR.

⁹⁴⁶ The exceptions were 'Indecipherable', 'Discrepancy in Appendix A.1 of O.B 1207. of 13 June 1916 and Butler, R., 'Bridging arrangements' of 15 September 1916 in WO 95/673/2.

7.4.1 Artillery planning

Romer's plan left the BGRA, Uniacke, free to plan as he wished. He produced one plan for each day, that for 'V' day is shown below.

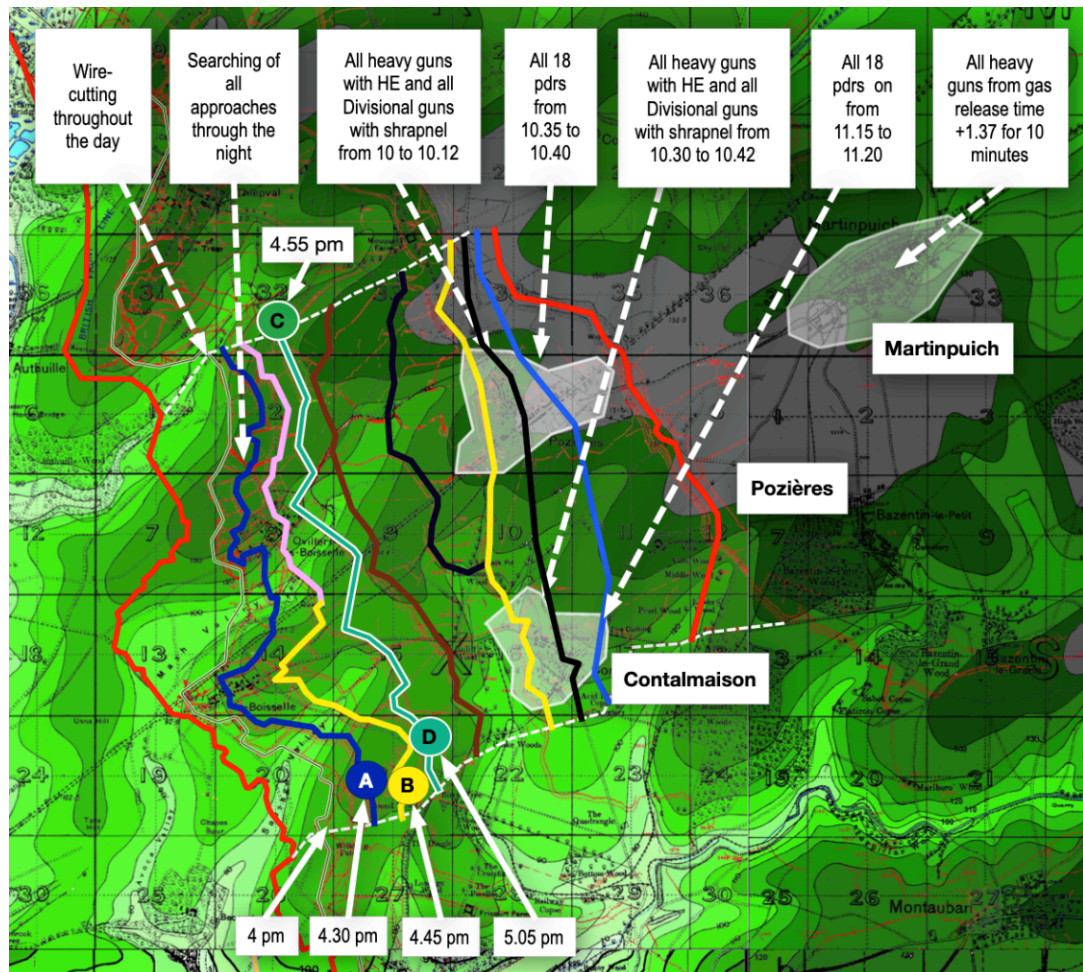


Figure 222 - III Corps | 8 Division | Artillery instructions No. 21 for 'V' day

III Corps and divisional artillery practised shelling villages and lines in anticipation of the assault. Each of the 4 days ('V'-'Y') was considered a rehearsal for 'Z' day: ammunition was restricted to one round per minute for the 18 pdrs. with heavier guns firing fewer.⁹⁴⁷ The plan ignored any cooperation with the RFC: instead officers were posted to observe the lifts and report to Corps HQ. While several target lines were shown on the map, only three were targeted on the 'V', 'and 'W' days, the rest were targeted on 'X'

⁹⁴⁷ The 18 pdr. could fire 20 rounds per minute but after the battle it was limited to 4 to limit recoil wear. Farndale 1986 p. 1.

day and possibly thereafter (those plans are missing from the file).⁹⁴⁸ The advance of the artillery into newly-captured ground was planned and routes and firing positions identified. Artillery would begin to move as soon as troops had captured the second objective.⁹⁴⁹

Cooperation with the RFC had been mentioned in April in connection with the bombardment of La Boisselle, but ignored until just before the offensive.⁹⁵⁰

Counter-battery groups had been called for by Rawlinson in March and established by 13 June long before a Counter-Battery Staff Office was mandated by the Fourth Army.⁹⁵¹ These groups each had an aircraft to cooperate with them in counter-battery work. Their first task was to 'report all active hostile batteries' which represents an early attempt to integrate information from the 'deep' battlefield.⁹⁵² Only III Corps, XIII Corps and VIII Corps planned constant counter-battery fire. For XV Corps such firing was No. 7 in the list of tasks of the Heavy and Siege artillery and X Corps ignored it.⁹⁵³ A very few 'particular targets' were identified by the GoC RA for destruction 'as early as possible', but not the villages of Owillers and la Boisselle.⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁴⁸ Broad, C., 'Artillery instructions Nos. 21-24'. in WO 95/689/2.

⁹⁴⁹ Broad, C., 'Instructions for the advance of the artillery' of 12 June 1916 and Broad, C. 'Routes for artillery advance' of 12 June 1916 in WO 95/689/2.

⁹⁵⁰ Broad, C., 'Artillery instructions for bombardment of La Boisselle of 6 June 1916' and Broad, C., 'Artillery instructions No 33' of 30 June 1916 in WO 95/689/2.

⁹⁵¹ Pitt-Taylor, Fourth Army conference call and agenda of 3 March 1916 in IWM 5, Fourth Army Conferences and Somme papers and Broad, C., 'Instructions for artillery action for days previous to 'U' day' of 13 June 1916 in WO 95/689/2.
Palazzo, Albert, P., 'The British Army's Counter Battery Staff Office and Control of the Enemy in World War I', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Jan., 1999), pp. 55, 74.

⁹⁵² Broad, C., 'Artillery instructions No 33' in WO 95/689/2.

⁹⁵³ Alexander, E. W., 'XV Corps instructions of 12 June 1916' in Edmonds, J. E., Appendices, p. 184.

⁹⁵⁴ Broad C., (RA/S/119) of 16 June 1916 in WO 95/689/2.

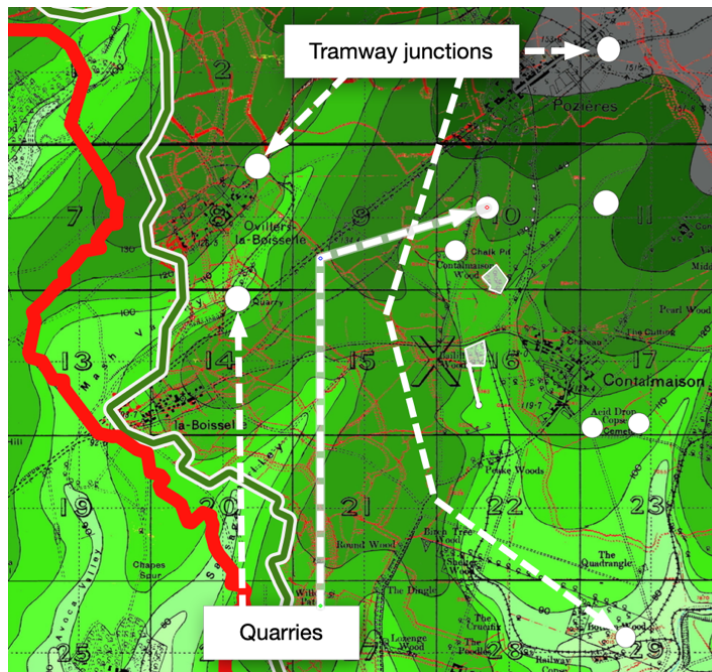


Figure 223 - III Corps | 8 Division | Heavy artillery special targets

Uniacke's approach was reviewed by Brigadier-General R.P. Benson, CHA, V Corps, in June 1916, but he made no mention of battle plans.⁹⁵⁵

7.4.2 8 Division planning

Despite the lack of leadership, by Romer, Lieutenant-Colonel H. Hill (GS01 of 8 Division) published a 13-page order on 12 June covering the intention, boundaries, objectives, distribution of Brigades, Field companies, preparation for assault, trench mortars, gas, MGs, wire-cutting, communications, movements, equipment, stores, dépôts, prisoners, first aid and security. With amendments and appendices 8 Division's orders covered 39 pages.⁹⁵⁶

In turn the Brigades planned: a model of the divisional front had been available for Brigade officers to view from 3 May, offensive actions were discussed on 10 May and each Brigade wrote their assault plans.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ Report on Visit to III Corps, by Brig. Genl. R.P. Benson, Commanding Heavy Artillery, V. Corps (presumably) in June 1916 in WO 95/757/3.

⁹⁵⁶ Hill, H., OO 107 of 12 June 1916 in WO 95/1674/4.3.

⁹⁵⁷ [431-437] in WO 95/1707, [438-450] in WO 95/1725-6, [454-465] in WO 95/2185.

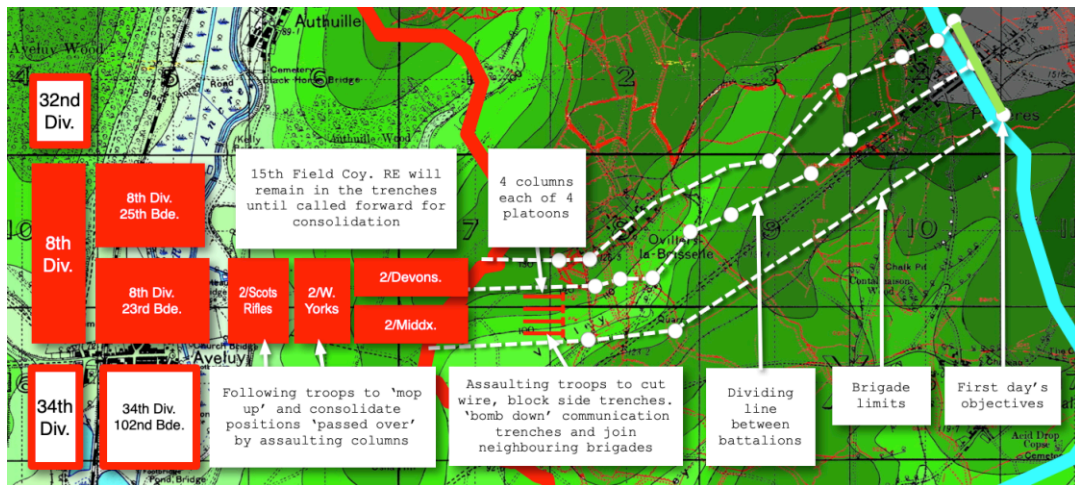


Figure 224 - III Corps | 8 Division | 23 Brigade | The structure of the assault

The 8 Division plan claimed it would attack with ‘all three Brigades in the front line’, but included the 102 Brigade which was part of 34 Division. The assault of the 23 Brigade was to be preceded by the five-day artillery bombardment and a 3in. mortar bombardment of the front trench eight minutes beforehand. British wire would be cut by hand to form lanes to permit egress from the trenches, leaving ‘chevaux de frises’ beyond each gap to impede any enemy attack, until the moment of assault. Troops were to be protected by barrages, with ‘lifts’ timed as shown in Figure 239 below.

Once the first objective was taken, a barrage would be formed ‘in front’ as it was being consolidated. This was not shown on any artillery map and the ambiguity of the phrase ‘in front’ rather than ‘immediately beyond’ could have become lethal.

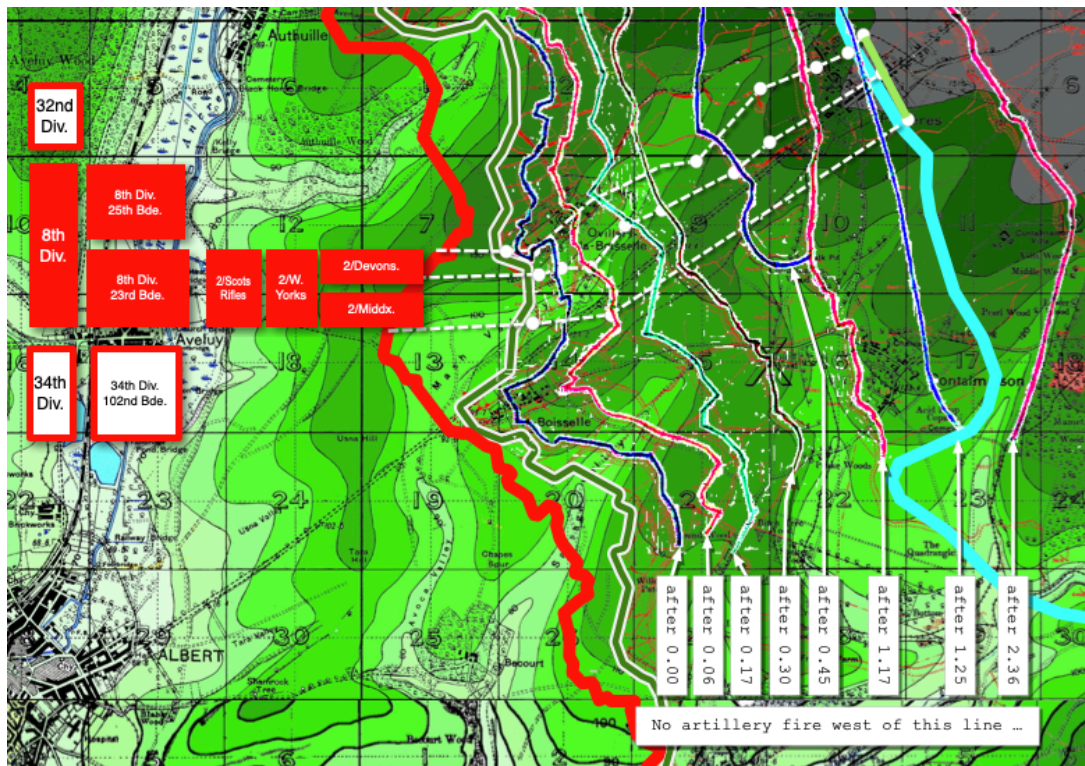


Figure 225 - III Corps | 8 Division | 23 Brigade | Field artillery support

However, the artillery responsibilities were confused and it is unclear how the infantry could be protected at the final objective if this were outside the area of the field artillery. Captain Charles Broad, then GSO RA III Corps

Artillery observed:

‘III Corps Artillery did not understand the barrage and jumped from one trench system to another without searching shell holes or destroying the concrete MG [posts].’⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁸ Leask, Anthony, *Putty*, Helion, Solihull, 2015, p. 400.

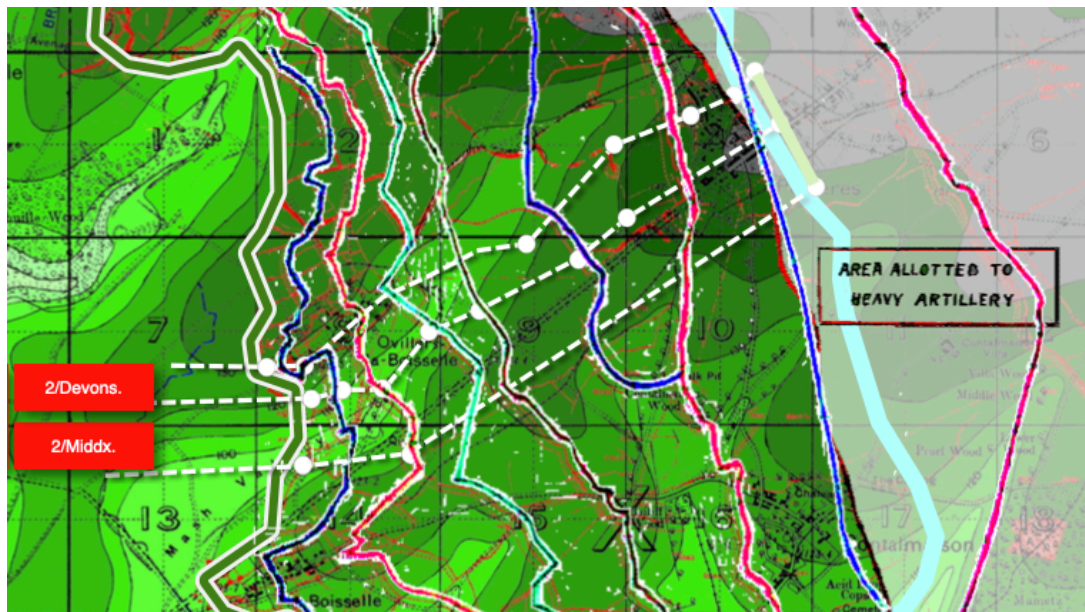


Figure 226 - III Corps | 8 Division | 23 Brigade | Field and Heavy artillery limits⁹⁵⁹

The plan refers to yellow and blue intermediate lines on Map A. The 'Yellow line' is not an intermediate line as the plan claims, but well beyond the final line for the first day, specified in the plan.

⁹⁵⁹ Derived from a marked-up map in WO 95/673/3.2

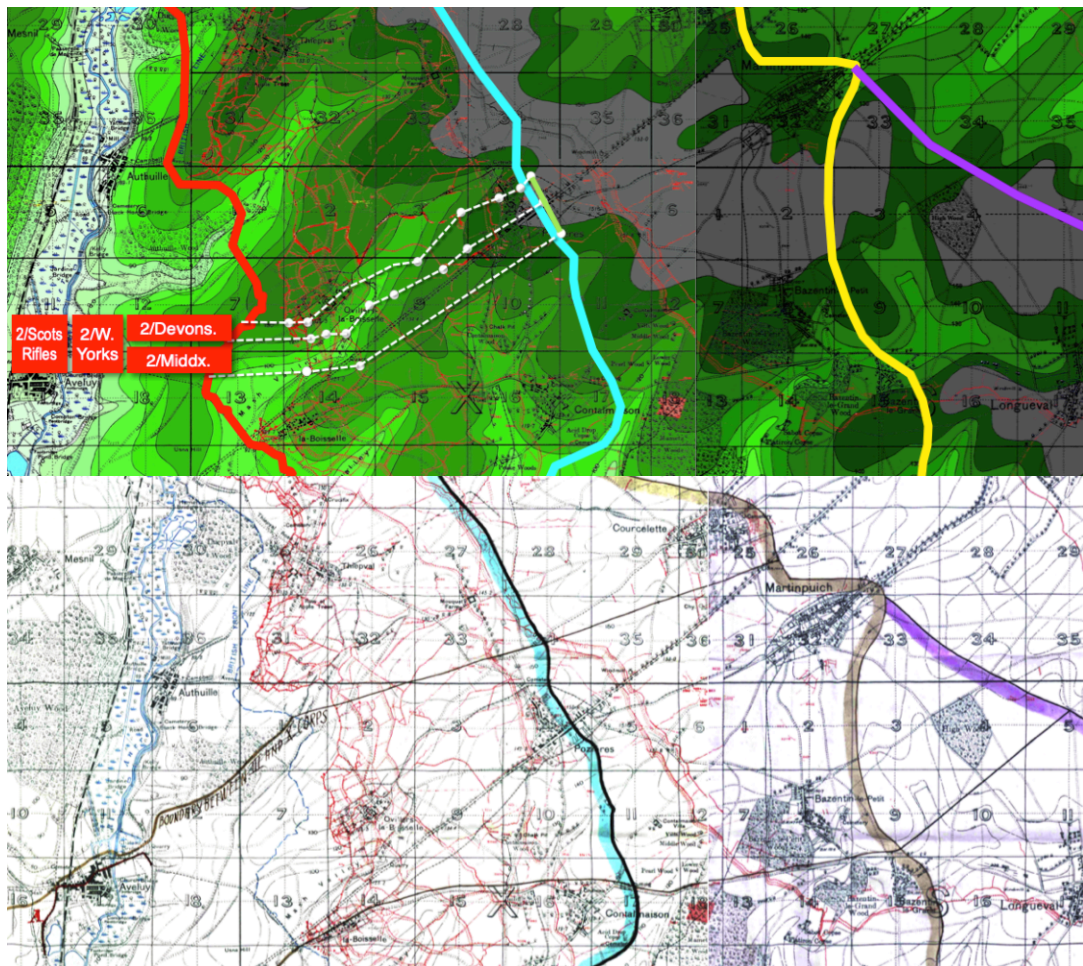


Figure 227 - III Corps | 8 Division | 23 Brigade | Map 'A' boundaries transposed from the original showing the discrepancy between the end lines of the 23 Brigade's plan and the distance to the 'intermediate' yellow line

Having captured the German Front line, it would then be necessary to connect it to the former British Front line.

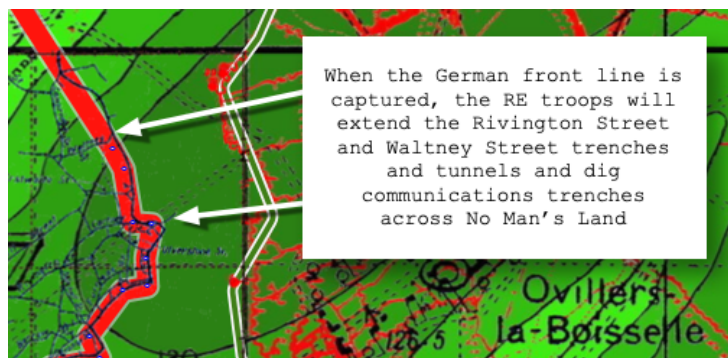


Figure 228 - III Corps | 8 Division | 23 Brigade | Later action

The locations of the support were identified by reference to either the map or trench names.

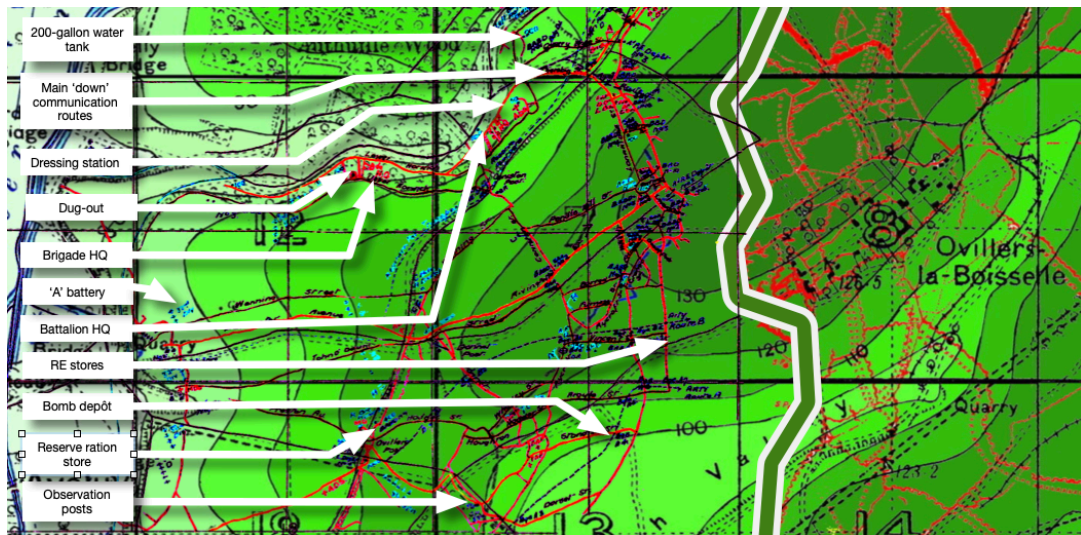


Figure 229 - III Corps | 8 Division | Support

7.4.3 Battalion-Level Planning

A plan can be found in the June war diary of the 2 West Yorkshires.⁹⁶⁰ While no plans can be found for any of the other battalions of the 23 Brigade, Major James Jack of 2 Scottish Rifles recorded in his diary entry of 28 June that:

‘I have been writing my orders for the two companies under my command when the battle opens ...’⁹⁶¹

His battalion was in reserve and while the Brigade plan had been issued on 14 June there had been several later corrections to it.

7.4.4 34 Division planning

Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Mangles of 34 Division had covered the same topics as 8 Division. His assault and reporting processes covered 23 pages and were issued on 15 June.⁹⁶² Rawlinson had visited 34 Division on the 6th and...

‘found they were not as far ahead with their preparations as I could wish. Williams and Mangles have not thought out their details sufficiently.’

By 17 June however he concluded that:

‘34 Division have improved’⁹⁶³

⁹⁶⁰ Hume-Spry, L. 2 West Yorkshires war diary of 30 June 1916 in WO 95/1714/1.

⁹⁶¹ Terraine, John, *General Jack's diary*, Cassell, London, 2000, p.141.

⁹⁶² Mangles, K. H. OO 16 of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/2432/3.1.

⁹⁶³ Rawlinson, H., Diary, 17 June 1916. CHUR.

Mangles then issued three sets of corrections covering 17 pages on the 22, but the 101st Brigade had in the meantime issued their plan which then had to be greatly rewritten.⁹⁶⁴ While the Brigades provided detailed plans, only seven of the 23 battalions wrote orders.⁹⁶⁵ One of these was the 11th Suffolks, a Service battalion. Captain G. L. J. Tuck circulated OO 26 on 26 June.⁹⁶⁶ It derived from an early version of the 101st Brigade Assault plan.⁹⁶⁷ His determination to issue the orders in a timely manner meant that later changes were not incorporated and some inconsistencies occurred. The poor quality of the Brigade copies may also have contributed.

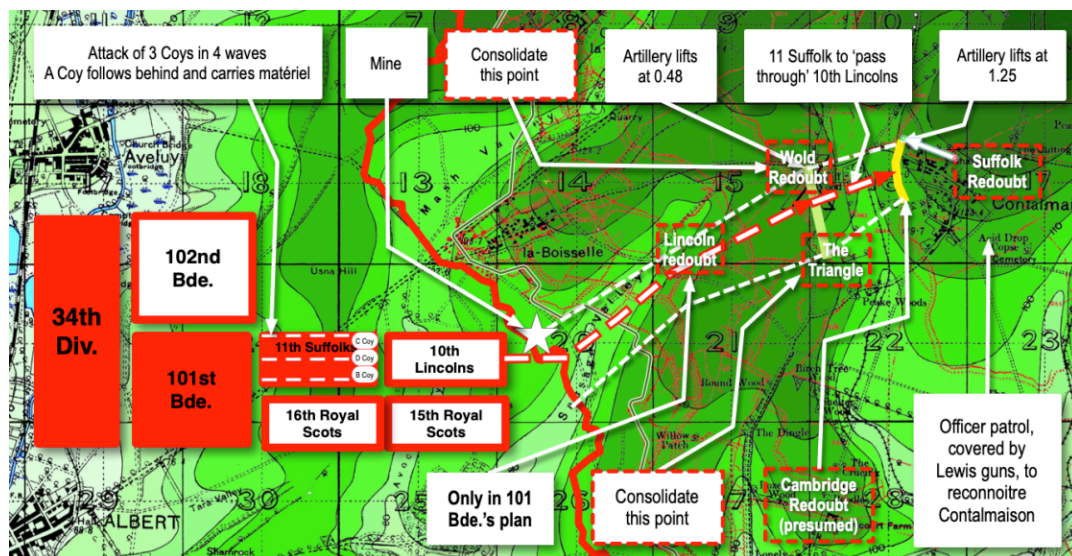


Figure 230 - III Corps | 34 Division | 101st Brigade 11th Suffolk | Objectives

The locations of the Redoubts to be established by III Corps were apparently decided only at Brigade level, but few references are given at any levels (in X

⁹⁶⁴ Mangles, K. H. 34 Division OO 16 (Assault) corrections and appendix, Amendments to Appendix C and OO 16 amendments of 22 June in WO 95/2432/3.2, Osborne, 101 Brigade OO 34 Assault plan, map of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/2455/2.

⁹⁶⁵ Chichester Constable, R. C, 23rd. Brigade preliminary OO 35 and OO 37 assault, of 14 and 17 June 1916 in WO 95/1708/5., Lloyd, H., 25th Brigade preliminary OO 101 assault, of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/1726/1, Wilson, W., 70 Brigade OO 63 assault and *Appendices* of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/1726/1, Osborne, G. A., 101 Brigade OO 34 Assault plan of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/2455/2, Parr, P., 103rd Brigade OO 24 assault orders of 27 June 1915 in WO 95/2464/2, Soutry, H., 102nd Bde., OO 32 assault, of 18 June 1916 in WO 95/2459/1.

⁹⁶⁶ [418] Tuck, 11th Suffolk OO 26 Assault plan, map in WO 95/2458/3.1.

⁹⁶⁷ Osborne, Op. Cit.

Corps they were decided at Division level: ⁹⁶⁸ in XV Corps, at Corps level). ⁹⁶⁹

The whereabouts of the Suffolk Redoubt is only given in the 101st Brigade's plan (the Cambridge Redoubt's position shown above is guesswork). There were frequent references to a Lincoln Redoubt in the 101st Brigade's and the 11th Suffolk's plans, but no references were given. In the battle this led to a ...

‘difficulty in locating such points as Lincoln Redoubt’. ⁹⁷⁰

There is no mention of German machine guns, barbed wire, rushing artillery forward, or mopping-up (the 101 Brigade's plan has the ‘Clearing’ companies mopping-up). Commanders were expected to report their position every half hour as well as sending up rockets or flares to show their position every four hours. However, the supply of Verey pistols was constrained.

Tellingly, the artillery

‘would move back gradually, but faster than the infantry can advance’. ⁹⁷¹

... so ‘losing the barrage’ by the infantry was planned-in.

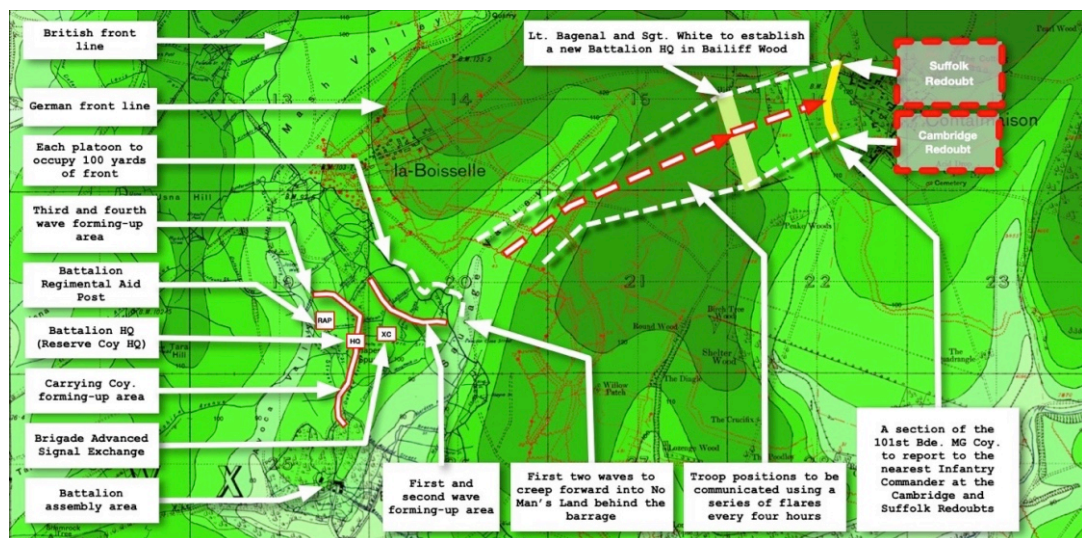


Figure 231 - III Corps | 34 Division | 101st Brigade | 11th Suffolk | Preparation

⁹⁶⁸ Rycroft to Wace, E. G. on 13 June 1916 in WO 95/863/10.

⁹⁶⁹ Vaughan, L., XV Corps Scheme of attack of 31 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.2.

⁹⁷⁰ Anon., War diary of 101st Brigade 2 p.m. on 2 July 1916 in WO 95/2455/2. The reference was X 15 c 21 in Chasseaud, Peter, *Rats Alley*, Spellmount, (Stroud, 2006), p. 332.

⁹⁷¹ 11th Suffolks in WO 95/2458/3.1.

With the omissions and errors due to the rush to issue plans, the infantry were being set up to fail. Despite valiant attempts by more-junior officers to cope with the planning failures of Romer and his superiors, the confusion and waste of time is evident.

7.5 XV Corps Planning

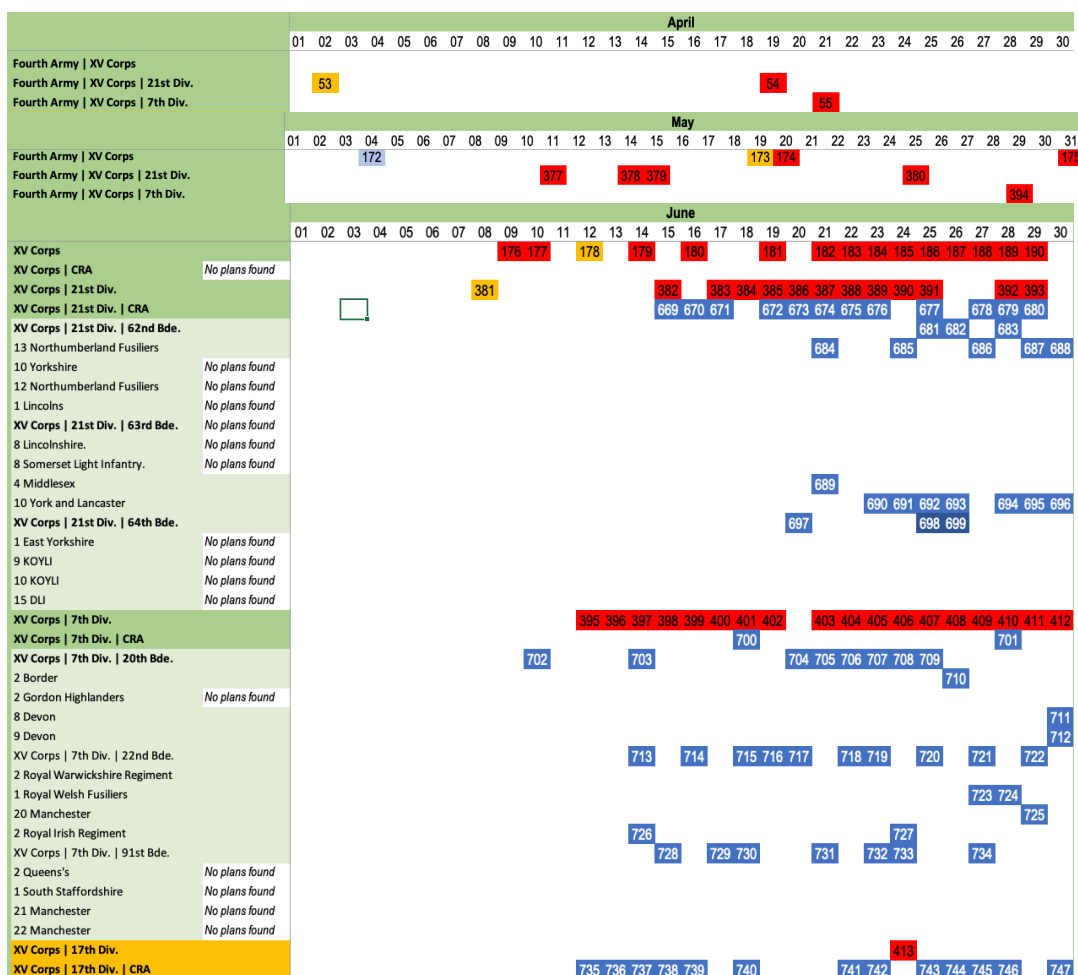


Figure 232 - XV Corps | Planning timeline (see page 22 for the key)

The XV Corps commanded by Lieutenant-General H. S. Horne, took over 7th and 21st divisions, associated units and their part of the front, from XIII Corps on 29 April. It was the only Corps to have identified some of the planning requirements and constraints of the Battle of Albert,⁹⁷² but none of these was reflected in its plans.⁹⁷³ In common with the whole of the BEF, it faced many

972 Vaughan, L., 'XV Corps Order No. 1' of 28 April 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

973 Vaughan, L., 'Notes on battle plan contents and constraints' of 2 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.2.

planning problems: the lack of planning doctrines; the lack of a clear lead from Montgomery on the approach to take and an overall plan from which to work; a divided artillery command with Corps in charge of 'heavy artillery' and divisions in charge of 'field' artillery; planning staff with a limited attention to detail, difficulty in map-reading; and an inconsistent approach to battlefield communication. Facing the planners was a well-planned defensive position at Fricourt at the mouth of a valley which would have to be overcome for any advance to be made. They had little useful intelligence on the German order of battle, but a lot of details of enemy MG and artillery positions.⁹⁷⁴

As in other sectors, the divisions published plans before the corps. A first draft of the corps plan was referenced in a memo outlining changes and has not survived, but a 'Scheme of operations, Part I' has.⁹⁷⁵ It alludes subtly to the lack of leadership from Rawlinson:

‘The attack would be prepared ... according to orders which would be received from Army Headquarters.’⁹⁷⁶

It was structured as a series of 11 operation orders detailing the attack, the last arriving on 29 June. The assault had three objectives.

⁹⁷⁴ 171, Intelligence files in WO 157/168.

⁹⁷⁵ [174] As footnote 744.

⁹⁷⁶ [175] Vaughan, L., XV Corps Scheme of operations 31 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

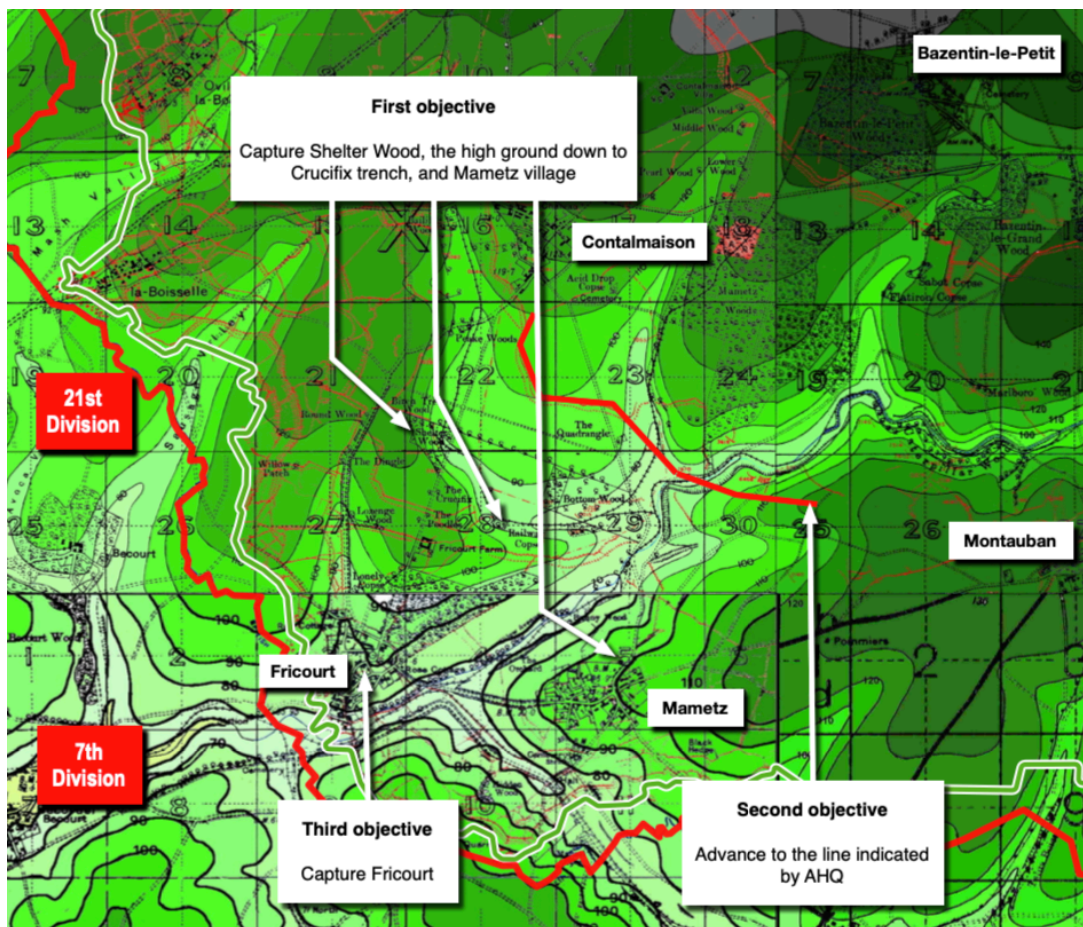


Figure 233 - XV Corps | Objectives

... and would be carried out by two divisions which would meet along the Willow Stream running through Fricourt.

The Corps approach to planning was a form of timetable design mixed with doctrinal exhortations and their earliest version incoherently listed the points that had been raised at an earlier conference:⁹⁷⁷ the attack should be divided into three stages, timed to allow the gunners to "arrosor" each objective and put the infantry in';⁹⁷⁸ the infantry should rather be delayed than the artillery advance be too fast; threats to flanks should be ignored; divisions would control their own artillery, but they would be coordinated through the Corps CRA whose (missing) plan would cover the artillery's advance, its routes,

⁹⁷⁷ [172] Vaughan L., Notes of conference of 2 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁷⁸ French for 'to water', implying a heavy bombardment.

roads and bridges; counter-battery work should be planned and its 'detachments able to work in gas helmets' but

‘it is not anticipated that it will be necessary to tell off any batteries entirely for counter-battery work’.⁹⁷⁹

Target acquisition was discussed elsewhere in the document. It had already been emphasised by Vaughan and while no steps were mentioned to establish any organisation to coordinate it, a list was generated. ‘More’ mortars and artillery should be allocated to each Division; enemy wire should be cut and its repair inhibited. A defence scheme should be prepared. The taking of Fricourt should be planned as a separate operation for which gas and smoke might be used, although smoke might ‘hide our troops’.⁹⁸⁰

Horne’s BGGs, Vaughan considered infantry-artillery cooperation in a memo written two weeks later, centralising field (but not heavy) artillery command, allocating batteries to battalions and arranging for OPs, emergency bombardments, communications between the various HQs and testing.⁹⁸¹ He noted the value of a system of flares to be observed by contact aircraft and its protocol. Lamps and mirrors could be used similarly. He deprecated the use of rockets since their only value lay in deceiving the enemy and of white sheets laid on the ground since they were too small.⁹⁸² He thus contradicted the orders of Montgomery.⁹⁸³

7.5.1 7 Division Planning

The Commanders of 7 and 21 Divisions attempted to fill the planning gap left by Rawlinson and Vaughan: Lieutenant-Colonel C. Bonham-Carter, BGGs of 7 Division, had issued a 19-page plan by 4 April at the request of Watts, the

⁹⁷⁹ Vaughan, L., ‘Scheme of operations), part I’ of 5 June 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁸⁰ Vaughan, L., ‘Notes of conference’ of 2 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁸¹ Vaughan, L., ‘Doctrine for infantry-artillery cooperation’ of 19 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁸² Horne, J. S., ‘Report on infantry-RFC cooperation’ of 19 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁸³ Montgomery A. A., ‘Report of the Army Commander’s remarks at the Conference held at Fourth Army Headquarters, 22nd June, 1916’ in WO 95/2015/1.

GOC. XV Corps requested changes and Bonham-Carter replied on 29 May.⁹⁸⁴ Thereafter Bonham-Carter, following Vaughan's eventual lead, reissued the plan as a set of 11 instructions, the last on 29th June which were unlikely to have arrived at the battalions in time:⁹⁸⁵ 14 out of 24 battalions had no orders on file, nor did 63 Brigade, but one of its battalions - the 4 Middlesex - issued OO 5 on 21 June.⁹⁸⁶ The 13th Northumberland Fusiliers drafted and cancelled several orders, finally issuing one on 30 June.⁹⁸⁷

7.5.2 21st Division Planning

Similarly, on 19 April. Major-General C. W. Jacob of 21 Division had Paley (his Chief of Staff) write an

‘outline of what is understood to be the general plan of operations’ [so that commanders might be] ‘able to get forward with their own plans and arrangements’.⁹⁸⁸

Jacob's intention was, apparently, to take Fricourt in a pincer movement by 7 and 21 Divisions, though this was not clarified in the plan. The attack would be made in waves and would advance until halted by *force majeure* or by reaching the objective. In either case troops would be relieved speedily. Once the area was captured, strongpoints and HQs would be established and a road for wheeled vehicles prepared. Medical, communication and supply services, the use of Vickers and Lewis guns, mortars and the need to keep advancing were mentioned, but not the possible use of cavalry.⁹⁸⁹

Apart from the failure to confront the most pressing issues of breaking into and through German lines, this plan was a useful exercise in managing an advancing front. When no corps-level plan had been received by 11 May,

⁹⁸⁴ Watts, ‘Assault outline’ of 21 April 1916 in WO 95/1630/3.

⁹⁸⁵ [412] Vaughan, L., XV Corps, ‘OO 11’, of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/1630/4 and [396-413] generally.

⁹⁸⁶ T. L. Boden, OO 5 (a certified copy) of 21 June in WO 95/2158/2.

⁹⁸⁷ M. Massiah-Palmer OO 67 of 30 June 1916 in WO 95/2155/2.

⁹⁸⁸ Jacob was succeeded by Campbell on 22 May 1916, Becke, ‘Order...’

⁹⁸⁹ Paley, W., ‘Preliminary instructions for the offensive’ of 19 April 1916 in WO 95/2129/4.

Paley revised his plan, attempting to coordinate with the neighbouring 34 and 7 Divisions.

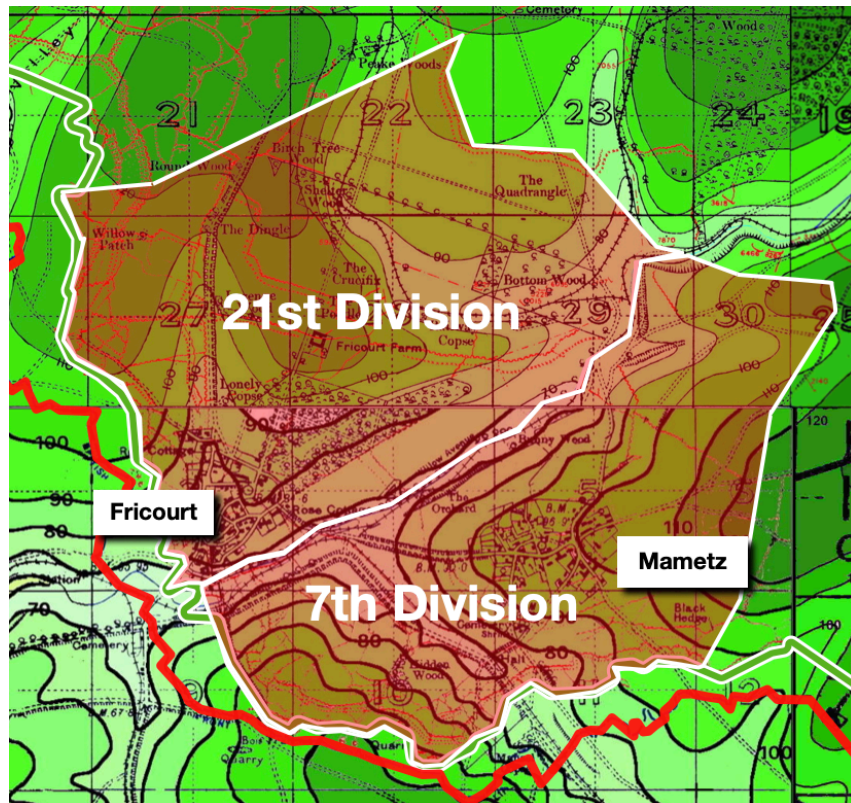


Figure 234 - XV Corps | divisional dispositions

Initially the attack had two objectives, each supported by artillery. The first was to break in, north and south of the heavily fortified village of Fricourt.

No explanation of how troops were to break through the enemy first line was given, but the Germans would be effectively advised some 48 hours in advance of the points where the troops would leave their own line:

The enemy can ... overlook the greater part of this line ... The wire will be removed ... two nights before the attack ... the points of passage will be marked by poles with bundles of straw tied on them.⁹⁹⁰

The introduction of a third phase, to take Fricourt by the Corps on 31 May, changed the approaches of the two divisions.⁹⁹¹ Two weeks later Paley issued revisions which recognised the need to delay the taking of Fricourt and

⁹⁹⁰ Vaughan, L., XV Corps Battle plan (Scheme of operations) part I of 31 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1.

⁹⁹¹ Paley, G.671 of 25 May 1916 in WO 95/2130/1 and Watts, 'Assault outline' of 29 May 1916 in WO 95/1630/3.

accounted for the attack of 7 Division. He acknowledged the need to prepare for counter-attacks, but ignored the danger of flank attacks from Fricourt, the use of artillery barrages, gas or smoke.

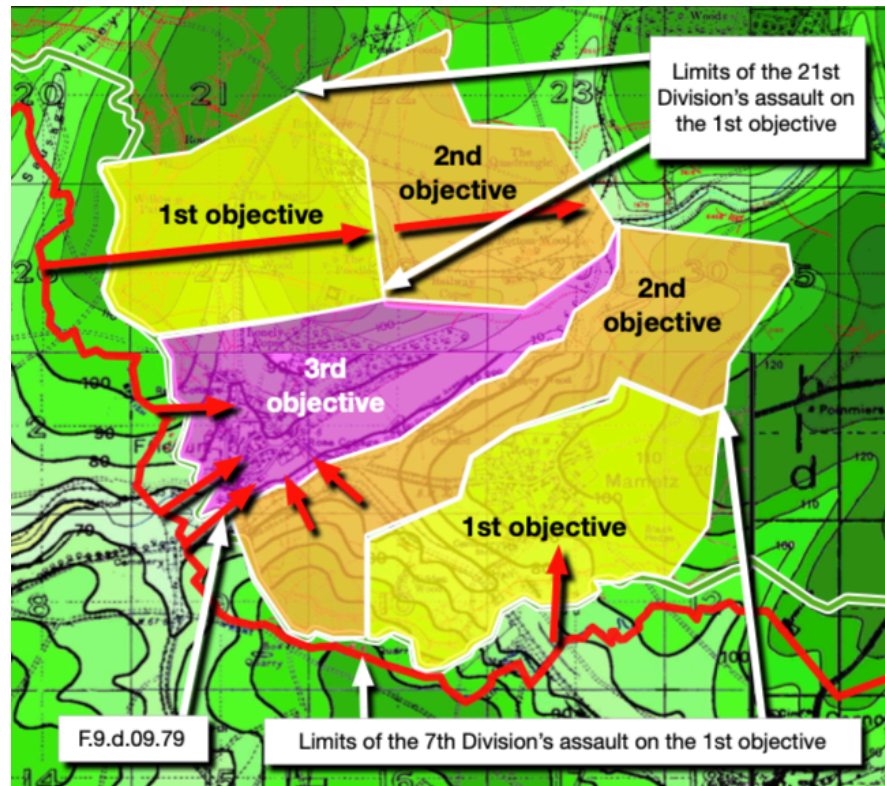


Figure 235 - XV Corps | Scheme of operations part 1 - Objectives 1 - 3

7.5.3 21 Division Planning

For 21 Division, the second objective was a simple continuation of the first, in which, wind permitting the use of smoke and gas, a battalion of 91 Brigade would advance 'through the leading battalions' and head north-west to protect the southern flank from the forces holding the village. This would isolate the Fricourt area completely until the third phase, when the break-in would be supported by flamethrowers.

The third objective would be carried by

'two battalions of the 22nd Brigade advancing ... north of F.9.d.09.79' [and three] companies of the ... 21st Division [which] would attack Fricourt from [the south-west and west]'.

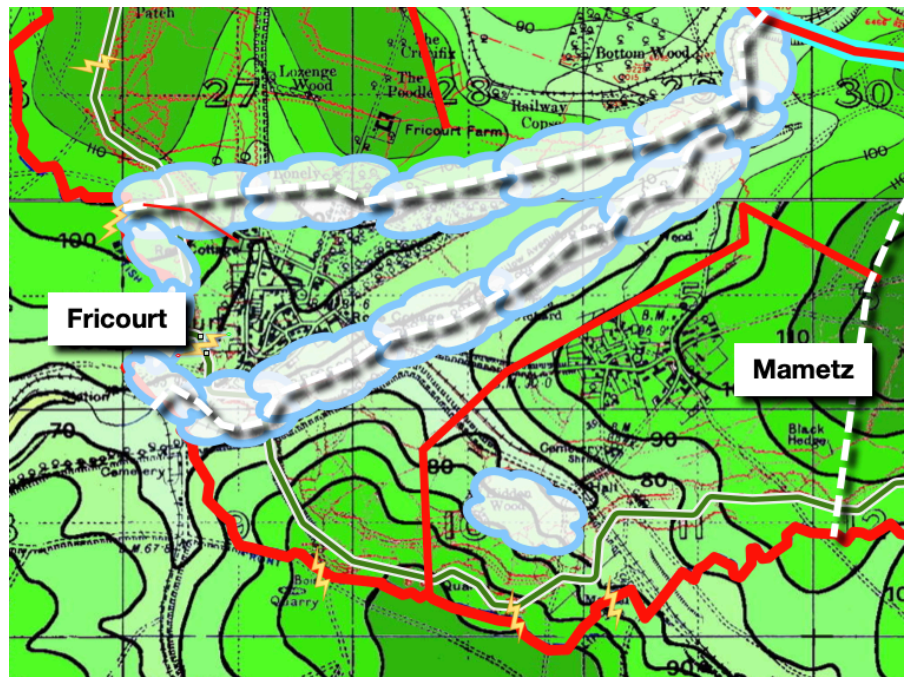


Figure 236 - XV Corps | Scheme of operations part 1 - Obfuscation

The differences between the approaches of the two divisions remain unexplained, but see page 384 for a possible interpretation. While 7 Division was expected to maintain a defensive flank to the north against the defended village of Fricourt, no such flank was to be maintained by 21 Division - rather the southernmost limit of its first objective was left quite exposed. The advance to the second objective by 7 Division would be made on an even wider front than their initial assault. As the objectives were captured, they were to be consolidated by reinforced trenches and strongpoints.

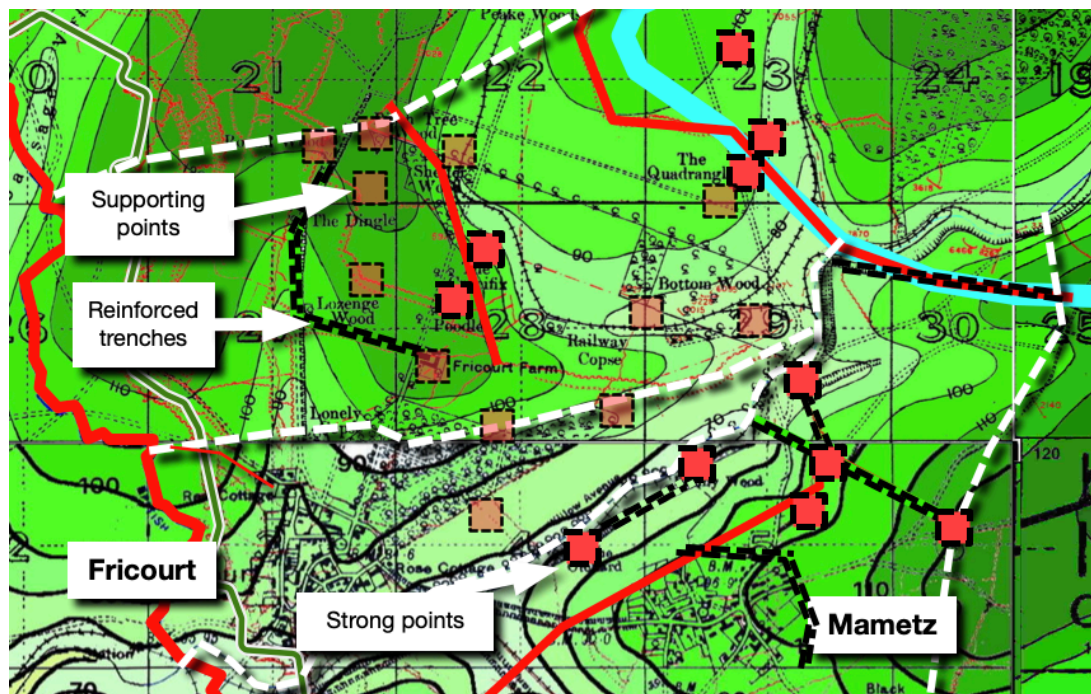


Figure 237 - XV Corps | Scheme of operations part 1 - Consolidation

Army, Corps and divisional HQs would be linked by telephone and telegraph, pigeons, semaphore and wireless. Kite balloons and RFC contact patrols would relay battle status messages. Prisoners would be escorted to cages, interrogated and fed. Engineers would prepare captured mines for destruction in the event of a successful German counter-attack.⁹⁹²

Of all the divisional commanders, only Paley of 21 Division attempted to mitigate any delays to issuing plans. The file contains a number of draft plans for Brigades and battalions dating from 17 May, when the attack date was unclear. None of these drafts or any other plans can be found in any of the files of these Brigades or battalions and even had they been adopted, the many later changes to higher-level plans would have rendered them inconsistent. Two brigades out of three and three battalions out of 12 wrote their own plans.⁹⁹³ Paley's foresight was insufficient to compensate for the delays of the Army and Corps.

⁹⁹² Vaughan, L., Battle plan (Scheme of operations) part I of 31 May 1916 in XV Corps war diaries WO 95/921/1.2.

⁹⁹³ WO 95/2130.

7.5.4 Artillery Planning

XV Corps Artillery planning was divided between field and 'heavy' artillery. Heavy artillery was under the control of the Corps CHA, Brigadier-General W. J. Napier and field artillery remained under Rotton and Brigadier-General R. A. C. Wellesley, the BGRAs of 7 and 21 Divisions. Early attempts at planning had used tracings to identify an area and a time of a barrage, but the final artillery plans mostly used map references.

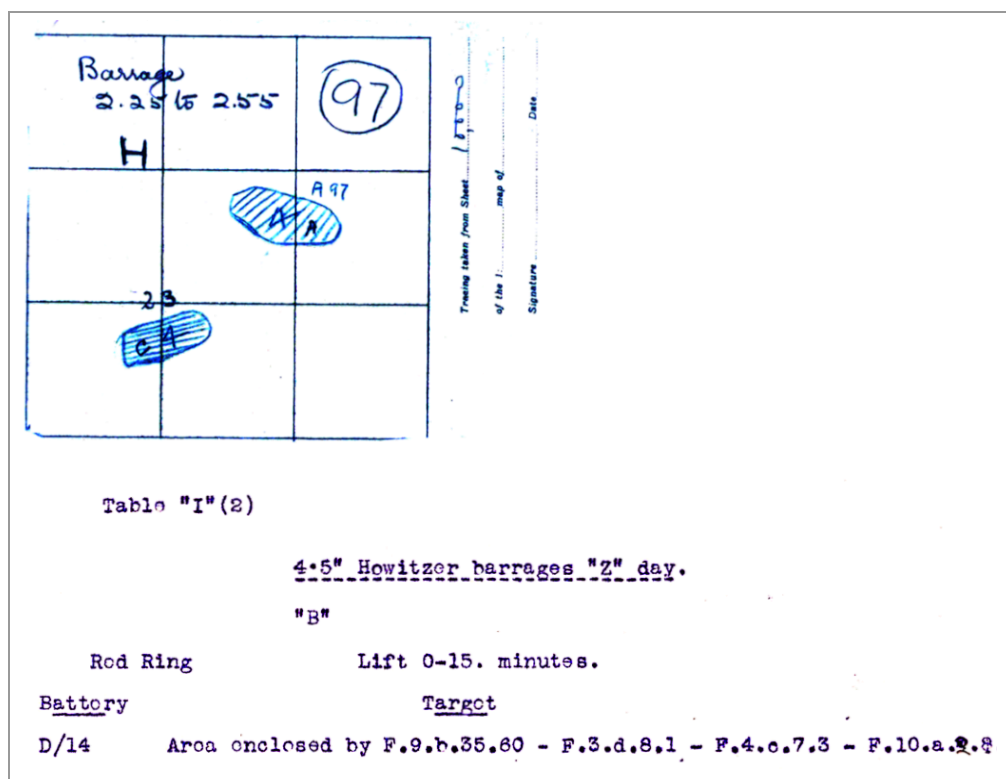


Figure 238 - XV Corps | Extracts from (top) Wellesley' 21 Division Artillery instructions for offence addendum 4 - Barrage' of 18 June in WO 95/2136/2 and (bottom) Rotton, 'Instructions for forthcoming operations' of 18 June in WO 95/1639/1

The artillery support is also difficult to understand: the barrage was trench-related rather than lift-related and none of the objectives was covered (see Figure 259 on page 380). The reason for the north-western-most limit of 7 Division's first objective remains obscure; much of the bombardment of Fricourt could have been better directed at the positions 7 Division was to

assault.⁹⁹⁴ The CRA was Brigadier-General E. W. Alexander and no plan can be found in the CRA file, though copies have been located elsewhere.⁹⁹⁵ He claimed to have used a form of creeping barrage as early as Loos, but none is reflected in Figure 257.⁹⁹⁶

The preliminary bombardments by 7 Division are shown below.

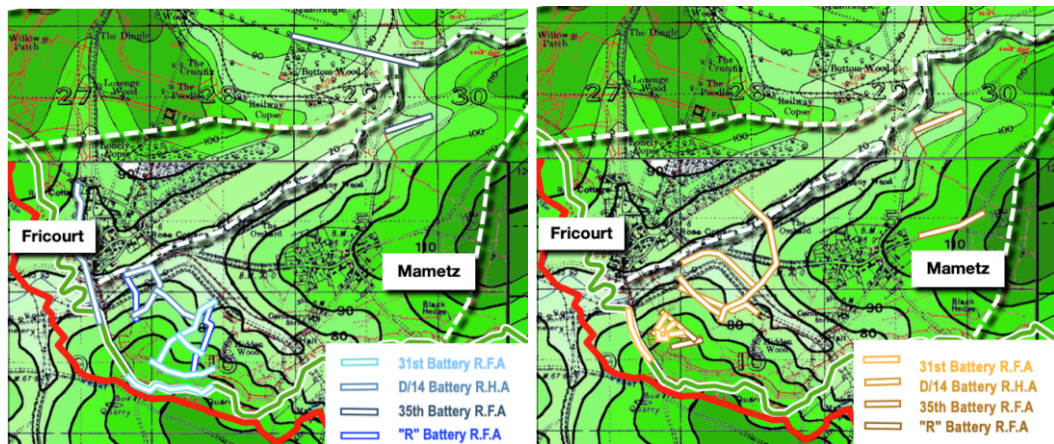


Figure 239 - XV Corps | 7 Division | V- X and W-Y day bombardments

21 Division divided its field artillery between general wire cutting each day and a time-table of repeated bombardments.

⁹⁹⁴ See page 349.

⁹⁹⁵ WO 95/925 and WO 95/1981.

⁹⁹⁶ Edmonds, J. E., ... 1916, Vol. I, p. 349.

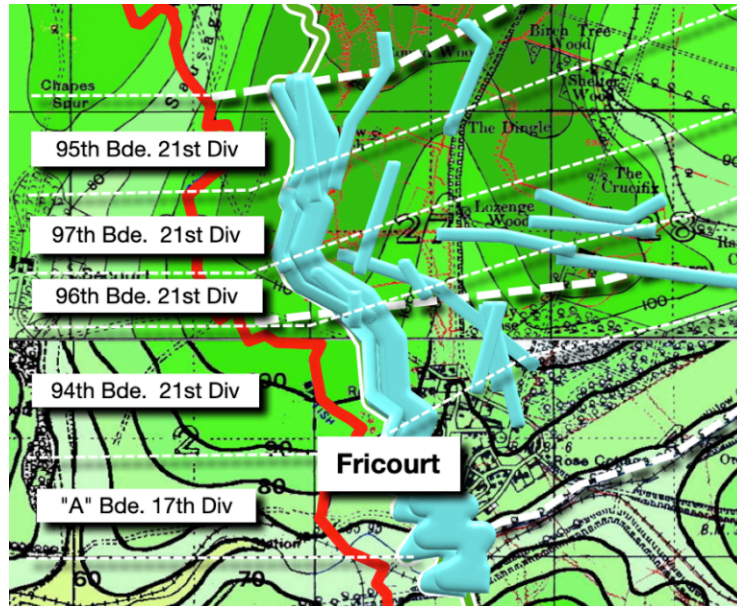


Figure 240 - XV Corps | 21st Division | U day wire-cutting

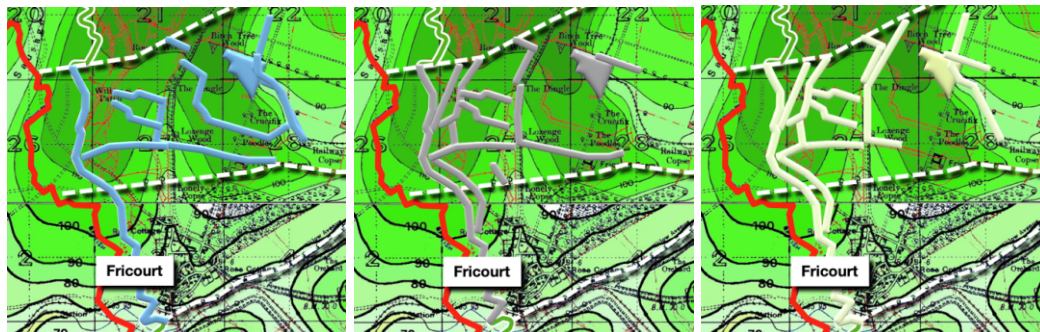
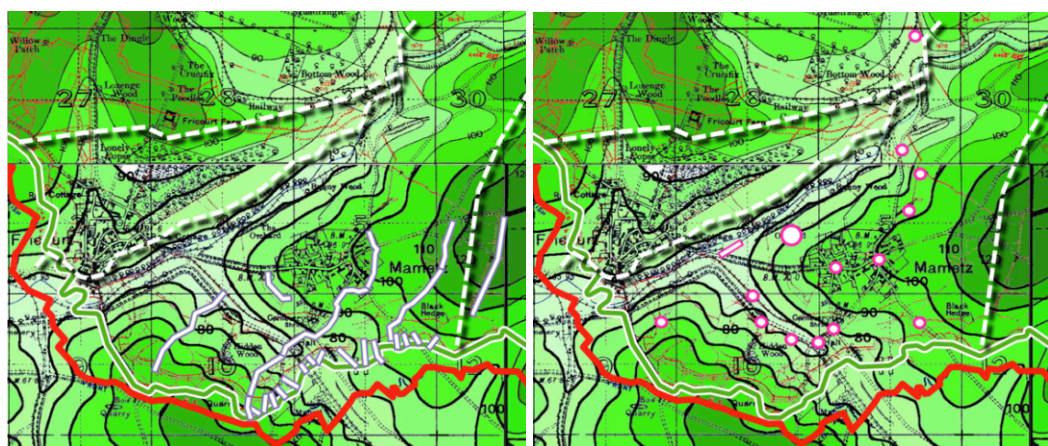
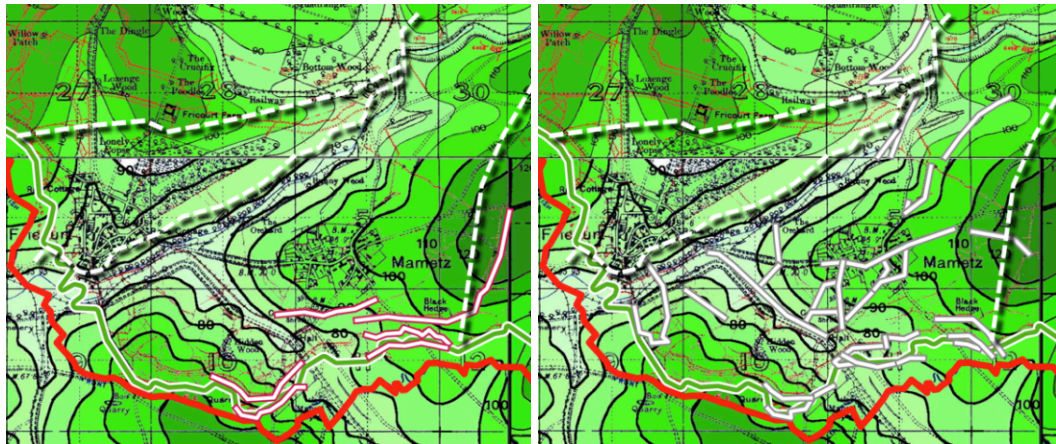


Figure 241 - XV Corps | 21st Division | U-X day's bombardments - 00.30-0930, 09.00-17.20 and 17.30-23.59

The 7 Division's artillery approach was similar. A general bombardment.



... blocking of communication trenches, night firing by howitzers..



... 18 pounders by day ...

... and by night.

Figure 242 - XV Corps | 7 Division | Artillery plan

Rotton believed 50 rounds to be sufficient to 'block each main communication trench' and 24 for each minor communication trench. He ordered that these be bombarded by mortars and Heavy Artillery, but allocated no Heavy Artillery to shell communications trenches.⁹⁹⁷

The two Divisions' assault support is shown below. They began and ended simultaneously though the timing of their intermediate lifts varied.

⁹⁹⁷ XV Corps, 17 Division, CRA, 1916 in WO 95/1987/2.

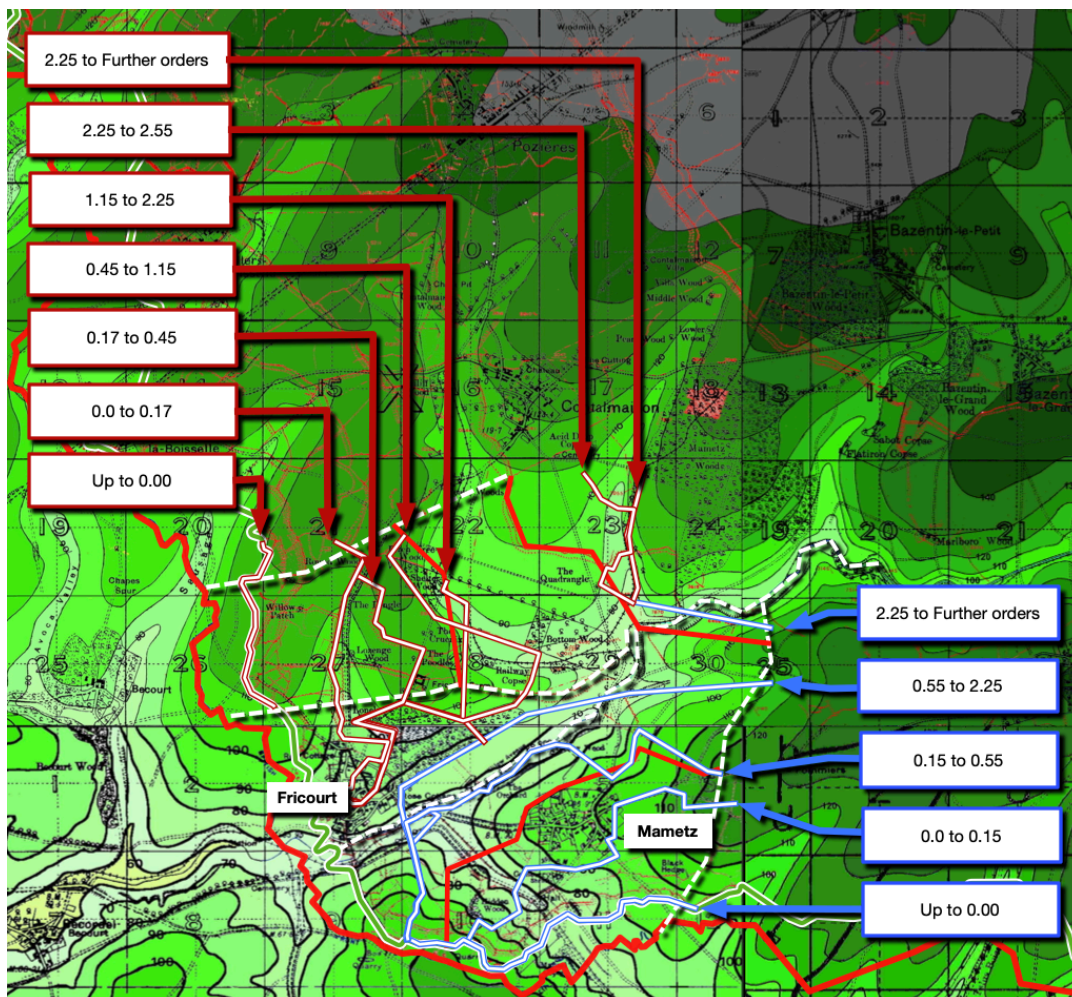


Figure 243 - XV Corps | Scheme of operations part 1 - Artillery support for objectives 1 and 2

The plans' objectives were occasionally obscured by mis-referencing, for example the boundary limit was exceeded by the barrage in Figure 243 and the western limit of 7 Division jumping-off point was defined with reference to trenches F10.4 and 5 rather than to a map reference. This required that everyone had access to a map with the correct trench overlay. At least two versions existed.⁹⁹⁸ Claims that the artillery would lift 50 yards every minute ignored the fact that the lifts were planned between very irregular lines.⁹⁹⁹ Barrage tracings were to be circulated to companies and marked on their maps and ...

⁹⁹⁸ See page 360.

⁹⁹⁹ Rotton, OO 11, assault of 18 June 1916 in WO 95/1639/1.

‘all ranks must thoroughly understand the times of the different barrages and realise that each barrage must be followed up as closely as possible.’¹⁰⁰⁰

Additionally the artillery could vary the lengths of their lifts ‘as time and ground permit’,¹⁰⁰¹ and this could be as short as 20 yards.¹⁰⁰² However

Farndale’s claim that

‘in the 21 Division the artillery were ordered to search back and forward’ (with consequent risk to advancing infantry) is not supported by an examination of the records.¹⁰⁰³ Anticipating the SOS system, 17 Division’s artillery developed a system of codes to direct artillery to the locus of an enemy counter-attack.¹⁰⁰⁴

Napier published the XV Corps Heavy Artillery plan on 16 June. He commanded 30 batteries ranging from 12 in. howitzers to 75mm French field guns and allotted tasks by means of tables, covering registration, the bombardments of days W-X, nights and the barrages supporting the assaulting troops. Several batteries were told to prioritise counter-battery tasks whenever called on.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ridgeway, J. H., 10 York and Lancaster Regiment OO, amendment 1, Appendix 1 of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/2158/4.

¹⁰⁰¹ Wellesley, 21st Division Artillery instructions for offence 3, Summary of preparations of 16 June 1916 in WO 95/2136/2

¹⁰⁰² Vaughan, L., (Scheme of operations) part I of 31 May 1916 in WO 95/921/1

¹⁰⁰³ Farndale, *Op. Cit.* p. 146.

¹⁰⁰⁴ King, ‘Further instructions with respect to forthcoming operations’ of 25 June 1916 in WO 95/1987/2 and Farndale, *Op. Cit.* p. 73

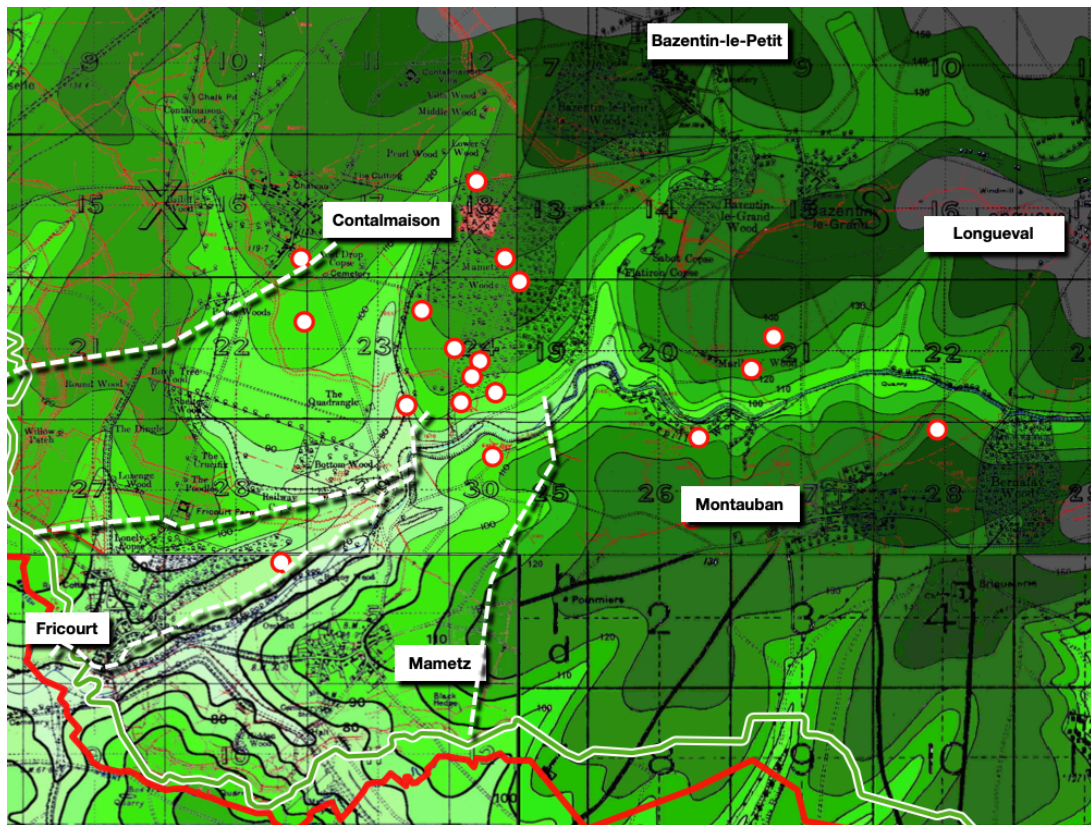


Figure 244 - XV Corps | Counter-battery target list¹⁰⁰⁵

Divisions could also call on Heavy Artillery as required, but most calls were expected to come from the RFC. There would be pauses to wash out the guns, permit patrols and aerial photographs.¹⁰⁰⁶ The position of troops would be determined by flares being lit at their most advanced positions at 0900, 1300, 1700 and 2100 hours. They would also be lit on reaching the first and second objectives, though no distinction between one kind of flare or another was made.

None of these details was reflected in the few extant orders or plans of the assaulting units.¹⁰⁰⁷ Batteries should not advance simultaneously: 59 and 38 Batteries should precede the others and come under the orders of the BGRA

¹⁰⁰⁵ Anon., 'Counter-battery area' of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/1987/2.

¹⁰⁰⁶ WO 95/1987/2, XV Corps, 17 Division, CRA, 1916.

¹⁰⁰⁷ 13 Northumberland Fusiliers in WO 95/2155/2.

4 Middlesex in WO 95/2158/2

Flags would be waved. 10 York and Lancaster Regiment in WO 95/2158/4

'One aeroplane flare, per man will be carried in the pocket of the Service Dress jacket.' Bosanquet, 64th Brigade OO 52 of 21 June 1916 in WO 95/2159/2.2.

of their assigned divisions when they did so. Communications should be duplicated by the use of lamps and semaphore in addition to telephones. Reports should be frequent even if null, but the frequency was not specified. The boundaries specified differed from those of the XV Corps plan.¹⁰⁰⁸ No attack orders of 17 Division could be found. Instead on June 26, a set of 'Preliminary instructions for operations' identified actions to be taken of a tactical, intelligence, administration and communications nature.¹⁰⁰⁹ It was a reserve division.

The 21 Division's support for objective 3 attended to Fricourt village, but also exceeded the boundaries. Fricourt Wood was the more heavily bombarded.¹⁰¹⁰

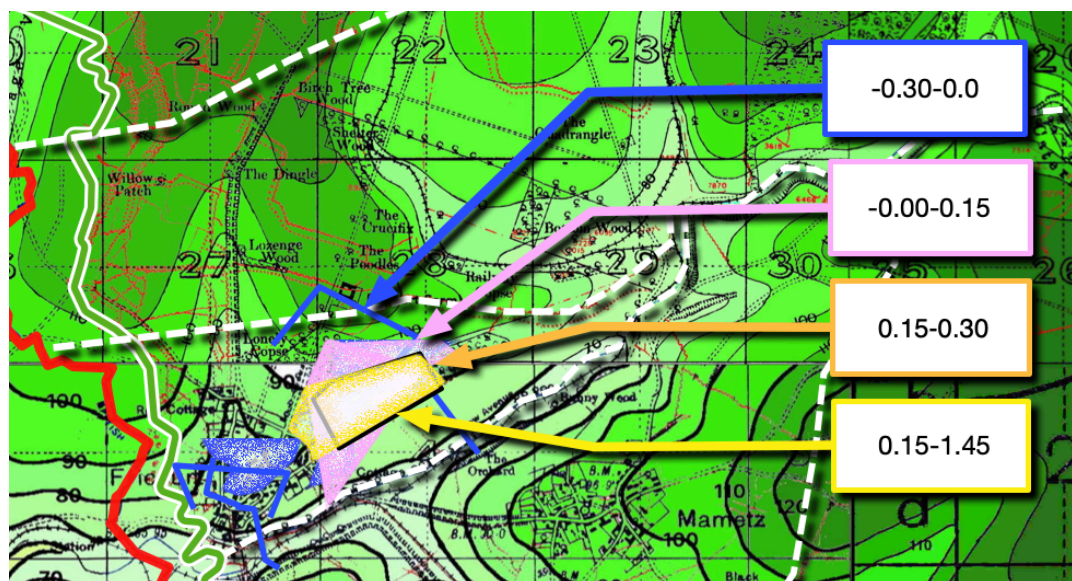


Figure 245 - XV Corps | 21 Division | Scheme of operations part 1 - artillery support for objective 3

The 7 Division's artillery support for the third objective seems bizarre: the objective was to prepare Fricourt for assault, yet only the wood was bombarded and another boundary was exceeded.

¹⁰⁰⁸ See page 527.

¹⁰⁰⁹ 64 Brigade draft operational order No. X in WO 95/1980/4.2

¹⁰¹⁰ Wellesley, 21 Division Artillery instructions for offence 3, Summary of preparations, table L of 16 June 1916 in WO 95/2136/2.

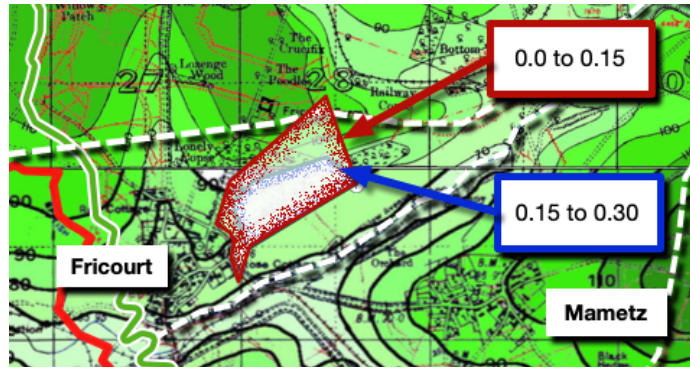


Figure 246 - XV Corps | 21 Division | Scheme of operations part 1 - artillery support for the objective 3 - another barrage exceeding the assault boundary (WO 95/921/2)

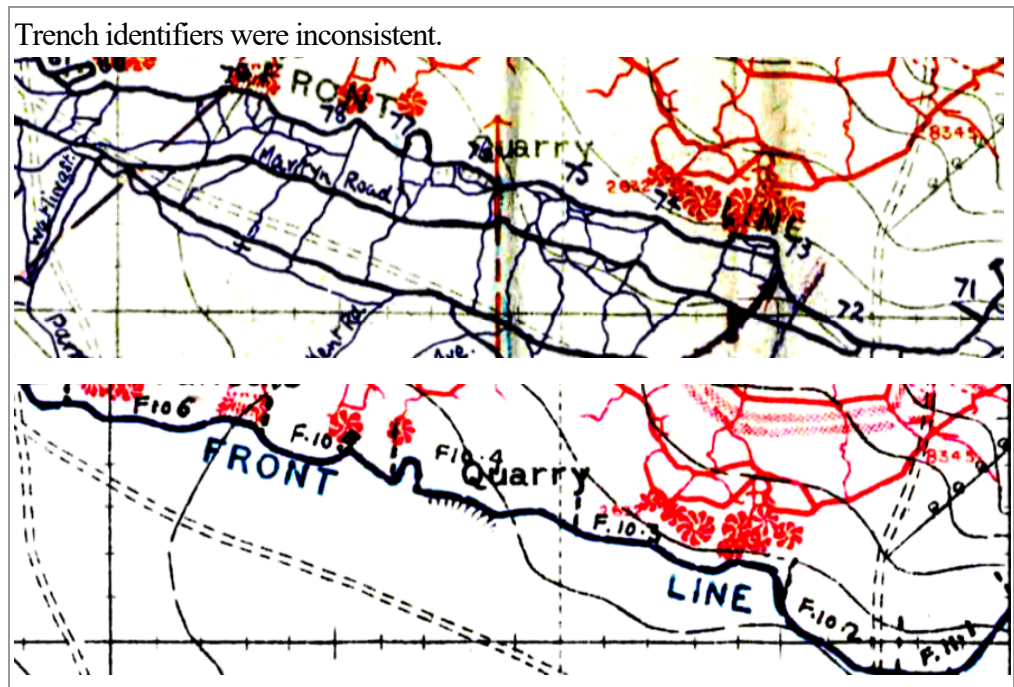
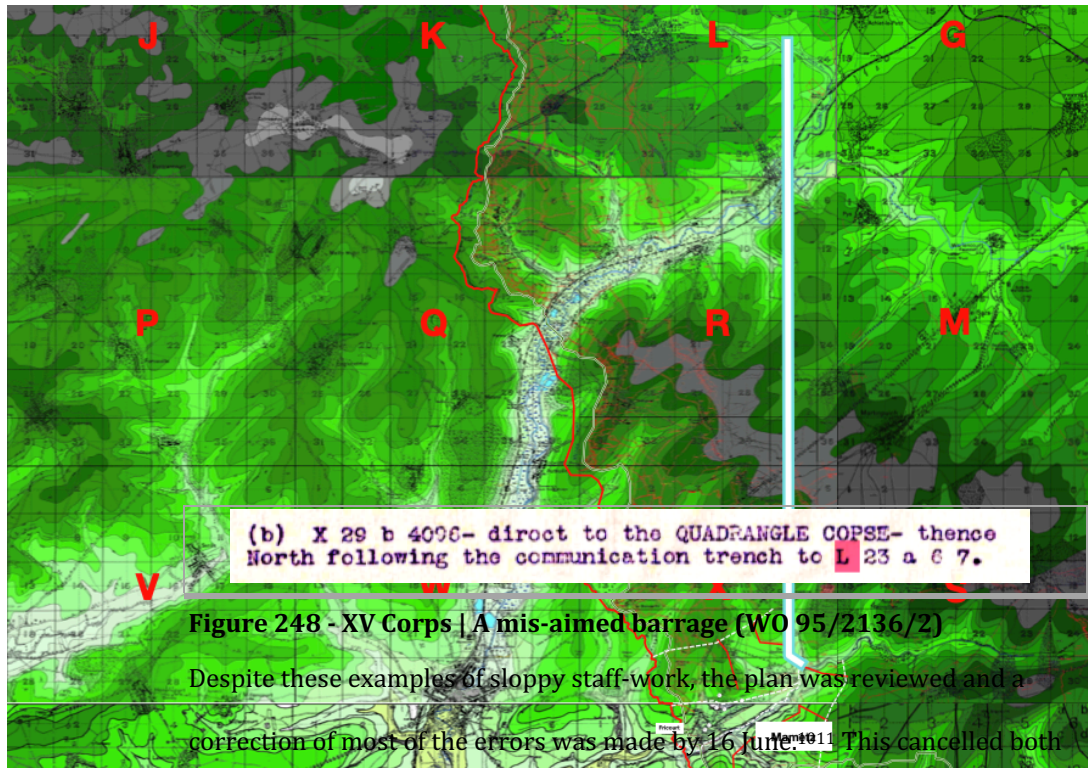


Figure 247 - XV Corps | Two trench maps from the same file. The top one is dated 1 February and the lower one 13 March (WO 95/1630/3)

A barrage was mis-aimed



sets of artillery timetables which were re-issued.¹⁰¹²

Too late to have been used in any plan, a map of the German order of battle was issued on 28 June.¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹¹ Vaughan, L Anon., WO-General Staff Conferences., 1/16 GX of 16 June 1916 in WO 95/921/2.

¹⁰¹² Alexander, E. W., 'Instructions, with Appendices showing barrage lines' of 14 June 1916 in WO 95/921/2.

¹⁰¹³ WO 95/1987/2.

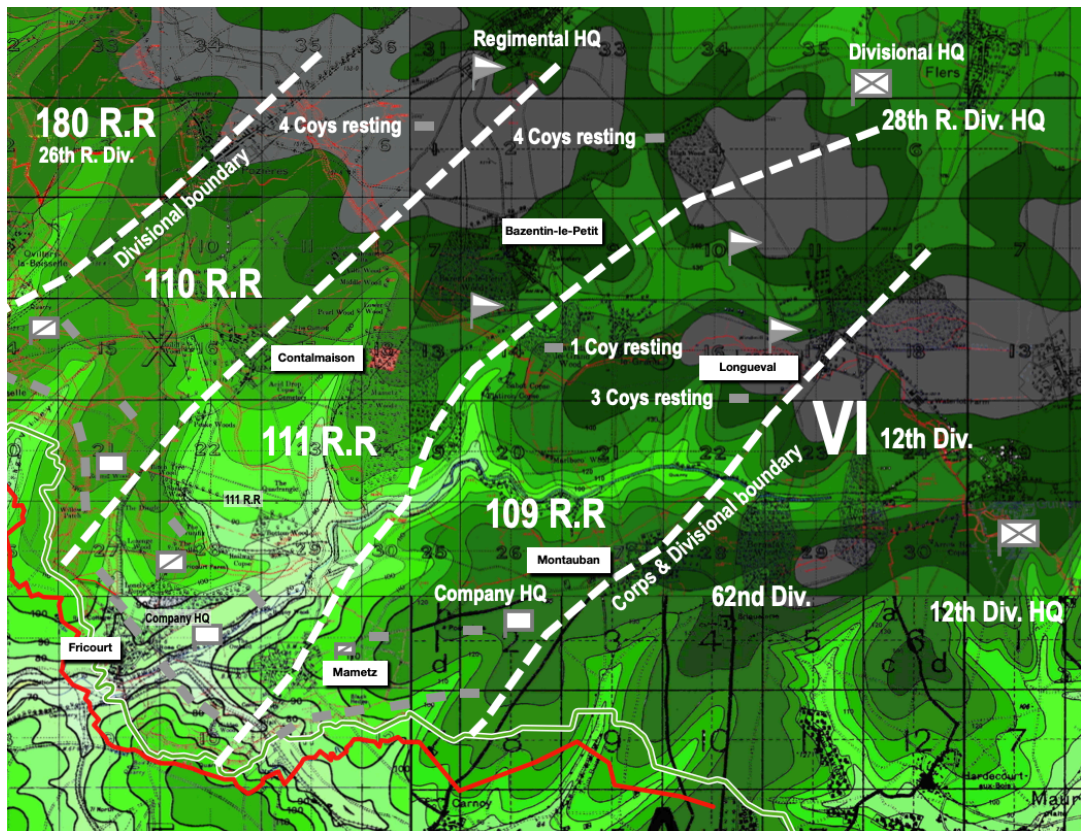


Figure 249 - XV Corps | Map of part of the German order of battle

As elsewhere the failure of Fourth Army to publish plans in a timely manner inhibited XV Corps more than its divisions. Corps approached planning as if it were a timetable, with many aspirations, but had difficulty in devising processes to meet them. The late publication of corps' plans with the reallocation of objectives, disrupted divisional plans which were by then quite advanced.

As with other Corps, the planning delays fed through to lower-level units: 9 of the 24 battalions had no plans or orders in their files. The quality of the staffwork can be judged by the general failure to echo the essential requirements of all plans down to order level and the many map-referencing errors.

The separation of artillery planning between corps and divisions and the lack of coherence with the infantry plans risked problems with the assaults: none was planned to have the troops close to the German line at the moment the barrage lifted off the first trench line. Since several parts of the British line

were 500 yards from the German ones, this left the attacking troops exposed for a long period during which the Germans had time to mount their defences.

It is possible that the structure of the barrages was intended to tie down the troops occupying Fricourt and induce their surrender. The barrages and the use of smoke and gas would have prevented the defending troops from attacking the surrounding troops or retreating to reinforce Mametz. To this can be added the explosions of three mines at the outset of the assault, of which there is no mention in the XV Corps or divisional plans.¹⁰¹⁴ Montgomery had ordered that they be blown on Z-Day.¹⁰¹⁵

The failure of the artillery of both divisions to adhere to divisional and corps boundaries thus risking the lives of their troops, shows the limitations of artillery planning of the period. Although it was known that Fricourt village was strongly fortified, greater attention was paid to Fricourt Wood.

¹⁰¹⁴ 178 Tunnelling Company Royal Engineers OO 1 in WO 95/405/1. Edmunds, 1916 Vol. I p. 348.

¹⁰¹⁵ Montgomery, A. A., Blow all mines on Z-day of 15 June 1916 in IWM 7.

7.6 XIII Corps Planning

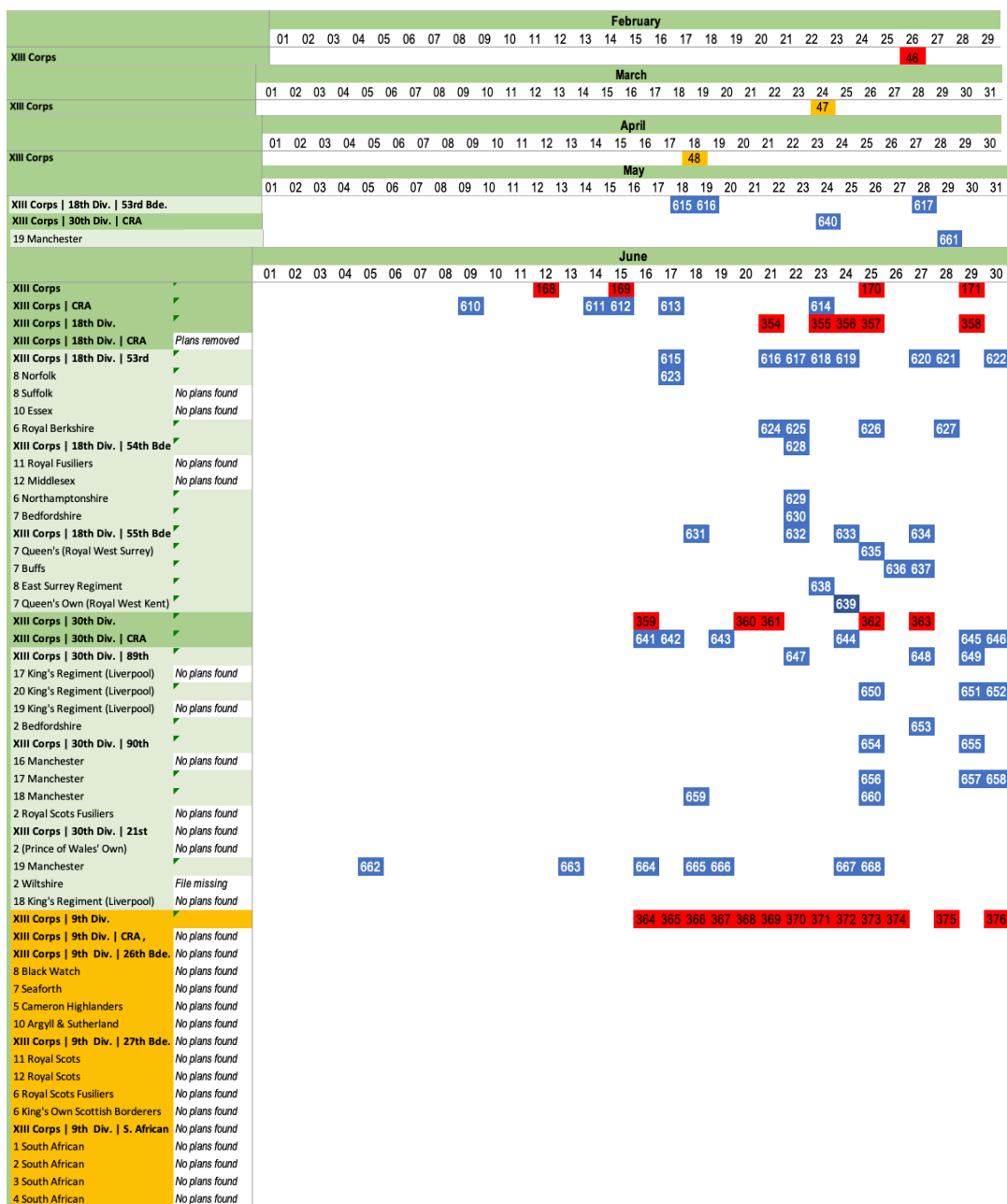


Figure 250 - XIII Corps | Planning timelines (see page 22 for the key)

The XIII Corps was established on 15 November 1915 and eventually consisted of 18, 30 and 9 Divisions. It took over the line on the Somme from X Corps between the River Somme and west of Fricourt in January.¹⁰¹⁶ Congreve

¹⁰¹⁶ Operation order No. 1 of 28 January 1916 in WO 95/895/1.

wrote a proposal containing an Appreciation and an outline of an attack as early as 26 February.¹⁰¹⁷

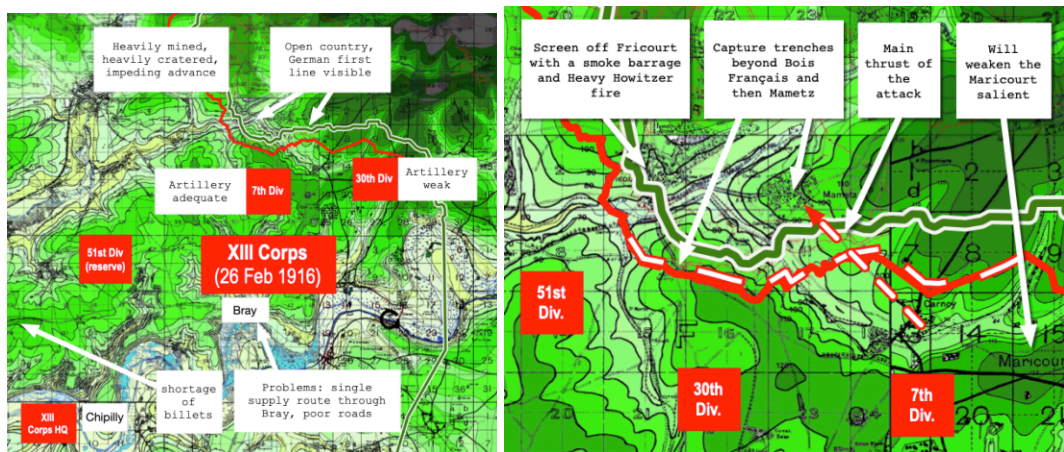


Figure 251 - XIII Corps | Congreve's appreciation and outline of an attack

The difference between this outline and the later plan of operations is instructive. Congreve acknowledged the existence of XV Corps to his left, but ignored any possible French activity to his right. It was as simple a proposal as could have been generated for a staff college exercise and Rawlinson ignored it.

Congreve wrote a further version a month later which Rawlinson did not understand, insisting that in summer, troops could be accommodated under canvas as Congreve had in fact proposed. Montgomery complained that Fricourt would not be attacked under the plan and that the attack would end at the second line trenches. Rawlinson considered the plan to be insufficiently bold.¹⁰¹⁸ He and Montgomery were not to release Map A,¹⁰¹⁹ which defined the offensive, for another two weeks and Congreve could hardly be blamed for failing to match their expectations without it.

Visiting the XIII Corps at Corbie in May, Haig questioned Congreve on his knowledge of the preparations for the offensive and 'came to the conclusion

¹⁰¹⁷ [46] As footnote 696.

¹⁰¹⁸ Congreve to Fourth Army of 24 March 1916 in IWM 6.

¹⁰¹⁹ See page 63.

that he knew very little about' it. The next day he told Rawlinson that the 'little fracas will do Congreve good'.¹⁰²⁰ He was satisfied by Jacob, Watts of 7 Division was

‘distinctly stupid ... but inspires confidence in all’.¹⁰²¹
He had to impress on Hunter-Weston ...

‘that there must be no halting at each trench ... for rear lines to pass through’.

He met Greenly, Congreve's BGGs, three times, but made no comment.¹⁰²²

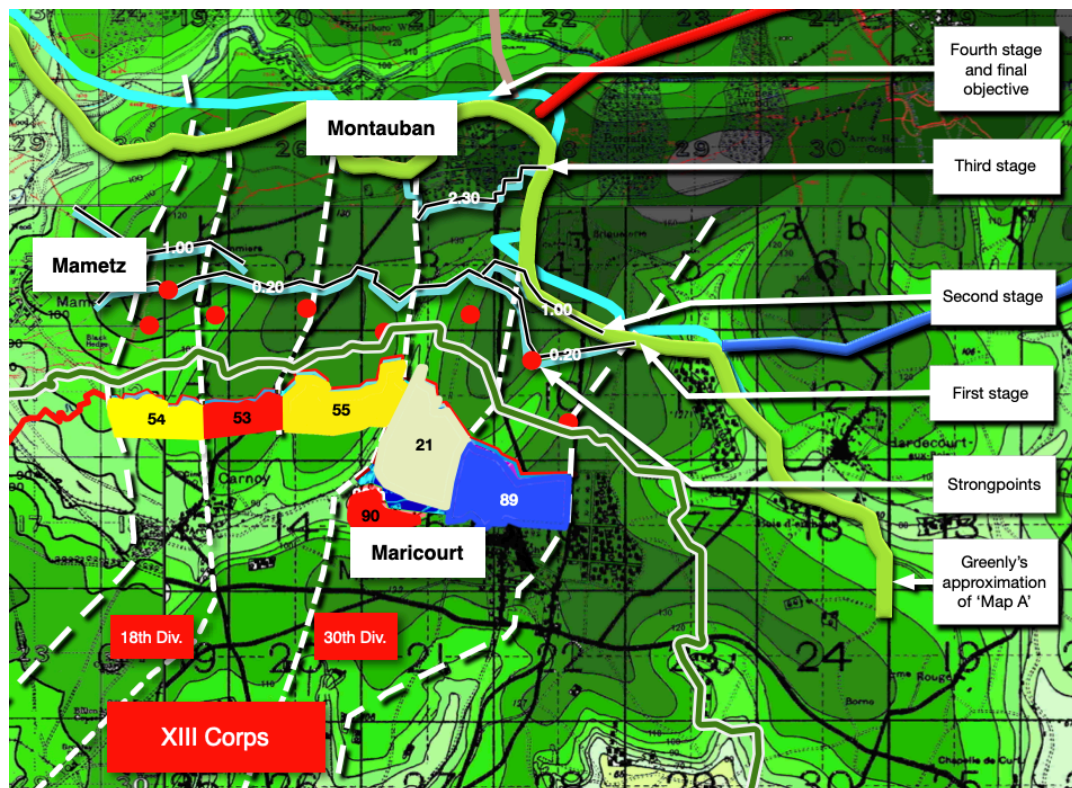


Figure 252 - XIII Corps | Preliminary instructions No. 1 - objectives and dispositions

XIII Corps only acquired 18 Division on 11 June.¹⁰²³ Four days later Greenly, issued part I of a five-part 'Plan of operations'. The initial parts of the plan were accompanied by the XIII Corps operation order No 14, issued a mere

¹⁰²⁰ Rawlinson, Diary 9 May 1916, CHUR.

¹⁰²¹ Entry of 9 May 1916 in Haig, Diary, WO 256/10.

¹⁰²² Entry of 10 May 1916 in Haig, Diary, WO 256/10.

¹⁰²³ Edmonds, J. E., ... 1916, Vol I, p. 254, footnote 1.

week before the battle. It had a brief appreciation of the opposing forces: 3 battalions of 62 Regiment to the right and 3 battalions of 23 Regiment to the left. (Edmonds mentioned 9 battalions together with several strong-points to be overcome.)¹⁰²⁴ The plan envisaged a preliminary bombardment to exhaust the enemy, impede his movement, disguise the moment of assault and cut wire. Counter-battery firing was ignored. The bombardment would be followed by a three-phase offensive, of which the first phase would have four stages. Phases II and III were lightly-defined: creating a defensive flank to the east, enfilading German defences in unspecified positions; and then heading east with the aid of a fourth, unspecified, division. The attack would be prepared by advancing infantry beyond the fourth stage, identifying OP positions, moving artillery forward, preparing to raid Caterpillar Wood and capturing enemy guns. Counter-attacks from Montauban were also envisaged. The stages of phase one are shown as thin black lines on the map above. The fourth was close to the first stage of Montgomery's original map 'A, which Greenly referenced approximately.

The mis-location of the boundaries and divisional barrages is noticeable around Mametz where, to the left of 54 Brigade, it strays into the XV Corps area. Possibly this was due to the artillery map ('Appendix B') being outside infantry control. Neither is in the file and Figure 252, showing the strongpoints, has been derived from the CRA and 9 Division maps. It is not clear whether the strongpoints were to be newly-built or were pre-existing. Greenly ordered that they be connected to trenches.¹⁰²⁵

The artillery support was, as elsewhere, divided.

■ 'Lifts of the divisional Artillery are ... arranged [so] as to fit in with Corps

¹⁰²⁴ Edmonds, J. E., ... 1916, Vol. I, p. 321.

¹⁰²⁵ WO 95/901 and Secret Map 31a in Stewart, Preliminary instructions No. 1 regarding the forthcoming operations, 9 Division plan of WO 95/1734/3.

Artillery'. [They should not] 'interfere with a neighbouring unit'.¹⁰²⁶ Figure 252 shows this was another unmet aspiration. While the Heavy Artillery would 'lift direct from one line on to the next', the field artillery would 'creep back by short lifts' of unspecified distance and timing, behind which the infantry would follow as close 'as safety admits'.¹⁰²⁷ Some batteries would advance early to deal with resilient strongpoints. Each division would send out patrols to check the state of the wire and raid the enemy trenches to capture prisoners.

On 'Y' day, were the wind from the south-west, gas and smoke would be used on the front line to deceive the enemy into believing the assault would shortly follow. This might be repeated for later assaults. If available, flame throwers would be used for the initial assault. stragglers, medical care, RE materials, liaison with the French XX Corps HQ and water supply were also covered.

Infantry would wear special markers, platoons and company HQs would carry flags to be waved and their locations thus observed. The flags and flares were to be used only when a position was reached. Two OPs, the RFC and the corps balloon would monitor their positions. Trench wireless sets, lamps, heliographs, mirrors, pigeons and flares would be used to transmit the details, but field telephones were only mentioned in the context of prisoner management.¹⁰²⁸

Phases II and III were included in part II of Greenly's plan issued on 23 June. It added little other than the second phase should follow the first with no more than three days delay, 30 Division would be relieved by 9 Division and 18 Division would progressively be relieved by XV Corps. Should the German

¹⁰²⁶ Stewart, Preliminary instructions No. 1 regarding the forthcoming operations of 19 June 1916 and Greenly in 'plan of operations' of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/1734.

¹⁰²⁷ Edmonds claims that the artillery lifts of the 18 Division were defined 'in a diary as "50 yards every 1½ minutes"'. Edmonds, J. E., ... *1916, Vol I*, p.324. There is no mention of this in any plan or the 18 Division CRA war diary in WO 95/2019.

¹⁰²⁸ Greenly, Plan of operations, part I of 16 June 1916 in WO 95/895/2.

defence collapse, the movement east would support the cavalry's advance to Bapaume.

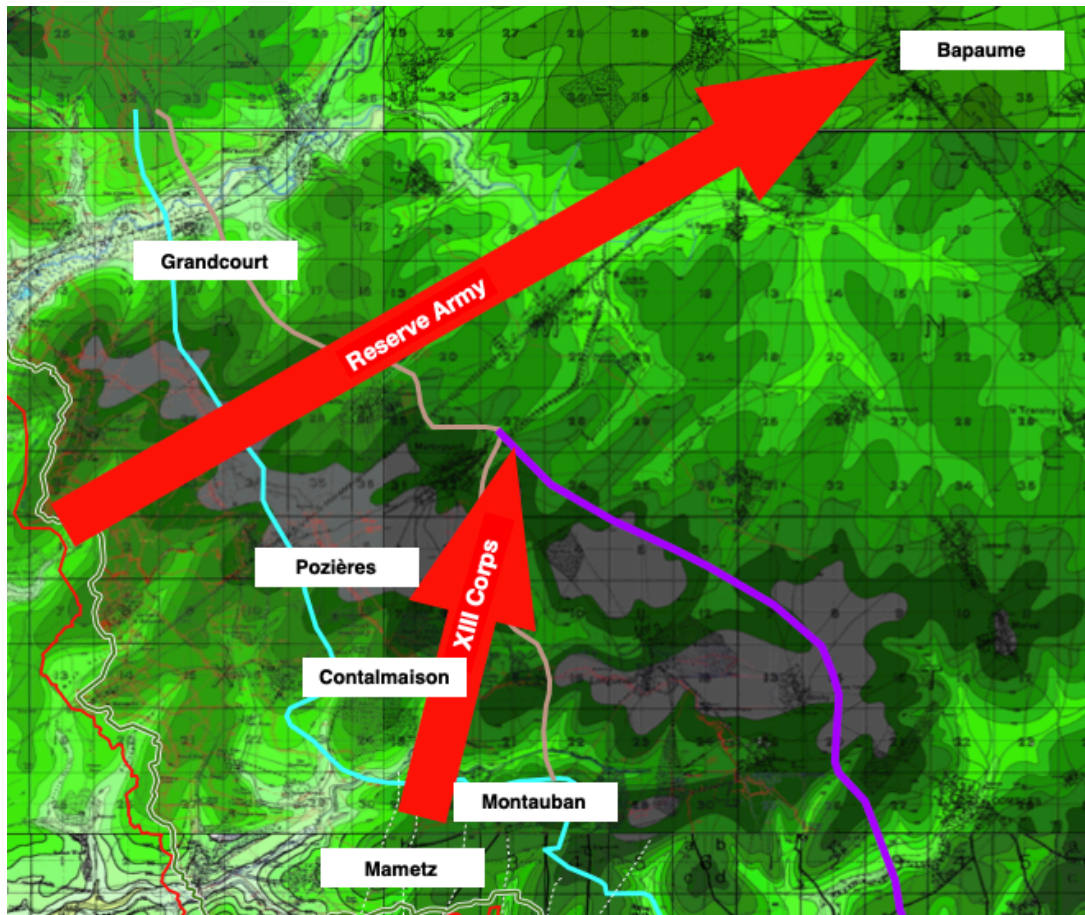


Figure 253 - XIII Corps | Plan of operations II - breakthrough

In that event the XIII was expected to 'secure the purple' line. Otherwise, Fourth Army operations were unlikely to extend beyond the brown line. At the end of the second phase the least-exhausted of 18 or 30 Divisions would exchange places with 9 Division, the artillery would be rearranged and a new (but undefined) 'communication system' would be completed. By 29 June the Phase III plan was finalised: the attack would be made by 9 Division on the right, the 18 Division on the left and 30 Division in reserve. They would capture Hardecourt (with the French), Trones Wood, Falfemont Farm and Guillemont. The plan was sparse and too late to be disseminated, but contained an important novelty: the first timetable of predicted events to be published in a BEF plan.

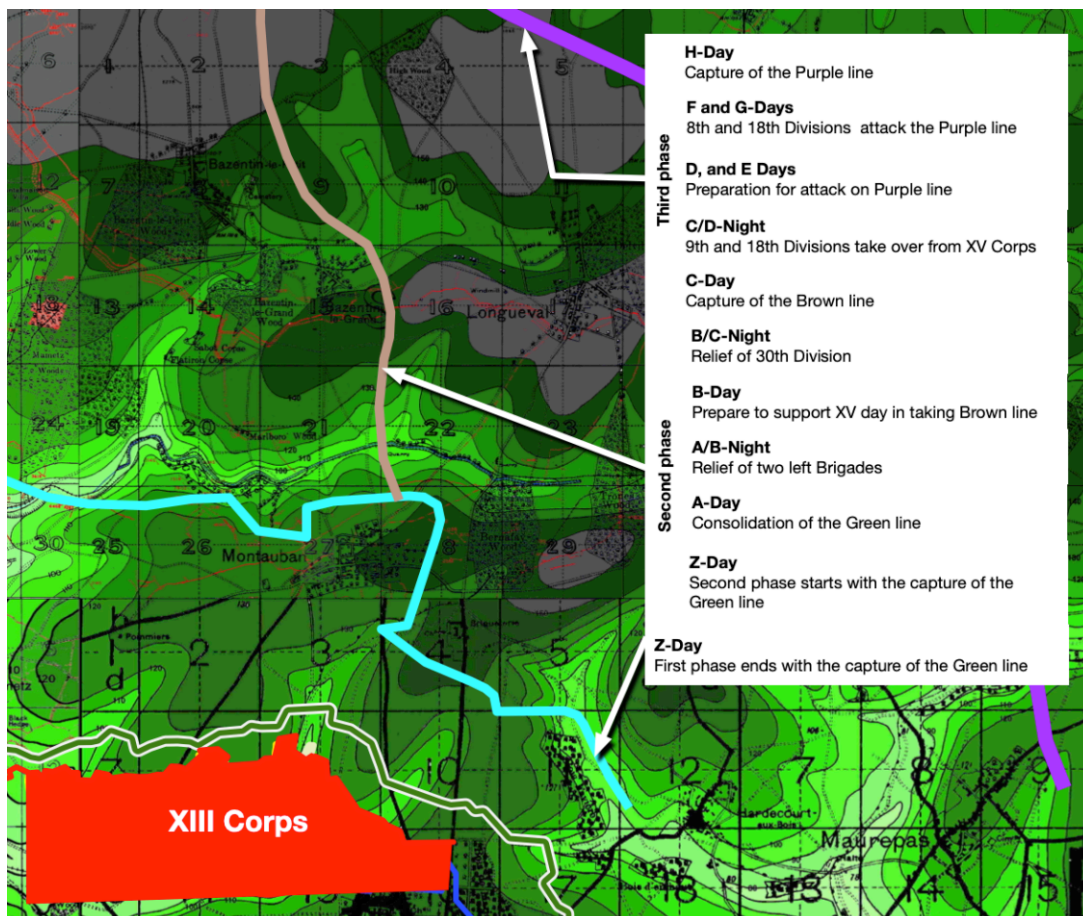


Figure 254 - XIII Corps | Plan of operations III - completion¹⁰²⁹

This large-scale time-table bears comparison with the barrage-derived and more-detailed timetables of the VIII Corps on page 320 et seq., but the risk of failure the XIII Corps timetable represents is far greater and the period covered is far longer. The tentative decisions to move divisions involve far more troops. It was published too late to be reflected in battalion plans, but until then, no other plan of the BEF had predicted events so far in the future.

There is some evidence of coordination between the XIII and XV Corps:

Greenly refers to

‘Possibilities in regard to the action of the XV Corps ... in 132/33 (G) dated 26th June’ ...

‘6. (a) In the event of the XV Corps establishing their line East of Mametz Wood the left division will [connect to] the 7 Division by securing

¹⁰²⁹ Greenly, ‘Contingent forecast of operations of 2nd and 3rd Phases’ in Plan of operations, part IV of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/895/2.

... Caterpillar Wood'.¹⁰³⁰

The XV Corps plan complemented that of the XIII Corps:

'The XIII Corps may be expected to connect with the 7 Division at the North-western point of Caterpillar Wood.'¹⁰³¹

However, Greenly also declared that:

'before the XV Corps [attacks] the Brown line, their two right divisions will ... Take over ... the front of 18 Division.'¹⁰³²

These actions are not reflected in the XV Corps plans.

Between Greenly's plan and the divisional plans being published, some changes occurred. Greenly mentions two 'attached' maps (which are missing) and the maps of 9, 18 and 30 Divisions have boundaries which differ from his. The rest of the plan was concerned with troop movements and changes to artillery control. The last part, dealing with the early stages of the battle, was only issued on 7 July.¹⁰³³

7.6.1 Artillery Planning

The XIII Corps artillery plan was issued on 23 June.¹⁰³⁴ The CRA commanded howitzers up to 12 inches which shelled communication approaches, railways fortified locations, billets and enemy batteries, specified vaguely (within a 2500-yard square) as:

'Southern exits of Longueval ... [and], western exits of Guillemont ... '

¹⁰³⁰ Greenly, XIII Corps, Plan of operations part III, Instructions for the second phase of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/895/2.

¹⁰³¹ Bonham-Carter, Further operations, 5.a. of 26 June 1916 in WO 95/1630/4.

¹⁰³² Greenly, XIII Corps, Plan of operations part III, Instructions for the second phase of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/895/2.

¹⁰³³ [169-171] XIII Corps Plan of operation parts I-V and OO 14 of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/895/2.

¹⁰³⁴ Lecky, Plan for XIII Corps artillery II of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/901/1.

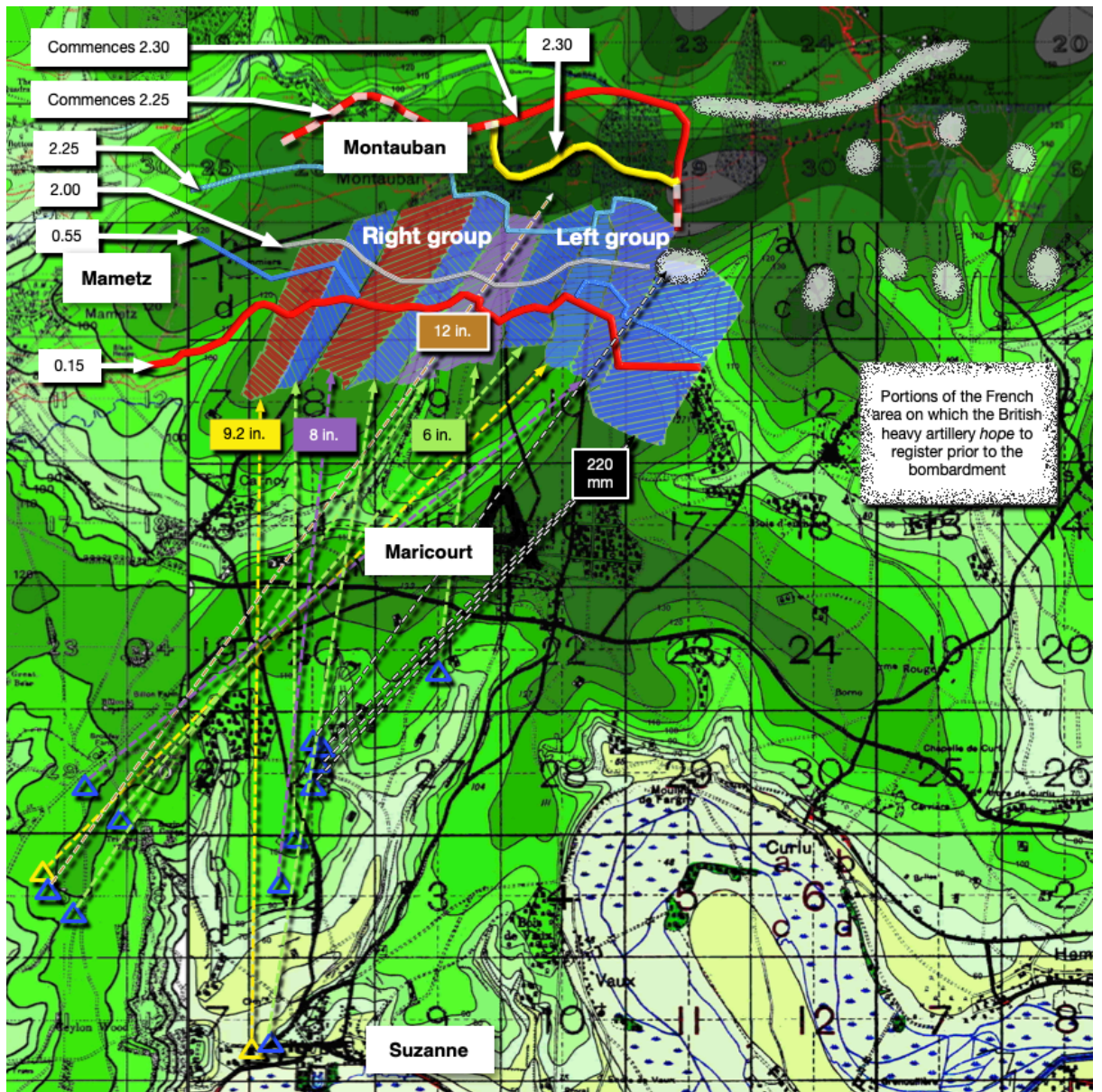


Figure 255 - XIII Corps | CRA - corps artillery plan 1

They would support the infantry by not firing on or within 150 yards of the German front line after the assault and never within 200 yards of positions to be occupied by British troops, but would otherwise minimally conform to field artillery barrages: the red line beyond Montauban ('Commences 2.30') would synchronise with the yellow line off which the artillery would lift at 2.30.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰³⁵ WO 95/901/1

The other divisions had either, like 30 Division, already begun issuing orders (see below),¹⁰³⁶ or issued them soon thereafter: that the plans cohered at all was probably due to Montgomery's outline 'Plan A' and the degree of social osmosis of the officers concerned. 18 Division issued theirs on 21 June,¹⁰³⁷ 9 Division on 19 June.¹⁰³⁸ It was to be kept in reserve: only on 11 June had it been ordered to join XIII Corps from Second Army. The move was completed by 25 June, they received the 'Plan of operations' on 15 June and the last of a series of instructions, showing the four stages of Phase I of the attack, only on 30 June.¹⁰³⁹

7.6.2 30 Division Planning

30 Division's plan for the assault was published by Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. F. Weber on 21 June, two days before the XIII Corps Operation Order.¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁶ [359] Weber, 30 Division operation order No. 18, Preliminary stages of the Somme battle in WO 95/2310/4.

¹⁰³⁷ [354-358] 18 Division in WO 95/2015.

¹⁰³⁸ [367] Stewart, Preliminary instructions Nos. 1 & 2 regarding the forthcoming operations, Playle, Artillery OO 22 (Assault) in WO 95/1734/3.

¹⁰³⁹ Stewart, Preliminary instructions No. 1 regarding the forthcoming operations of 19 June 1916 in WO 95/1734.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Weber W. H. F., 30 Division operation order No. 19 of 21 June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

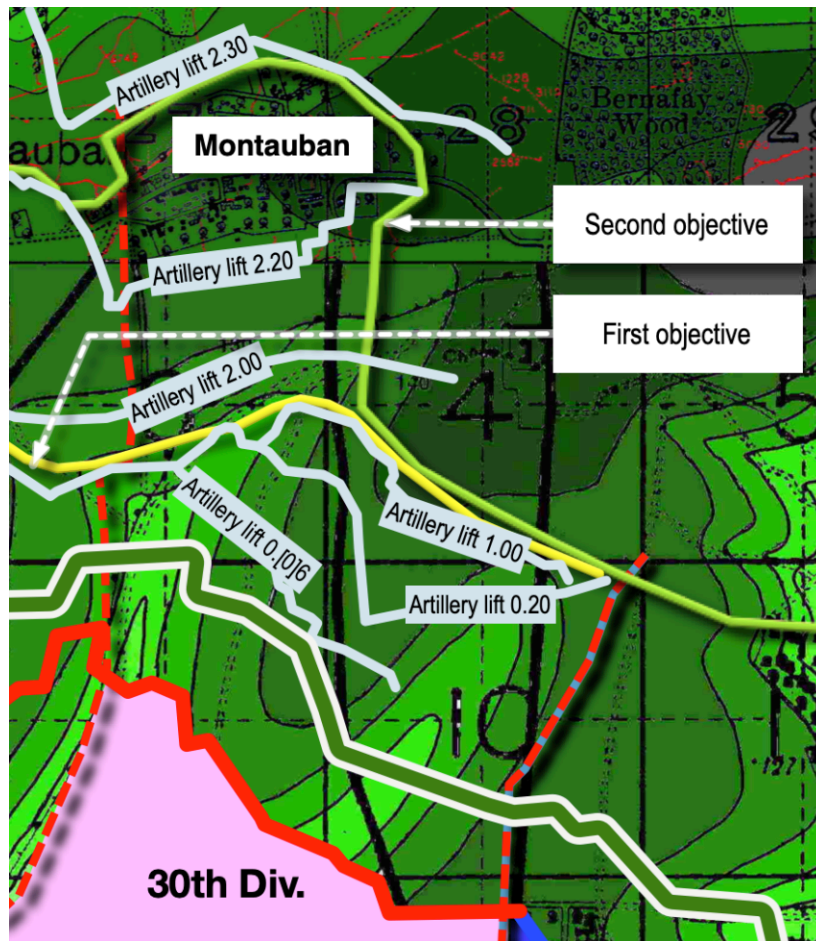


Figure 256 - XIII Corps | 30 Division OO 19 - objectives

Its objectives were mentioned in the text and, more accurately, on an accompanying map. The 'lifts' of artillery implied that while troops were expected to reach the outskirts of the fortified village of Montauban (de Picardie)¹⁰⁴¹ by 2.20, they were then to traverse it in ten minutes.

No means of staying in touch with the French 39^{me} Division to their right was mentioned other than the address of their HQ and name of their liaison officer. For this the French were perhaps thankful since the method proposed for contacting 18 Division to their left was that

█ '21st Bde ... will bomb to the left to get touch with 18 Division ...¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰⁴¹ There are several Montaubans in France.

¹⁰⁴² Shea J. S. M., 30 Division OO 19 of 21 June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

At a corps conference on 23 of June the only reference was to a 'Communication with the French' from whom they received the 39^{me} Division 'Ordre d'attaque' the next day: they did not reflect it anywhere in their plans and only XIII Corps reciprocated by circulating their plans to the 39^{me} Division.¹⁰⁴³

Having captured a position, it had to be defended and strongpoints built. Several of these had duplicate numbers. Some were in different positions to those shown on the map issued with the plan. Those of the 21 Brigade are shown in red, those of 89 Brigade in yellow and 90 Brigade would later complete those in green. Some references were wrong: No. 2 (yellow) is shown as in the plan at **A.10.d.15/60**, whereas on the map it is shown at A.10.a.35.65.

¹⁰⁴³ Anon., Conference at XIII Corps HQ of 23 June 1916 in WO 95/1734/3 and Anon., 30th Div entry of 24 June 1916, Greenly, Plan of operations part I of 15 June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

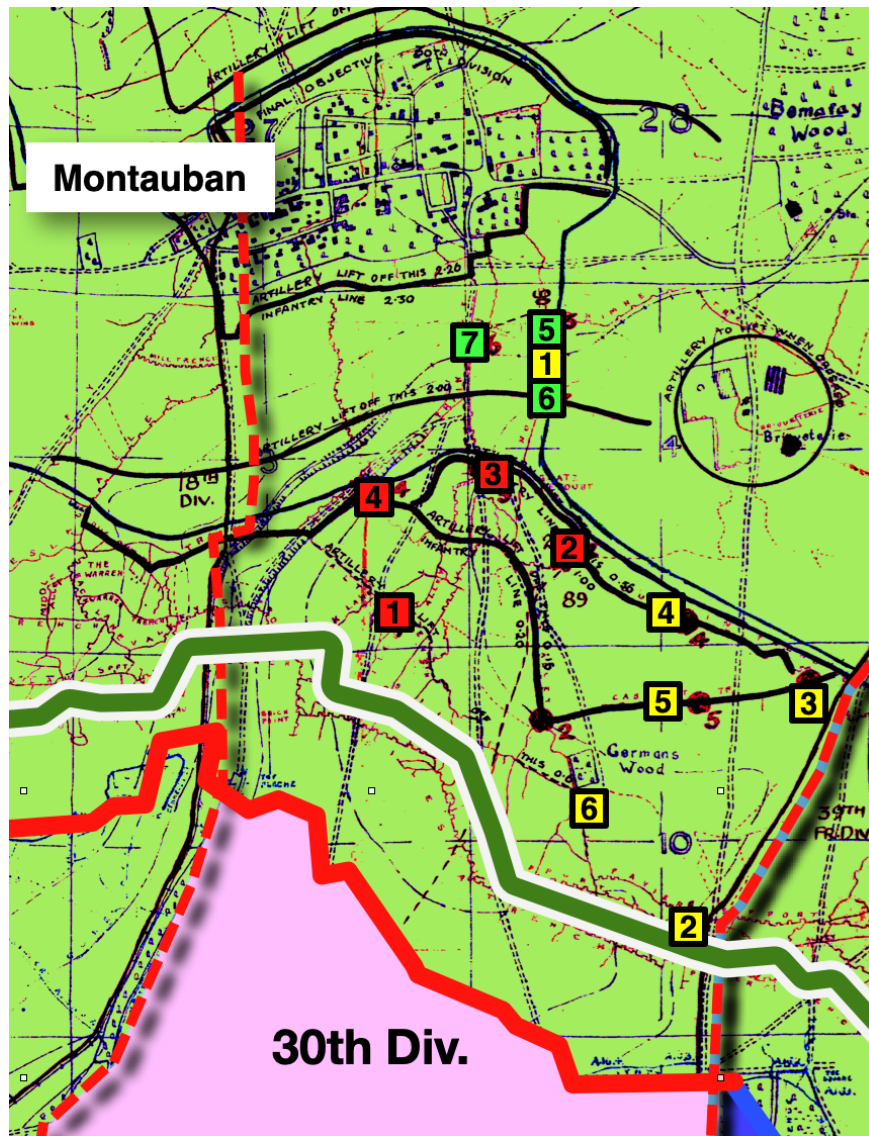


Figure 257 - XIII Corps | 30 Division - Strongpoints

The attack would be made by two brigades with a third in reserve.

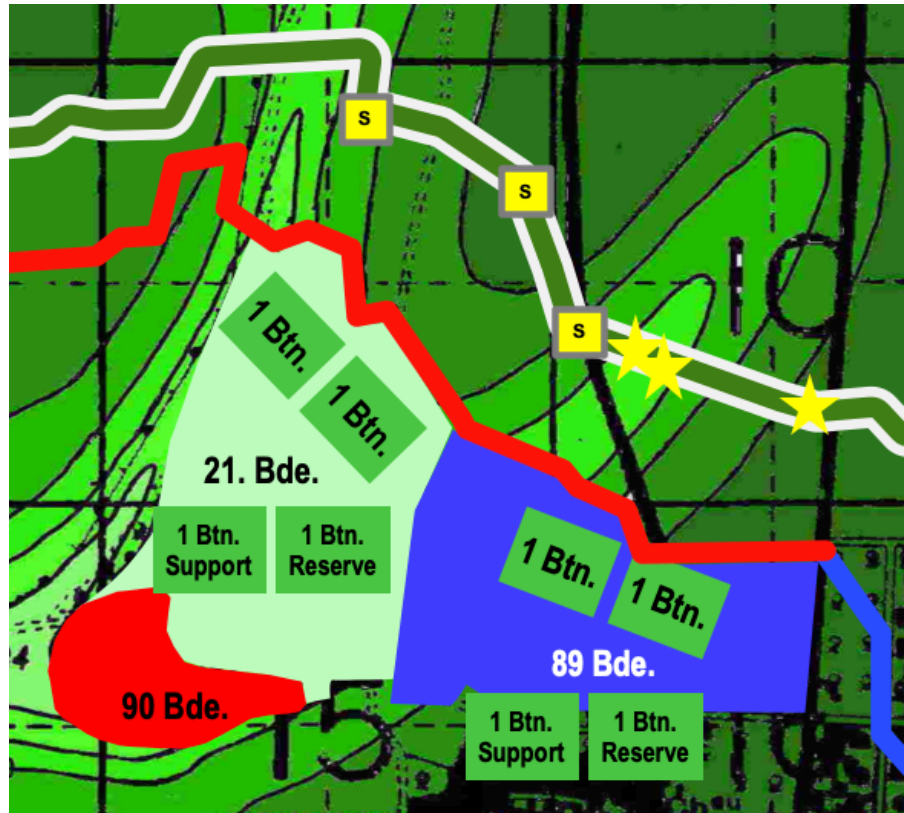


Figure 258 - XIII Corps | 30 Division - Attack formation

Each leading battalion would have 50 'moppers-up'. The attack would be covered by the fire of 16 MGs and Lewis guns. Stokes mortars would bombard known MG posts and strongpoints. As soon as the first objective was taken and if the wind came from anywhere between south and west, smoke candles would be lit to draw attention from 90 Brigade's advance on the second objective.

The artillery timetable was reflected in smoke emission plans. Smoke would be used (were the wind in the right direction) to blind enemy FOOs as shown below.¹⁰⁴⁴

¹⁰⁴⁴ Weber, Instructions to O.C Detachment No. 5 Special Brigade of 25 June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

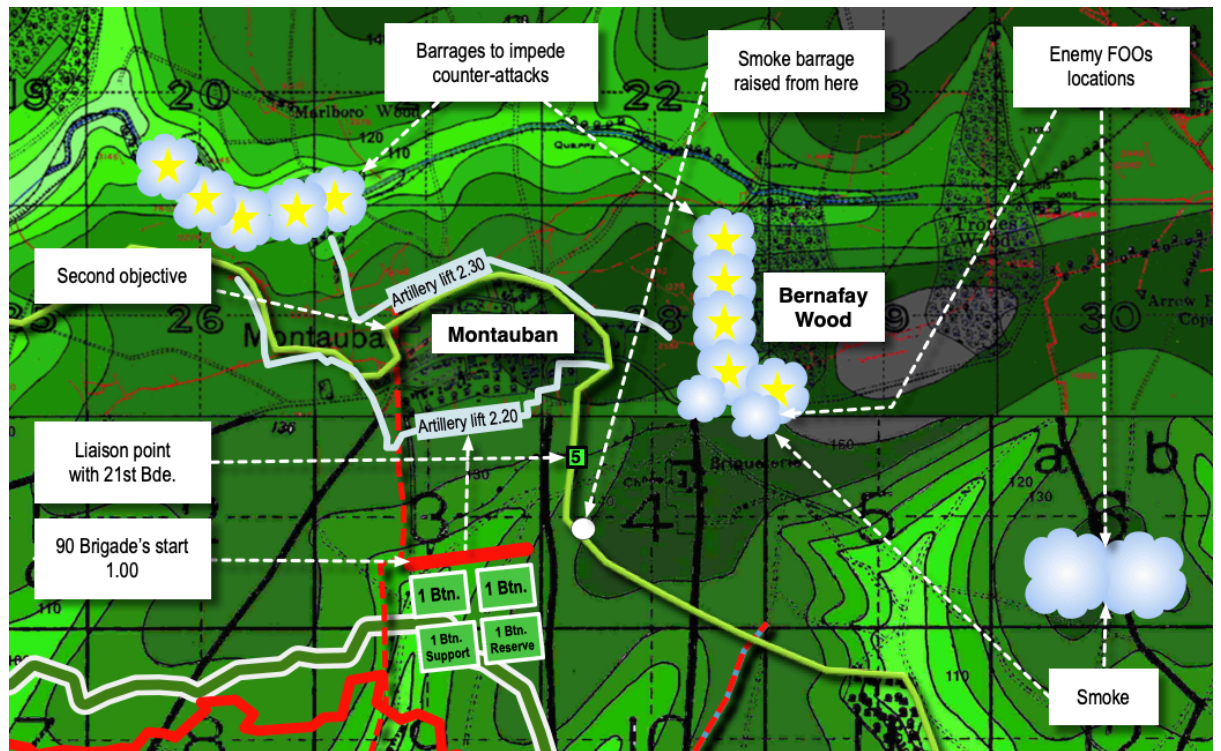


Figure 259 - XIII Corps | 30 Division | 90 Brigade - Attack on the second objective

The 30 Division's plans were supported by 13 appendices and an index. The appendices were among the most detailed of the Fourth Army: the Intelligence appendix, for example, listed the document types to be searched for (artillery locations, telephone messages, ammunition states, maps and sketches) and the prisoner types of greatest interest for interrogation (pioneers and gunners). Information was so highly-prized that any officer observing any man carrying intelligence material to be wounded should order another man to carry the material for him.

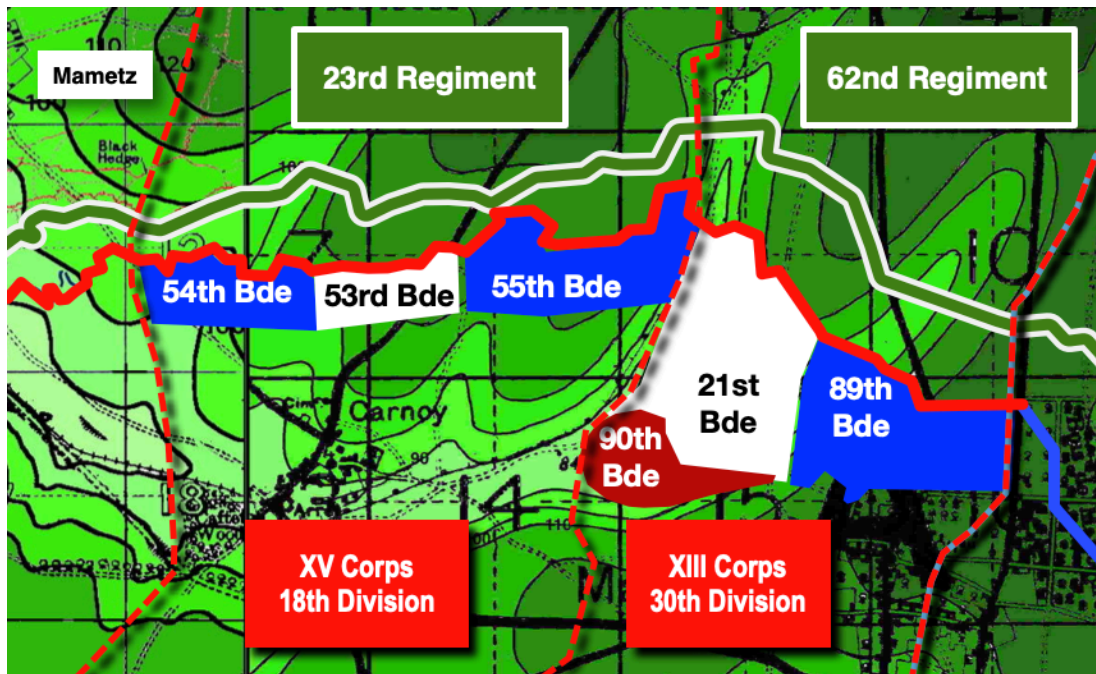


Figure 260 - XIII Corps | Opposing dispositions

Only on 25 June was an addendum to the plan issued, showing the forces opposing 12 Division.¹⁰⁴⁵ This was supplemented by a 'Notes on German Forces' which revealed that the two opposing regiments had some 26 MGs, 36 Field Guns, 12 howitzers and could each draw on a further 44 Heavy guns or howitzers from its corps. Both opposing regiments had been in the position since May 1915 and had a 'fair proportion of active soldiers and reservists'.¹⁰⁴⁶

90 Brigade issued their attack plan on 25 June and detailed instructions with two maps on 29 June.¹⁰⁴⁷ 89 Brigade were a little earlier.¹⁰⁴⁸ The plans for 21 Brigade were found in the files of 19/Manchesters,¹⁰⁴⁹ who had no orders of their own (only five of the 12 battalions issued orders).¹⁰⁵⁰ By contrast 21

¹⁰⁴⁵ Weber, W. H. Addenda and modifications to 30 Division OO 19 of 25 June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Anon., Notes on German forces undated but in June 1916 in WO 95/2310/4.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Steavenson, OO 24, assault and Rampton, OO 23, assaulting instructions in WO 95/2337/2.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Seymour, OO 30, assault of 22 June 1916, OO 30 Addendum of 27 June 1916 and 0031, Forming up, of 29 June 1916 in WO 95/2331/2.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Crossman, OO 136, map, of 19 June 1916 in WO 95/2329/4.

¹⁰⁵⁰ 20 King's Regiment (Liverpool) in WO 95/2335, 2 Bedfordshire in WO 95/2333/1, 17 Manchester in WO 95/2334/2, 18 Manchester in WO 95/2339/3, 19 Manchester in WO 95/2329/4.

Division had already issued provisional plans to nine battalions on 15 June.¹⁰⁵¹

XIII Corps plan part III contained the first attempt by a corps in the BEF to estimate a timetable of events which they could not control, rather than the preparations,¹⁰⁵² or barrages which they could. By this means, Congreve and Greenly planned the reliefs of their divisions in the line, but they were the slowest of all the corps to generate plans and this severely constrained the generation of lower-level plans and orders by divisions and Brigades.

7.7 Conclusions

The planning of the Battle of the Somme exposed many of the BEF's organisational and structural problems. The lack of an army-level Appreciation meant that apart from relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun,¹⁰⁵³ few battle objectives were identified.¹⁰⁵⁴ Thus when Haig was pressured by Joffre to change direction and head north-east for Bapaume,¹⁰⁵⁵ rather than east for Peronne,¹⁰⁵⁶ there was no competing strategic objective which might have dissuaded him, or persuaded the Fourth Army corps commanders to follow him.¹⁰⁵⁷ Haig was prepared to risk splitting the main Allied thrust of 1916 in a gamble to achieve a breakout,¹⁰⁵⁸ but was not prepared to mitigate the risk by establishing an adequate early advice system.¹⁰⁵⁹

1051 WO 95/2130/1.

1052 Rawlinson, Revised programme (OAD 9) of 12 June 1916 in WO 158/321.

1053 See pages 185, 193, and 189.

1054 See pages 223, 226 and 240.

1055 See page 219.

1056 See page 193.

1057 See page 250.

1058 See pages 220 and 240.

1059 See page 247

While it was organisationally handicapped by being composed of five corps,¹⁰⁶⁰ the effects of this large span of control could have been mitigated had Rawlinson created a Fourth Army plan in a timely manner (the two extra divisions were engaged in a deception operation at Gommecourt of no strategic importance other than to distract German resources).¹⁰⁶¹ It is evident from Neuve Chapelle and Loos that Rawlinson himself could not plan,¹⁰⁶² but it remains unclear why he did not order Montgomery to prepare one for his approval, and it is possible that his reluctance stemmed from the leverage it would have afforded Haig to impose his views even more explicitly.¹⁰⁶³ But equally Haig exhibited management failings by not insisting that Rawlinson write such a plan, as he had insisted at Neuve Chapelle, and had himself to be prodded to decide how to take Montauban, only to propose a most unrealistic approach.¹⁰⁶⁴ The absence of a Fourth Army plan possibly prompted some corps commanders to leave the planning to divisional commanders and merely coordinate the results. The consequence was a series of chaotic attempts by corps to integrate divisional plans into their own,¹⁰⁶⁵ resulting in battalions either receiving their plans incomplete,¹⁰⁶⁶ very late,¹⁰⁶⁷ or not at all.¹⁰⁶⁸ There were consequently: a cover-up¹⁰⁶⁹ and several orders dictated at the last minute.¹⁰⁷⁰ The detail of planning was further confused by the general failure to establish and monitor measures of

¹⁰⁶⁰ See page 188.

¹⁰⁶¹ See page 236.

¹⁰⁶² See pages 94 and 151.

¹⁰⁶³ See page 249.

¹⁰⁶⁴ See pages 230, 233, 236, 237, and 374.

¹⁰⁶⁵ See pages 234, 257, 346, 344, and 347.

¹⁰⁶⁶ See pages 263, 273 and 321.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See pages 292 and 289.

¹⁰⁶⁸ See pages 292, 325, 347, 340 and 362.

¹⁰⁶⁹ See page 292.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See pages 232, and 264.

front, troop numbers and artillery.¹⁰⁷¹ The few resulting plans often lacked essential details,¹⁰⁷² caused poor artillery coverage of troops,¹⁰⁷³ command dislocation between corps, divisions, brigades, and battalions,¹⁰⁷⁴ and induced friction, if not local confusion.¹⁰⁷⁵

In several ways the BEF planning had evolved from 1915. A few plans included Appreciations,¹⁰⁷⁶ and deception elements,¹⁰⁷⁷ and a very few became comprehensive.¹⁰⁷⁸ Rawlinson asked that arrival times to be shown,¹⁰⁷⁹ and the first plan with a timetable appeared.¹⁰⁸⁰ A corps published a planning doctrine.¹⁰⁸¹ While the some plans' contents may have improved, the process of generating them did not, and the many delays in planning imposed on subordinate units by the non-arrival of superior plans resulted in 58% of battalions assaulting without written orders, compared with 33% at Loos.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁷¹ See pages 197, 199 and 217

¹⁰⁷² See pages 216, 337, 341, 360, and 375.

¹⁰⁷³ See pages 266, 270, 285, 291, 300, 321, 323, 325, 336, 342, 358, 359, and 361.

¹⁰⁷⁴ See pages 304, 371 and 272.

¹⁰⁷⁵ See pages 276, 285, 363 and 374.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See pages 261, 308 and 365.

¹⁰⁷⁷ See pages 217 and 260.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See pages 281-4, 287 and 294.

¹⁰⁷⁹ See page 242.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See page 370.

¹⁰⁸¹ See page 318.

¹⁰⁸² See also the discussion on page 496.

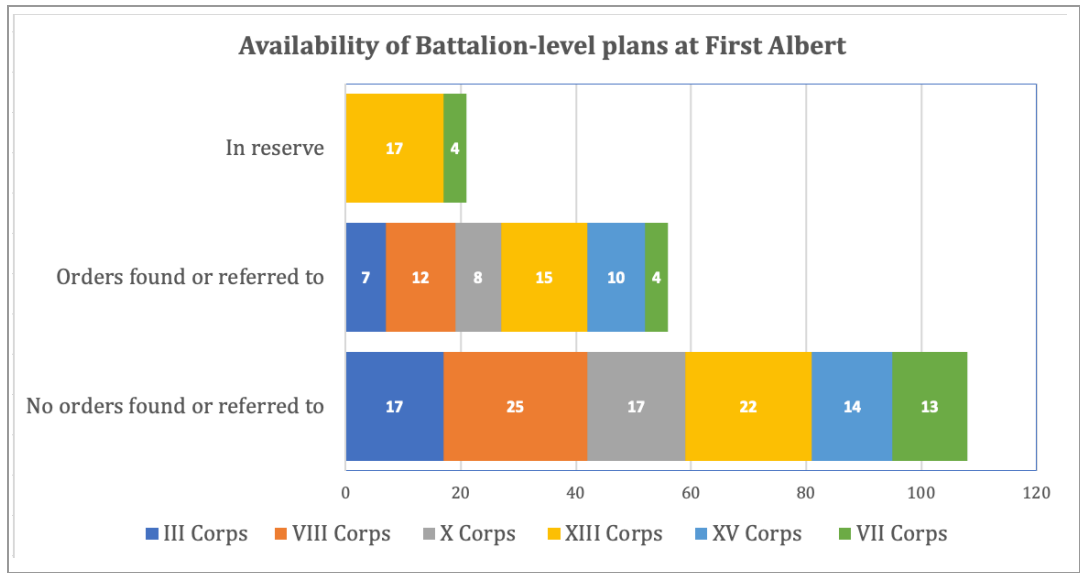


Figure 261 - Availability of battalion-level plans at First Albert

7.8 Postscript

Plans which were not translated into orders at battalion level might as well never have been written. The analysis on page 273 shows that a 40% of battalions had no plans or orders in their files. Below is an example of how one Major Geoffrey Taunton Raikes DSO attempted to support his unit.



Schedule for attack on German Trenches 31/6/16

Appendix IV

June 1916

Ref Trench Map $\frac{1}{10,000}$

Position held by B² Q/66 55/65 - Q 10 c 95/85

Area allotted for B² to attack German 1st line system of trenches as far as STATION ROAD. South of the line Q 10 d 65/75 - Q 11 c 00/85
 - Quarry at Q 11 d 50/80 and North of line Q 11 c 60/10
 - S of STATION ROAD

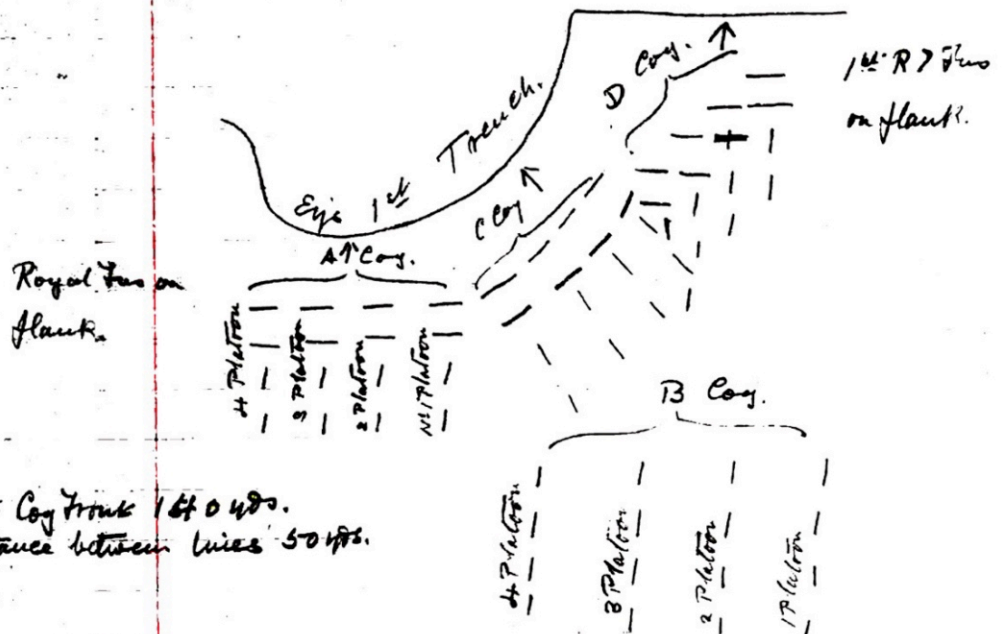
Formation

A, C + D Coys in the first line B Coy in Reserve
 A Coy to attack between Points Q 10 d 65/75 + Q 10 d 75/45
 C Coy " " " " " " " " " " " " Q 10 d 75/45 + Q 11 c 30/30
 D Coy " " " " " " " " " " " " Q 11 c 30/40 + Q 11 c 60/10
 A Coy to push through till right flank reaches Y Ravine then swing half right & advance astride E of 2nd trench to PE Q 11 c 80/60 where they consolidate
 B Coy as soon as they reach E of first trench swing half right & move between Y Ravine & E of 1st trench then right & bomb squad on 1st trench to junction of two branches of Y Ravine. The Coy then pushes through A Coy & moves forward as covering party to E side of STATION ROAD covering both front. Two H.Q. Bomb Squads will be attached to C Coy to assist in cleaning dug outs, Communication & Quarry.

D Coy. advance straight through to E of 3rd trench + consolidate PE Q 11 c 85/40

H.Q. Grenadiers 2 Squads attached to C Coy as above
 1 Squad to A Coy to clean E of 2nd trench
 2 Squads to B Coy to assist in cleaning trenches after leading Coys have moved through
 1 Squad in Reserve.

B Coy. in Reserve will follow 50 yds in Rear & as leading Coys pass over Eys trenches will send off 1 Platoon with 1 Coy & 1 H&Q Bomb Squad & clear dugouts etc in 1st trench & 1 Platoon with Coy & H&Q Bomb Squad to clear 2nd trench. The Battalion will form up outside our trenches & 100 yds from German trenches as follows.



Each Coy will have a bomb Squad with leading & 2nd line, on approaching Eys trench Bomb squad moves forward & bombs trench, trench bridge & then brought forward & leading & 2nd line cross & move straight on to final objective. One bomb Squad remaining at each trench to prevent Eys coming out of his dugouts till Platoon detached from B Coy comes up to clear the trench.

Equipment Carried

- (i) 1st line of sections 170 rounds SAA. 2 bombs
 3 sandbags rifle bayonet + equipment less pack
 1 Trench bridge per section. 1 Bangalore per Section
 1 Art screen per sect
- (ii) 2nd line of sections as above less Art screen
- (iii) 3rd line of sections as above ~~less~~ in (i) less trench
 bridge, Bangalore torpedo + Art screen. Each
 man in addition to carry a pick or shovel
 (in proportion of 1 pick 3 shovels)
- (iv) 4th line of sections as in (iii) but 25% carry
 coils of french wire + remainder 25 sandbags
- (v) Reserve Coy 170 RDS SAA. 2 bombs rifle bayonet +
 equipment less pack. 25% coils french wire
 remainder 25 sandbags. A Pick or shovel
^{per man} per man (1 pick - 3 shovels).
- (vi) Bombers 50 rounds SAA. 20 bombs 4 men per squad
 rifles. all carry bayonets. equipment less pack
- (vii) Lewis Gunners 50 rds per man, 2 per gun team
 carry rifles. equipment less pack.
- (viii) Runners & Signaller 50 rds per man

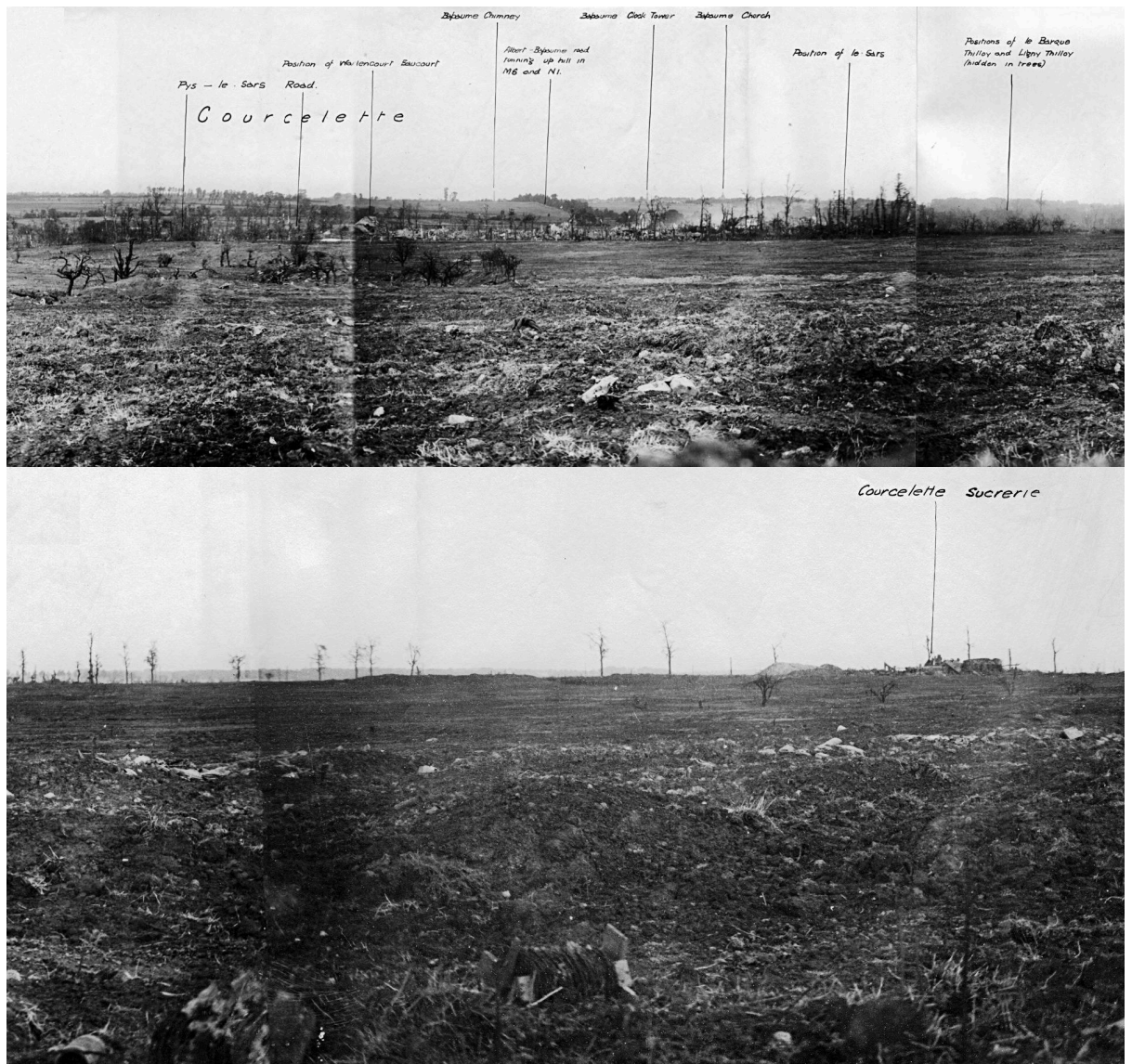
In addition each man carries two days ration + iron ration
 All officers + INCO per section carry 4 flares for
 denisting position to Contact Aeroplane.

30/6/16.

G. T. Raikes Maj
 for OC 29th Division Borderers

Figure 262 - Raikes, G. T., 29th Division - 87 Brigade - 2 South Wales Borderers, Schema for attack on German trenches, of 30 June in WO 95/2304/2.1

8. Flers-Courcelette



8.1 Introduction

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette had several unusual characteristics: on the Allied side it was conducted by three armies, the British Reserve and Fourth armies and the French Sixth, on a front disjointed by a 1600-yard gap.

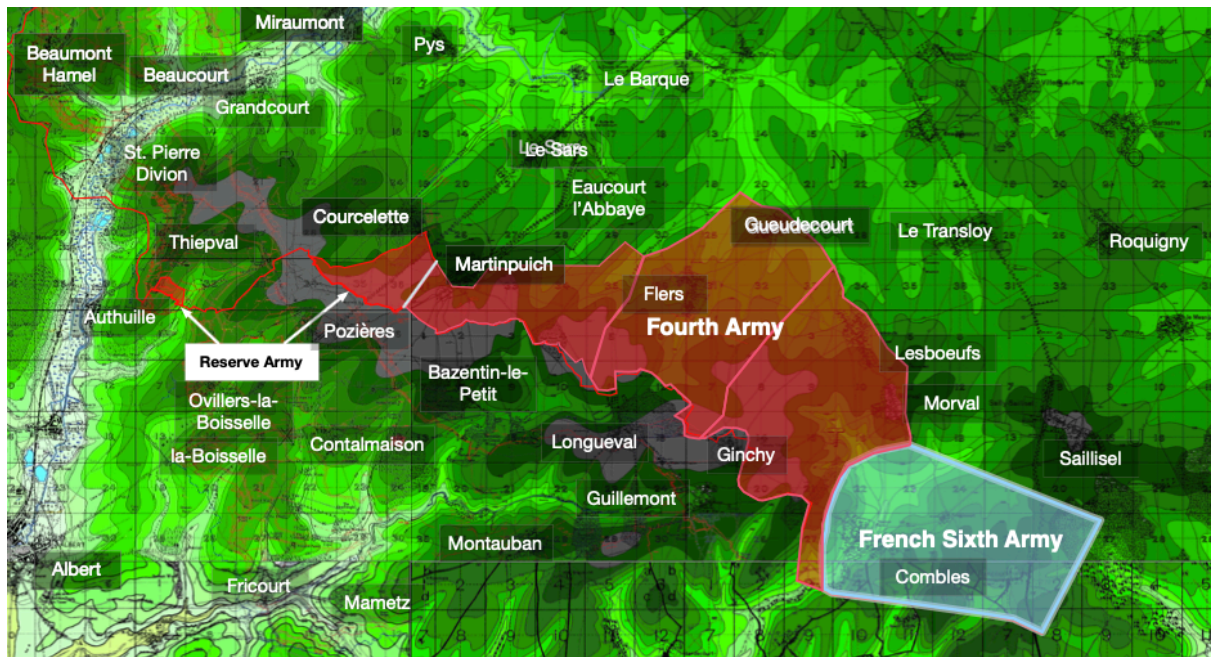


Figure 263 - GHQ | Armies

It embodied novelties: for the first time a BEF corps planned to seize a dominant position, expose both flanks and stop, rather than attempt a breakthrough. The battle would be fought with barrage maps, the experience gained at First Albert and tanks. Moreover, another attempt would be made to provide a planning doctrine.

The tactic of seizing and stopping (or 'bite and hold') is discussed on page 433 and was due to the need to dislodge the enemy from a dominant position.

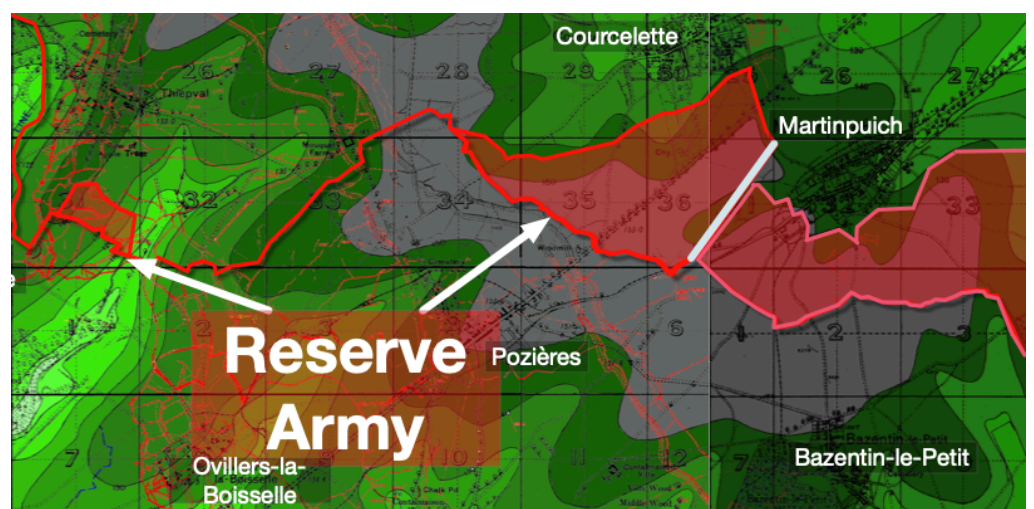


Figure 264 - GHQ | The Reserve Army and the Gap

In this case the area to be seized was well-separated from the rest of the targeted territory.

It was the first major battle the BEF had fought after First Albert and it was preceded by a tactical doctrine issued by GHQ.¹⁰⁸³ This had required that

successive lines on which each successive barrage or bombardment will be placed must all be laid down beforehand

... but made no mention of barrage maps. It also identified infantry rôles:

flank protectors; 'moppers-up' (who capture or kill any remaining enemy);

bombers, (who throw grenades); patrollers; and consolidators.

Creeping barrages had entered the BEF's tactical lexicon but, while they remained unplanned, troops did not trust them and kept their distance, despite the exhortations of senior officers.

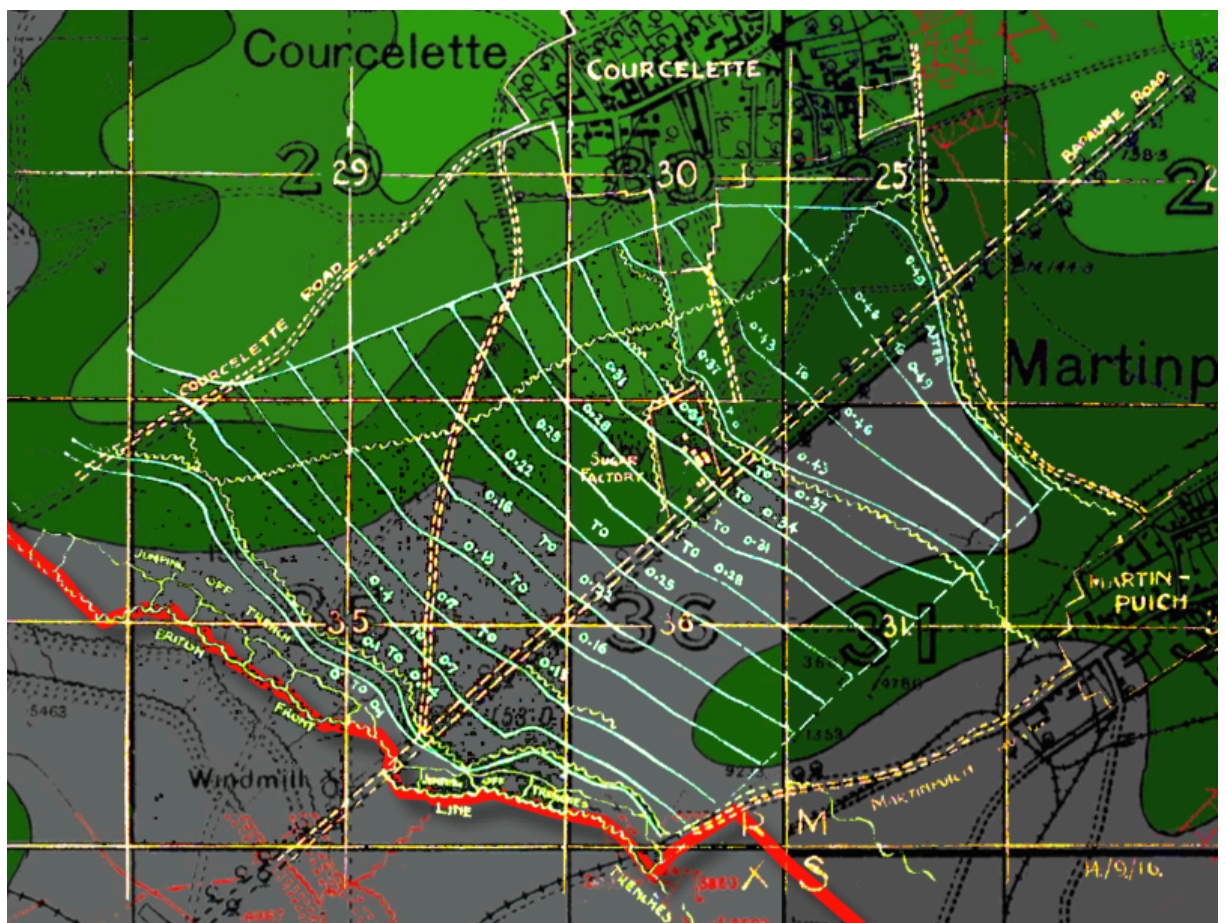


Figure 265 - Fourth Army | Canadian Corps | 3 Canadian Division barrage map

¹⁰⁸³ SS 119 Preliminary Notes on the Tactical Lessons of the Recent Operations, GHQ July 1916.

As barrage maps proliferated (and the quality of shells improved) troops learned to trust barrages more, and assaults had better results.¹⁰⁸⁴

A major plea (promptly ignored) was to leave sufficient ...

time ... for ... battalion and company commanders to reconnoitre the ground, make their preparations in detail and issue their orders ...

... but the plea was then undermined:

Six hours is a rough estimate of the minimum time for orders to pass from the Corps to company commanders, ... Changes ... which will reach the attacking troops only a short time before the assault or ... fail to reach them in time, are a frequent source of failure.

Brigadier-General Philip Howell, the BGGs of II Corps, issued an outline planning doctrine. This was the second instance of a battle planning doctrine (Figure 266). He followed this by an amplification of the GHQ 'Preliminary Notes' which can be interpreted as an early view of battle-as-a-set-of-processes (Figure 267).¹⁰⁸⁵

¹⁰⁸⁴ See page 34. A barrage map was also used on the 9 September 1916. See Elkington, R.J.G., Plan of Barrage to cover attack of 56 Division's attack. 9 September 1916 in WO 95/2937/1.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Howell, P., G 751 of 28 August 1916 and 'Notes on the attack' of 12 September 1916 in WO 95/638/6.

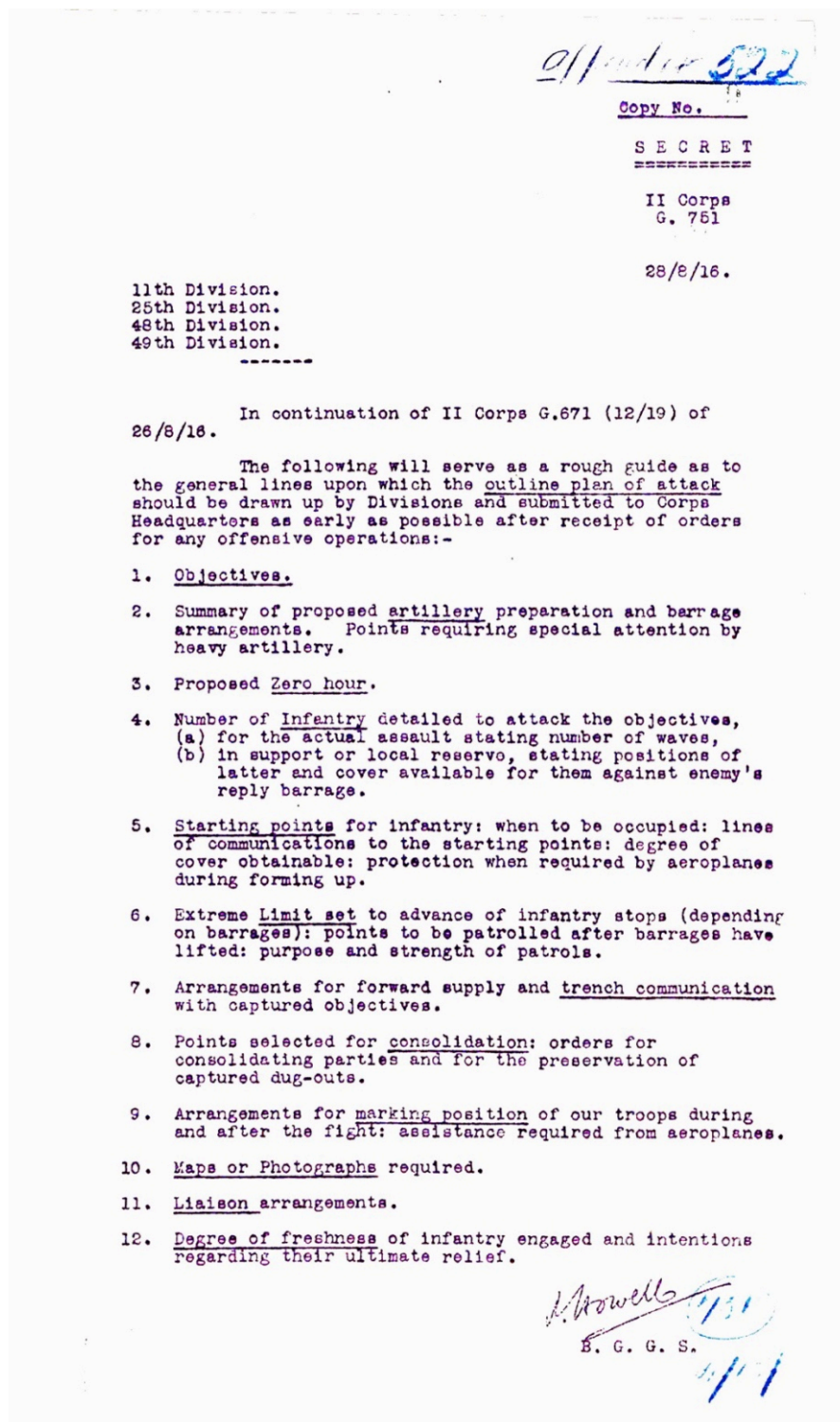


Figure 266 - Howell's Battle Plan Doctrine

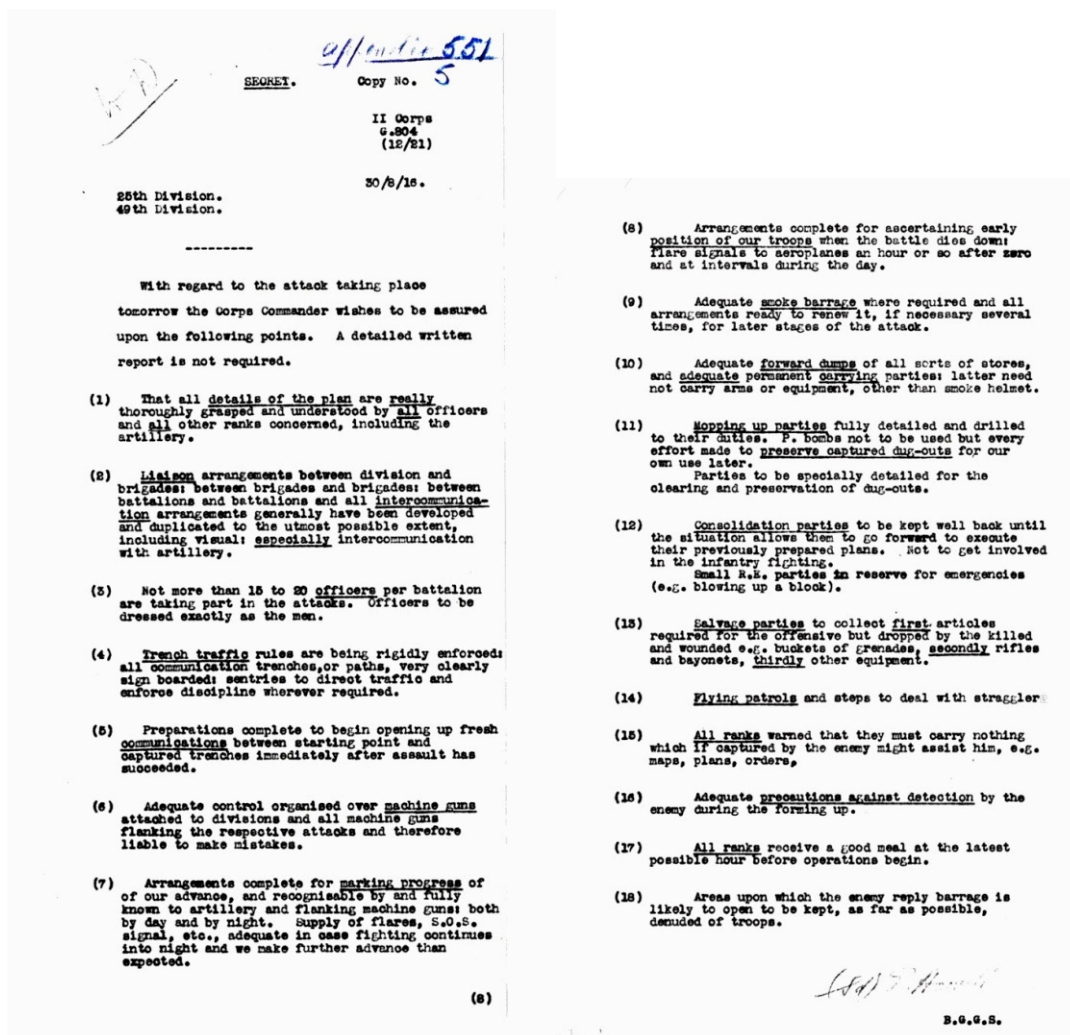


Figure 267 - Howell's Battle Planning Doctrine

He was killed on 7 October.¹⁰⁸⁶

8.2 Tanks at Flers

The first mention of Flers as a battle site had occurred in Rawlinson's revised battle plan of 19 April..

III Corps to push forward to FAUCOURT-L'ABBAYE - FLERS¹⁰⁸⁷

¹⁰⁸⁶ Becke, Part 4, page 137.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Rawlinson, plan of 19 April 1916 in WO 158/233.

... and Haig echoed this in his conference of 15 June,¹⁰⁸⁸ but it was not until 19 August that Butler (who by then reported to A. A. Montgomery, the Fourth Army CoS) wrote an outline of a plan for a mid-September offensive

Commander-in-Chief intends to ... attack about the middle of September ... with fresh forces and all available resource (including 'tanks') ... south of the Ancre...

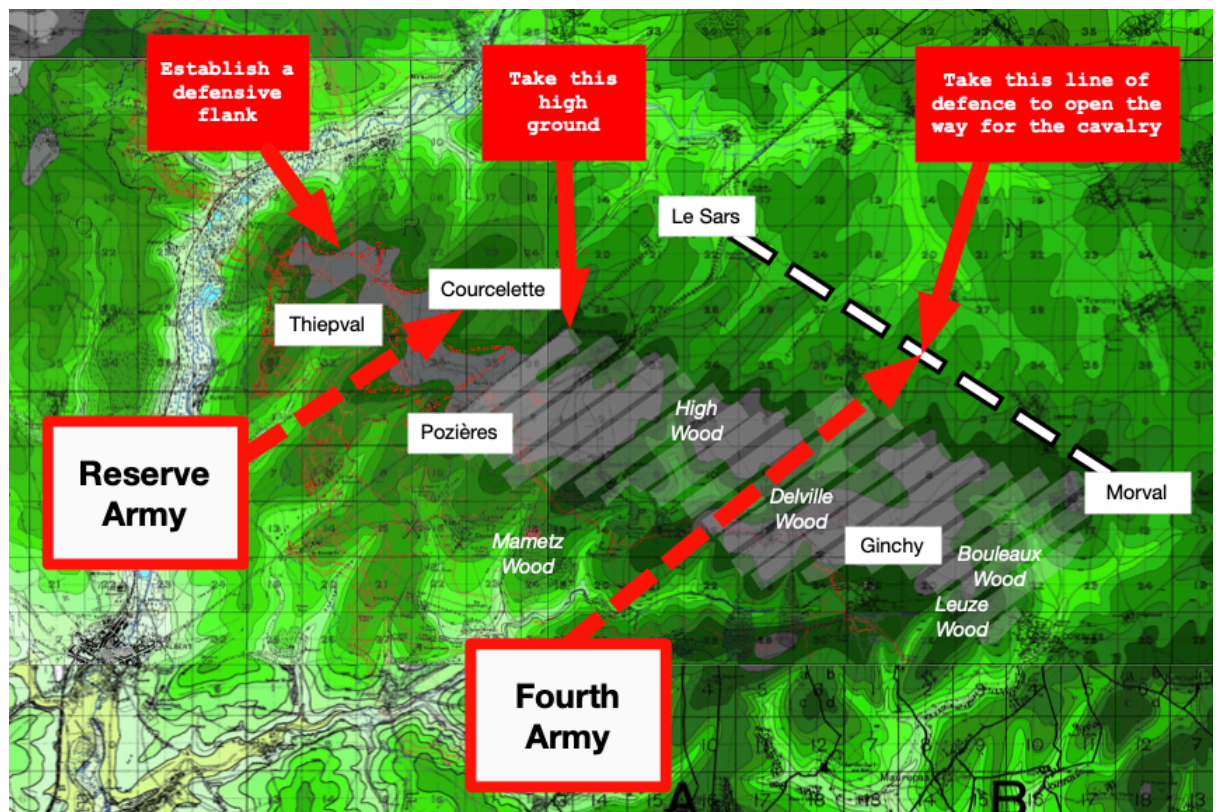


Figure 268 - GHQ | Butler's objectives

Butler's plan aroused no interest.

Haig was made aware of the existence of tanks by a memo from Churchill which he read on Christmas Day 1915.¹⁰⁸⁹ 50 would be allotted to the Fourth Army. Any more would be allotted to the Reserve Army.¹⁰⁹⁰ On 14 August Kiggell declared that up to 60 would be available and that...

it was hoped to make use [of them] about the middle of September.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Haig, Diary.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Liddell Hart, B.H., *The Tanks*, Cassell, London, 1959, Vol 1, p. 48.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Butler, R., O.A.D 116 of 19 August 1916 in WO 158/233.

He attached a paper outlining their use. Exercises with infantry would be planned and possible objectives involving tanks. While the 'recommended' inter-tank spacing was 100-150 yards, he proposed doubling this...

in view of the nature of the German defences
... The principle of concentration of force being again forgotten.¹⁰⁹¹

The first mention of tank doctrine had been made in a report of a War Office conference in June: advances should be made in 'bounds'. They should precede the infantry, arrive at the German first line before dawn and only at this moment should the infantry leave their trenches. Thereafter, they would head for the German second and third lines and the German artillery positions. Crews should be trained to drive in the dark, guided by guides, tapes and discs covered in luminous paint. The Deputy CoS should be asked for some schemes to test these approaches.¹⁰⁹² News of their introduction aroused much enthusiasm. The General staff issued details of tank establishment, maintenance and supply and outlined the weapon's capabilities. It followed this up with a 'Preliminary note' on tanks' tactical deployment.¹⁰⁹³

No bombardment seems to succeed in obliterating these places so completely as to prevent the re-appearance of machine guns there as soon as the artillery lifts... The tank is designed to afford a solution to the difficulty.
Tanks should deal with pivots of defence: infantry should advance under their cover, clear up behind them and consolidate. Tanks, like infantry should advance behind a barrage. They could only move over unknown country when there was enough light to see. They could also be used for transporting stores, moving guns, reconnaissance or as light mobile artillery. However, virtually none of the contents of Swinton's 'Notes on the Employment of

¹⁰⁹¹ Kiggell, Announcement of the arrival of 'tanks' and instructions of 14 August 1916 in WO 158/234.

¹⁰⁹² Anon., Digest of decisions reached at a conference of 26th June 1916 in, Tanks (Code 14G), WO 32/5754.

¹⁰⁹³ Kiggell, Notes on organisation and equipment, preliminary notes on the employment of tanks of 14 August 1916 in WO 158/234.

tanks' of February 1916 was echoed either in the GHQ 'Preliminary note',¹⁰⁹⁴ or in A. A. Montgomery's 'Instructions for the employment of tanks' which was released five days before the attack. 18 tanks would be distributed to each corps and a further section to the Reserve Army. They would operate in columns of three and assemble at night a mile from the 'point of departure'. Their routes would be marked out by tapes, the noise they made would be drowned by aircraft and they were expected to move at 15 yards a minute. This latter constraint was ignored when it contradicted planners hopes.

Recent trials have shown that over heavily shelled ground a greater pace than 15 yards a minute cannot be depended upon. This pace would be increased to 33 yards over good ground and down hills on good ground it will reach 50 yards a minute.¹⁰⁹⁵

Because of their slow speed, they would begin their advance early so as to reach the objective at the same time as the infantry. 100 yard gaps would be left in the creeping barrage to accommodate them. The stationary barrage would lift some minutes before the tank's expected arrival. On taking a position, some tanks should be advanced as temporary strong points.¹⁰⁹⁶ The second position should be taken in the same way as the first, but the third position would be taken without a creeping barrage, though with the tanks still well-ahead of the infantry. Communications would be by means of flags and lamps.

At no point did senior officers consult anyone with experience of tanks.

It may seem very curious ... that the officer commanding the tanks on the XIV Corps front was never once consulted as to the ... use of his tanks. ... I was sent for to ... see General Rawlinson. The only words that passed between us were very short questions from him as to (1) whether my men were trained, (2)... The pace at which my tanks were able to move and (3) the distance that they could accomplish on average ground and return for replenishment. Interview Two was with General Gathorne-Hardy (XIV Corps Chief of Staff) who asked me no questions whatever, but gave me a

¹⁰⁹⁴ Swinton, Ernest, (the first British progenitor of the Tank), 'Notes on the Employment of tanks' in Miles, Wilfred, *Military operations France and Belgium*, 1916, Volume 2 Appendices, Naval and Military Press Ltd. p. 50.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Brind, J., Instructions for the employment of tanks, Section 4 in XIV Corps OO 51 of 11 September 1916 and also Brind's timetable of 13 September 1916, both in WO 95/96/6, Fourth Army, Tank Corps, C-Company, in which tanks are expected to advance at 20 yards a minute.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Montgomery, A. A., Instructions for the employment of 'Tanks' of 11 September 1916 in WO 95/431/5.

map showing the ... tank routes which had been arbitrarily fixed with no reconnaissance by any officer who knew anything about a tank at all. I had ... interviews with various divisions, but not with brigades ... ¹⁰⁹⁷

As usual, plan distribution was problematic:

For every three tanks only one set of orders had been issued and only one map supplied: consequently we had to grasp those orders before we passed them onto the other two officers.

However, at 5 p. m. on 14 September, new, verbal orders were received. The tanks were to operate: ten on the right with the Guards Division, seven with 6th and 56 Divisions attacking Ginchy and the Quadrilateral; eight on the left with III Corps attacking through High Wood and east of Martinpuich; 17 with XV Corps and six with the Reserve Army attacking between Pozières and Martinpuich.¹⁰⁹⁸

The plans allegedly used by 43 tanks of the 48 available can be found in the War Diaries of 'C' Company and the 4 Brigade of the Tank Corps. These show that only the 21 tanks of 'C' Company were issued with a timetable and a route explicit enough to have enabled their coördination with artillery and the rest were simply given a route such as..

D12 - NW of Delville Wood - Stay on left boundary of XV Corps, Switch Trench, West of Flers, Gird Trench, Gird Support, Red line.¹⁰⁹⁹

The BEF had a new weapon. Now they needed a plan.

8.2.1 Rawlinson submits a plan

On August 28th Rawlinson submitted a battle plan to Haig.¹¹⁰⁰ It showed the defensive system, the fortified areas and the observation points.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Holford-Walker, Allen, Letter to the Official Historian, 22 April 1935, TNA PRO: CAB 45/134. Also quoted in Pidgeon, *The Tanks at Flers*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Williams-Ellis, C. *The Tank Corps*, Doran, New York, 1920, p. 61.

¹⁰⁹⁹ WO 95/96/6, Fourth Army, Tank Corps, C-Company, 191609 and WO 95/110/1.

¹¹⁰⁰ Rawlinson, Draft plan of attack on Flers-Courcelette, of 28 August 1916 with comments by Haig in WO 158/235.

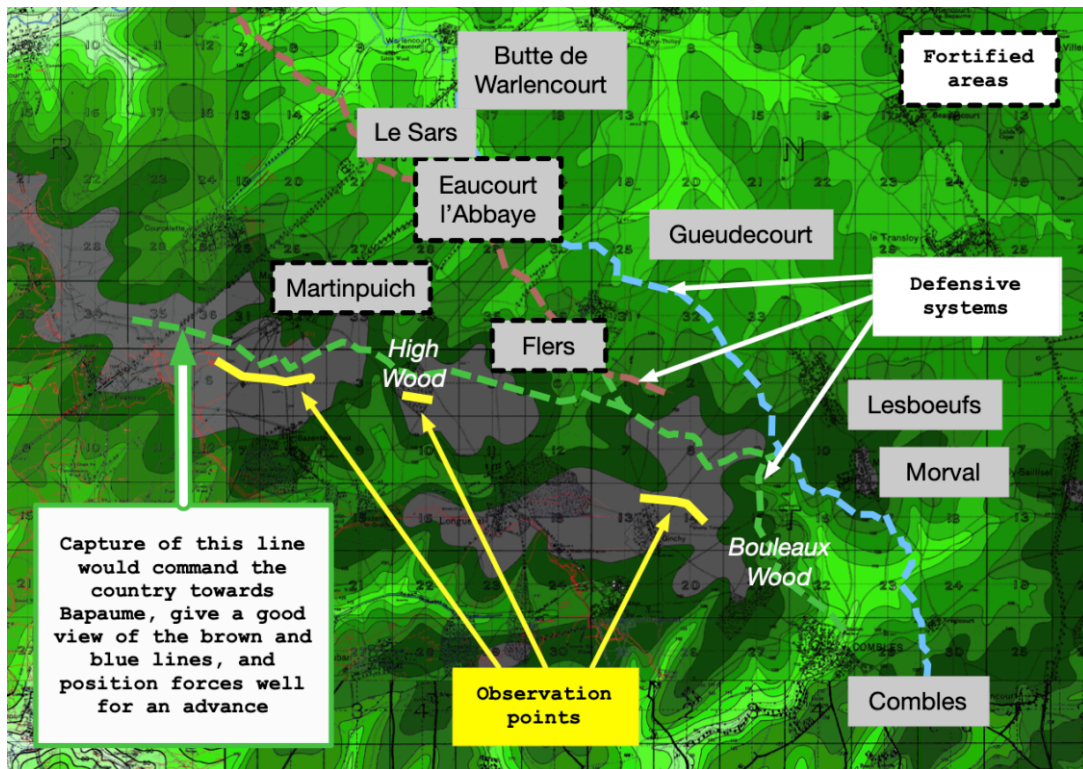


Figure 269 - Fourth Army | Rawlinson's plan of 28 August - Appreciation of German defences

He identified the possible objectives and proposed taking the Brown line in two assaults, to the right and left of Flers. Given the 50 tanks he had been allocated, restricting themselves to capturing only the green line might cause them to

... miss... an opportunity
... but by expecting too much of the tanks, they might be overreaching themselves, lose tanks, men and the element of surprise which he wanted to maintain as long as possible. Haig agreed, but immediately contradicted himself by declaring that

... when we use them, they should be thrown in regardless of cost!

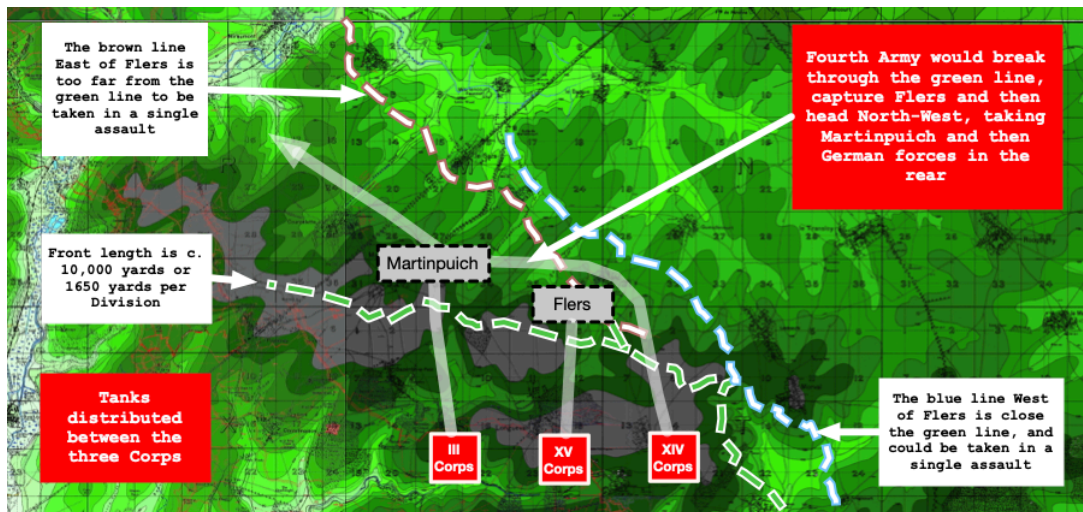


Figure 270 - Fourth Army | Rawlinson's plan of 28 August - Possible assaults - Day 1

Rawlinson believed that a daylight attack by tanks, exposed to artillery fire would be impossible and considered a night attack whereafter the tanks would be withdrawn leaving the Germans none the wiser as to what had happened (Haig disagreed). The attack should rather occur in moonlight (full moon would be on 11 September). Once all objectives were taken, the tanks would be withdrawn before daylight.

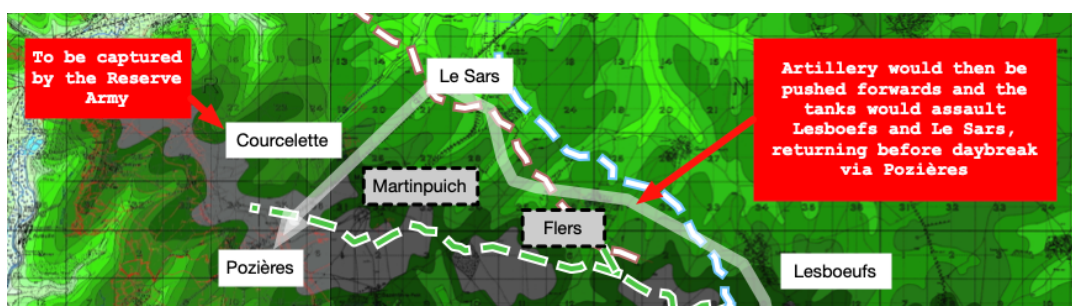


Figure 271 - Fourth Army | Rawlinson's plan of 28 August - Possible assaults - Day 2

The blue line could later be attacked in the same manner. Tank crews would need training in night manoeuvres and might be helped by searchlights.

Haig doubted if all the tanks could be retrieved by daybreak.

... something is sure to go wrong with some of the tanks... greater boldness is needed.¹¹⁰¹

¹¹⁰¹ As footnote 1187.

Rawlinson's 'plan' illustrates several important failings: it is evident that he never asked for the views of the tank commanders; he had no idea how fast the tanks could move; he was happy to expose his troops to enfilade fire for long periods as they moved parallel to the brown and blue lines and while wishing to keep the tanks a secret, would use a searchlight. Yet Haig raised no objections and his note of 29 August added little.¹¹⁰²

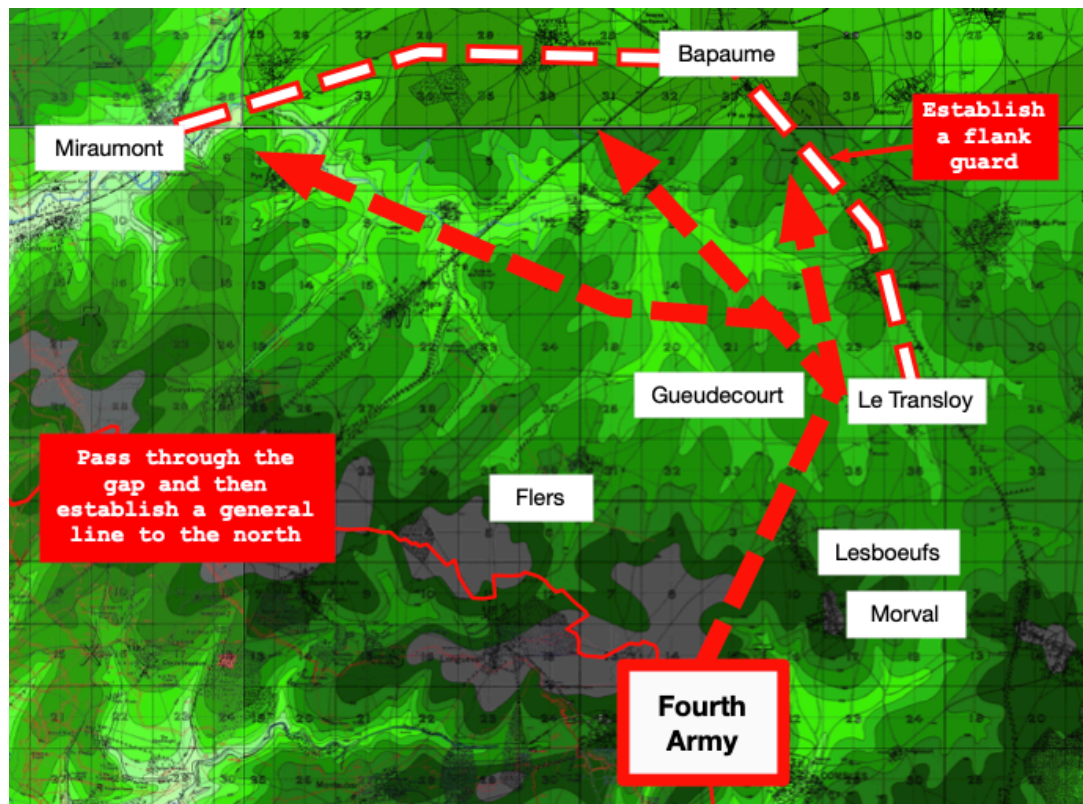


Figure 272 - GHQ | Haig's note of 29 August

On 1 September Kiggell reported on discussions with Rawlinson and Gough concerning the capture of Courcelette and Martinpuich (see Figure 9 below).

¹¹⁰² Haig, Notes on September offensive (Flers-Courcelette) of 29 August 1916 in WO 158/235.

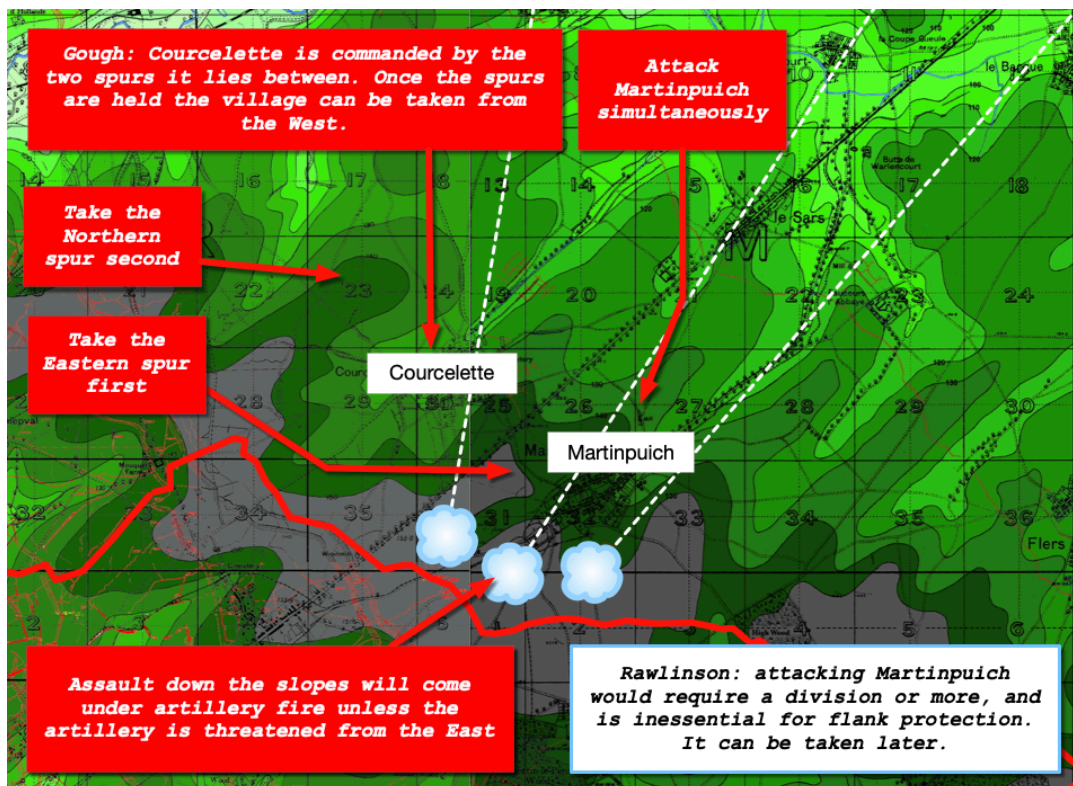


Figure 273 - GHQ | Capture of Courcelette and Martinpuich

Two weeks before the attack Rawlinson released a 'fresh plan' for the operations to his corps commanders, suggesting that he wanted to use tanks..

'... in groups a short distance in front of the infantry line for seizing the strong points and trench junctions.'

The plan consisted of a map with lines showing the objectives to be reached.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰³ Rawlinson, Second draft plan of attack on Flers-Courcelette of 1 September 1916 in WO 158/235 and WO 95/431/5.

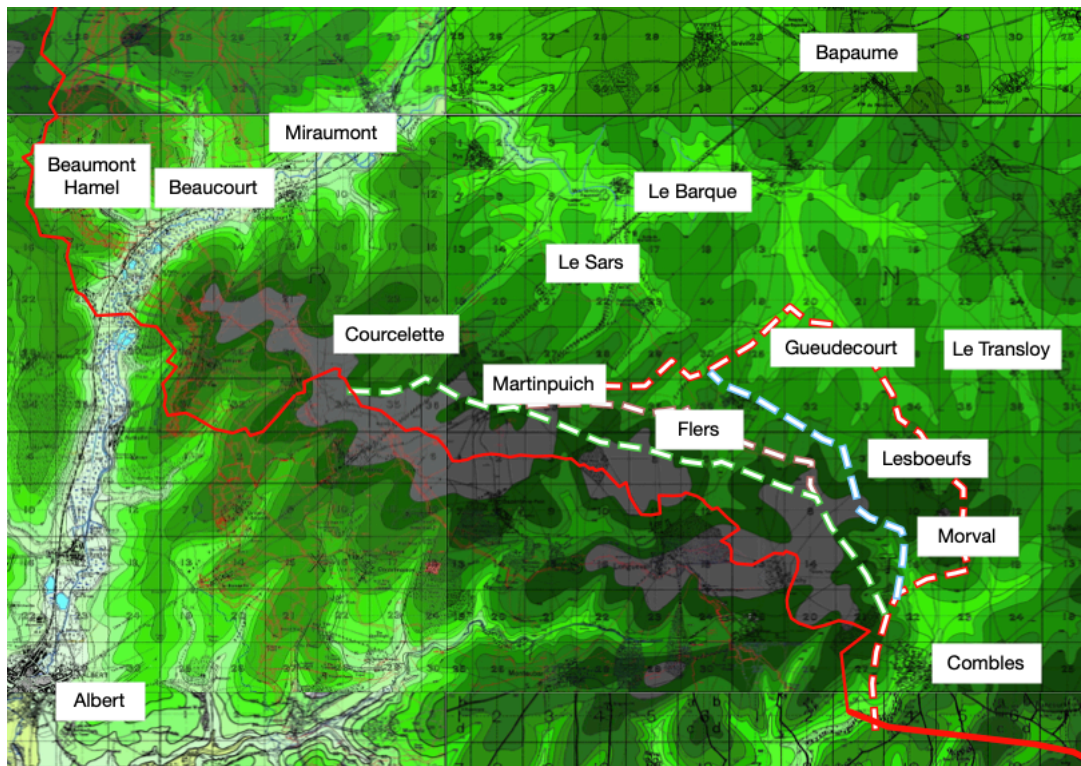


Figure 274 - Fourth Army | Outline of Rawlinson's objectives

A similar diagram is in A. A. Montgomery's two-page plan issued on 11 September showing the objectives to be taken (outlined in red) and the attack start times for each.¹¹⁰⁴

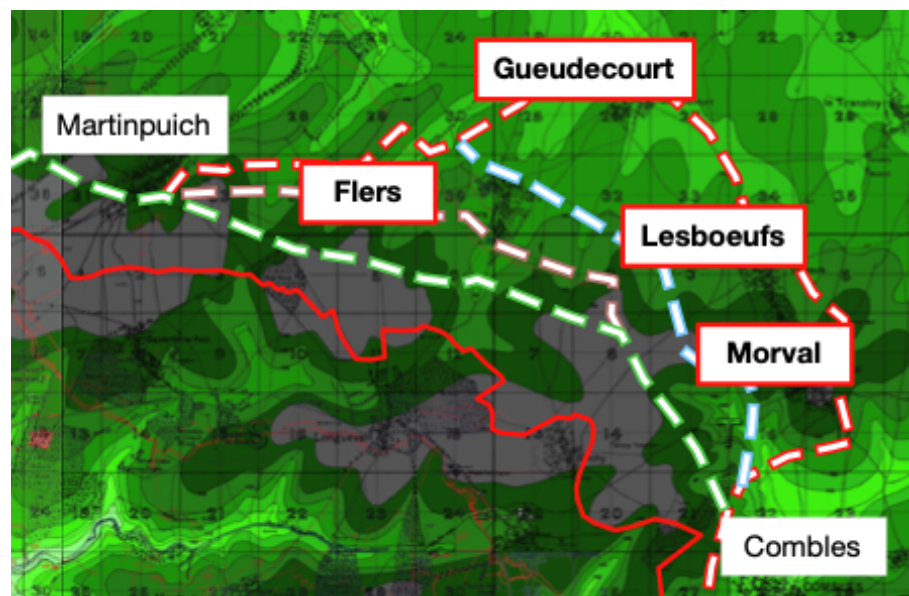


Figure 275 - GHQ | Outline of A. A. Montgomery's objectives

¹¹⁰⁴ Montgomery, A. A., '299/17 G, Attack outline' of 11 September 1916 in WO 95/431/5.

As soon as these objectives were taken, the cavalry would

' ... advance and seize the high ground ... and establish a flank ... '

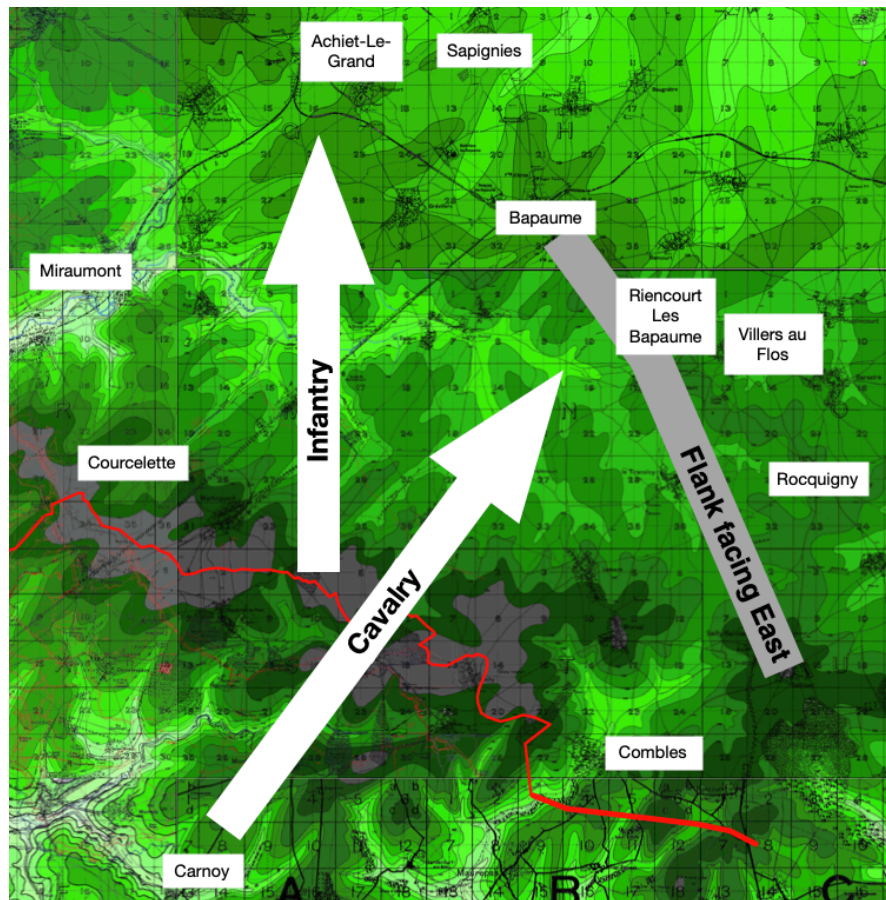


Figure 276 - GHQ | A. A. Montgomery - the Cavalry Breakthrough

In addition to identifying the extent of the infantry advances,¹¹⁰⁵ A. A. Montgomery, supplanted Budworth, the Fourth Army MGRA and issued Artillery instructions on 6 September, ordering a general bombardment from 9 September, with siege howitzers each firing 8-12 rounds per hour from 06.00 to 18.30 daily, the fire being 'brisk' in the morning and continuing throughout the night. Field guns would only fire for registration and wire-cutting, between 18.30 and 06.00 and divisional artillery would fire at approaches, woods, villages and shell-holes. Fire would become 'more

¹¹⁰⁵ See page 399.

intense' at zero hour (06.20 on 15 September).¹¹⁰⁶ Counter-battery fire would be 'vigorously pursued', but no proportion of guns to be committed to this was specified.

He identified the four objectives shown in Figure 308.¹¹⁰⁷ In turn III and XIV Corps issued Artillery instructions,¹¹⁰⁸ and XV Corps issued an artillery plan which is only to be found in the Official History,¹¹⁰⁹ zero hour being later fixed at 06.20 on 15 September.¹¹¹⁰

Rawlinson was however, sufficiently concerned for the advance of the artillery to mention the need to Haig for labour battalions to reconstruct roads.¹¹¹¹ He was realising that diktats were insufficient and needed to be thought through.

Rawlinson's plan involved four corps.

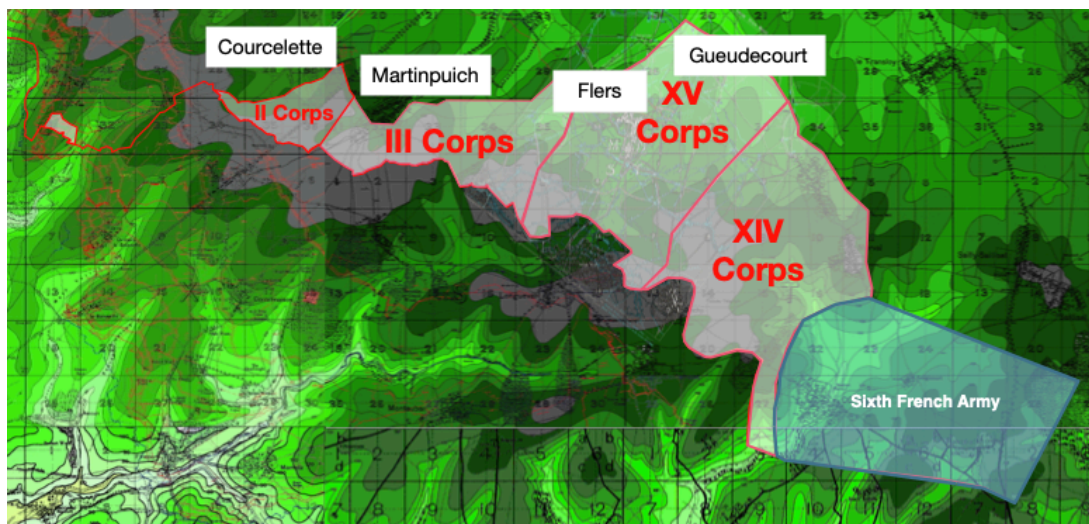


Figure 277 - Fourth Army | corps positions

¹¹⁰⁶ Montgomery, A. A., Artillery instructions in 'Continuation of Fourth Army No. 299/14 (G) of 6 September 1916' in WO 95/431/5.

¹¹⁰⁷ Montgomery, A. A., *ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁸ Lewen, W.R., Artillery Instructions No. 71 of 14 September 1916 in WO 95/690/3 and Bartholomew, A. W., XIV Corps Artillery Operation Order No. 18 of 11 September 1916 in WO 95/915/2.

¹¹⁰⁹ XV Corps artillery operation order 47 of 13 September 1916 in Edmonds, J. E., Vol. II Appendices, p.79.

¹¹¹⁰ Montgomery, A. A., Artillery instructions in 'Continuation of Fourth Army No. 299/14 (G) of 6/9/16' in WO 95/431/5.

¹¹¹¹ Rawlinson, Second draft plan of attack on Flers-Courcellette of 1 August 1916 in WO 158/235 and WO 95/431/5.

... of 12 divisions.

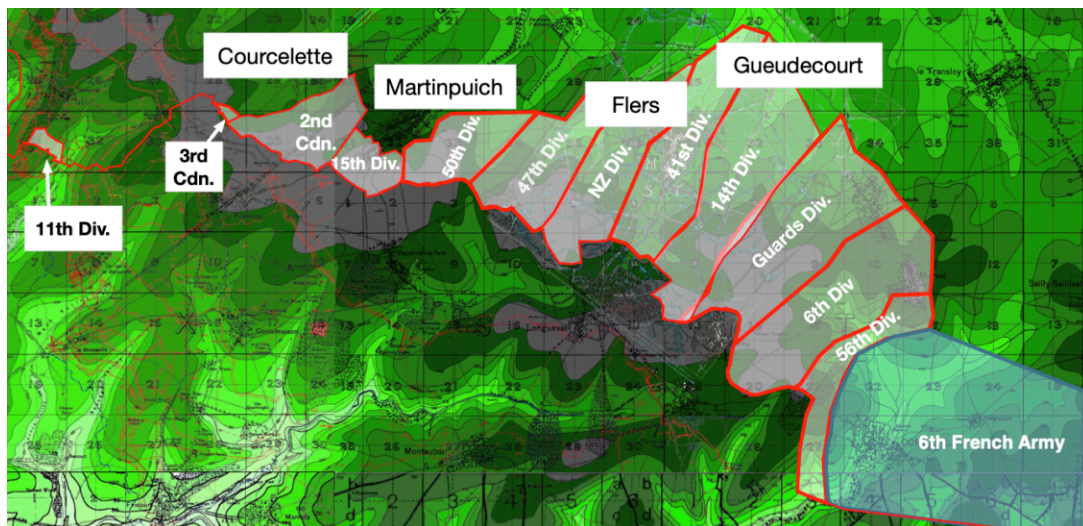


Figure 278 - Fourth Army | Divisional positions

Rawlinson..

laid the plan before [the] Corps Commanders this morning and ... instructed them to work out the details. ... When they have discussed the scheme ... I will submit fuller particulars.¹¹¹²

He didn't, nor did he give any more than a cursory review of their plans. He preferred to confer.

8.2.2 Conferences

Rawlinson held conferences, less to examine and resolve problems than to assert his authority. On 31 August he held one for his corps commanders to discuss the attack. After an overview of the state of European hostilities he suggested that the battle

' ... would probably take place around 12th, 13th or 14 September ... ' The objectives (following his discussions with Haig),¹¹¹³ would be the ridge from the Quadrilateral to Flers corresponding to the blue line in Figure 274

¹¹¹² Rawlinson, *Ibid.*

¹¹¹³ See page 397.

above.¹¹¹⁴ Each corps would field three divisions in the front line, some fresher than others. He emphasised the importance of Leuze Wood..

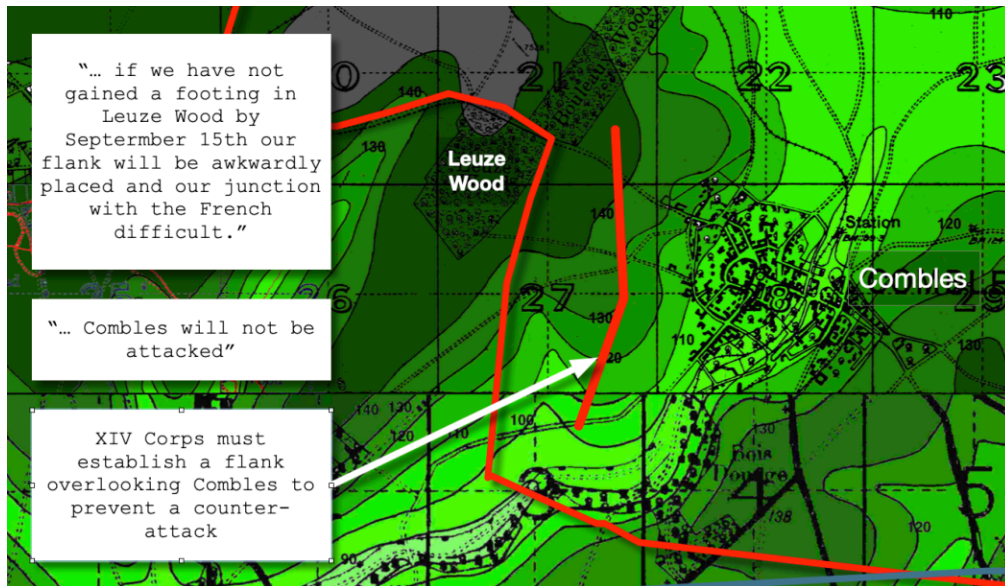


Figure 279 - Fourth Army | The importance of Leuze Wood

... and of the need for XIV Corps to concentrate their attack on the ridge west of Morval rather than the valley to its south.

¹¹¹⁴ Montgomery, A. A., Fourth Army conference notes of 31 August 1916 in IWM 4.

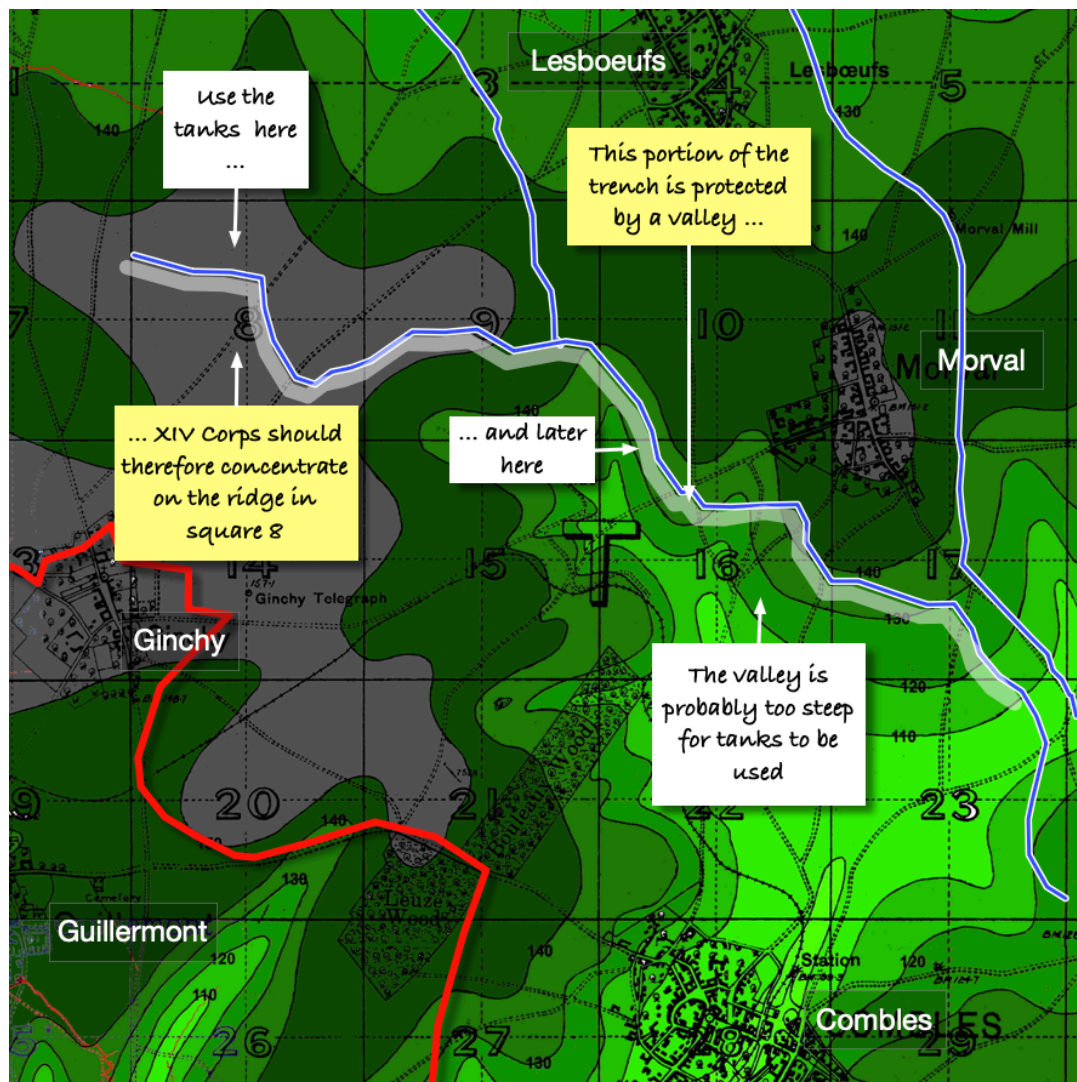


Figure 280 - The proposed XIV Corps attack on Morval

While some of the discussion was concerned with provision of roads and labour, the movement of artillery and support for a cavalry attack, the topographic issues would better have been discussed in an Appreciation. Rawlinson used the absence of an Appreciation to discuss corps-level issues. He did not propose an attack narrative which could have shaped corps-level planning and thus failed to lead. Haig had similarly failed in this at Neuve Chapelle.¹¹¹⁵

A week before the attack, plans had been circulated and Rawlinson held his next conference. Firstly, he wanted to improve the start of the assault.

¹¹¹⁵ Montgomery, A. A., Fourth Army conference notes of 1 September 1916 in IWM 4.

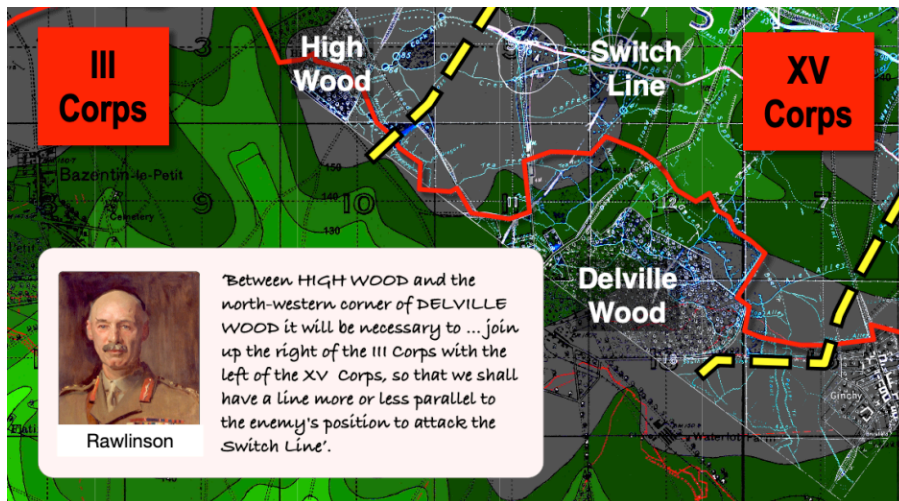


Figure 281 - Conference of 10 September - Rawlinson's plea¹¹¹⁶

He made this and several other line-straightening requests without success and they illustrate the difference between Commanders and commanded: Commanders could see what should be done from the map, but only the commanded knew how difficult it would be to do: none of these requests was reflected in any plan.

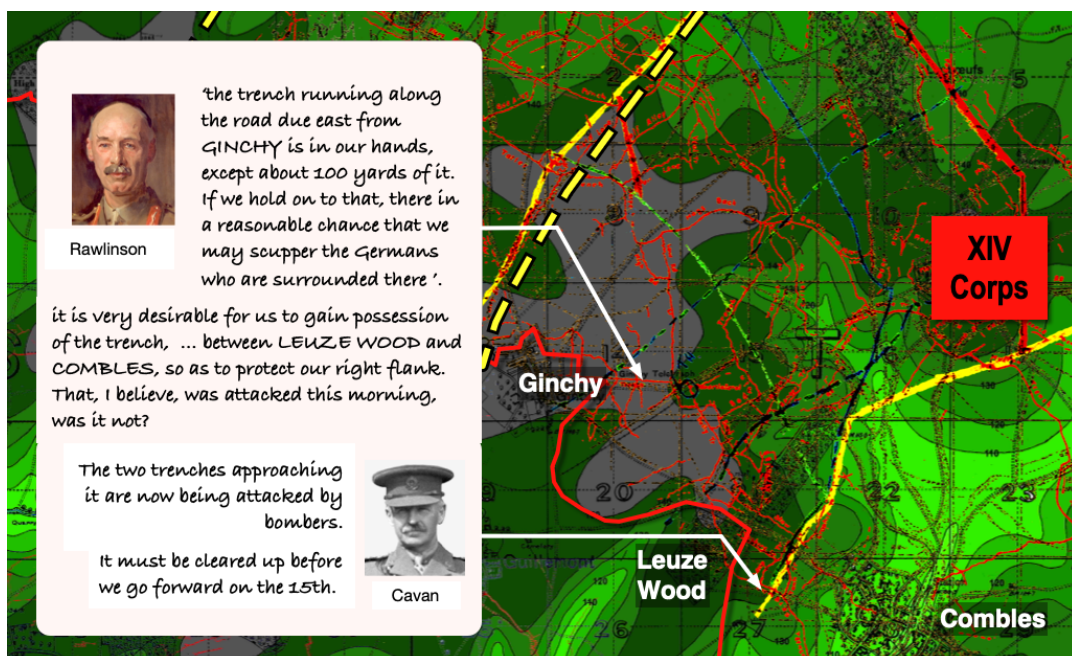


Figure 282 - Conference of 10 September - Preliminaries before the battle

¹¹¹⁶ This and subsequent dialogues are taken from a shorthand report entitled 'Notes of conference held at Heilly, 10th September 1916' in 'Fourth Army Conferences and Somme papers 5 February 1916 to 13 September 1916 in IWM 6.

Again he emphasised the importance of a particular trench, but its capture was not mentioned in any XIV Corps plan.¹¹¹⁷ Then he began to discuss tanks:

- 'Rawlinson I would like ... To hear what your views are in connection with making use of the "tanks".
- Pulteney I propose using six of them against the southern end of Martinpuich.
- Rawlinson What about the barrage?
- Pulteney That would be a difficult matter. The tanks will go quickly through High Wood because they will have cover all the way.
- Rawlinson It is hoped that we shall be able to get them going in the early morning.
- Elles¹¹¹⁸ I took one out for experiment. It went 15 yards a minute over badly crumped ground. I do not think "tanks" would be able to get through a place like Trones Wood.
- Rawlinson This is a matter for consideration. You had better settle whether it is worth going through the Wood or whether it is better to ignore it and go round it.'

Trones Wood was already captured by then, High Wood was not. The plan for tanks to traverse High Wood and the problem of using tanks with a creeping barrage remained unresolved.¹¹¹⁹

- 'Horne I propose to have five groups, each consisting of three "tanks", to go forward against strong points ... We were working out the question of a rolling barrage, but I am now inclined to ... barrage a ... line ... and the infantry and "tanks" must make their way.
- Rawlinson I am reluctant to give up the creeping barrage. I would prefer to leave a hole for the "tanks" to go through, or the "tanks" could proceed irrespective of the creeping barrage and go to their objectives whilst the barrage is behind.
- Horne The only use of a creeping barrage is to clear out men who are lying about in shell holes. I could never follow what is the value of a creeping barrage.'

Given the extensive use of creeping barrages hitherto, this was an extraordinary admission, but it went unquestioned.

¹¹¹⁷ See page 470.

¹¹¹⁸ Brigadier-General Hugh Jamieson Elles, then a temporary Colonel, liaising with Haig and shortly to become the Head of the Heavy Branch (the first tank units) of the Machine Gun Corps and later of the Tank Corps.

¹¹¹⁹ See page 448.

- 'Rawlinson ... would you keep the barrage on the first objective until the arrival of the tanks and the infantry there?
- Horne Yes, with the tanks arriving slowly ahead of the infantry just as the barrage lifts.
- Rawlinson You must start the tanks at whatever time it is necessary for the infantry to reach the objectives. ... The "tanks" ... are only accessories for the infantry and the latter must work in conformity with them.
- Cavan I think ... The tanks must be always up in front of the infantry, otherwise they would be squashing the wounded. ... once the tanks have started on their journey ... they will hardly be able to stop more than five or six minutes on a strong point. It will not take the German gunners much longer than that to get the range. ... Another question is the wire which we cannot see. Are the tanks to cut that wire for us?...
- Rawlinson It is too far distant and not sufficiently well observed, to be dealt with by 60-pounders.
- Cavan I do not think any wire can be seen until we get up beyond Ginchy Telegraph and I rather doubt whether it can be seen from there.
- Rawlinson Then we are driven back to the air. All we can do is to attempt to deal with it. I am afraid it is no use trying to get guns up on the 15th to Ginchy Telegraph.
- Rawlinson We must get this question settled as quickly as possible, so as to have a cut and dried scheme that we can pass down to all the various units who are to take part in the fight.'

At no point was Elles consulted.

- 'Rawlinson The R. F. C. would be depended on very largely. ... We shall find it very difficult to get information back by any other means ... so our contact patrols should be increased, if anything.

It may be necessary to have a smaller conference later.'

This conversation shows that: none of the senior officers had previously confronted the problem of using tanks with a barrage; Rawlinson still believed that infantry dominated the battle and if anyone believed that tanks could cut wire, they were not prepared to say so.

At the conference of 13 September Rawlinson insisted that the two pockets of resistance around Ginchy be overcome before zero hour, but did not suggest that the assault be delayed were they unsuppressed. Lieutenant-General C. T. McM Kavanagh, the Cavalry Corps Commander, maintained his distance from

reality by suggesting that the tanks advance with the cavalry.¹¹²⁰ Rawlinson speculated on a transition from trench to open warfare and expressed various worthy aspirations: the heavy artillery must have places to move to, Montauban railway station would hopefully be open.¹¹²¹ None of the statements recorded could be considered as an order: the gentility of this group of booted-and-jodhpured officers could not be sacrificed for the trivial concerns of order-writing clerks and awkward questions of accountability.

8.3 Armies and Corps

The battle was planned by the Fourth Army and the Reserve Army conformed to it. No overall plan was issued by either Commander, rather the corps commanders for once gave the planning lead.

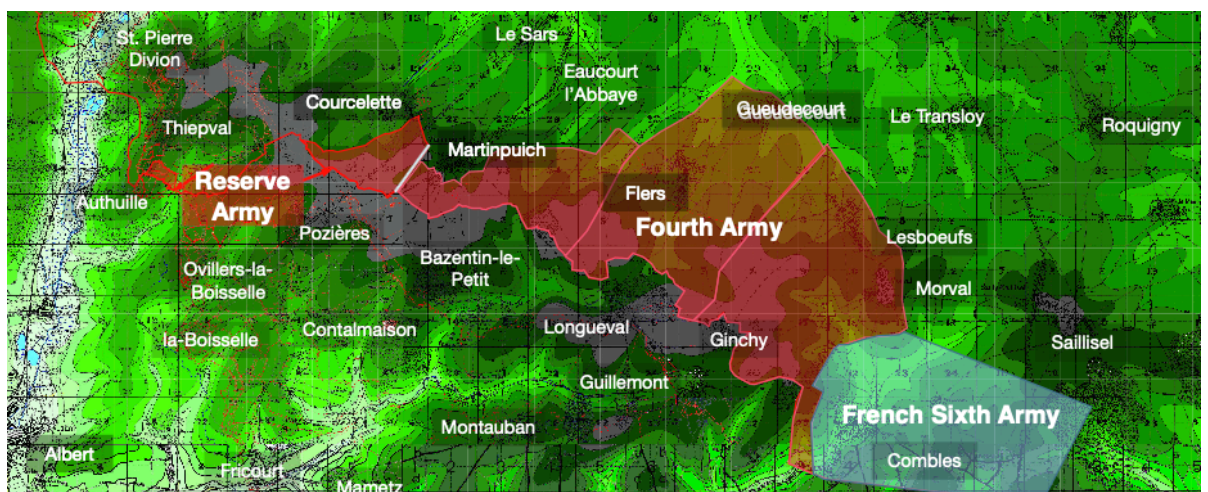


Figure 283 - GHQ | The armies in context

The French Sixth Army did not take part until the next day.

¹¹²⁰ Since the cavalry commander had already attended previous conferences, he would have known that the tanks' top speed was c. 880 yards an hour. The cavalry could gallop 20 times faster. To have slowed the horses to such an amble in full view of machine guns would have meant their extermination.

¹¹²¹ Notes of conference of 13 September 1916 in IWM 6

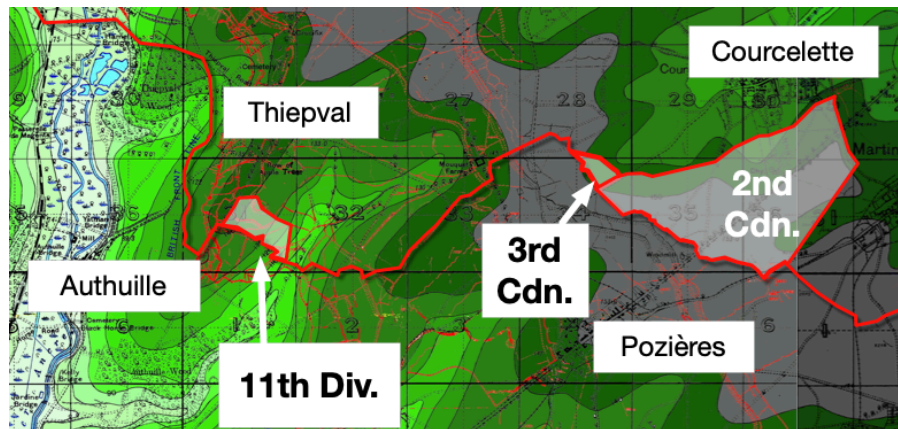


Figure 284 - Reserve Army | divisions and area

The Reserve Army was composed of II Corps (11 Division) and the Canadian Corps.

8.3.1 II Corps

While the Battle of Albert had left the Allies in possession of most of a ridge, at its extreme left, the heavily-fortified German position called the 'Wunderwerk', dominated the route to Courcelette, Mouquet Farm and other areas to the east: it would have to be captured before the rest of the battle began. Once captured, its dominance of other German positions would simplify their later capture and operations could stop.

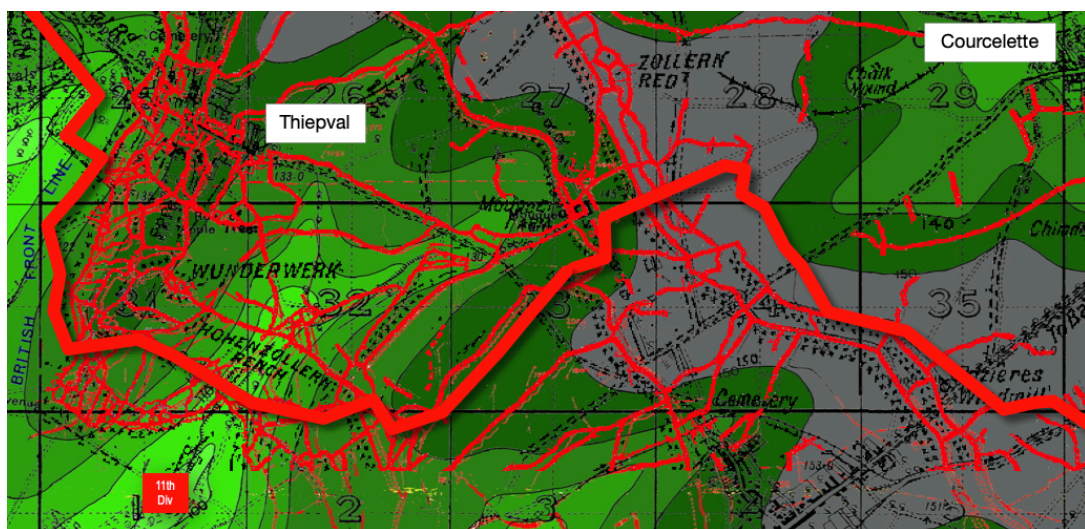


Figure 285 - Reserve Army | II Corps | The Wunderwerk, Thiepval and Courcelette

Howell issued II Corps OO 21 on 8 September: a request for plans from the 11 Division, to capture, the 'Wunderwerk' in one 'bite'.¹¹²² This attack would be disguised by repeated bombardments in the preceding days. The division was also to capture the Pole trench.¹¹²³ He followed this up with OO 23 on the 13th which gave the briefest of details.¹¹²⁴ Howell was also one of the few officers to issue any tactical notes for the battle.¹¹²⁵ He recognised the dominant position of the Constance trench and the value of capturing that first, but the absence of an Appreciation of that bite of territory, caused several iterations of the plans and as the underlying problems of the battle emerged, the size of the bite was greatly reduced, as senior officers made their views known.



Figure 286 - Reserve Army | II Corps | Howell's request for plans

Lieutenant-Colonel C. N. MacMullen issued a two-page order for the capture four days after Howell's request.¹¹²⁶

¹¹²² Howell, Philip, OO 21 of 8 Sept 1916 in WO 95/639. Note that the plans shown in the Reserve (later Fifth) Army war diary of Sept 1916 in WO 95/518/2.2) are untrustworthy: for example Appendix 7, Map No. 2 of the morning of Sept 10th 1916 shows the WunderWerk already captured.

¹¹²³ Howell, P., G/1027 of 5 Sept 1916 in WO 95/639.

¹¹²⁴ Howell, P., OO23 of 13 Sept 1916 in WO 95/639.

¹¹²⁵ Howell, P., of 12 Sept 1916 in WO 95/638/7.

¹¹²⁶ McMullen, C. N., Reserve Army operation order No. 26, of 12 Sept 1916 in WO 95/518/2.2.

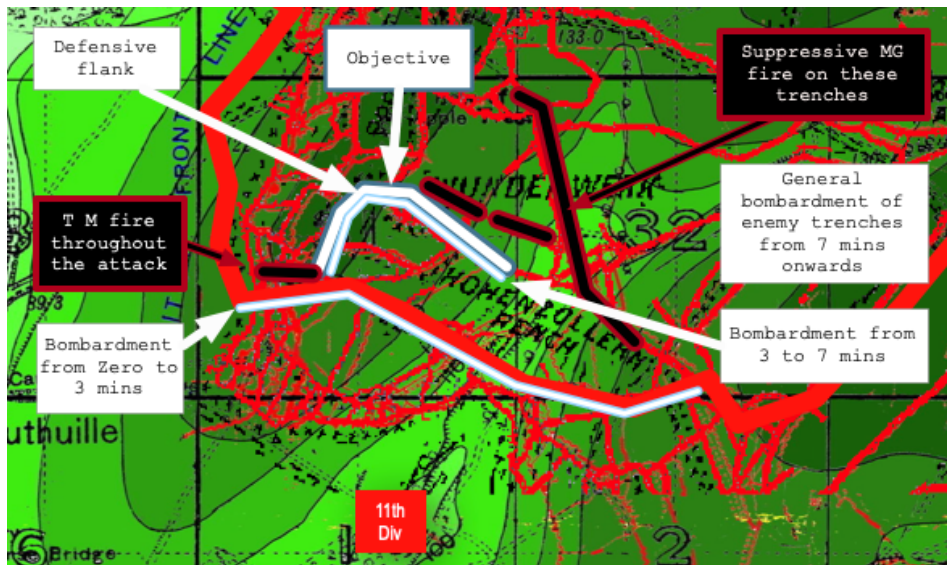


Figure 287 - Reserve Army | II Corps | MacMullen's view of the assault on the Wunderwerk

Since the capture was separate from the rest of the battle, the attackers would halt and consolidate immediately thereafter.

8.3.1.1 11 Division Planning

By the 12th, Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. S. D. Coleridge the GSO1 of 11 Division, had issued 0021: the left (32) Brigade would attack from the south and having gained their objectives would consolidate; the right (33) Brigade, would capture Pole trench.¹¹²⁷ Cutting across his own BGGs, Lieutenant-General Sir C. L. Woollcombe, the GOC of 11 Division, wrote an undated memorandum directly to 32 Brigade, adding his own planning expectations.¹¹²⁸ Two days later Howell modified his request: 33 Brigade should continue to dig towards the Pole trench, but not attack it without further orders.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²⁷ Coleridge, J. D., 11 Division 00 21 of 12th Sept 1916 in WO 95/1787/1.

¹¹²⁸ Anon., (Woollcombe C.) 'Plan of attack of Left Brigade (32nd Infantry Brigade)' in WO 95/1806/2.

¹¹²⁹ Howell, BMS/75 of 10 Sept 1916 in WO 95/1810/2.

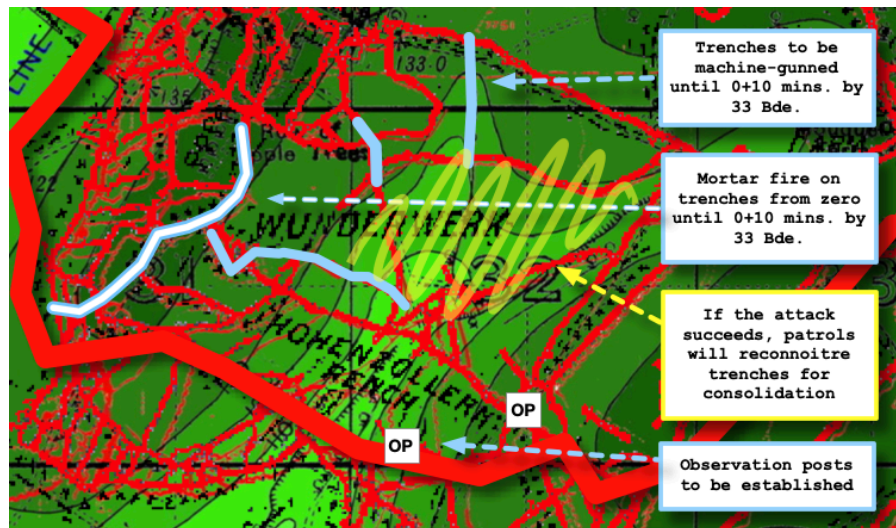


Figure 288 - Reserve Army | II Corps | 11 Division | 33 Brigade's MG and mortar fire roles

The Brigade would otherwise confine themselves to machine-gunning and mortaring enemy trenches, monitoring the progress of the attack and reconnoitring the valley to identify trenches for consolidation.¹¹³⁰ The plans became confused, possibly due to the Brigade's original plan preceding the divisional one.



Figure 289 - Reserve Army | II Corps | 11 Division MG and mortar fire plan¹¹³¹

¹¹³⁰ Martin, OO 18 Amendments of 14 September 1916 in WO 95/1810/2.

¹¹³¹ Shaw Stewart, B. H., 11 Division Artillery Operation Order 10 of 13 Sept 1916 in WO 95/1796/1.

8.3.1.2 11 Division Artillery planning

Uniacke, the Reserve Army MGRA, issued no Artillery order that can be found.¹¹³² There were corps' and divisional artillery plans covering both II Corps and the Canadian Corps, the latter envisaging six phases.¹¹³³

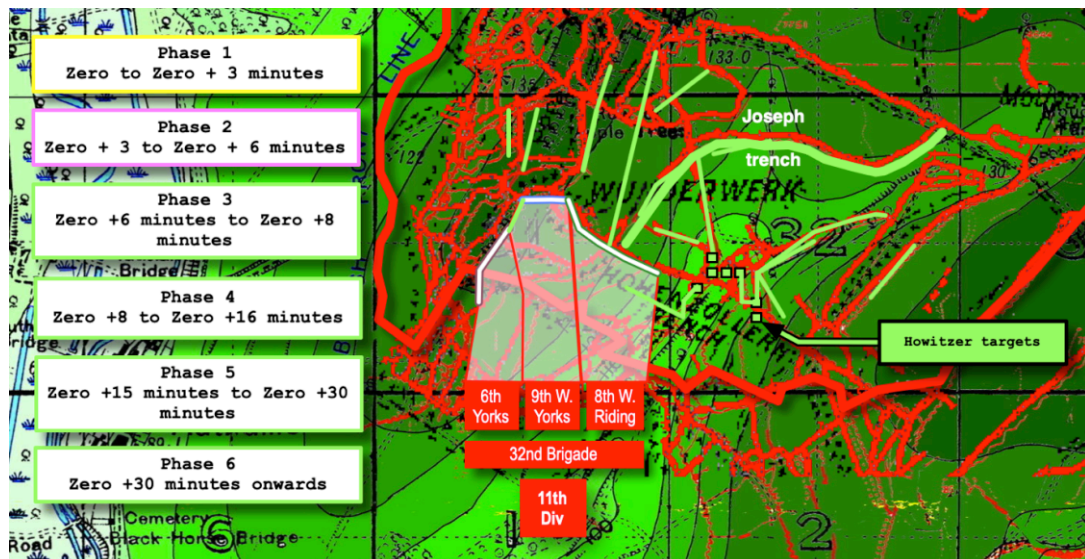


Figure 290 - Reserve Army | II Corps | 11 Division | The artillery phases

Other than the barrage before the Joseph trench ...

... searching for hidden Machine Guns ...¹¹³⁴

... few of the planned barrages coincide with any trenches and the advances of 6/Yorkshire and half of 9/Yorkshire appear to be unsupported. While the infantry plan mentions..

... an intense bombardment ... on the whole front..

This is not echoed in the artillery plan, nor can any copy of this be found in 11 Division or 32 Brigade's files. The artillery references in the infantry plan are without any map references. Nevertheless the..

... necessity of the infantry following the artillery barrage cannot be too strongly impressed on all ranks.¹¹³⁵

¹¹³² None is referenced in any of the Corps documents, none can be found in the Uniacke papers at the Artillery Museum, There is no CRA file for the Reserve Army in the TNA and Gough did not mention an artillery plan in his book 'The Reserve Army', Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1931.

¹¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁴ Anon., Amendment to 11 Division Artillery OO 10 in WO 95/1796/1.

¹¹³⁵ Martin, K. M., 32nd Infantry Brigade operation order No 18 of 13 September 1916 in WO 95/1810/2.

The assault would be made by 2 companies of each regiment in four waves, but no further description can be found.

Howell made no formal appreciation, but had seen the dominant position of the Constance trench (see Figure 22 above) and planned accordingly.



Figure 291 - Reserve Army | II Corps | 11 Division assault outline

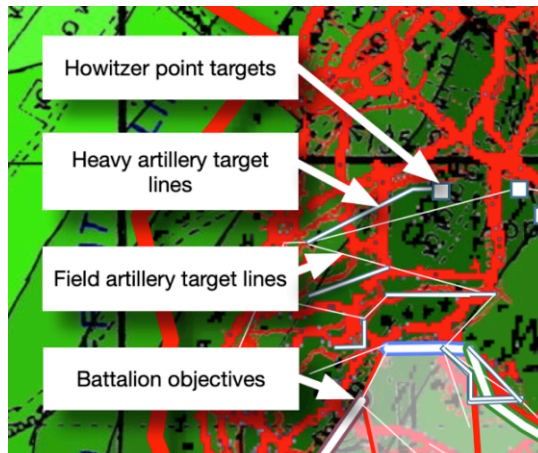


Figure 292 - Reserve Army | Key to II Corps artillery plan

The corps artillery plan was written in three Artillery orders: 21-23.¹¹³⁶

Together they envisaged the six phases shown below.

¹¹³⁶ Robinson, G, Artillery orders Nos. 21, 22 and 23 of 9, 12 and 13 September 1916 in WO 95/651/3.

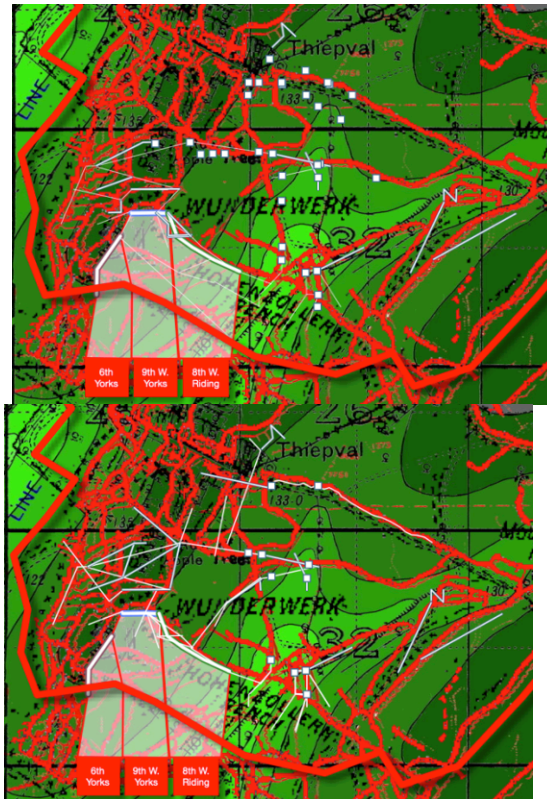


Figure 293 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery plan - phases I & II - 0-3 and 3-6 minutes

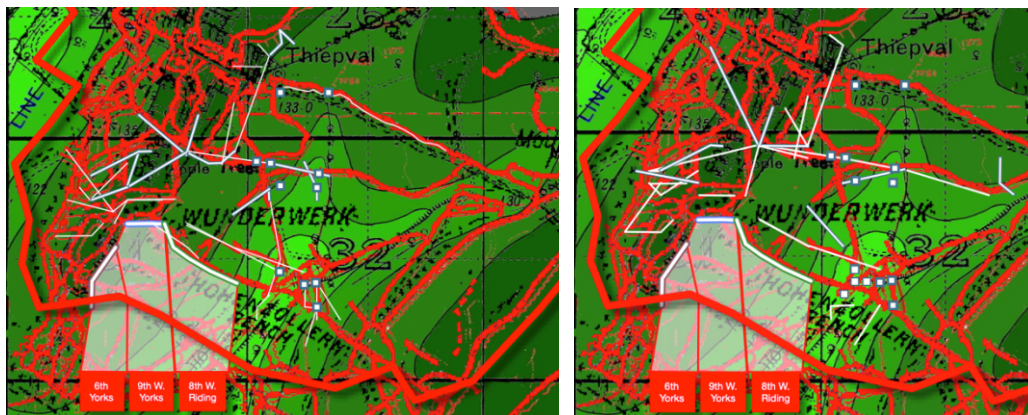


Figure 294 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery plan - phase III - 6-8 minutes. phase IV - 8-15 minutes



Figure 295 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery plan - phases V & VI - 15-30 and 30-60 minutes

The plans exhibited odd features: no allowance was made for troop advances; only two of the trenches were explicitly bombarded, otherwise the plans merely allocate lines of fire to their approximate positions and contained no reference to any map or aerial photograph which might have refined the gunners' aim.¹¹³⁷ Enemy machine gunners in the trenches to the east of the attack would have been able to fire unmolested, on the left flank of 6th Yorks and barrage B1 of 25 Divisional Artillery, running from the north-west to the south-east, would have endangered 8/West Riding battalion.

¹¹³⁷ Compare with Bartholomew's Artillery Order No. 22 of 18 September 1916 in WO 95/915/2, Fourth Army, XIV Corps, CRA, 191609-12. 'G.O.C. Heavy Artillery will allot his tasks on the RED, GREEN and YELLOW portions according to the evidence of Aeroplane photos'.

UNIT.	TIME.	OBJECTIVE.
<u>25th D.A.</u> <u>18-pdrs.</u>	B 1. 0.0 - 0.3.	R 31 d 15.95 - a 9.1.

Figure 296 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery plan - barrage B1 definition

However this was the only bombardment likely to support the attacking troops: 11 Division's bombardments had two large gaps.

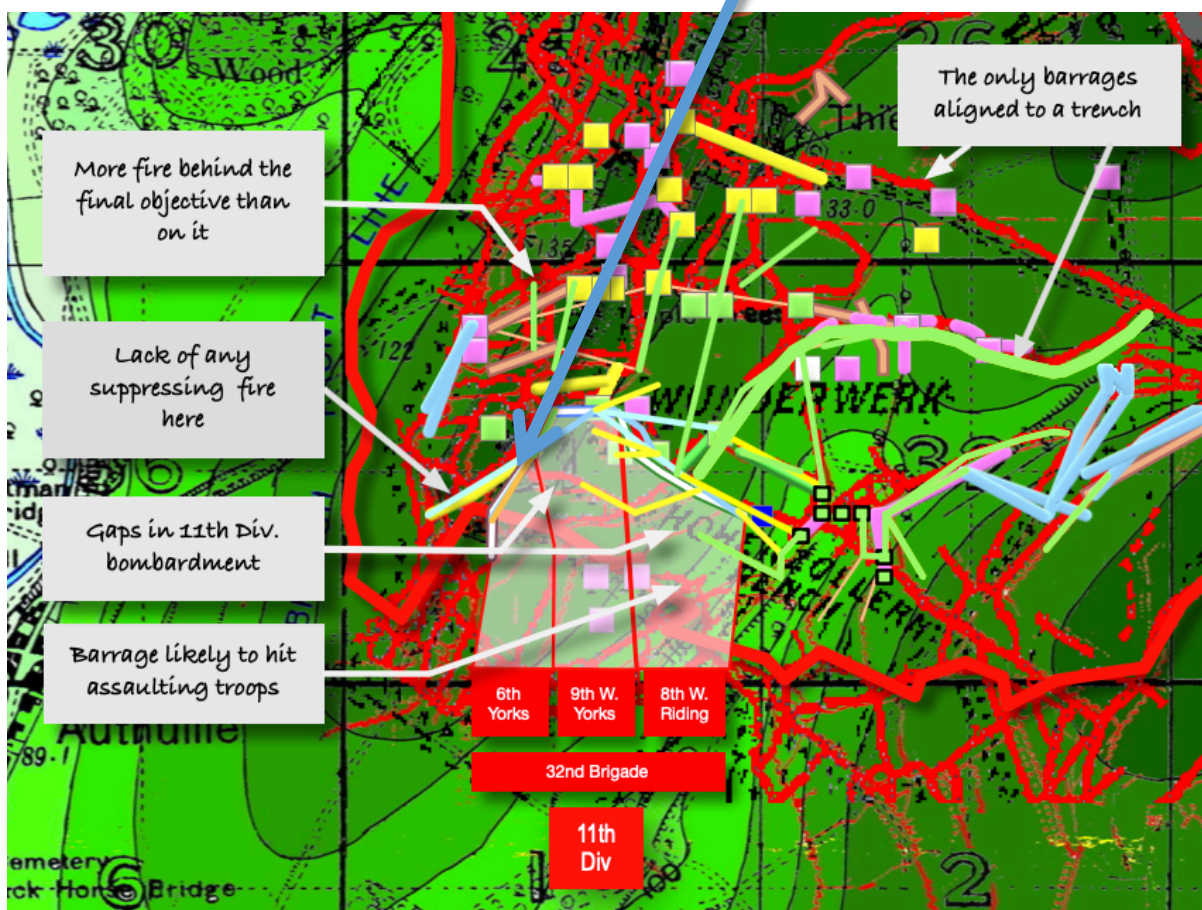


Figure 297 - Reserve Army | II Corps | and 11 Division artillery plans - overall

Many of the machine-gun nests, carefully identified by 32 Brigade, were ignored by the artillery.

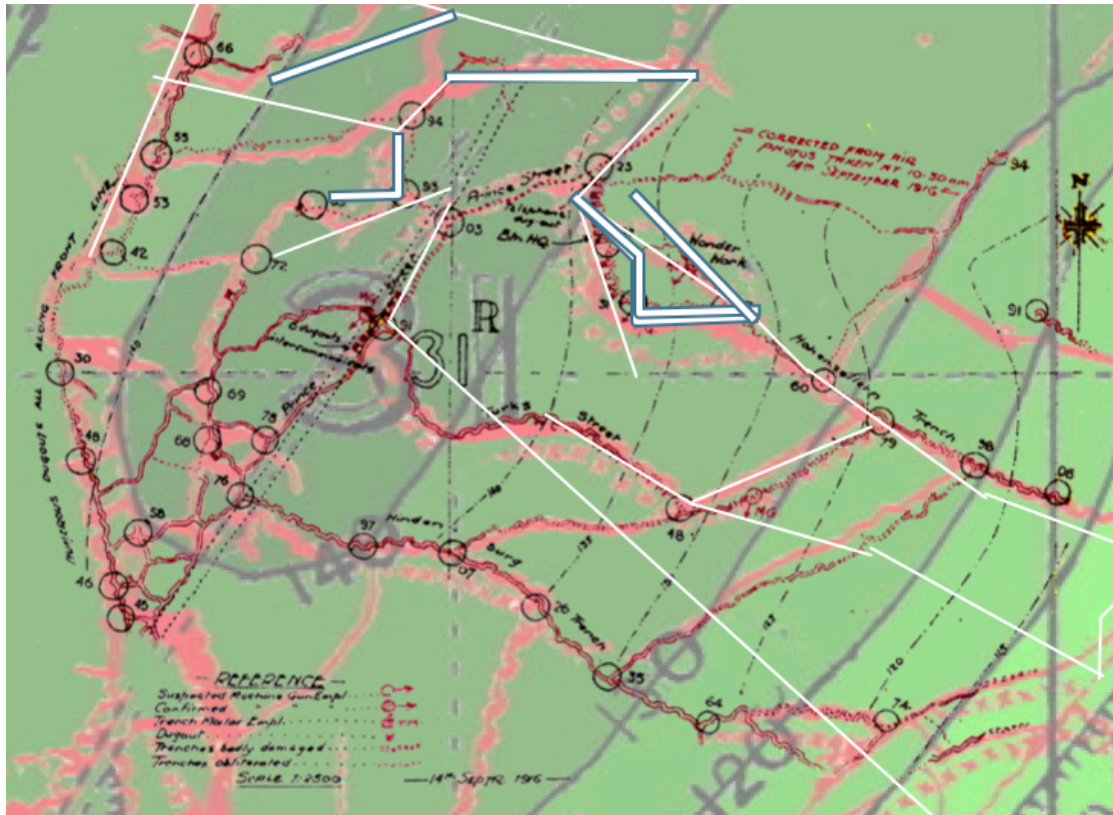


Figure 298 - Reserve Army | II Corps | 32 Brigade map of artillery targets updated on 14 September(WO 95/1806/2)

The II Corps artillery plans showed siege howitzers deployed in support of both the Canadian Corps and II Corps for the assault on Flanders-Courcelette. The Canadian Corps artillery counter-battery duties would be shared between II Corps and V Corps.

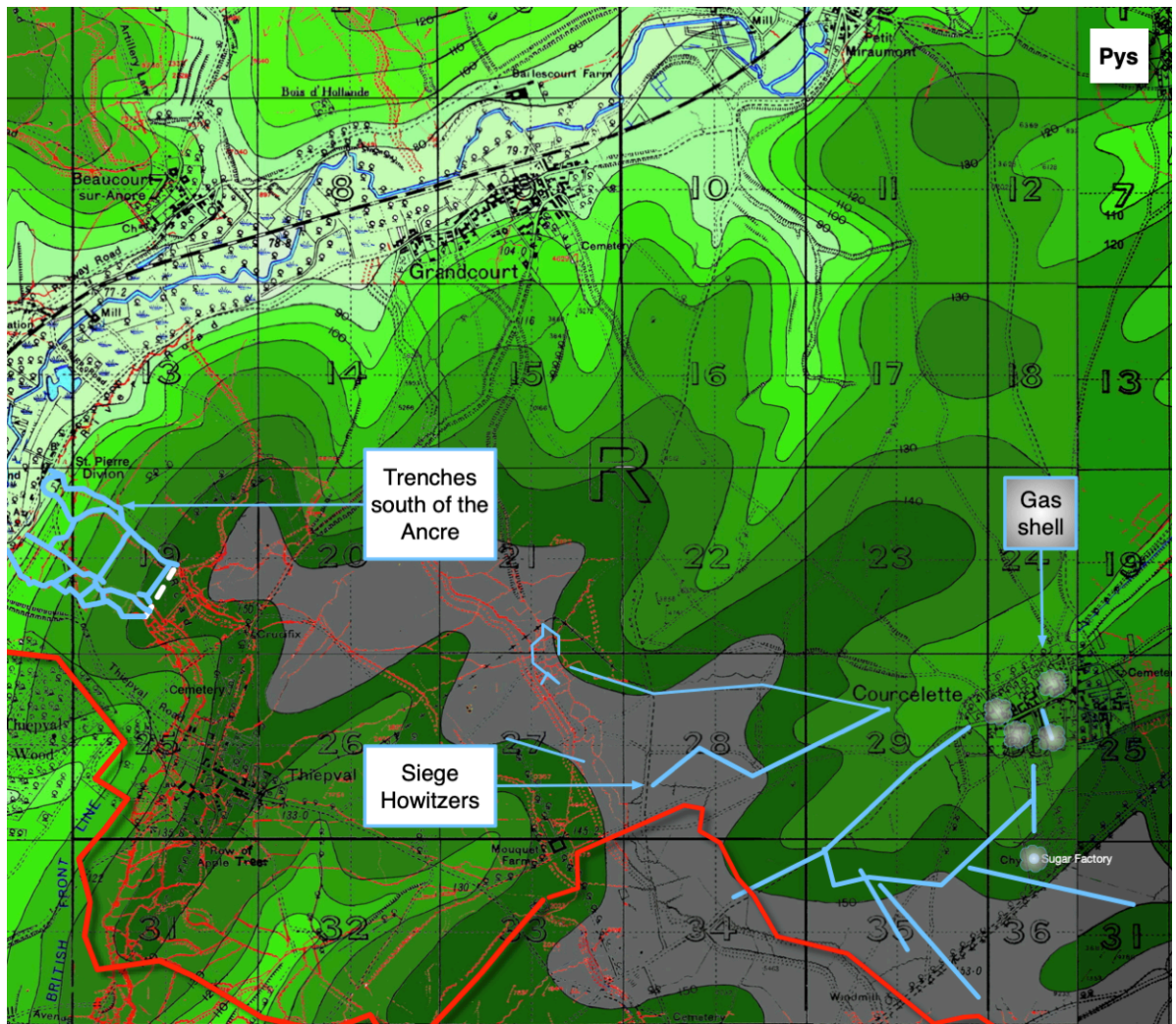


Figure 299 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery orders 21 and 22 of 12 September

Throughout the preliminary bombardment, the assault area would be swept by shrapnel to dissuade troops from sheltering in shell holes. From the night of the 12/13 September, the II Corps and Canadian Corps fronts would bombard each night until zero hour. The gaps in the barrage to facilitate the attack by the tanks supporting the Canadians (none was used to support the 11 Division) would be defined verbally. Pys and Courcelette would be shelled with Thermite from the evening of the 14th, to set them on fire.¹¹³⁸ All enemy batteries would be shelled intermittently with gas and bombarded on the day

¹¹³⁸ E. Norton, Memo of 11 September 1916 in WO 95/1059/1.

of the attack. The possibility that they might simply move, having thus been warned, was not mentioned.¹¹³⁹

II Corps Artillery Orders 21 and 22 were quite unrelated to any infantry assault and indeed to the Artillery order No. 23 covering much of the same area and the reliance on verbal instructions to define safe lanes for tanks calls into question the degree of infantry-artillery cooperation then achievable.¹¹⁴⁰

In the end Artillery order No. 23 collapsed into incoherence:

UNIT.	TIME.	OBJECTIVE.	GUNS OR HOWS.	AMMUNITION & RATES OF FIRE.
II Corps H.A. Howitzers.				
614 E 1.	ZERO - 0.45.	Points R 26 a 9.3, 54, 03. R 25 d 9.3, 72, 62, 55, 55, 26, 04, 14. R 25 c 9.1. R 32 b 1.6. R 32 a 7.7, 28, 08, 26, 54, 50. R 31 b 78, 88, 59, 29, 19. R 31 a 8.7, 66. R 32 c 6.8, 66, 65, 58, 39.	1 - 12" How. 8 - 9.2" Hows. 6 - 8" Hows. 16 - 6" Hows.	ZERO - 0.15. 1/3 rd 12" per gun per min. 1 round 9.2" -do- 1 round 8" -do- 1 round 6" -do- From 0.15 - 0.50. at half above rate. From 0.50 - 0.45. at quarter above rate.

Figure 300 - Extract from Major M. G. Robinson, II Corps artillery order No 23, p. 15 in WO 95/651/3

It is impossible to determine from it, which guns aim at which points, for how long or with how much ammunition. The need to generate an order overtook the need to generate a useable order. Formalism overtook function.

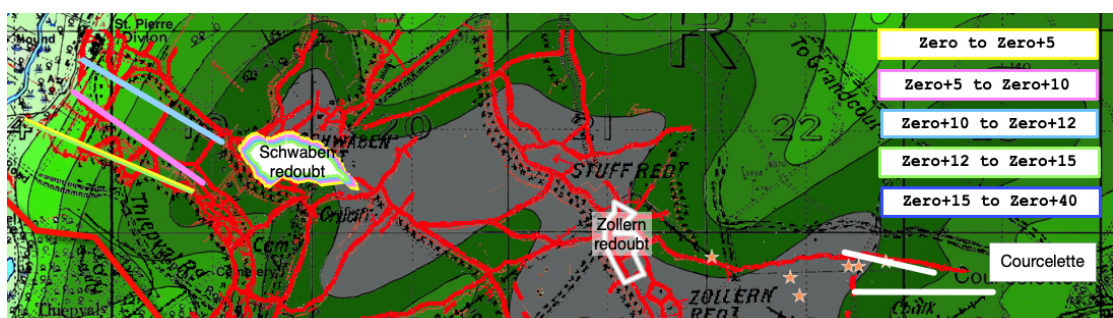


Figure 301 - Reserve Army | II Corps artillery plans for 15 September (stars and stripes imply bombardments from zero hour to zero+40 minutes)

In addition to the II Corps artillery orders, the II Corps CHA issued a plan for heavy artillery as a series of memoranda from 11 to 14 September.¹¹⁴¹ It

¹¹³⁹ Robinson, G, Artillery orders Nos. 21 and 22 of 9 and 12 September 1916 in WO 95/651/3.

¹¹⁴⁰ See pages 410-418.

¹¹⁴¹ Diarmid, A. H., Heavy Artillery II Corps Operation Order No. 1 of 14 September 1916 in WO 95/654/3.

covered the activities of three groups: 40th, 36th and 25th, whose guns ranged from 6 to 15 in. with some 60 pdrs. firing HE. They were occasionally to be helped by the 2 and 14 Groups. The following figures show the targets coloured by group: yellow - 40th, purple - 25th, green - 36th, white - 14th, blue - 2nd.

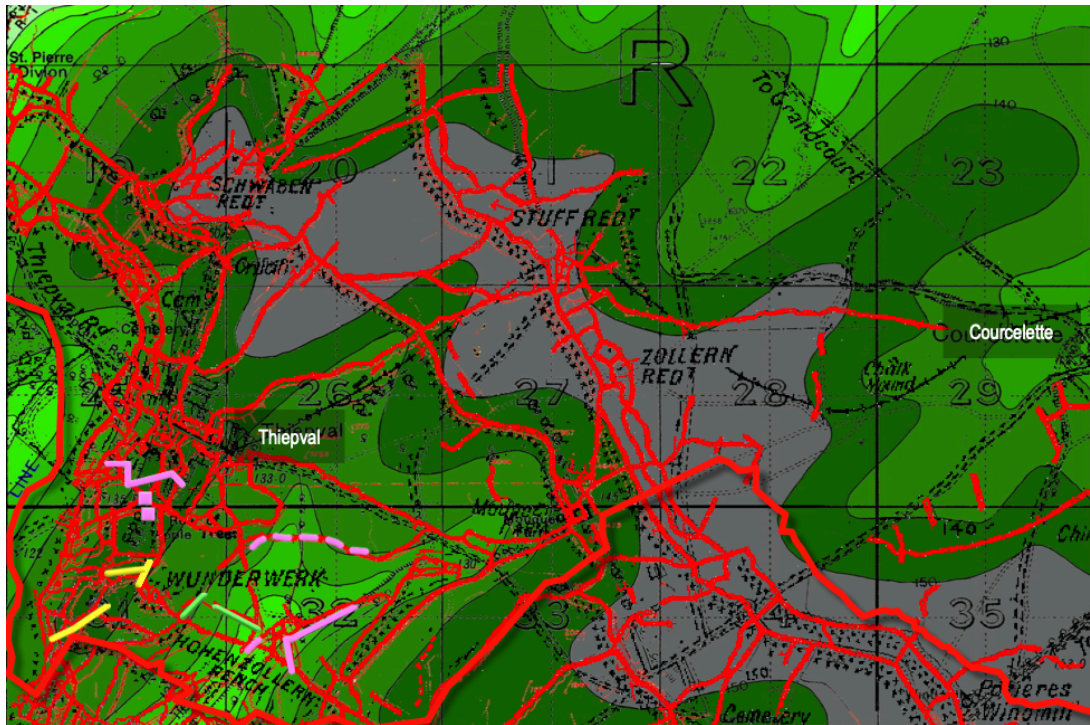


Figure 302 - Reserve Army | II Corps - Continuous Heavy Artillery barrages on 11 September (WO 95/654/3)

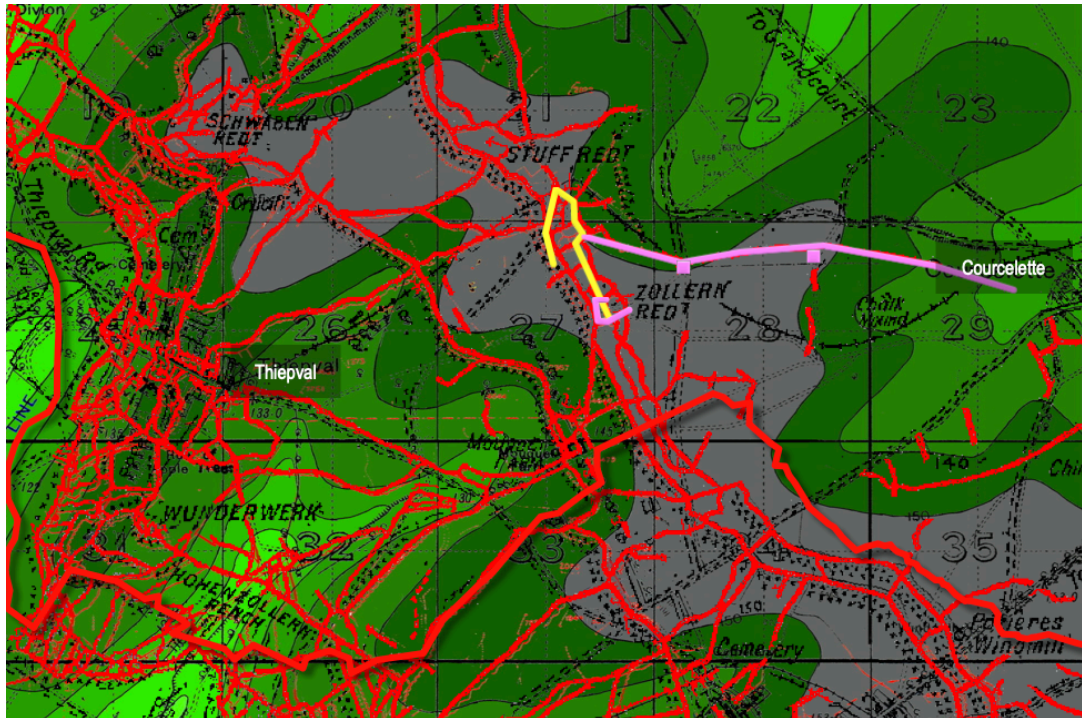


Figure 303 - Reserve Army | II Corps - Continuous Heavy Artillery barrages from 11-11.30 and 16.10 to 16.45 on 13 September and 09.15 to 09.50 and 19.10 to 19.50 on 14 September (WO 95/654/3)

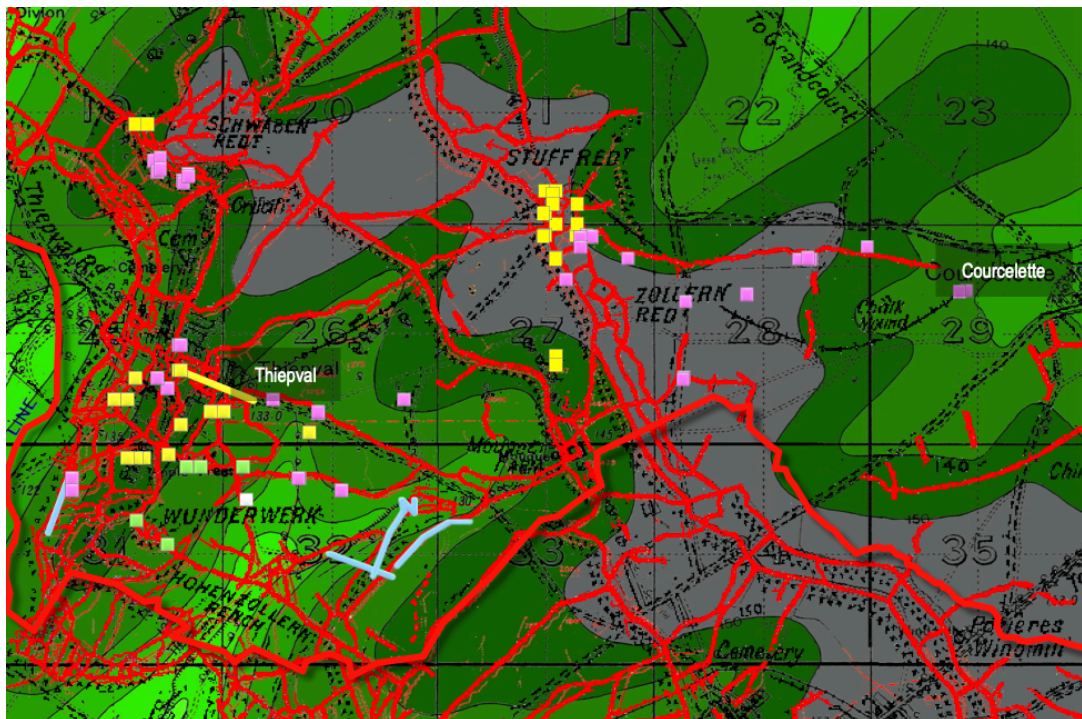


Figure 304 - Reserve Army | II Corps - Heavy Artillery barrages from 00.00 to 0.40 on 13 and 14 September (WO 95/654/3)

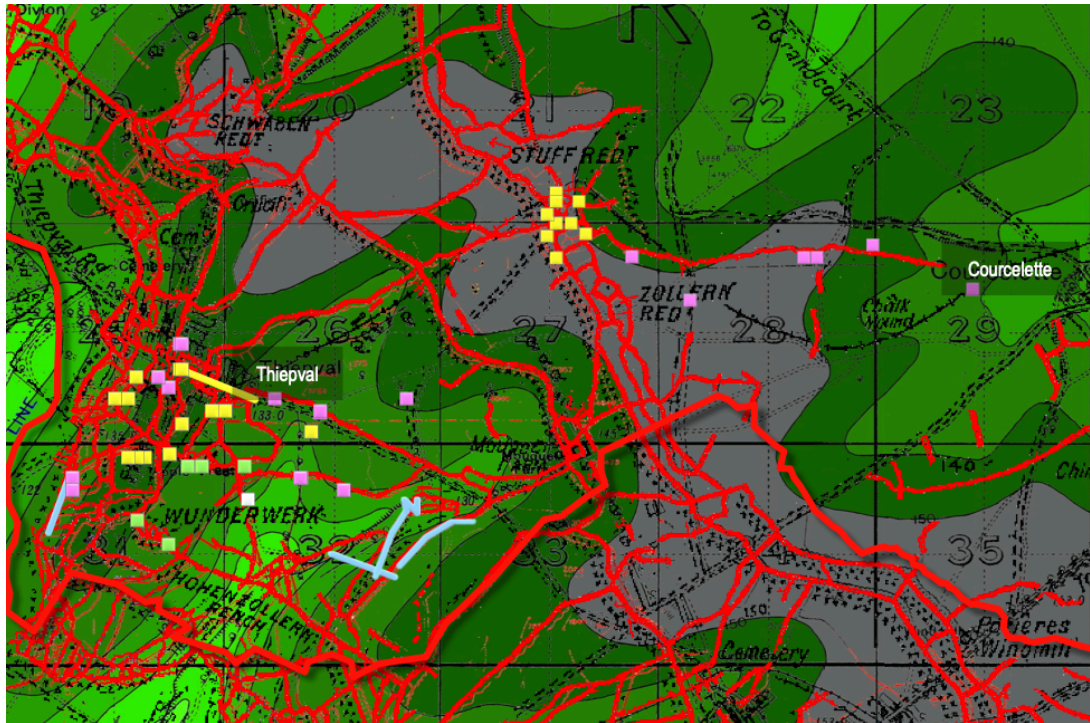


Figure 305 - Reserve Army | II Corps - Heavy Artillery barrages from 00.40 to 01.10 on 13 and 14 September (WO 95/654/3)

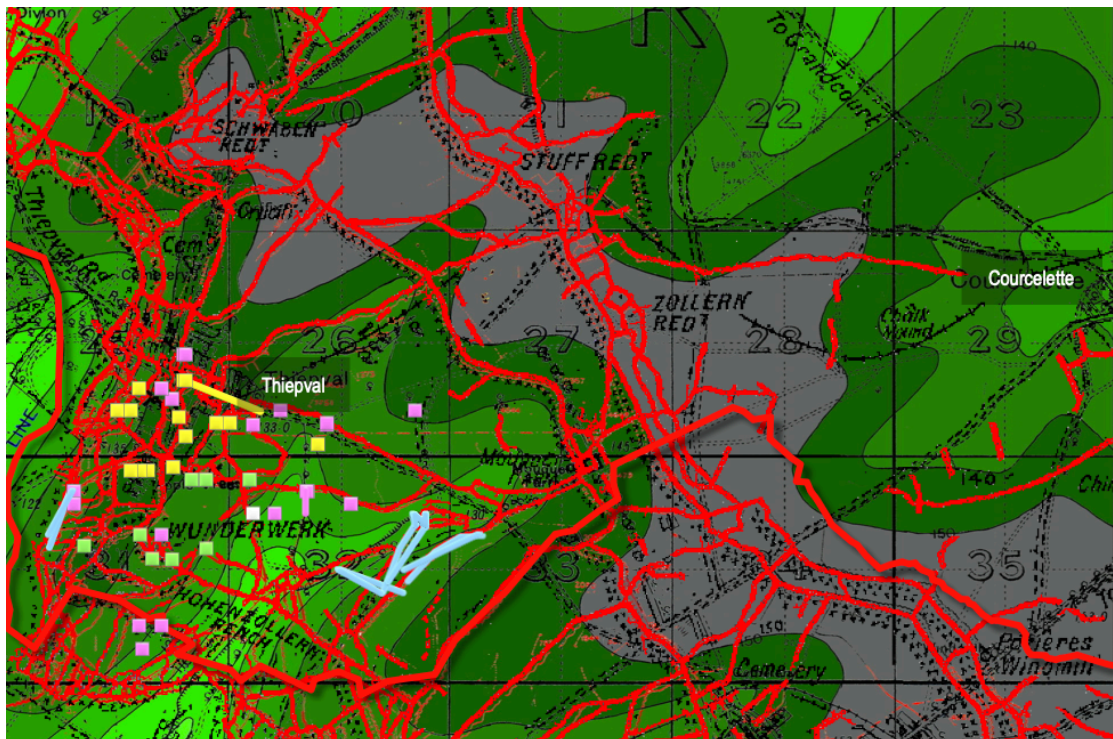


Figure 306 - Reserve Army | II Corps - Heavy Artillery barrages from 14.00 to 16.00 on 13 and 14 September (WO 95/654/3)

Targets are rarely justified: 'trenchwork and large dugout', 'MG in house', 'S.A.A. dump. Such phrases as 'within the limits of ammunition available', the occasional ammunition restrictions (15 rounds on the 12in howitzers and 7

rounds per point per hour) and the gaps between some bombardments, suggest that the Heavy Artillery suffered constraints.

The plans confuse: while some targets are clearly referenced as points and some as trenches, implying that every part of that trench is to be hit, others are vague.

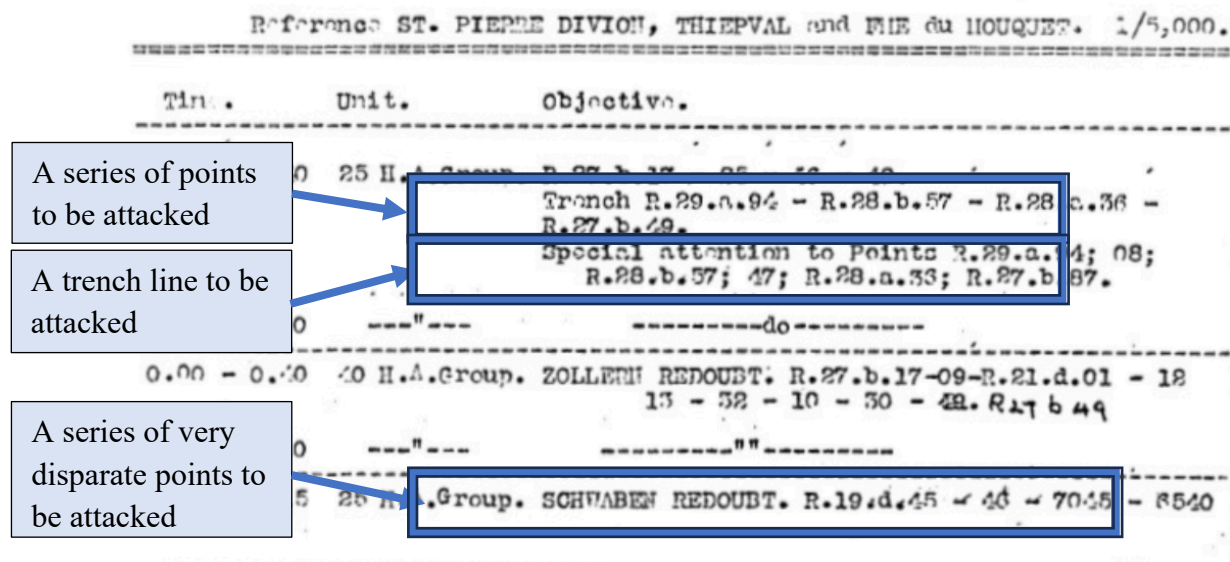


Figure 307 - Confusing specifications

This example contains a reference to points in the Schwaben Redoubt, so far apart, that to destroy all defences between them would involve more ammunition than was allowed for in the plan.¹¹⁴² Even by 1917 no artillery doctrine laid down how to specify artillery targets in a plan.¹¹⁴³

8.3.2 Canadian Corps

MacMullen issued a Preliminary Operation Order on 8 September identifying the Sugar Factory as a key position and the need to cooperate with III Corps.¹¹⁴⁴ 'Strong patrols' would thereafter be advanced into Courcelette and posts possibly established therein.

¹¹⁴² Diarmid, *Op. Cit.*

¹¹⁴³ Anon., AEF, *Artillery in Offensive Operations*, US Army Fort Leavenworth, 1 August 1917 (copy of a GHQ document).

¹¹⁴⁴ MacMullen, C. N. Reserve Army preliminary operation order of 8th September 1916 in WO 95/1047.

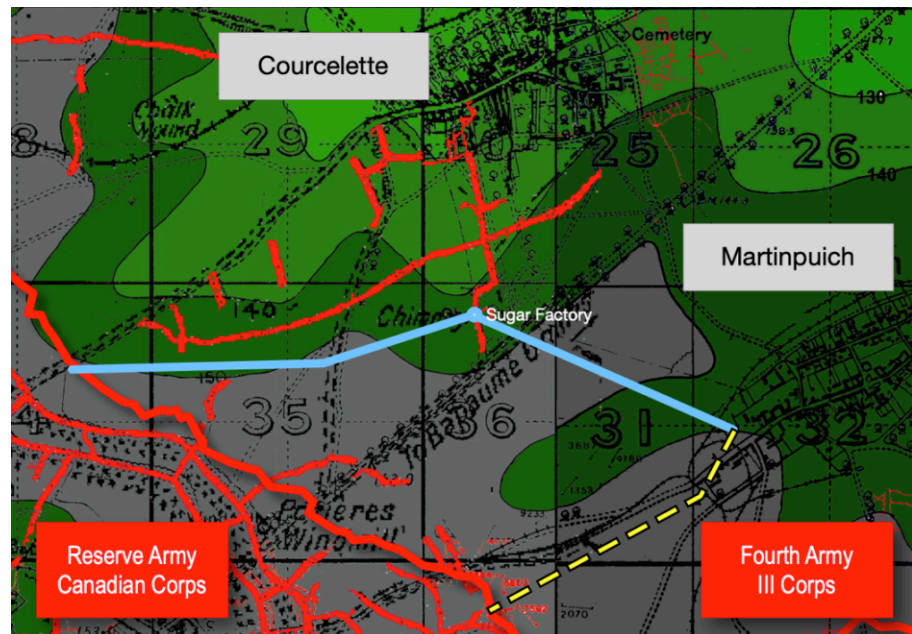


Figure 308 - Reserve Army | Canadian Corps | MacMullen's Preliminary Operation Order of 8 September

The Canadian Corps OO 46 was based on McMullen's Preliminary Operation Order.¹¹⁴⁵

8.3.2.1 3 Canadian Division

The division had minor rôles: to protect the left flank of 2 Canadian Division and raid trenches near Mouquet Farm.

¹¹⁴⁵ Radcliffe, P de B., Canadian Corps Operation Order No. 4 of 12 September 1916 in WO 95/1047.

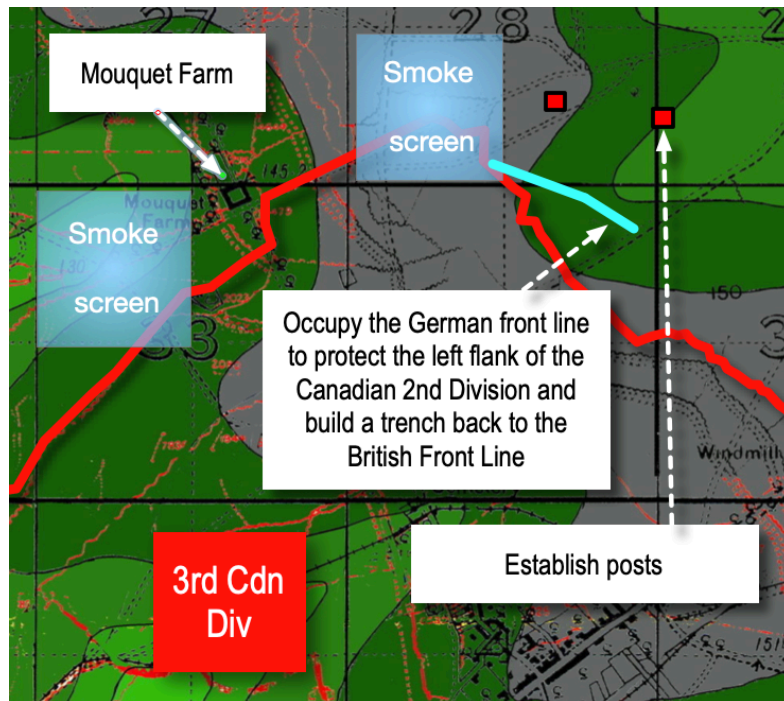


Figure 309 - Reserve Army | Canadian Corps | 3 Canadian Division plan (WO 95/3837)

8.3.2.2 2 Canadian and 49 Divisions

Lieutenant-Colonel N. W. Webber, the GSO1 of the 2 Canadian Division issued an instruction advising of an impending attack on 8 September,¹¹⁴⁶ and the Canadian Corps issued their Operation order on 13 September.¹¹⁴⁷

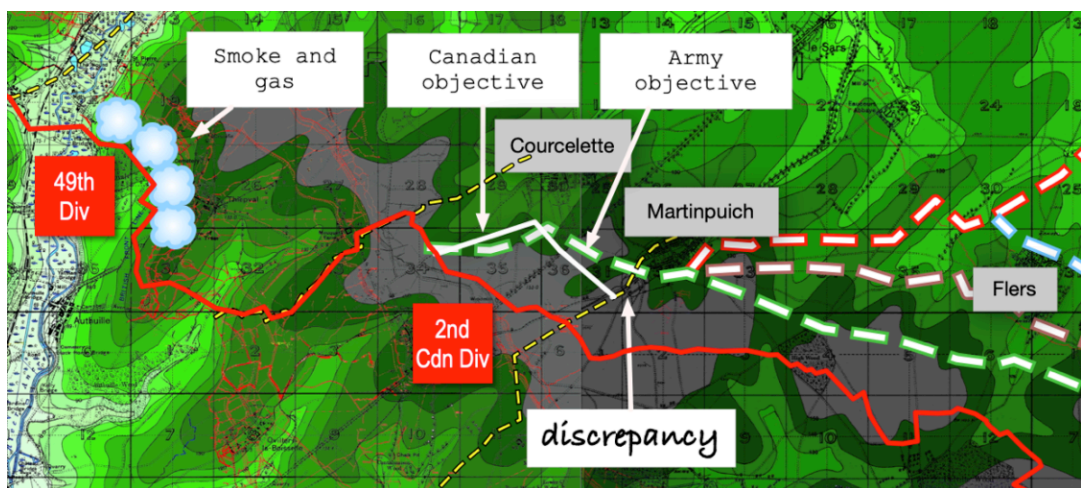


Figure 310 - Reserve Army | Canadian Corps | 2 Canadian and 49 Divisions

¹¹⁴⁶ Webber, N. W., Memo of 8 Sept 1916 in WO 95/3811.

¹¹⁴⁷ Webber, N. W., OO 75 of 14 September 1916 in WO 95/3785.

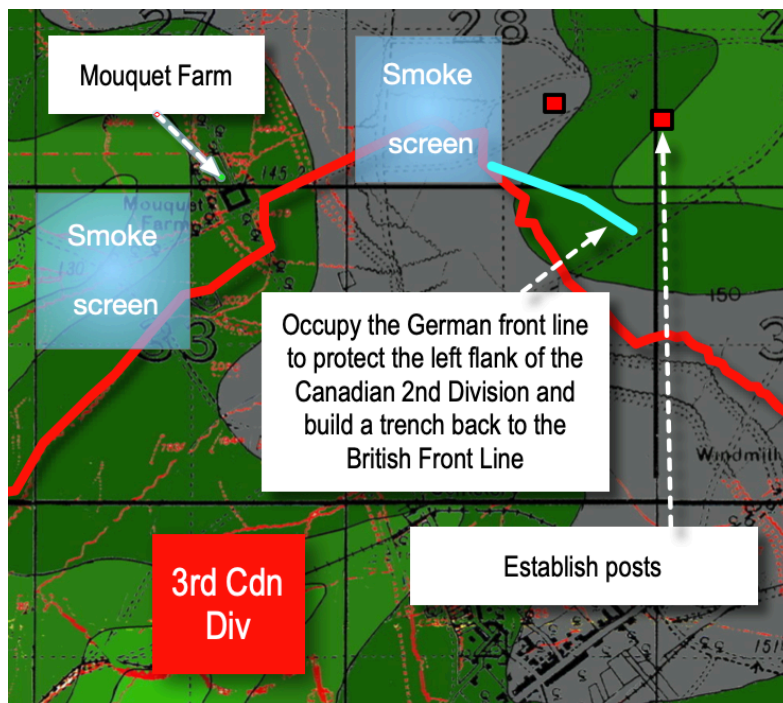


Figure 309 - Reserve Army | Canadian Corps | 3 Canadian Division plan (WO 95/3837)

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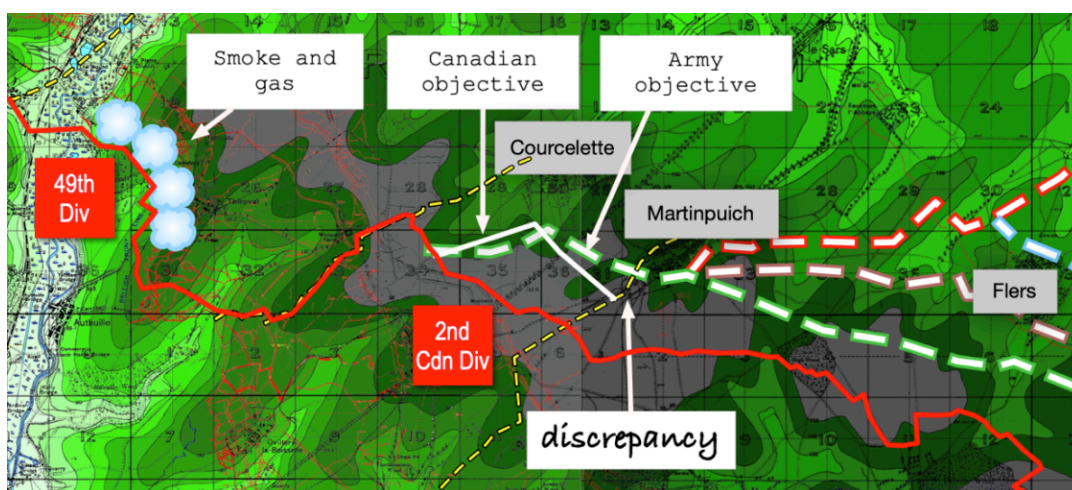


Figure 310 - Reserve Army | Canadian Corps | 2 Canadian and 49 Divisions

¹¹⁴⁶ Webber, N. W., Memo of 8 Sept 1916 in WO 95/3811.

¹¹⁴⁷ Webber, N. W., OO 75 of 14 September 1916 in WO 95/3785.