

**THE ORGANIZATION OF AN
INFANTRY BATTALION
AND
THE NORMAL FORMATION FOR
THE ATTACK.**

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*Issued by the General Staff,
April, 1917.*

1. The Instructions contained in this Pamphlet have already been issued by General Headquarters, British Armies in France, as follows :—

- (i) *The Organization of an Infantry Battalion*, in O.B./1919, dated 7.2.17.
- (ii) *The Normal Formation for the Attack*, in S.S. 144 (O.B./1919/T.), dated February, 1917.

2. This Pamphlet is issued by the Army Council and deals with the Training of Infantry and its leading in War.

It is to be read in connection with S.S. 135 and S.S. 143.

PART I.

Organization of an Infantry Battalion.

Extracts from O.B./1919, d/- 7.2.17, issued by G.H.Q.,
British Armies in France.

1. Necessity of Uniformity of Organization.

In order to ensure the necessary degree of uniformity of training and tactical method throughout the Army, it is necessary that there should be similarity of organization in all Battalions. The following instructions are therefore issued.

2. Battalion.

The Battalion will continue to consist of—

- (a) Battalion Headquarters;
- (b) 4 Companies, consisting of 4 Platoons of 4 Sections each.

3. Battalion Headquarters.

In addition to the personnel shown in War Establishments as forming part of the Battalion Headquarters, certain other personnel will be attached. This personnel, which is principally employed on administrative duties, will be temporarily detached from Companies whilst so employed, but will remain on the establishment of the Companies for accounting purposes. A Headquarters Company as such will not be formed.

The detail of the personnel included in the Battalion Headquarters is given in Appendix I. The total should not exceed 150 other ranks.

The personnel composing the Battalion Headquarters can conveniently be divided into two categories, namely, the fighting portion and the administrative portion. The former will be grouped into sections, each under a commander. The strength of the latter will not exceed 80 other ranks.

4. Companies.

Each Company will consist of—

- (a) Company Headquarters, and
- (b) 4 Platoons.

Company Headquarters, the strength of which should not exceed 14 other ranks, will be composed entirely of fighting troops, and will be formed as a section under a commander.

5. Platoons.

The organization of a platoon is given in S.S. 143.

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6. The organization outlined above is designed to create a fighting machine composed solely of fighting ranks and distinct from the necessary administrative establishment.

7. The essence of this organization is—

- (a) That the Platoon should constitute a unit for fighting and training, and should consist of a homogeneous combination of all the weapons with which the infantry is now armed;
- (b) That specialists should all be with their Platoons and Companies, except such as may be required at Battalion and Company Headquarters either for purposes of fighting or for instructional duties;
- (c) That every portion of the Battalion, including the fighting portion of Battalion Headquarters and Company Headquarters, should consist of a certain number of permanently formed units, namely sections, each under its own commander;

(d) * * * * *

- (e) That every man is available for working and carrying parties, irrespective of the weapon with which he is armed;

- (f) That one Lewis gun with its detachment is allotted to each Platoon. Although this will be the normal organization, it may often be advisable in dealing with particular tactical situations to allot a second Lewis gun to a Platoon, or to withdraw temporarily one, two or more of these guns from Platoons for special tactical employment under the orders of Company or Battalion Commanders. It is to be clearly understood that the normal organization is not to interfere with any such temporary special grouping or employment as circumstance may render desirable.

NOTE.—Para. 5, page 17, of S.S. 135, "Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action" will be amended accordingly.

8. In order to meet the varying conditions under which Battalions serve, to allow of more flexibility as regards the number of men detached for extra regimental employ, and to meet the case of heavy battle casualties, a maximum and a minimum strength of 28 and 44 O.R. respectively have been laid down for the Platoon in S.S. 143.

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PART II.

The Normal Formation for the Attack.

I. General Principles of the Formation.

In the special circumstances of present warfare it has become necessary to modify the provisions of Section 114, Chapter IX, "Infantry Training" in so far as the attack is concerned, and to lay down a normal formation for the attack.

The normal formation described below is one which has frequently been employed with success in recent fighting; it is simple and adaptable to the varying conditions of trench-to-trench attack. It should also prove suitable to most conditions of open warfare.

So far as the Platoon is concerned, the formation described should be applicable to most circumstances and it should seldom be necessary to depart therefrom, while as regards the Battalion it aims at elasticity.

The PLATOON is to be regarded as the unit in the assault. The frontage of an Infantry Battalion in the trench-to-trench attack may range from 200 yards, against a highly organized position, to 600 yards or more, against one less highly consolidated.

II. Application of Weapons.

The weapons now under the hand of a Platoon Commander should be arranged according to their various peculiarities. That is to say, the rifle and bayonet and the bomb, being the most effective offensive weapons, should be placed as far forward as possible, closely supported by the rifle grenade, which may be regarded as the "howitzer" of the Platoon, and by the Lewis gun, which is the weapon of opportunity.

Each Platoon will therefore normally be disposed in two lines, bombers and riflemen in the front line, rifle bombers and the Lewis gun* in the second line. These two lines will constitute one Wave irrespective of "Moppers-up," see Plate "A."

Further, it has been found convenient as a general rule for the Company to be formed on a two platoon frontage.

The Platoon, therefore, should normally be formed in two lines, constituting one wave, and the Company in two waves, see Plate "B."

In this connection it cannot be too often urged, firstly, that in the assault every man is a bayonet man, excepting No. 1 and No. 2 of the Lewis gun; secondly, that every man is a bomber; and thirdly, that every man in rifle sections is also trained to be either a Lewis gunner or a rifle bomber, with a view to replacing casualties in men armed with those weapons.

* This in no way contravenes the provisions of paragraph 7 (f) of Part I, or paragraph 29 in "Notes on the Tactical Employment of Machine Guns and Lewis Guns," dated March, 1916.

III. Intervals and Distances.

Intervals between men should usually be 4 to 5 yards.

The distance between lines should be 15 to 25 yards, and that between waves 50 to 100 yards; to avoid the rear waves being caught in the enemy's barrage, these distances may be reduced to meet the requirements of the moment. Rear waves should move in sections in artillery formation.

IV. Moppers-up.

"Moppers-up" should follow the second line of a wave, see Plates "A," "B," "C," "D" and "E." It is considered preferable to find them, *when possible*, from the platoons and companies whose objectives they are to clear. If, however, the numbers required for clearing these objectives are so great as to deplete unduly the platoons or companies to which they are allotted, moppers-up must be found from another company or possibly another battalion. This case will usually occur when attacking a highly organized position at the commencement of an offensive.

V. Allotment of Objectives.

Each wave must be allotted a definite objective, and each component part of each line should have a definite duty to perform according to the weapon with which it is armed. Thus, in the trench-to-trench attack, if the Platoon is given one objective, the Company would have two objectives, and the Battalion two or more. In this way it is possible to ensure that troops are distributed in depth on attaining their objective, and that the frontage of any commander is not unduly extended.

VI. The Assault.

The Assault may be carried out either by

- (i) the leading wave going straight to the furthest objective, rear waves following it to nearer objectives in succession, see Plate "C";
- or by
- (ii) the leading wave being directed to a near objective, rear waves passing through it to those further away, i.e., "leap-frog," see Plate "D."

In cases where there are only two objectives, the first-mentioned method is usually preferable, see Plate "E."

In cases, however, where there are more than two objectives, either method may be employed.

In deciding which method to adopt, a guiding factor is the distance between the various objectives.

If there is sufficient room for our Artillery barrage to halt on, or short of, the further objective, so as to afford time for the rear waves to close up under it by passing through the leading waves, the second method will be preferable. This method simplifies the organization of "Moppers-up," see Plate "D."

If there is not sufficient room for our Artillery barrage to halt as above indicated, it will usually be necessary to adopt the first method, see Plate "C."

It is necessary to remember the undesirability of the barrage crossing an objective before the waves told off for its capture have closed up under the barrage.

VII. Plates and Notes.

Five Plates are attached with Explanatory Notes, showing:—

Plate A.—A Platoon in one wave of two lines.

" B.—A Company in two waves of two lines each.

" C.—A Battalion with four objectives, the first wave being directed to the furthest.

" D.—A Battalion with four objectives, the first wave being directed to the nearest objective, rear waves passing through, that is to say, "leap-frog."

" E.—The Battalion on a broader front, with two objectives, the first wave being directed on the furthest objective.

VIII. Carriers.

Provision for immediate requirements in grenades and ammunition is made in each section of Platoons; requirements over and above these must be met by parties from other platoons, companies or battalions as best suits the case.

APPENDIX I (A).

BATTALION HEADQUARTERS.

FIGHTING PORTION.

Officers.		ADMINISTRATIVE PORTION.	
Commanding officer	... 1	Assistant adjutant	... 1
Second in command	... 1	Quartermaster	... 1
Adjutant	... 1	Transport officer	... 1
Lewis gun officer	... 1		
Signalling officer	... 1		
Bombing officer	... 1		
Other Ranks.		Other Ranks.	
Sergeant-major	... 1	Quartermaster-serjeant and storemen	... 3
Orderly-room clerk	... 1	Company quartermaster-serjeant and storemen	... 8
Gas	... 2	Transport establishment	... 45
Signallers	... 13	Tailors	... 3
Stretcher bearers	... 4	Butchers	... 3
Runners	... 9	Postman	... 2
Pioneers	... 11	Cooks	... 1
Cooks	... 2	Batmen	... 3
Batmen	... 6		70
49		Balance to be made up by additional shoemakers, tailors, cooks, transport establishment, police, sanitary men, or water men at the discretion of battalion commanders	... 10
Balance to be made up by additional stretcher bearers, runners, police, or scouts at the discretion of battalion commanders	... 21		
Total...	... 70	Total...	... 80

APPENDIX I (B).

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS.

Company-serjeant-major	1
Signallers	4
Runners (including 1 batman)	4
Batman or cook	1
		10
Balance to be made up by additional stretcher bearers, runners, or scouts at the discretion of company commanders	4
Total	14

APPENDIX I (C).

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS.

Platoon-serjeant	1
Signaller	10*
Runner	3
Batman	1
Total	4

Note to Appendices to I (A)-I (C).—These numbers do not include those mentioned in S.S. 135, page 58, "Numbers to be left behind when the battalion takes part in the Attack," as it should always be possible to replace those left behind by an equivalent number of men withdrawn from classes, extra regimental employ, &c.

APPENDIX II.

NUMBERS TO BE LEFT BEHIND WHEN THE BATTALION TAKES PART IN THE ATTACK.

		Per Battalion.
In each Battalion—		
Company serjeant-majors	2
33 per cent, signallers	10*
33 per cent, runners	13*
Gas instructor	1
Bombing instructor	1
Lewis gun instructor	2
Any other instructors in special work, such as dog-outs	3
Total	32
32		
In each Company—		
Serjeant	1
Corporal	1
Lance-corporal	1
Total	3
3		12
In each Platoon—		
Rifle bomber	1
Scout and sniper	1
Lewis gunners	2
Total	4
4		64
GRAND TOTAL	108

* If up to full strength.

PLATE "A."

THE PLATOON

Taking an average strength of 36 O.R. and H.Q. at 4 O.R.

(Showing 2 Platoons in 2 Waves, with the right the outer flank.)

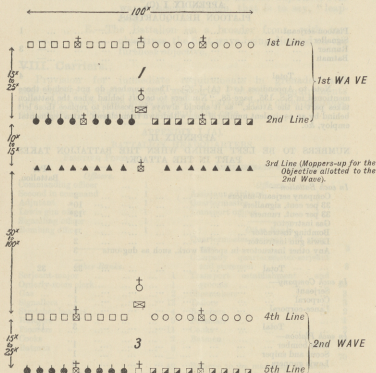


PLATE "B."

THE COMPANY

Taking 4 Platoons at an average strength of 36 O.R. each and Co. H.Q. at 14 O.R.

Key:

- Platoon Commander.
- Platoon Sergeant.
- ⊠ Section Commander.
- Riflemen.
- ⊠ Lewis Gunner.
- Bomber.
- Rifle Bomber.
- ▲ Mopper up.
- ⊠ Platoon H.Q.

NOTES.

Two Platoons are depicted showing the different positions of leaders in first and second waves.

The Platoon is the unit in the assault, moves in one wave of two lines, and has one definite objective.

Every man is a rifleman and a bomber, and in the assault, with the exception of the No. 1 and No. 2 of Lewis gun, fixes his bayonet. Men in rifle sections must be trained either to the Lewis gun or Rifle grenade.

Bombing and Lewis Gun Sections are on the outer flank of Platoons.

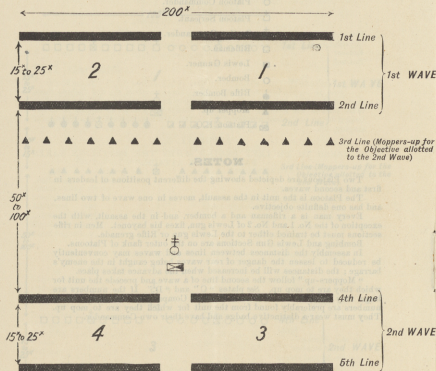
In assembly the distances between lines and waves may conveniently be reduced to lessen the danger of rear waves being caught in the enemy's barrage; the distances will be increased when the advance takes place.

"Moppers-up" follow the second line of a wave and precede the unit for which they are to mop up. See plates "C" and "D." If the numbers are large they must be found from a different Company or Battalion. Small numbers are preferably found from the unit for which they are to mop up. They must wear a distinctive badge and have their own Commander.

PLATE "B."

THE COMPANY

Taking 4 Platoons at an average strength of 36 O.R. each,
and Coy. H.Q. at 14 O.R.



Key:—

- ⊕ Coy. Commander.
 ☒ Coy. H.Q.
 — Platoon (in 2 Lines).
 ▲ Moppers up.

NOTES.

The Company moves in two waves, has two objectives, and is distributed in depth.

"Moppers-up" follow the second line of a wave and precede the unit for which they are to mop up. See plates "C" and "D." If the numbers are large they must be found from a different Company or Battalion. Small numbers are preferably found from the unit for which they are to mop up. They must wear a distinctive badge and have their own Commander.

THE 7 BATTALION

"PLATE C."

Taking 16 average Platoons of 36, 4 Coy. H.Q. of 14, and Battalion H.Q. of 70 O.R.

(4 Objectives, 1st Wave to 4th Objective, i.e. furthest).

1st " 2nd " 3rd " 4th "

400'

1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

1st Wave 2nd Wave 3rd Wave 4th Wave 5th Wave 6th Wave 7th Wave

1st Objective 2nd Objective 3rd Objective 4th Objective

1st Coy 2nd Coy 3rd Coy 4th Coy 5th Coy 6th Coy 7th Coy

1st Platoon 2nd Platoon 3rd Platoon 4th Platoon 5th Platoon 6th Platoon 7th Platoon

1st Squad 2nd Squad 3rd Squad 4th Squad 5th Squad 6th Squad 7th Squad

1st Section 2nd Section 3rd Section 4th Section 5th Section 6th Section 7th Section

1st File 2nd File 3rd File 4th File 5th File 6th File 7th File

1st Rank 2nd Rank 3rd Rank 4th Rank 5th Rank 6th Rank 7th Rank

1st Row 2nd Row 3rd Row 4th Row 5th Row 6th Row 7th Row

1st Column 2nd Column 3rd Column 4th Column 5th Column 6th Column 7th Column

1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

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1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

1st Line 2nd Line 3rd Line 4th Line 5th Line 6th Line 7th Line

1st WAVE
to 4th or furthest
Objective.
Moppers-up for 1st Objective.
2nd Line. Moppers-up for 2nd Objective.
3rd Line. Moppers-up for 3rd Objective.

2nd WAVE
to 3rd Objective.

3rd WAVE
to 2nd Objective.

4th WAVE
to 1st Objective.

Key:-

Battalion H.Q.

Coy. Commander.

Coy. H.Q.

Platoon.

Moppers up.

NOTES.

The Battalion moves in four waves, each direct to its objective, and is distributed in company columns, following the second line of a wave and proceeds the unit for which they are to mop up, see plates "C" and "D." If the numbers are large they must be found from a different Company or Battalion. Small numbers are preferably found from the unit to be mopped up. The Battalion Commander is responsible for the mopping up of the unit.

In this instance the organization of "Moppers-up" is complicated. It may be advisable to detail a Company from another unit as a Reserve to the Battalion.

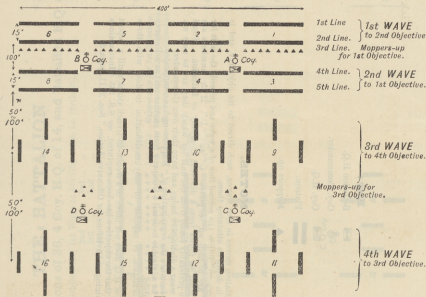
This formation is capable of easy modification to deal with three objectives. Battalion H.Q. does not move in a trench-to-trench attack until a report is received that the objective has been captured, see S.S. 133 "Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action, Sec. XIII, para. 3.

THE BATTALION

Taking 16 average Platoons of 36, 4 Coy. H.Q. of 14, and

Key:— Battalion H.Q. (4 Objectives, 1st Wave to 2nd Objective.)

1st Coy. Commander. 2nd " 1st
 3rd " 4th "
 4th " 3rd "
 Platoon. 4th " 3rd "
 Moppers up. i.e.—Leap Frog.



NOTES.

The Battalion moves in four waves, the first to the nearest objectives and the last two waves passing through to the two furthest objectives, and is distributed in depth on attaining them.

"Moppers-up" follow the second line of a wave and precede the unit for which they are to mop up. See plates "C" and "D." If the numbers are large, they must be found from a different Company or Battalion. Small numbers are preferably found from the unit for which they are to mop up. They must wear a distinctive badge and have their own Commander.

In this case the organization of the "Moppers up" is simple.

It is not usually necessary to detail a reserve from another unit, because the 1st and 2nd waves can re-form after the 3rd and 4th have passed through them.

This formation is capable of easy modification to deal with three objectives.

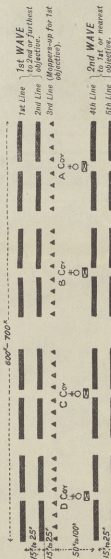
Battalion H.Q. does not move in a trench-to-trench attack until a report is received that the objective has been captured. See S.S. 135, "Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action," Sec. XIII, para. 3.

PLATE "E."

THE BATTALION

Taking 16 average Platoons of 36, 4 Coy. H.Q. of 14, and
Battalion H.Q. of 70 O.R.

(2 Objectives, 1st Wave to furthest objective.)



NOTES.

The Battalion moves in two waves, the first to the furthest objective, for which they are to mop up. See Plates "C" and "D." If the numbers are large, they must be found from a different Company or Battalion. Small numbers are preferably found from the unit for which they are to mop up. They must wear a distinctive badge and have their own Commander.

In this case the organization of "Moppers-up" is simple.

Companies are distributed in depth on attaining their objectives.

It may be possible to keep one company as a reserve, in which case the formation is easily adaptable; if this is not possible, a company must be detailed from the Battalion H.Q. to follow the first wave.

Battalion H.Q. does not move in a trench-to-trench attack until a report is received that the objective has been captured. See S.S. 135 "Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action," Sec. XIII, para. 3.

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