CHAPTER XIX

THE HINDENBURG OUTPOST-LINE

The capture of Mont St. Quentin and Péronne is held by many Australian soldiers to be the most brilliant achievement of the A.I.F. Among the operations planned by Monash it stands out as one of movement rather than a set piece; indeed within Australian experience of the Western Front it was the only important fight in which quick, free manoeuvre played a decisive part. It furnishes a complete answer to the comment that Monash was merely a composer of set pieces. But Monash himself realised that it was also largely a soldiers' battle. Monash passed four brigades under the enemy's nose round the bend of the Somme, with all his invariable care in planning, supplying and bridging. But what an instrument was to his hand! The picture given in the histories of some German regiments of their slender, exhausted remnants being overwhelmed by masses of fresh troops is sheer propaganda. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions at least, with companies depleted to the German level, weary with—in some cases—incredibly protracted effort, and without normal artillery support, constantly attacked more than their number of Germans in strong, well wired positions and captured more prisoners than they could safely hold. The tactics were necessarily left largely to divisional, brigade, battalion and even platoon commanders, they were sometimes brilliant and sometimes faulty, but in general the dash, intelligence, and persistence of the troops dealt a stunning blow to five German divisions, drove the enemy from one of his key positions in France, and took

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1 Gen. Monash says (Australian Victories, p. 192) that Gen. Rawlinson "more than once referred to the operation as the finest single feat of the war." It was immediately after it that Haig welcomed a party of newspaper leaders, newly arrived from several dominions, with the observations referred to on page 485. His note, that the Australian ones "were very much surprised" inadequately describes the effect.
2,600 prisoners at a cost of slightly over 3,000 casualties.\(^2\)

The Germans had intended to hold the Somme line indefinitely; but the loss of it at Mont St. Quentin and Péronne was only a second reason for Ludendorff’s decision on September 2nd to retire from it;\(^3\) German records show that the main cause was—as Haig had planned and now realised—the blow struck that day by Third Army in conjunction with the Canadians (First Army). The XVII British Corps (Third Army) broke through the junction of the Drocourt-Quéant line with the Hindenburg Line and drove back the Seventeenth German Army. The position was considered too dangerous to allow of the maintenance of the Somme line farther south and as the German Second Army’s line at Péronne had already gone and all the armies engaged were exhausted, dwindling, and in desperate need of rest to regain their morale, Ludendorff ordered the retirement which would shorten his line, economise troops, and, he hoped, give them at least a short rest.

\(^2\)The detailed infantry casualties for Aug. 31-Sep. 2 were:

### 2nd Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5th Brigade</th>
<th>Offrs.</th>
<th>O.R.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bde. H.Q.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th Bn.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>151</td>
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<td>18th Bn.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>19th Bn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th Bn.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>23rd Bn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25th Bn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26th Bn.</td>
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<td>27th Bn.</td>
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<td>28th Bn.</td>
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<td>29th Bn.</td>
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<td>63</td>
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<td>7th L.T.M. Bty.</td>
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### 3rd Division

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<td>34th Bn.</td>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>35th Bn.</td>
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<td>38th Bn.</td>
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<td>42nd Bn.</td>
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<td>43rd Bn.</td>
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<td>44th L.T.M. Bty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>56th Bn.</td>
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<td>216</td>
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<td>59th Bn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15th L.T.M. Bty.</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>269</td>
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In the advance from Aug. 24-30 the 3rd Div. had 1,200 casualties.

\(^3\)Ludendorff himself implies this in *War Memories, Vol II*, p. 695. The loss of Mont St. Quentin he attributes to the loss of the Ommécourt-Péronne bridgehead on Aug. 29.
But the Fourth British Army also was subjected to intense strain; though Haig had intended it to play a quiescent rôle, and not to draw on his reserves, Monash and Godley had really forced his hand. On August 31st Monash was warned by General Hobbs that the stress on the 5th Division was approaching the limits of endurance. Before the next three days’ fighting ended the strain on the 2nd and 3rd Divisions was even greater. The impression was growing among the Australian troops that because they were so successful the British Command was using them more persistently than its own troops and for tasks which the British were unable fully to perform. Numbers were sinking.

Battalions are going into some of these fights 150 strong (wrote one observer); 300 or 350 seems to be a big number in the fighting line nowadays. They are not as done as they were after Pozières, but they certainly are feeling that they have had more than their share of fighting . . . . There is a feeling that “there won’t be any dominion army left soon.” “There’ll be no more A.I.F. before long.”

The same diarist quotes General Monash as saying that “six days’ rest and a bath restores the elasticity of a division. The troops are not tired—a little footsore.”

It was essential (Monash writes in *Australian Victories*) that they should be called upon to yield up the last particle of effort of which they are capable. . . . I was compelled to disregard the evident signs of overstrain which were brought to my notice by the divisional generals and their brigadiers.

Actually conditions were approaching those in which the regimental officers, in giving orders for some renewed stage in the prolonged effort were not without the consciousness that any chain of mischances increasing the burden might precipitate a local mutiny. It was at Péronne that the first recorded mutiny in the A.I.F. occurred. The 59th Battalion when relieved on September 14th after a week of repeated efforts and continuous strain had no sooner reached its bivouac and settled to sleep than it was summoned to the line again to follow the enemy’s retirement. Three Platoons refused and their officers supported them, saying that the men “believe their action to be the only way they can impress the (higher) authorities with their needs.” The refusal was

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*There had during this period been slighter incidents, of which only hints are given in the records.*
eventually overcome—but was probably one of the "signs of overstrain" to which Monash refers.

Two widely different policies were being adopted to sustain the exertions of the troops. Monash believed that for the effort now demanded of them they required a stimulus keener than that of the high moral issues on which Birdwood had always based his appeal. He told the Official War Correspondent that

he was ceasing to appeal to the Australians on the ground of patriotism—he was not asking them to fight for patriotism or public interest. The appeal which he was going to make, and was making, to them was on grounds of prestige.5

He accordingly circulated to the troops from time to time a news sheet with extracts from the French and British Press signalling the achievements of the Australians. In conformity with this policy he complained strongly to G.H.Q. of the undoubted covering-up in the Press of the part played by dominion troops in the great battle of August 8th; though that victory was outstandingly an achievement of theirs, no reader of The Times, for example, would have had the remotest notion of their rôle in it,6 nor indeed was this generally realised in England for years afterwards.7 It seems certain that in the interests of the whole side, to avoid giving a handle for German propaganda, G.H.Q. wished to avoid stressing the prominence of dominion troops in the successes of 1918; but on this occasion this policy (so different from that of 1941) overreached itself and caused much resentment. Brig.-Genl. Brand reported to Monash that in the 4th Brigade, which had snatched a costly victory from the difficult situation left by the failure of English troops on its left, a discontented section was growling: "Whatever we do they'll say they won the battle; next time we'll let them win it." It was now that Monash

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5 From the War Correspondent's diary.
6 Haig's brief communiqué it is true mentioned "French, Canadian, Australian and English divisions."
7 G.H.Q. replied unofficially that the term "British troops" was understood and intended by it to include those of the Dominions. This was true, but G.H.Q. also knew that the term was constantly used by the overseas peoples and often in the British Army (for example in a current communiqué of Allenby's) as meaning troops of the Motherland excluding those of the dominions. "Imperial troops" to an Australian then meant troops of the mother country. Today "Empire troops" appears best to connot "British and oversea forces." The double meaning of "British" has proved a constant embarrassment even in the writing of this history.
produced to half a dozen British leaders in succession his cherished illustration of the Australian as a "sportsman" who would therefore refuse to play unless his score was displayed on the board. The argument would have been detested by the best of his men but it brought the intended result: newspapers began to pay to the dominion forces an attention which helped Monash in his new method of appeal to his troops.

That policy was assisted, from quite other motives, by the Australian Prime Minister. Mr. Hughes, being shown over the battlefield of Amiens by the senior Australian war correspondent, was astonished at the part now being played by Australian and Canadian troops. It appeared to him to be nothing less than, at the moment, a decisive factor—as indeed it was, though one of several. If he could only cause this to be widely realised the influence of the Dominions in the peace settlement would be greatly increased, and he therefore arranged that successive parties of leading British journalists and newspaper owners should be invited to the Australian sector, with complete freedom to see and enquire for themselves. This urge for publicity was fully consistent with Monash's policy for inspiring the A.I.F.

Mr. Hughes's policy, however, had a different object and brought him later into sharp conflict with Monash. In Australia there had been raised in May 1917 the difficult question of securing for Australian soldiers furlough not merely to England or France but to Australia. When Mr. Hughes reached London in June 1918 and found Mr. Lloyd George deeply impressed with the need for conserving the British Army, Hughes was for the same reason equally concerned for the Australians. Like all other members of the Imperial War Cabinet he had been advised that the war would not end until 1919 or 1920. If the Australian forces were by then reduced to two or three divisions Australia would have a diminished influence in the peace negotiations. He was therefore deter-

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8 See p. 200.
9 He noted it as "a complete change" (War Letters, p. 268).
10 The first party, led by Mr. Hughes himself, arrived on Sep. 12 and left on the 16th. It included Lord Burnham (owner of the Daily Telegraph), and Messrs. Thomas Marlowe (editor of Daily Mail) and Edward Price Bell (American Press). For the others see Vol. XI, pp. 750-51.
11 For its origin see Vol. II, pp. 179-80, 409 and 745.
mined that the five infantry divisions must, if possible, be maintained. Accordingly, he applied to the A.I.F. a general recommendation of a committee of the Imperial War Cabinet,¹² and insisted that before Australian divisions were used in any important offensive he must be consulted.

But either this instruction was not passed to Haig, or Haig thought it too dangerous to be complied with; for Mr. Hughes did not hear of the committal of the whole Australian Corps in the great attack at Amiens until Sir Henry Wilson was actually describing that day’s success to members of the Imperial War Cabinet. Wilson often told afterwards how the Australian Prime Minister was beginning to ask by whose authority the Corps was so used when he caught Wilson’s next sentence, telling of the penetration of dominion troops through the enemy’s line in the greatest Allied victory of the war, and any protest died away.

But Mr. Hughes was very much impressed by Australian soldiers on leave in London during those weeks telling him, “There’ll be no A.I.F. if they don’t rest us soon”; and he determined to bring about three steps: first, the granting of “home leave” for the original Anzacs—which till now the British authorities, fearing its probable extension to other troops¹³ and heavy demands on shipping, had declared to be out of the question; second, the withdrawal of the Australian infantry for rest when autumn began and then, as Mr. Hughes then believed, further attacks would be merely waste of men urgently needed for next year; and, third, the transfer of the Corps during the winter months to a milder climate to recoup its numbers. “The Australian divisions are being used as shock troops,” he maintained. “If, then, the final effort is to be made in 1919, the right method is to conserve them.”

He laid these proposals before Sir Henry Wilson. As to the first he was informed that the apparently insuperable difficulty was that of obtaining ships, whereupon he concentrated his effort upon securing them. As to the second, Wilson advised him to see Haig who might be able to arrange it. “I shall not see Haig or any one else,” said Hughes. “If the Belgian Government wants its troops withdrawn from the line it does

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¹³ e.g. New Zealanders; and also British soldiers in distant theatres.
not ask any one’s leave. It simply says they are to be withdrawn.” Monash, to whom he told his plans, demurred that the needs of the campaign might render it impossible to withdraw the Corps when the weather broke—at latest by October 15th—as Hughes insisted. The Prime Minister’s reply was that the Corps must be out of the line by the date mentioned and that General Monash’s position would depend upon this. There is evidence that Mr. Hughes at this time, though sure of the Australian Government’s approval of his aims, was not always certain whether it would support his methods, and even feared that Monash by cabling to Australia might have him overruled. Nevertheless he accepted that chance. His only threat to Sir Henry Wilson was that he would not leave England until the Corps was at rest.

These problems were brewing in the Australian Corps when the Seventeenth, Second, and Eighteenth German Armies suddenly withdrew from their so-called “Winter Line” along the Somme and north of it, and Rawlinson ordered advanced guards to follow the enemy to the Hindenburg Line.14

Rawlinson had ordered his two corps to press the enemy vigorously so as to prevent roads and railways from being destroyed. This order, though undoubtedly wise, displeased Haig who did not wish to be forced into attacking the Hindenburg Line until Foch was ready with his American and French offensives elsewhere; then the blows would fall together. Haig therefore refused Rawlinson another division to bring relief to his tired troops—they must be rested by not pressing the pursuit. When the time for the combined stroke arrived, Haig would send several divisions to form a new corps, the IX, to relieve the right of the Australian.

However, in accordance with Rawlinson’s order, Monash had already directed a vigorous pursuit with three divisions.15 He had now promised a good rest to the 2nd; and as the 1st and 4th, then resting, were being reserved for the next set battle (presumably at the Hindenburg Line) he was forced, in spite

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14 On First Army’s front the Germans had already lost this.
15 On Sep. 5, during one day’s readjustment, he held his front with two—3rd and 5th. Rawlinson’s order had been telegraphed at 10:45 p.m. on Sep. 4 and was repeated formally on the 5th.
of previous promises, to recall for a few days the weary 3rd. Each line-division was given a 5,000 yards’ front, the 32nd south of the Roman road, the 5th and 3rd north of it. The advanced guards were:

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<th>3rd Division</th>
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<th>32nd Division</th>
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Cyclists also were attached. Gen. Gellibrand ensured vigorous work from the 3rd Divn.’s tired troops by sending each battalion into the line for only twenty-four hours.

In the 5th Division the 8th Brigade after continuously marching and fighting for 48 hours was called to what an officer described as “the heaviest and weariest work the battalions have done. C.O’s (he added) could scarcely expect the battalions to do such work.” When at 7 a.m. on the 6th they arrived from near Mont St. Quentin to pass through the 14th British Brigade (32nd Division) north of the Roman road, they were so obviously exhausted that the British divisional commander himself asked leave for his brigade to go on to the second of the objectives set (he was already on the first) and so allow the tired Australians a day’s rest. Monash agreed and the 14th British Brigade reached their objective at 9.30 a.m. without fighting, as did the 97th south of the Roman road.

The advanced guard of the 3rd Division had a very different experience. Ahead of the Corps lay the rolling country through which two small tributaries of the Somme, the Cologne on the north flank and the Omignon on the south, flow down to the Somme marshes. Each river valley is wide, marshy, and tree covered, with villages strung at intervals along it. The higher land is rolling, and bare except for scattered woods and for villages whose tree-lined hedges and gardens give them the appearance of woods. Fourteen miles east of Péronne, where the Cologne and Omignon rise and the country then dips to

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16 Monash’s account (*Victories*, pp. 200-1, and map at p. 208) is inaccurate.
the sources of the Scheldt, lay the Hindenburg Line. Its main line lay beyond the watershed, generally behind the canal joining the sources of Somme and Scheldt, and its foremost line along the watershed about a mile west of the canal. The whole trench-system had lain abandoned since March, as had the successive British lines west of it, now a moorland of overgrown trenches and long dense belts of wire running for miles both across and along the ridges. It was uncertain upon which of five of the old lines—three British lines (reserve, main, and outpost) and the two first German ones (outpost and main line)—the Germans would now make their stand; but Rawlinson’s order for the pursuit laid down four objectives, at two or three miles intervals, two before the trench area was reached, the third lying close to the old British reserve line and the fourth in the old British front area. Till the third and fourth were reached the advance would lie through untrenched country except for a line hurriedly dug and improved by the Germans five miles east of Péronne, through Nurlu and Tincourt. This would be attained in the first and

17 Named the green, red, blue and brown lines.
second stages and it was hither that the Germans were believed to have retired as the first stage in their withdrawal.\textsuperscript{18}

The advance towards the second objective on the morning of September 6th met, as already mentioned, no serious resistance in the two southern sectors of Australian Corps. In the northern sector at midnight on the 5th the head of the 11th Brigade passed through the 8th (which then withdrew southwards on its exhausting march to the next sector). Brig.-Genl. Cannan advanced with the 42nd Battalion on his left and the 3rd Pioneer on his right.\textsuperscript{19} The foremost troops, very widely extended, felt their way in the dark through unknown country across several abandoned wire-entanglements. No Germans were seen but their flares rose not far ahead. At 3 a.m. the Pioneers rested in a clover field near Cartigny and Buire (the first objective) waiting for dawn. Here the Cologne curved across the 3rd Division's front. The right company of the Pioneers crossed it at Buire and, when the advance was resumed at 4.30, just before dawn, the left trended north-eastwards over the hills north of the river. Presently in the misty light it was fired on by machine-guns in Buire Wood, which clothed the hill north of Tincourt.\textsuperscript{20} The pioneers not being trained in "peaceful penetration," were uncertain how best to attack; they appeared to be well ahead of other troops, but they would not withdraw and decided to rush the post. In doing so 16 were hit, including Lieut. Broadbridge\textsuperscript{21} mortally wounded. They killed every German there except one\textsuperscript{22} and seized the hill. South of the stream the artillery shelled a German post near Cartigny, and the platoon of pioneers here pushed on for a mile until stopped by machine-guns. Capt. Toone\textsuperscript{23} was killed directing his men. Into the gap at the Cologne stream Lieut.-

\textsuperscript{18} No time-table was laid down for the British advance but the intention apparently was to reach the first objective by the night of Sep. 5; pass through it at dawn on the 6th and reach the second by nightfall, reach the third, if possible, during the night of the 6th; rest there during the 7th and relieve some of the troops; and then at dawn on the 8th attempt to advance, as far as was possible by patrolling methods, through the zone of the old British defences.

\textsuperscript{19} A detached company of the 42nd formed the extreme right.

\textsuperscript{20} Volt. XII, plates 547-8 shows the scene when the mist rose.


\textsuperscript{22} A youth who fled, hands high, to the Australian rear.

Col. Sanday\textsuperscript{24} put a reserve company, which then worked through the trees south of Tincourt. But the 8th Brigade on the right was far behind and was not coming up.\textsuperscript{25} Sanday therefore drew back his right for a mile. At 3 p.m. pillars of smoke rose from Tincourt; explosions blew up the roads; and Germans withdrew from there and Boucly, and many small copses. The 42nd and the left of the pioneers advanced unopposed to Tincourt\textsuperscript{26} and the second objective beyond; the right stayed back waiting for the 8th Brigade to move.

German records show that in this retirement von Boehn's Army Group was to deceive its opponents as long as possible by strong rear-guard action, retiring to the Hindenburg Line only if firmly attacked. The reason was that Ludendorff required time to rest his other forces and move reserves, a transfer of Allied forces towards the Meuse area having been noticed. On the night of Sep. 3 Boehn had withdrawn his main force to the Tincourt line, and on that of the 5th to the Epéhy line—that is, the old British main line of the previous March. The country was (for the second time) to be devastated, houses, roads and railways to be destroyed. The posts met by the 3rd Pioneer were those of the II/258th R.I.R. acting as rearguard of the 185th Divn.

That night the horizon ahead of Fourth Army was lurid with burning villages. The 3rd Pioneer and 42nd were withdrawn.\textsuperscript{27} At daylight the advanced guards moved on again, 8th Brigade in the centre passing through the 14th British. Again the two southern columns reached their objective with slight resistance; light horse and cyclist patrols scouted ahead, advanced companies of infantry with an allotment of field-guns, Vickers machine-guns, and trench-mortars followed. The light horse located posts of the German rearguard, the guns shelled them, infantry patrols worked round them. At Vraignes, two miles from the objective, the troops obviously came within long range of the new German artillery positions; but by 8 a.m. the 8th Brigade (29th and 31st Battalions) had posts in old trenches past the third objective, and light horse and cyclist patrols could presently be seen two miles ahead, well beyond the nearest German posts. One patrol dismounted and crossed the St. Quentin-Cambrai railway close behind which lay the old British reserve


\textsuperscript{25} Through bad liaison the pioneers knew nothing of the 14th British Bde.'s generous advance.

\textsuperscript{26} The scene this afternoon is shown in plates 457-8, Vol. XII.

\textsuperscript{27} The pioneers began at once a course of infantry training.
line. Machine-guns fired from Vermand, beside the Omignon, terminus of the long Roman road, and from which other Roman roads or traces of them radiated to St. Quentin, le Cateau, and sites of forgotten Roman forts. On the 3rd Division's front the left battalion, 41st, was stopped at about half its way along the Cologne valley by machine-guns and field-guns firing point blank from Roisel. The British and Australian guns thereupon shelled this so persistently that the 41st had to pass it, the Germans then retiring and abandoning 10 machine-guns, 60 waggons, and 2 guns. The enemy now fought a steady rearguard action, the advanced companies of the 44th and 41st having to outflank one machine-gun post after another. The 44th pushed past Hervilly and by dusk on the 7th the third objective was fully occupied.

The region confronting the advanced guards was now crossed at wide intervals by the trench-systems and wire belts of last year's front; the immediate task was to discover at which of these the Germans intended to stand. To the eye, despite the trench-lines and wandering switches and entanglements, the landscape was little changed. Grass or self-sown crops stood high; the copses and occasional hedges or avenues had not been shattered like those of the Somme and Ypres. The apparently endless belts of old British wire had been cut through to make passages for German transport. In the old British area the entanglements were mostly on the wrong side of the trenches for the Germans, and were a serious obstacle only when toughly defended. Except for these the fields, woods and roads close ahead of the troops were prac-

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*Plate 549, Vol. XII shows a pioneer battalion approaching this area.*
tically untouched, though the villages had been shelled and burnt and were generally avoided.

At the third objective, owing to Haig’s order that the troops must be rested, Monash directed the Corps to halt. While patrols tried to discover without serious fighting where the Germans intended to give battle, the divisions were to bring up their infantry and artillery, organise their supply and communications, and prepare for another set-piece. It was already clear that on the first trench-line, the old British reserve position near Vendelles and Hesbécourt, von Boehn was maintaining only a screen; but he might stand at any of the next three. The British artillery would get into position to attack the second, the old British main line. On September 10th the 1st and 4th Divisions, already coming up by buses from the Amiens battlefield, would take over the front, each with one brigade ready to continue the advance.

Meanwhile on September 8th the weather, hitherto fine, had broken, but the brigades in line—8th and 10th (the latter having relieved the 11th)—had probed ahead with patrols and found the enemy posts stronger than before. On the southern flank patrols reached Vermand but the enemy was found to be holding Vendelles, Hesbécourt and the old British reserve line area beyond them. During this day and night and the next the front line companies, still helped by light horse and cyclists, closed up for about a mile to beyond Hesbécourt and near Vendelles and Jeancourt. North of the Cologne the 74th Division, still in the line, tried to go deeper but failed. This was the position when on the evening of September 10th infantry of the 4th and 1st Divisions moved up to the line.

At a conference on September 9th Monash told the divisional commanders, MacLagan and Glasgow, that probably the old main British line, two miles ahead up the spurs at le Verguier and near Hargicourt, was strongly held and would have to be attacked in a "set

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29 Capt. Towl, 37th Bn., was here mortally wounded by German shelling.
30 Sgt. R. H. Tuff (Caulfield, Vic.), 13th L.H. reached the Mound there. Under Lt. E. C. Knowles (Brisbane), 31st parties went completely round Vermand, returning through it; they were fired on from the heights south of the river. Lts. A. E. Hynes (Ballarat, Vic.), 31st Bn., and L. A. Deegan (Camberwell, Vic.), 13th L. H., reconnoitred the railway farther north.
31 The 3rd Div now had the 37th, 39th and 40th Bns. in line.
battle," but that it was thought that up to that line the ground was lightly held and might be penetrated by energetic patrols. On September 8th Haig had asked his army commanders for a report as to the enemy's position and condition, and what he seemed likely to do, and to submit proposals for the next set-piece attack. Foch had told Haig that he proposed to launch a great French and American offensive later in the month, but was having great difficulty in getting the American commander, Pershing, to complete his preparations in time. Haig had criticised the original plan for this offensive by which the Americans would have launched a separate, divergent thrust, and had urged that all strokes should be concentric against the German communications. Foch adopted this plan and asked that the British should co-operate in this vast offensive by a thrust in combination with the Belgians in Flanders as well as the coming stroke on the Hindenburg front. Haig's present question to his army commanders was a preliminary to planning these attacks. General Byng of the Third Army replied that the Germans were obviously fighting for time to rest their troops and would make their main stand at the Hindenburg Line which should be attacked before the position crystallised and the Germans were rested. Rawlinson's answer was similar but expressed uncertainty as to the line on which the Germans would stand. If the Germans were given time to rest, their morale would quickly recover, and a frontal attack on the very strong fortifications of this sector of the Hindenburg Line might not be advisable. Rawlinson therefore proposed, as a preliminary operation, to "hustle" the Germans from the old British line. In doing this he would discover the state of their morale, and could then decide whether he could wisely attack the Hindenburg Line. His army was at last being reinforced and would be organised from September 11th into three corps—IX, Australian and III. The troops, Rawlinson said, needed a rest but should be rested after, not before, they had thrust to within striking distance of the Hindenburg Line. Meanwhile he begged strongly for permission to make the preliminary attack.

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28 As that of the British had done in April.
29 This related to the divisions of III and Australian Corps. The IX Corps would comprise comparatively fresh divisions, 1st, 6th and 46th. The 32nd was to be relieved.
By Monash's order the 4th and 1st Divisions began their task at once by "peaceful penetration." On the afternoon of September 10th the two forward battalions of the 1st Brigade which that night was to take over the front west of Jeancourt and east of Hesbécourt, found a line of German posts across the two knuckles leading west from Hargicourt, Villeret and le Verguier. At dusk fighting patrols were sent to cut out these posts. The patrols of the 4th Battalion east of Hesbécourt (where the old British reserve line was already taken) drove back the German posts but found themselves in turn nearly cut off by the garrison of one post which worked round through a switch line to their rear. The patrols returned to report that the position could not be taken without artillery. Farther south, however, patrols of the 2nd Battalion operating on either side of Jeancourt, where the old reserve system had not yet been captured, were able to work up the trenches north and south of the village. Jeancourt was empty, but on one of its roads in the dark a patrol found a force of Germans marching in fours and poured in Lewis gun fire at short range.

The Germans were a party of the 81st I.R. (21st Divn.) sent up at the request of Capt. Gross (87th I.R.) commander of the local outposts to salvage some medical material. Gross had no notion that the Australians had penetrated here and (says the history of the 87th) the party suffered very heavy loss. An Australian patrol afterwards found 20 German rifles dropped in the road there.

The 4th Battalion decided to resume its attack up the spur south of the Cologne at dawn, 5.30 a.m., covered by a barrage from the supporting artillery. This barrage was thin and the German post fought, but the patrols of the two attacking com-
panies together with parties of machine-gunners outflanked it and other posts on Hill 140 south of Templeux-le-Guérard; the Germans fled and Australian posts were formed on the eastern slope of the hill. Here, however, as they dug and the mist cleared, they were fired on by machine-guns at Templeux just below them, and by field-guns both at Hargicourt, a mile farther up the valley, and in the extensive quarries with which the slopes between those villages were scored. In the two platoons on the hill both the officers and most of the men were killed, wounded, or gassed. The posts were withdrawn to the rear of the hill, and at 11 a.m. the Germans laid down a heavy bombardment and attacked, retaking Hill 140 and capturing ten of the 4th who had sheltered from the shelling in a sunken road and were not informed of the withdrawal. On regaining the summit the Germans also fired into the posts established by the right company of the 4th across the valley south of the knoll. The 4th was driven back to its starting point with a loss of 5 officers and 98 men.

The patrolling platoons of the 2nd Battalion also resumed the attack; at noon, with the help of guns, Stokes mortars, rifle-grenades and machine-guns, they cleared two German posts from the trenches south of Jeancourt and carried the front slightly beyond the trench-line.

Farther south the 4th Division, taking over the 5th Division's front which was much more distant from the old defence lines, advanced in the early afternoon 2,000 yards driving back the few posts left to watch its movements. This brought the outposts of the 4th Division on to the south-western side of a valley along whose north-eastern side the old British reserve line lay. Here on September 12th the two forward battalions, 51st and 50th (13th Brigade), met fairly strong resistance. But the thrust of the 1st Division on the previous day and of the

84 Lts. K. Bale, A. L. Malone, T. J. Perkins, H. Dean and J. C. Brennan were wounded. The left company lost all its N.C.O's and three-quarters of its men.
85 Lt. H. W. Parle (Darlinghurst, N.S.W.), reconnoitring up the old works had found himself face to face with a German officer looking over a barricade. Parle fired first and then slipped back and arranged an attack. After a ten minutes' "crash" by artillery and 40 Stokes mortar shells the post was rushed from the front and 15 prisoners of the 87th T.R. taken. Sgt. G. Dransfield (Strathfield, N.S.W.) attacked the other post, firing a Lewis gun from the hip. On reaching it he was badly wounded by distant machine-gun fire from le Verguier way, but 7 Germans were captured and 8 killed. Jeancourt was left empty but Sgt. A. H. Buckeridge (Camperdown, N.S.W.) had pushed out a post north of it. Lt. E. H. Comerford (Christchurch, N.Z.) was wounded.
74th British Division farther north on September 10th had already given Monash and Rawlinson the desired indication—that the Second German Army intended to fight on the old British main line through Épéhy, Hargicourt and le Verguier.

It is now known that this was correct—the German command had laid down that the “Siegfried Line,” which was to be held, now included the old British defences. The Second Army’s new battle zone comprised all the trench-systems west of the Canal. The forward zone at first reached to the old British reserve line, including Jeancourt. The H.W.L. (main line of resistance) was the old British main line at Épéhy, Hargicourt and le Verguier. The reserve lines were the old British outpost-line known as H.W.L. 2, the old German outpost-line H.W.L. 3 (A), and the further line half way down to the Canal H.W.L. 3 (B). The old main German line, east of the Canal and over the Bellicourt tunnel, and the successive Nauroy and Beaurevoir lines behind this, were to be held (where at all) only by emergency garrisons. On an order to “stand to” the counter-attack divisions were to be brought up to H.W.L. 3, which would also have security garrisons of engineers, grooms and batman.

It was into the forward zone that the Australians thrust on Sep. 10-11. An order of the 21st Divn. says that this zone was to be toughly held, so as to give time for the construction of the le Verguier line (H.W.L.) for permanent occupation. As there was no natural obstacle for tanks, mines were to be laid in the forward zone, and “forts” were to be constructed in the H.W.L., each containing two field-guns, machine-guns with armour-piercing ammunition, trench-mortars and searchlights. Attack was expected, but prisoners were required in order to ascertain the British intention; the troops were told that, if patrols could not catch prisoners, raids would have to be made.

The 1st and 4th Australian Divisions were now faced almost exactly by the 51st Army Corps, with the 5th Bavarian, 21st and 119th Divns. in that order from north to south. On Sep. 11 opposite the 4th Aust. Divn. the 46th I.R. (119th Divn.) tried to get prisoners but failed. The 87th I.R. was to raid on the night of the 10th but was

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53 Actually there was too little time to carry this out properly.
54 The 38th German Div was now north of the Aust. Corps sector.
caught by the advance of the 2nd Bn. and of the flank of the 50th as were the 81st and 80th I.R. at Jeancourt. The Australian attack farther north fell on pickets of the three regiments of the 5th Bav. Divn. It was the III/19th Bav. I.R. that fought that night on Hill 140. At 5 a.m. on the 11th it made its attempt to raid, but was driven off the hill by the 4th Bn.'s attack. This it eventually stopped by flanking fire, and at noon half of the II and III Bns. retook the hill and captured prisoners. Farther south the pickets of the 21st and 7th Bav. I.R. had been driven back, but after the counter-attack they regained the ground. That night, however, the German pickets were withdrawn 400-800 yards.

Although Monash and Rawlinson could not know how the trench-systems ahead were held, they now realised that further approach to the main Hindenburg defence line could be made only by formal attack. The southern sector of Monash's front, held by the 32nd Division, was on September 11th taken over by the IX Corps under Lieut.-General Braithwaite (formerly Hamilton's chief-of-staff at the Dardanelles); and on September 12th Rawlinson at a conference with his three corps commanders "over a cup of tea" at Monash's headquarters planned the preliminary battle by which the British front would be brought within attacking distance of the main Hindenburg Line. Haig gave his consent to the project next day (13th) and ordered it to be carried out as soon as possible. That day both Rawlinson and Monash issued their orders and Monash held a conference with the commanders and staffs concerned. For the starting point he fixed a straight line ahead of the positions yet reached, confident that his line battalions would reach it (as he now ordered them to do) before the day of attack, probably September 18th. His artillery was thus able to take up immediately its positions for the battle and dump its ammunition.

By patrol fighting, sometimes difficult, in showery weather
the Australian forward battalions stole the ground on which the start-line was to be laid. South of the Omignon the British took Holnon Wood on the 12th and on the 17th were reported to have secured Holnon village, three miles from St. Quentin. Orders had then been issued for a set attack on September 18th by the whole Fourth Army together with the extreme left of the First French Army and the right corps of the Third British Army. The total front of attack would be 17 miles, from Holnon to Gouzeaucourt. Fourth Army's attack would have a 20,000 yards' front as shown in the marginal sketch, the Australian Corps occupying the central third and

41 The 51st and 50th (13th Bde.) holding the 4th Div.'s front had some awkward tasks. The 51st Bn. with its right on the Omignon river, advanced its forward companies on the afternoon and evening of the 12th under heavy fire from German posts on both sides of the river, taking 8 prisoners. Next morning a German post was found within the new front and a patrol attacked it frontally from a sunken road, shooting 3 Germans and capturing without loss 2 officers and 44 men. (This was the right flank group of the forward zone garrison of the 58th I.R., 119th Div. The Australians had penetrated between it and the 87th I.R., 21st Div., unnoticed. The company commander barely escaped. A counter-attack being ordered was made by 6 NCO's and 6 men, but the Australian fire beat it off.)

Farther north, in the 50th Bn.'s sector Lt. A. S. Hawker ("Marola" Yacka, S.A.)—brother of the famous airman—reconnoitring with his platoon preparatory to an advance, heard voices and ran into a German post which, evidently awaiting relief, asked "Are you the 7th Company?" Hawker answered "Ja!" and ordered his men to fire. Just then the real relief came up behind him. Sgt. F. H. Horley (Adelaide), whom he had sent to reconnoitre ahead, also ran into Germans, and the platoons withdrew, fighting enemy parties on all sides of them. The information brought back by these leaders and Cpl. F. Wood (Adelaide) greatly helped the advance by the companies at dawn to the starting line. Forty prisoners and 8 machine guns were captured. The Germans counter-attacked feebly in the morning, but strongly at dusk, when they captured one post beside a wood on "Spur 123" leading to le Verguier, and 4 prisoners. (The outpost-line probed by Hawker on
attacking with its 4th and 1st Divisions each on a 3,500 yards' front.

In this region the German staff who sited the Hindenburg Line in 1916 had drawn it so as to be protected by the St. Quentin Canal which ran, largely through a deep cutting, from the Somme at St. Quentin to the Scheldt between le Catelet and Vendhuille. The main line thus lay behind the canal cutting, protruding only at two places where the canal passed through tunnels—a short one at le Tronquoy, three miles north of St. Quentin (on the IX Corps front) and a long one at Bellicourt five miles farther north (mainly on the III Corps front). At those places the line was strengthened by additional trenches and wire. With the two lines farther back this chapter is not concerned; but in front of the main line its first designers had sited an outpost-line running along the watershed about a mile west of the canal and its tunnels, the object being to screen the main line from observation. The main line was thus generally lower than the front. This accorded with the principle favoured in 1915, of siting defences on a reverse slope, but when opinion swung back to the earlier method the adequacy of these defences was strongly questioned by some of the German staff, and the outpost system was strengthened until it became a main position. Full details of the scheme for the sector opposite Fourth Army’s right, together with maps and the particulars of this controversy, had been captured by Lieut. Rollings at Framerville. It was realised that the ideas embodied in these voluminous records were largely out of date, and the defences would now probably be

Sep. 12 was held by the 87th I.R. and had been reinforced in consequence of a bombing attack made by the 50th along an old sap during the afternoon. The Germans had been vainly trying to secure prisoners by patrolling and an N.C.O. who brought in the dead body of one of Hawker’s men was rewarded with 250 marks—nominally £12 10s.—a similar sum being distributed to his party. That night the 21st Div. was relieved by the 1st Res. The 3rd Coy of the 90th R.I.R. lost the hill at dawn, but recaptured it after a strong bombardment as the position was “to be held at all costs.”

The line on this flank was finally advanced to the start-line on the afternoon of Sep. 15, when the 51st Bn. attacked together with the 2nd Welch (1st Brit. Div.), the IX Corps boundary having been shifted to 1,000 yards north of the Omignon. The 51st took a few prisoners, machine-guns and trench-mortars at a cost of 28 casualties. The 49th (then facing Hill 123), hearing of this advance, seized the opportunity for clearing the Germans from that hill. One platoon under Lt. M. J. McCabe (Brisbane) helped by Stokes mortars captured 22 men of the 58th I.R. (119th Div.), whose history says that only 20 of 85 men of 1st and 3rd Cos. escaped. Its forward zone garrison had vanished, and the zone had to be re-established farther back as had that of the 2nd Coy of the 90th R.I.R. (1st Res. Div.), whose history says that only 20 of 85 men of 1st and 3rd Cos. escaped. Its forward zone garrison had vanished, and the zone had to be re-established farther back as had that of the 2nd Coy of the 90th R.I.R. (1st Res. Div.), whose history says that only 20 of 85 men of 1st and 3rd Cos. escaped. Its forward zone garrison had vanished, and the zone had to be re-established farther back as had that of the 2nd Coy of the 90th R.I.R. (1st Res. Div.), whose history says that only 20 of 85 men of 1st and 3rd Cos. escaped.
held differently, but the information was nevertheless highly valuable.

The Hindenburg "Outpost"-Line—to give it the name still used, though recognised in British orders as an incorrect description—ran generally a mile west of the Hindenburg Main Line and a mile east of the old British outpost-line except opposite the Bellicourt end of the tunnel where, in the heavy local fighting in 1917, the British outpost-line had been thrust forward into the German and for a mile the two systems keyed with one another. The old British main line lay from half a mile to a mile west of the British outpost-line; and the position from which the Australian Corps would start lay from 1,000 to 3,000 yards west of this again. The 1st Australian Division, which was farthest from it, would attack up the long even spurs to the Cologne-Scheldt watershed, while the 4th would cross successive valleys running south to the Omignon. The army and corps commanders decided to make the British main line the first objective and the British outpost-line the second. The first would be attacked under a normal creeping barrage and, by arranging for a pause in which to advance the field artillery, the second could be attacked by the same method. But it was also decided to attempt to take advantage of any temporary shock to the Germans by trying to secure the Hindenburg Outpost-Line as well. This was accordingly made a third objective, to be reached by exploitation.42

The detailed arrangements generally followed those for

42 The objectives were termed the green, red, and blue lines.
Hamel. The Corps had already thirteen brigades of field artillery and two were now added. This would give a normally dense barrage, and ten per cent. of smoke shell would provide a thick screen. As usual the Australians pressed for a slightly earlier start and quicker pace than were eventually arranged; and they urged that the pause at the first objective should not be longer than an hour. This could not be arranged; owing to the needs of their neighbours the 4th Division had to pause for two hours and part of the 1st for an hour and a quarter. The Australians arranged to push on with exploitation as soon as the barrage ceased, fifteen minutes after reaching the second objective; but, owing to the requirement of troops farther south, the 1st British Division, on the Australian right, would not begin to exploit till nearly two hours later.

A few tanks would assist, but only 20 for the whole army. They were parcelled out, 8 each to Australian and III Corps, and 4 to IX Corps. Each Australian division was given 4, but only on the 1st Australian Division's front, where stiff fighting was expected in the complex of trenches around Cologne Farm, were they to go beyond the first objective. This time they would advance behind the infantry and be used in capturing particular strong-points. But to instil the fear caused by the mere appearance of tanks, a number of dummy ones were to be made with wooden frames covered by painted hessian. These would be taken before zero hour to high ground near the start-line and would thence be moved a little distance by pioneers with long drag-ropes or other means to points where the Germans after dawn would see them. A new feature of the plans was Monash's adding another division's machine-guns to each attacking division, so that the machine-gun barrage in the first two stages would be specially dense. After the second objective was taken two field artillery brigades would advance into the territory captured by each division and help the exploiting infantry.

"The fight is a normal advance with a normal limited objective, a very simple form of advance," said Monash the day before. Nevertheless, both he and others thought that the third stage—an attempt to seize the powerful Siegfried defences by

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43 Smoke bombs were also dropped from the air but this time proved confusing. The dropping of ammunition from aeroplanes was prevented by a storm which wrecked many hangars and damaged 40 machines on the night of the 16th.
“exploitation,” involving on his right the crossing of an open valley a mile wide—furnished a task probably beyond the power of the troops. Aeroplane photographs of that system showed that belts of immensely strong wire protecting it were uncut, and Monash, at his final conference on the 16th, reminded the divisional commanders that the “blue line,” as it was called,

is a line for exploitation only. It is not to be considered as a definite objective of the attack. Exploitation is to be undertaken in order to take advantage of the demoralisation of the enemy which usually ensues after an attack. It is not intended that a large body of troops should be detailed to capture this line.

He issued this as a supplementary order. The object in this phase was to obtain observation down the gullies leading to Bellicourt and the area round it. He told the official war correspondent:

the divisions are to make an honest and sincere attempt to capture the Blue Line by allocating to its capture certain bodies of troops. But if those bodies fail they are not to throw in any other bodies of troops... The wire on that line has not been successfully cut. We may find behind this wire fresh, rested troops.

The attacking divisions expected that in the main Hindenburg Line, farther back still, the Germans would have at least emergency garrisons and a large force of artillery. The German gunners would know the battlefield and the attacking troops after reaching the second objective would probably be very severely shelled. “It is an extensive, ambitious, plan for troops as worn as these,” noted the official correspondent. The commander of the adjoining brigade of the 74th British Division, who knew the old British lines, anticipated difficulties at many points. His neighbour, Brig.-Genl. Iven Mackay of the 1st Australian Brigade said that the prospect of this fight gave him greater anxiety than that of any other in 1918.

Monash’s preparations were affected by another acute anxiety when on September 12th there arrived from Birdwood (still administrative commander of the A.I.F.) a telephone message stating that shipping had been found by the British Government for the first batch of 1914 men to go on leave to

44 The procuring of the ships was due entirely to the persistence of Mr. Hughes. When once they had been obtained, the shipping arrangements were made by the Australian transport department in London under Commander C. A. Parker (East Kew, Vic.).
Australia, and 60 officers and 740 men were to be embarked at once. The notice given to Birdwood was so short that he could not arrange for the men to obtain fresh clothing from England; they must sail in what clothes they had and would be reclothed in Egypt en route. As leave was to be given only to men who left Australia in 1914 the great majority would necessarily come from the 1st and 4th Divisions. But these were the two that were going into action, and the message shocked General Monash, who immediately telegraphed through his D.A. and Q.M.G. (Brig.-Genl. Carruthers) that it was "quite impossible in inadequate time to provide quota for embarkation." Birdwood replied:

I feel it would be wrong to miss this opportunity and allow the ship to sail empty. Because a large number of deserving men cannot take this opportunity is no reason why others should be prevented.

He suggested that men not required in the coming action could go in the first batch, and the others later. Monash gave way and the full contingent was sent, including 260 from the 1st Division and 192 from the 4th. Now came news that a second ship would be available immediately after the fight.

In the optimism of the moment all these troubles were easily shed. The III Corps had been excessively worked, but put in nearly all its infantry. The 4th Australian Division was fairly rested but its attacking battalions averaged now only 19 officers and 405 men (including headquarters) actually in the trenches, and those of the 1st Division only 18 officers and 339 men. Most of the battalions had reorganised themselves with three companies instead of four and with only three Platoons in each company. The four Australian brigades, two from each division, that were to attack—driving as deep as 6,000 yards through these very strong defences on a 7,000-yard front—would have only 277 officers and 5,545 men in action. A minor anxiety was added at the last minute. Shortly before dusk on

45 They would receive two months' leave in Australia. Men with wives in Australia received preference.

46 All infantry brigades from the 1st Div. and one in the 4th had left Australia in 1914. The other two brigades of the 4th were formed from part of the original brigades. The 5th Div had two brigades so formed. The artillery, medical, engineer and transport units contained a number of "original" troops, and the infantry of the 2nd and 3rd Divs. a sprinkling of them.

47 Mr Hughes addressed them on Sep. 14 before they entrained.
45. The scene fast of Péronne, 5th September, 1918

Bussu and other places burning. Across the middle distance the road from Mont St Quentin runs past St Denis towards Péronne. Beyond it can be seen the Aisecourt road, enclosing part of the "Triangle"
46. A PLATOON OF THE 45TH BATTALION REACHES ITS OBJECTIVE, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 1918

The Lewis Gunner is sniping at Germans who were retreating up the other side of the next valley, above which lay the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.

Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E3449.
September 17th one of the keenest officers of the force, Lieut.-
Col. Marsden, commanding the 5th Machine-Gun Battalion,
when out south-west of le Verguier to check the safety angle
for his guns, strayed past a German post and was seized from
behind while studying a map with the objective marked on it.
He tried to escape, knocking down one of his escort, but could
not get clear.

The troops were in bounding spirits. Yet among the staffs
in rear, when at 3 a.m. on the 18th they were wakened by
showers of rain swishing down the iron roofs of their huts,
many hearts sank. The attacking companies must then be on
their way to the start or lying out, wet through, before
advancing over the heavy ground. Such conditions had
wrecked offensives in the previous autumn, and as the rain
continued with hardly a pause till after daylight, chance
of success seemed to be vanishing. Miles ahead most of the
attack battalions had had five or six miles to march to the
start-line. The majority started at midnight and had a hot
breakfast and a tot of rum during a halt at one of the
villages about the time when the rain began. The 10th Bat-
talion had been marched by Neligan to Jeancourt early in
the night and "put to bed early" in some old huts at the
front line. Neligan took the risk of shelling, and one shell
did burst in a hut killing Capt. Young, the medical officer,
Lieut. White, and some others; but after a sleep and break-
fast in the huts the 10th started fresh and eager. Others
trudged wet through with rain and with the sweat of the heavy
march. The dark was intense but the tracks had been admirably
staked.

The barrage, which came down at 5.20, seemed to many the
densest they had known. This was due partly to the sound of
200 machine-guns ripping out with a single roar, and partly
to the sight of the smoke shell, easy to detect even in the dawn

48 Lt.-Col. T. R. Marsden, D.S.O, Commanded 5th M.G. Bn., 1918; afterwards
wing commander in R.A.A.F. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Randwick,
49 He had been told that the front line had been advanced 300 yards.
50 Capt. R. P. Young, A.A.M.C., Medical practitioner; of Cavendish, Vic.;
51 Lt. A. D. H. White, 10th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Unley,
mist now rising. The showers were dying out and the mist, though thickened to great density by the smoke shells, seemed to promise a fair autumn day. The 1st Division knew it had a long approach to the old British main line. The troops pressed into the dark mist in their little section columns, guided partly by the sound of the shells and the direction of the ridges—which they were to follow, avoiding the valleys—partly by the compasses of their officers, some of whom had been given the sole duty of keeping direction. The scouts of each unit kept touch admirably on the flanks. Everyone wondered how soon they would stumble on Germans. As was now general with Australians, all had been closely instructed in the plans and lie of the ground, and even the N.C.O’s had paper maps which were useful though gradually pulped by the rain.

The 12th Battalion had barely started from the old line east of Jeancourt when in passing through an entanglement Lieut Brian Butler of the 12th and five of his men were suddenly killed by a German machine-gun firing from a small wood ahead; the gun was evidently trained upon a gap in the wire. But the general advance was nowhere held up; the fog was so thick that parties on the flanks easily worked round the German outposts. Apart from sounds, flashes were at first the only sign each side saw of the other, and each blazed at them. As the light grew vague figures were sometimes dimly seen. The Australians always came at them when possible from the rear. Often a group of German helmets in some hole a few yards away was the first actual sight of the enemy.

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62 The infantry’s start-line had been withdrawn 200 yards behind that originally planned. The field artillery barrage fell 200 yards ahead of it for 3 minutes, made two quick steps each of 100 yards in 2 minutes, and then went at the rate of 100 in 3 to the first objective and thence (after the halt) at 100 in 4 to the second. Beyond this it lay for 15 minutes. The machine-gun barrage was laid in several successive belts ahead of the artillery barrage, and its concentration was described by German officers afterwards as “frightful”.

The field artillery comprised:


63 The 3rd Bde. had carried out practices over similar ground. The 9th Bn. had been lectured by Col. Mullen in front of a raised map; others had made similar preparations.

The formation used depended on the local obstacles. Taking the troops (shown in the marginal sketch) from the north southwards, the 1st Brigade (1st Divn.), attacking south of the Cologne with the 74th Division on the northern side of the valley, employed two battalions in the first phase, with two following behind to carry out the second and third. The scouts moved in pairs, 150 yards ahead, the companies in lines of sections following. On the left, the 4th Battalion’s tank duly came out of the fog behind the line, but then lost its way in the fog again. The 140 Knoll had been abandoned by the Germans but the right battalion, 2nd, came on a post where Hargicourt Switch wandered up the hill. It had been thought that Templeux-le-Guérard in the Cologne valley might prove a centre of tough resistance to the 74th Division’s right, but in the fog the British easily passed it and afterwards cleared it.

As the line moved over and round Knoll 140 the shells of its own barrage swished low overhead, and the German barrage began to fall there. Crossing the sunken road on the eastern slope the 4th Battalion met infantry fire. German posts at the big quarries and spoil heaps on both sides of the valley were shooting blindly into the fog. In the half waterlogged switch leading south of Hargicourt the 2nd Battalion also stumbled on Germans. But the flanks always enveloped them and at the first shots from the rear the Germans, however numerous, surrendered.

It was now daylight and, crossing the valley where it bent across the front, the scattered groups of New South Welshmen arriving through the mist were hurriedly pushed into a rough order along the line of the railway and immediately climbed

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88 Lt P. F. Ryan (2nd Bn.) was killed. He had been in charge of the trench-mortars at Anzac (see Vol. II p. 826); returned to Australia as a captain in 1917; re-enlisted as a private in Feb. 1918; rose to acting-sergeant in May, and to lieutenant in July.
the opposite hill past the big quarries north-west of Hargicourt. German garrisons in trenches before and behind these opened heavy fire into the fog, but were quickly taken in rear. In the old British main line west of Hargicourt 100 were taken, in Bolsover Switch 70; just south of the village some of the 1st Machine-Gun Company advancing among the infantry captured 50. Some groups of Australians here headed on to the III Corps front. Lieut. Kinchington (3rd Battalion) heard Germans behind Templeux still firing strongly at the British, and by lying on the ground managed to sight them beneath the smoke. He attacked, capturing 28 and enabling the right of the 15th Suffolk under Lieut. Truscott to continue the 74th Division's advance.

Meanwhile the 2nd and the right of the 4th approached their objective, Hargicourt, a straggling village with some of the walls left shoulder high and battered chimneys. As Capt. Newth of the 4th Battalion moved up the main road with a scout in each gutter ahead and a few men following him, a dog dashed past from behind him with a message tied to its collar. He could not shoot for fear of hitting the scouts, and before they understood his shouts the animal flashed out of sight between the ruins, doubtless bearing a note from a German company commander in Templeux. In the face of odd shots from gardens, hedges, and broken walls the troops cleared the village. They were now beyond the old British main line, but as General Monash had arranged for both his divisions to advance about 600 yards farther before the pause in the barrage they passed on to the eastern outskirts where they dug in.

The two attacking battalions of the 3rd Brigade—11th on left, 12th on right—moved up the next two spurs on the south, leading to the strong-posts at the ruined Fervaque Farm and

66 Lt E. H. S. Truscott, 15th Bn., Suffolk Regiment.
67 This intermediate objective was called the "brown line."
to Grand Priel Wood. The two forward companies of each battalion, hugging their own barrage, escaped the German reply, but in each case it caught the mopping up company, Capt. “Wally” Hallahan of the 11th being killed and Capt. Burt (12th) having a foot blown off. Except for the shots that killed Lieut. Butler and his men, the 11th and 12th met no opposition till beyond Carpeza Copse. There two machine-guns held up the 11th and killed Sergt. Muldoon of Capt. Tulloch’s company just as Muldoon reached them. Corpl. Nelley, placing two Lewis guns to distract the German fire, rushed the position. The right company, Lieut. Graham’s, was 73 strong (including headquarters) but had a front of 500 yards. Five of its privates walking along the parapet of Fervaque Switch shooting into dugouts and taking odd prisoners, found themselves peering into a wide bay filled with fifty upturned faces and a hundred upraised arms. They hurriedly pushed the Germans into some sort of order and sent them to the rear in charge of one man. Nearing the old British main line at Hargicourt Switch Tulloch became unsure of his direction, and going on with two men became involved in a close fight with two heavy machine-guns. In ten minutes Tulloch and his companions had killed or wounded the crews and captured the guns. Along Fervaque Switch and about Fervaque Farm Graham’s company took post after post, the

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58 A few men were hit by short shooting by their own guns, among them being Lt J G Simmons (Launceston), 12th Bn., who was mortally wounded. Generally, however, the barrage was excellent. Hallahan, a beloved officer, was an original machine-gunner of the 11th—“a tall, thin, gentle looking chap with a refined face, a gallant man with a quiet manner… a very attractive character.” He was in London, about to be married and to leave for Australia on transport duty, when he was recalled, had he been married he would have been among the “Anzac leave” men.

60 At a junction of the long switch leading to Fervaque Farm.


62 Cpl D W Nelley, M.M. (No. 6087; 11th Bn.). Wheelwright; of Geraldton, W.A.; b. Geraldton, 8 June 1897

63 One was Pte F C Lucas (Fremantle, W.A.).

64 At this post or a similar one were 8 heavy and 1 light machine-guns.

65 C S M B J. Shipton (Northam, W.A.) and Pte. G. H. Moore (Kellerberrin, W.A.)
mopping up platoons under Lieuts. Colvin\(^6\) and McKinley\(^6\) clearing up the positions with extraordinary resourcefulness and enabling the forward troops still to move ahead with the barrage. On the next spur to the south the 12th Battalion was fired at from Brosse Wood in the gully on its left, but a mopping up platoon entering the north-western side of the wood drove out the enemy to the south where Capt. Holyman's company captured them. Two field-guns were in the wood but were not firing—about them Germans lay wounded. At the main line on the ridge other machine-gun posts opened, but the troops worked around them by sound.

Both battalions were tired with the fighting and heavy going, and during the manoeuvring at the main line they lost the barrage. Thus on reaching the summit, whence the undergrowth and felled tree trunks of Grand Priel Wood extended widely into the next valley, they had to win the remaining ground by infantry fighting. How this was done during the long pause of the barrage will be described later.

The 4th Brigade, forming the left of the 4th Division, employed an entirely different disposition. Le Verguier, expected to be one of the strong-points of resistance, lay straight up a wide spur ahead of the start, and only half a mile away. Accordingly, as at Vaire Wood in the battle of Hamel, the 15th Battalion was to go round the north of this obstacle, the 13th round the south, and the 16th would clear the ruins. The old British main line was quickly reached and the frequent belts of wire, often diagonal, forced the officers to rely constantly on their compasses\(^7\) to keep direction. The sunken road north of le Verguier was filled with wire, and a barbed wire apron lay on top of each bank. Germans held trenches behind it, but part of the 15th passed north of it and fired a Lewis gun down the road. Sergt. Holt\(^8\) and Pte. Williams\(^9\) rushed a post at the southern end. The Germans had been

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\(^{7}\) Some noted, however, that these were affected by the wire.


\(^{9}\) Pte. E. V. Williams, M.M. (No. 6858; 15th Bn.). Grocer, of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Mt. Usher, Q'land, 7 Mar. 1898.
cowed by the barrage and, despite the great strength of the defences and their many machine-guns, they surrendered.70

South of the village the 13th Battalion, after having a few men hit at the start by its own guns,71 cleared some outposts; Sergt. Sexton72 firing a Lewis gun from the hip rushed two of them. At the old British main line (Hun Trench) Capt. Parsonage was wounded by a German bomb and Sergt. Lihou,73 as he went bombing along the parapet to meet the 48th, was killed by a machine-gun that suddenly opened. Capt. Turner74 and a small party captured this gun and, leaving a guard of two men, turned eastward over the slope and around le Verguier. The barrage went ahead, the smoke thinned, and objects became visible at a quarter of a mile. Germans manning a bank with a field-gun and trench-mortar were pointed out by Lieut. Price75 to Sergt. Sexton who went on at once, firing short bursts with his Lewis gun and calling to his section to follow. He rushed down the bank, shooting the gun's crew, and thence under machine-gun fire across a flat to shoot another group, and then back to the bank, where firing into the dugout entrances he caused 30 Germans to surrender.76 He had captured the headquarters of the line battalion of the 58th I.R. (119th Divn.). Capt. Turner's party farther south captured without further fighting its R.A.P. and 7 machine-guns with their crews. A party marching along the Pontru road 200 yards ahead was mistaken for Australians and escaped. The 13th dug in beyond le Verguier.

Le Verguier was to be cleared by the 16th, commanded at

70 Holt, a great footballer, had not yet disarmed the whole party when a German N.C.O. drew a revolver and killed him. Williams shot the N.C.O.; two Australians hearing the shots, came up and helped him to complete the capture.
71 Lt. N. J. McGuire was killed here.
76 He was awarded the Victoria Cross.
this time by Capt. Lynas. Being fired on as it approached the village the 16th broke into small groups, each making its way through the ruins by the most convenient route. The village had been elaborately fortified. The old wire belts had been little cut and had been extended through the ruins, forcing the men on to the winding roads. Several strong-points had been prepared and densely garrisoned. But many of the machine-guns were found abandoned; and, though at three large strong-points the Germans fired machine-guns and threw bombs, they were quickly surrounded, whereupon most of them retreated to their deep dugouts where they were bombed and surrendered. At Fort Bell 70 including a regimental commander were captured. At Fort Lees 28 prisoners and 6 machine-guns were taken by a private leading his section. The key position, Fort Bull, behind the centre of the village, was defended by many machine-guns, but few of them were fired; 5 officers, including an artillery observer, and 32 men came from one dugout. Beyond, in the old British trenches, machine-guns and trench-mortars were in position, but were weakly fought. With less than 20 casualties the 16th took 450 prisoners, 60 machine-guns, four or five field-guns and two anti-aircraft guns, and dug in temporarily in the old British main line east of the village while the 13th and 15th swept round to the halting place beyond. This brigade, having started closest to its objective, had now two hours to wait.

The southernmost Australian brigade, 12th, used a different battalion for each phase of the advance. In the first, the 48th Battalion attacked across a valley, the objective being the old British main line on the low spur opposite. The left company

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Pte. (later Cpl.) A. F. Lawrence (Albany, W.A.). He then captured a second post.


easily captured its sector, only 1,200 yards from the start-
line. The centre was fired on at Dean Copse but quickly out-
flanked the Germans there.\textsuperscript{80} The right company came under
much heavier fire, its commander, Lieut. Fletcher,\textsuperscript{81} being badly
wounded. The 12th Brigade's tank made a brave attack, going
through the Australian barrage,\textsuperscript{82} and across the front into the
IX Corps area. The 48th pierced the trench-line at several
points,\textsuperscript{83} and the Germans retired to their battalion headquarters
in a copse behind the spur, and to a sunken road some distance
away where their officers could be seen reorganising them.

The old British main line which, on the Australian front,
had thus been everywhere taken, was an immensely strong
position, held by quite as many troops as had attacked it—
probably by more.

The German archives show that the 51st Corps anticipated the offe-
sive: the map seized with
Col. Marsden showed the
final objective. The line-
divisions were ordered to
increase their depth and the counter-attack divisions
to "stand to." The 51st
Corps had in line this day
the 5th Bav., 1st Res., and
119th Divns. (the 1st Res.
having relieved the 21st on
Sep. 13). Farther north,
holding Templeux-le-Guér-
ard, was the 94th I.R. (38th
Divn., southern flank of
the IV Res. Corps).

Few German histories
of the fight contain any
detail. That of the 94th
I.R. says that its pickets
were overrun in the fog.
A company behind Tem-
pleux, at the quarry, open-
ed blind fire at 6 o'clock
and at 6.20 was shot at from its rear. Few men of the forward battalion

\textsuperscript{80} Lts. J. A. Bingley (Adelaide) and A. F. Franke (Adelaide) of Capt. G. A.
Favy's company and their men achieved this, capturing 3 machine-guns and crews.
\textsuperscript{81} Lt. R. N. J. Fletcher, 48th Bn. Cordial manufacturer; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.;
b Wilcannia, N.S.W., 21 May 1881.
\textsuperscript{82} The tank, in which was Lt. R. S. Rafferty of the 48th, had come up past the
south of Cambrières Wood. It had to steer by compass.
\textsuperscript{83} Pte. A. G. Lines (Adelaide), a Lewis gunner, and Cpl. S. Massey (Edwards-
town, S.A.) were specially marked; Pte. R. Pinto secured 50 prisoners in a single
group.
escaped. The history of the 19th Bav. I.R. (5th Bav. Divn.) which held Hargicourt records most battles in detail, basing its account on the documents, but tells nothing of this. The 21st B.I.R. says that the halt at Hargicourt and Villeret gave the temporary impression that the attack had ended there. The historian of the 3rd R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.) thinks that the advance probably began at 6.55. The history of the 59th R.I.R., which held le Verguier with two battalions, one in the line and one in close support, says that infantry fire ceased soon after 6 a.m. and presently observers farther back saw the village spewing out masses of enemy troops. The 46th R.I.R. (119th Divn.) says frankly: "as to the details of the fighting... all information fails."

The fact is that, as already stated, the attack had arrived suddenly through the mist, and when fired on from the rear few Germans would face the determined men who came at them. Capt. Lynas, always a most generous opponent said of the taking of le Verguier:

If the German had had the fighting spirit of a louse, one battalion on the whole brigade front would have made it impossible to go forward; but he never fought an inch so far as we were concerned.

Another young veteran, Lieut. Graham of the 11th said, "If there had been any defence at all we could not have got this objective with one man to 12 yards [in the leading companies]." Frightened Germans ran past his company asking "Which way?" to the Australian rear.

During the pause the barrage was much lighter than before, many batteries being on the move and the rate of fire slow. The mist, largely due to smoke shell, thinned and German snipers and machine-guns in the next positions began to fire at the digging troops. On the right, where the advance of the 1st British Division had been slower, Lieut. Parry of the flank company of the 48th brought up the flank troops of the 2nd Royal Sussex into the old British main line (there Mareval Trench) and then returning to his own platoon worked it around the shoulder of the spur into the valley in which the German battalion from the line was being rallied by its staff.

84 Occasionally some stouter man resisted—for example one German bombed a party which was taking prisoners, killed Pte. H. E. Strongman (Norseman, W.A.), and enabled the prisoners to escape. Br. Gen. Leane records that he asked a German battalion commander, whom the 48th captured, how it was that so few of the 48th had taken so many prisoners in such excellent positions. "The Australians are so brave," said the German, "and so quick, that it is impossible to stop them."

85 Lt. W. Parry, M.C., 47th and 48th Bns. Tin miner; of Lottah, Tas.; b. Scamander, Tas., 21 July 1887.
at a copse and a more distant road. Lieuts. Cameron⁸⁶ and Gelston⁸⁷ with their platoons also moved over the spur, partly through a sunken road on the right—portion of the old Roman highway to le Cateau—partly farther north. Their Lewis gunners, in particular Pte. Rochford,⁸⁸ dribbled into positions from which they drove these groups to shelter. Rochford caught a large number trying to move from their rallying point at the road. Corpl. Price⁸⁹ worked behind the German headquarters at the wood and bombed the dugout capturing the battalion commander,⁹⁰ his staff, and 60 others. The remaining groups of the enemy found themselves enveloped by the several platoons⁹¹ and in all 187 surrendered here. These were starting to the rear when the hour, 8.30 for the second phase arrived.

Not all the field artillery was yet in position, the ground being soft with rain and the strain on the horses very great.⁹²

It will be convenient—owing to the turn of that day’s events—to begin the description of the second phase with the events on the southern flank. In the southernmost (12th Brigade) sector the 45th Battalion had been warned by Leane that in emergency, but only then, it might have to help the 48th; the desire was to keep it intact for the second phase. It had therefore followed steadily 400 yards behind the 48th—though station was hard to keep in the fog. But the German barrage, constantly shortening but always too late to catch the front troops, also kept pace about 400 yards behind the 48th and incessantly fell on the 45th. As the battalion in the fog tried to pick its way through gaps in the devious belts of wire, first the adjutant, Capt. Adams,

⁹⁰ The one whom Leane interrogated.
⁹¹ Cameron’s platoon had previously been held up on the objective by 80 Germans. Placing two Lewis guns to keep the enemy’s heads down Cameron and Pte. A. Dudley (Perth, W.A.) jumped in among them, capturing the lot and 4 machine-guns.
⁹² Especially for the ammunition columns, which worked partly with four-horse teams, but the drivers gave their horses great care. The shortage was due to the necessity of equipping American divisions.
then the commander, Lieut.-Col. Loutit (of Anzac fame) were wounded and Lieut. Hill,\textsuperscript{93} signal officer, killed. Lieuts. Hughes,\textsuperscript{94} intelligence officer, and Horne,\textsuperscript{95} a company commander, were mortally wounded and many others hit.\textsuperscript{96} While the 48th fought over the spur ahead, the 45th sheltered in a sunken road and shell craters, the barrage still falling about it.

The mist had now cleared and the local fog caused by the barrage was thinner. Brightening clouds presently let through the sun which glistened on wet leaves and grass and shook like spray from the many thistles as the men brushed them. The forward parties of the 48th, completing their mopping up, were just sending their prisoners back over the spur\textsuperscript{97} when the 45th appeared on its summit, advancing in magnificent order. Its task was to seize the next and higher spur along whose crest, three-quarters of a mile ahead, lay the string of outpost trenches, each circled by wire, of the old British outpost-line. Away on the southern shoulder of this ridge, near where the old Roman track climbed it, was a tumulus, an ancient mound. German machine-guns had been expected to open here, but the British company on the flank reached it abreast of the 45th, and it was from the trenches farther on that fire came. The British were stopped but the 45th pushed on finding the Germans still so disorganised that the line of posts on the hilltop and several hundred prisoners were taken with little resistance. The expected barrage from the Hindenburg guns had not descended; on the contrary German shelling had almost entirely ceased. On the right near the hilltop the teams of a German

\textsuperscript{93} Lt. S. J. Hill, M.M., 47th and 45th Bns. Stationer; of S. Brisbane; b. S. Brisbane, 1897. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

\textsuperscript{94} Lt. L. R. Hughes, 45th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Lakemba, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 20 Apr. 1891. Died of wounds, 1 Oct. 1918.


\textsuperscript{96} Including Lt. F. W. Fifield (Stanmore, N.S.W.).

\textsuperscript{97} This incident, photographed by Capt. Wilkins, is shown in Vol. XII, plate 552.
battery of medium howitzers tried to limber up and withdraw the guns, some machine-gunners firing to protect them. A platoon of the 45th at once pushed forward its Lewis guns, shot the teams and machine-gunners and captured guns and crews. Farther north a second battery lay abandoned. The left of the 45th, which had also to cross the intervening end of Ascension Spur, captured a remnant of the Germans scattered by the 48th, passed two more guns, and then seized the posts on the hilltop, finding the garrisons in dugouts.

The history of the 58th I.R. (119th Divn.) says that the remnant of its I Bn. and part of the III were captured here. The regiment had 27 members killed or wounded and 12 officers and 294 men missing.

From this ridge the troops looked out over a wider valley to the next spur along the top of which could be seen the dense wire belts and white parapets of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. The weather was now bright. Over the hills south of the Omignon the upper half of St. Quentin Cathedral was visible from all high ground for miles around. Low on the right, on the Omignon flats, a German battery at a cross-roads in Pontruet fired at close range until shelled out of the village. In the valley ahead were German batteries and transport moving off for safety.

Next on the north, the 4th Brigade employed in the second stage the two battalions that had established the line beyond le Verguier, 13th and 15th. The halt, which there lasted two hours, had allowed several hundred Germans with machine-guns and field-guns to escape and reorganise. But the creeping barrage, when it thickened again after the halt, was good and the Germans seemed cowed. The 13th, which now went on with its four companies in line, climbed the opposing ridge, Ascension Spur, taking farm after farm—by the now normal tactics—against half-hearted resistance, Sergt. Sexton again silencing the machine-guns in successive posts by standing full height to spray them with bursts from his Lewis gun. In

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68 The scene at this stage is shown in photographs 550-1, Vol. XII. Lt. J. H. Dietze (Marrickville, N.S.W.) was killed here.
69 The 110th (How.) Bty. apparently shelled this village.
100 The 16th, in rear, had patrolled a gap between them, and now moved up to the line they left.
1 Col. Marks had intended to leap-frog with his support companies but in the first stage the fog, and in the second the thinness of the line, caused all companies to be employed.
Coronet Post on the summit were a dozen German machine-guns, mostly mounted on the parapet, but while the barrage fell on the place the crews were in dugouts and the New South Welshmen, rushing in as the barrage lifted, found the garrison still there. Eighty were captured in a trench near Ascension Farm. The 15th also kept very close to its barrage: “I almost wore myself out stopping the Diggers from getting into it,” said a young platoon commander cheerfuly; he had not one man killed. At Priel crater a German battalion headquarters with a number of machine-guns “could have made things difficult if they had had the guts,” said Col. Johnston a few days later; but resistance ceased as the 15th closed.

Our men, fighting like veterans, simply walked around these places (Johnston added); it was their last fight, and their best.

Several hundred prisoners were taken by each battalion.

Actually here and in le Verguier most of the infantry of the 1st Res. Divn. was captured. A German doctor, surprised here by the 15th, had just been telephoning to the rear position. “You'll find a lot more men farther on,” he said, “but I don't think you'll have much trouble with them.” The history of the 59th R.I.R. calls this “the blackest day in the history of the regiment.” The losses “were frightful”—4 officers and 38 others killed or wounded and 24 officers and 617 others missing.

As the 13th and 15th dug in on the eastern slope of Ascension ridge, machine-guns and snipers in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the next ridge opened a distant but troublesome fire.

Next on the left, before and during the halt, the 3rd Brigade having lost the barrage had almost continual fighting about Grand Priel Wood. The right company of the 12th lost its commander, Capt. Houghton, there but Lieut. Archer of the 3rd Machine Gun Company took charge. In the Château grounds a German headquarters fought for a time and then was captured in its dugouts. The 11th also had to fight through the wood. Lieut. “Wally” Graham, working up hill with a party of five, glanced at his map and then looked up to see a row of

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8 Lt. F. N. Livingston (Kerang, Vic.).
6 Later Lt. R. W. Fletcher, liaison officer with the 15th, took command.
red cap bands looking over a log above him. He drew his revolver and a row of hands went up as if by clockwork. These were men who had fled from the front. Graham sent them off without escort. At the objective, however, a deadly fire was opened from a trench at Caution Dugouts on the next small spur. The bullets razed the ground on which the 11th was digging. Lieut. Elliott was killed. While Graham walked over to consult Capt. Tulloch, leaving his men sheltered from this fire, Lieut. McKinley arrived with some moppers up, and at once attacked. On Tulloch's front Sergt. Grubnau with a Lewis gun worked forward along a road bank, to a heap of stones, and so forth until he forced the Germans to keep their heads down. On Graham's front Stokes mortars were used, and eventually a Lewis gunner of the 9th, Corpl. Tayler, walking fully erect so as to spray the Germans with his gun at the hip, reached their parapet and fired down at them. Some dived for the dugouts, others ran along the trench; twenty-five, with several machine-guns and trench-mortars and a field-gun, were captured there, and the mortars and machine-guns were at once turned upon German machine-guns that were firing from Villeret. A tank which now came through swept over the ground ahead, silencing machine-guns, rolling down the wire, and spreading terror among the Germans within sight.

It was then 8.30. The barrage for the second stage fell, and the 10th and 9th Battalions, with which General Bennett was attacking the second and third objectives, came through, as did the 1st and 3rd on the 1st Brigade's front farther north. The 10th at once met troublesome fire from Germans who had been firing during the halt from a small quarry and dump (“Harrod's
"Stores") on a spur in the valley. The machine-guns here and in several copse on the opposite hillside caught a line of the South Australians crossing between this spur and Priel Farm. Many were killed and the barrage was lost, but the right, led by Lieut. W. S. Bennett, pushed on up the main hill about Holly Post. Though faced by three machine-guns Bennett himself worked to a flank, entered the trench, and armed with his revolver captured the three guns. At the outpost-line thus entered 100 Germans with 12 machine-guns and 4 field-guns surrendered. The 9th Battalion also was met by machine-gun fire from the ruins of Villeret on the summit on its left, and from sunken roads south of that village. Here, to the admiration of all onlookers, a tank swept ahead into and round the village, although it was hit direct by a shell and its crew severely shaken. The sunken road south of Villeret was cleared partly by Sergt. Bentley whose leadership was outstanding.

The resistance in Villeret also held up the right company (Capt. Steen's) of the 1st Battalion. But the left company (Maj. Street's) climbed the hill between the sources of the Cologne, and met no strong fire till approaching the old British outpost-line on the summit, near the ruined brick foundations of Cologne Farm. Here a tank was to assist, and punctually it came, made for the old British outpost-line, and routed out the garrison. As the 11th and its tank cleared Villeret, the 1st, now with all companies in line, was able to work past on the north. The barrage had been lost; the Germans quickly shortened the range of their field-guns and Steen's company had three officers wounded; but after approaching by section rushes Lieut. Hudson and his platoon charged and captured part of the old British outpost-line (Railway Trench) and the rest was soon seized.

The 3rd Battalion had to capture the northern part of the Cologne Farm spur. While its right company (Lieut.

10 The German field-guns, however, wasted much fire on one dummy tank which was now visible far in rear, and was shelled for two hours.
12 Those under Lts. Kelleway and Sampson had been in support.
13 Here in a small deep quarry known as "The Egg" the engineers examining the dugouts found a number of Germans and machine-guns.
Shelley’s was assembling during a halt, the intelligence officer, Lieut. Clark, advised the platoon commanders, Lieuts. Leggett, Lord and Baird, to go for all they were worth, as by “sticking to the barrage” they would help the troops on their left. Actually the left company (Lieut. Clifton’s) from the start headed up the next spur on the north into the territory of the 74th Division which itself had been driven farther north by a German post in a concrete emplacement. The support company of the 3rd (Capt. McDonald’s) found itself in the gap thus made. Lieut. Hawkshaw brought up rifle-grenadiers and captured the post that had caused the trouble, and McDonald’s company also worked through the territory of the 74th Division.

But the three platoons of the right company duly covered the battalion’s whole front on Cologne Spur. Hurrying with the barrage Lieut. Baird passed over Cologne Farm without seeing a German there—those seen were fleeing into the valley north of it. Only three shots were fired at him and he entered the old British outpost-line (at Ferret Trench) with the barrage.

Lieut. Lord, to advance quickly, split his platoon into two, half being led by Sergt. McMillan. Half way up the northern slope of the spur the left was stopped by machine-gunners in a knot of trenches. Leggett’s platoon on the north side of the valley was sniping across at these when it saw three Australians coming from the south towards the nest of guns. They were

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18 Capt E. R. Shelley, M.C., 3rd Bn Farmer and grazier; of Henley, N.S.W.; b. Woolwich, N.S.W., 1 July 1892.
18 Lt. J. N. Lord, 3rd Bn. Station manager; of Quirindi, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 7 Feb. 1878.
19 Lt. C. J. Clifton, M.C., 3rd Bn. Station overseer; of Liverpool, N.S.W.; b. Burrowa, N.S.W., 12 Jan. 1890.
20 Lt E. Hawkshaw, M.C., 3rd Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 1890.
Sergt. McMillan and two of his men. Following closely on the barrage, they had seen a machine-gun firing at the troops on the left, and they hurried to work round into the trench from which it fired. With a shock they found the trench full of Germans, but putting a bold face on their surprise they hurled in their bombs. The whole trench-full surrendered, whereupon all other Germans in the valley fled to the rear. Resistance ended and Lord's and Leggett's platoons, now in scattered parties, advanced as fast as they could parallel to the roads leading from Hargicourt to Bellicourt and Bony.

Now arrived the juncture at which, on all parts of the Australian front, officers and men had to make the "sincere effort" to reach the Hindenburg "Outpost"-Line by exploitation. Had any battalion commander decided to send out a couple of weak patrols, and had the patrols when sent out reported themselves stopped by strong machine-gun fire which could not be overcome without serious casualties, Monash's order would have completely exonerated them.

But the troops knew the plans. Not only battalion commanders but company and platoon leaders, sergeants, and men, knew as well as their brigadiers that what was desired was to obtain a position looking down on the Canal, so that the main Hindenburg Line behind it could be attacked in the next battle. All realised that the attack would really have failed if the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the watershed screening the Canal remained in German hands; and this knowledge decided the day's results.

In part of the 1st Division's area the task was simplified by the fact that, as previously mentioned, the old British front there keyed into the German. On the heights east of Cologne Farm and Villeret the old British and German "outpost"-lines ran close together for 2,000 yards and at some points interlaced. In this sector the protruding part of the old British lines lay ahead of this day's second objective but not so far as the third. Lieuts. Meyers and Salisbury, commanding the two front companies of the 9th, immediately on reaching the second objective and while they collected their scattered groups, sent

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ahead patrols among the still more scattered parties of the enemy. Sergt. Bentley, leading his patrol over the crest from which he looked down Quarry Ravine straight into Bellicourt, was faced near Quarry Wood by some Germans whom an officer was trying to rally. He charged straight at them just as Gower had done at Crépey Wood, shot the officer, and bayoneted the first men met. The rest fled or surrendered. Going on through the wood he found at its farther edge another officer trying to rally some men. Bentley shot him and took 17 prisoners. Farther south another patrol had thrust out and captured Quarry “Knoll” (the spoil heap of the quarries near Haute Bruyère Farm), some 200 Germans here fleeing and abandoning one field battery and the headquarters of two, leaving code books and other documents.

It is typical of the inability of German writers to record a real defeat that the history of the 3rd R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.), whose rear defences the 9th Bn. was penetrating at this vital spot, claims that in spite of heavy losses the 18th of September was “a day of fame” for the regiment.

Posts were at once placed by the 9th along the front and support trenches of the Hindenburg outpost-system. They could see the Canal and the water in it; the tunnel entrance, only a mile away; Bellicourt village sprawling across the high valley north of the tunnel mouth; Nauroy a mile beyond, on the Hindenburg support defence line; roads with troops and waggons moving; the Canal bridges with engineers busy at repairs. From the Knoll Meyers’ company overlooked miles of country to front and flank. This position was on the final line of exploitation and the importance of it for any force attacking the Canal was obvious at a glance.

28 Later a German officer rode up to within 100 yards of these guns; when fired on he galloped off. Two teams were then sent by the Germans to remove the guns but drivers and horses were shot.
Next on the north Capt. Steen’s company of the 1st also, after the 9th got in, placed outposts along the old German front line (Bank Trench). Farther north, where the shell-cratered crest near Cologne Farm was crossed by the road from Hargicourt to Bellicourt—transformed by the Germans into a plank road—the Hindenburg Outpost-Line bent north-east following the watershed past Malakoff Wood to Quennemont Farm, the old British and German systems diverging until they were again nearly a mile apart (though each side had held advanced positions between). Maj. Street’s patrol sent out from the old British front at Bait Trench, where the separation began, found the Germans ahead difficult to locate.24

The northernmost battalion, 3rd, was still west of the watershed, in the long valley leading up from Hargicourt; the scattered companies attacking up both the hollow and its slopes, partly through Hussar Post on the 74th Division’s front, secured the old British outpost-line (Minnow Trench) by Malakoff Farm on the southern side of the valley, and an old German outwork (Triangle Trench) in the hollow; and here part of the 10th Buffs (74th Divn.) coming down the north-west slope presently joined them.25 Sergt. McMillan and his companions hurried along the valley to Malakoff Wood at its head. But Germans on the watershed farther north, about Quennemont Farm, made the Hindenburg Outpost-Line impossible to reach there.26

Villeret appears to have been held by fugitives and rear companies

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24 The patrol under Lt. F. A Graham had its corporal, L. J. Gosper (Meranburn, Molong, N.S.W.), killed by a machine-gun bullet. Maj. Street was afterwards wounded at the same place.

25 The left company of the 3rd, Lt. Clifton’s, was eventually found in Triangle Trench. Here the Germans left unopened parcels of cakes and a boiler of hot coffee. In Minnow Trench was a drunken battery commander.

26 Lt. C. J. McDonald and Hawkshaw at Triangle Trench were wounded by a machine-gun firing down the Bony-Hargicourt road.
of the 7th Bav. I.R., Cologne heights by those of the 21st, and the valleys north-east of Hargicourt by the 19th. The troops on the northern side of Hargicourt valley who opposed the right of the 74th Divn and the left of the 3rd Bn. (especially at the cross ways at Benjamin Post) were mainly the 94th I.R. (38th Divn.). The 111/21st Bav. I.R. would not follow its commander when he tried to counter-attack; the commander of the regiment, Maj. Hacke, was mortally wounded and captured.

Thus by 10.30 a.m. the right of the 1st Division was consolidating the exploitation objective, overlooking Bellicourt and the Canal, while its left was beyond the second objective though short of the final one. The battalions south of the 9th were faced by a different task. There the Hindenburg Outpost-Line lay on a different ridge from that of the old British outpost-line, and higher; the slopes between were untrenched, covered with grass and thistles, and, in the 4th Division's sector, a mile wide. The German trench was protected by dense entanglement. The Australian brigadiers concerned—Leane (12th) and Drake Brockman (4th)—realised well that, whatever the Corps orders might say, the only hope of seizing such a position lay in an attack in force; it would be merely "eye-wash" to attempt it with patrols. Consequently each had given the task to a whole battalion, the 46th and 14th respectively. At the eleventh hour, when it was learnt that the British division on the right would not begin to exploit until two hours after reaching the second objective, the task of the Australian right seemed hopeless and the right brigade accordingly decided to use only patrol methods; but on hearing that Lieut.-Col. Crowther of the 14th and his brigadier were still determined to adhere to their plan of a strong attack, Lieut.-Col. Corrigan of the 46th and General Leane decided that they must do the same, and safeguard both the 14th's flank and their own; but Leane advised Corrigan to attack in great depth,

dribbling forward first his leading companies and guarding his southern flank.

The same difficulties, though in less degree, faced the right battalion of the 1st Division, the 10th. On its front the exploitation objective (the "blue line"), though only half a mile from the second objective, had to be approached over the open summit of Buisson ridge, and the patrols were pinned down there by intense machine-gun fire. All available machine and Lewis guns of the 9th, 10th, and 14th were then turned on to sweep the German line while the left company of the 10th went into the Hindenburg Outpost-Line captured by the 9th, and thence bombed down it. The Germans, already under fierce fire from the front, surrendered easily to this flank attack. As the prisoners were sent back over the open from section after section of the Hindenburg trench, the companies of the 10th lying opposite made their way frontally into that line, cutting through the entanglement or finding gaps, and occupied both front and support line near Buisson Gaulaine Farm. Capt. Perry sent patrols 500 yards down the slopes towards the canal, and at 11.55 reported that his company was just beyond the "blue line."

Next on the south, the whole 14th Battalion had advanced through the 13th and 15th into the wide Ascension valley immediately the protective barrage ceased at 10.8. Its two front line companies had not gone ten yards when machine-guns from the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the opposite crest opened. Some of the troops that had taken the second objective and now watched the 14th pass between their rifle-pits, thought the attempt suicidal—and said so—but the platoons of the two front companies of the 14th (under Maj. Wadsworth and Capt. Mackay) advanced by short rushes from shell-hole to

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Like the 9th, 10th and 46th, the 14th had advanced from the original start-line an hour after the troops employed in the previous phases. North of le Verguier it was faced by a dense barrage, but Maj. Wadsworth, who was leading, cleverly avoided this by swerving north of Pieuvel Wood.
shell-hole down the bare slope. German machine-guns were by then firing at them from heights ahead of the 10th, from Ascension Wood in the valley, and from two copses, Big and Little Bill, on the opposite slope. The 14th had expected that the Australian machine-guns on the second objective would fire over their heads to suppress the enemy, but such fire, if given, was not noticeable. The few Germans at Ascension Wood fled as the troops approached; but many of the 14th had already been hit and the two companies—150 men advancing on a front of 1,500 yards—were so weak for their task that, on reaching the shelter of the tongue running out into the valley, Wads-worth conferred with Mackay and decided to bring into line the two support companies (under Lieuts. Aldridge and Chubb). The Lewis gunners then concentrated their fire on the copses. The German machine-gunners ran from these, and the right company (Wadsworth's) and part of the right support (Aldridge's) worked up the farther hillside and reached the low bank of a road that ran along the hillside, high up like a shelf, only a few hundred yards from the German line on the crest. But whenever any of the 14th showed above that bank, or above the crest of the tongue on which lay Little Bill, there broke out the tempest of machine-gun fire that had stopped the 10th. Company and platoon commanders tried to work forward first at one point, then at another, constantly withdrawing their men to shelter and working up other parts of the slope, only to be met with the same fusillade, which all the Lewis guns, now brought up into the line, could not subdue. The supporting batteries could help against the minor obstacles but against one like this they could do little.

The platoon and company leaders seemed to be faced by an impossible task. But about 11 o'clock it became known that the 10th Battalion was getting into the German line through the captured trenches farther north, and Wadsworth, Mackay, and their juniors, after conference, decided to follow the same

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82 The northern copse, Little Bill, was fired on by the 10th from the north flank and by Lt. Hawkins' platoon (14th) farther south.
83 The 41st Bty. was attached to the 14th Bn. and the rest of the 11th A.F.A. Bde. was in close support.
THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE [18th Sept., 1918

plan. Mackay's company would be withdrawn and pass round through the trenches taken by the 10th and bomb southwards along the German front line and at the same time eastwards to the support line. The company's place would be taken by Chubb's company, which would keep down the enemy's heads by intense fire from its Lewis guns.

This was done forthwith. By 12.45 Mackay's company was in the German front line, Lieut. Hawkins' platoon bombing down it, the Germans fleeing. Near Buisson Farm, however, the trench for fifty yards ran shallow and straight, and troops entering it were fired on by a machine-gun placed on a higher part beyond. Six men were killed there and the exhausted troops, after building a block north of it, were given a rest. They could see Wadsworth's company lining the road bank farther south, and being shelled by German trench-mortars. Chubb's company, and part of Wadsworth's under Lieut. Rule, were now also brought round to continue the attack. Mackay's company tried to bomb through to the position then attained by the 10th in the German support line, while Rule bombed southwards in the front line. By arranging with a trench-mortar crew to shell the dangerous machine-gun Rule just managed to get his party past the straight length of trench, but they ran immediately into range of an unsuspected German post. Eight men were hit and the platoon scrambled back through the dangerous trench. Mackay's parties were held up before reaching the support trench.

Wadsworth decided to wait for dusk, intending to have the German line bombarded during the night, and to attack it at dawn. But he had barely made that decision when there reached him an order to attack at 11 p.m. after a short bombardment.

Mackay and Lt. Bruford (support company) first reconnoitred the way.


47. Part of the 46th Battalion in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line

Part of wire-entanglement through which the battalion had attacked is seen in rear of the trench.

Taken on 24th September, 1918.

To face p. 920
48. THE ENTRANCE OF THE CANAL TUNNEL BELOW BELLECOURT

The position captured by the 4th Australian Division looked down on this at 750-1500 yards' distance. Bellecourt is seen at the top of the picture. To the left are part of the Hindenburg line and trenches.

Photo by Lt A. G. Barrett, No. 3 Sqn., A.F.C.  
To face p. 924
in co-operation with the 46th Battalion which was to make a frontal assault farther south.

The 46th had with great difficulty reached about the same line as the right of the 14th. General Leane’s orders were that it must support the advance of the 14th on its left, but also keep touch with the British on its right, who would not be advancing for two hours. Lieut.-Col. Corrigan had accordingly ordered his left front company under Lieut. Wallace to advance with the 14th, but the right under Maj. Couchman to send forward two platoons, echeloned back from Wallace’s flank. The other two must keep touch with the British. At 10.8 Wallace moved in line with the 14th under the same fire, suffering similar loss, and being eventually stopped near the same position but farther south. Couchman’s company, as ordered, dribbled two platoons across the valley with only moderate loss. At the bottom they passed a battery and a number of Germans, including two officers, who showed no sign of resistance, and farther on at a lower sunken road a second battery whose officer, mortally wounded (“a decent fellow” Couchman said), told them with disgust that in the trenches on the hilltop they would find 100-200 Germans waiting to surrender.

At this stage the British company next on the right was back near the ancient mound behind the second objective. Couchman had a patrol in touch with it, and he now ordered up his other platoons. About the same time there reached him two keen-spirited officers and a couple of brave men of the British company on his right. The 2nd British Brigade, instead of leapfrogging fresh troops at each stage, was using (on this flank at least) one battalion, the 2nd Royal Sussex, to make the three successive efforts. The strain on the troops was thus very great. The senior officer told Couchman that he would bring his company up although the troops farther right were not in line: “Pontruet village is knocking them to bits.” Both officers went out with Couchman to a terrace ahead where a

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39 Its commander was ordered to carry out exploitation “unless he thinks his troops have done all they can manage.” In that case a sister battalion (1st Northants) would find the necessary patrols.
shell, bursting near, killed the senior and badly wounded the other.

Meanwhile Wallace's company had dribbled its men as close as it could to the road bank that was held farther north by the 14th. On the slope above Couchman the line of this road was clearly marked by a row of eleven trees. Several German machine-guns here were shelled by the 38th Battery, whose commander, Maj. de Low, had now established an observation post near Col. Corrigan's headquarters and thenceforth dealt quickly with any target detected by de Low or pointed out by the 46th. Couchman now dribbled his company section by section along a terraced bank on his right and thence to the road which was reached by 2 p.m. Here, as elsewhere, the Germans in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line seemed to be caught napping by the arrival of Australians, the long grass and dense wire probably screening the movement. But when the Germans did awake they swept the front with a fire so intense that movement on the road became almost impossible. Lieut. Byrne, who brought up a platoon of the left support company, was killed. Of three men sent by Couchman along the road to find the left company two were killed and one wounded. A Lewis gun team under Corpl. Greenwood burrowed beneath the entanglement, set up their gun beyond and, whenever the muzzle of a machine-gun appeared over the German trench, tore up the parapet with their bullets. This reduced the German fusillade considerably. At 5 o'clock the British heavy artillery opened fire on the German position and de Low's battery (38th) shelled the wire. The entanglement was much nearer to the road than the maps

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40 The battery attached to the 46th was the 37th, but ill luck seems to have obstructed its communications with the battalion. However the whole 10th A.F.A. Bde. was in active support.


42 On the map the road was wrongly marked as sunken.

indicated, and shells burst so close that Couchman’s company was hastily withdrawn along the terrace bank to the lower road.

At 3 o’clock Col. Corrigan had reported the attack held up, and asked for strong artillery support. General Leane came up and suggested an attack as soon as a bombardment of the German line could be arranged. Corrigan replied that his men were exhausted and must have rest and food before they could make a vigorous attempt. Leane agreed, and it was arranged that the German position should be shelled by the heavies and then attacked at 11 p.m. under cover of a barrage from the field-guns. The attack would be made by the support companies under Lieuts. Muriel and Leith. Meanwhile a hot meal would be hurried to the valley and the men rested as far as possible.

This was the attack with which the 14th would co-operate, assembling within the captured part of the Hindenburg front line while the 46th attacked frontally farther south. At dusk bombs and other ammunition were brought up and a hot meal was hurried forward for the 46th. In this fight Australian battalions were so weak that, except for loads taken by one or two invaluable supply tanks to the first objective, all material was carried right to the front on limbers or pack-animals. Thus mules with machine-guns, trench-mortars and ammunition followed the infantry from objective to objective, those of the 12th L.T.M. Battery arriving without one animal being hit, though some pack mules with the machine-guns were wounded. Limbers with food-containers, water and other stores reached some battalions within an hour or two of their seizing the objectives, coming through safely while the German artillery was disorganised.

During the afternoon on the Australian front no sign of any real counter-attack was noticed; but on the northern flank the 74th Division, shelled out of Triangle Trench by its own artillery, fell back to the second objective at Rifle Pit Trench.

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46 Under Lt. R. J. Minty (Sydney).
47 Mules came up to company headquarters of the 9th Bn. even on Sep 19. But the use of limbers gave greater advantages so long as it was possible.
Towards evening Germans assembled on that front and at dusk, working round, forced the 74th farther back. The Australian machine-guns, however, well guarded the flank. On the southern flank of the Corps the left company of the 2nd Royal Sussex was exhausted and seemed to have lost heart after its captain's death; it advanced but did not hold on. Farther south the 6th British Division had not captured its first objective. General Leane accordingly ordered two companies of the 48th to attack at the same time as the 46th and seize a position above Ste. Hélène, guarding his flank. The commander of the 1st British Division, however, protested that this lay on his front and ordered his own troops to attack it. Leane had to cancel his order but directed the two companies to advance and guard the flank inside his boundary instead.

The hot meal that Col. Corrigan had ordered for the 46th reached Ascension valley in time for the left company but just too late for the right, which was already forming up. However the men had eaten their iron rations, and in high spirits the two former support companies, 160 strong, lined out along the upper road-bank, with the Hindenburg wire immediately ahead, on a front of nearly a mile. Two platoons of the former front companies were to follow and mop up. Just then, at 10.55, a short but very heavy rainstorm burst over the battlefield. Almost at the same time down came the barrage, promptly and accurately upon the German wire. Three minutes later it advanced to lie for two minutes on the German front line, and the troops began to clamber through the entanglement. Rain was still falling.

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48 To the sunken road behind Hussar Post.
49 The battalion had at that stage 270 rifles, Couchman's company having been reduced to 40 men, and Wallace's to 70.
The wire had been little damaged, but they got through it and entered the trench while the barrage was still on the support line.\textsuperscript{50} Except for a few sentries the Germans had sheltered in their dugouts from rain and barrage. Their machine-guns were in position along the parapet, aimed at gaps in the wire, but not manned. As the commander of the left company, Lieut. Leith, entered the trench, a sentry with a revolver wounded him,\textsuperscript{51} but Leith led straight on to the second trench leaving the first to the mopping up platoon. The right company, Lieut. Muriel's, entered on a narrower front, near Square Copse at the northern end of its objective, and it, too, went straight on to the support trench. The right mopping up platoon under Lieut. Storey consequently entered the right sector of the front trench (Onoto Trench) alone, and had to fight there—the corresponding part of the second trench was not captured till later.\textsuperscript{62}

The position of the scattered groups of Australians was precarious for, though many dugouts were reached and bombed before the Germans tried to emerge, there were many more between, containing Germans in far greater numbers than those of the invaders. But the Victorians went for everything with complete confidence. The Germans were evidently bewildered, and it quickly became clear that they were largely reserves, hurried forward that afternoon and put into the front line after dark. They said they had expected to be attacked at dawn but not before. Many fled southwards, but the great numbers that surrendered became a serious menace, especially when Lieut.

\textsuperscript{50} It lay there for 3 minutes, and then 15 minutes on the communication trenches beyond. Machine-guns also joined in the barrage. A photograph of the wire and the chalk parapet behind it is given in Vol. XII, plate 554.

\textsuperscript{51} This was his fifth wound received in France.

\textsuperscript{62} Pen Trench was captured that night, and the next trench, 400 yards beyond, on the 20th.
Storey on the right hurrying a flock of several hundred back to Couchman's headquarters in the valley almost ran into a large German patrol on this completely exposed flank. Storey was warned of the German patrol's proximity by meeting a patrol of Couchman's that was trying to cut it off. He at once sent on his prisoners and worked with the Australian patrol in rear of the German one. Unfortunately the enemy saw him and escaped southward. Meanwhile, some of the crowd of prisoners arriving at Couchman's headquarters showed signs of aggression, especially one officer; but a Victorian corporal by keeping them on the move to the rear averted any outbreak. A captured officer remarked to Couchman: "All I can say is you are some bloody soldiers!"

The position on the flank was eased by the arrival, though late, of the two companies of the 48th ordered to guard the flank. One was extended from the British left at the tumulus to the 46th's right. Of the other Couchman placed half at his headquarters and half in the southern end of the objective at Onoto Trench.\(^{63}\) From there it bombed down Pen Trench towards Entrepot Trench, to which the British on the right were to advance in their projected attack at midnight.

In the German line the 46th mopped up as far as it could,\(^ {64}\) barricaded its right at Pen Trench where the Germans soon became active, and prepared against an expected counter-attack at dawn. Despite the great numbers that had fled or been captured others were still between its posts and were not finally cleared till next day.\(^ {65}\) In all it took at least 550 prisoners including about 20 officers.\(^ {66}\)

The 14th Battalion had attacked at the same time as the 46th, but from within the Hindenburg trenches. Aldridge's company was to bomb south along the first trench and secure the rest of the 14th's objective in it. Wadsworth's was to assemble beside Aldridge's in the first trench (clinging to the back wall while Aldridge's clung to the front), charge across,

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\(^{63}\) Lt. L. N. Ward, 48th, was killed by a shell.

\(^{64}\) Lt. Muriel took a few men out towards Bell Copse and captured Germans in dugouts there.

\(^{65}\) One man of the right company was captured by them and held for half an hour in a dugout, before the mopping-up party arrived. The same had happened in the second phase to a man of the 45th.

\(^{66}\) The 12th Bde. took over 1,100. A photograph of Col. Corrigan and some of his men in the captured trench next day is given in *Vol. XII, plate 553.*
seize the second trench, and then bomb down it parallel to Aldridge's company. Mackay's also would cross to the second trench, but would then bomb northwards to join the 10th Battalion.

On this sector the bombardment was weak, and when it lifted from the second trench Lieut. Rule, now leading Wadsworth's company, was scrambling from the first trench in order to get his men out, when the Germans in the second trench fired a flare and three machine-guns opened with tracer bullets which seemed to skim the parapet. Rule slipped back into the trench. His account of what followed illustrates the initiative of Australian soldiers at this stage of the war:

In despair I turned to Tom Griffith, an officer of "A" (Aldridge's) Company, and told him that it was madness to attempt it. To my surprise he yelled as he started bombing up the sap: "Have a bloody go at them." This pulled me together, and out on the top the bombing section and I clambered. After a little wait the rest of the boys crawled out also, and we started to advance.

We had to reach the support trench and we must have got about one hundred yards, with forty still to go, when these guns opened again. I looked around and my heart sank. Here was the whole company bunched in a heap. On account of the lead that was flying, we all got down flat on the ground. Bullets were kicking up the dirt all around us. I heard a man yell just beside me, and then he lay quiet. What to do was past me; I was just on the point of ordering a bolt, when one of the boys with a Lewis gun crawled up alongside me, and in a second had opened fire along their trench, and to our surprise he silenced the Huns. A little farther along another of the lads took his cue from the first one and opened fire, and after each burst these gunners would yell; "Now's your time rush them." They did this several times before any one moved but at last it sank in and several of the N.C.O.'s started to go forward. Even then I was very dubious, but these lads set the pace, and we all up and ran for dear life towards those Huns, yelling like lunatics.

Immediately the German guns opened again; but the Huns must

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67 Wadsworth was now in charge of the four companies.
68 In Jacka's Mob, p. 327
have had their heads down below the parapet, for the balls of fire seemed to be going in a circle just level with our own heads and most of them going over. When we were within thirty yards, some of the Huns heaved some bombs, and then they bolted for their lives. We could see them climbing out of their trenches and vanishing in the darkness. Just as we got near where the bombs had fallen, the things went off and scuttled a few more of the lads; but the worst of the job was done.

Sergt. Bauchop⁶⁰ and his team at once bombed southwards—Germans could be seen fleeing before them. Aldridge’s company worked parallel down the first line. Each had half a mile to go, and after several pauses they covered that distance; but in the dark they could find no trace of the 46th till just before dawn, when Rule met one of its officers looking for him. They arranged to signal to each other the position of their battalions’ flanks, which proved to be 600 yards apart. The 46th was holding the second trench—it had not men enough to hold the first. Aldridge’s company of the 14th advanced on the following night and filled the gap there, a company of the 15th taking its place. Mackay’s company which had entered the second trench shortly after Rule⁶¹ had turned north and found touch with the 10th.

The extraordinarily daring attack by these two closely related battalions⁶² had resulted in an achievement to which there were probably few parallels on the Western Front.

The sector of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line seized by them had, when first attacked, earlier in the day, been manned by the reserve battalions⁶³ of the three regiments of the 119th Divn. (58th I.R., 46th I.R. and 46th R.I.R.) and the reserve companies of the 59th R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.), together with fugitives from the forward garrison. But since 6 a.m. Second Army had been moving up its reserves. All the senior German staffs concerned were late in learning the situation, and long after H.W.L. 2 and parts of H.W.L. 3 were lost they believed themselves to be dealing merely with the loss of H.W.L. 1. In the 51st Corps sector the three regiments of the counter-attack division (185th) were early sent from the Beaurevoir Line and Montbrehain (3½ miles beyond Bellicourt) to Nauroy and Bellicourt, and were ordered, as a precaution, into H.W.L. 3 (A)—the Hindenburg Outpost-Line⁶⁴ But shortly after 10 a.m. on reaching


⁶¹ It was supported only by a machine-gun barrage.

⁶² The 46th was daughter of the 14th, and it had been arranged for the mother and daughter battalions to attack side by side—a cause of great satisfaction to the troops. The same had been done for the 13th and 45th.

⁶³ Each now normally comprising only three companies.

⁶⁴ Their places in reserve were taken by the 21st Div.
Nauroy, they found that in the 1st Res. Divn.'s sector the Australians were already in the 3 (A) line, looking down at them and the Canal. The 28th R.I.R., allotted to the 1st Res. Divn., was therefore ordered to occupy the 3 (B) line, half way up the slope from the Canal to the 3 (A) line. Its right battalion (III) did this while the two southern ones made their way to the 3 (A) line still in German hands in that sector. They occupied the support trench, the front line being held by remnants of the line division, machine-gun sharpshooters, and engineers. Farther south, where at 2 p.m. the southern regiment of the 119th Divn. (46th R.I.R.) awoke to the fact that there were Australians immediately in front of its wire, the three battalions of the 65th I.R. about that time filed from Bellenglise into the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. On the northern flank the 161st I.R. was placed west of Bellicourt behind the 5th Bav. Divn.

Opposite the IX British Corps the I Bav. Corps had reported that, in general, it was still holding its position; opposite the III British Corps the IV Res. Corps had lost its main line but was preparing to counter-attack from Bony with the fresh 121st Divn. Opposite the Australians the 51st Corps had all it could do to form and hold a new line. But about noon it received a special order from von Boehn, commander of the group of armies, to advance and retake H.W.L. 1. Accordingly at 1 p.m.—surely with the certainty that no such operation could be carried out—the Corps Commander ordered for 2 o'clock a counter-attack to retake the old main line along its whole front. There was to be half an hour's artillery preparation. The Australian infantry, though widely shelled, observed no definite bombardment. In any case the German infantry was late. Part of the 161st west of Bellicourt and the 28th R.I.R. farther south made a slight advance; after a second effort at 5 p.m. the 28th reached Bruyère Farm and the knuckle near Buisson-Gaulaine Farm. Apparently it was these troops that stopped the 14th Bn. from taking the support trench of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. But if any attempts were made by the Germans to pass that line they were hopeless.

It was against the trenches reinforced by the 28th R.I.R. and 65th I.R., that is to say held by nine or ten battalions and remnants of the main garrison from farther forward, that the attack of the two weak Australian battalions at 11 p.m. was made. The 65th had been shifted to the right of the 119th Divn.'s sector. Of the 46th Australian Bn.'s attack the history of the 65th I.R. (exaggerating the efforts at resistance, but probably not the confusion) says: "On the right of II/65th an enemy battalion got into the trenches of the

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* This now included a battalion of the disbanded 258th R.I.R.
* This also had been reinforced by a disbanded battalion of 258th R.I.R.
6/46th I.R. and pushed through, divided itself, and attacked the I and II/65th in rear. Everywhere bombs cracked suddenly in the pitch dark night. No one knew what was actually happening or where the enemy was. Each company, each nest of riflemen barricaded itself off as well as it could to right and left and threw bombs at every shadow that approached. Whether it was friend or enemy was not, and could not be, distinguished."

Many of the Germans fled across the Canal and could not be brought back to the 3 (B) line until next day. A line of resistance was then organised there. The forward posts about Bruyère Farm were withdrawn except one machine-gun post. The 65th I.R. lost 3 officers and 61 men killed or wounded, but 13 officers and 440 men missing.

This achievement ensured for the Australian Corps the capture of nearly the whole “exploitation” objective. When daylight came the outposts, looking down the short gullies and knuckles to the Canal and the main Hindenburg Line beyond, realised with surprise what a commanding position they had taken. The exploitation objective had been captured on no other Corps front. The attempt of the 1st British Division at midnight failed; the tired troops reached Fourmi Trench but withdrew to the lower sunken road soon after; and though the British divisional commander constantly reported that his flank was in this position General Leane knew, by sending a patrol to the place that it was not. This patrol of three men found that the junction of Pen and Entrepot Trenches on the prominent knuckle ending the ridge was held by Germans. Pte. Woods rushed these, capturing one and wounding a second. Although the post held four heavy and two light machine-guns the rest of the garrison fled. One of the patrol was wounded, and the Germans, at least thirty strong, counter-

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67 Maj. Couchman also, keeping touch with the British nearest to his headquarters, was aware of it.
68 Pte. J. P. Woods, V.C. (No. 3244A; 48th Bn.). Vigneron; of Caversham, WA; b Gawler, S.A., 2 Jan. 1891. (Woods was not accepted for enlistment in the A.I.F. until 1916. By earlier standards he was below the minimum height.)
attacked up the trenches and over the open. Some of the 48th in Pen Trench now came up, Woods, lying on the parapet while his comrades passed up bombs, holding off the Germans until this important position was secured. The flank was thus safely held although the British were half a mile back near their second objective.

The victory was greater than was realised then or afterwards by the higher command, which throughout regarded the captured position as a mere forward protection of the Hindenburg Line, whereas German histories abundantly show that it was occupied as the chief position and was intended to remain so. Although part of Lempire and Ronsoy was held most of the day by the stubborn Alpine Corps, the British III Corps eventually seized most of the main German position, which was thus captured on nearly the whole front of attack north of the Omignon; the ten attacking divisions of Fourth and Third Armies took nearly 12,000 prisoners and over 100 guns. Of these the 6,800 Australian infantry, machine-gunnors and trench-mortar men engaged in that day's advance took 4,300 prisoners and 76 guns at a cost of 1,260 casualties to themselves. In reporting on the battle to Haig Rawlinson mentioned that

Woods was awarded the Victoria Cross. The details here given come partly from the excellent Story of a Battalion by the Rev. W. Devine, Chaplain of the 48th.

Including battalion headquarters.

Details of the loss are:

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| 12th Bn. | 5 | 83 | 45th Bn. | 9 | 101 |
| 14th Bn. | 2 | 51 | 46th Bn. | 7 | 115 |
| 15th Bn. | 1 | 39 | 48th Bn. | 2 | 63 |
| 16th Bn. | 2 | 20 | 12th L.T.M. Bty. | 1 | 3 |
| 4th L.T.M. Bty. | - | 7 | | | |
|          | 10 | 199 | 19 | 282 |

The 1st M.G. Bn. lost 1 offr. and 39 o.r., and the 4th 1 offr. and 33 o.r.
German officers said that their men would not now face the Australians.

It was clear that an attack on the remaining Hindenburg defences was a feasible operation for the near future, and while the battle was still unfinished General Monash was drawing the outlines of the next plan.

But before the main Hindenburg Line could be attacked there had to be gained if possible on the IX and III Corps fronts a start-line as close as that captured by Australian Corps. During September 19th several attempts by the IX Corps failed. The 48th Battalion was shelled out of Pen Trench and the flanking strong-post, but retook them, and on the 20th occupied the support trench 400 yards ahead and sent patrols down towards the Canal. South of this the front was not materially advanced until September 24th when IX Corps, in a set piece attack assisted by some tanks and by the extreme flank of Debeney's army, made considerable progress. III Corps on the other hand sought to advance by constant attacks by all divisions on a small scale. After these had continued for two days with slight success General Butler decided to attack with his four tired divisions and a few tanks at dawn (5.40 a.m.) next day, September 21st, and asked General Monash if he would help by taking responsibility for the southern 500 yards of this attack and also swinging up his own flank. Monash agreed and at 10.30 on the 20th warned the 1st Division.

The order came at a difficult time. General Glasgow had just arranged to relieve the tired troops of the 1st Brigade; but, as the proposed operation could only be safely carried out by men knowing the ground, it was obviously a task for that brigade. Glasgow therefore at once postponed the relief and Brig.-Genl. Iven Mackay ordered the 1st and 3rd Battalions, then in the line, to carry out the attack. The 3rd would attack from the left of its present front north-eastwards along the valley up which it had advanced on September 18th. The 1st would take over the right sector of the 3rd, and advance half a mile along the

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72 It captured 5 prisoners and 1 machine-gun.
73 Entrepot Trench was handed over to the British, who came up.
74 Capturing 1,300 prisoners. The 46th British Div. had taken over on Sep. 22 the southern end of the Australian line.
watershed past Ruby Wood. A line of posts would then be placed across the ridge and valley 500 yards south-west of Malakoff Wood. The 10th Buffs were attacking farther to the left.

It was found possible to let half the relief proceed, the 6th Battalion taking over from the 1st, which then gathered in a sunken road south of Hargicourt for a hot meal prior to going forward again to the fight. Its reserve company, Capt. Steen's, which had lost most of its officers on the 18th, was already bivouacked in that road. During the afternoon word reached Col. Stacy that the order cancelling relief and sending the battalion into another fight was resented by the men. Capt. Moffat, back at the nucleus camp, came up at once on learning of the attack. Late that night Col. Stacy learnt that the trouble was serious; the men of Steen's company refused to move. On his going up to speak to them they told him they "were not getting a fair deal," and "were being put in to do other people's work." There was widespread feeling that British troops had repeatedly failed to keep up, and that the Australians, as well as fighting on their own front, were sometimes called on to make good their neighbours' failure. Col. Stacy (according to a friend's diary) at the time attributed this protest largely to "over-mention of the troops in the newspapers, so that they over-valued themselves in comparison with others." When the order for the attack arrived the men were unaware that it was to be a minor affair. "That's pretty rough," someone would say; and one of the bad soldiers, of whom every battalion had some, probably chimed in: "Well they can bloody well go over without me." The troops were in a mood to catch this up; they were not unfriendly to their officers, but the only officers remaining in Steen's company, himself and Lieut. Blake, were just then wounded by a shell. When Capt. Moffat told the men to join his company all except one—who had stood out all through—refused and walked to the rear. When the remaining companies assembled it was found that many other men, making 119 in all, had

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76 Lie. S. J. Sheen (Goulburn, N.S.W.), 2nd Bn., also was wounded, mortally.

77 Pte. J. H. Berman (No. 7829, 1st Bn.). Railway signalman, of Petersham, N.S.W.; b. Walcha, N.S.W., 16 Apr. 1886.
disappeared. Three companies totalling 10 officers and 84 men, together with Col. Stacy and all his headquarters, went forward. At Stacy's request Capt. Collingwood of the 2nd, one of the finest leaders of the A.I.F., moved up his company in closer support. The 3rd Battalion allotted to the attack only one company, Capt. McDonald's.

In the actual operation the only real difficulty proved to be the German shelling. It fell on Minnow Trench for nearly an hour before the start; and when the platoons advanced, at 5.40, it descended quickly and densely. The leading companies of the 1st, clinging to their own barrage which was excellently laid, worked along the two trenches of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line, whose garrison was still sheltering, took 85 prisoners and many machine-guns, and placed their posts duly on the objective, as did McDonald's company of the 3rd in the valley. The 6th Battalion advanced a post on the right. Four machine-guns of the 1st Company were emplaced in the posts. Coming through the German barrage with his company in support, the gallant Moffat was mortally wounded.

The 74th Division reached the wire of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line at Quennemont Farm, but farther north the tired divisions of III Corps failed at most points to secure the old second objective. Before noon the Germans counter-attacked the 74th, and cut off some of the advanced troops. The rest fell back to behind the old second objective. Capt. McDonald (3rd Bn.), whose posts in the valley were now overlooked, withdrew them to Minnow Trench, but the 1st Battalion held all its posts on the height.79

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78 Many prisoners were hit passing through their own barrage.
79 Collingwood had dribbled his company through the barrage to Minnow Trench, where Col Stacy also was. Stacy's headquarters did not have to be used in the attack.
The German regiments concerned looked upon the British attack this day as a major one. The Australians were opposed by parts of the 3rd and 50th R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.) on the right, and of the 60th I.R. and 7th R.I.R. (121st Divn.) on the left. The 21st Divn. was moved up from support, but was not required.

Early that morning the 13th, 15th and 10th Battalions also advanced some of their posts between Haute Bruyère and Gaulaine Farms where the Germans still had a post on the high ground, and farther south. The enemy post soon afterwards withdrew.

The 1st and 4th Australian Divisions were now relieved and went to the rear for the “Corps” rest for which they had been hoping since July. General Monash had also insisted that the three remaining Australian divisions must go into rest after the next battle.

While he was in the thick of preparation for that offensive, another sharp trouble, though much less serious than it might appear to non-Australians, descended on him. The Army Council in London was concerned at the depletion of the Australian infantry through lack of reinforcements. It pointed out that the 57 Australian battalions were 8,500 men short, and that reinforcement drafts for the next four months, estimated at 3,000 monthly, would be insufficient to keep up even the present strength. Battalions which entered the battle with 300-400 men were in some important respects uneconomic, requiring the same staff as a battalion that took in 750. In the British Army this difficulty had been met by disbanding the fourth battalion in each infantry brigade; a similar measure had long before been adopted by the French and Germans, and this policy had already been approved for the A.I.F. in February: Battalions had been earmarked for disbandment but, in view of the extreme reluctance expressed by the Australian Government, it was to be carried out only gradually as it became unavoidable. Three battalions had been thus disbanded in the spring; Haig entirely accepted the Australian Government’s condition, but in June he pointed out that of the 57 remaining

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These had relieved the 14th.

This post lay opposite a shallow unoccupied part of the Hindenburg Outpost Support Line. Two men of the 10th trying to make contact with the 14th there had been captured by the Germans.

As the 11th Bn. was marching through Roisel on the night of Sep. 23 a German aeroplane dropped a bomb near its headquarters staff, who were on horseback. Maj. A. H. Darnell and Lt. J. A. Archibald (Kalgoorlie, W.A.), his adjutant, were both mortally wounded. The battalion itself was moving across country near by and escaped.
battalions 5 now had less than 700 men, 17 less than 800 and only 11 more than 900, which was the strength then laid down as minimum. He considered this "a rather alarming degree of unevenness." Birdwood (as G.O.C., A.I.F.) explained that there were still hopes of keeping the battalions at 900 and that they were disbanded only when so weak as to be inefficient as fighting units. On August 29th the Army Council drafted a letter to Haig saying that, in view of the shortage then evident, it considered that the reduction of the remaining four-battalion brigades to three-battalion ones should be carried out as soon as possible. Before sending this letter it passed the draft to A.I.F. Headquarters for comment, and Birdwood asked Monash for his views. Both realised that the step would cause intense heart-burning, and Monash, even now that his battalions were going into battle 300-400 strong, urged that it should be postponed till the new year.

It is not likely that weather conditions will permit of our carrying on for much longer at the same intense pressure at which the Corps has been going for the last five months, (he wrote to Birdwood on Sep. 7). In all probability if we carry on, at latest till the end of October, we ought to be able to carry on right over the winter.

It was possible, he added, that G.H.Q. might then be able to do "what we all desire"—keep the Australian Corps entirely out of the line for the four winter months. Australian battalions had never been so effective as in the last month when they were all far below strength; he urged that 750 should be considered a sufficient strength even for next year.

I welcome any pretext (he said to a friend on Sep. 8th) to take the fewest possible men into action. So long as they have thirty Lewis guns (per battalion) it doesn't very much matter what else they have.

And it was true that the A.I.F. battalions, entering these great battles with 300-400 rifles, still attacked on fronts of 850-1,000 yards, and had even attacked on fronts of up to a mile. Carrying parties could not be provided; Lewis gun teams were reduced to two men, and Vickers gun crews could no longer carry full loads of ammunition. These and the food supplies had to go by pack or waggon, and in recent fights

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83 A battalion of 750 would not have many more, allowing for a nucleus, transport, and men detached on various duties.
this had worked very well. Monash asked to be allowed to reorganise his battalions on a three company basis, but he well knew that most of them had already done this for themselves, and reduced their companies to three or even two Platoons. Finally he asked to be allowed discretion to recommend the disbanding of “one or more battalions” if he and his generals found it advantageous. Birdwood insisted on prompter action, pointing out that the principle had already been determined in January. He and Monash now agreed that it should not yet be applied to the four original brigades, but he informed the War Office that it would be applied in all unreduced brigades as soon as found necessary.

It was immediately after this that Monash learnt of the coming withdrawal of “1914 men” (estimated by him at “upwards of 6,000”) on furlough to Australia, which obviously would render the disbandments more urgent. The battalions selected by divisional commanders on the advice of their brigadiers were the 19th, 21st, 25th, 37th, 42nd, 54th and 60th; and on September 23rd the order went out for their immediate disbandment: in each case their records, and a few representatives were to go to training battalions on Salisbury Plain, whose companies would assume the battalions’ names, but the rest would reinforce some other battalion or battalions of their own brigade.

To officers and men of these battalions the blow was overwhelming. The step might be necessary—but why should their battalion be chosen. Men and even officers held among themselves indignant meetings. In the first battalion to hear of its fate, the 37th, Col. Story, a fine leader, took the step of protesting not merely to the brigadier, but over his head to Gellibrand, Monash and Birdwood, a serious breach of discipline. Moreover in the bitterness of the moment Story’s

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84 On Sep. 18 the troops on the first objective had a hot meal soon after they got there, and many troops on the final objective were given one as soon as it was dark. The 2nd Bn secured a German cooker and used it to take hot drinks for the whole battalion around its line of posts.

85 Br.-Gen. Robertson (6th Bde.) wrote that the step “will cause heart-burning, still all recognise the futility of attempting to carry on under present conditions.” Gen. Rosenthal (2nd Div.) wrote: “I most strongly urge that... authority be given to me to have it carried into effect in all brigades at once.”

86 Including the “Brewery Company” described in Chapter I.

87 The reorganisation of the 8th Bde. was postponed apparently because, Gen. Hobbs being in England, his approval to the disbandment of the 29th Bn. had not been obtained.
letter was foolishly drawn, disparaging sister units. He was relieved of his command, but his attitude had become widely known. At a meeting the men of the 37th agreed that on the final parade they would obey every order but the last—the order to march to their new battalions. On September 22nd, when that parade took place, they did so, obeying every command but the final one. Brig.-Genl. McNicoll was then summoned and spoke to the men, but with the same result. The officers then reluctantly obeyed an order to fall out; after them the sergeants did the same—and one corporal and one private. The remainder were told that, if they did not join their new units that afternoon, they would be posted as absent without leave. Being left to themselves they at once re-established strict military form in the battalion, choosing from their own number commanders to carry on temporarily the absent officers' duties. It was noticeable that those selected were not the "bad hats" or of the demagogue type, but the men most fitted to lead in action, and strict discipline was maintained. The battalion marched back to its huts; men already in detention for various offences were retained under guard; the medical aid-post was re-formed by the orderlies, and church parade for next day arranged with the padre, who went with the men. The "commanders" had meals with the men, rations being obtained through the support of other units who "lost" occasional boxes of food from their own waggon-loads as they passed near by.

There was keen sympathy for these troops throughout the force and, one after the other, the other selected battalions, when ordered to disband (mostly on September 24th and 25th) took the same action. General Gellibrand had asked for representatives of the 37th to meet him, and later went to the camp and talked the matter over with the men in a friendly, informal way. Monash also spoke quietly to representatives of the 37th, and battalion commanders and brigadiers addressed all the recalcitrant battalions. The men's argument was the same in every case and was entirely sincere.

Look Colonel (said those of the 25th to Col. Davis) the 25th from the first has been built on esprit de corps. We have been taught that the regiment is everything. You have often told us

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88 The chief commander was a corporal.
that we must sacrifice everything for its honour. We have always obeyed you and we always will—in everything but what you now ask. We cannot obey you in this just for that reason—we would sacrifice everything for the battalion.

They told General Wisdom that it was their unanimous wish to go into the next battle and to be given the hardest task: there would either be no 25th left to break up, or they would leave such a record as would make it impossible to break them up. All the resisting battalions said they were keen to enter the great attack that they knew to be impending, but they demanded to be allowed to go in with their identity unchanged. A point elicited by Gellibrand was that the amalgamation of two battalions would be much less keenly felt than the extinction (in the field) of one of them.

Some units were clearly affected by their commanders’ arguments, the strongest of which was that they could not indefinitely resist, which the men knew to be true; but only one battalion gave way. It is a tribute to the unrivalled hold of Brig.-Genl. “Pompey” Elliott on the loyalty of his men that the 60th Battalion, after disobeying its commander’s order to join the 59th, agreed to do so upon being addressed by this beloved stout-hearted Australian. What was Elliott’s disgust when next morning, September 27th, he learnt that the other battalions were being allowed to go into the coming battle intact. As the great offensive was only a few days distant Monash had urged upon Rawlinson that the disbandment should be deferred for a fortnight, and asked him to press this upon Haig. The news of the order, says a record of the 21st Battalion, “was received with deafening cheers.” Naturally trouble at once recurred in the 60th, but Elliott again addressed it. “By using my influence to the utmost,” he wrote in his diary, “I managed to sway the men over the line. My brigade is the only one in which the reorganisation was successfully accomplished.”

This incident has been called that of “the mutinies over disbandment,” and so in the strict sense of the terms it was; but the refusal was not treated as mutiny by any authority, Australian or British. In contrast to the mutiny in the 1st Battalion, it had its origin in some of the best men and finest qualities of the A.I.F. Australian soldiers had experienced few
ties of loyalty in their civil lives; and a public loyalty once conceived was sustained with a flaming zeal disconcerting to those who had encouraged it. If, as General Brudenell White always strongly wished, it had been possible to tie the A.I.F. battalions overseas to the corresponding regiments of the citizen forces in Australia, so that the home regiment fed battalions or even companies overseas as in the New Zealand force, this trouble would probably never have arisen. But the A.I.F. was an improvised force and the disbandment of a battalion carried too many of the consequences of its extinction.

Mutiny was one of the only two offences punishable in the A.I.F. by death.89 No man was punished for his part in the disbandment mutiny. The mutiny in the 1st Battalion was in a totally different category. The men who refused duty, 119 in number, were tried and, with one exception, found guilty, not of joining in a mutiny, but of desertion. The ending of hostilities caused General Monash not to enforce the penalties,89 and almost certainly saved him and the A.I.F. from having to face difficult problems whose solution would have called for not only tact but the highest qualities of wisdom, leadership and moral courage. Monash had some of these. In this decisive fighting, for such it was, he was right to work his troops to the extreme limit of their endurance, which normally is beyond the limit to which men themselves think they can endure. At such times victory often goes to the troops that hold out longest, withstanding strain, toil or exhaustion in perhaps unbelievable degree and for an unbelievable time; and the value of different armies depends largely upon how far they are ready to do this. On the other hand students of history may doubt whether mere eagerness for military prestige could ever, as Monash apparently imagined, maintain the will to such sacrifices, or could be wisely substituted for the high aims of justice and humanity in implanting a motive for which ordinary men, in such a war, will readily die.

89 The other was desertion to the enemy. It was doubtful whether an Australian soldier even when guilty of murder could receive a death penalty.

89 Gen. Glasgow would not recommend remittance of the sentences, though Gen. Monash tried to induce him to do so, and the condemned men followed the 1st Div. about for many weeks. Apparently remittance was finally recommended by Gen. Hobbs.