THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT

BATTLEFIELD TOUR

7 - 14 May 2007

AGINCOURT and THE SOMME
1415 - 1916

AGINCOURT and The SOMME

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Trench Maps will be issued on relevant days.

Programme for the Duke of Wellington's Regiment

Battlefield Tour

DATE	TIME	EVENT	REMARKS
Mon 7 May	15.00	Coach pick up Leeds Rail Station For Hull/Zeebrugge ferry	*Dinner/breakfast on ferry*
	16.30	Pax joining at Hull	*P&O passengers terminal*
Tue 8 May	09.00	Coach from Zeebrugge to Calais	
	11.00	Pick up pax at Calais P&O terminal	
	12.30	ETA Agincourt	
		Lunch	*Restaurant*
	14.00	Agincourt Battle (Speaker: Mrs Juliet Barker)	
	17.30	Coach to Abbeville Book into Mercure Hotel	
	20.00	*Dinner*	*Mercure Hotel*
Wed 9 May	*07.30*	*Breakfast*	
	08.30	Depart Abbeville	
	10.00 -16.00	Somme Battlefields: Including 2 DWR on 1 July 1916 Guided tour Newfoundland Park	*Picnic lunch*
	17.00	Arr Amiens Book into Mercure Hotel	
	20.00	*Dinner*	*Local restaurant*
Thu 10 May		Free Day - Amiens	*Breakfast only*
Fri 11 May	*08.00*	*Breakfast*	
	09.00	Depart Hotel	
	09.45 -13.00	Somme Battlefields Including 10 DWR 10-14 July 1916	*Lay wreath Becourt Cemetery*
	13.30 -16.00	Free Time in Albert	*Picnic lunch*
	17.00	Arr Amiens	*Dinner - own arrangements*
Sat 12 May	*08.00*	*Breakfast*	*Breakfast only*
	09.00	Depart for Paris	
	11.00 -17.00	Free Time in Paris	
	19.00	Arr Amiens	
Sun 13 May	*07.30*	*Breakfast*	
	08.30	Depart Hotel	
	09.15 -16.00	Somme Battlefields Lay wreath Mill Road Cemetery Including 10th and 1/4th DWR actions Sep/Oct 1916	*Picnic lunch*
	17.00	Arr Amiens	
	20.00	*Dinner Local restaurant*	
Mon 14 May	09.00	*Breakfast*	*Lunch – own arrangements*
	12.00	Depart Amiens for Calais	
	14.00	Drop off pax at Calais ferry terminal	
	16.30	Arr Zeebrugge Dinner/breakfast on ferry	
Tue 15 May	08.00	Arr Hull	
	10.00 *(approx)*	Drop off at Leeds Rail Station	

Battlefield Tour, France - May 2007

Tour Leader and speaker
Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, KCVO, OBE

Tour Administrator
Major R Heron

Joining the coach at Leeds

Major and Mrs R Heron (Bob/Linda)
Lieutenant Colonel W Robins (Robbie)
Dom Alberic Stacpoole (John)
Ms J E M Gul (Janet)
Mr R Hanson (Bob)
Mrs P Harley (Pat)
Mr R L Harvey (Richard)
Mr and Mrs C Ford (Cyril/Jean)
Mr M S Flaving (Scott)
Mrs I Mallinson (Irene)
Mr J O'Neill (John)
Mr J Smith (Jack)
Mr R Owers (Rodney)
Mr and Mrs D Peckover (David/Jeanne)
Mr and Mrs G Popple (Geoffrey/Patricia)
Mr J E Sargeant (John)
Mr B Searson (Brian)
Mr P R Taylor (Paul)
Mr J Young (John)

Total – 23

Joining at Hull port

Colonel C J Dent (Charles)
Major and Mrs D L J Harrap (David/Meike)
Captain and Mrs R C Wilson (Bob/Jean)
Mr and Mrs L A Balding (Tony/Margaret)

Total – 7

Joining at Calais

Major General Sir Evelyn and Lady Celia Webb-Carter
Brigadier and Mrs J B K Greenway (John/Judith)
Brigadier M R N Bray (Michael)
Mr G Bullock (Geoffrey)

Total – 6

Joining at Agincourt

Mr C Boothman (Cliff)
Mrs K Shone (Kath)

Total – 2

Tour total – 38

The Battle of Agincourt 1415

Henry left Harfleur on 8 October, 1415, with the force carrying eight days' rations. The plan was to march directly to Calais, and sail back to England from there. Henry's advisers unanimously recommended against this, but Henry overruled them. Among other things, Henry probably hoped to escape the dysentery epidemic that was raging in Harfleur. The risks were considerable, as Constable d'Albret was known to be gathering a large force at Rouen.

Things went reasonably well until they reached the river Somme. They had planned to cross just below Abbeville, but there two problems with this. First, the river was flooded, making the ford very dangerous. Second, there was a large French force waiting on the other side. Henry marched upstream, looking for a safer ford, but be didn't find one until 18 October, at Nesle. By this time, the army was in pretty bad shape. Not only were rations low, but the epidemic had come along with them. d'Albret harassed the English for six more days. On 24 October, the English camped at Maisoncelles, and scouts reported that a very large French force was camped on the road to Calais. The English had marched 260 miles in 17 days, and they were not in good shape.

Henry ordered total silence in the camp, so that everybody to get a good night's sleep. They were so quiet that some of the French thought that they had snuck away in the night.

St. Crispin's Day (October 25th)

At dawn, both Henry and d'Albret laid out their forces near their respective camps. To start, the lines were a little over a mile apart. The plain between the armies was a gently rolling field, freshly ploughed and planted, about 900 yards wide. It had been raining continuously for two weeks, and the field was a sea of mud. The French had two very dense lines of armoured foot soldiers with crossbowmen and bombards between. Mounted knights guarded the flanks and formed a reserve in the rear. d'Albret's plan was to use the bombards to cut the English lines into smaller sections that could be handled individually. Unfortunately, everybody (including d'Albret!) wanted to be in the front line. It got so dense that the bombards couldn't be fired, as they would hit more French than English. They actually were fired once, to no effect.
Henry laid out his forces in the traditional English fashion, with men-at-arms flanked by wedges of archers, protected by large pointed stakes. (Horses won't charge at big pointy things.) The archers at the ends of the lines were positioned forward from the rest of the troops to give covering fire along the main front. This is an excellent defensive position, but it gives very little scope for attack.

After the forces were arranged, they sat and stared at each other for four hours. The English had no desire to attack, and the French were presumably not pleased at the idea of wading through a mile of mud. About 11 AM, as some of the French were sending their servants back to camp to bring lunch, Henry decided to force the issue. He ordered his troops to move the line forward, and to reset the positions within extreme longbow range from the French lines. He didn't have enough men-at-arms to form a reserve or to guard the camp. This was to have dramatic consequences later on.

As Henry had planned, the first volley of arrows goaded the French into attacking. The first attack was from the mounted knights on the flanks of the French position, intending to overrun the longbowmen protecting the English flanks. It was a disaster. While an English arrow would not normally penetrate a knight's plate armour, a horse cannot carry enough armour to be effective. Wounded horses threw their riders into the mud and trampled through the close-packed ranks of French foot soldiers. They also churned up the mud in front of the English positions, making things more difficult for future French attacks.

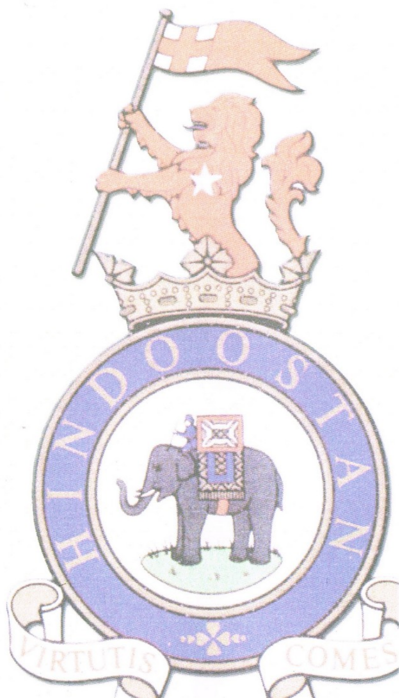
The main French attack was from the first line of men-at-arms. Unfortunately, everybody tried to push their way into the first line, including Constable d'Albret. As they marched toward the English, their line was squeezed together by the narrowing field, until they were so close together that they couldn't lift their arms to use their weapons. However, even with the mud and the crowding, the shock of the French men-at-arms hitting the English line was terrific, throwing the lines back for several yards.

It was, however, ineffectual. Despite some terrific fighting, the English line was never in any serious danger. While men-at-arms in plate armour are normally quite mobile, the combination of the mud and the crowding made them almost helpless. The English simply knocked them down, to drown or suffocate under fallen bodies. The second line of men-at-arms followed the first. Now, however, there was the added complication that the English positions were blocked by a wall of bodies. The second line had no better luck against the arrows, mud, and English men-at-arms than the first.

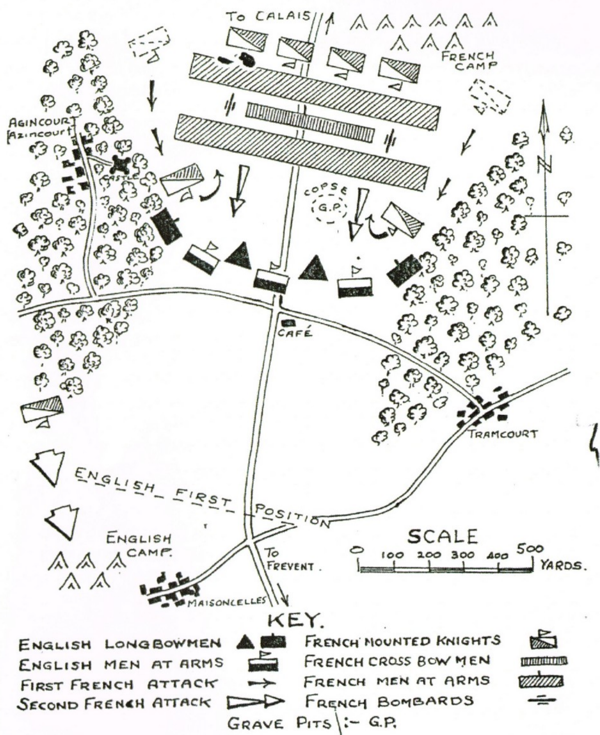
After the collapse of the second line, the English common soldiers started in on the traditional battlefield activity of taking prisoners for ransom and stripping the armour and jewellery from the dead. However, the remaining French forces, both the survivors of the first two lines and the entire third line, plus the crossbowman, easily outnumbered the English. As the counts of Marle and Fauquembergues tried to rally the French for a third attack, Henry gave the order to kill the prisoners. This removed the risk of the prisoners turning on their captors and freed their guards for duty elsewhere.

At roughly the same time, a group of French knights cut through the woods and attacked the English camp. In Shakespeare, the raid on the camp was Henry's reason for ordering the prisoners killed; I suspect that it was a later justification. Remember, the murdered prisoners represented a very large amount of ransom money, which Henry needed very badly.

The attack of Marle and Fauquembergues was defeated with no particular effort. Their charge (in which both of them were killed) was the last offensive action that the French mounted.



Agincourt
25th October 1415



The Battle of the Somme 1916

Comprising the main Allied attack on the Western Front during 1916, the Battle of the Somme is famous chiefly on account of the loss of 58,000 British troops (one third of them killed) on the first day of the battle, 1 July 1916, which to this day remains a one-day record. The attack was launched upon a 30 kilometre front, from north of the Somme river between Arras and Albert, and ran from 1 July until 18 November, at which point it was called off.

The offensive was planned late in 1915 and was intended as a joint French-British attack. The French Commander in Chief, Joffre, conceived the idea as a battle of attrition, the aim being to drain the German forces of reserves, although territorial gain was a secondary aim.

The plan was agreed upon by the new British Commander in Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, although Haig would have preferred an offensive among the open ground of Flanders. Haig, who took up his appointment as Commander in Chief of the BEF on 19 December 1915, had been granted authorisation by the British government, led by Asquith, to conduct a major offensive in 1916.

Although in actuality British forces comprised by far the bulk of the offensive forces, Joffre and Haig originally intended for the attack to be a predominantly French offensive. However the German onslaught at Verdun at the start of 1916, where the German Army Chief of Staff, von Falkenhayn promised to 'bleed France white', resulted in the diversion of virtually all French manpower and efforts.

The German Verdun offensive transformed the intent of the Somme attack; the French demanded that the planned date of the attack, 1 August 1916, be brought forward to 1 July, the aim chiefly being to divert German resources from Verdun in the defence of the Somme.

Haig took over responsibility from Joffre for the planning and execution of the attack. Haig meticulous preparations progressed slowly, much to Joffre's irritation. Haig intended to fashion the attack using the ideas of both himself and General Rawlinson, whose Fourth army was to spearhead the assault.

The attack was preceded by an eight-day preliminary bombardment of the German lines, beginning on Saturday 24 June.

The expectation was that the ferocity of the bombardment would entirely destroy all forward German defences, enabling the attacking British troops to practically walk across No Man's Land and take possession of the German front lines from the battered and dazed German troops. 1,500 British guns, together with a similar number of French guns, were employed in the bombardment.

Following the artillery bombardment, it was determined that a creeping barrage would precede the advancing infantry to the German front line, and onwards to the second and third trench lines. The Royal Artillery had prepared an underground network of telephone cables so as to enable forward observation officers to monitor and correct the barrage as the battle progressed.

With the conclusion of the advance bombardment Rawlinson's southern wing, at the centre of the attack line, was instructed by Haig to consolidate after a limited advance. Rawlinson's troops went into battle heavily-laden with supplies for that purpose. Meanwhile to the north the rest of Fourth Army, in addition to 1 Corps of General Allenby's Third Army, attempted a complete breakthrough, with cavalry standing by to fully exploit the resultant gap in the German lines.

Haig's background in cavalry – he served in the 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars – convinced him that the coup de grace of the attack would best be carried out by cavalry troops. Following the taking of the German lines, the plan was for the British to break through to Cambrai and Douai, thus breaking the German line in two.

Further south a subsidiary advance by the French Sixth Army was scheduled to start operations at the same time as 1 Corps.

27 divisions of men went into the attack – 750,000 men – of which over 80% were comprised from the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Ranged against them in the German trenches were 16 divisions of the German Second Army. The odds were apparently stacked heavily in the attacking force's favour.

However the advance artillery bombardment failed to destroy either the German front line barbed wire or the heavily-built concrete bunkers the Germans had carefully and robustly constructed. Much of the munitions used by the British proved to be 'duds' – badly constructed and ineffective. Many charges did not go off; even today farmers of the Western Front unearth many tons of unexploded 'iron harvest' each year.

During the bombardment the German troops sought effective shelter in such bunkers, emerging only with the ceasing of the British artillery bombardment, when the German machine guns were manned to great effect.

The attack itself began at 07:30 on 1 July with the detonation of a series of 17 mines. The first, which was actually exploded ten minutes early, went off at 07:20.

The detonation of this mine, the Hawthorn Crater – which remains visible today – was captured on moving film by official war photographer Geoffrey Malins.

The first attacking wave of the offensive went over the top from Gommecourt to the French left flank just south of Montauban. The attack was by no means a surprise to the German forces. Quite aside from being freely discussed in French coffee shops and in letters home from the front, the chief effect of the eight-day preliminary bombardment served merely to alert the German army to imminent attack.

As a consequence of the lack of surprise generated by the advance bombardment, and the lack of success in cutting the German barbed wire and in damaging their underground bunkers, the BEF made strikingly little progress on 1 July or in the days and weeks that followed.

More success was achieved by the French forces at the southern tail of the line, possibly because their advance bombardment was sprung only hours before the attack, thus ensuring a degree of surprise. In addition, von Falkenhayn believed that the French would not attack at all on account of their heavy losses at Verdun. By advancing in small groups, as they had at Verdun, the French troops achieved most of their objectives. Even so, the gains made here were consolidated upon rather than exploited.

The British troops were for the most part forced back into their trenches by the effectiveness of the German machine gun response.

Many troops were killed or wounded the moment they stepped out of the front lines into No Man's Land. Many men walked slowly towards the German lines, laden down with supplies, expecting little or no opposition. They made for incredulously easy targets for the German machine-gunners.

Despite heavy losses during the first day – 58,000 British troops alone – Haig persisted with the offensive in the following days. Advances were made, but these were limited and often ultimately repulsed. Rawlinson's forces secured the first line of German trenches on 11 July. On that day German troops were transferred from Verdun to contribute to the German defence, doubling the number of men available for the defence.

On 19 July the German defence was re-organised, with the southern wing forming a new army, First Army, under von Gallwitz. Gallwitz took overall responsibility for the conduct of the defence of the line.

Haig was convinced – as were the Germans – that the enemy was on the point of exhaustion and that a breakthrough was imminent. Thus the offensive was maintained throughout the summer and into November. The British saw few victories however: such as Pozieres, captured by two Australian divisions on 23 July; and those that were secured were not followed up.

In early September the French Tenth Army under Micheler joined the attack on a 20 kilometre front to the south. Meanwhile the British attack was renewed in north-east, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, by the Fourth Army on 15 September. This latter attack made use of tanks for the first time and deployed 15 divisions of men; even so, it gained under a kilometre of ground.

These first tanks, which totalled 50, were sourced from the Machine Gun Corps, 'C and 'D' Companies, and reached the Somme in September. Mechanical and other failures reduced the original number of participating tanks from 50 to 24. Whilst they achieved a large measure of shocked surprise when sprung upon the German opposition, these early tanks proved unwieldy and highly unreliable.

The tanks were rolled out at 06:20 on the morning of 15 September. General Gough's forces moved to force the enemy off the northern end of the main ridge and away from Fourth Army.

Rawlinson's troops were to break through the remaining enemy trench system while the French Sixth Army would attempt to clear the enemy from the British right flank. Meanwhile the Canadians were northwest of the Albert-Bapaume road and outpaced their seven tanks to capture Courcelette. Immediately south of them, the 15th Scottish Division, helped by a single tank, captured Martinpuich.

To the southeast, however, German forces in High Wood swept the ground with fire from each end, halting a number of tanks. Others found themselves lost, while yet others fired on their own infantry.

To the east progress to Flers was helped by the arrival of four tanks at a critical moment, the ruined village falling to a single tank assisted by mixed platoons of Hampshires and Royal West Kents.

Haig renewed attacks in this area again between 25-27 September, in the Battle of Morval and the Battle of Thiepval Ridge). British advances were small but were consolidated upon. Other attacks were launched by the British at the Battles of Transloy Ridges (1-20 October) and the Battle of the Ancre Heights (1-11 October). Similarly French attacks were continued in the south around Chaulnes, and in the centre east of Morval.

In October Joffre urged Haig to continue the offensive. By this time the French forces in Verdun were on the offensive and were gaining ground. Joffre was concerned that Haig should keep up the pressure on the Germans so as to prevent a diversion of German manpower back to Verdun to assist with the German defence there.

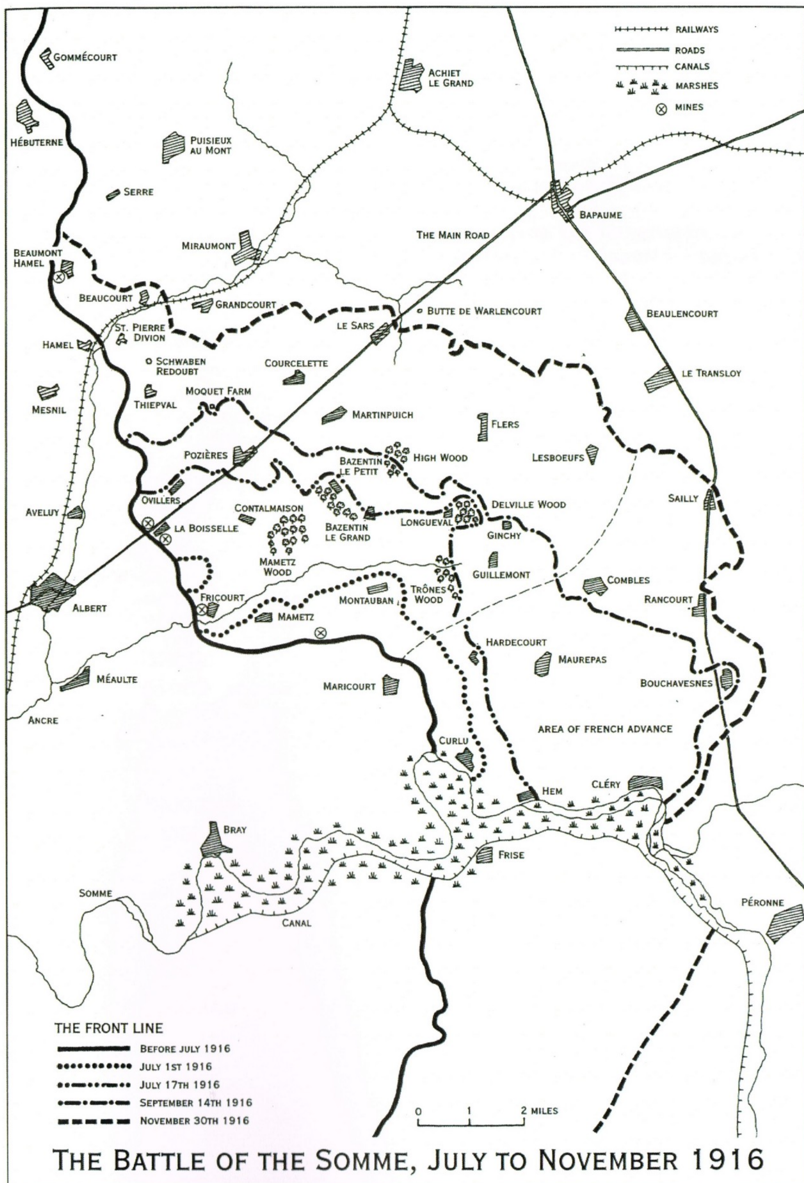
On 13 November the BEF made a final effort on the far east of the salient in the Battle of the Ancre, in which they captured the field fortress of Beaumont Hamel.

Despite the slow but progressive British advance, poor weather – snow – brought a halt to the Somme offensive on 18 November. During the attack the British and French had gained 12 kilometres of ground, the taking of which resulted in 420,000 estimated British casualties, including many of the volunteer 'pal's' battalions, plus a further 200,000 French casualties. German casualties were estimated to run at around 500,000.

Sir Douglas Haig's conduct of the battle caused – and still causes – great controversy. Critics argued that his inflexible approach merely repeated flawed tactics; others argue that Haig's hand was forced in that the Somme offensive was necessary in order to relieve the French at Verdun.

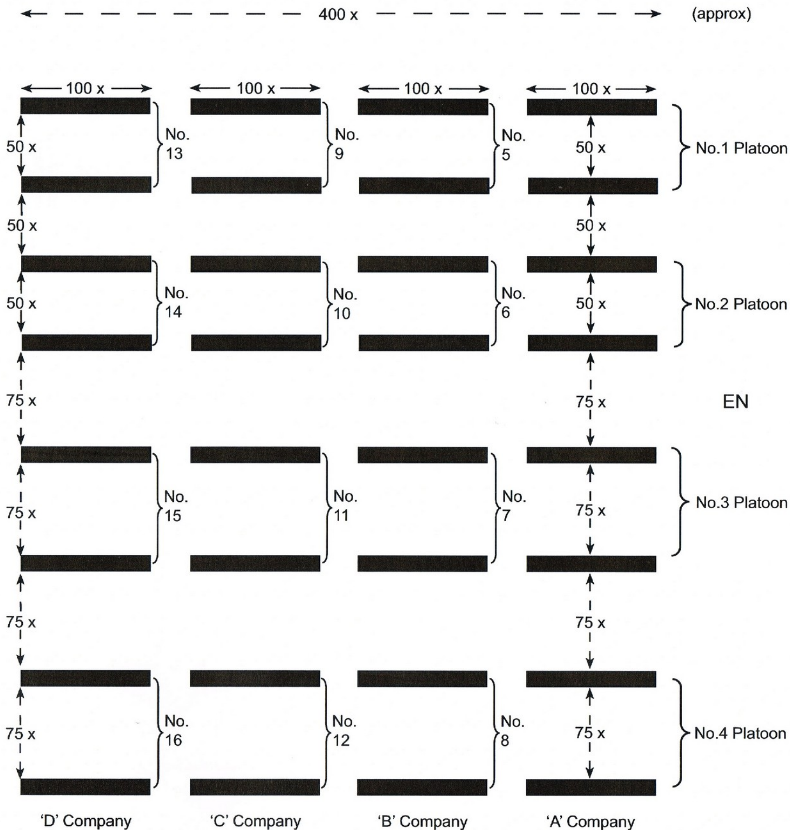
Formations on 1st July 1916

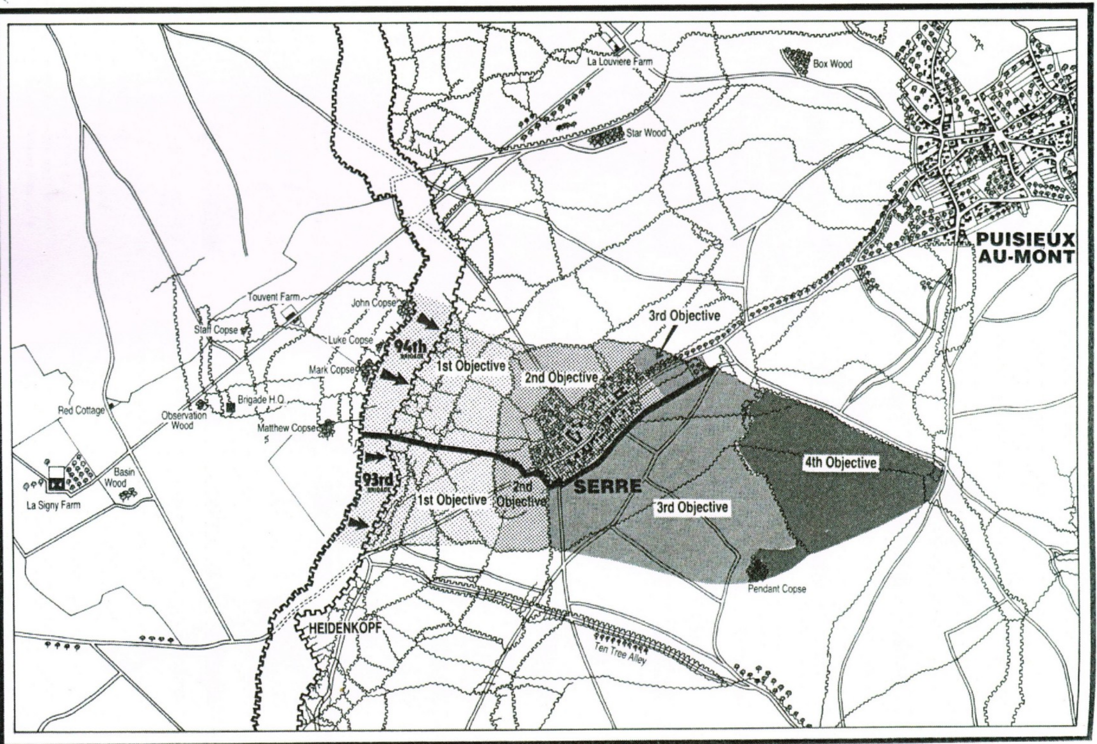
Army (Comd)	*Corps* (Comd)	*Division*	*Area*
3rd		46	GOMMECOURT
Allenby	VII	56	
	VIII	48 (South Midlands)	SERRE
	Hunter-Weston	31	
		4 (2 DWR)	BEAUMONT HAMEL
		29	
	X	36	THIEPVAL
4th	Morland	49 (West Riding)	
Rawlinson		32	
		25	
	III	8	OVILLERS
	Pulteney	19 (Western)	LA BOISSELLE
		34	
	XV	21	FRICOURT
	Horne	17 (Northern)(9 DWR)	MAMETZ
		7	
		23 (10 DWR)	In Reserve
	XIII	18 (Eastern)	
	Congreve VC	30	MARICOURT
		9 (Scottish)	



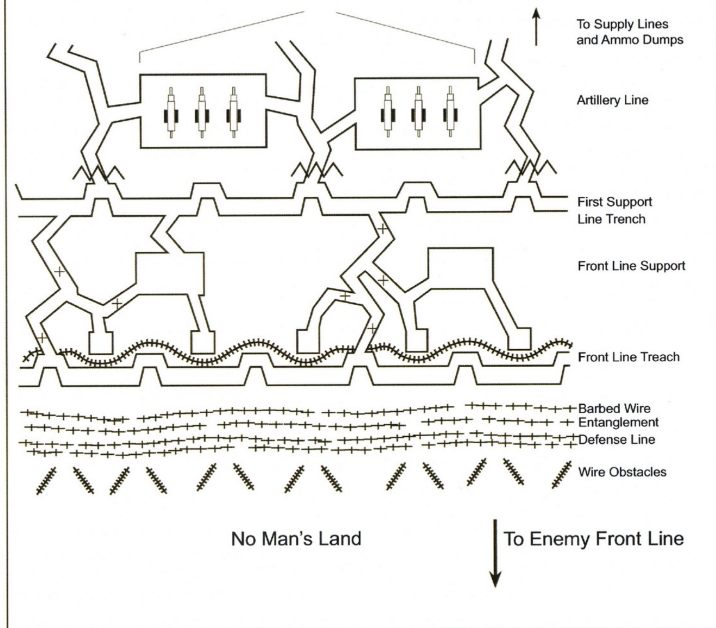
THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, JULY TO NOVEMBER 1916

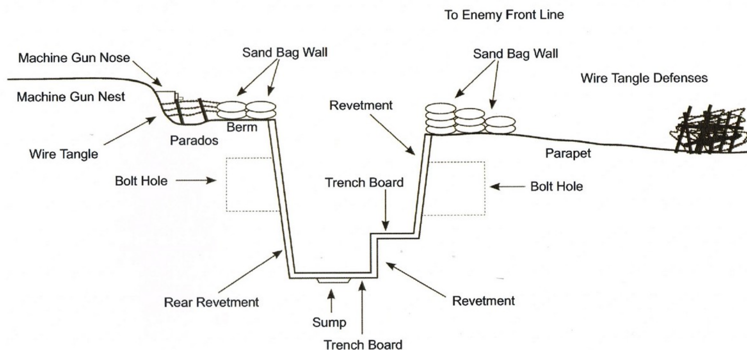
Formation of Battalions in Attack





La Louviere Farm
Box Wood
Star Wood
PUISIEUX
AU-MONT
Touvent Farm
John Copse
Staff Copse
Luke Copse
94th
Mark Copse
1st Objective
2nd Objective
3rd Objective
Brigade H.Q.
Red Cottage
Observation Wood
Matthew Copse
4th Objective
Basin Wood
93rd
La Signy Farm
1st Objective
2nd Objective
SERRE
3rd Objective
Pendant Copse
HEIDENKOPF
Ten Tree Alley


Trench System
To Supply Lines and Ammo Dumps
Artillery Line
First Support Line Trench
Front Line Support
Front Line Treach
Barbed Wire Entanglement Defense Line
Wire Obstacles
No Man's Land
To Enemy Front Line


To Enemy Front Line
Machine Gun Nose
Machine Gun Nest
Sand Bag Wall
Sand Bag Wall
Wire Tangle Defenses
Revetment
Berm
Parados
Wire Tangle
Parapet
Bolt Hole
Trench Board
Bolt Hole
Rear Revetment
Revetment
Sump
Trench Board

2nd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment
Orbat - 1 July 1916

Headquarters

Lt. Col. R.N. Bray
Act/Adjt Capt F.H. Fraser
Signal Offr Lieut H.R.Holdsworth
2/Lieut F.C. Glover
M.O. Capt G. McLeod R.A.M.C.

No. 1 Coy

Capt K. J. Milln S.L.I.
Lieut A.F. Hemming
Lieut L.C. Adye
2/Lieut H.K. Homfray

No.2 Coy

Lieut N.W. Hadwen +
Lieut S.R. Lord
2/Lieut D.M. Brown
2/Lieut H.R.Thelwell +
2/Lieut G.D. Johnston

No.3 Coy

Capt C.L. Hart
Lieut G.H. Sugden +
Lieut P.J. Sainsbury
2/Lieut C.W.G. Grinsby
2/Lieut C.R. Sanderson

No.4 Coy

Lieut R.N. Davis +
2/Lieut F.L. Harry
2/Lieut A.V. Maunder
2/Lieut C. H. Bowes +

Bombing Officer

2/Lieut S.B. Kington

Scout Officer

2/Lieut E.S. Plumb +

Bde Intelligence Offr

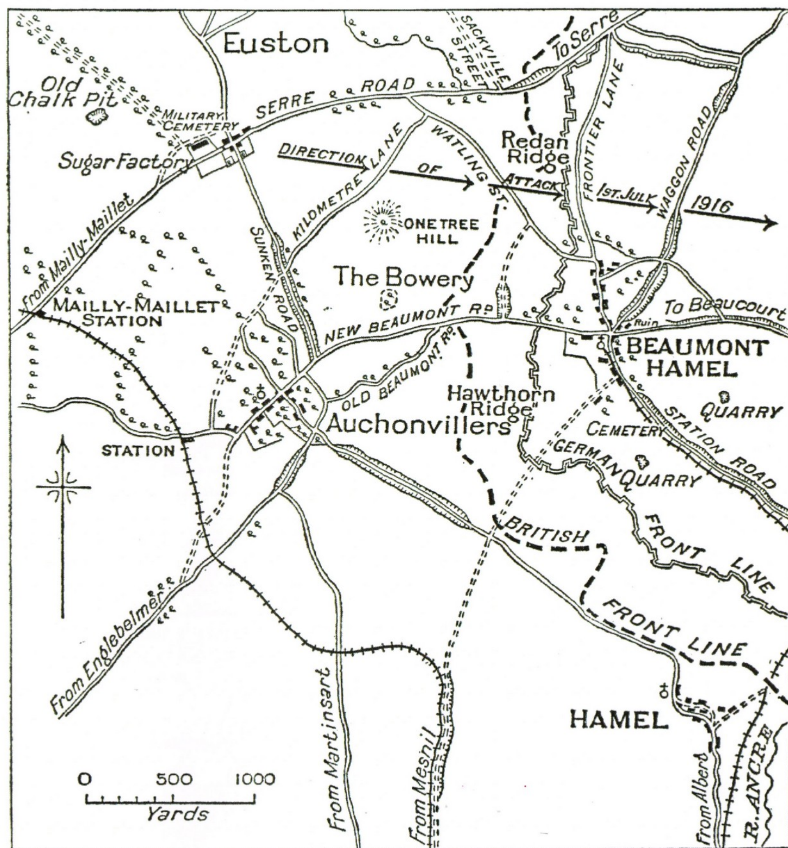
2/Lieut J.S, Millican +

Bde Carriers

Lieut A.W. Lawless
2/Lieut M. Graham

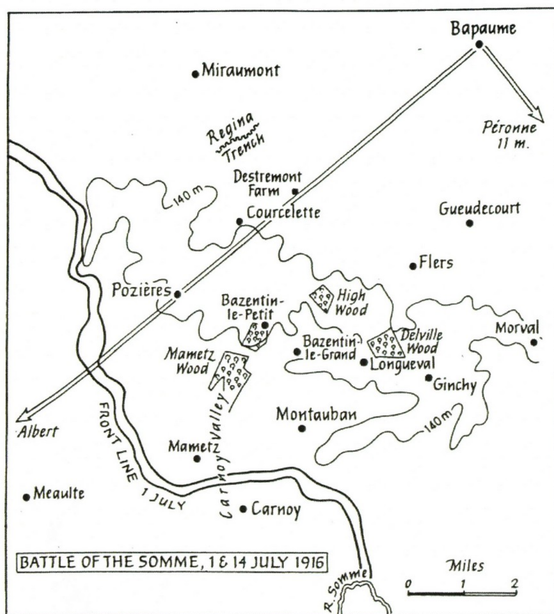
+ = Killed in action

Area of Attack
July 1st 1916

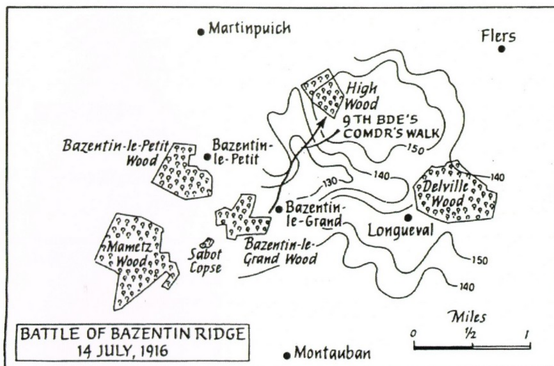


AREA OF ATTACK, JULY 1ST, 1916.

Battle of The Somme
1 & 14 July 1916



Battle of Bazentin Ridge
14 July 1916



10th Battalion The Duke Of Wellington's Regiment Officers – August 1916

CO	Lt Col S S (Slasher) Hayne
2IC	Maj R H Gill
Adjt	Lt H W Lester
RMA	Capt C Berry
Padre	Rev H W Wood

Coy Comds

A Coy	Capt H G Tunstill
B Coy	Capt J Atkinson
C Coy	Capt J C Bull
D Coy	Capt A O Pereira

Other Bn Officers

2 Lt H Harris +
2 Lt F H C Redington
2 Lt D L Evans
2 Lt E G Costello
2 Lt Hodkinson
2 Lt H Kelly
2 Lt Stafford +

Becourt Military Cemetery, Becordel-Becourt

Historical Information

The Military Cemetery was begun in August, 1915, by the 51st (Highland) Division, and carried on by the 18th and other Divisions in the line until the Battles of the Somme, 1916. It continued in use, chiefly by Field Ambulances, until April, 1917; and Plot II was made by the 18th Division at the end of August, 1918. There are now over 700, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, a small number are unidentified and a special memorial is erected to a soldier from the United Kingdom buried among them. Three German graves have been removed. The cemetery covers an area of 4,327 square metres and is enclosed by a rubble wall.

Roll of Honour

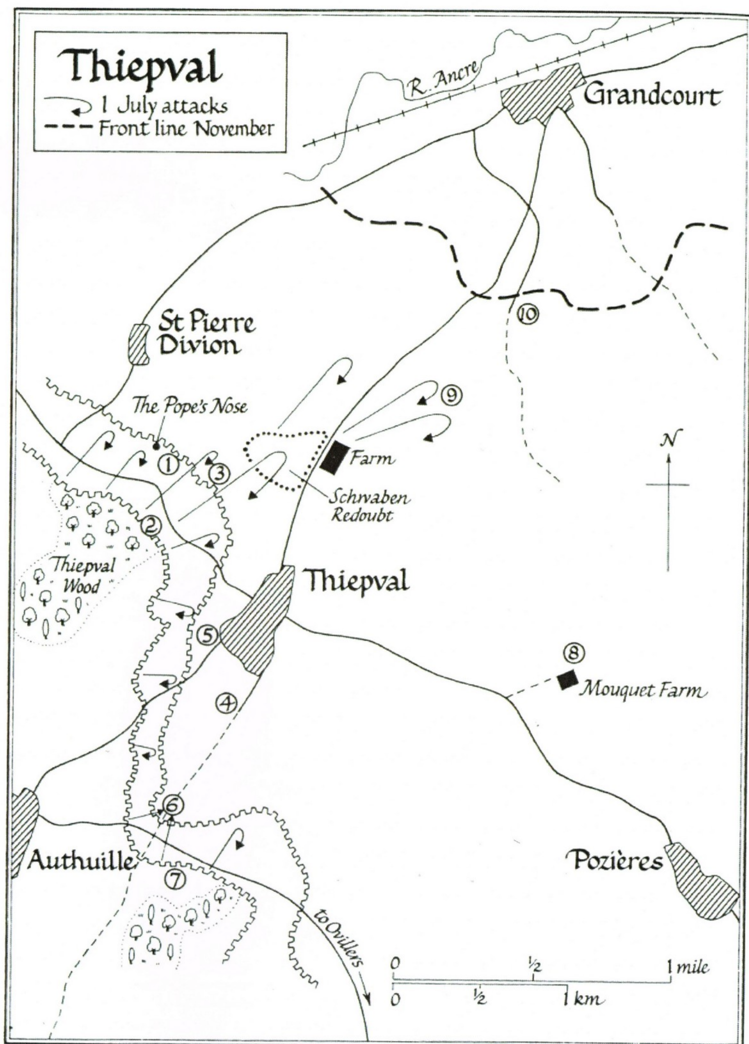
Captain	H M S	CARPENTER
Private	RICHARD DAVIES	ELLISON
Private	J	FIELD
Lieutenant	LEONARD	HAMMOND
Lieutenant	ADOLPH KEITH	LAVARACK
Second Lieutenant	WALTER DOUGLAS	TAYLOR

Victoria Cross - T/Captain H.Kelly
10th Battalion West Riding Regiment

London Gazette 25 November 1916

"For most conspicuous bravery in attack. He twice rallied his company under the heaviest fire and finally led the only three available men into the enemy trench and there remained bombing until two of them had become casualties and enemy reinforcements had arrived. He then carried his Company Sergeant Major, who had been wounded, back to our trenches a distance of seventy yards and subsequently three other soldiers. He set a fine example of gallantry and endurance."

Thiepval
1 July Attacks



1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment
Orbat - 3 September 1916

CO	Major J Walker
Adjt	Lt W C Fenton
IO	2Lt H H Ackroyd, MC
Lewis Gun Officer	2Lt H N Taylor
Bombing Officer	2Lt N Mellor
RMO	Capt S S Greaves RAMC
RSM	F P Stirzaker, MC +

A Company

OC – Lt W N Everitt, MC +
2Lt A E Hirst; +
2Lt G F Robertshaw w
CSM A Stirzaker, DCM +

B Company

OC – Capt C Hirst +
2Lt V A Horsfall; +
2Lt H E Pohlmann w
CSM W Medley

C Company

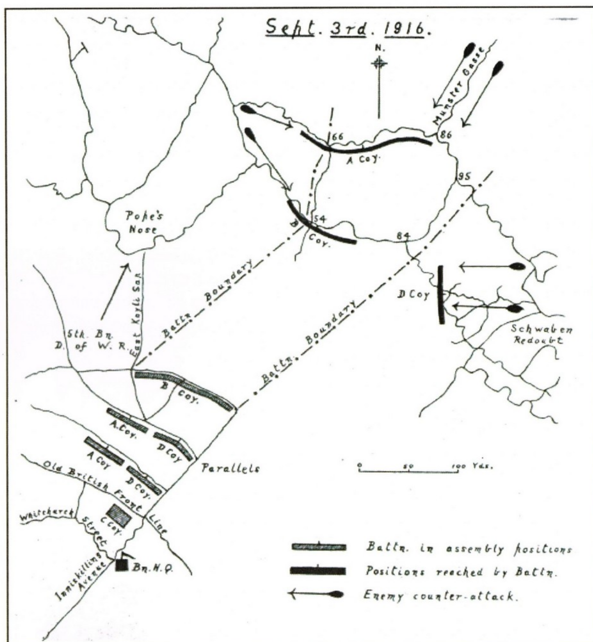
OC – Capt E N Marshall
2nd Lt F Walker;
2nd Lt W Smith w
CSM T H Greenwood +

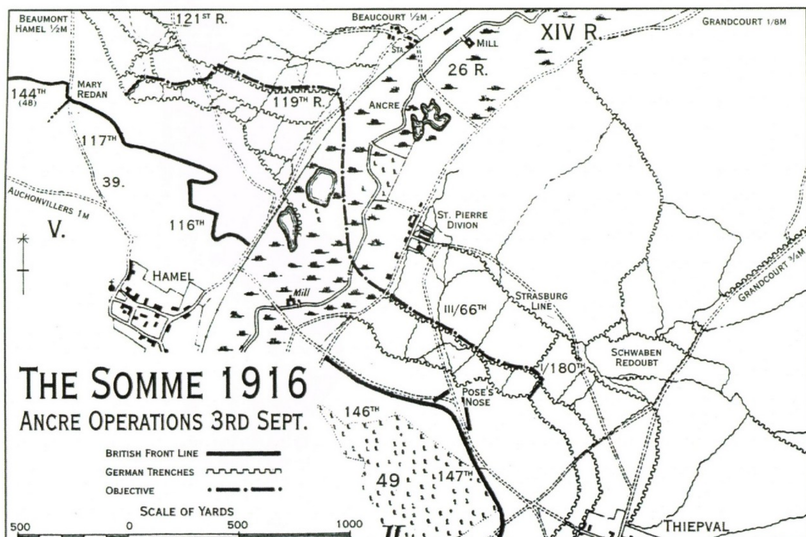
D Company

OC – Lt J T Riley +
2nd Lt A C Mee; +
2nd Lt C W Tomlinson +
CSM J C Walker +

Total Battalion strength: 18 Officers, 629 Other Ranks

+ = Killed in action


Sept. 3rd. 1916.
N.
Munster Gasse
66
86
A Coy.
95
Pope's Nose
54
B Coy.
84
D Coy
Schwaben Redoubt
Battn. Boundary
Battn. Boundary
5th. Bn. D. of W. R.
East Yorks Sap
B Coy.
A Coy.
D Coy
A Coy
D Coy.
Parallels
Old British Front Line
Whitchurch Street
C Coy.
Inniskilling Avenue
Bn. H.Q.
0 50 100 Yds.
Battn. in assembly positions
Positions reached by Battn.
Enemy counter-attack.


Beaumont Hamel ½m
121st R.
Beaucourt ½m
Mill
Sta.
XIV R.
Grandcourt 1/8m
26 R.
144th (48)
Mary Redan
119th R.
Ancre
117th
39.
Auchonvillers 1m
V.
116th
St. Pierre Divion
Hamel
Mill
III/66th
Strasburg Line
Grandcourt ¾m
Schwaben Redoubt
1/180th
The Somme 1916
Ancre Operations 3rd Sept.
Pope's Nose
146th
British Front Line
German Trenches
Objective
49
147th
Scale of Yards
500 0 500 1000
Thiepval

Mill Road Cemetery, Thiepval

Historical Information

Before the 1916 Battle of the Somme, Thiepval was in German hands, garrisoned by the 160th Regiment of Wurtembergers. On 1 July 1916, it was attacked unsuccessfully by the 36th (Ulster) Division and no further attempt on the village was possible until 26 September, when it was captured by the 18th Division. Thiepval remained under Allied occupation until 25 March 1918 when it was lost during the great German offensive, but it was retaken on the following 24 August by the 17th and 38th (Welsh) Divisions. Mill Road Cemetery was made in the spring of 1917 when the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg line allowed the battlefield to be cleared. At the Armistice, it contained 260 burials but was then greatly enlarged when graves were brought in from smaller cemeteries and from the battlefields of Beaumont-Hamel and Thiepval. There are now 1,304 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in the cemetery. 815 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to three casualties believed to be buried among them and three others buried in Divion Road Cemetery No 1, whose graves were destroyed by shell fire. The cemetery was designed by Sir Herbert Baker.

Roll of Honour

L/Cpl	HERBERT	ASPINALL
Private	E	BARBER
Private	C	BARRACLOUGH
Private	F	BEARDSELL
Private	GEORGE	BEAUMONT
Private	M	BENSON
Private	BERTRAM	BENTLEY
Private	GEORGE	BETHEL
Private	A	BLOOMER
Private	A	BOOTH
Private	J	BOOTH
Private	L	BRICK
Private	R	BROWN
Private	J W	BURROWS
Private	H	CARTER
L/ Sjt	H	CLIFF
Private	WILFRED	COATES
Private	S	COLDWELL
Private	H	COLE
Private	J	CONROY
Private	J	CONSTANTINE
L/ Cpl	J	CROWTHER
L/ Cpl	N	DENNISON
Sjt	W G	DENTON
Private	W R	DIXON
L/Sjt	W	DRAKE
C S M	HAROLD	DYSO
Private	A	EARNSHAW
Private	CHARLES	ELLIOTT
L/Cpl	F	ELLIS
Private	WILLIAM	EMBLETON
Private	J	EMSLEY
Private	M	FAHY
L/Cpl	J	FISHER
Private	T S	FOSTER
Private	HUBERT	FRANK
Private	W G	GALLAGHER
Private	G	GIBSON
Private	M	GILL
Private	BENJAMIN	GLEDHILL
Private	M	GREENHOUGH
Private	GEORGE I	HAMMOND
Private	H	HANSON
Private	R	HANSON
Private	E	HENSBY

Private	A	HIRST
Sjt	AUSTIN	HITCHEN
Private	GEORGE	HORNSBY
Private	RALPH	HORNSBY
Private	B	HORSFALL
Corporal	G E	HUTCHINSON
L/Sjt	SAM	JACKSON
Private	WILLIAM H	KILBURN
Private	T	LOCKWOOD
Sjt	JOHN	LORD
Captain	ARNOLD	McLINTOCK
Private	H	MITCHELL
Private	J	MYTTON
Private	H	NEWTON
Private	F	PARKER
Corporal	RONALD	PENNEY
Sjt	J	PHILIBIN
Private	E	RILEY
2Lt	JOHN	RILEY
Private	J	RILEY
Private	ALBERT	RISPIN
Private	G	RUTHERFORD
Corporal	S	SHARP
Lt	ARTHUR	SHARPE
Sjt	HORACE S.	SHAW
Private	JOHN	SHELLEY
Private	E	SLINGER
Private	J	SLOAN
Private	ARTHUR	SMITH
Private	C H	SMITH
Private	FRED	SOUTHWELL
Corporal	L	STEELE
Private	W	STOKES
Private	F	STUBBS
Private	J W	SYKES
Private	WILFRED	SYKES
Private	J	TAYLOR
Private	F	TEARNE
Sjt	HERBERT	THOMPSON
Private	JAMES	THORNTON
Private	T	VARLEY
L/Cpl	A	VINEY
Private	J	WARD
Sjt	MARCUS	WARDLE
Private	GEORGE	WILLIAMSON

Field General Court Martials - Death Sentences
1915 - 1918

Number	Name	Inits	Bn	Offence	Date of FGCM	Sentence/Commutation	Remarks
2524	**Crook**	R	1/6th	Sleeping on duty	28-Aug-15	5 yrs Penal Servitude	Awarded MM - LG 16 Nov 16
265611	**Maude**	G	1/6th	Sleeping on duty	28-Aug-15	5 yrs Penal Servitude	Awarded MM - LG, 7 Oct 18, Bar - LG, 17 Jun 19. kia 1 Nov 18.
	Colbeck	F	10th	Sleeping on duty	16-Oct-15	2 yrs Hard Labour	
24810	**Brook**	T	9th	Quitting his post	04-Dec-15	3 mnths Field Punishment	kia 25 Apr 17
	Birtle	A	2nd	Desertion	21-May-16	2 yrs Hard Labour	
	Anderson		1/4th	Disobedience	12-Jun-16	2 yrs Hard Labour	
	Pugh	P	1/7th	Cowardice	29-Jul-16	Not confirmed	
	Howard	J	1/7th	Sleeping on duty	23-Aug-16	2 yrs Hardbour	
	Wilson	T	1/5th	Desertion	12-Oct-16	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Moorhouse	C	2nd	Desertion	09-Nov-16	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Stead	F	2nd	Desertion	21-Nov-16	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Atkinson	F	1/7th	Desertion	26-Dec-16	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
10390	**Stead**	F	2nd	Desertion	11-Jan-17	Executed 12 Feb 17	
	Cunliffe	J	8th	Desertion	03-Feb-17	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Brown	J	10th	Desertion	18-Apr-17	10yrs Penal Servitude	
	Hampshire	F	2/5th	Desertion	07-Jun-17	15yrs Penal Servitude	
	Sweeney	P	10th	Desertion	17-Oct-17	15 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Montgomery	P	10th	Desertion	12-Dec-17	15 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Rickett	E	10th	Desertion	20-Dec-17	10 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Rabjohn	F	10th	Desertion	17-Jan-18	15 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Peddar	A	9th	Desertion	25-Jan-18	5 yrs Penal Servitude	
	Dickin	F	1/6th	Cowardice	18-May-18	10 yrs Penal Servitude	Letter of mitigation in Archives

The life and death of Private Harry Farr

Simon Wessely

J R Soc Med 2006;**99**:440–443

Last month the Defence Secretary Des Browne announced a formal pardon for Harry Farr, who had been shot at dawn for cowardice on 16 October 1916. The long-standing campaign for a pardon, not just for Harry Farr but for all those executed for military offences during the First World War, has been concluded. Most people will probably have been pleased by the result, and feel that justice has finally been done. Now that a pardon will be granted, it is timely to review what we know about the life and death of Harry Farr.

There is little dispute about the sequence of events on 17 September 1916 that led to the execution of Private Farr. Harry Farr was a member of 1st Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, which was taking part in the battle of the Somme. That day his battalion was moving from their rear positions up to the front line itself. At 9.00 am that morning Farr asked for permission to fall out, saying he was not well. He was sent to see the medical officer, who either found nothing wrong with him, or refused to see him because he had no physical injury—the Court Martial papers are unclear on this point. Later that night Farr was found still at the rear, and was again ordered to go the trenches. He refused, telling Regimental Sergeant Major Haking, that he 'could not stand it'. Then Hanking replied 'You are a fucking coward and you will go to the trenches. I give fuck all for my life and I give fuck all for yours and I'll get you fucking well shot'. At 11.00 pm that night a final attempt was made to get Private Farr up to the front line, and he was escorted forward. A fracas broke out between Farr and his escorts, and this time they let him run away. The following morning he was arrested and charged with contravening section 4 (7) of the *Army Act*—showing cowardice in the face of the enemy.

The Field General Court Martial took place 2 weeks later. Four soldiers gave evidence against Farr, confirming the general sequence of events, which Farr did not deny. Farr was not represented by a so called 'prisoner's friend' (this was not unusual[1]), but spoke in his own defence. He was asked by the president of the court whether he had the opportunity to report sick between the night of the offence and now; Farr replied that he had indeed had the opportunity but had not done so. When asked why Farr replied, almost certainly unwisely for his future, that this was because 'being away from the shell fire I felt better'. The Court then heard about his medical history and his disciplinary record, which, apart from a brief period of going absent without leave in 1914 had been exemplary. Private Farr had spent several months in a rear hospital in 1915 with a diagnosis of shell shock, had been treated by the medical officer with the same diagnosis in April 1916, and again for one day in July 1916. Unfortunately, the medical officer who had treated Farr was not able to give evidence: he had been severely wounded. Despite intense searching, we have found no other information about Farr's medical history; the records were almost certainly lost when the Public Records Office was bombed in 1940.

The Court Martial lasted less than an hour. For the military, it was probably an open and shut case. The evidence against Private Farr was overwhelming. He had absented himself from duty on several occasions, despite being told forcefully the consequence of his actions. The events took place 'in the face of the enemy'. He was found guilty, and sentenced to death.

Despite receiving the death sentence Harry could still have comforted himself that he was unlikely to be executed, since he would have known that most of those who received a capital sentence from a Court Martial were soon reprieved. Between August 1914 and October 1918 there were around 240 000 Courts Martial, of which 3080 resulted in a death sentence. Of these 3080, 346 (11%) were carried out, 2734 were not.[1] Private Farr was charged with cowardice. There were 551 Courts Martial for cowardice that resulted in a guilty verdict, but only 18 (3.3%) executions. No execution could take place until it had been confirmed by the Commander-in-Chief (France) Sir Douglas Haig, and in nine out of ten occasions he did not. Farr was one of the unlucky ones; and to understand why this was we need first to consider the military background to Farr's offence.

What was going through Haig's mind when he signed Private Farr's death warrant? To answer that we must be careful not to read history backwards. By 1916 there were large issues that preyed on the minds of the senior British commanders. It was not a foregone conclusion that the British Army would be able to continue to withstand the strain of the Western Front. Only a few months later the French Army would mutiny, and remain paralysed for most

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of 1917. The Italians collapsed at Caporetto, and the Russian armies disintegrated in the same year. In fact, the British Army did withstand the almost unimaginable strain, and in 1918 would win what many historians to be its finest feat of arms, but that was still to come.

Haig had reason to be worried. By 1916 most of the regular army, the 'Old Contemptibles' had gone. In their place came the citizen army, the Kitchener Army, followed by the conscripts of 1917. For regulars such as Haig these were viewed with suspicion. They were not lacking in patriotism or morale, but they were not proper soldiers. They had no professional military training, or previous service. No one knew how the mass citizen armies would withstand the new and terrible environment of industrialized warfare. Haig and his colleagues were constantly on the alert for signs of a reducing of morale, or a worsening of discipline, that might precede a catastrophic collapse or mutiny.

Haig, like all his colleagues, believed that the main reason that his men fought was because of their patriotism, sense of duty, leadership, and local *esprit de corps*. But if those were the carrots, there was also no dissention from the view that occasionally the stick was needed as well. The new army required a stern system of discipline much as applied to the pre war regulars if it was to endure. The regular army was expected to set the example—and Private Farr, as a regular, would be judged by those standards.

Yet even in the testing years of 1916 and 1917 it remained the case that, despite all the pressures, Haig still showed clemency to the vast majority of those sentenced to death for military offences. Why was Farr the exception? Part of the answer to that question lies in the exact circumstances of the fateful day when Farr refused RSM Haking's orders to go forward.

The Battle of the Somme had been renewed the day before, in what historians now call the battle of Flers-Courcelette. The West Yorks were due to join this battle the following morning as part of 6th Division's assault against the notorious fortified German position known as the 'Quadrilateral'.

Farr was moving through what was known as 'Chimpanzee Valley', where his unit was forming up. It was a particularly unpleasant location because of the proximity of the British artillery laying down the barrage for the attack the following day (Corns, personal communication). It was those guns, not the German guns as some think, that so disturbed Harry. War diaries for that day report intense British artillery fire for much of the 16 September, and then again intense fire directed at the Quadrilateral in the evening of the 17 September.

It would have been common knowledge that the battalion was to go into action the following dawn: as indeed it did. And it would be common knowledge that this would be costly: as indeed it was. There were 150 casualties out of a battalion strength of 600. So Private Farr's refusal to go to the trenches on the night of 17 September would have been interpreted by his comrades, NCOs and officers in the light of the forthcoming action. The four sergeants and privates who gave evidence against Farr all took part in the attack, and survived. And all would have had friends who did not.

It was a very bad night to break down. Usually soldiers facing a capital charge would have people to speak up for them, and give evidence as to their sound character, previous service and so on. Yet in Farr's case this kind of testimony is either absent or ambiguous. As the papers of the Field General Court Martial processed up the chain of command, being first reviewed by the legal section (who found no legal anomalies, and hence no grounds to quash the conviction), six different officers had the opportunity to add their comments. Farr's commanding officer was the first, and wrote:

> 'I cannot say what has destroyed this man's nerves, but he has proved himself on many occasions incapable of keeping his head in action and likely to cause a panic. Apart from his behaviour under fire, his conduct and character are very good.'

This was not very helpful, but it would have been the comments from General Cavan, GOC 4th division, that sealed Farr's fate:

> 'The charge of "cowardice" seems to be clearly proved and the Sgt Major's opinion of the man is definitely bad to say the least of it. The G.O.C. 6th Div. informs me that the men know the man is no good. I therefore recommend that the sentence be carried out.'

Nothing was said at the Court Martial about what had happened to the battalion in the hours after Farr's desertion, but nothing would have needed to have been said. Everyone knew. There were and are considerable difference in military honour and codes of behaviour between 'scrimshanking'—breaking the rules, stealing better provisions, avoiding onerous duties, missing out on parades and so on, and letting your mates down and leaving them in danger. The former is seen with approval by your comrades, if not the NCOs or officers, but the latter is not.[2] It may have been for this reason that Farr's comrades were so reluctant to speak up for him, testimony which if present would normally have led to a reprieve. None was forthcoming for Farr—rather the opposite. And so Rawlinson, and then Haig, endorsed the sentence, and the last act of the tragedy took place at Carnoy at dawn on the 18 October 1916.

But there is another factor which, to our modern mind, seems to sum up the insensitivity and injustice of Farr's fate. Prior to his refusal to join his comrades in the trenches ready for the attack on the Quadrilateral, Farr had on at least three occasions being hospitalized with a diagnosis of shell shock. Even his commanding officer admitted that Farr's 'nerves' had been destroyed. Surely, that should have led to a more compassionate verdict? Was Farr not suffering from what contemporary psychiatrists call post-traumatic stress disorder, which was the opinion of the modern psychiatrists who wrote in support of Gertrude Farr's plea for pardon for her father?

To understand why this did not happen, we need to think a little more about the concepts of psychological disorder that existed in 1916. In fact, shell shock is not just another name for post-traumatic stress disorder. Each disorder had different symptoms. We for example have shown that the 'flashback', characteristic of modern post-traumatic stress disorder, is absent from medical files of shell shock victims of the First World War; but this is not an important point. More importantly, it is not true to say, as many do, that the military and medical authorities were blind to the psychiatric consequences of war. The sheer scale of the psychiatric casualties meant that this was impossible. But what was different was their understanding of why men broke down in battle, or more particularly, why they did not get better.[3]

By 1916 it was accepted that many men could break down if pushed long and hard enough. But if a person was fundamentally 'sound', provided that he was managed correctly—and, in particular, not given a medical label nor sent to a rear hospital for a prolonged period of time—this condition ought to be short lived. But if a person did not recover, despite good management, then the war was only the trigger, the real causes of the prolonged breakdown lying elsewhere. The true cause was either inheritance, some form of constitutional weakness, or genetics as we would say now; alternatively, if the doctor was more aware of Freud and his theories, then it was the soldier's early life and upbringing. Either way one's card was marked long before the person joined up. A short-term breakdown could be the result of the war, but the longer the condition persisted, the more likely it was to be the result of a defect in character. The officers and medical officers of the First World War were Victorians and Edwardians, to whom character mattered, and mattered immensely.

At the end of the War a Royal Commission was formed to try and understand exactly what shell shock was, and why had it become such a problem. Rather than accepting that psychiatric breakdown was the inevitable result of modern war, and that 'every man has his breaking point' (a conclusion that was reached only after the Second World War[4]), they instead preferred views such as those of Lord Gort VC, who told them shell shock was a regrettable weakness, and was not found in good units. The Commission concluded that good soldiers, properly led, with good morale and good training, should not break down.[5] All their witnesses also told them that shell shock was contagious and hence a threat to fighting spirit—so Farr's commanding officer comments that he was 'liable to cause a panic' awakened every suspicion about shell shock in the military mind, and did not help him.

So how could one separate out those who refused to fight for legitimate reasons, and deserved sympathy, from those who refused to fight because they were cowards? It was not easy. What does modern psychiatry say? Nothing. I searched in vain every contemporary textbook of psychiatry that the Maudsley Hospital possesses for any mention of the word cowardice, but it is entirely absent. We are never called on to even consider the question, thankfully. But back in 1916 they did not have that luxury, and the distinction was, literally for Private Farr, a matter of life and death. Eventually the best guidance that the Shell Shock Commission could give was that if a man had previously shown courage, then he should not be considered a coward.[6] A man who had 'done his bit' should, and indeed did, receive more sympathy and understanding than one who had not. It was a moral matter. Even in the modern army it helps to have 'earned' your breakdown.

So the label of shell shock, which to our modern mind is synonymous with psychiatric disorder, and should automatically have meant mercy for Farr, was more ambiguous to the people of 1916. It was already falling into disrepute, and was being increased seen on both sides of the trenches as a convenient medical label for people to avoid their duties, and would be banned completely as a diagnosis in 1917.[7,8] It was not, however, the case that mental illness could never be a defence to a capital charge. Lt Sidney Stuart Hume, for example, shot an orderly in 1918, but was found insane by the same rules that still apply today, and was committed to Broadmoor, where he remained until 1976 (Barham P, personal communication). But Harry Farr was not insane. Others were sometimes reprieved because they had obvious signs of other mental disorders—but at his trial Farr was found to be in a 'satisfactory' mental condition by the medical officer, whatever that meant. More importantly, Farr himself had unwisely told the president of the Court Martial that away from the guns he was now better. This would have been seen as incompatible with a total nervous collapse. Medical officers did frequently send soldiers back down the line for nervous problems—it had happened to Farr on three previous occasions—but not the night before a big attack. Only 2 months before Farr's fateful day Lt Kirkwood RAMC, a medical officer with the 11th Border Regiment, had certified that one-third of his battalion were unfit to take

part in a planned trench raid because they were suffering from 'some degree of shell shock'. He was relieved of his post the following morning.[9] When the needs of the military conflicted with the needs of the individual, there was no doubt on whose side the medical officer was meant to be.

We can be sure that on the night of 17 September 1916 Harry Farr was in a state of intense fear. There were no psychiatrists available on the Western Front (psychiatrists were mainly asylum doctors anyway who looked after the insane), but if a modern psychiatrist had made the journey back in time to interview Farr, it is probable the diagnosis would be of some form of anxiety, phobic or post-traumatic stress disorder (the diagnoses are not exclusive). A phobic disorder is when a person experiences severe irrational disabling symptoms out of proportion to any actual risk. There is no rational reason to be crippled with anxiety when confronted with a spider, nor to have panic attacks inside a supermarket. But there was nothing irrational about Farr's fears that night—indeed, one might argue that refusing to go 'over the top' was the most rational response to the situation: a veritable Catch 22. And that night Farr would not have been alone in experiencing intense fear—there were probably few around him who did not feel something similar as they faced the prospect of attacking the notorious Quadrilateral the following morning. What the Court Martial had to consider was that Farr did not control his fears, whilst his comrades did.

Modern psychiatrists like me can count themselves lucky that we will never be placed in the situation of judging Harry Farr's behaviour and those of his comrades. Instead, those who did have the task of judging Farr's actions were faced with a dilemma. They wished to, and usually did, show concern for the welfare of the individual soldier. But they also wanted to promote order and discipline, and to ensure that soldiers continued to risk their lives in combat. They believed that this required sanctions up to the supreme penalty for those who tried to avoid those duties. It was always a balance between showing mercy and enforcing discipline. Although the usual outcome was the former, for Private Farr they choose the latter.

Speaking now personally, I wish that they had not. It seems very probable that Farr was suffering from a psychiatric disorder, even if we do not know which one. We are more sympathetic towards psychiatric breakdown now, although perhaps not as much as we think we are. Anyway, irrespective of Private Farr's mental state, I remain utterly opposed to the death penalty for any reason. But that was not the view in 1916, either in the military or in civil society. Our social climate has changed, both towards the death penalty and towards psychiatric illness, and thank goodness for that.

But greater compassion is not necessarily the same as greater understanding. We should be careful of viewing the past through our modern sensibilities. The best we can do is to try and understand the actions of all the men of 1916, including Private Farr and those who judged him, and not to make apologies for either. Nor should we succumb to the temptation to rewrite history to make ourselves feel more comfortable about the past.

In his recent social history of the British soldier in the First World War Richard Holmes[10] probably got it about right when he gave his thoughts on the subject of military executions in the First World War:

> '. . . the most that one can say is that the overwhelming majority were justly convicted by the law as it then stood it was indeed a hard law but it was, in general, fairly applied. But like so much else about the war, the issue divides head from heart and if my head applauds the logic of capital sentences, they still break my heart'.

Acknowledgments I wish to thank Corporate Memory at the Ministry of Defence for obtaining the relevant War Diaries. I am also grateful to Cathryn Corns, Ben Shephard, Edgar Jones, Peter Barham, Paul Lerner and Tim Finnegan for their comments.

Competing interests Simon Wessely is Co-Director of the King's Centre for Military Health Research, part of King's College London. He is also Honorary Civilian Advisor in Psychiatry for the British Army.

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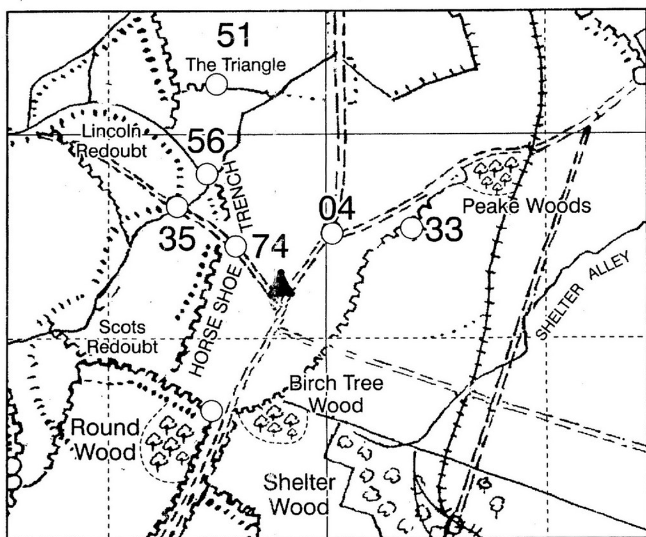
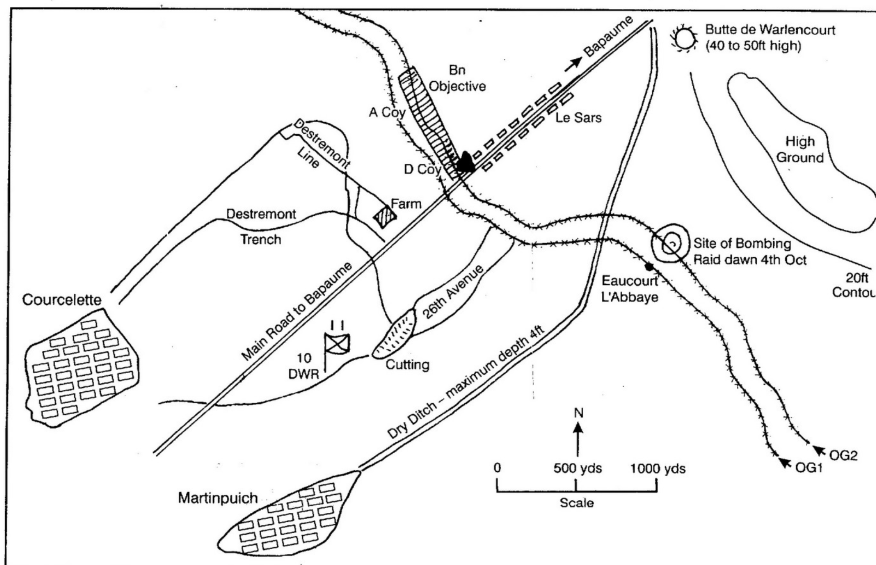
Notes

Bailiff Wood
The Cutting
PEARL
Contalmaison
ALLEY
Acid Drop Copse
Mam
Woo
51
The Triangle
Lincoln Redoubt
56
Cemetery
PEARL
QUADRANGLE SUPPORT
ALLEY
TRENCH
35
04
33
Peake Woods
74
WOOD SUPPORT
SHELTER ALLEY
QUADRANGLE ALLEY
HORSE SHOE
Scots Redoubt
QUADRANGLE
TRENCH
WOOD TRENCH
Birch Tree Wood
Round Wood
6th Dorsets
Shelter Wood
BOTTOM ALLEY
The Quadrangle



10th DWR - Action of 5th-6th July 1916

Scale: 1,000 yards squares



Le Sars – 4th October 1916