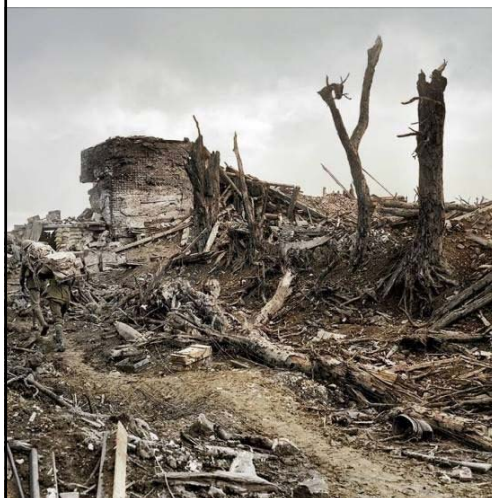




1

Pozières – Mouquet Farm 1916



THE RUIN OF POZIERES WINDMILL
WHICH LIES HERE WAS THE CENTRE
OF THE STRUGGLE IN THIS PART OF
THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD IN JULY
AND AUGUST 1916 IT WAS CAPTURED
ON AUGUST 4TH BY AUSTRALIAN
TROOPS WHO FELL MORE THICKLY ON
THIS RIDGE THAN ON ANY OTHER
BATTLEFIELD OF THE WAR

C E W Bean

2

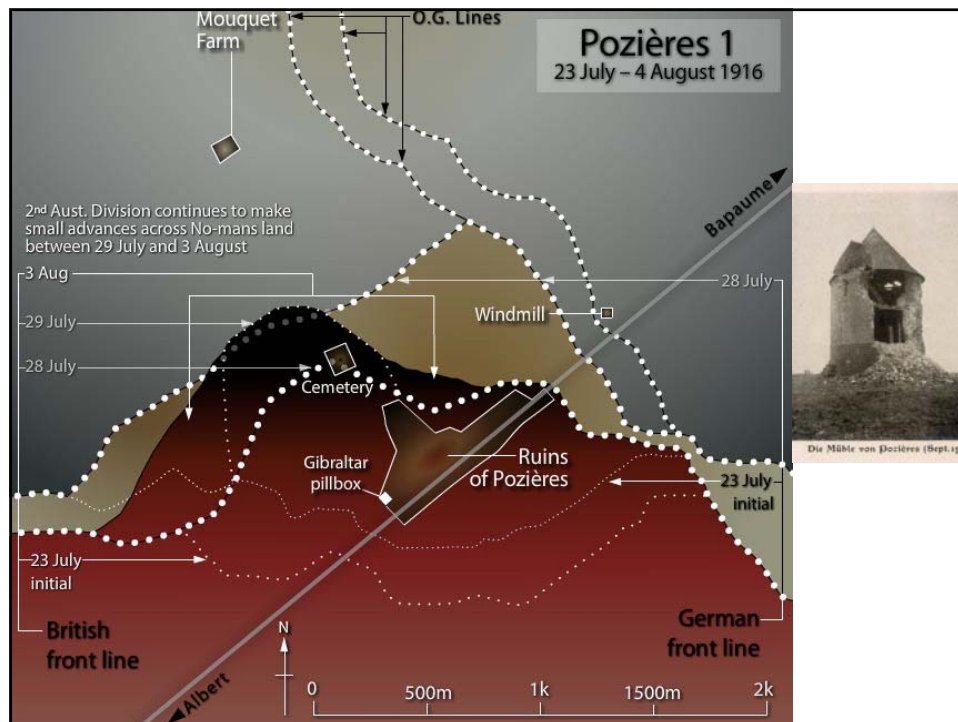


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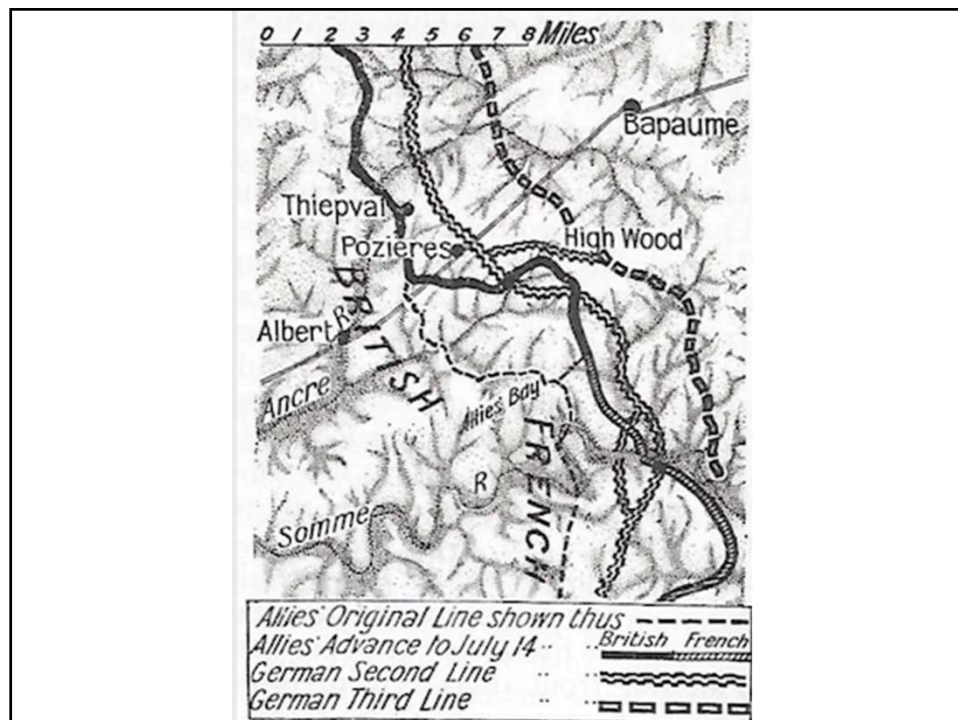
“Mouquet Farm has entered
Australian military lore as the
‘unachievable object’, repeatedly
attacked and always lost.”

Meleah Hampton

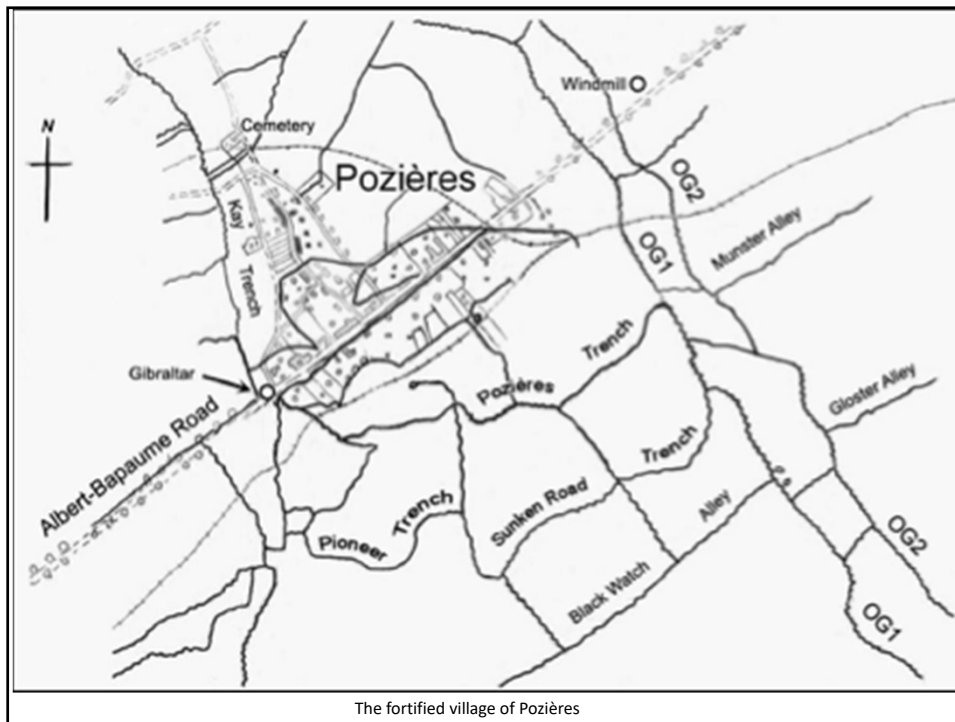
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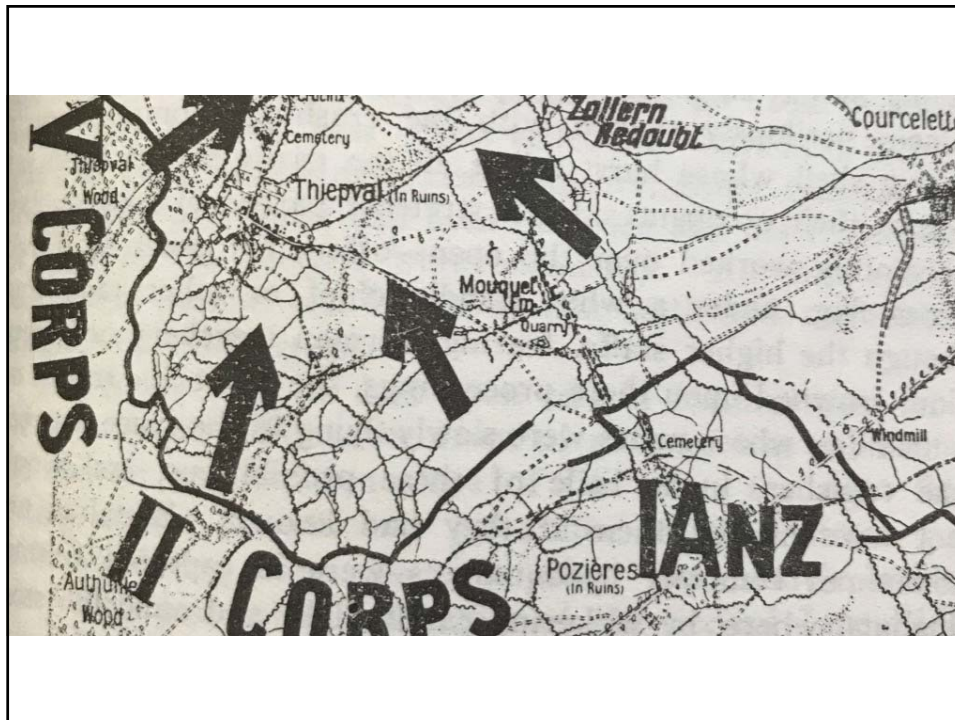
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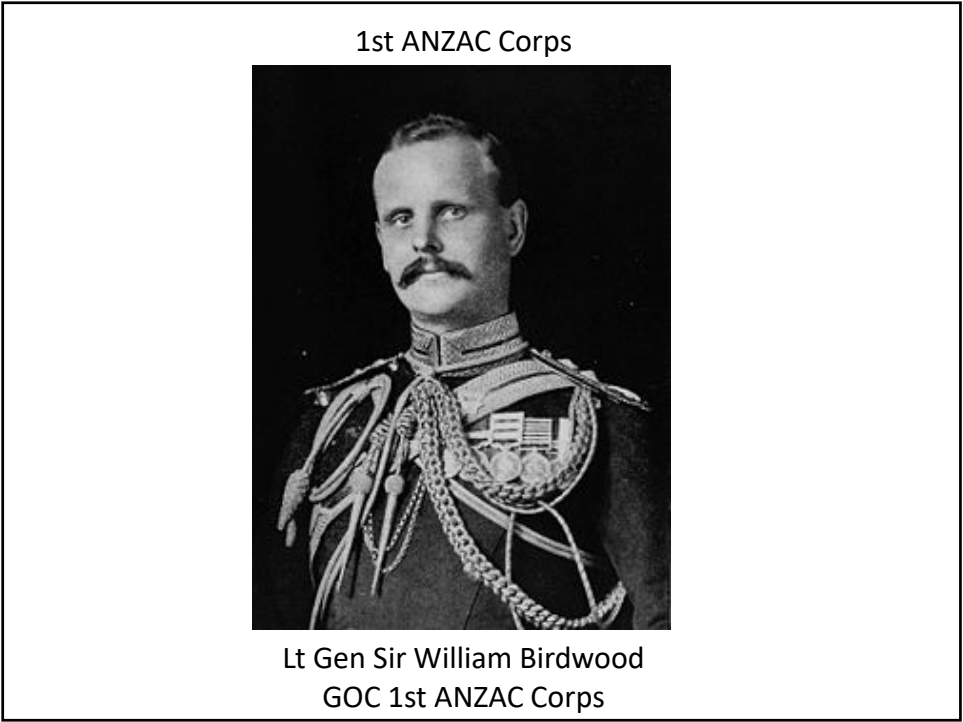
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8



9

Expansion of AIF – Jan 1916								
Division	Brigade	Battalion	To	Division	Brigade	Battalion	To	From
1 st	1 st	1 st NSW	53 rd NSW	4 th	4 th	13 th NSW	45 th NSW	
		2 nd NSW	54 th NSW			14 th Vic	46 th Vic	
		3 rd NSW	55 th NSW			15 th QT	47 th QT	
		4 th NSW	56 th NSW			16 th SW	48 th SW	
	2 nd	5 th Vic	57 th Vic		12 th	45 th NSW		13 th NSW
		6 th Vic	58 th Vic			46 th Vic		14 th Vic
		7 th Vic	59 th Vic			47 th QT		15 th QT
		8 th Vic	60 th Vic			48 th SW		16 th SW
	3 rd	9 th Qld	49 th Qld		13 th	49 th Qld		9 th Qld
		10 th SA	50 th SA			50 th SA		10 th SA
		11 th WA	51 st WA			51 st WA		11 th WA
		12 th TWS	52 nd TWS			52 nd TWS		12 th TWS
2 nd	5 th	17 th to 20 th NSW		5 th	8 th	29 th Vic		
	6 th	21 st to 24 th Vic				30 th NSW		
	7 th	25 th Qld				31 st Qld		
		26 th QT				32 nd SW		
3 rd	9 th	27 th SA			14 th	53 rd NSW		1 st NSW
		28 th WA				54 th NSW		2 nd NSW
	10 th	33 rd to 36 th NSW				55 th NSW		3 rd NSW
		37 th to 39 th Vic				56 th NSW		4 th NSW
		40 th Tas			15 th	57 th Vic		5 th Vic
3 rd	11 th	41 st to 42 nd Qld				58 th Vic		6 th Vic
		43 rd SA				59 th Vic		7 th Vic
		44 th WA				60 th Vic		8 th Vic

10

Maj Gen Sir Harold
"Hooky" Walker
GOC 1st AIF Division

- Born 1862 and commissioned into British Army 1884
- Served Sudan, India, South Africa and Ireland
- 1915 Chief of Staff of Birdwood's new ANZAC Corps
- Landed ANZAC 0800 on 25 April and took command of NZ Inf Brigade then 1st Aust Brigade (after death of Col MacLaurin)

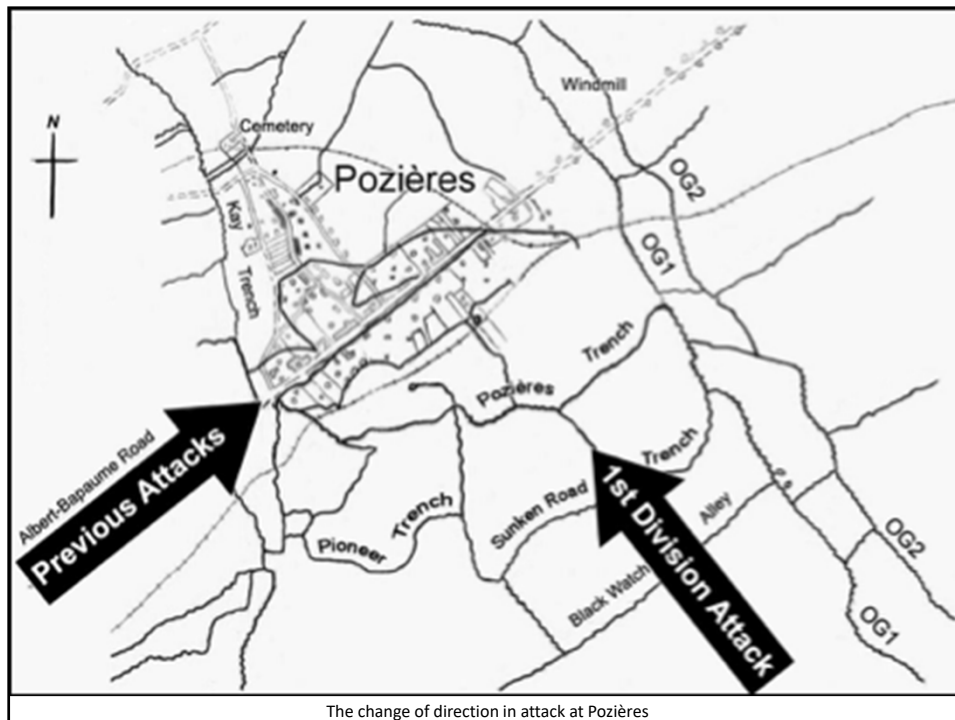


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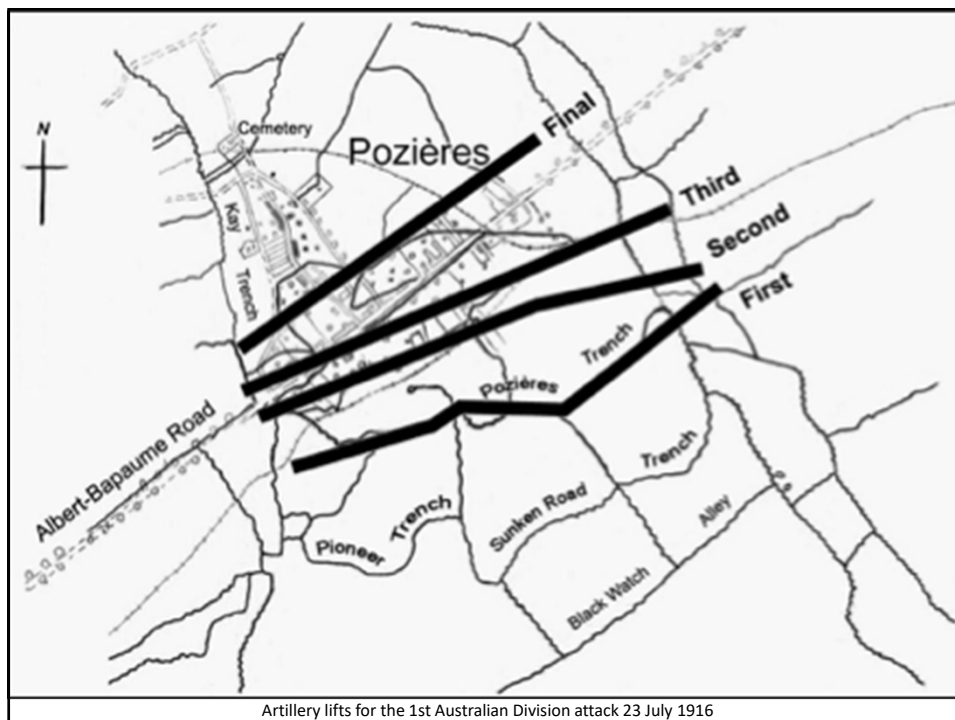
Maj Gen Sir Harold "Hooky" Walker

- July 1915 assumed command 1st AIF Div after death of Maj Gen Bridges. Remained in command until July 1918, when senior AIF commands were "Australianised"
- Oversaw transformation of 1st Div from an inexperienced formation to one equal to the best in the British Army
- Capable and astute, Walker often stood up to senior commanders and looked out for the well-being of his men, especially where he considered operational plans to be dangerously inappropriate
- Highly regarded by his men, Walker was finally replaced in 1918 much to the regret of his officers and men

12



13



14

Maj Gen James Legge GOC 2nd AIF Division

- 53 years old
- Army career of administrative and quartermaster roles
- Served as Australia's representative on Imperial General Staff before war
- Chief of General Staff since outbreak of war until briefly commanded 1st Div (1 month on Gallipoli)
- Many well placed friends and political clout



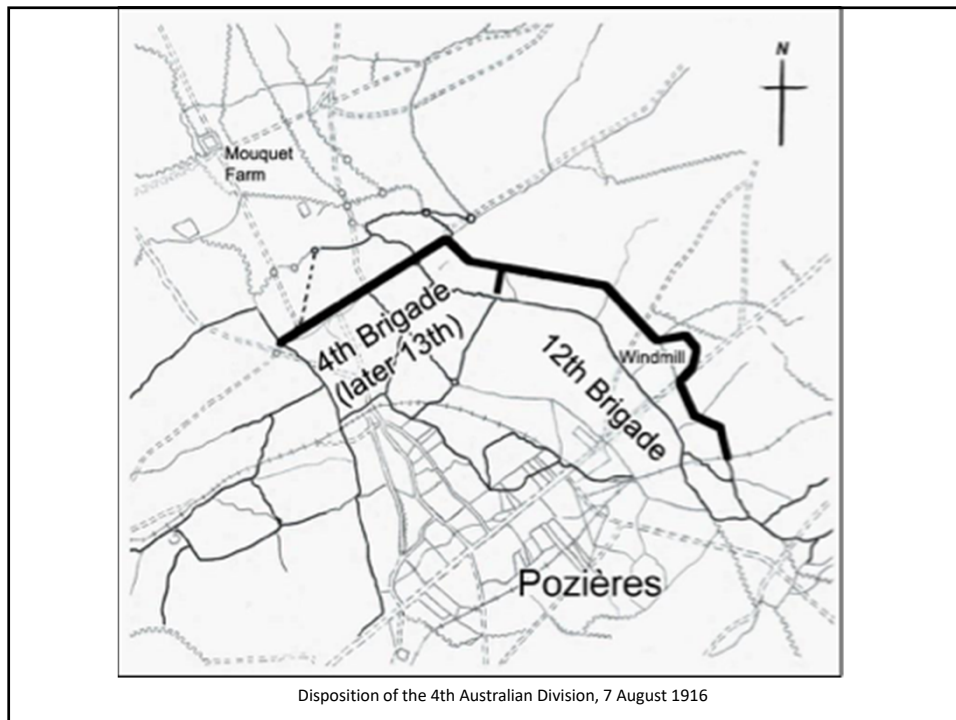
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Maj Gen Sir Herbert Cox GOC 4th AIF Division

- Aged 57 in 1916, Herbert Cox had graduated from Sandhurst in 1880
- Prior to the First World war, Cox saw service and action in Afghanistan, Burma, India and in the Boxer Rebellion
- After holding senior appointments in India Cox was given command of 29th Indian Brigade, which he lead at Gallipoli. Wounded at Gallipoli and evacuated, in 1916 Cox was promoted Major General and given command of the newly formed 4th AIF Division



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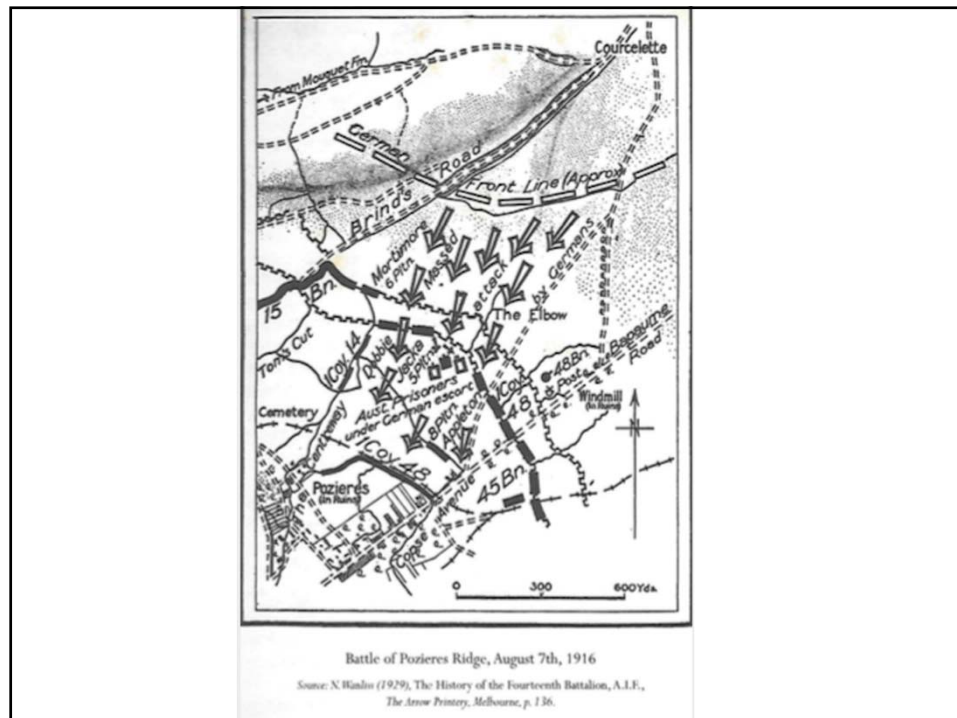
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- But Gough issued a memorandum on 3rd August that caused great problems for the men of 4th Division. He urged corps commanders to impress on subordinate commanders to take energetic & offensive action “instead of waiting for orders from above”
- This set the stage for quickly & poorly planned attacks that were in fact counter-intuitive to a considered broad front approach. He basically removed himself from control.
- This meant that during 4th Division’s first spell of 8 days they took part in 2 larger actions included in more than 6 battalion or larger actions and many smaller ones
- This was also in an environment where the Germans were increasingly anxious to regain ground and launching bigger and more determined counter-attacks with increasingly vicious artillery support
- So the situation faced by 4th Division was the most critical faced, to date, by any of the three AIF Divisions at Pozières
- Even as the relief was going on the artillery bombardment intensified to what CEW Bean describes as “the crowning bombardment of the whole series.” And that the bulge the Australians had developed “now permitted the enemy artillery to shell them from the rear, Thiepval way, as well as from front and both flanks. A great part of their front line was now completely enfiladed by German batteries and the loss was heavy.”

19

- On the night of 6th August the bombardment was so heavy and the trenches so completely destroyed that the men basically sheltered in the old German deep dugouts as a means of survival. OG2 was only being lightly held by small outposts
- But the Germans launched a counter-attack at 0700 on 7th August on the front being held by 4th Brigade and passed through OG2, over the deep dugouts in OG1 capturing Australians and advancing towards Pozières village
- Lt Albert Jacka and 8 men were sheltering in one of the dugouts in OG2 and the Germans had passed over in the barrage, thrown a bomb down and posted a guard
- Jacka climbed the stairs and shot the guard. He then led his men in line and attacked the Germans from the rear. Other isolated men joined and as the Germans turned in confusion the captured Australians joined in and then the neighbouring 48th Battalion joined in.
- The surviving Germans were captured, the lost ground retaken (plus more) and the counter-attack to re-take Pozières heights failed.
- But the cost was great – in 2 days of artillery and counter-attack 48th Battalion lost 598 men, 45th Battalion lost 345 and Jacka’s company in 14th Battalion lost 150 men

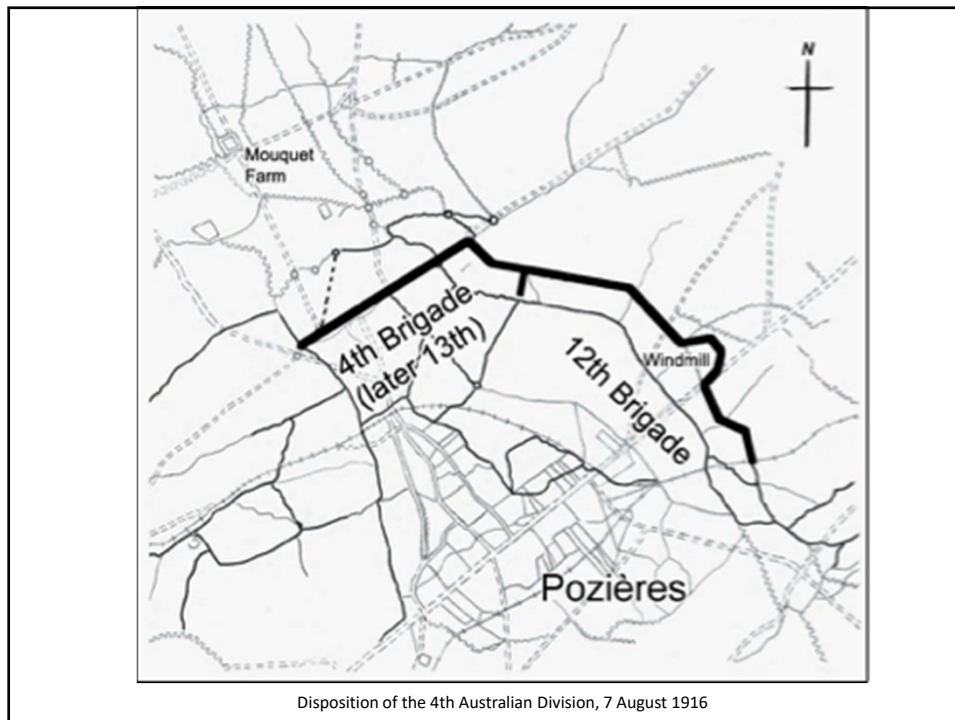
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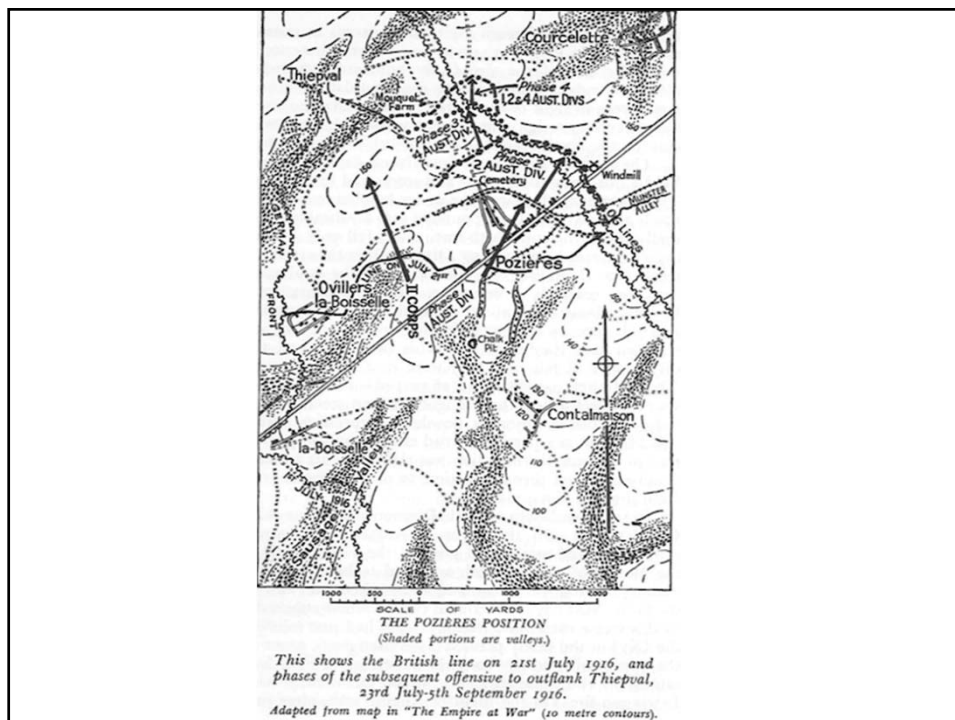
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- CEW Bean in his Official History describes the relief of 2nd Division as the end of the Battle for Pozieres Heights and the entry of 4th Division as the beginning of the 'Advance to Mouquet Farm'
- But the reality is that the advance to Mouquet Farm was in response to an attempt by Reserve Army to encircle Thiepval from the north (by V Corps) and the south (by II Corps and 1 ANZAC Corps)
- The 1 ANZAC Corps advance would be undertaken by 4th Brigade initially and then 13th Brigade with 12th Brigade allocated a defensive/holding role on the right
- The 8 days the 4th Division were in the line their 8+ attacks were at brigade then battalion levels that took place in an environment of continuing heavy enfilading artillery and machine gun fire and an increasingly disconnected relationship between infantry and artillery plans and reality
- Altogether these 17 days (plus the 8 of 4th Div) was incredibly costly with the three divisions suffering 16,780 casualties (5285, 6846 & 4649)

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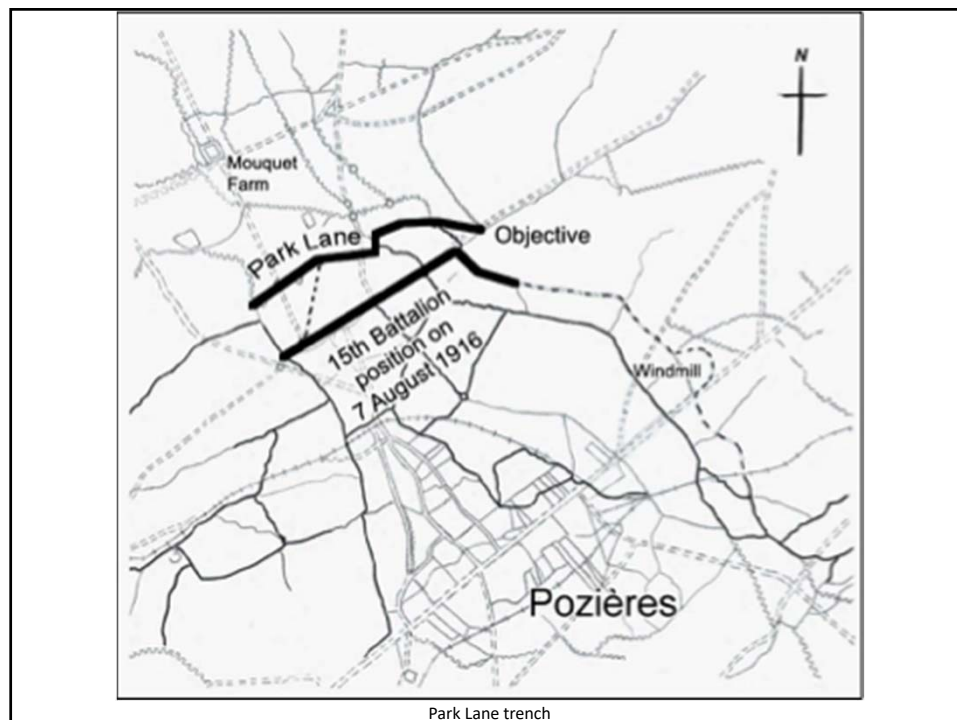
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- So 4th Brigade found itself under ferocious bombardment and facing immediate heavy German counter attacks (20 men to two battalions strong) with parts of the line repeatedly changing hands. Also the trench system had ceased to exist in places as a result of the pulverizing artillery fire
- Defense was characterized by thinned out units using Lewis guns that called on artillery to break up the Germans as they massed for attack.
- 4th Division concentrated on the left of its line (4th Brigade) as it represented the offensive direction towards Mouquet Farm and Thiepval.
- But the defensive lines of 12th Brigade suffered continual losses repulsing German attacks
- The first offensive action by 4th Brigade took place on 8 August, one day after relieving 2nd division
- It was meant to be a diversion to an attack by 4th Army at Guillemont that was 'to distract the enemy's attention from the point of attack and to diminish hostile artillery fire at that point'
- The objective was Park Lane trench – only about 250 yards from the Australian jumping off trench, along a front of no more than 900 yards

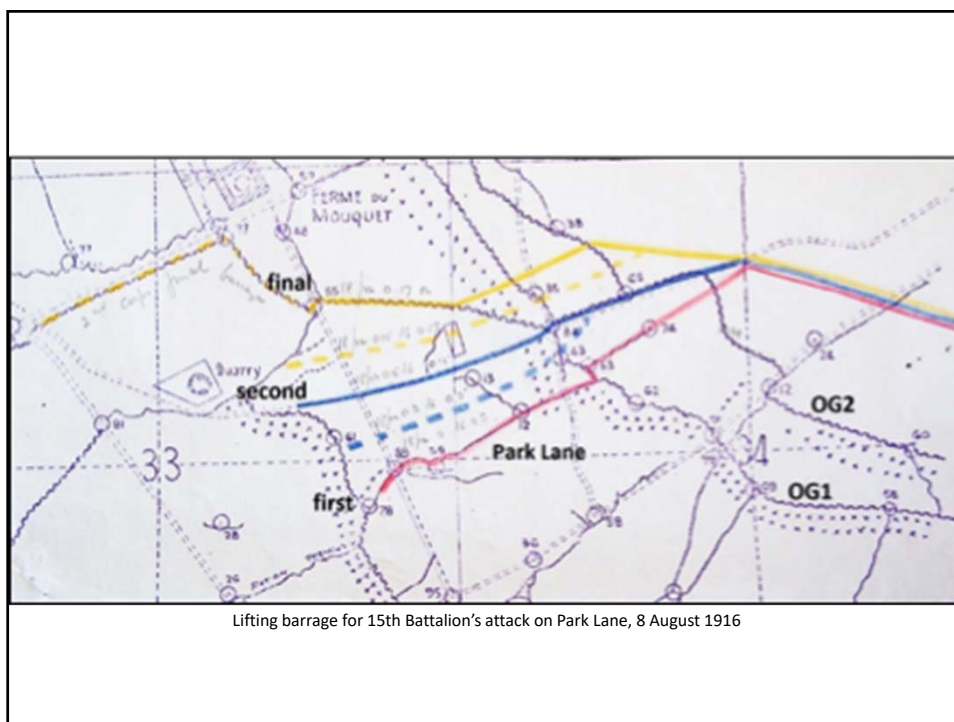
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- The attack was to be supported on the left by 7th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment, 35th Brigade, 12th Division and would be undertaken by the 4th Brigade's 15th Battalion, commanded by Lt Col James Cannan, with support of a company from 16th Battalion.
- The artillery barrage supporting the attack was the strongest fired by 1 ANZAC Corps so far and involved a lifting barrage – BUT
- The barrage started on the objective, Park Lane, with 3 minutes fire, then lifted to a second line beyond Park Lane for a 10 minute barrage before lifting to a third line about 150 to 300 yards beyond Park Lane. Also the lifts would pause for midway between jumps for 2 to 5 minutes resulting really in 4 lifts of 50 yards, supposedly to assist the infantry to stay closer to the barrage.
- But the only objective was Park Lane the target of the initial barrage so all the other fancy lifting was beyond the infantry's objective and of no use
- The plan involved the use of 3 waves to attack a single objective:
 - Wave 1 – 2 platoons from each company plus Lewis Guns & preceded by scouts
 - Waves 2 & 3 – 1 platoon of each company
- Apparently the waves were meant to reinforce the others at Park Lane before thinning out for defence with Lewis Guns in no man's land and a series of defensive trenches behind

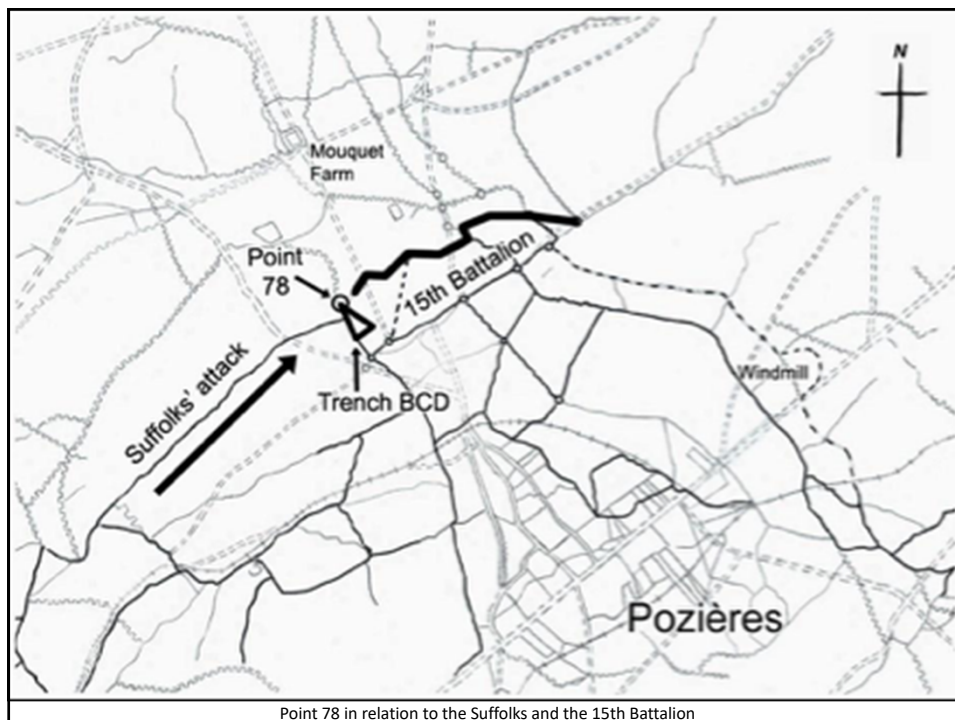
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- The attack went ahead at 2120 on 8 August and reached the objective all along the line and proceeded to dig in after suffering heavy casualties
- Communications were cut during this phase and 4th Brigade only learnt of the success at 0145 on 9 August
- Meanwhile 15th Battalion were waiting for support from the left, ie 7th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment.
 - 7th Battalion were meant to move along Ration Trench to take a strong point known as Point 78 that was on the 15th Battalion's left at the end of Park Lane
 - The attack was to be undertaken by 1 platoon moving along the trench with bayonets and 1 platoon moving up on each side of the trench – there was no artillery support for this attack
- This attack was meant to take ration trench and Point 78 thus securing 15th Battalion's left flank
- However Point 78 was in fact a triangle of heavily fortified trenches that was strongly armed with machine guns
- Although increasingly aware of the strength of Point 78, 7th Suffolks did not increase the strength of their attack and it remained primarily a raid up a trench

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Point 78 in relation to the Suffolks and the 15th Battalion

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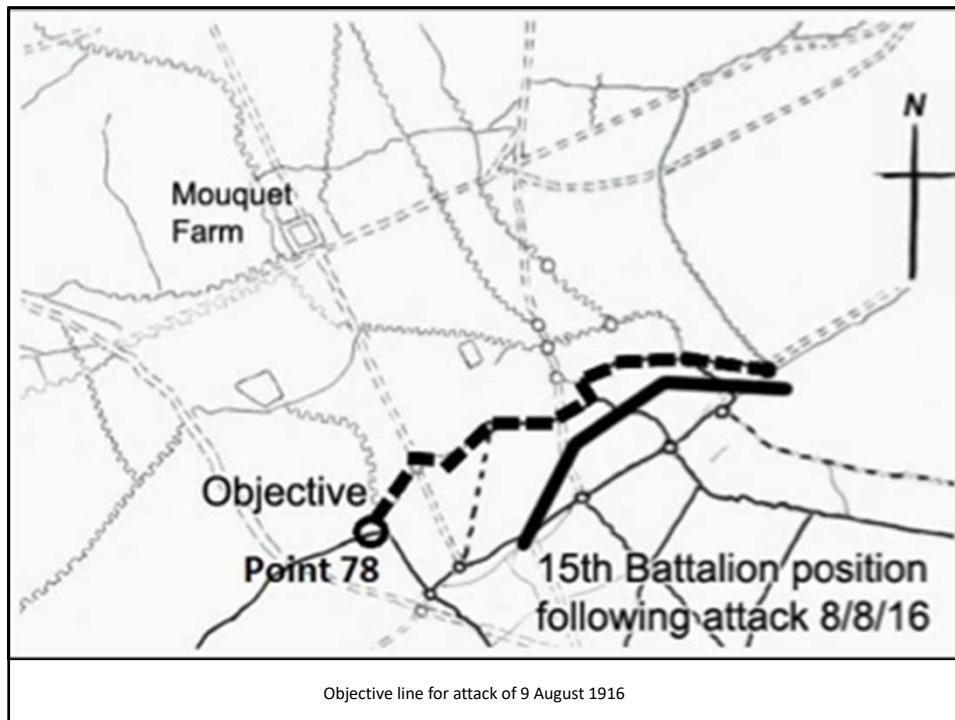
- After a promising start the 7th Suffolk's raid ended disastrously and they failed to get closer than 60 yards from Point 78 after taking very heavy losses – leaving 15th Battalion's left flank dangerously up in the air and open to heavy enfilading machine gun fire
- By 0500 with Point 78 still in German hands Lt Col Cannan was forced to withdraw his left flank while retaining 2/3 of the original gains.
- In fact 15th Bn had not only taken Park Lane but had unknowingly advanced beyond it in places which was to have consequences shortly
- The failure to take Point 78 resulted in 1 ANZAC Corps hurriedly planning on 9 August a second attack to address the shortfalls of the first attack. This rushed planning was of no strategic or tactical importance as the supposed reason for the attack on 8 August was a diversion to the Guillemont attack.
 - The drive for this second attack may have been to achieve a better link between 4th Brigade and 35th Brigade – but there was already a strong link just to the rear, or
 - Perhaps it was motivated to make corps, or divisional, command look better if all the self-imposed objectives were achieved
- Point 78 was the main objective and the 4th and 35th Divisions agreed their boundaries would shift to move this objective within 4th Division's sector

31

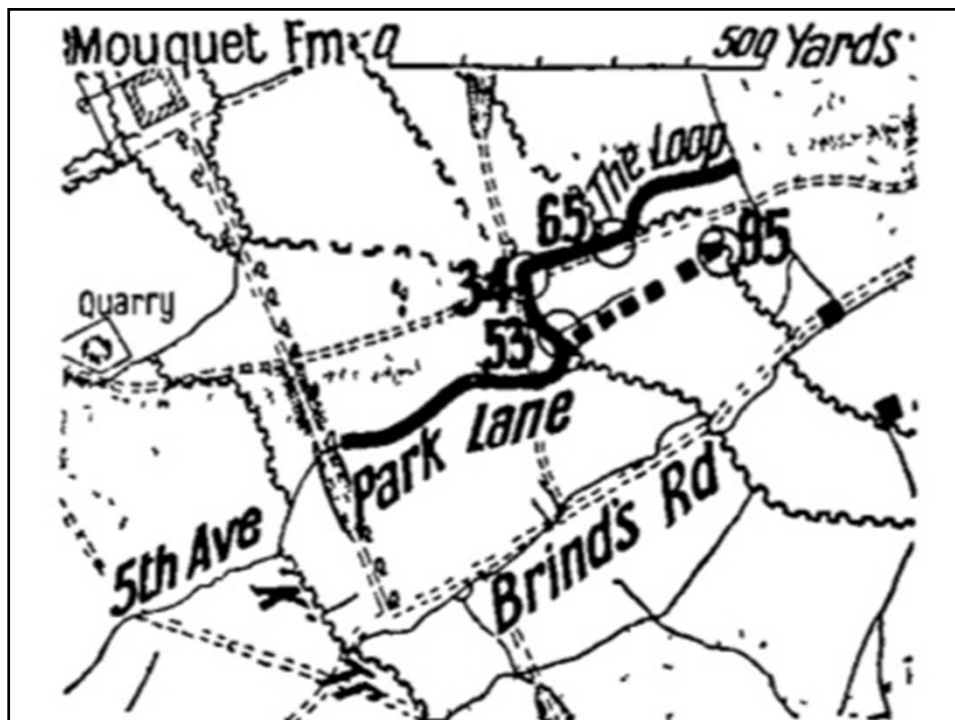
- The attack on 9 August was given to Lt Col Drake-Brockman's 16th Battalion which was wedged into the space between 15th AIF and 7th Suffolks Battalions. With almost no time for infantry or artillery planning a very simple plan was put in place for midnight:
 - "the intense bombardment of the objective will be commenced. Prior to the barrage lifting the first wave will move forward as close to the barrage as possible and rush the trench the moment it lifts. As soon as the line has been secured it will be consolidated and held as lightly as possible."
- CEW Bean noted that the bombardment fell on those 15th Bn troops in the line they thought was Park Lane but was in fact beyond it and they had to retire while the bombardment was under way, returning to occupy their positions afterwards
- Learning from 7th Suffolks' experience (and their dead lying in front of the Point 78 trenches) 16th Bn attacked Point 78 obliquely and not front on.
- After jumping off in good time 16th Bn reported within 3 hours its objectives captured and an hour later reported:

"everything successful. Have joined up with 15th Battalion on my right flank and Suffolks on my left flank. Am consolidating positions."
- 70 German prisoners were captured and a number of machine guns.

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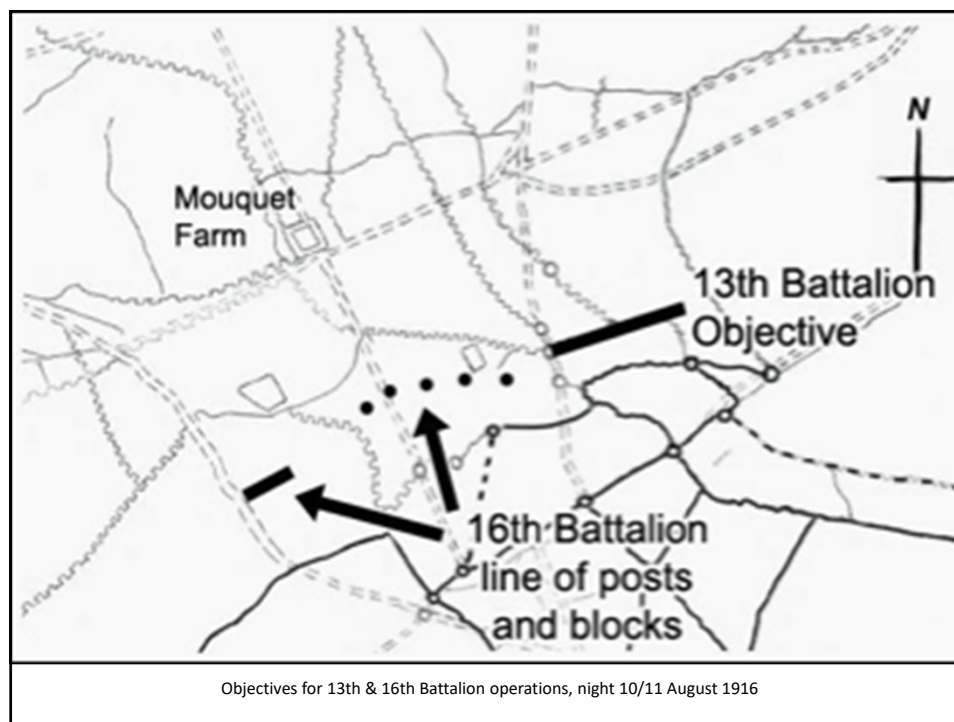
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- The attack by 16th Bn was not much more than a raid but it set 4th Brigade's fate by lodging with 4th Div HQ the idea that smaller, close-range operations could be successful with little time for planning being required
- At 0430 on 10 August as the 16th Bn operation was still concluding 4th Brigade messaged Lt Col Tilney's 13th Bn to arrange an operation for the next night (10/11 August) against a small portion of trench just forward of the Australian line. It was stated that 13th Bn was "practically fresh" as it had only suffered 70 casualties carrying out rations duties
- Brig Gen Brand then side-stepped Lt Col Tilney saying "am arranging for 13th Battalion officers to reconnoitre ground today"
- At 1630 on 10 August 4th Div issued Operational Order 13 formally endorsing the plan for 13th Bn and also ordering 16th Bn to attack a similar series of objectives
- Neither battalion's objective was against an identified landmark or strongpoint and neither had a front wider than 300 yards
- 13th Bn was in the process of relieving 15th Bn and 16th Bn was still recovering from the previous night but both had to quickly try and prepare their attacks. There was no time to prepare machine gun or trench mortar support but artillery support was provided

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- Both these unsynchronised attacks were successfully prosecuted with 13th Bn having to drive off a heavy German counter attack
- But these successes hid an increasingly serious situation
 - The small operations were coming at a high cost in casualties
 - German artillery fire remained extremely heavy and was coming from a number of directions with shell shock becoming an increasing consequence
 - There was little coherence in what was happening with operational suggestions coming from division, brigade, battalion and even company level to try and advance small portions of front line, all in an environment of ongoing artillery bombardment.
 - Exhaustion was increasingly becoming apparent with 13th Bn being relatively fresh to the front line but after 3 to 4 days of working parties and carrying duties to the front line, conducting the attack, defending their gains against a heavy German counter attack and bombing attack and coming after heavy and increasingly accurate artillery fire.

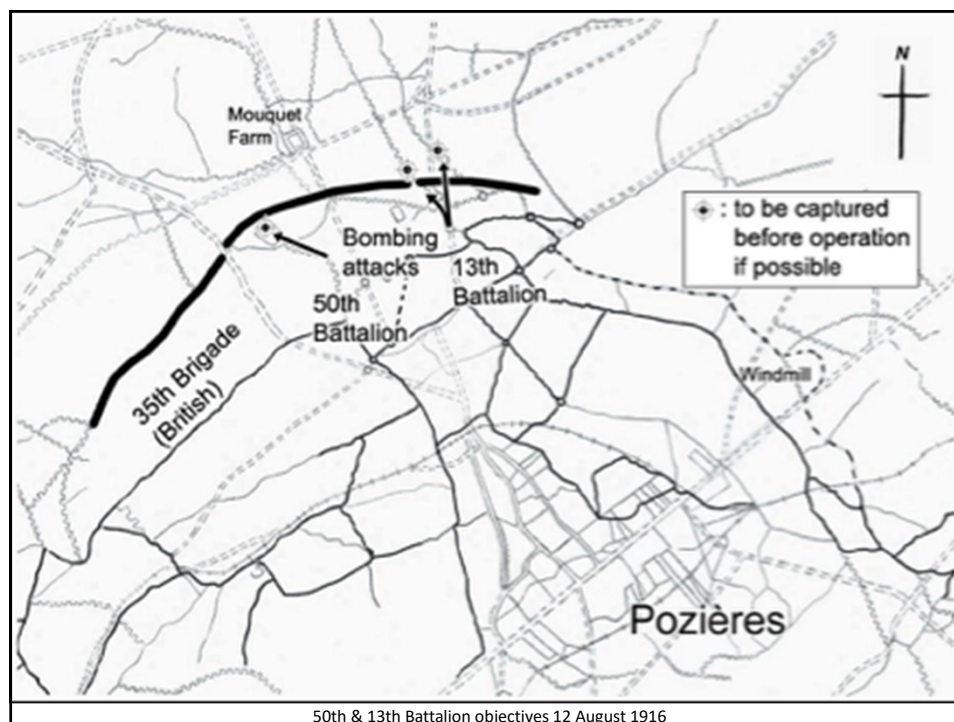
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- Lt Col Tilney reported on 12 August:
 "Owing to all my front works being new and only partially dug the troops are practically unable to obtain sleep during the day, and incessant digging operations go on throughout night. Tonight's operations will prevent any rest being obtained. The result is that the men and officers are becoming very fagged. I am of the opinion that, for safety's sake, it is necessary to relieve the Battalion tomorrow at latest."
- Serious rations and ammunition supply problems resulting from the constant shellfire also became evident. Units undertaking carrier duties were suddenly being called forward to reinforce the front line and Battalions started receiving messages like the message received by 13th Battalion on 13 August:
 "It will be necessary for you to make your own arrangements for your rations tonight. The Battalion which carried this morning is going up to the line and is not available"
- This sudden non-arrival of rations was compounded by the fact that 13th Bn had not received supplies the day before. 13th Bn went 36 hours in the front line without food or water.
- Shortages were also occurring with wire, corkscrews, picks, shovels, Lewis Guns and ammunition

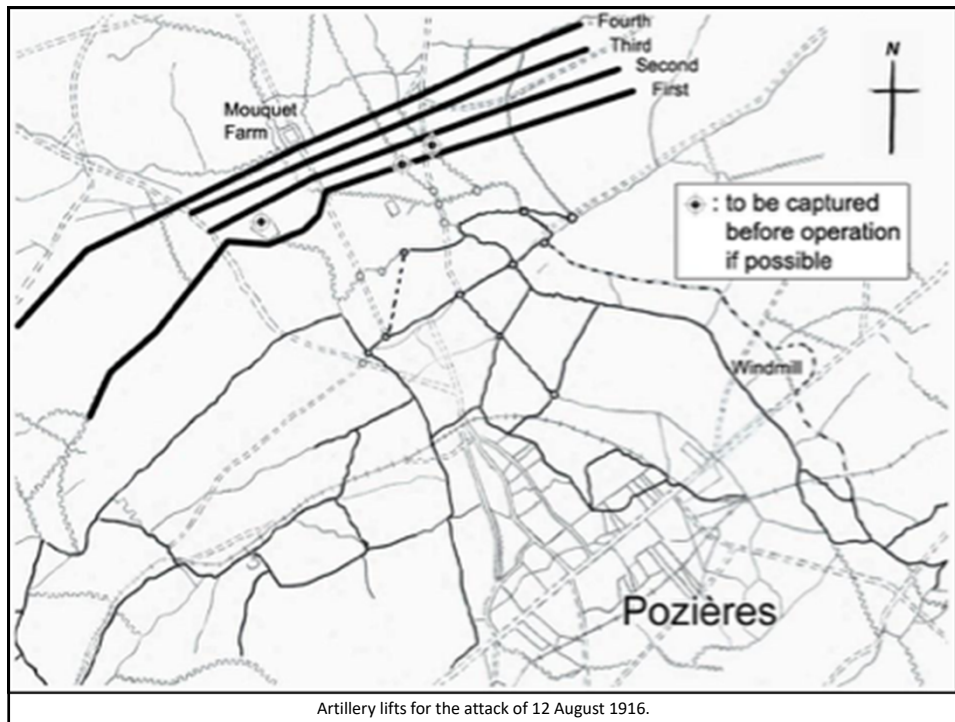
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- The work by 4th Brigade had extended the salient to a point where 3 battalions could be fitted with one in close support. But to help maintain and service this line the Brigade was loaned 50th Battalion from 13th Brigade on 11 August
- 50th started to relieve 16th Bn and while doing so came under 'violent and continuous' enemy shell fire. But it was also required to undertake an operation immediately.
- Reserve Army had been planning an operation on the evening of 12 August for 4 days involving 12th Division, specifically 35th Brigade, (on 4th Brigade's left) with support from 4th Brigade.
- Brig Brand chose 13th Bn and the 50th Bn that was not only just relieving 16th Bn but was seeing active service in the line for the first time!!
- These battalions were to undertake an assault that synchronized with the 35th Brigade's assault but orders from 4th Div and 4th Bde the day before the assault stated:
"as much ground as possible will be made good towards [tomorrow night's] objective" before the operation went ahead; AND
"if it is possible to reach any of these objectives by bombing it should be done"
- In so doing, both Gen Cox and Brig Brand denied their battalions a chance to pause and prepare, preferring ongoing ad hoc, small scale and piecemeal operations

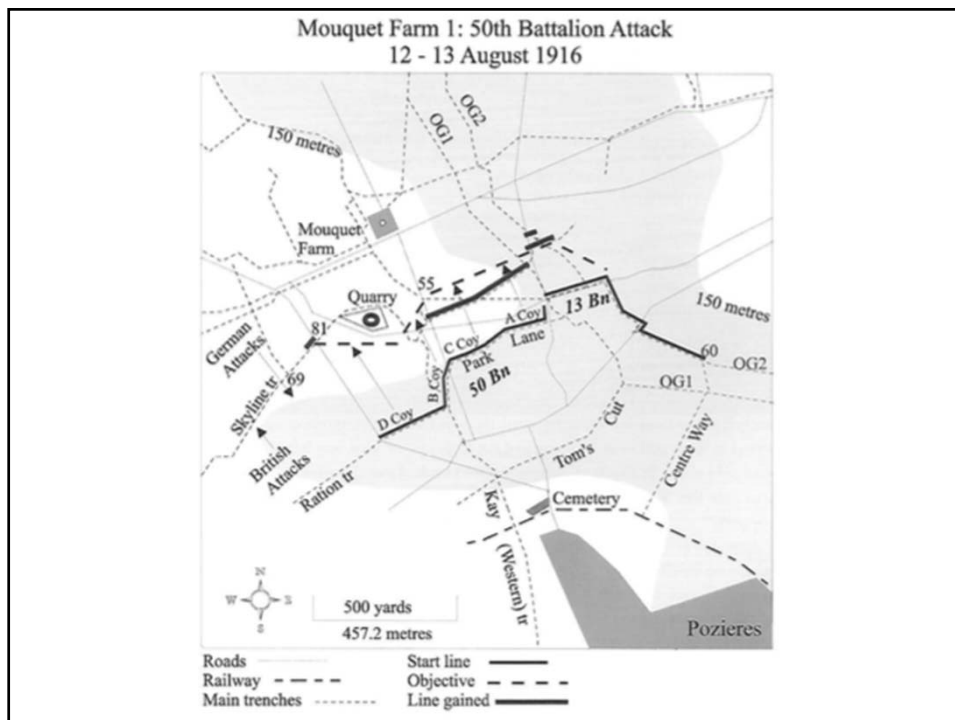
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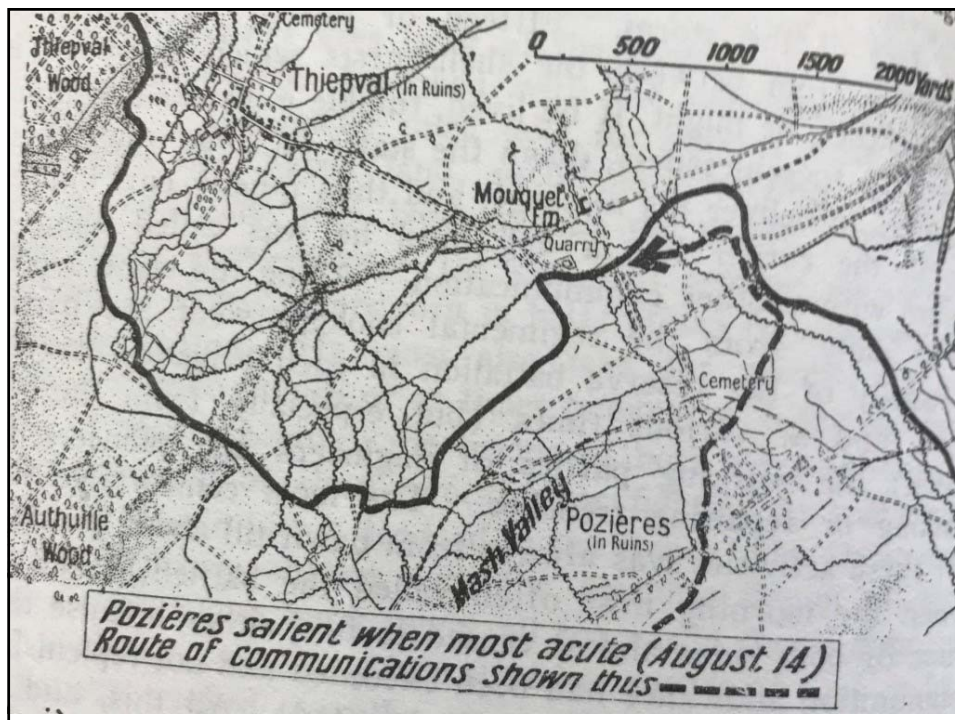
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- Bombing parties were duly sent forward and achieved no real gains. They also potentially were exposed to the artillery barrage that descended when the operation commenced at 2230 on 12 August when infantry advanced under an artillery barrage that once again landed on the objective before lifting away.
- Both 13th and 50th Bns were successful advancing their line a short distance, each along a front of about 750 yards
- But very shortly 50th Bn started to run out of critical supplies. This was occurring because the German artillery had finally 'caught up'. 12th Brigade had been securing the right flank along the OG lines and receiving the major share of German artillery attention. But now the German had appreciated that 4th Div's advance had moved from an easterly direction to the north, towards Thiepval.
- The violent barrage 50th experienced as it was relieving 16th Bn was the start of the German artillery concentrating on 4th Brigade's line and its rear areas
- The constant heavy bombardment meant that by even though numerous attempts were made only 7 tins of water were received for the whole of 50th Bn by the morning of 13 August, the morning after the attack. The battalion continued to sustain heavy casualties and work slowed with a lack of tools. 50th were facing the same situation as 13th a few days before and 4th Bde were showing little ability (or desire) to remedy the situation

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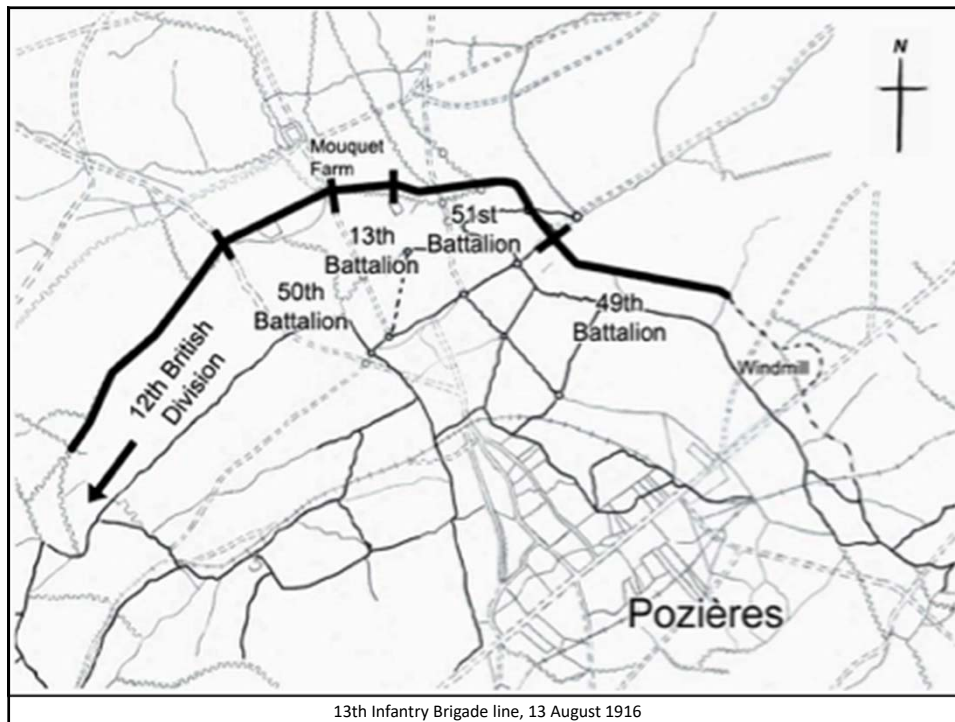
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- On 13 August 4th Brigade was replaced by 13th Brigade under Brig Glasgow (later Maj Gen Sir William Glasgow)
- Meleah Hampton summed up 4th Brigade's first period at Pozières as:
 - Complicated and busy
 - Sets an alarming precedent for future action by 1 ANZAC Corps
 - Operations initiated from all levels were narrow-fronted & small-scale against very close objectives
 - No finesse – artillery bludgeoned then lifted to protect infantry rushing in
 - Efficacious – success but of extremely limited scope & of no tactical or strategic value
 - Exhausted itself through constant jockeying for position
 - 15th & 16th Battalions were depleted through conduct of one or more small attacks
 - 14th Battalion suffered from a series of strong German counter-attacks
 - 13th depleted through battle casualties and artillery generated supply problems
 - 50th suffered serious casualties within hours of entering the line
 - By 12 August 4th Brigade had suffered 1,283 casualties for small scale, limited gains of little strategic consequence, however 4th Div could report 'successes'
 - Set a dangerously seductive example for future operations by 1 ANZAC Corps at Pozières

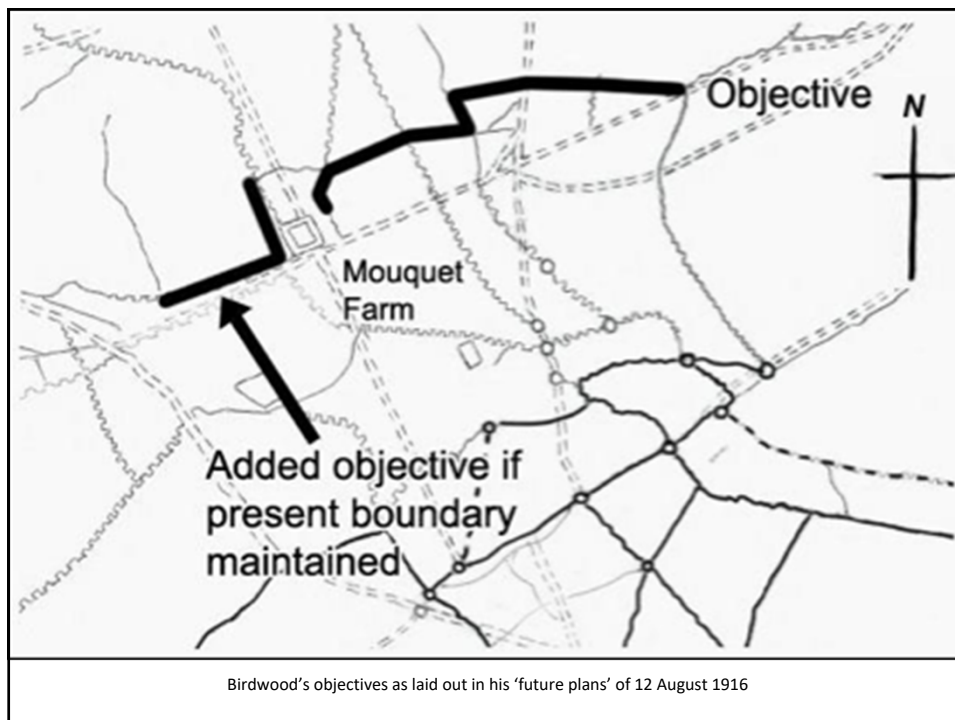
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- Brig Glasgow was given no time to settle in and during the afternoon of 14 August 13th Brigade was ordered to attack that night at 2000 as part of an Order coming from Reserve Army (Gen Gough). This was the first action for 13th Brigade and Brig Glasgow as its commanding officer
- On 12 August 1 ANZAC Corps outlined its plans to be 'limited to the occupation of a line in the vicinity of Mouquet Farm'. Birdwood also tried to reduce the length of the Corps' front by handing the left part, including Mouquet Farm, to II Corps, even though II Corps next door held a front 5 times greater
- Reserve Army did not approve Birdwood's attempt to either shorten the line or 'duck' responsibility for Mouquet Farm. But Mouquet Farm did not feature as an objective in 1 ANZAC's plans for this, and later, attacks - rather it seems to have been willfully ignored
- The final plan that came from 1 ANZAC ignored Mouquet Farm by leaving 50th Bn basically static as a link with 145th Bde on the left but required 13th Bn (on loan) and 51st Bn to advance about 400 yards, extending the salient further but with no real strategic objective stated rather than some trench lines.
- Once again the Brigade and battalion commanders had been given very little time to plan the attack and the resulting infantry plan basically repeated earlier attacks with 2 waves attacking a single objective

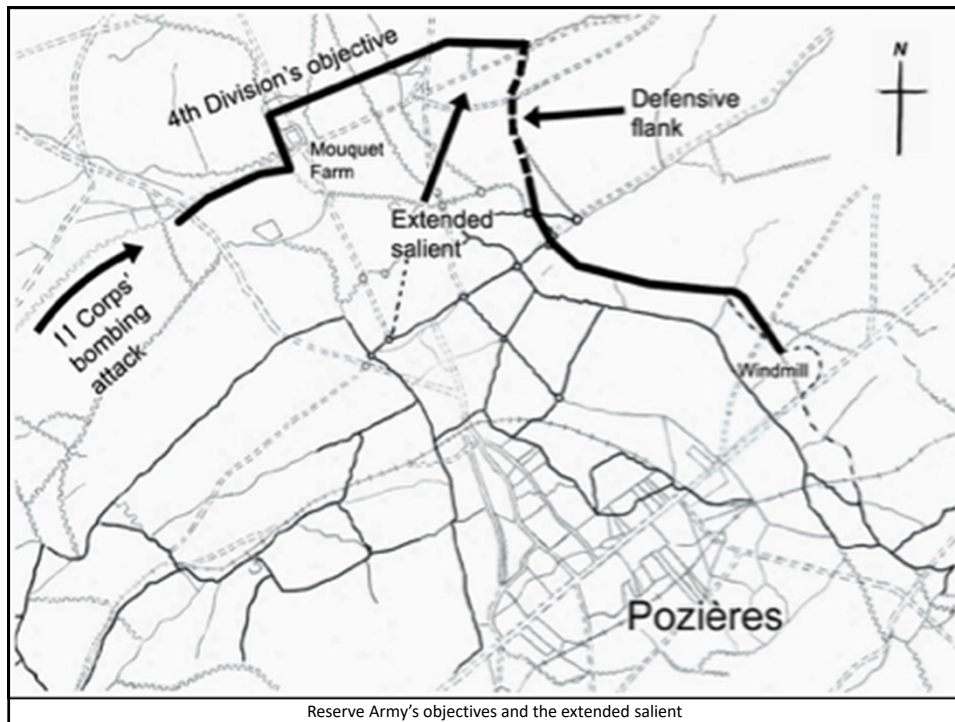
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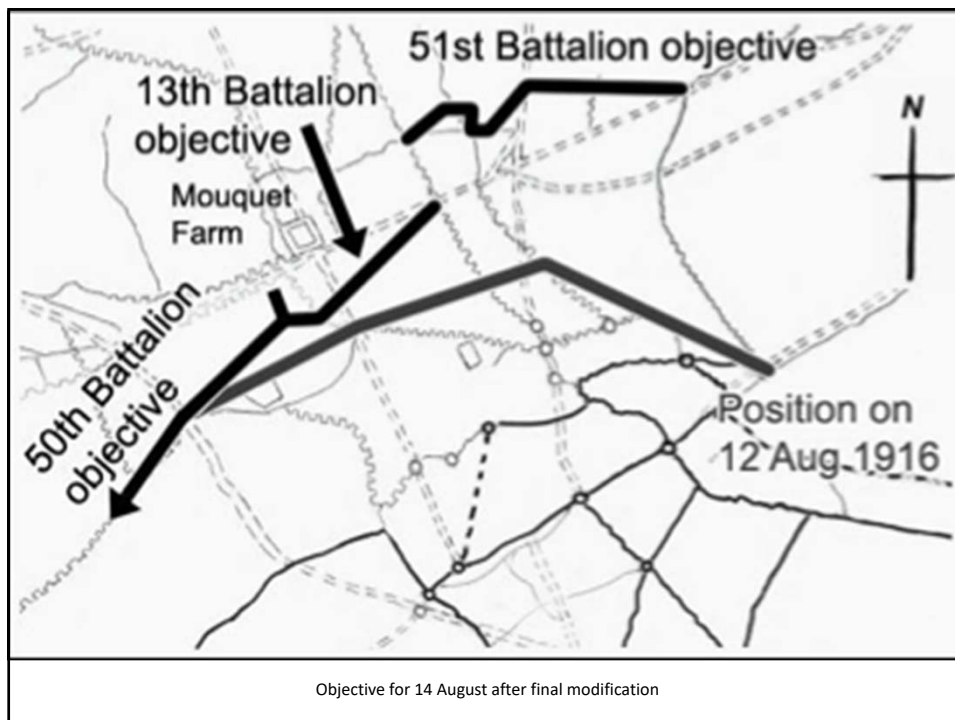
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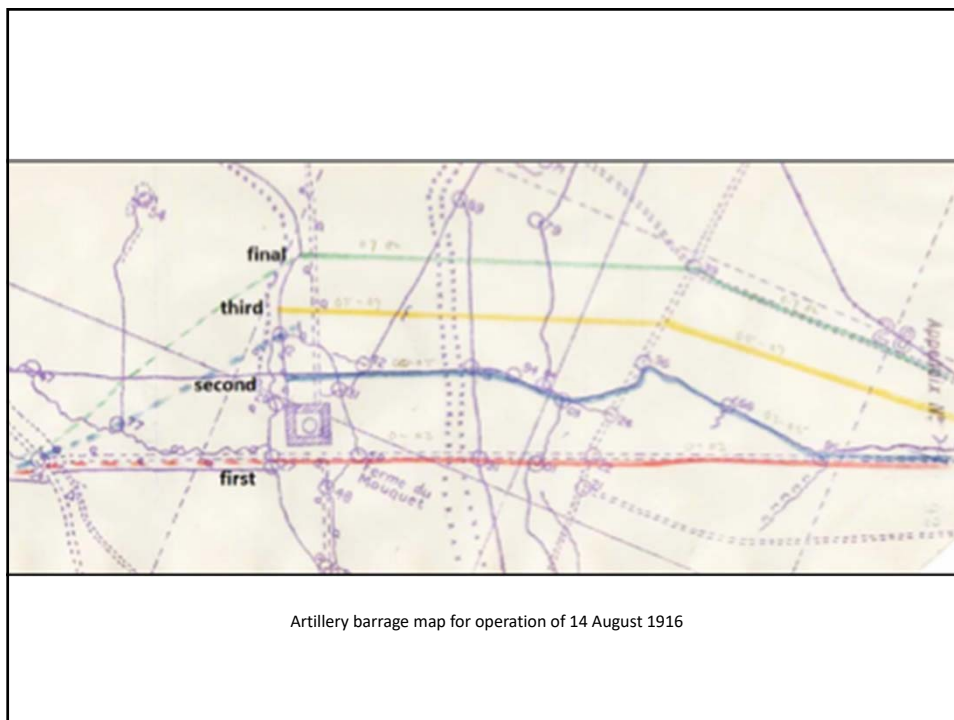
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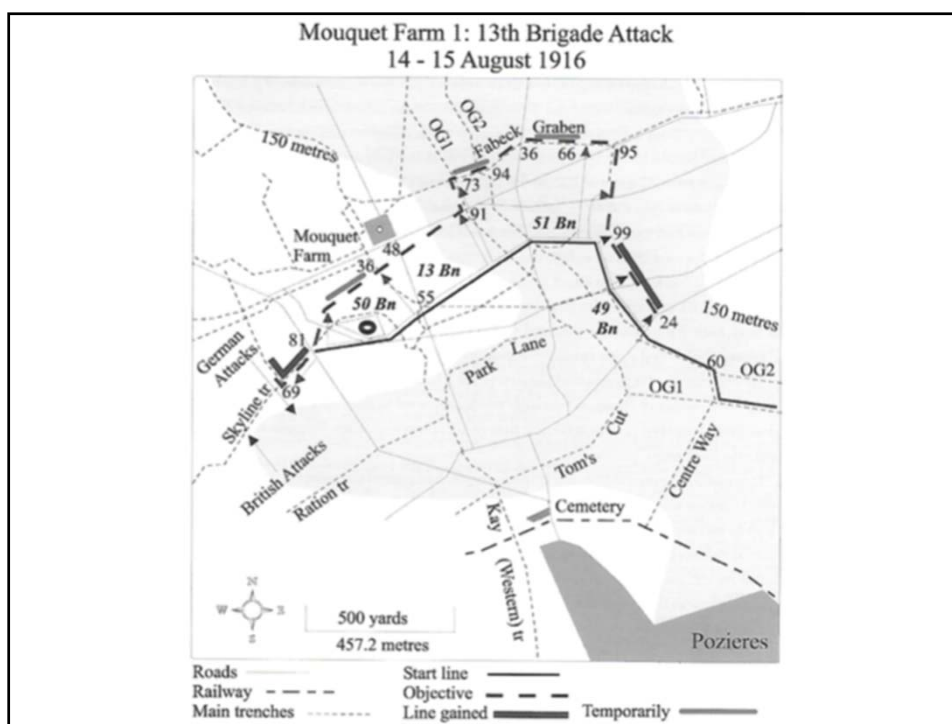
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- The attack the main attack was to occur on the right with 51st taking main responsibility for the capture of Fabeck Graben trench. 49th Bn would enter the line on the right of 51st and form the defensive right flank. 13th Bn would advance with 51st and also link back to 50th who would only have a limited advance on the left, in front of Mouquet Farm
- The artillery barrage replicated the earlier one in form and deficiencies. It comprised:
 - Began on road south of Mouquet Farm at 1000 for 3 minutes; then
 - Lifted 100 yards to just beyond the farm for 2 minutes; then
 - Lifted another 100 yards for 2 minutes and; finally
 - Lifted to a line 200 – 250 yards beyond the Farm and 300 yards beyond the objective
 - Mouquet Farm would receive one bombardment from heavy trench mortars at an unspecified time
 - Only 51st Bn received assistance – from the second lift
- However at 1800 Brig Glasgow was informed that Lt Col Hurcombe, CO of 50th Bn, was no longer in command due to shell shock and the 2IC had taken over
- The attack commenced on time at 2000 but by 0130 it finally became evident that it was not successful

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- 49th successfully advanced on right flank and established flank positions and connecting trenches
- 50th Bn reported it had moved forward but been driven back by heavy artillery and machine gun fire with heavy losses. It was back in its old front line trenches after a lot of panic among the companies
- 51st Bn reported that it had advanced only 150 yards (not required 400 yards) and right held up by machine gun fire. A number of men from centre and left companies reached Fabeck Graben and dug in but with few on very left and no contact with 13th Bn. In face of heavy fire 51st companies retired
- 13th Bn (under Capt Harry Murray) advanced beyond its objectives and captured the left hand portion of 51st Bn's objective (points 73 – 94 of Fabeck Graben). As it had no contact with 50th & 51st Bns on its right & left, 13th Bn, under Murray, was forced to retire after repulsing several strong counter attacks from the Germans and being unable to gain covering artillery fire. In retiring, Murray saw to the evacuation of his large number of wounded. 13th Bn also finished back in its original trenches and later in the day it was relieved by 51st Bn
- 13th Brigade (and 4th Division) was then relieved on 16 August by 1st Brigade of 1st Division having suffered 915 casualties (plus 13th Bn) and 4th Division's total was 4649

54

- 4th Divisions time in the line has been summed up by Hampton as:
 “While the 4th Australian Division began their time in the line with a reasonably well-planned operation conducted by a competent brigade, by the end of their first tour of the front line they had devolved into conducting hasty, ill-prepared operations with artillery support that can only be described as completely inadequate.....The rush of small-scale operations did mean that there was a minimum amount of time to prepare between each attack. But the lack of communication trenches prepared in no man’s land was only one side of a multi-faceted problem. The unceasing flow of operational orders for small-scale attacks was simply destroying the 4th Division.”

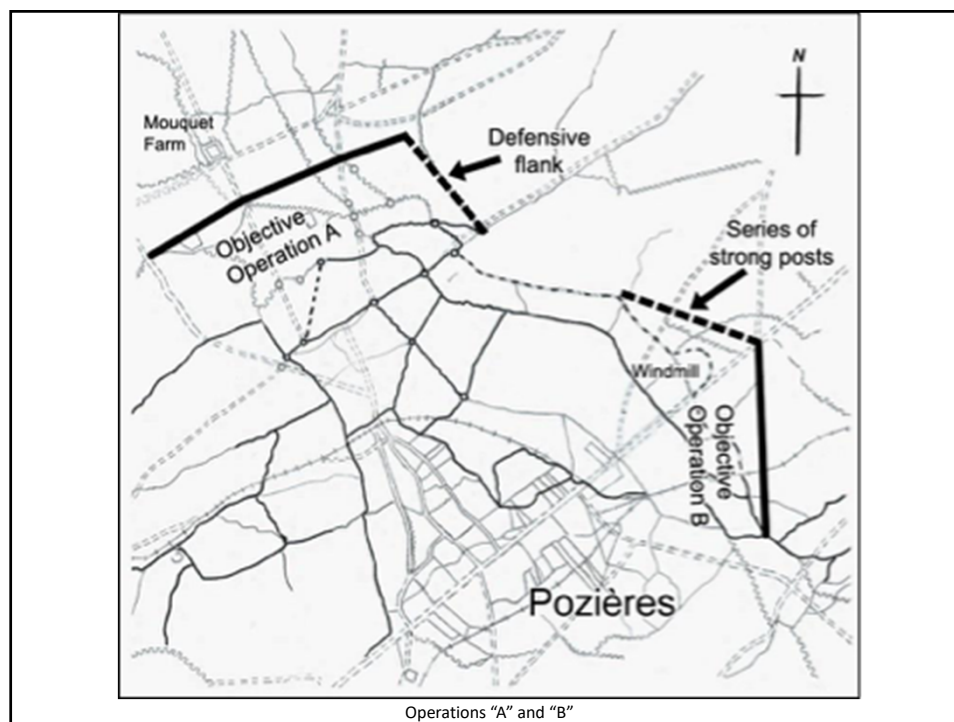
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- Hampton goes on:
 “But small patrols would not reduce the threat from major obstacles like Mouquet Farm. Indeed, Pozières village and the OG Lines had just proven major obstacles to attack that had needed significantly more than active patrolling and quick construction of strongpoints. The consequence of constant raids, patrols and small-scale operations was a force that was as exhausted and demoralised as the 13th Brigade was when the 4th Division was withdrawn. Their supply lines could not be firmly established through the shellfire, the constant need for working parties and the persistently shifting front line, and so they were hungry, thirsty and lacking other vital requirements for their work. There was a constant flow of wounded men coming out of the front line even when the battalions were not attacking anything. The 50th Battalion’s experience of shell shock, disorganisation and possible mutiny demonstrated the real dangers of low morale morale in the field. Units that failed to advance, even a single company, seriously undermined the potential for success of any operation.”

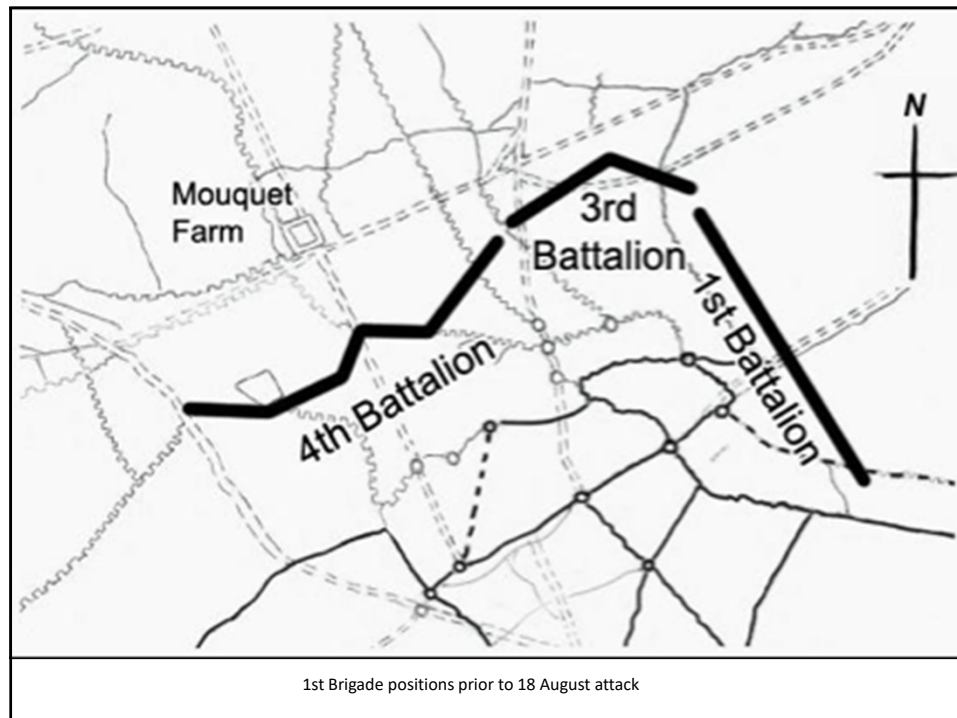
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- It was now 1st Division's turn once more and Gen Gough was up to his old tricks, ordering a new attack for 18 August to co-incide with a new 4th Army attack. But there was no attempt to coordinate with 4th Army and 1st ANZAC's attack was timed for 6 hours after that of 4th Army
- Nor was this attack really conforming with Reserve Army's stated strategic plan of attacking to the North West to isolate Thiepval – II Corps were not asked to make any major advance and 1 ANZAC Corps' objective was of an extremely limited scale and in two unconnected areas
- The first (Op A) was to rectify some of 13th Brigade's shortcomings by advancing the line to the road in front of Mouquet Farm and the second (Op B) was to advance about 150 yards and capture some trenches beyond the Windmill
- These were nothing like the 4 battalion attack and capture of Pozières village with its lifting and closely co-ordinated artillery barrage
- Mouquet Farm was still not an objective and although a strong redoubt it was not on the scale of the fortified village of Pozières

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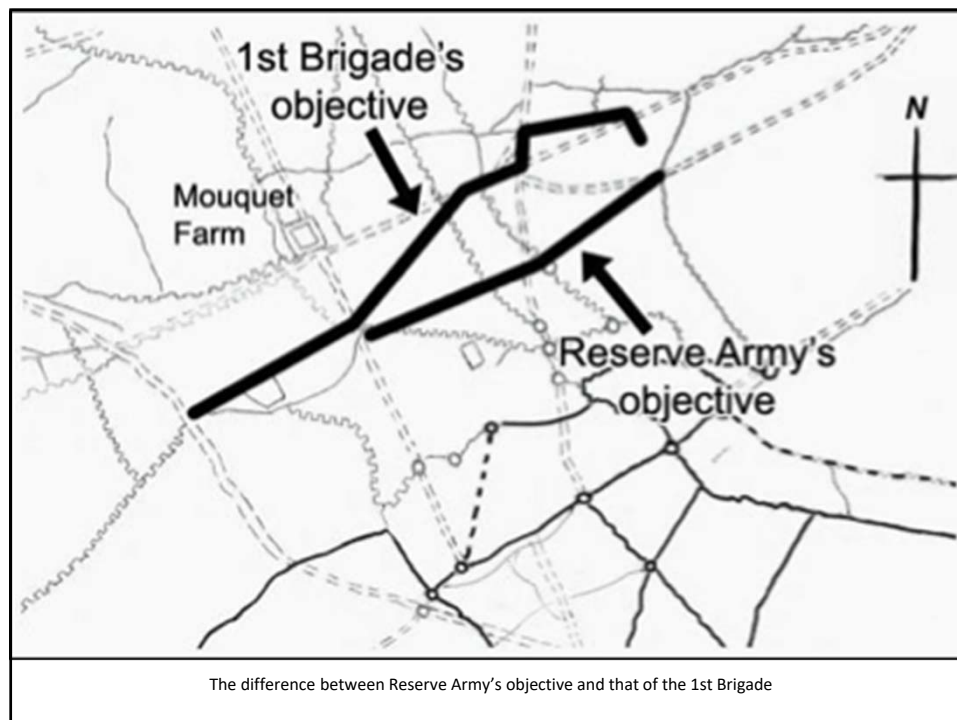
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- On receiving the orders, Gen Walker had a number of concerns:
 - Suggested that Op B (2nd Brigade) should be co-ordinated with the nearby 4th Army attack and Op A (1st Brigade) be treated as a separate operation. This was ignored by Gen Birdwood & his staff
 - That Op A constituted a wedge that would be susceptible to enfilading fire and was creating a salient on the side of an established salient resulting in too many corners
- But Walker also failed to inform Birdwood that 1st Div was not prepared to carry out either operation as the battlefield was a muddle
 - German artillery fire had created a landscape of shell holes, partially destroyed trenches and many destroyed communication trenches.
 - Commanders and staff at division, brigade and battalion levels were having extreme difficulty mapping the battlefield so as to create meaningful detailed orders – let alone the troops having to try and exist or, perhaps more importantly, the artillery to fire with maximum accuracy
- Walkers concerns and request for time were ignored, due in part to him not pursuing them with enough vigour
- The final objective for 1st Brigade was modified either by Gen Walker or Brig Smyth and extended the front to be captured but still avoided Mouquet Farm

60



61

- The German artillery was now fully concentrated on the salient and the front line trench held by the Australians was destroyed in part, leaving gaps, and many communication trenches had been destroyed. However no delay was given to allow these problems to be rectified
- The attack for Operation A was timed for 2100 on 18 August following an hour long bombardment
- 4th Battalion, on the left, were subjected to a particularly heavy German bombardment an hour before the assault that caused a number of casualties and interfered with their being supplied with bombs and other preparations.
- The heavy shelling also delayed 4th Battalion's start, probably by about 15 minutes
 - The supporting barrage was particularly ineffective and the Germans were not forced to take cover. Two heavily manned strong points poured out heavy machine gun fire and broke up the attack in a number of places and even though re-inforcements from 2nd Bn had been provided gains on the left and centre were just short of the objective
 - On 4th Bn's right the attack failed, in part due to new re-inforcements being unwilling to leave their trench and supply/support the bombing platoon
- 3rd Battalion were seriously delayed because during the afternoon and evening they were repeatedly subjected to Australian heavy artillery fire, increasing at jump off time

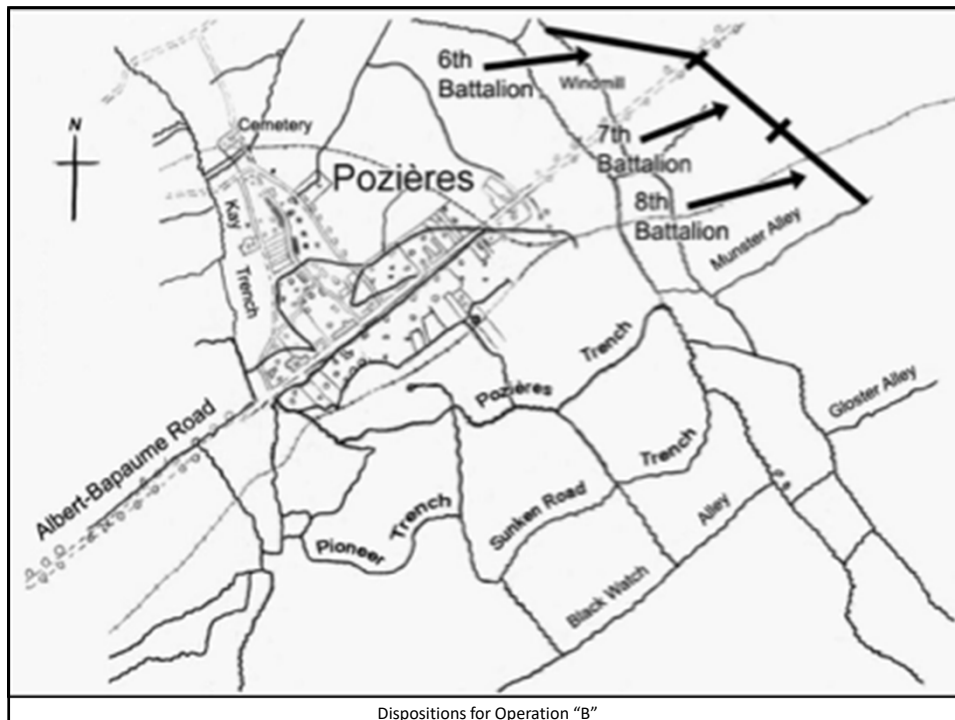
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- Lt Col Howell-Price (OC 3rd Bn) reported at 2035 "barrage is on my line which is now about demolished...I am doubtful whether we shall be able to carry out our stunt laid down tonight as a consequence"
- There were no heavy artillery liaison officers at 1st Brigade HQ or comms to the artillery
- They were forced to wait for the barrage to lift and at 2145 reported "unable to push ahead as our artillery barrage has not lifted sufficiently. The heavies continue to fall short"
- The barrage ceased at 2000 and the infantry were finally able to re-organise and advance about 90 minutes late and no real advances could be secured
- The attack relied on sending out strong patrols to take the trenches but as they were advancing the artillery swiftly lifted off the objective to a point further on allowing the Germans plenty of time to bring their machine guns into play and cause heavy casualties. Further patrols were then sent forward to try and support the first ones and more and more men were drawn into the fight, but on a piecemeal basis, until all but 1 company of 1st Brigade were engaged in the line.
- The only gain from the attack were on the 4th Battalion's left at a cost of more than 480 men by 0900 on 20 August

63

- 2nd Brigade on the right were charged with Operation B. Many units were drawn, from reserve, into the front line during 1st Division's first action at Pozières but this was the Brigade's first action under Lt Col (a/g Brig) Henry Gordon Bennett
- The main attack would be made south of Albert-Bapaume Rd by 7th & 8th Battalions. Each would use 4 waves (1/2 a company each) and 1 in support plus 1 in reserve. 6th Bn would protect the left flank by moving forward to complete the line in conjunction with 7th Bn
- The attack was a well planned infantry operation but preparation was "much restricted by the activity of the enemy's artillery and also by the urgency for rapid progress in our constructional work"
- In spite of the fact "the shelling and machine gun fire was so severe that the working parties had to be withdrawn, with very little progress made", 2nd Brigade managed to construct a jumping off trench from Munster alley to the windmill during the day of 18th August. But in 7th Bn sector could only accommodate one man at a time crouched, greatly impacting forming up
- The attack commenced on time but was almost a complete failure with 6th Bn achieving its limited objectives, 7th Bn only reaching a small part of its objective line and 8th Bn suffering heavy casualties and after 3 separate attacks finishing back in its original lines

64



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- The biggest factor in this outcome was the artillery:
 - The plan involved the infantry following the artillery barrage
 - Orders were issued to battalions without the time of attack (it would follow)
 - Even the barrage timetable didn't reach 7th or 8th Bns early enough for them to use it in absence of formal orders from Brigade. The men were in position but completely unprepared for action when orders finally arrived
 - 7th Bn was in the jumping off trench but under severe enemy shell fire and had to withdraw the men to avoid "sheer waste of men", signaling to Brigade:
 - "URGENT Will require at least two hours notice from operation unless troops are to be packed into forward trenches forthwith so it is necessary to hold forward line thinly to avoid casualties and majority of troops are well in rear and have to dribble into place through battered communication trenches"
 - But 2 hours later no barrage timetable had been received. It was finally received at 2045, 15 minutes before the barrage was to commence. 8th Bn remained in its deeper trench but still only received the timetable with 10 minutes warning
- Once again good infantry planning & preparation was undone by a lack of co-ordination with the barrage timetable. The attack went ahead on time but with there being no confidence in what artillery support could be expected throughout the attack

66

- All through the 18th before the attack in the evening, the infantry complained that the Australian artillery was firing short onto their own lines. Although vehemently denied, an Artillery Liaison Officer at 2nd Brigade HQ corroborated the reports
- The Germans had seen the attack preparations and increased their artillery shelling accordingly but had also used an early example of 'chequerboard defence' by moving forward out of their lines (and the Australian barrage) into shell holes to place their machine guns and form an in-depth defence. This then relied on firepower not manpower
- The ineffectual allied artillery barrage not only basically missed the scattered Germans but failed make them keep their heads down. Strongpoints remained intact and machine gun crews were ready and waiting.
- 7th Bn and, especially, 8th Bn ran into a 'most hellish machine gun fire... [and] were also heavily bombed and shelled'. 8th Bn War Diary records:
 - "As the barrage lifted the attacking companies moved forward and the right of "A" Company immediately came under a heavy fire from Bombs and Machine Guns. The centre and the left also suffered severely from M[achine] Gun fire from the left. The fire was so heavy that the line withdrew and was reformed and again attacked, but, as enemy strong points and trenches had apparently not suffered from our Artillery fire, they had an immense superiority of fire and our attack was again beaten back.

67

- I then ordered "D" Company to reinforce "A" and made a further attempt but though the line reached the enemy position it could not gain a footing and returned to Dot Trench. Our left Company was under a galling fire from both flanks and could make no progress and also fell back on their original position."
- 8th Battalion gained no ground at all and 7th had just advanced a little on the left to meet up with 6th. 7th Battalion suffered enormous casualties for a gain of just 10's of yards. B Company, 7th Bn went forward with just 111 men and 37 answered roll call after the attack.
 - From 16 to 20 August 1st Division had suffered a loss of 57 officers and 1,524 other ranks.
 - Now at 1530 on 20 August 3rd Brigade relieved 1st Brigade which was still depleted by its operations in July
 - Also the front line was basically unprepared for launching another assault – German shell fire had destroyed communications trenches and ammunition stores. Bombs, grenades, water and other supplies were very low. There was nowhere for supports or reserves to form up. Working and carrying parties were continually hampered by shellfire so that it was very difficult to repair damage or replenish supplies.
 - The exact position of the front line was still very unclear by the morning of 21 August

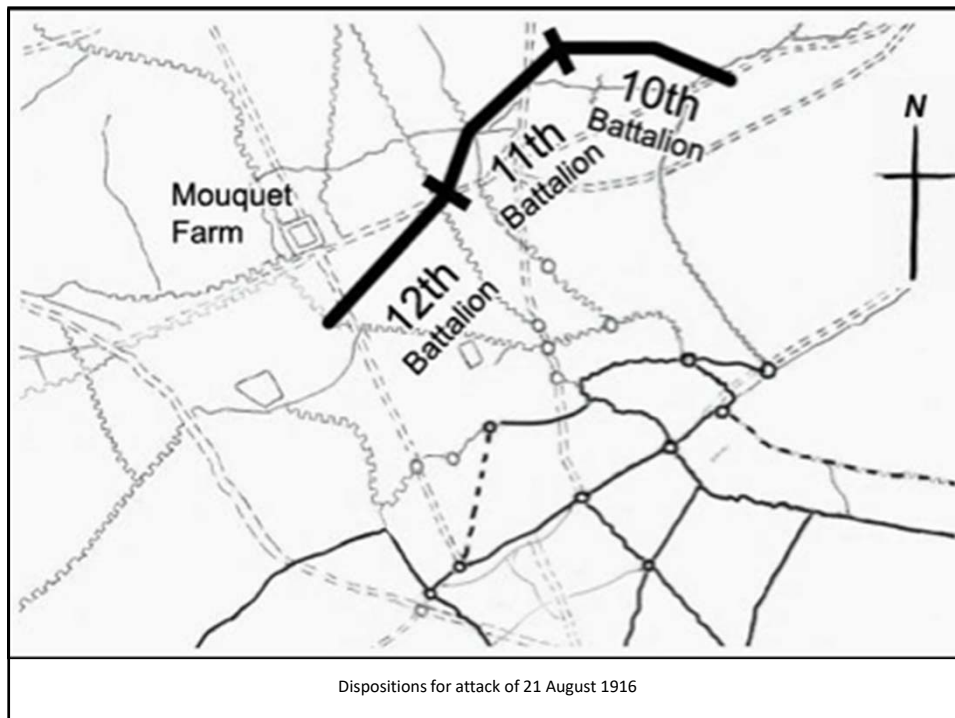
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- 3rd Brigade were given 24 hours to prepare for an attack on 21 August at 1800
- The attack once again fell short of or skirted Mouquet Farm and had no real operational focus and limited advance (ie about 100 yards) with 10th Bn having to push forward most, again extending the narrow salient
- The artillery plan was weakened nor strengthened with no preliminary barrage or barrage on the objective, rather an hour long standing barrage beyond the objective
- This might have prevented German re-inforcement but did not suppress the machine gun and rifle fire of their front line troops
- Once again a very sound infantry plan using waves was adopted but without good artillery support were of little impact.
- Having seen the Australian preparations the German artillery laid a 'specially severe bombardment' on the Brigade's lines from 1700 causing so many casualties in 10th Bn that the 3rd and 4th waves had to re-inforce the first two before the assault commenced.
- All 10th Bn officers were hit leaving the trench except 1 who was hit reaching the objective where severe enfilading machine gun fire ripped into the ranks. Finally 10th Bn had to fall back after all reserves had been consumed. Starting with a depleted 620 men, 10th Bn suffered 346 casualties in less than 24 hours

69

- On the left 12th Battalion achieved their objective with very little opposition with some men chasing a rapidly withdrawing enemy into Mouquet Farm and bombing dugouts before falling back in line with the rest of the battalion
- Mouquet Farm has been seen as an 'unachievable objective' that was repeatedly attacked but always lost. But even now even though it had been entered more than twice by Australian troops (of 50th and 12th Battalions) it had not been an operational objective
- 11th Battalion's experience was even more bizarre. They were on carrying parties around the Chalk Pit (unknown by 3rd Brigade's GOC Brig Sinclair MacLagan) and were not relieved until 1500 on 21 August – 3 hours before the attack!
- 11th Battalion was unable to attack until 2000 - 2 hours after the attacks on both flanks occurred
- Consequently they could not 'fill the gap' between 10th and 12th and provide flanking cover. This gap threatened the stability of the line until 11th could enter the line
- It was becoming increasingly evident that these continuous small ad hoc operations were pushing the depleted 1st Div beyond its capacity to undertake them and all the attendant carrying, digging and other support activities needed. 1st ANZAC Corps seemed oblivious to the situation and kept pressing more and more seemingly pointless ad hoc operations on its units

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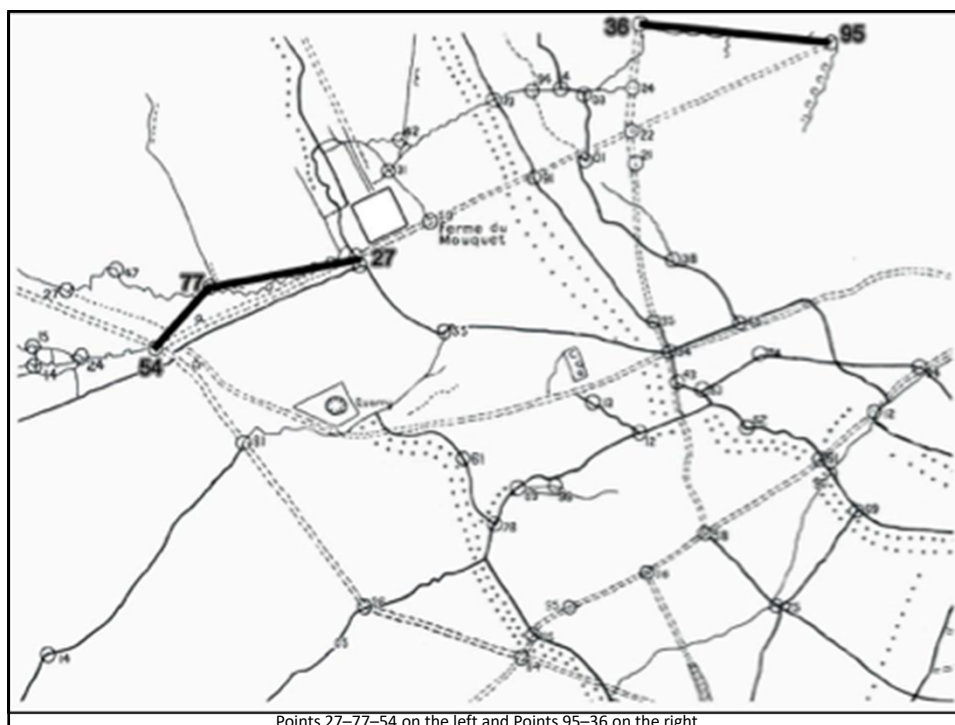
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- After its failed initial assault, 7th Battalion in 2nd Brigade kept conducting large and small attacks on their objective for days
- At the same time as they continued to hold the line and press attacks, 1st ANZAC ordered 2nd Brigade to undertake carrying duties for 3rd Brigade, requiring all of 2nd Bde's reserve
- With the artillery barrages provided by 1st ANZAC only starting on the objective and lifting beyond the needs of the infantry were now completely disconnected from the cover meant to be provided by the artillery and they suffered grievously from the German machine guns and rifle fire. This was contrary to the view of Reserve Army who thought 1st ANZAC should have advanced 800 yards in 4 days where as they had barely advanced from the position captured 4 weeks before
- By 23 August 1st Division had suffered 2,654 casualties since it re-entered the line on 5 August and was completely finished. At 0900 command of the front line was transferred to Gen Legge and his 2nd Division
- Now began a series of operations that are frighteningly similar to previous operations and resulted in similarly very high casualty rates
- 6th Brigade was detailed to relieve 3rd Brigade on the 'active front' while 5th Brigade took over the 'defensive' part of the line on the right while 7th Brigade remained in reserve (and carried out all the support activities)

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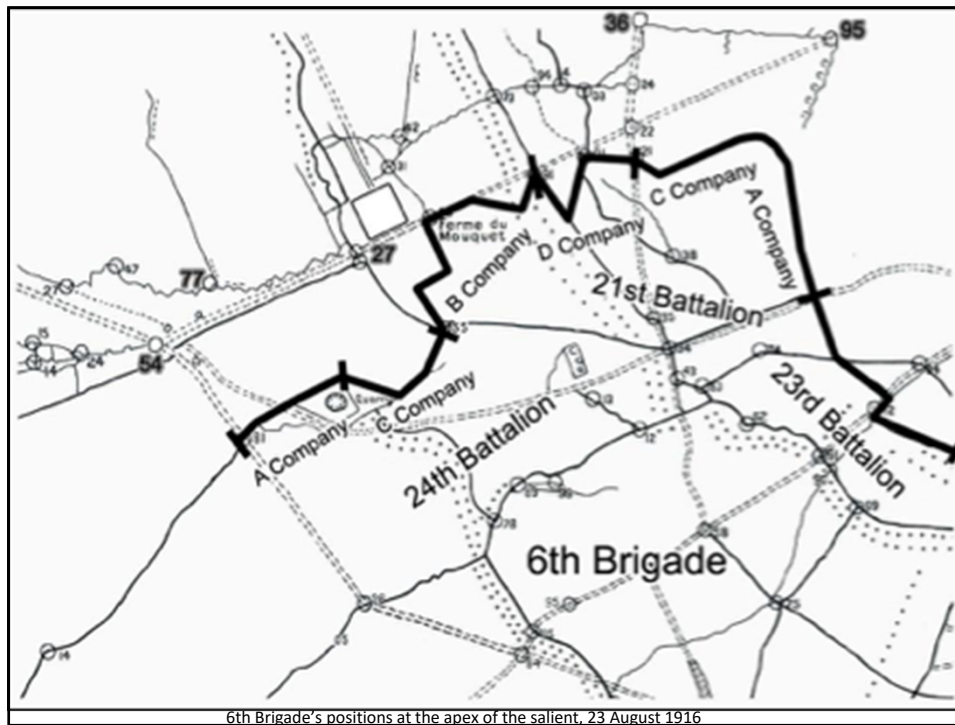
- All the activity would concentrate on the sectors involving points 54 – 77 – 27 (Objective A) and 36 – 95 (Objective B).
- The first of these was just in front of where 4th Division had got to and the second, 36 – 95, was the section of Fabeck Graben Trench that Capt Harry Butler and men of 13th Battalion had captured, and held briefly without support, on 14 August
- All the same defects involving the artillery fire plans continued and 6th Brigade initiated a series of attacks on these points, starting on 26 August, with little success and at great cost.
- It is perhaps indicative of the awareness of planners that the orders had to be changed when it was noticed that the two objectives had a gaping gap between them that contained a strong point called Mouquet Farm.
- An entirely separate third operation was devised (really a large raid) the on 25 August to protect the right flank of Objective A. The objective was points 73 – 42 – 12. It was not to benefit from the lifting barrage but would have benefit of the standing barrage
- Then on 25 August the orders were issued that bore little resemblance to the planning to date:
 - Objective A was the main focus of the attack and the other two were not mentioned
 - The artillery barrage would stay on Objective B & 3 and lift from Objective A

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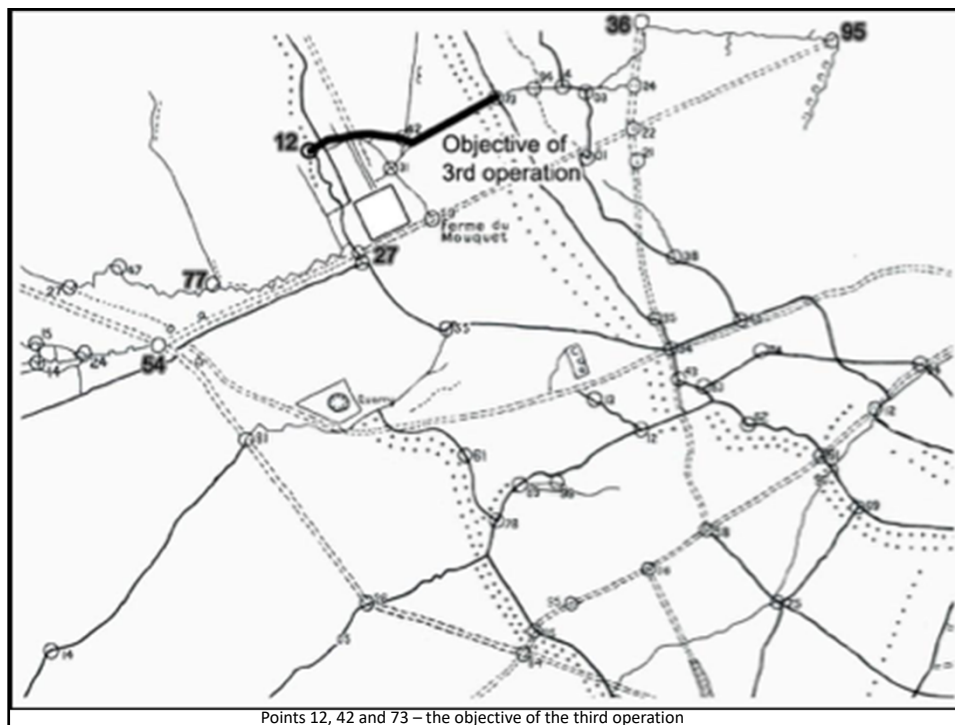


Points 27-77-54 on the left and Points 95-36 on the right

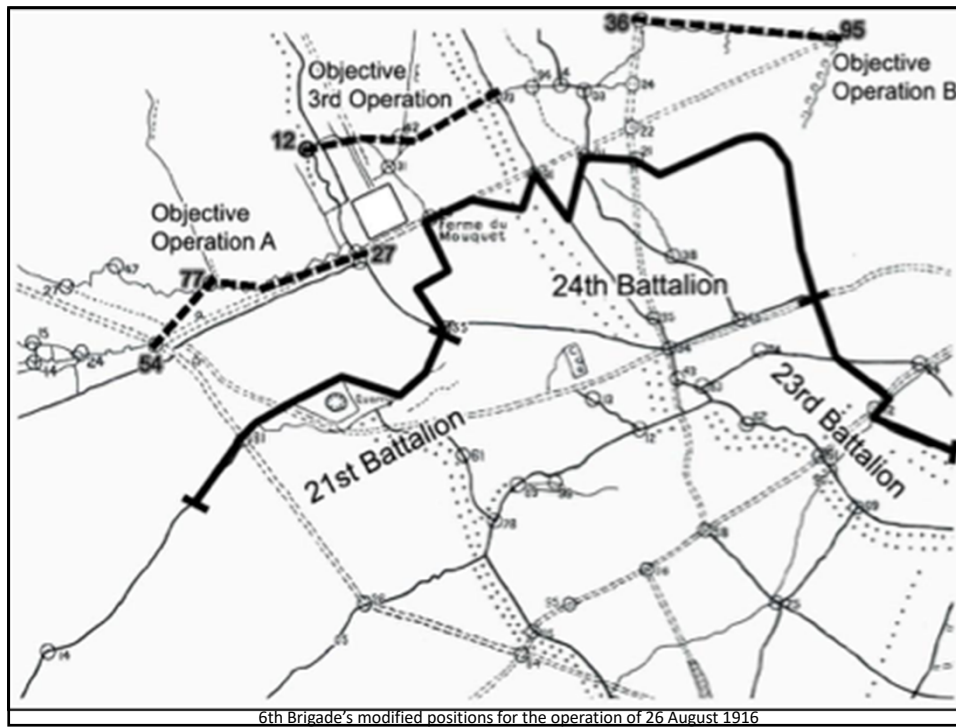
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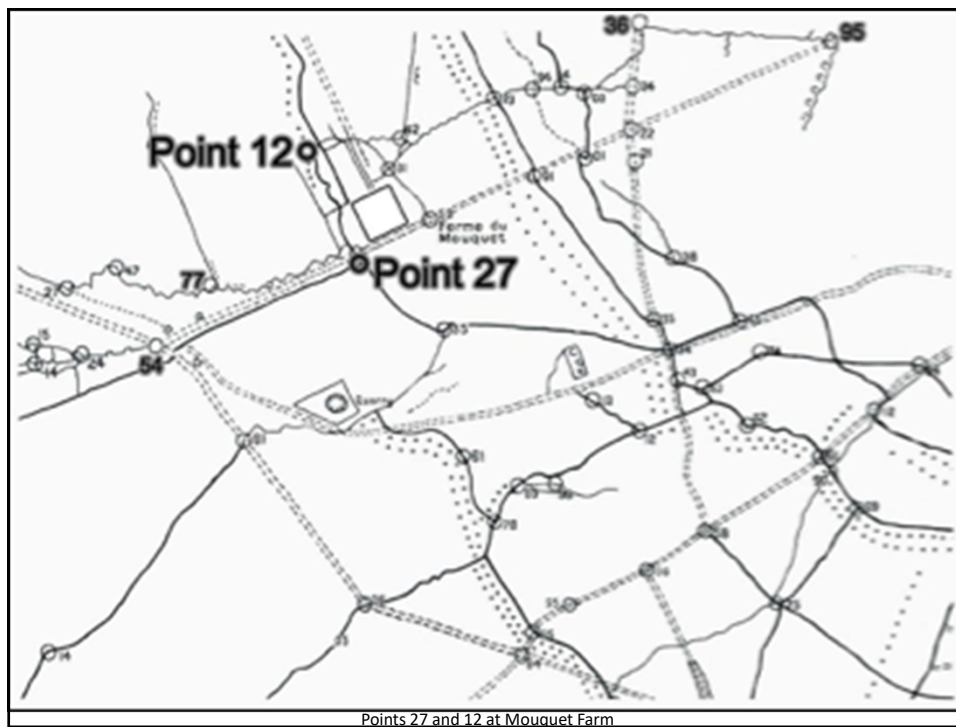
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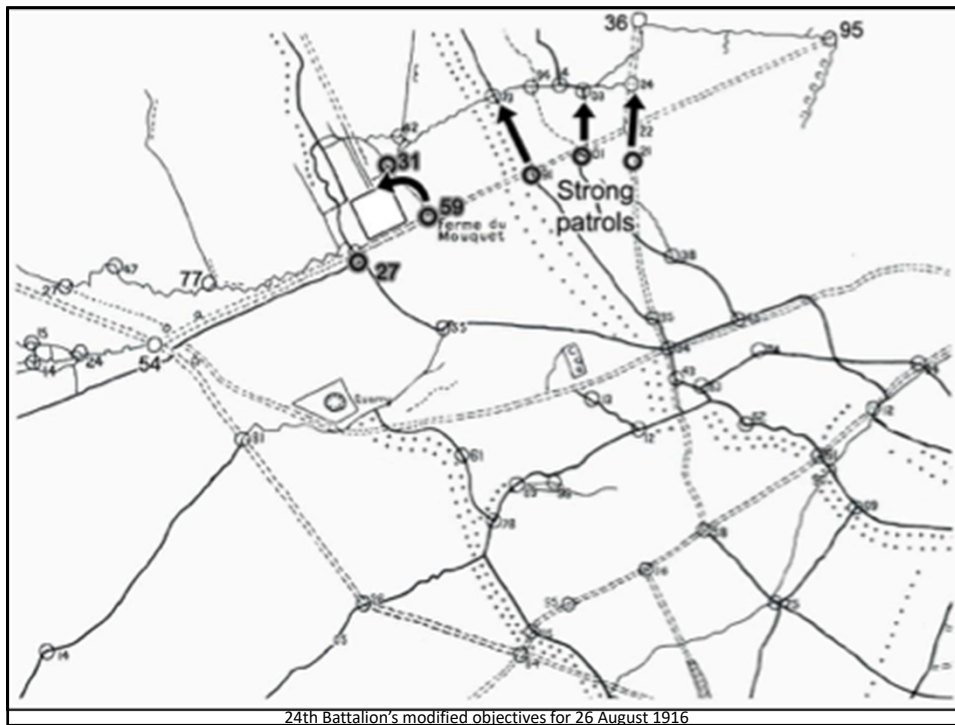
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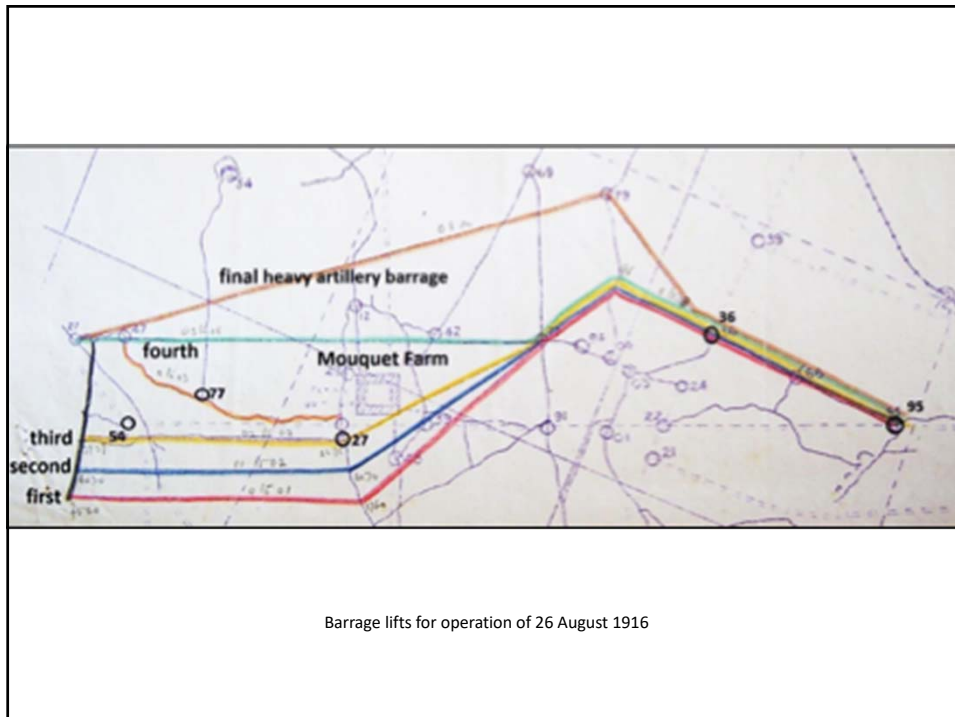
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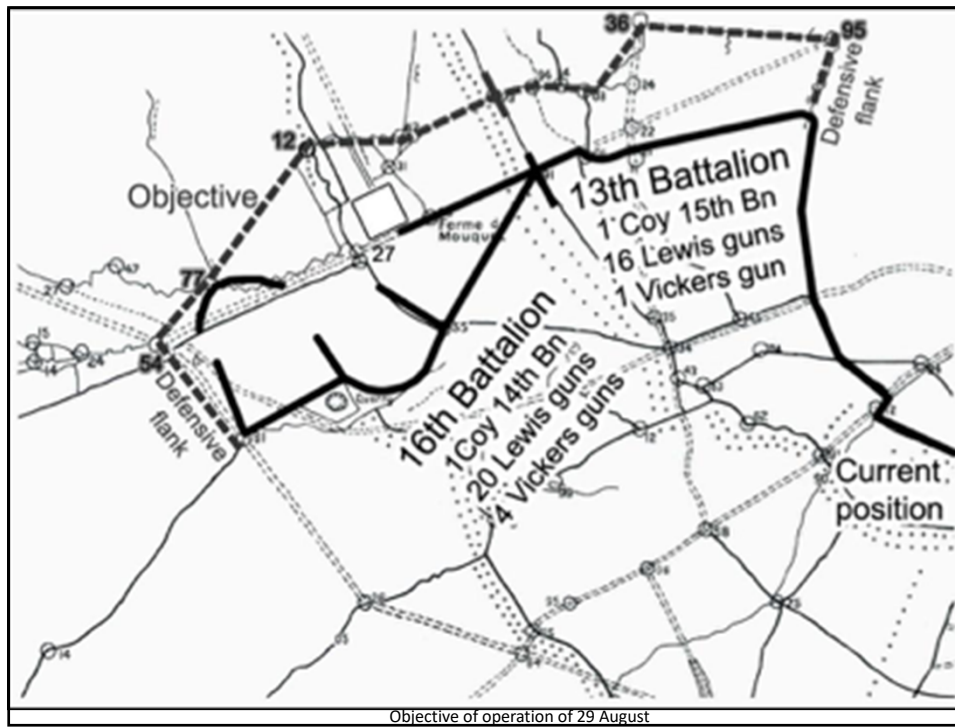
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- The attack by 21st (with support from 22nd Bn) and 24th Battalions was another failure.
- The barrage did not repress the Germans and furious machine gun fire met the Australians who suffered severe casualties.
- Some men pushed on but overran the objective following the barrage and the Germans pushed out from Mouquet Farm as well as firing from its entrenched positions, enfilading the Australians and opposing the 24th Bn attacking from the south
- 21st Bn found the 'superiority of numbers and... machine gun fire' kept them at bay and 24th Bn reported 'Heavy artillery had failed in making any impression on the farm' and it was 'exceedingly strong [and] holds a garrison of 400 men' and 'made progress impossible'
- Now for the first time Mouquet Farm was specifically mentioned in some orders – 6th Brigade to 24th Bn – "The situation now demands that an energetic bombing attack be directed against Mouquet Farm which is causing many casualties at present."
- Unfortunately this came in the middle of an attack in response to the situation experienced and had no supporting artillery
- While men of 24th Bn did enter the Farm they were few in number and could not be supported
- When artillery was finally moved to support the action at the Farm half fell on the 24th Bn

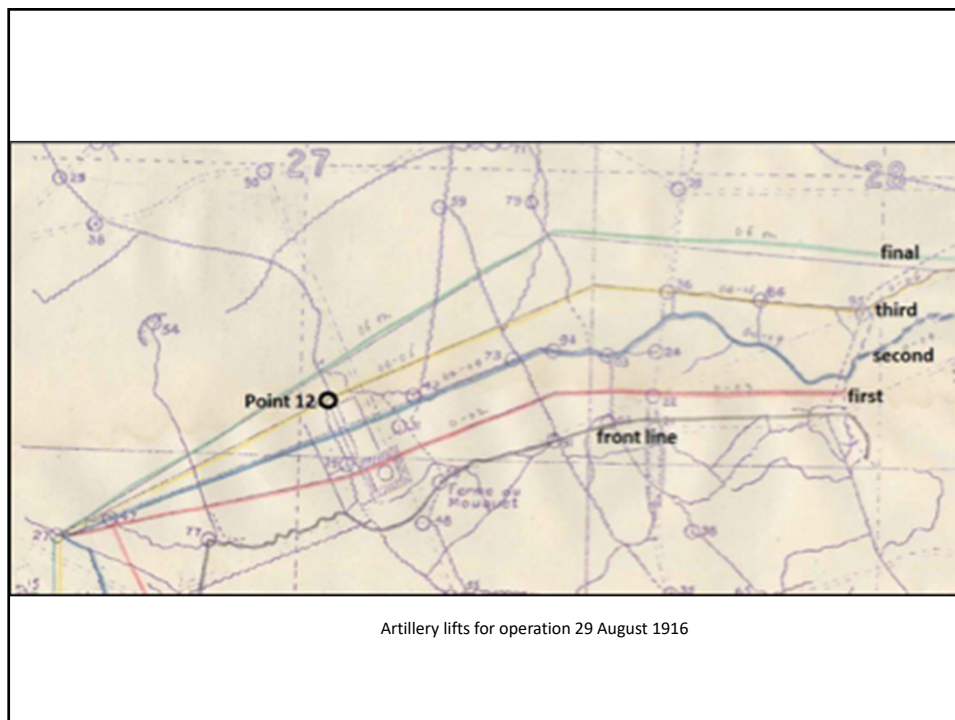
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- Only point 77 was occupied and the bulk of the operation failed. Large parts of 2nd Division's line were now so destroyed it was no more than a line of shell holes
- The failure was attributed to:
 - "the enemy's superiority in numbers and his machine gun fire"; and
 - The failure to address the threat of Mouquet Farm and its dug outs
- The general consensus at 1st ANZAC was not to change tactics but the same again but more
- On 27 August Gen Cox and 4th Division began relieving a severely depleted 2nd Division (4th Bde relieving 6th Bde) and he took over command at 1200 on 28 August
- On the same day 4th Bde unsuccessfully attacked points 27 and 54 using one & half companies and a bombing section. A worrying sign
- One that day Gen Birdwood issued an order "the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade will tomorrow attack the enemy"
- For the first time the objective of an attack ordered by Birdwood included Mouquet Farm!!
- But once again the artillery plan was inadequate starting too close to (or on) the jump off trenches and, after very quick (2 minutes) lifts, finished with a standing barrage very close to the objective (30 to 100 yards)
- Plus heavy rain had reduced the trenches to a quagmire and resulted in the artillery firing short, especially on 13th Bn's jumping off trenches causing heavy casualties

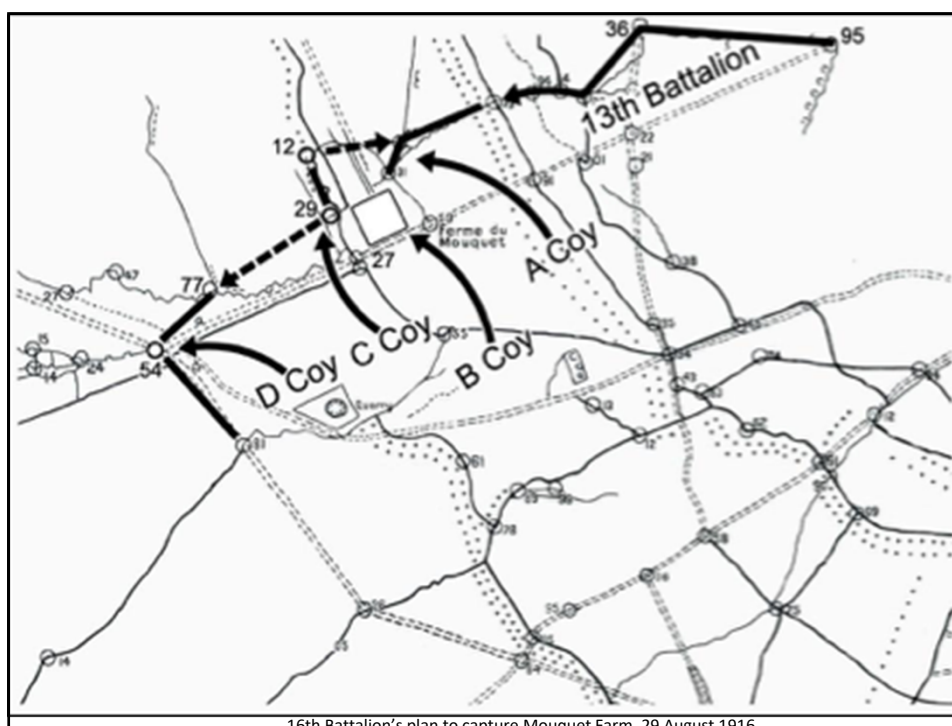
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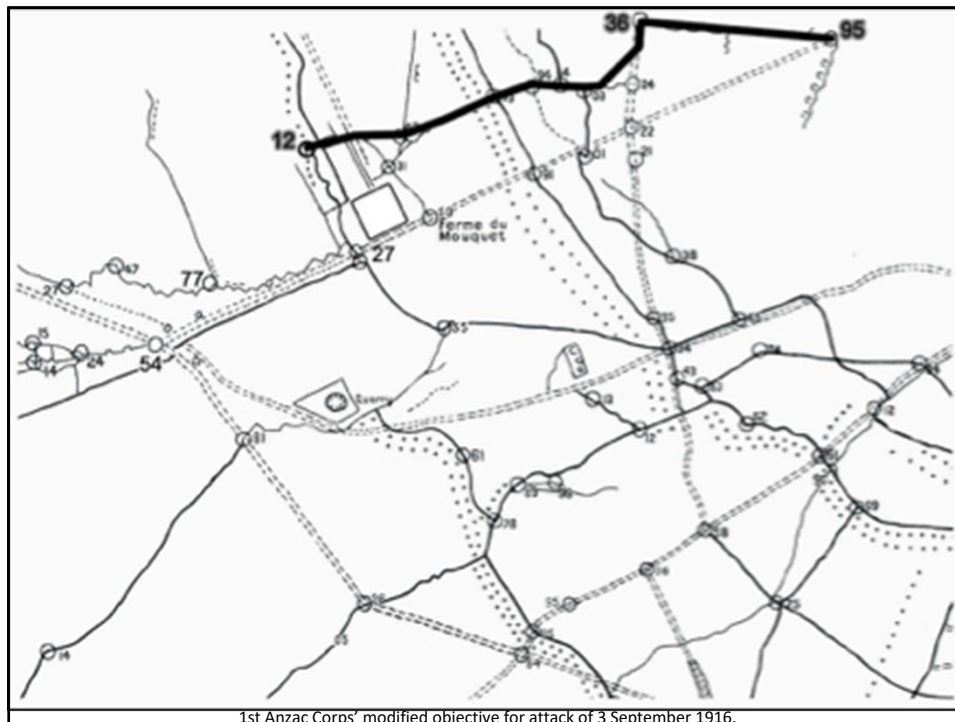


16th Battalion's plan to capture Mouquet Farm, 29 August 1916

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- 13th Bn noted they "found that with the exception of the left flank the line had advanced very little since [the] Battalion was relieved on [the] morning of [the] 15th [of] August". Their objective included the Fabeck Graben Trench that Capt Harry Murray had captured temporarily last time
- The attack was a failure and resulted from a number of factors:
 - 16th Battalion reached its objectives (except point 12) but were very heavily shelled by the Germans and attacked from the rear by Germans emerging from tunnels in Mouquet Farm. 16th then had to retire
 - The weakened state of 13th Battalion, exacerbated by the casualties inflicted by shellfire before the advance. They then suffered badly from enfilading heavy machine gun fire from both the right and the left (ie from Mouquet Farm) and were only just strong enough to hold some gains but with retirement of 16th were also forced to retire
- A badly weakened 4th Brigade was relieved by 12th Brigade on 30 August (who were relieved by 13th Brigade on 1 September)
- When Reserve Army issued an order for an attack on 3rd September Gen Birdwood issued orders that involved an attack that was greatly reduced from Reserve Army's objective and not co-ordinated with the rest of the Army. (Gen Gough did not pick this up and it stood)

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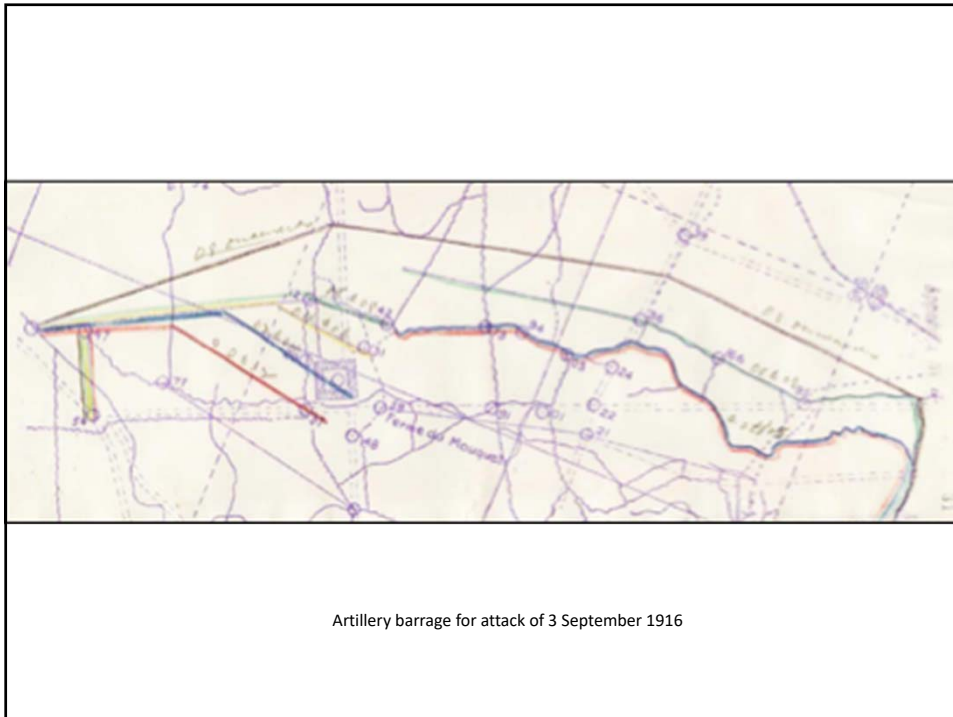


1st Anzac Corps' modified objective for attack of 3 September 1916.

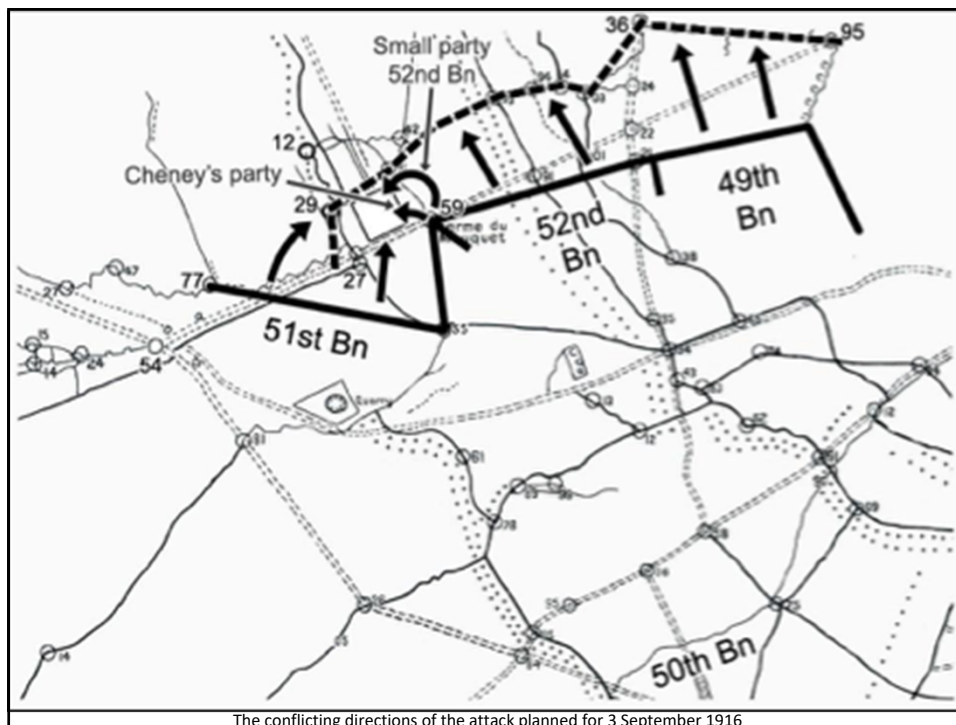
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- The attack would be made by 13th Brigade using 49th, 51st & 52nd Battalions with 50th in reserve, but
 - The ground was unprepared and after rain difficult to make proper preparations
 - 4th Division was weak and exhausted having suffered 4,500 casualties in August
 - The enemy 'are in considerably greater strength in every way now than they were when were in the line last month'
 - 51st advance on MF was in depth but there was no sizeable mop up force. Also its flanks were not well connected so the attack on the German strongpoint ('practically a fortress') was by 1 battalion on a small 400 yd front with little effective flank protection
- The attack went in and 51st on the left made good progress to and through Mouquet Farm to its allotted objective of points 12 to 42 but without a mopping up force in support German troops and machine gunners kept appearing from bunkers, tunnels and shell holes. Also they could not make contact with the 52nd Bn on their right & eventually had to retire
- 49th Battalion achieved its objectives but was in a much weakened state and only just holding its gains (including Fabeck Graben) & requesting re-inforcement. Plus it could not find 52nd on its left
- 52nd Battalion basically had 2 companies decimated, losing all their officers and most men and although some men made the line they were pitifully few and could not fill the gap

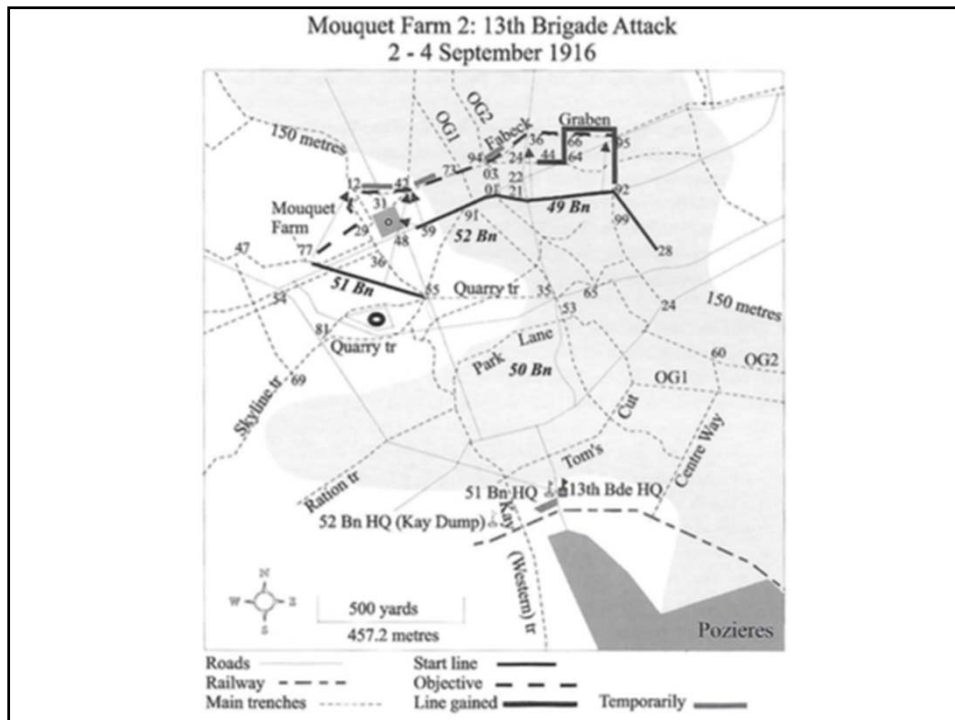
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- So although Mouquet Farm had been entered and many prisoners taken, it could not be retained due to the number of emerging Germans and the lack of a proper mopping up force. 13th Brigade suffered 1,346 casualties by the time it was relieved 5 September, along with the rest of 4th Division who in total had suffered approximately 2,500 casualties since re-entering the line 8 days previously on 27 August
- This ended the Australian involvement at Pozieres with the 1st Canadian division relieving the Australians
- Mouquet Farm resisted the Canadians and it was finally captured on 26 September during an advance by 4 Reserve Army divisions.
- All told 1st ANZAC Corps suffered some 23,000 casualties during its time at Pozieres
- Casualties Overall 1st Div 7700 2nd Div 8100 4th Div 7100 **23000**
- One wonders how many fewer this number would have been if:
 - Better artillery plans and co-ordination with infantry had been employed;
 - Realistic creeping barrages had been employed;
 - More strategic objectives had been adopted, using a broader front with sufficient numbers to allow attacks in depth and proper provision for consolidation; and
 - Time had been taking to allow proper planning, preparation and supply to occur.

93



94

With thanks to and acknowledging:

- CEW Bean - The Official History of Australia in the War 1914 – 1918 Vol III – The A.I.F. in France
- CEW Bean - ANZAC to Amiens
- Peter Brune - Our Great Hearted Men – The Australian Corps and the 100 Days
- Peter Edgar - To Villers-Bretonneux (Brig-Gen William Glasgow & 13th AIF Brigade)
- Peter Fitzsimons - Fromelles & Pozières – In the Trenches of Hell
- Meleah Hampton - 1st Anzac Corps and the Battle of Pozières Ridge, 1916 (Doctoral Thesis)
- Meleah Hampton - The Battles of Pozières (Australian Army Campaign Series – 22)
- David Holloway - Combat Colonels of the AIF in the Great War
- Graham Keech - Australians on the Somme 1916 Pozières
- Michael Lawriwsky - Hard Jacka
- Ray McNab - Pozières Phase 1 & 9th Battalion – Supplementary Note
- Christopher Wray - Pozières Echoes of a Distant Battle