

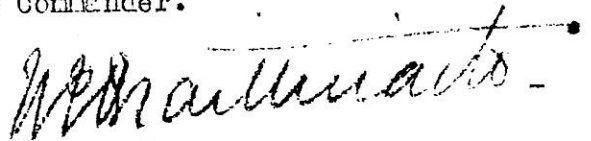
The Orders for the Attack on the Hindenburg Line May 1917 – Henry Williamson's own copy

62ND DIVISION.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

As the Division will shortly be going into action to take part in its first great battle, the Divisional Commander desires to assure all ranks of his complete confidence in their ability to defeat the German troops opposed to them.

That the 62nd (West Riding) Division will maintain its reputation for staunchness and grit – qualities for which Yorkshiremen have ever been famed – that they will gain all objectives and hold them against the most determined counter-attacks, is the firm conviction of the General Officer who is proud to be their Commander.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'H. Williamson', is written over a horizontal line.

Major General.
Commanding 62nd (West Riding) Division.

May 1st 1917.

where

-2-

where strong parties of the enemy are liable to be met with.

9. In place of the strong battle patrols mentioned in para. 8 of Division Order No. 31, 1 Battalion of the 186th. Infantry Brigade and 2 Companies of the 187th. Infantry Brigade will push forward at Zero hour plus 2 hours and 15 minutes under an artillery barrage to the 3rd. Objective.
10. Amended artillery programme will be issued later.
11. 1 Brigade of the 7th. Division will be in Reserve in the valley North West of MORV, in place of 185th. Infantry Brigade.
12. Orders re Tanks will be issued later.
13. LIAISON.

Liaison Officers will be detailed between :-

62nd. Divisional Headquarters and 2nd. Australian Division.
185th. Infantry Brigade and Left Brigade 2nd. Australian Division.
Right Battalion 185th. Infantry Brigade and Left Battalion
2nd. Australian Division.

These Officers will keep their own units informed of the progress of the Units to which they are attached.

14. Watches will be synchronised at 12 noon, and 5 p.m. on 'Y' day.

15. REPORT CENTRES.

Divisional Report Centre :- B.13.b.2.3.
185th. Infantry Brigade }
186th. Infantry Brigade. } B.17.a.8.7.
187th. Infantry Brigade }

16. With the above exceptions 62nd. Division Order No. 31. and Instructions for attack on the HINDENBURG LINE will hold good.

17. ACKNOWLEDGE.

A. Hou - Trent-Haven

Issued at 11 p.m.

Lieut. Colonel,
General Staff, 62nd. Division.

Copies to:-

1 A.D.C. for G.O.C.	22-23 V. Corps
2 G.S.G.I.	24 V. Corps 'Q'
3-5 'G'	25 V Corps H.A.
6 'Q'	26 7th. Divn.
7 G.O.C.R.A.	27 Anzac Corps
8 C.R.E.	x 28 2nd. Aust. Divn.
x 9-10 185th. Inf. Bde.	29 21st. Divn.
x 11-12 186th. do	30 4th. Cav. Divn.
x 13-14 187th. do	31 No. 11 Coy. H. Batt. M.G. Coy.
15 Signals	32 P. Special Coy. R.E.
16 A.D.M.S.	33 V Corps M.G. Officer
17 A.P.M.	34 V Corps Cav. Regt.
18 201st. M.G. Coy.	
19 208th. M.G. Coy.	
20 212th. M.G. Coy.	
21 213th. M.G. Coy.	

x Sketch attached.

SECRET.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTACK ON THE HINDENBURG LINE NO.5.

T A N K S.

1. 6 Tanks will assist the 62nd Division in the attack on the HINDENBURG LINE.

2. Their tasks will be allotted as follows :-

1st OBJECTIVE.

One pair will assist in the capture of BUISSICOURT and trenches on the East and North of that village, dealing with any strong points that may be holding out.

One pair will be responsible for trenches West of BUISSICOURT as far as U.21.a.9.5.

One pair will be responsible for the trench system from U.21.a.9.5. to the strong point at U.20.b. inclusive.

2nd OBJECTIVE.

When the Infantry move forward tanks will advance conforming to the barrage.

One pair will be responsible for SUMMERS ROAD running North through U.21.a.2.8 and U.15.c.

One pair will be responsible for trench running through U.21.a.9.5. - U.15.d.5.0 - U.15.d.9.4, and any adjacent strong points.

One pair will assist the Infantry in U.22.c and U.22.a.

3. All Tanks will assist in the capture of the 2nd Objective, each Tank operating in its allotted area.

4. The Tanks will follow the Infantry as closely as possible, but the Infantry will not wait for the Tanks.

5. ACKNOWLEDGED.

Lt Col. S. J. ...

20.4.1917.

Lieut-Colonel.
General Staff 62nd Division.

Copies to :-

A.D.C. for G.O.C.	V Corps (2)
G.S.O. 1	V Corps H.A.
"Q"	7th Divn.
G.O.C. R.A.	Anzac Corps.
C.R.D.	2nd Aust. Divn.
185th Brigade.	33rd Divn.
186th Brigade.	V Corps Cav. Regt.
187th Brigade.	War Diary (2)
Signals.	
201st M.G. Coy.	
208th M.G. Coy.	
212th M.G. Coy.	
215th M.G. Coy.	

CONFIDENTIAL: NOT TO BE ISSUED TO COMMANDERS OF LOWER RANK THAN BATTALION, BATTERY AND FIELD COMPANY COMMANDERS, AND NOT TO BE TAKEN INTO FRONT LINE TRENCHES.

18/3/17. V CORPS SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE. No.205.

PART I.

INFORMATION FROM OUR OWN FRONT.

1. OPERATIONS.

The enemy continued his withdrawal throughout the night of the 17/18th March, evacuating COURCELLES, DOUCHY, AYETTE, GOMIECOURT, MOYENNEVILLE and HAMELINGOURT and ERVILLEKS. These villages are now occupied by our troops.

The Corps on our right have extended their line to FREMICOURT, BEUGNATRE, FAVREUIL, SAPIGNIES and are pushing patrols forward which have now reached MORY.

The Corps on our left is now in occupation of ADINFER WOOD, ADINFER, HENDECOURT, RANSART, BLAIREVILLE and FICHEUX.

In all these operations practically no opposition was met with from the enemy.

For our approximate line see attached map.

2. ENEMY DISPOSITIONS.

Owing to the rapidity of the enemy's retreat, it has been difficult to keep touch. At the present moment there is no information to hand of the dispositions of his main troops, but his nearest line is part of the HINDENBURG system running in a south-easterly direction East of St.MARTIN SUR COJEUL and GROISILLES through BULLECOURT.

Reports have been received that enemy posts are situated in a crater in front of ST.LEGER at S.B. and also in ECOUST ST.MEIN.

Hostile cavalry patrols have also been seen on the road between ERVILLEKS and ST.LEGER and S.W. of ECOUST ST.MEIN in G.7 and 8.

3. IDENTIFICATIONS.

(a) A very severely wounded prisoner of the 3rd Coy.55th R.I.R. (220th Division) was taken at QUESNOY FARM early this morning. He stated that his company left their normal sector near RANSART for BOIRY ST.MARTIN early last night. He, however, fell out and lost his way and wandered about until he was wounded and found by our troops near QUESNOY FARM.

From his statements, it appears that the 220th Division came into the RANSART area on 28th February. He was ignorant of the order of battle, but said the 207th R.I.R. was on his left.

As the prisoner was in a dying condition and half unconscious from morphia, his statements should be taken with reserve.

(b) Two unwounded prisoners of the 55th R.I.R.(220th Div.) have been captured at COURCELLES.

At the time of writing these prisoners have not yet been examined.

4. ...

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4. ENEMY'S WITHDRAWAL PRECAUTIONS.

(a) Fires are reported this afternoon in :-

BOIRY BECQUELLE.
BOIRY ST.MARTIN
BOISLEUX ST.MARC
VAULX
VHAUCOURT
MOREUIL
QUEANT
ST.LEGER
CHOISILLES.

and many other fires were observed in villages further East.

(b) It appears from observers' reports that practically all cross-roads, level crossings, entrances to and exits from villages have been blown up. On several roads trees have been cut down to block the roads. With the exception of the above, the roads are in good condition. For position of the above mentioned obstacles, see attached map.

(c) The rails of the railway from ARRAS - ACHIET-le-GRAND - BAPAUME have been torn from the sleepers.

5. ARTILLERY.

(a) Our Artillery: Our artillery supported the advance of our infantry and shelled the enemy's roads and tracks and usual targets.

(b) Enemy's activity: Enemy's artillery activity has been practically nil. Shortly after midnight 17/18th inst., the southern outskirts of BUCQUOY were shelled with 150 mm.

Our Cavalry report that the northern exit of HAMELINCOURT was shelled with gas shells and the CHOISILLES - HAMELINCOURT road at A.6.c.2.5 with long range shrapnel.

6. CAPTURED DOCUMENT.

Regimental Order of 77th A.I.A.

(i) The band will proceed on the 13/3/17 to MARQUION (6 miles W. of CAMBRAI) and will be attached to the Infantry Pioneer Company. They will work on the new position.

(ii) The Regimental Post Office should be transferred by rail from ST.LEGER to MARQUION and from here further by road to SAINS LES MARQUIONS, so long as the Field Post Office remains in ST.LEGER.

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PART II.

INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES.

A. PRECAUTIONS FOR WITHDRAWAL.

A prisoner captured by the Army on our right states that orders were given by the Germans to poison wells. The well at BARLEUX was examined and found to be poisoned with arsenic.

The Army on our left report working parties on the HINDENBURG LINE.

All villages west of this line are in flames.

ST. LEGER.

(Reference 1/20,000 sheets 57c N.W.
and 51b S.W.).

1. General.

(a) ST. LEGER, a village of 171 houses, stands in a valley, that of the Upper SENSEE, running from south-west to north-east. There is high ground north and south of the village. In the village itself the ground rises from north to south and the hill is steep. All villages in the neighbourhood except CROISILLES are hidden, but from the high ground south of the village there is a wide view in every direction.

(b) The neighbourhood of the village and the village itself are particularly well wooded. There are large trees along the roads at all the exits from the village, along the banks of the stream and in the orchards and pastures surrounding the village. The gardens are enclosed by thick hedges and fences. Half the village area consists of the large chateau park which is well wooded.

2. Woods.

Apart from the plantations in the immediate neighbourhood of the village, there are numerous small copses in the open country beyond. These are intended to serve as cover for partridges and are all shown on the 1/20,000 maps of the area.

3. Watercourse.

The SENSEE at this point is dry except as the result of heavy rain. It is from 6 to 8 feet wide, and its banks are about 4 feet deep and not abrupt. The road bridges over the watercourse marked on the map are all of brick.

4. Water Supply.

There is one large pond on the road to ERVILLERS. There are 50 wells, and the average depth of water level is 40 feet.

5. Railway.

ST. LEGER is on the BOISLEUX-MARQUION railway. The track is broad gauge and single. There is a "Halte" about T 28 central with a siding and a loop line. East of the station the line is embanked for about 1,000 yards; through the village it is level, from T 28 a 40 to T 27 b 71 it is embanked, and from this point to T 27 a 19 it is in a fairly deep cutting.

6. Roads.

The roads are of the usual type; sunken at the exits of the village; slightly sunken or level in the open country. There is a deep cutting on the road at the southern exit from the village in B 4 b and d (the banks are said to be 20 feet high). Practically every road is lined with trees as it leaves the village, those to VAULX-VRAUCOURT and MAISON ROUGE FARM for a considerable distance.

The CROISILLES road passes under the railway.

The ECOUST and VAULX-VRAUCOURT roads are unmetalled.

7. Buildings.

By far the most important building is the chateau. There are a few large brick farms and a brick sugar factory, but most of the houses are small two storeyed farms, built of brick and toronis. There are cellars to almost every house, the only important ones being those under the chateau and the factory. JUDAS FARM, T 27 a 10, and ST. LEGER Mill T 21 d 92 are important buildings away from the village.

8.

- 2 -

8. Underground passages.

There is said to be an underground gallery, one kilometre long, at ST.LEGER. It is rather remarkable that although it is at least 70 feet below the surface, the soil of the passages and rooms is of beaten clay. In 1885, during the digging of a well, one of the streets of this underground village was discovered; 26 rooms and stables were counted, and there were 5 vent holes that had provided ventilation and exits for the passage of smoke, for some of the rooms had fire places. These ventilations had, however, collapsed. The street was only 2 feet wide, the rooms were about 8 feet high by 9 feet square and the doors 6 feet high. The entrance discovered was in the garden of the chateau.

9. Quarry.

The quarry shown on the map at T 28 a 31 is reported to be from 15 to 20 feet deep.

10. Obstacles.

None of the various terraces marked on the 1/20,000 map, north-west and south-east of ST.LEGER are high nor do they present a serious obstacle.

11. Soil.

The soil of the village and of the whole valley is chalk, except that the bed of the stream is sandy. On the hills north and south of the village the surface soil is clay.

12. Present Military Organization.

Up to the present there are no signs of any trenches having been dug near ST.LEGER and the village appears to be quite undefended. The village has been consistently used as rest billets and for a long time there was a Divisional Headquarters in the chateau.

13. Population.

784 before the war. Now all evacuated.

List of important buildings.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| T 28 d 22. | Chateau standing in a large wooded park. There is a garden between the chateau and the village street. Between this garden and the park there is a railing. The house itself is old and strong, with thick stone walls. Under the house there are large cellars and vaults. Attached to the chateau there are good stables and farm buildings. |
| ? B 4 b 6280. | Church: a large building with a tall belfry. |
| T 28 c 86. | Sugar factory standing at the bottom of the hill. It is not large but is strongly built with good cellars and several large sheds. |
| T 28 c 7054. | Two storeyed brick house. |
| T 28 c 8846. | Large and strong farm. |
| T 27 a 10. | JUDAS FARM: isolated, astride the BOYELLES road. The buildings north of the road are strongly built and have thick walls. The cellars are 13 feet below the surface and divided into four chambers: they are vaulted with masonry. There is one entrance in the yard and one in the house. There is a pigeon loft 30 feet high from which there is a wide view. There is reported to be an underground gallery beneath the farm and road, possibly connected with the cellars. |
| T 21 d.92. | Strong stone windmill on the BOIRY road: stands high and is an excellent O.P. |

3.

A. GERMAN BACK LINES OF DEFENCE. (From G.H.Q.Summary).

(a) HINDENBURG LINE.

A deserter, who had worked for some time on the HINDENBURG line near CAMBRAI, gave the following information:-

- (a) All dug-outs are made of concrete with head cover of 4 to 5 metres thickness.
- (b) Trenches are unrevetted but well built.
- (c) No specially built machine gun emplacements had been made.
- (d) Concrete observation posts with about 5 metres head cover, and a periscope protected by steel plates, had been made.
- (e) The wire in front of St.QUENTIN was 15 to 20 yards deep.

(b) Air reconnaissance yesterday morning confirms the line of trenches previously reported by refugees from CANTIN past ARLEUX to MARQUION. Just north of MARQUION the line bends off to the west, passing just N. of BARALLE. A continuation beyond this point could not be observed.

Those portions of line which were observed are very strongly wired, and consist in most places of both front and support trenches,

(Sgd) S.S.HILL-DILLON, Capt.,G.S.,

for B.G.,G.S.,
V Corps.

STOP PRESS

Fred Crawford's long awaited book on the controversy surrounding Richard Aldington and T.E. Lawrence arrived after this issue of the HWSJ had been typeset. Thus there is no room for a full review but at least it can be drawn to your attention *pro tem*.

Fred D. Crawford, RICHARD ALDINGTON AND LAWRENCE OF ARABIA: A Cautionary Tale.
Southern Illinois University Press, USA, 1998. ISBN 0-8093-2166-1.

This book examines the extraordinary arena in which the combatants were Richard Aldington and his (then) sensational work *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* (Collins, 1955) versus a group ostensibly led by B.H. Liddell-Hart and A.W. Lawrence (TE's brother and executor). In trying to protect TEL this group ('The Lawrence Bureau') went to great lengths to try to suppress Aldington's book in which he sought to clarify previous conceptions about TEL's life, particularly the mystery surrounding his birth and his role in the Arab campaign in the First World War. When their ploy failed (although the book was highly edited by result) they then tried to damage Aldington's reputation so that the book would not be taken seriously. Prof. Crawford's book gives a clear and objective discussion of the total scenario - in which Henry Williamson played a part (see Anne Williamson, 'The Genius of Friendship', Pt 1 'T.E. Lawrence', HWSJ, no. 27, March 1993, pp 18-35; Pt 2 'Richard Aldington', HWSJ no. 18, Sept. 1993, pp 7-21). Crawford's 'Cautionary Tale' illuminates the problems faced by one biographer in discovering the truth - and warns us that similar situations still exist. It is appallingly easy for truth to be suppressed or twisted to present a false picture. We know Henry Williamson suffered (and still suffers) from the same syndrome.