

## **THE AUSTRALIAN ATTACK IN THE BATTLE OF POZIÈRES, 21-31 JULY 1916: A TRANSLATION OF THE OFFICIAL GERMAN VERSION – PART 1**

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The following article is the first of a two-part series involving a translation from the relevant pages of the German Official History pertaining to the Australian attack at Pozzières. The original work is titled *Somme-Nord II. Teil: Die Brennpunkte der Schlacht im Juli 1916. (Schlachten des Weltkrieges, Band 21)* [Somme-North 2<sup>nd</sup> Part: The Focal Points of the Battle in July 1916 (Battles of the World War, Volume 21)] by Lt Col (retd) Albrecht von Stosch (at that time Major and Battalion Cdr, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Thuringian Infantry Regiment 153), published by Gerhard Stalling: Oldenburg i.O./Berlin, 1927. The translated pages are from the chapter titled ‘The Loss of Pozzières. 21-31 July’, pages 127-52.

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Notes on this translation: This is a literal translation. The authors have tried to keep as true to the original text as possible, although some effort has been made to make it more readable by the application (in places) of plain English techniques. The original pagination is indicated within the translated text in square brackets, while footnotes as they appear in the original are marked with asterisks. Footnotes added by the authors are numbered and formatted as standard footnotes. Any additional text by the authors appears also in square brackets. As in the original: full stops after numbers (e.g. 1., 2., 3. etc) equal ordinal numbers (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc); Arabic numerals preceding a unit designation indicate a company (e.g. 1., 2., 3.-12.); and Roman numerals preceding a unit designation indicate a battalion (e.g. I., II., III.). The original German ranks have been retained in the text and a table showing the various German ranks can be found in Appendix 1. For ease of reference portions of Maps 10-13 from von Stosch showing the Australian attack are included in the colour section located in the middle of this issue, and are referred to as [Fig.1.1] and so on.

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[page 127] **The Loss of Pozières. 21-31 July**

In the last third of July there were especially heavy battles for the ruins of Pozières and the German positions thereabouts as well as for the dominant windmill height 161 [161m]. The enemy was expecting as well to gain the Thiepval position after he had occupied those positions, which he hadn't been able to achieve so far and which he wasn't to attain for a long time, thanks to the bravery and tenacity of the Swabians, in association with Prussians, Bavarians and Badeners. At first the English employed between their 48. and 1. Divisions the 1. Australian Division\* against Pozières.

In the Thiepval sector I.R.<sup>2</sup> 185, the 3., 4., 7. and 8./186 as well as I./R. 15 were relieved during the 20. to 22. July by R.I.R.<sup>3</sup> 22 (117. I.D.<sup>4</sup>), whose Commander, Major Freiherr von Senden, took command of the sector early on 22. July. On 24. July the command of the positions at St. Pierre-Divion-Thiepval came to the 26. R.D.<sup>5</sup>, as ordered by the A.O.K. 1.\*\* With this, the defence of the important place Thiepval came to the very experienced Württemberger [page 128] I.R. 180, Oberstlt. [Lieutenant Colonel] Vischer. The last remaining sections of the Bavarian R.I.R. 8 retired after almost four weeks of combat on 25. and 26. July. from the ruins of St. Pierre-Divion and Thiepval, during the brave defence of which this Regiment had lost 252 dead (5 Off.), 758 wounded (7 Off.) and 208 missing (1 Off.).

\* This Division belonged to the 1. Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) that was so distinguished in the Dardanelles in 1915 but also suffered (bled) very heavily. The Australian Divisions consisted of three Australian and one New Zealand Brigades of four Battalions each rather than the

<sup>2</sup> I.R. = Infanterie-Regiment (Infantry Regiment) (General Staff, 1918: 189).

<sup>3</sup> R.I.R. = Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment (Reserve Infantry Regiment). R. = Reserve (General Staff, 1918: 202).

<sup>4</sup> I.D. = Infanterie-Division (Infantry Division) (General Staff, 1918: 188).

<sup>5</sup> R.D. = Reserve Division.

British Divisions of three Brigades.<sup>6</sup>

\*\* *Armee Ober Kommando* [Army High Command].

Under heavy enemy artillery fire, I., II. and the M.G.Verbände/185<sup>7</sup> had been repulsing repetitive English attacks at the endangered position near Thiepval-Ovillers since 1. July, III./185 since 12. July, and they generally held their positions. With a loss of 156 dead, including Lt. d. L. [Landwehr Second-Lieutenant] Schmidt (Wilhelm), Lt. d. R. [Reserve Second-Lts] Kauffmann and Götz, 628 wounded (10 Off.) 59 missing, the Baden Regiment left the battlefield on the Ancre rivulet. According to Gen.Maj. [Major General] Burkhardt,<sup>8</sup> the 3., 4., 7. and 8./186 had performed outstandingly during this action. The other companies of the I. and II./186 had given excellent support to R.I.R. 121 and 119 north of the Ancre. I./186 suffered 36 dead, 122 wounded, 3 missing, II./186 24 dead, 104 wounded, 2 missing. I./R. 15 had performed bravely since 3. July continuously and with many losses in the threatened place Thiepval.

I.R. 27 formed three Battalion sectors in the area at Pozières on 21. July: to the right, II./27 Hptm. [Captain] Lyons<sup>9</sup>, with the Companies Messerschmidt (5. and 6.) and Schade (7. and 8.); in the centre staff III./R. 77, Major d. R. [Reserve Major] von Lettow-Vorbeck<sup>10</sup>, with 8./62, 9. and 10./R. 77; on the left staff II./62, Hptm. Heck, with 7./62, 11. and 12./R. 77, I./27 (without 3.) was the reserve of the Brigade in Ligny and Le Barque.

On 21. July the fire of the English artillery and heavy Minenwerfer<sup>11</sup> [mortars] became heavier from 2.00 a.m. to the north and northeast of Ovillers. Shortly after 3.00 a.m. components of the English 145. Brigade (48. Division) attacked again the 12./G.F.<sup>12</sup> [Guard Fusiliers] north of Ovillers, 10. and 11./R. 91 in the old *Nordwerk* northeast of Ovillers and adjoining right wing of those companies, where the I./157 (without 4.) Major Zech<sup>13</sup> († 6.12.16) had only just then relieved the III./R. 15 in the *Schwarzwaldgraben*<sup>14</sup> and on the north-western side of Pozières. At the 12./G.F. the English entered a gap where two groups had been destroyed by minefire [i.e. trench-mortar fire] but they were repulsed again. There, V.F. [Vice-Sergeant] Schuyler and the G.F. [Lance Corporal] Giessler, Knapnick and Kagma distinguished themselves especially. At 10./R. 91 Oblt. d. R. [Reserve Lieutenant] Windels († 4.8.17) repulsed the enemy as well. Similar to the 19. July Lt. d. R. Sütterle with a group chased the retreating enemy with hand grenades [page 129] but had to stop, because he entered the excellent curtainfire from the artillery group *Caesar*, Hptm. Jäckh, II./R.F.A. 27, that had just commenced and had caused him some losses. At 11./R. 91, the alerted platoon of Lt. d. R. Rösing, with a machine gun repulsed the enemy who had come very close. At day-break Utffz. [Corporal] Grensser with three men, followed by the whole platoon Rösing, advanced to clear the enemy from the dug-outs in the front. Only few Englishmen could escape; most were felled with handgrenades. In front of 11./R. 91 were about 100 dead Englishmen; 10. and 11./R. 91 took 16 P.O.W.s of the 5. Gloucesters. In front of I./157., Lt. d. R. Rammensee, the attack also collapsed in the

<sup>6</sup> See Bean 1936: 523 n.66, who comments on the inaccuracy of this description.

<sup>7</sup> M.G.Verbände = Maschinen-Gewehr unit (M.G. units).

<sup>8</sup> Gen.Maj. Burkhardt (10. Bavarian Div.) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 520) and Miles (1938: 142 n.2).

<sup>9</sup> Hptm. Ponsonby Lyons (II./27) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 524, 542 n.36).

<sup>10</sup> Reserve Major von Lettow-Vorbeck (III./Res. 77) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 524).

<sup>11</sup> Minenwerfer = trench mortar (War Office 1918: 103).

<sup>12</sup> Presumably G.F. = Garde-Füsilier (Guard Fusilier). G = Garde (Guard) (General Staff, 1918: 184). F = Füsilier (Fusilier) (General Staff, 1918: 180).

<sup>13</sup> Major Zech the commander of the (I./157) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 521 n.54).

<sup>14</sup> Schwarzwaldgraben = Black Forest Trench.

defensive fire of the crew and the outstandingly aimed artillery fire. A Captain of the 1. Oxford and Buckingham Battalion was taken prisoner.

The remainder of the III. and II./R. 15 moved to the rear as army reserve. The staff of R.I.R 15 was relieved in Courcelette by the staff of I.R. 157, Major Hengstenberg.<sup>15</sup> II./R. 15 had 73 dead, 247 wounded (8 Off.), 129 missing (2 Off.); III./R. 15 suffered 29 dead (1 Off.), 190 wounded, of whom Offz.St. [Deputy-Officer] Haferkamp later died of his wounds, and 9 missing.

The III./G.F. that was relieved from the Hindenburg position in the night of 22. July by the III./R. 11, leader Hptm. Feuerstein (gef.<sup>16</sup> 1.10.18), retired to Metz-en-Couture: 'The Garde-Füsilier Regiment [Guard Fusilier Regiment] that has defended this important sector with which it had been entrusted has covered itself with lasting glory. It has performed much better than could ever have been expected. I am proud to have had the heroes of Ovillers under my command'. With these words discharged Gen.Maj. Burkhardt the brave Regiment to his 3. G.I.D.<sup>17</sup> [Guard Infantry Division]. Total losses of the G.F.R.<sup>18</sup> [Guard Fusilier Regiment] on dead, wounded and missing were for the timeframe 3. to 22. July 220 dead (5 Off.), 790 wounded (14 Off.) and 209 missing (3 Off.).

To hand responsibility for the defence of the village Pozières, which was continuously under the heaviest fire, to a single Division, the Div. Burkhardt extended its left wing over the path Pozières-Contalmaison on the night of 22. July as ordered by Army Group Armin in place of the II./27, which had only about 150 rifles left, and in place of 8./62, the 4./157 and 10./R. 77 occupied the south and southeast positions; 20 men of the 6./27. [page 130] remained between 10. and 11./R. 77 in the front.<sup>19</sup> The remaining sections of the Komp. Messerschmidt and Schade occupied blocking positions northeast of the village. The M.G./27 remained in their current position, i.e. in part with the 157now. This regiment was charged early on 22. July with the defence of the village ruins. II./62 returned to Ligny-Thilloy, so that the regimental sector of I.R. 27 only included the sectors Lyons and Lettow. During the difficult relief operations at night the Australians tried several times to enter the Pozières position but were unsuccessful.

All day on 22. and in the night to the 23. July the village and the area around it was under brisk English air activity and drum fire [see Fig.1.1, p.31]. Losses increased significantly, many buried by shellfire. Lt. d. R. Heider of I./R. 22 was killed in action; Lts. d. R. Kutsch and Bartsch of III./R. 11 were wounded. Lt. [Second-Lieutenant] Hachtmann of I.R. 27 also fell and Lt. d. R. Buchholz and Lt. Vornkohl were wounded. Wounded from III./R. 77 were Lts. d. R. Klussmann, Baetke, leaders of the 9. and 11. Komp., Wildhagen and Offz.St. Frey and Sporn.

II. and III./R. 91 were supposed to be relieved north and northeast of Ovillers during the night of 23. July by I./R. 11, Hptm. d. R. [Reserve Captain] Theuer. The M.G.K./R. 11<sup>20</sup> advanced to relieve the M.G. of the G.F.R. and R.I.R. 91. As well, III./R. 77 (without 12.) was to be relieved in the Pozières position by III./62 (without 12.), 12./R. 77 east of Pozières by 11./27, and 12./62 to move to Martinpuich. But during the reliefs at about 1.30 a.m. there commenced

<sup>15</sup> Major Hengstenberg the commander of I.R. 57 is mentioned in Bean (1936: 521 n.54, 524, 577).

<sup>16</sup> gef. could be gefallen (K.I.A.) or gefangen (Prisoner)?

<sup>17</sup> G.I.D = Garde-Infantry Division (Guard Infantry Division).

<sup>18</sup> G.F.R. = Garde-Füsilier Regiment (Guard Fusilier Regiment).

<sup>19</sup> See Miles (1938: 142 n.2).

<sup>20</sup> M.G.K. = Maschinen-Gewehr-Kompanie (Machine Gun Company) (General Staff, 1918: 197).

strong attacks by the English 144. Br. (48. Div.) and the 3. Australian Br. (1. Australian Div.) against the positions of R.I.R. 11 north of Pozières, of I./157 in front of this village, as well the 10. and 11./R. 77 southeast of the village.<sup>21</sup> At the same time a heavy English attack commenced further east against I.R. 165 and 93 in the *Foureaux* blocking position, that adjoined I.R. 27.\*

\* Refer the section *The Victorious Defence of the Foureaux Forest from the 21. to 31. July* refer page 153 [not included in this translation].

At III./R. 11 the English thrust was directed principally against 9./R. 11, Hptm. d. R. Thiel, which was in position east of the shellhole<sup>22</sup>; this had been under heavy minefire for three hours. By especially brave action of Lts. d. R. Grützner and Tschech, the English, who had penetrated in the centre, were immediately repulsed and 5 prisoners (1 Off.) as well as a machine gun taken. At the I.R. 11., 2. and 1. Komp., Lts. d. R. Hoffmann and Pflaume reported soon by telephone that the enemy had been repulsed. In front of the 3. Komp., Lt. d. R. [page 131] Hebrocks as well and the right section of the 4. Komp., Lt. d. L. Böhm, the dense lines of the attackers soon came to halt in the defensive and artillery curtainfire, which caused heavy losses to the enemy. But on the left wing of the 4. Komp. and at the neighbouring 157. the enemy penetrated the position. Oblt. d. R. Windels, leader of the 10./R. 91 gathered anyone he could of his company who had already been relieved and hurried to the front. Here Uffz. Eggebrecht and his group excelled again. He had been buried three times and wounded on the right ear by a shell fragment. Even so, he held fast with his team and threw hand grenades into the enemy lines. Lts. d. R. Schade, Rösing and Helwes from 11./R. 91 were still at the front at 4./R. 11 with their runners. Without a thought of their own safety they remained at the front; thus Lt. d. R. Rösing was fatally injured. Lt. d. R. Helwes personally defended a sap. 4./R. 11 asked for reinforcements, to prevent the infiltrating enemy from rolling up the left wing of I./R. 11. Major von Lüttichau, Komdr. [Commander] of the II./R. 11, sent two platoons of 7./R. 11 with Lt. d. L. Korsawe to the front. One platoon got lost but the second was soon helping the 3./R. 11, which had suffered heavy losses. In the meantime, counter charges of the 4./R. 11 had some success. V.F. Kluge had pushed back some of the enemy but further attempts were held in check by heavy English machine gun fire. The leader of the company was missing. With the successful invasion at 4./R. 11 and I./157 the enemy was able to occupy about 250m of the position. Sections of New South Wales battalions<sup>23</sup> took possession of the actual defence line of the 1. and 2./157. Lt. d. R. Rammensee was able to dislodge the enemy there twice, but in the end he had many losses and had to be satisfied with holding the old *Schwarzalldgraben*. Several companies of the Victorian battalion<sup>24</sup> entered the southern part of the village, after having breached the left wing of the 4./157 and the right wing of 10./R. 77. The rest of 6./27 soon noticed Australians in the rear of 10./R. 77, which was almost obliterated in fierce hand-to-hand fighting.<sup>25</sup> Only few people were able to escape the encirclement. Lt. d. R. Janssen, the leader of the company, was one of the missing, so were Lts. d. R. Zimmermann, Koop, and Lt. d. L. Bülter. The few people of the 6./27 who were able to defend themselves from the encirclement by the enemy had two of M.G./27<sup>26</sup> along who happened to be with them. 11./R. 77 pushed the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting back with heavy losses. Lt. d. R. Pawlik, who had been disabled by shell burial, nevertheless remained at his post under heaviest fire and so

<sup>21</sup> See Bean (1936: 523-24).

<sup>22</sup> Granatloch = shellhole. Must be a prominent point?

<sup>23</sup> Sic. These could be any of the four New South Wales battalions in 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division.

<sup>24</sup> Sic. 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division actually contained four Victorian battalions in its 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade.

<sup>25</sup> See Miles (1938: 143 n.3).

<sup>26</sup> M.G./27 = Machine Gun Company I.R. 27, presumably.

displayed an example of [*page 132*] bravery and faithfulness. To avoid being cut off the last few of the 6./27 and the rests of 10./R. 77 retreated fighting with both machine guns to the area northeast of Pozières.<sup>27</sup>

The left wing of 4./157 was also soon attacked in the rear and almost completely annihilated.<sup>28</sup> Only few people could escape to the right. When the Australians then continued in the rear of the 4. and 3./157 from the left and pushed on, those left were pushed together to the right. That caused a gap west of the National Str. [Street]. Lt. d. R. Ertel,<sup>29</sup> leader of the 4./157, who remained with three machine guns and a few people in the Panzerturm<sup>30</sup> [armoured turret] on the National Str. was soon completely isolated. With the intention to come to the relief of their endangered comrades, Lt. d. R. Roske,<sup>31</sup> leader of the 3./157 with a few men stormed against the Australians but could only get to about 30m of the great road. One could hear machine gun fire from the armoured turret until 6.00 a.m., then all was quiet there. Lt. d. R. Ertel and his men had been overpowered by the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

The enemy opposite the 11./R. 77 had in the meantime attacked again but had been repulsed with the help of the 9. and 12./62 which had come to relieve there. Then a daring counterattack by the leader of 12./62, Oblt. d. R. Ohr<sup>33</sup> who had mustered men from Reserves of 77. and 62. reached as far as the road Pozières-Kl. Bazentin, where heavy English machine gun fire held the heroic advance for good. The companies that had suffered heavy losses were finally forced by flanking fire and renewed attacks on both sides by superior forces of the enemy to evacuate the position they had won. Oblt. d. R. Ohr and Offz.St. Graetsch were killed in action.

Of the M.G./27 that had been in position in Pozières, seven [machine guns] were lost with their entire crews, after they had been destroyed by fire previously. Lt. d. R. Seher and V.F. Kornemann were among the missing.

On 23. July at 3.30 a.m. the staff of III./62, Hptm. Bruck<sup>34</sup>, had arrived in the combined command post of the staffs of III./R. 77 and II./27 in the northeast of Pozières, to relieve the staff of III./R. 77. There no one knew of the battles that had occurred at the front because of the terrible English artillery fire that was covering the village.<sup>35</sup> Not until 3.40 a.m. a runner (Gefr. Meyer, III./R. 77) who was supposed to guide the Battalion Doctor of III./62, Ass.Arzt d. R. [Assistant Doctor] Dr. Mogwitz, [*page 133*] to the First Aid Post, reported that he had seen several enemies in front of the Gef.St.<sup>36</sup> [Battle Headquarters]. All officers and personnel of the staffs left the Gef.St. at once to defend it. By the light of flares they observed an enemy company which was entrenching immediately south of National Str. 30m from the Gef.St. With the few available rifles they fired at the enemy, who returned the fire. Lt. Horn, Adj. [Adjutant]

<sup>27</sup> See Miles (1938: 143 n.3).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Lt. d. R. Ertel (4./157) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 547).

<sup>30</sup> Panzerturm = armoured turret (War Office, 1918: 112). This strongpoint was first named 'The Cement House' and then 'Gibraltar' by the Australians (Bean, 1936: 536, 536 n.17; Miles, 1938: 146 n.1). It is annotated 'Panzer T.' in Fig.1.1.

<sup>31</sup> Lt. d. R. Roske (3./157) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 547, 578).

<sup>32</sup> According to Bean (1936: 535 n.12; 535-36) and Talyor & Cusacks (1942: 182) the strong post was attacked by Lieutenant Waterhouse and a number of men from the 2nd Battalion. The structure was found to be occupied by 3 officers and 23 men with 3 machine guns who subsequently surrendered. One officer later died of his wounds. Also see Charlton (1986: 144); and Wray (2015: 37).

<sup>33</sup> Oblt. d. R. Ohr (12./62) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 524). He was killed in this action.

<sup>34</sup> Hptm. Bruck or Brück (III./62) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 524).

<sup>35</sup> See Bean (1936: 522).

<sup>36</sup> Gef.St. or Gef.Std. = Gefechts-Stand (Battle Headquarters) (War Office, 1918: 185).



II./27 (gef. 25.3.17) and a few men were wounded. As the continuation of the uneven fight would have been hopeless with the coming of the day, Major d. R. von Lettow and Hptm. Lyons with their staffs retreated to the first blocking trench northeast of the village, to arrange a counterattack against the enemy in the village. With a few casualties from the enemy curtainfire they reached the primary blocking trench, but the staff of III./62 that had been left behind was taken prisoner later on.<sup>37</sup> A similar fate befell the doctors of II./27 and III./62, Ob.Arzt d. R. [Reserve-Lieutenant (Medical) ] Dr. Albrecht and Ass.Arzt d. R. Dr. Mogwitz, as they had not heard of the intrusion of the Australians into the village in their first aid post.<sup>38</sup>

Major Hengstenberg had received a report from I./157 by telephone early 2.30 a.m. ‘Attack on Pozieres. Enemy has entered some areas’. After having notified the artillery and the Division he ordered III./157 at Courcellette, Hptm. Rumland, to retake the village immediately in an attack and to push on to the old position.<sup>39</sup> Shortly after 3.00 a.m. Bavarian 20. I.Br.<sup>40</sup> [20. Infantry Brigade] made the II./157, Hptm. d. R. Mende, also available; this had been in place west of Le Sars but was already assembled to move to Courcellette. As 9./157 remained at Courcellette to protect the artillery the attack commenced at 5.30 a.m. by the 10., 11., and 12./157 from the II. Position north of Pozières.<sup>41</sup> Hptm. Lyons as well used weak remnants of the Komp. Messerschmidt (II./27) from the blocking position in a counterattack; he personally proceeded with the second wave. The counterattack fell apart in the machine gun fire of the Australians; Hptm. Lyons was captured.<sup>42</sup> 12./157 met in the northern part of Pozières a greatly superior enemy, was caught in the left flank by enemy machine guns and had to go to ground. But 10. and 11./157 were able to enter the village west of the National Str. and push the Australians to the east behind or close to the National Str. But then the Australians received reinforcements and entrenched.

Major Zech, I./157 asked shortly after 7.00 a.m. for urgent assistance, as the situation of his companies became more and more critical. [page 134] During the morning the 8./157 were able to penetrate the English artillery fire in sections and to reinforce the rest of the 3. and 4./157 in the former *Schwarzwald* trench. But the situation there remained grim so that the 6./157 was assigned there as well early in the afternoon.

When Oberstlt. Hundrich,\* Komdr. of the I.R. 27, learned at 5.00 a.m. in Martinpuich of the penetration by the Australians in Pozières, the 5. and 6./62 at Ligny-Thillooy were assigned to him. As they advanced at about 5.00 p.m. against the National Str. northeast of Pozières into the position of the III./62 they lost in the heavy English artillery fire about a third of their effective strength, including their leader Oblt. Heinrici (wounded).

\* Later on a Knight of the order *Pour le mérite*.

On the morning of 23. July there were the following changes in Command: Gen. d. Inf. [General of Infantry] Kuntze<sup>43</sup>, Komdr. of the 117. I.D. in Bancourt took over from Gen.Maj.

<sup>37</sup> See Bean (1936: 524) and Miles (1938: 143 n.3).

<sup>38</sup> See Bean (1936: 515 n.39).

<sup>39</sup> See Bean (1936: 524).

<sup>40</sup> I.Br. or I.B. = Infanterie-Brigade (Infantry Brigade) (War Office, 1918: 175, 188).

<sup>41</sup> See Bean (1936: 524 n.69) and Miles (1938: 144, 144 n.1) in relation to the 3rd Australian Brigade.

<sup>42</sup> Newton (1925: 223) apparently describes this event in relation to the 12th Battalion. He says: ‘A large dug-out was discovered and an officer and nineteen men taken prisoners. The officer said, in good English, to Captain Vowles, “My name is Ponsonby Lyons; I am the Commandant of Pozieres.” “You mean that you *were*,” replied Vowles’. Also see Bean (1936: 524, 542 n.36).

<sup>43</sup> Gen. d. Inf. Kuntze (117. I.D.) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 520 n.51) and Miles (1938: 142 n.2).

Burkhardt for the sector between Ancre and Pozières inclusive and Oberst [Colonel] von Weise, Komdr. of 233. I.Br. (Br.Gef. St.<sup>44</sup> Pys) from Gen.Maj. Rauchenberger as leader of the Infantry employed in the Divisional Sector. Oberstlt. Nicolai, Komdr. of F.A.R.<sup>45</sup> 233 from now on commanded the Field Artillery in the new sector of the 117. I.D. and Oberstlt. Bansi, Komdr. of the R.Fß.A.R.<sup>46</sup>10, the heavy artillery.

A permanent hold by the enemy in Pozières between the paths leading to Contalmaison and Kl. Bazentin had to be prevented at all costs. Therefore I.R. 157 and 27 received orders to combine and to eject the enemy from the village. As well, the Army Group Armin placed a battalion from the R.I.R. 86 behind the 117. I.D. The artillery of the Division received orders to keep the area to the south and southwest of the village under continuous fire and also to lay down a barrage in front of the right wing of the 7. I.D. to prevent the enemy from sending reinforcements.

I.R. 157 and 27 agreed that the joint counterattack should start at 6.00 p.m. after the artillery had softened up the target. III./157 (without 9.) were to advance in the village from the north and northwest, 5. and 6./62 were to attack in the sector of the I.R. 27 from the northeast on the National Str. But before the attack could commence, it was noticed that the preparatory artillery fire had missed the Australians and their numerous machine guns on the northern and north-eastern edge of the village. So the attack could not be carried out as yet.<sup>47</sup>

12./R. 11, Lt. d. R. Brieger, had repulsed an English assault at the Hindenburg position soon after 8.00 a.m. after a two-hour fight with handgrenades. [page 135] A counterattack by the 6./R. 11, Lt. d. R. Zoch, at about 5.00 p.m. against the enemy on the left wing of the 4./R. 11 failed after suffering severe losses. At 11.30 p.m. 5./R. 11, Oblt. d. R. Steffen, attacked yet again, regained about 100m of the position and recovered the missing leader of 4./R. 11, Lt. d. L. Böhm, who had been lying wounded in a shellhole the whole day. Lt. d. R. Pflaume, leader of 2./R. 11 was killed in action. Lt. d. R. Urban, leader of the 8./R. 11 and Lt. d. L. Grunwald were wounded, Lt. d. R. Niedenzu was missing. The enemy had also taken two M.G./R. 91 at his penetration of 4./R. 11.<sup>48</sup>

The enemy was sitting in a total of about 200m within the German position between the left wing of R.I.R. 11 and the right wing of I./157. Both wings were blocked off, but I./157 was now left with only about 175 rifles.

R.I.R. 91 (without I.) retired during the day to billets in the rear; in its short period of combat north of Ovillers from 17. to 23. July it had lost from English artillery fire and during the successful repulse of English assaults 45 dead (including Lt. d. R. Overesch, leader of the 9. Komp., Lt. d. R. Rösing and Offz.St. Averbeck), 199 wounded (4 Off.) and 17 missing.

Oberst von Weise<sup>49</sup> had planned to renew the attack onto the south-eastern half of Pozières on the night of 24. July with the cooperation of I.R. 27. So that I.R. 157 could utilise all sections for the attack, he made his last reserves, 5./R. 22, available to occupy the positions in the rear. But the nightly assault had to be left undone, as in the meantime 10. and 11./157 in the north-

<sup>44</sup> Br.Gef.St. or Br.Gef.Std. = Brigade-Gefechts-Stand (Brigade Battle Headquarters) (War Office, 1918: 175).

<sup>45</sup> F.A.R. = Feld-Artillerie-Regiment (Field Artillery Regiment) (War Office, 1918: 180).

<sup>46</sup> R.Fß.A.R. = [Reserve] Fuss-Artillerie-Regiment (Foot Artillery Regiment) (War Office, 1918: 184).

<sup>47</sup> See Bean (1936: 547) and Miles (1938: 145 n.3).

<sup>48</sup> In this instance it is not clear if M.G./R. 91 refers to soldiers or guns.

<sup>49</sup> Oberst von Weise is mentioned in Bean (1936: 548).



western part of the village were endangered to be cut off by the Australians who received continuous reinforcements, therefore had to retreat even before midnight with 12./157 to the old II. Position north of Pozières.

The I.R. 26 which was stationed at Beaulencourt and Villers-au-Flos with six combat companies was alerted early on the 23. July from Le Barque and had the companies Winter and Leist transferred to I.R. 157, the companies Molsen and Hedicke to I.R. 27. Company Molsen occupied the Martinpuich position west of the village late in the evening and Komp. Hedicke reinforced 11./27, which had suffered very much under the English artillery fire, on the left wing of the 27. The companies Winter and Leist advanced over Le Sars through the sunken Road Courcelette-Martinpuich. As Lt. Leist was soon wounded, Lt. d. R. Deckert assumed command of the Company. [page 136] The Komp. Winter received a direct hit from shrapnel and suffered three dead and twelve wounded.

During the night of 24. July Pozières was shelled heavily by the combined artillery of 117. and 7. I.D. to prepare the counterattack [see Fig.1.2, p.32]. For this Hptm. Rumland had available 7., 9., the remains of 10., 11. and 12./157, Komp. Winter (I.R. 26) and two platoons of the 62. (5. and 6.). The assembly for the attack, which had been made difficult by the retreat of the 157. from Pozières, was only just ready by 4.00 a.m. The attack that commenced did not advance because of the heavy English curtainfire and rapid machine gun fire from the masonry wreckage.<sup>50</sup> In the devastating fire the assault companies shrank more and more. Only a few of the 157. had got as far as the western sector of the village but were now thrown back in a counterstroke by the Australians in this area, to the outer northwest rim of the village. The positions of the 157. now only passed through the outer north-western tip of the village ruins on the way to Thiepval, from there to the blocking position northeast to the old II. Position and then in that old II. Position further to the southeast. Therefore there were Australians already in the western edge of Pozières in the rear of the rest of the 4. and 3./157, but they continued to hold their positions bravely in spite of this and of further serious losses.

On the morning of 24. July the heavy batteries of 117. I.D. began firing on the whole of Pozières with exception of the north-western tip. But superior English artillery as well fired very heavily into the surroundings of the village. As there was hardly any cover left, the soldiers were sheltering mostly in shellholes, unprotected from the heavy fire. In the 117. I.D. alone ten guns were put out of action. As well, English aircraft fired their machine guns from a few metres at infantry and battery positions. The leader of the M.G. Ss. Tr. <sup>51</sup> 107 Lt. d. R. Seydel,<sup>52</sup> was able to personally shoot down an English plane with a machine gun.

The occupation of Pozières by the enemy now endangered also the left flank of R.I.R. 11, for the protection of which the 8. and 9./R. 22, which had become available at Thiepval, were engaged. Two-thirds of 8./R. 22 moved into the *Ganter* path, that by now consisted only of shellholes, and 1/3rd of 8./R. 22 and 9./R. 22 moved into the *Gierich* path behind. With this 117. I.D. had put all its forces into the frontline and into blocking positions. [page 137] The losses in the three infantry regiments were great, especially in I.R. 157. The only unit available for another attack on Pozières was I./R. 86, Hptm. Deichmann (18. R.D.) east of Courcelette, which had been in the meantime assigned to I.R. 157 but it had also had its share of losses from the English artillery fire. For 117. I.D. it had become hopeless to attack the extended village

<sup>50</sup> See Bean (1936: 548) and Miles (1938: 149 n.1).

<sup>51</sup> M.G.S.s.T. = Maschinen-Gewehr-Scharfschützen-Trupp (Machine Gun Marksman Section (obsolete) ) (General Staff, 1918: 197).

<sup>52</sup> This incident and Lt. d. R. Seydel is mentioned in Bean (1936: 564 n.23).

with their own units yet again, especially as the Australians had used the time at their disposal to dig in thoroughly. Only a strong and keen body of men could dare to carry out a successful attack after a heavy and intensive artillery preparation. Therefore Gen. d. Inf. von Below charged at noon on 24. July Gen. d. Inf. von Boehn,<sup>53</sup> Commanding General of the IX. R.K.<sup>54</sup> [Reserve Army Corps], with the recapture of Pozières. In the evening at the K.H.Qu.<sup>55</sup> [Corps H.Q.] in Havrincourt he took charge of the sectors of the 117. and 7. I.D., of which the last mentioned was assigned to Gen.Maj. Wellmann,<sup>56</sup> Komdr. of the 18. R.D. in Haplincourt. He was to arrange the recapture of Pozières, for which he had assigned the troops in the sector of I.R. 157 and R.I.R. 86, Oberstlt. Burmester (gef. 11.4.17).<sup>57</sup> Gen.Maj. Stüve,<sup>58</sup> General of the Fußartl. 7, had command of the entire heavy artillery; the Field artillery of the 117., 7. and 8. I.D. as well as units of field artillery of the IX. R.K. already in combat were also available. On the night of 24. July the staffs and batteries of the R.F.A.R. 18, Major Koehler, had taken over battery positions at Martinpuich, Eaucourt-L'Abbaye and Courcellette for Field Artillery Regiment 40 and II. (F.)/F.A. 4.<sup>59</sup> The guns of F.A.R. 40 remained in position. Batteries of the southern wing of 26. R.D. were expected to support the attack and the subsequent retention of Pozières on the flank.

Of a strong English reconnaissance force, that appeared in the evening in front of I./R. 11, Lt. d. R. Breitenstein (gef. 1918) who had already distinguished himself during a reconnaissance to determine the situation as it existed at the I./157, took an officer and five men prisoner; the others were driven away.

In the evening the relief commenced of the exhausted troops east of Pozières in the sector of I.R. 27. I./R. 84, Hptm. Freiherr von Hammerstein-Gesmold advanced with 2. and 4. Komp., Lt. d. R. Klüver and Oblt. Kühling, into the very front line with contact on the left with III./R. 31 (17. R.D.); 1. and 3. Komp. remained in lines further to the rear on standby. In the heavy English artillery fire the relief was made extremely difficult, 2./R. 84 lost 25 men in the advance alone. In the sunken road Courcellette-Martinpuich so many men of the 3./R. 84 were entombed or wounded, [page 138] that the company had to move into shellholes east of the sunken road.

*The series resumes with Part 2 in the next issue.*

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<sup>54</sup> R.K. is probably R.A.K. = Reserve-Armee-Korps (Reserve [Army] Corps) (War Office, 1918: 202).

<sup>55</sup> K.H.Qu. = Korps Hauptquartier (Corps Headquarters) (War Office, 1918: 192).

<sup>56</sup> Gen.Maj. Wellmann is mentioned in Bean (1936: 557, 567, 576, 583-84, 721-22) and Miles (1938: 149 n.2), 152 n.1, 153 n.1, 155 n.1 and n.3).

<sup>57</sup> Oberstlt. Burmester (R.I.R. 86) is mentioned in Bean (1936: 557 n.70, 612).

<sup>58</sup> Gen.Maj. Stüve is mentioned in Bean (1936: 582).

<sup>59</sup> Unsure which artillery unit this refers to.

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## Appendix 1

Table showing German ranks and their abbreviations used in the text.

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Signification</i>	<i>English Equivalent</i>	<i>Source</i>
G.F. or Gefr.	Gefreiter	Lance Corporal	War Office (1918: 63, 185).
Uttffz., Untffz. or U. Offz.	Unteroffizier	Corporal	War Office (1918: 153, 207).
V.F., Vfw. or V.Fwl.	Vice-Feldwebel	Vice-Sergeant	
Fwl. or Fldw.	Feldwebel	Sergeant	War Office (1918: 182).
Offz.St.		Deputy-Officer	
Fähnrl.	Fähnrich	Ensign	War Office (1918: 48, 180).
Lt.	Leutnant	Second-Lieutenant	War Office (1918: 97, 196).
Lt. d. R.	Reserve Leutnant	Reserve Second-Lieutenant	
Lt. d. L.	Landwehr Leutnant	Landwehr Second-Lieutenant	
Ass.Arzt d. R.		Assistant Doctor	
Ob.Arzt	Oberarzt	Lieutenant (Medical)	War Office (1918: 109).
Ob.Arzt d. R.	Reserve Oberarzt	Reserve Lieutenant (Medical)	
Oblt. or Oberlt.	Oberleutnant	Lieutenant	War Office (1918: 109, 200).
Oblt. d. R.	Reserve Oberleutnant	Reserve Lieutenant	
Oblt. d. L.	Landwehr Oberleutnant	Landwehr Lieutenant	
Hptm. or Hauptm.	Hauptmann	Captain	War Office (1918: 74, 188).
Hptm. d. R.	Reserve Hauptmann	Reserve Captain	
Hptm. d. L.	Landwehr Hauptmann	Landwehr Captain	
Major or Maj.	Major	Major	War Office (1918: 99, 196).
Major d. R.	Reserve Major	Reserve Major	
Oberstlt. or Obstlt.	Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant-Colonel	War Office (1918: 109, 200).
Oberst or Ob.	Oberst	Colonel	War Office (1918: 109, 200).
Gen.Maj.	General-Major	Major General	War Office (1918: 185).
Gen. d. Inf.		General of Infantry	

# THE AUSTRALIAN ATTACK IN THE BATTLE OF POZIÈRES 21-31 JULY 1916: A TRANSLATION OF THE OFFICIAL GERMAN VERSION – PART 1 (MAPS)

Paul Thost and David Pearson

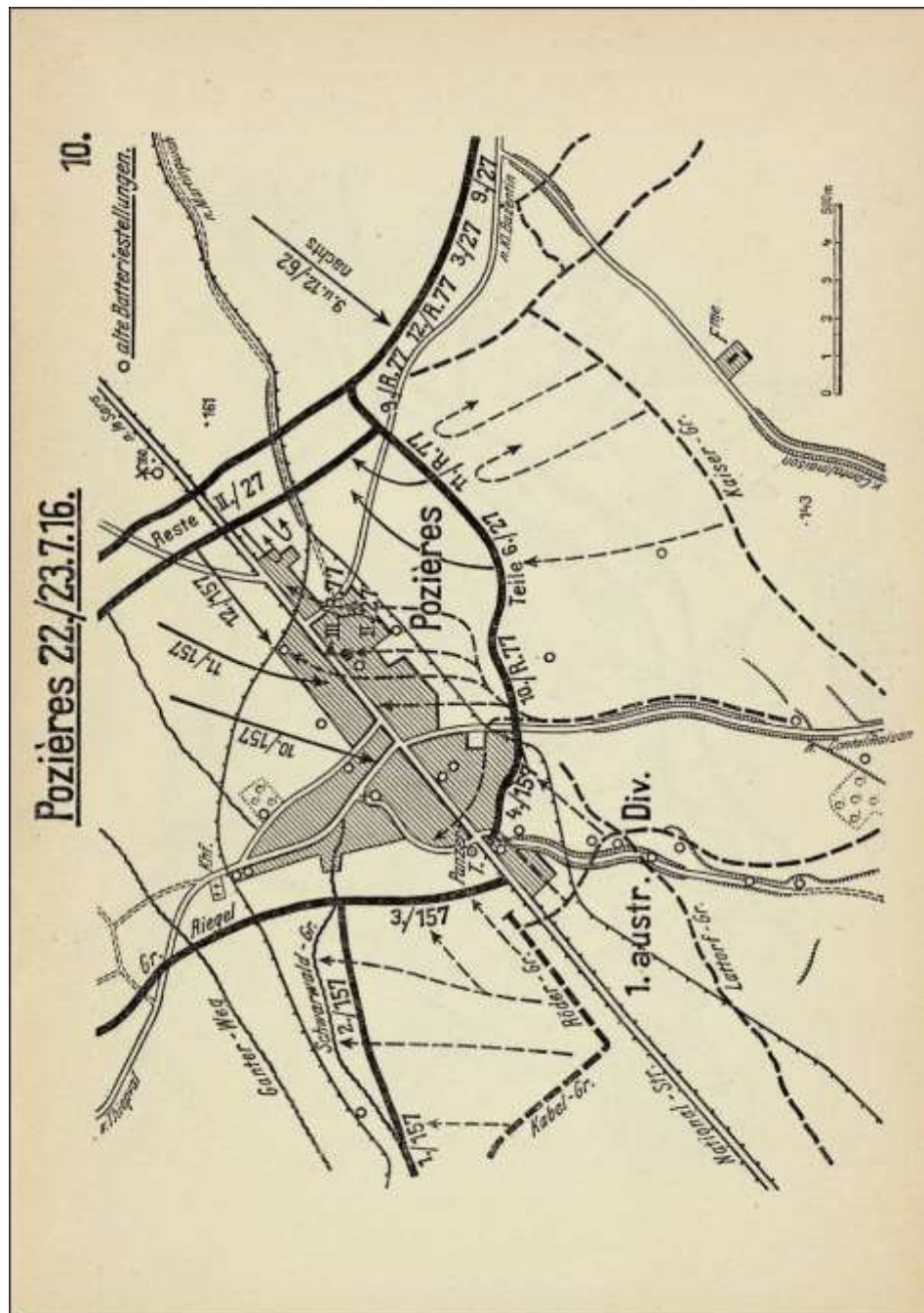
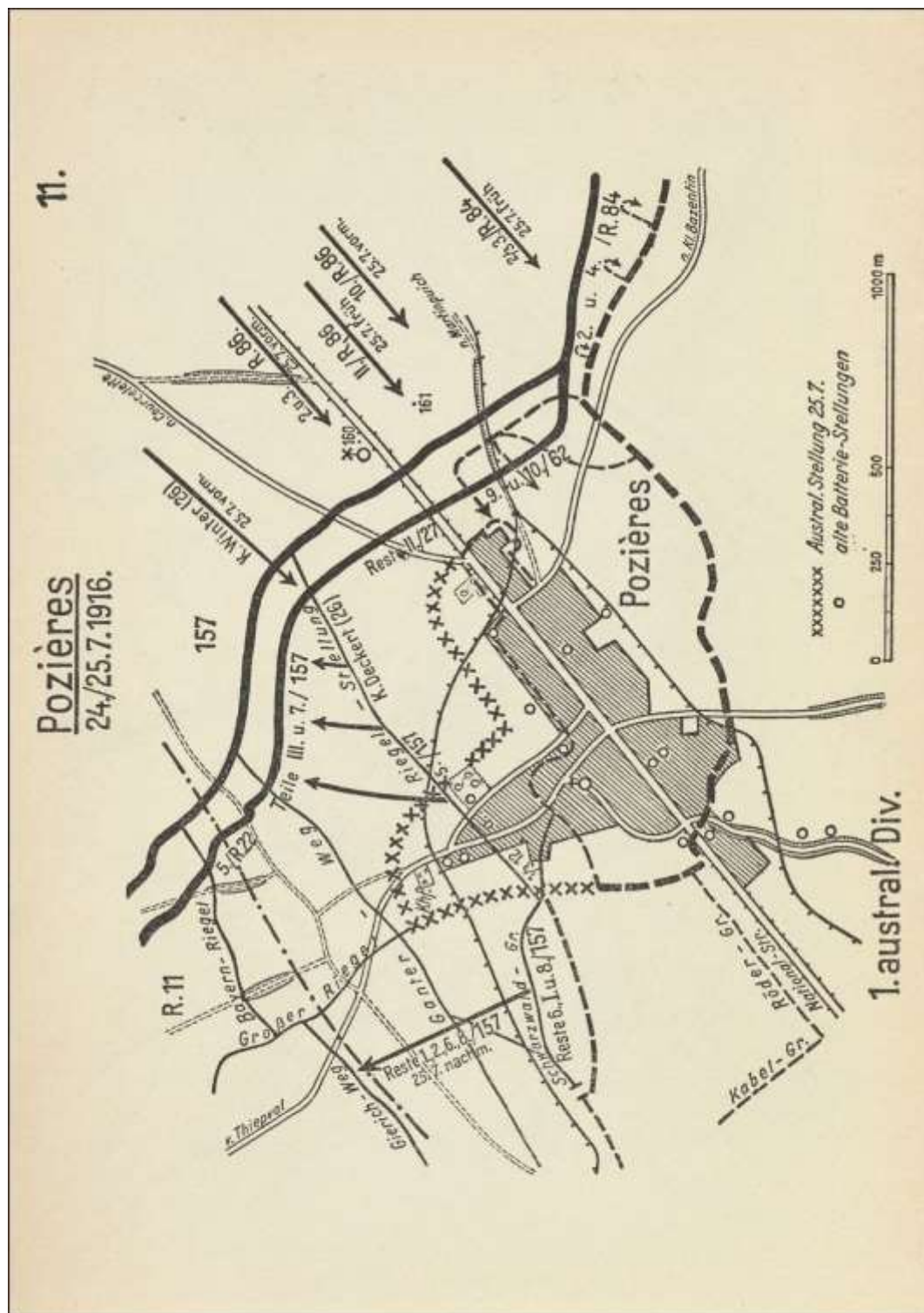


Fig.1.1: Map 10 titled 'Pozières 22./23.7.16.' showing the trenches and German units which were present during the attack of the Australian 1st Division on 23 July 1916. The German companies from left to right on the front line are: 1., 2., 3., and 4./157 (I./157); 10./R. 77 (III./R. 77); 6./27 (II./27); 11., 9., and 12./R. 77 (III./R. 77); 3./27 (I./27) and 9./27 (III./27). Behind the frontline, the headquarters for the II./27 and III./R. 77 Battalions are indicated located in the village. The map also shows the German counter-attacks on the 23 July by the 10., 11. and 12./157 (III./157) and at night (nacht) by the 9. and 12./62 (III./R.62). The high point of 161m is depicted as 161 on the map, the windmill is indicated on the 160m feature, the circles 'o' indicate alte Batteriestellungen (old battery positions), and the Panzerturm (armoured turret) or 'Gibraltar Blockhouse' is indicated on the map at the southwest corner of the village as 'Panzer T'. Scale 500m.



*Fig.1.2: Map 11 tilted 'Pozières 24./25.7.1916'. The map also shows the counter-attacks by the German units from the north-east: early (früh) on the 25 July by II./R. 86 and 2/3. 3./R. 84 (I./R. 84); and in the morning (vorm. = vormittag) 25 July by the K. (Company) Winter (I.R. 26); 2. and 3./R. 86; and 10./R. 86 (III./R. 86). On the map the church yard is indicated by the Khf. (Kirchhof), the circles 'o' indicate alte Batteriestellungen. (old battery positions) and Austral. Stellung 25.7 = Australian Position 25 July 1916. Scale 1000m.*