

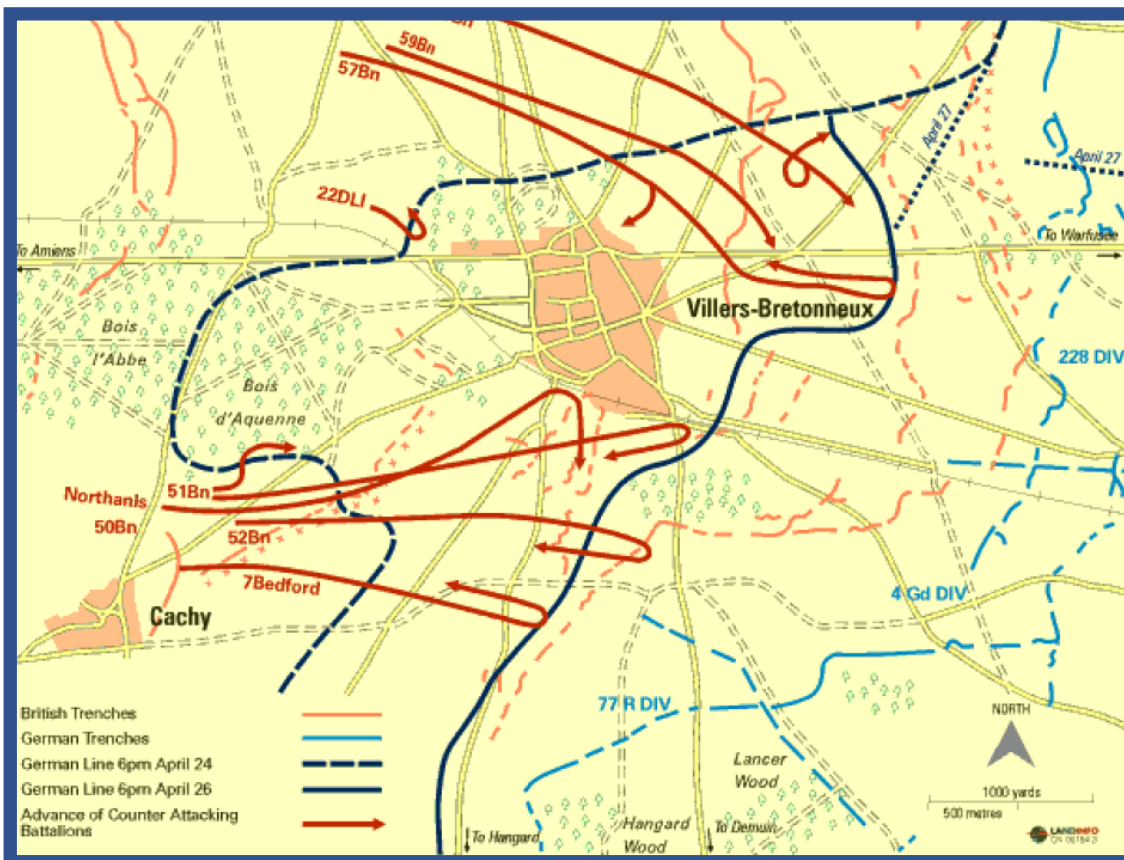
# Counter-Attack at Villers-Bretonneux

**13<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade vs 5<sup>th</sup> German Guards Division  
Villers-Bretonneux, France – Night of 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1918**

## The Battle

The Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux took place from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> April 1918, during the German Spring Offensive, against the Allied lines to the east of Amiens. It is notable for the first major use of tanks by the Germans, who deployed fourteen of their twenty A7Vs and for the first tank-versus-tank battle in history.

The tank battle occurred, on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> April, to the south of Villers-Bretonneux, when three advancing A7Vs met and engaged three British Mark IV tanks, two of which were female tanks armed only with machine-guns. The two Mark IV females were damaged and forced to withdraw but the male tank, armed with 6-pounder guns, hit and disabled the lead A7V, which was then abandoned by its crew. The Mark IV continued to fire on the two remaining German A7Vs, which withdrew. The "male" then advanced with the support of several Whippet light tanks which had arrived, until disabled by artillery fire and abandoned by the crew. The German and British crews recovered their vehicles later in the day.



A counter-attack, by two Australian brigades and one British brigade, during the night of 24<sup>th</sup> April partly surrounded Villers-Bretonneux and on 25<sup>th</sup> April the town was recaptured. Australian, British and French troops restored the original front line by 27<sup>th</sup> April.

Looking Back on the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux (ABC News)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/5504108-4x3-940x705.gif>

## **The Game**

This game represents the British Empire counter-attack on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> April 1918. It is played widthways across an 8' x 6' table. The game is limited to a maximum of 10 moves.

## **Orders**

*German:* Defend and hold "Aquenne Wood", "Monument Wood" and "Hangard Wood".

*British Empire:* Capture and hold "Aquenne Wood", "Monument Wood" and "Hangard Wood".

## **German Deployment**

German forces start the game as indicated in the order of battle. Infantry and guns start dug-in (except II & III Battalions, 5<sup>th</sup> Foot Guards), but not on reserved fire. The German player(s) have the first turn of each move.

## **British Empire Deployment**

All British Empire forces start as indicated in the order of battle. There is no preliminary artillery bombardment. British Empire forces do not start dug in or on reserved fire. British Empire elements are considered as moving prior to German turn 1. British Empire forces have the second turn of each move.

## **Victory Conditions**

**To win:** Hold two out of the three battle objectives (i.e. "Aquenne Wood", "Monument Wood" and "Hangard Wood") at the end of the game. A battle objective is considered held if only one side has troops within 6".

**To draw:** more than one battle objective is contested or not held by either side.

## **Background**

"To Villers-Bretonneux" - Peter Edgar

"Villers-Bretonneux" - Peter Pederson

"Victory at Villers-Bretonneux" - Peter Fitzsimons

"Australians on the Western Front 1918 - Volume One" - David Cameron

"The Western Front 1916-18 Anzac Battlefields - Episode 5 Spirit" - Documentary

"MK IV vs A7V : Villers-Bretonneux 1918" - Osprey Publishing

Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Battle\\_of\\_Villers-Bretonneux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Villers-Bretonneux)

Official History - Chapter XVII - Second Villers-Bretonneux - The Counter-attack

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1416776>

What happened here - The Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/history/conflicts/australians-western-front-19141918/australian-remembrance-trail/australian-3>

Looking Back on the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-06/battle-of-villers-bretonneux/5497598>

## German Special Rules

**Observation Posts** (p62) - German OPs are set up at the start of the game within 6" of any German HQ. Once setup they cannot move for the duration of the game. The OP can communicate with their artillery unit on the throw of anything but a 1.

**"Bergman SMGs"** (p88) - German small arms firing groups armed with Bergman SMGs have a +1 modifier to short range values and no long-range fire.

## British Empire Special Rules

**OPs** - British Empire Artillery OPs are attached to battalion HQs and must move with them for the duration of the game i.e. if the HQ moves the OP cannot observe that turn. The mortar OP is independent and operates as per normal. OPs can communicate with their artillery or mortar unit on the throw of anything but a 1 or 2.

**"Assault Trained"** (Australians only - p38) - If not carrying out a close assault, may move up to 9" each turn with normal movement penalties.

**"Bombers"** (British & Australian - pp 44 & 53) - May throw grenades immediately prior to a close assault. This occurs in the reserved fire stage after any enemy reserved fire is resolved. An element with "bombers" that has carried out a close assault can also fire, but not throw grenades, in the shooting stage of the same friendly turn.



*51<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion advances to Cachy Switch  
(photo by Mark Piper 28mm Great War Miniatures)*

## German & British Empire Special Rules

**Compulsory Withdrawal** (pp24-27) - Where is it unclear where infantry or AFV units are required to withdraw: German units withdraw to the east table edge and British Empire units to the west table edge.

**British Empire and German LMGs** (p88) - Lewis Guns and German MG 08/15 guns add +1 to the fire effect D6 throws.

**Air Support** (pp94-95) - German or British Empire air support is available on moves 8-10 (daylight). Roll a D6 at the start of the respective German or British Empire turn 8. The aircraft arrives on a score of 5 or 6. If unsuccessful roll again on turn 9 with an aircraft arriving on a score of a 4,5 or 6. If unsuccessful roll again on turn 10. Arrives on a score of 3, 4, 5 or 6.

If successful roll an additional D6. On a score of a 6 the pilot of a *fighter scout* is identified as an "Ace".

Aircraft may operate over the table for a maximum of three moves.

**Fighter Scouts** - are aircraft directly supporting ground troops.

*Observation Stage* - Identify target and test for spotting

- *Fighter scouts* - test to identify the selected target using rule 15.8 (page 94)

*Movement Stage* - Place successful *fighter scouts* within 6" of target.

*Reserved Fire Stage* - Enemy carries out reserved AA fire (page 98-99).

*Firing* - If not driven off or shot down *fighter scouts* carry out attacks (strafing, level bombing or air to air combat)

- *Strafing* (p95) Low altitude. 8 points.
- *Level Bombing* (p96). Medium altitude (can only be fired targeted by dedicated AA guns). 8 points on table 4. Aircraft bomb load = 4 small bombs. Use fire grid to plot hits (p65).
- *Air to Air Combat* (p100) i.e. "dogfight", occurs when two opposing armed aircraft are on table at the same time. Treat both sides as fighters i.e. 0 modifier. If the pilot of a *fighter scout* is identified as an "Ace" treat as superior fighter i.e. +1 when resolving combat.

*Final Movement*

Aircraft remain in position to receive any "normal" AA fire during the enemy's next turn.

**Aircraft & Artillery "Friendly Fire"** - if the target of an aircraft is within 12" of a friendly element (or if IDF artillery fire, if the target element is within 6" of a friendly element), roll for "friendly fire". On a score of a 5 or 6 the target switches to the nearest friendly element instead. This roll is made just before the reserved fire stage and before any dice are rolled for effect.



**Night Fighting** (p115) - Moves 1-7 only. While the British Empire attack was mostly conducted at night, on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> April there was also a full moon. Use rules 20.14 & 20.15 on page 115 with the following modifications to allow for this:

- All elements movement is unaffected
- Halve all observation ranges when locating MOVING units or infantry carrying out engineering tasks. Reduce to a quarter all observation ranges when locating STATIC units or infantry carrying out engineering tasks
- Normal observation ranges apply if targeting any enemy units that fired in the turn before
- Deduct 1 from all fire effect throws (except grenades) when firing at night
- Deduct 1 from all morale throws for German units
- AFVs must test before advancing unless following infantry (within 6"). Throw a D6. An AFV will advance on a score of 5 or 6
- Mortars may fire one parachute flare per move. ID a target out to a max range of 18" (light) or 48" (medium). Throw a D6. A score of 2, 4 or 6 means the target may be observed and fired at as if in daylight.
- Burning buildings automatically light up any units within 6" in all directions and these may also be observed and fired at normally.

### Terrain

**Roads** (p38) - Provide a benefit to troops and vehicles moving along them.

**Buildings** (p46 & 65) - Monument Farm starts intact. The buildings of Villers-Bretonneux are burning and cannot be entered.

**Woods** (p51) - Provides soft cover but do not restrict visibility or movement.

**Barbed Wire** (p81) - Delays infantry for one move once in contact.

**Incomplete Trenches & Large Shell Holes** (p51) - Provides hard cover (but are not prepared defences).

### Tactical Tips

**German** - You have been surprised by the night attack by the British Empire forces. You need to hold on until reserves can be brought forward. Take any opportunity to harass the flanks of the attack and be prepared to launch local counter attacks. Whatever happens do not let the enemy break through to the reserve trenches to the south-east of Villers-Bretonneux.

**British Empire** - Your force has the initiative. The Germans are not expected an attack and only have a light screen of troops in the front line. However German reserves are close to hand and can be expected to launch their own counter-attack. It is vital for the defence of Villers-Bretonneux that your force captures the trenches to the south-east of the town. Push on at all costs but be prepared for any local counter-attacks by the Germans.

# German Briefing

**Order of Battle** - elements of German 5th Guards Division  
all regular morale

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**Combined 5<sup>th</sup> Foot Guards / 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Grenadiers Regiment HQs\*** [Monument Farm]

Formation CO + 5 figures

\* Higher order HQ for all German forces (p78)

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**III Battalion, 5th Guard Grenadiers Regiment** [Forward Line - Cachy Switch and Aquenne Wood]

27 figures - test @ 14 casualties

BHQ CO + 4 figures

11<sup>th</sup> Company 8 figures

12<sup>th</sup> Company 8 figures

Reinforced MG Platoon 6 figures, 2 x Maxim MG08/15 MMG

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**I Battalion, 5th Foot Guard Regiment** [Second Line - moving]

36 figures - test @ 18 casualties

HQ Unit CO + 3 figures armed with *Bergman SMGs*, AT rifle

3 x companies each 8 figures, 1 x MG08/15 LMG

MG Platoon 3 figures, Maxim MG08/15 MMG

"Light" Mortar Platoon 3 figures, 7.6cm medium mortar (may fire flares)

Grenade Launcher Detachment 2 figures, Granatenwerfer Grenade Launcher (light mortar)

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**II Battalion, 5th Foot Guard Regiment** [Second Line - moving]

As per I Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Foot Guard Regiment

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**III Battalion, 5th Foot Guard Regiment** [Reserve - Hangard Wood & Monument Wood Trench]

34 figures - test @ 17 casualties

As per I Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Foot Guard Regiment (less Grenade Launcher Detachment and AT rifle)

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**Artillery Support**

**[on board]**

4<sup>th</sup> Battery, 26<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment

4 figures, 1 x 77mm Field Gun, OP on foot

5<sup>th</sup> Battery, 26<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment

as per 4<sup>th</sup> battery

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**[off-board]**

6<sup>th</sup> Battery, 26<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment

as per 4<sup>th</sup> battery

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**Air Support**

1 x Fighter Scout

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# British Empire Briefing

## Order of Battle - 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade

(supported by elements 54<sup>th</sup> British Infantry Brigade & 3<sup>rd</sup> British Tank Brigade )

Australians - elite morale ("Assault Trained" for movement, "Bombers" for close assault)

British - regular morale ("Bombers" for close assault)

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## 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade HQ

Formation CO + 5 figures      \* Higher order HQ for all British Empire forces (p78)

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## 51<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion [Left Forward]

Lt Col Christie - 40 figures - test @ 20 casualties

HQ                                  Unit CO + 4 figures + OP 1<sup>st</sup> Battery

4 x rifle companies    each 8 figures, Lewis Gun LMG, Rifle Grenade Launcher

MG Platoon                3 figures, Vickers MMG

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## 52<sup>nd</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion [Right Forward]

Lt Col Whitham - as per 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion + OP 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery

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## 50<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion [Reserve]

Lt Col Hurcome - as per 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion + OP 3<sup>rd</sup> Battery

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## (Attached in support) 2<sup>nd</sup> British Infantry Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment [Reserve]

Lt Col Latham - 31 figures - test @ 16 casualties

HQ                                  Unit CO + 3 figures

3 x rifle companies    each 8 figures, Lewis Gun, Rifle Grenade Launcher

MG Platoon                3 figures, Vickers MMG

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## (Attached in support) 7<sup>th</sup> British Infantry Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment [Right Flank Support]

Lt Col Percival - as per 2<sup>nd</sup> Northamptonshire Regiment

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## Elements "X" Company, British 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade      Whippet Tank

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## 13<sup>th</sup> Australian "Light" Trench Mortar Battery

3 x "Light" Trench Mortar Sections      each 3 figures, Stokes 3" medium mortars

OP team on foot

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## Artillery Support [off-board]

12<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Artillery Brigade

1<sup>st</sup> Battery    18 pdr Field Gun, OP on foot (with HQ 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion)

2<sup>nd</sup> Battery    18 pdr Field Gun, OP on foot (with HQ 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion)

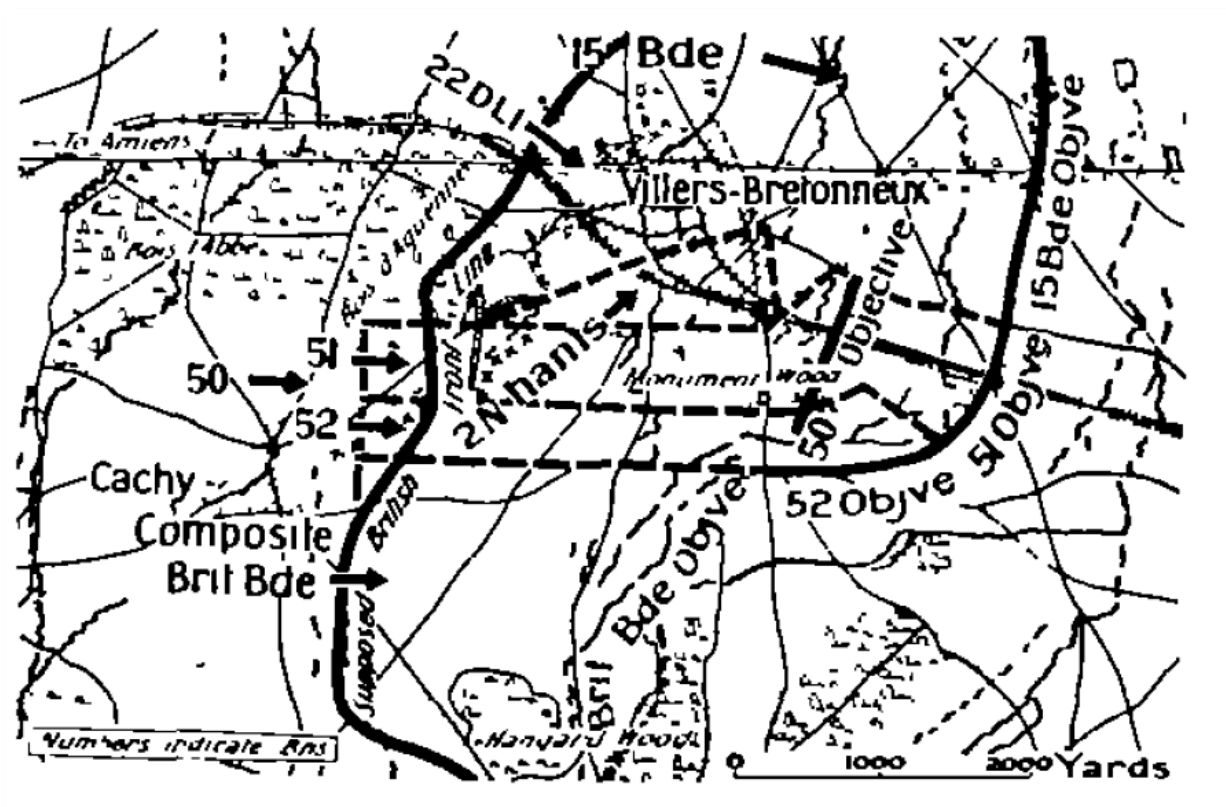
3<sup>rd</sup> Battery    4.5" Howitzer, OP on foot (with HQ 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion)

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## Air Support

1 x Fighter Scout





**13<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade**  
**direction of assault south of Villers-Bretonneux**

Official History - Chapter XVII - Second Villers-Bretonneux - The Counter-attack

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1416776>

Vehicle and Gun Chart - British Empire			
Vehicle (Main Weapon)	Speed	Armour	Hull (and other) Weapons
Whippet Tank	18" / 9"	E	multiple VMG
<b>Gun</b>			
Rifle Grenade Launcher	min 3" / max 18", HE 6 points table 4		
3" Stokes Medium Mortar	min 6" / max 48", HE 8 points table 4		
18 pdr *	HE 10 points table 4		
4.5" Howitzer *	HE 12 points table 5		
Fighter Scout	Strafe (p 95) - low altitude - 8 pts OR Bombing (p 96) medium altitude, 8pts table 4		

\* Infantry or deployed guns must test to determine if it is "suppressed" when targeted by this gun.

# Counter-Attack at Villers Bretonneux Battle Map (8' X 6')

