

= Second Battle of Passchendaele =

The Second Battle of Passchendaele was the culminating attack during the Third Battle of Ypres of the First World War . The battle took place in the Ypres Salient area of the Western Front , in and around the Belgian town of Passchendaele , between 26 October and 10 November 1917 . The Canadian Corps relieved the exhausted II Anzac Corps , continuing the advance started with the First Battle of Passchendaele and ultimately capturing Passchendaele village . Beyond gaining favourable observation positions , the battle was intended to gain drier winter positions on higher ground .

The assault position was directly south of the inter @-@ army boundary between the British Fifth and Second Armies . As a result , the Canadian Corps was to attack with support of formations from the British Fifth Army to the north and the I Anzac Corps and X Corps to the south . The offensive was executed in a series of attacks each with limited objectives , delivered at intervals of three or more days . The execution dates of the phases were tentatively given as 26 October , 30 October and 6 November with a final smaller action on 10 November . To permit time to facilitate inter @-@ divisional relief , there was a planned seven @-@ day pause between the second and third stages during which time the Second Army was ordered to take over the section of the Fifth Army front adjoining the Canadian Corps , so that the central portion of the assault could proceed under a single command .

The attack was successful in capturing the German @-@ held high ground along the Passchendaele ? Westrozebeke ridge but the campaign was forced to end just short of Westrozebeke . No further attempt was made to build on the momentum of the attack . The significant victory of the Austro @-@ German forces against the Italian Army at the Battle of Caporetto and the forthcoming Battle of Cambrai forced the British into a parallel diversion of resources away from the sector and make an end to offensive actions in the Ypres Salient .

= = Background = =

In July 1917 , British Field Marshal Douglas Haig launched a series of offensives , the Third Battle of Ypres . This was an attempt to break down the resistance of the German Fourth Army and advance out of the Ypres Salient . Initial successes had been achieved at the Battle of Messines and subsequent Battle of Pilckem Ridge . Torrential rain in August interrupted the tempo of the British advance and led to little progress at the Battle of Langemarck . In view of the failure of the British Fifth Army to make much headway in August , Haig decided to transfer more offensive weight towards the south @-@ east , along the southern half of Passchendaele Ridge . The main command was therefore switched from General Hubert Gough 's Fifth Army to the British Second Army under command of General Herbert Plumer . Plumer planned a series of more limited attacks , taking advantage of recent experience , rather than Gough 's attempts at a more optimistic semi @-@ open warfare version . Less ambitious infantry advances at the Battle of Menin Road , Battle of Polygon Wood , Battle of Broodseinde and Battle of Gravenstafel Ridge produced a 4 @, @ 000 @-@ yard ( 3 @, @ 700 m ) advance in two weeks . The German attempts at resisting the advances led to heavy losses on their part , especially at Broodseinde , after which the German command began preparations for a general withdrawal .

In the low ground west of the Passchendaele Ridge , three months of constant shelling had blocked the watercourses that normally provided drainage . When rain began falling on the night of 4 October ? which continued intermittently for the next three days ? the battlefield was once again transformed into a quagmire of mud , making movement extremely difficult . Gough and Plumer apparently told Haig that they favoured ending the campaign on account of the change in the weather and general state of the battlefield , however the decision was made to continue the offensive to gain more favourable winter positions on higher ground . The Battle of Poelcappelle and First Battle of Passchendaele both resulted in many casualties for both sides and failed to achieve any appreciable advance opposite Passchendaele , although they did provide a slightly better starting line for another attack . The four divisions of the Canadian Corps were transferred from the

Lens sector to the Ypres Salient to capture Passchendaele . The Canadian Corps relieved the II Anzac Corps on 18 October , from its position along the valley between Gravenstafel Ridge and the heights at Passchendaele and immediately began planning for the offensive . Interestingly , it was virtually the same front as had been occupied by the 1st Canadian Division back in April 1915 .

= = Prelude = =

= = = Planning and preparations = = =

The Canadian Corps operation was to be executed in a series of three attacks , each with limited objectives , delivered at intervals of three or more days . As the Canadian Corps position was directly south of the inter @-@ army boundary between British Fifth and Second Army , the British Fifth Army would mount subsidiary operations on the left flank of the Canadian Corps , while the I Anzac Corps would advance to protect the right flank and X Corps attacked Gheluvelt to improve the local tactical position and act as a diversion for the main attack in the north . Canadian Corps commander Lieutenant @-@ General Arthur Currie submitted his provisional operational plan on 16 October and recommended the attack not be executed until 29 October , to move sufficient artillery forward . However , Haig was anxious to avoid any unnecessary delays , particularly given that he wished to assist the French attack on Mailmaison , which was due to start on 23 October . Currie and the British Second Army commander , Herbert Plumer , re @-@ examined the situation and finally set the attack for 26 October . The dates for the subsequent phases were tentatively given as 30 October and 6 November .

Extensive preparations were needed before any advance could be made . A number of problems were found with the artillery and positions transferred from the Australians . Of the 250 heavy howitzers that existed on paper , only 227 could be found and of these 89 were out of action . Of the 306 18 pounder field guns , less than half were in action . The problem of mobility caused by the mud also resulted in the Australian artillery being badly bunched in two main clusters , thereby furnishing the Germans with easy targets . Furthermore , the Australians had been unable to send damaged artillery pieces for repair , because the Provost Marshal had ordered that no guns use the roads , for fear of blocking traffic . The situation was considerably improved by the arrival of the Canadian divisional artillery which placed an additional 210 18 @-@ pounder field guns , 190 howitzers and 26 heavy guns at the disposal of the Canadian Corps .

As early as 17 October , assaulting units were given details about the German defences in their respective sectors , to facilitate early assault planning . Intelligence officers and artillery observers worked jointly in observation posts , recording newly built German fortifications as well as those that had escaped notice , permitting the artillery to bombard them before the offensive . To improve the transport of artillery and supplies , an extensive program of road building was started . Ten field companies , seven Royal Engineer tunnelling companies , four army troop companies and nine battalions were put to work repairing or extending plank roads . From the middle of October until the end of the offensive , a total of 2 miles ( 3 @.@ 2 km ) of double plank road and more than 4 @,@ 000 yards ( 3 @,@ 700 m ) of heavy tram line were laid in the Canadian Corps area . Brigadier General Edward Morrison , commander of the artillery , also secured permission to use the roads to the rear for getting disabled guns back for repair .

Moving troops to the front ahead of the attack was nonetheless extremely difficult , as the only means of approaching the front line were narrow boardwalks made of wood planking , which wound between the shell @-@ holes . Slipping off the duckboards could often be deadly with unfortunate soldiers frequently drowning in mud under the weight of their own equipment . On account of the exhausting nature of the trip , the leading assault units entered the support line four days before the battle , to ensure soldiers would be as fresh as possible for the attack .

= = = Preliminary operations = = =

On 14 October , a German attack captured a post on the IX Corps front of the British 37th Division . The next day , patrols from the British 9th Division found that the Germans had occupied Varlet Farm . On 20 October , A local assault was conducted by elements of three British divisions and one French division . The British 18th and 34th Divisions attacked Poelcappelle while the British 35th and French First Division assaulted the Houthoult Forest . The attack began at 5 : 25 a.m. , after a 48 @-@ hour bombardment . Two battalions of the British 18th Division reached a German headquarters , west of Poelcappelle church . Two brigades of the 34th Division attacked at 5 : 35 a.m. , the right brigade taking their objectives and Requette Farm in the 18th Division area . The left brigade of the 34th Division advanced until close to a row of pillboxes , thought to have been captured ; this proved incorrect and the attacking troops consequently suffered casualties . British reinforcements were stopped at the Broembeek creek due to flooding and a heavy German barrage . The 35th Division attacked with two brigades . The right brigade reached the first objective easily . The left flank of the brigade reached its final objective at 6 : 45 a.m. whereas any further advance on the right flank was stopped by German machine @-@ gun fire . The left brigade captured Marechal Farm on its right flank but the attack in the centre was stopped by German machine @-@ gun fire . The left flank of the brigade reached the final objective by 7 : 45 a.m. A German counterattack forced one battalion to retreat to the start line ; the counterattack was then caught by British artillery fire and contained . During the operation , the British suffered 479 casualties and took 125 prisoners .

On 21 October , wire @-@ cutting began on the Fifth and Second Army fronts ; under cover of the bombardment , 18th Division platoons moved forward on the night of 21 October and dug shallow trenches , which saved many casualties from a German counter @-@ bombardment , after a ruined farm behind the jumping @-@ off places caught fire and silhouetted the troops . On 22 October , in the British 9th Division sector to the south , the XVIII Corps Cyclist Battalion conducted a feint , using dummy figures to assist an attack by the 9th Division . The attack was resumed at 7 : 30 a.m. through the village , taking Noble 's Farm , Meunier House and then Tracas Farm , a total advance of 1 @,@ 000 yards ( 910 m ) . At 5 : 00 p.m. A German counterattack was stopped before Noble 's Farm with heavy casualties .

= = Battle = =

= = = Opposing forces = = =

Currie 's Canadian Corps was the principal attacking formation . Immediately to the north , the Canadians were supported by XVIII Corps and after an inter @-@ army boundary shift , II Corps of the Second Army . To the extreme north , the advance was supported by diversionary attacks launched by the British XIV Corps and the 1st and 133rd Divisions of the French First Army . To the south , the advance was supported by I Anzac Corps . Further south , X Corps supported the operation by attacking Gheluvelt to secure Tower Hamlets ridge , east of the Bassevillebeek as a diversion .

Passchendaele Ridge and the area surrounding the village was defended by Gruppe Ypern organized under Guard Corps commander General der Kavallerie Alfred Graf zu Dohna @-@ Schlobitten . Defending German units changed throughout the battle and at various times , consisted of the 4th , 7th , 11th , 11th Bavarian , 27th , 39th , 44th Reserve , 185th , 199th , 238th and 239th Divisions .

= = = First stage = = =

Constant shelling had blocked the Ravebeek stream , creating an impassible swamp directly between the boundary of the 3rd Canadian and the 4th Canadian Divisions , necessitating a two @-@ prong attack . The 3rd Canadian Division was assigned the wider advance on the left , which included the sharply rising ground of the Bellevue spur . In the more restricted ground south of the

Ravebeek stream , the 4th Canadian Division would occupy advanced positions in no man 's land before the start of the offensive and take Decline Copse , which straddled the Ypres ? Roulers railway . Currie planned the attack with extensive depth in resources . The remaining units of the 8th , 9th and 10th Canadian Infantry Brigades were placed in support , while the 7th , 11th and 12th Canadian Infantry Brigades were held in divisional and corps reserve . The 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were in army reserve .

The assault began at 5 : 40 a.m. on the morning of 26 October . The troops were preceded by a rolling barrage , edging forward in lifts of 50 yards ( 46 m ) every four minutes , permitting the infantry to keep up while negotiating the mud . On the left flank , the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade captured Wolf Copse and secured its objective line but was ultimately forced to drop a defensive flank 300 yards ( 270 m ) back to link up with the 63rd ( Royal Naval ) Division , the flanking division of the British Fifth Army . In the middle , the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade found the German barbed wire to be well cut by the preliminary artillery bombardment and within an hour of the attack commencing , cleared and captured the Bellevue pillboxes . However , the Germans brought down heavy artillery fire on their abandoned positions , and by 9 : 00 a.m. the brigade 's right flank had retreated towards its start line . On the far right , the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade initially captured all its objectives as did the 1st Australian Division on its southern flank . As the day wore on , the positions in Decline Copse , a Canadian ? Australian objective on the Canadian Corps ' southern boundary were gradually abandoned due to German counterattacks and misunderstandings between the Canadian and Australian units .

The 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade 's right flank had consolidated its position and by the morning on 27 October , had gained or established outposts only 300 yards ( 270 m ) short of its first objective . The 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade captured Decline Copse on the night of 27 October . The German 238th Division attacked and briefly recaptured the copse the following night , only to be quickly expelled by a Canadian counterattack . When the first stage ended on 28 October , the Canadian Corps had suffered 2 @, @ 481 casualties . Although the first stage was not completely successful , the operation had placed the Canadians on higher ground and in a good tactical position for the second stage .

Immediately to the north of the Canadian Corps , the supporting attack by XVIII Corps involved one brigade each from the British 63rd and 58th divisions . The British 188th Brigade , 63rd Division quickly captured Varlet Farm and Banff House . The centre of the attack was held up on the road between Bray Farm and the village of Wallemolen and dug @-@ in near Source Trench . As dark fell , Banff House was abandoned and the line reformed at Berks House , leaving Banff House and Source Trench the only part of the first objective not captured . Further north , the 58th Division took three pillboxes at Cameron House , before being stopped at Spider crossroads by German machine @-@ gun fire and exhaustion due to the muddy conditions . From 7 : 00 a.m. to 10 : 00 a.m. German counterattacks from the north cut off the foremost troops and then advanced from a sunken road between Papa Farm and Whitechapel , which pushed the rest of the brigade back to the start line , where the Germans were also caught in the mud and pushed back by British reinforcements .

To the extreme north , XIV Corps conducted diversionary activities employing one brigade each from the 57th and 50th divisions . The 57th Division attack advanced into a marsh , which stopped the attack close to the start line . The division established advanced posts at Rubens and Memlings Farms 200 ? 350 yards ( 180 ? 320 m ) forward . On the 50th Division front , the right battalion got to within 80 yards ( 73 m ) of the objective , before fire from German machine @-@ guns and snipers forced a withdrawal to the start line . Further north up to the Ypres ? Staden railway line , a battalion reached Hill 23 , Aden House and Tourenne Crossing but was back at the start line by 4 : 15 p.m. . The left battalion advanced 2 @, @ 000 yards ( 1 @, @ 800 m ) before machine @-@ gun fire forced it back to the start line . All of the Fifth Army attacks encountered deep mud , which slowed progress to a crawl , caused the barrage to be lost and clogged weapons , in the face of German counterattacks , which forced most attacks back to their start lines .

To the south of the Canadian Corps , diversionary activities by X Corps involved formations from the British 5th and 7th Division . The British 7th Division commander only refrained from protesting against the attack , because it was intended to pin German reserves and stop them moving north

against the main attack . The 7th Division attacked Gheluvelt with the 20th and 91st Brigades , while the 5th Division attacked Polderhoek and the Scherriabeek valley immediately to the north with the 13th Brigade . On the 91st Brigade 's front , the battalion on the right advanced rapidly , protected by a rise which hid them from most of the German machine @-@ gunners nearer to the Menin road . They attacked their objective , a fortified mound near Hamp Farm , and overwhelmed the garrison stationed there after hand @-@ to @-@ hand fighting . The other two battalions of the brigade suffered far worse , having to advance along the forward slope of the spur running south @-@ east from Tower Hamlets ridge . The area was dominated by a group of pillboxes at Lewis House which held several machine @-@ guns . The centre battalion could not keep pace with the barrage and its advance was stopped well short of Lewis House . Troops began to converge on the area near Lewis House , which caused crowding and gaps in the line . An attempt to outflank the pillboxes failed and the brigade fell back to its assembly positions .

The 20th Brigade attacked astride the Menin Road . The right battalion crossed marshy ground that progressed into waist @-@ high mud towards the Kroomebeek creek . Some troops veered right and were caught by German machine @-@ gun fire from Lewis House and cross @-@ fire from the pillboxes on the Menin road and Swagger Farm . Others found the condition of the ground so poor that they moved left towards the Menin Road and were pinned down by fire from the pillboxes there . Despite the machine @-@ gun fire , the advance captured one pillbox and advanced to within 100 yards ( 91 m ) of Gheluvelt Church at the western end of the village . The two battalions that advanced north of the Menin road managed to keep up with the barrage and reached its junction with the railway tracks immediately outside Gheluvelt . Both battalions became intermingled and entered Gheluvelt at the same time , some of the troops cleared several pillboxes along Johnson Trench and one party got close enough to Gheluvelt Château to try to rush it . At 10 : 00 a.m. , the Germans counterattacked and the British retreated , due to many of their weapons being jammed with mud . The remaining troops formed a defensive flank south of the road towards Tower Hamlets and reoccupied the original front line . Once the retreat was complete , British artillery fired a protective barrage and no further German counterattack developed .

The 5th Division attack through the Scherriabeek valley was raked by fire from Gheluvelt and ultimately found the valley to be impassable . Three battalions tried to push forward but were stopped by German fire from the village of Gheluvelt . One battalion took Polderhoek Château but was forced to relinquish it due to many weapons being clogged with mud and to straighten the front line . The Germans promptly reoccupied the château , swept the area to the west with massed machine @-@ gun fire and counterattacked , which pushed the brigade back to the start line .

The simultaneous advances on the flanks of the Canadian Corps had not gone well . The diversion by X Corps resulted in 3 @, @ 321 casualties , 2 @, @ 201 in the 7th Division . XVIII Corps suffered 2 @, @ 310 casualties , the 63rd Division losing approximately 2 @, @ 000 casualties in the 188th Brigade and XIV Corps 3 @, @ 092 casualties . On 27 October the 63rd Division retook Banff House and repulsed a German counterattack . Two reserve battalions reinforced the 4th Canadian Division and reached the previous day 's objective by 10 : 00 a.m. Next day patrols from the 3rd Canadian Division scouted Meetchele and Furst Farms . On 29 October the 1st Australian Division established a post in Decoy Wood .

= = = = Franco @-@ Belgian operations = = = =

The French First Army , with the 1st and 133rd divisions and a division of the Belgian army , planned to occupy the Merckem peninsula in stages , by an attack on the south @-@ east of the peninsula , then to extend the attack to the north . On 26 October , after an intensive bombardment , French troops crossed the lower Steenbeek , advanced into Papegoed Wood , Lucannes Farm and the pillboxes in between . The French then forced the Germans from the remaining pillboxes to the west of the woods and forded the Corverbeek , which in places was shoulder @-@ high . The French soon captured the pillboxes opposite and occupied the Steenstraate ? Dixmude road round Langewaede . In the evening , the Germans rushed the 8th Bavarian Reserve Division into the Merckem peninsula as a reinforcement .

During the night the French engineers , in water up to their armpits , built pontoon bridges over the lower Steenbeek , west of Langewaede . At about 5 : 00 a.m. on 27 October , French troops on the right bank were joined by those on the left bank of the Steenbeek and a column advanced from the bridgehead at Drei Grachten , to attack the German defences on the causeway to Luyghem . The French on the extreme right in front of Draaibank , formed a flank guard facing east , near the troops in Papegoed Wood , which also protected the troops moving up from Steenstraate through Langewaede to Dixmude . The fortified villages of Verbrandesmis and Kippe blocked the road further on and north @-@ east of Verbrandesmis near Houthulst Forest , Jesiutengoed Farm near the hamlet of Kloostermolen and the village of Aschhoop to the north , also obstructed a further advance .

From Verbrandesmis a road runs north @-@ west , parallel with the lower Steenbeek through Merckem to Luyghem , slightly above the level of the surrounding marshes . Machine @-@ guns nests in the villages , commanded the causeway from Drei Grachten ; the ground everywhere in the peninsula was soaked and dotted with large numbers of blockhouses and pillboxes . The French artillery destroyed Verbrandesmis and it was quickly captured but the German garrisons at Jesiutengoed Farm and Kloostermolen held out for some time , before being driven out and forced back to Kippe and Aschhoop . German artillery bombarded the banks of the Steenbeek in front of Merckem and French troops rushed across on pontoon bridges , struggled through the mud to the objectives and then attacked towards Kippe and Luyghem . Kippe and Aschhoop were captured quickly but the German garrisons at Luyghem and the causeway from Drei Grachten , resisted until afternoon before being overwhelmed .

The French and Belgian advance on Luyghem began as soon as the causeway was captured , Belgian troops employing flat @-@ bottomed boats to move to the north of the village . The Belgians secured the southern edge of Blanckaart Lake and then attacked Luyghem from the north , taking the German pillboxes and blockhouses systematically . By the morning of 28 October , the French and Belgians had completed the capture of the Merckem peninsula , had taken approximately 300 prisoners and inflicted many casualties on the German defenders , who had resisted the attacks with great determination . The skill of the French artillery had obtained success with few infantry casualties and the Belgians had managed to conceal their flotilla of flat @-@ bottomed boats , despite German vigilance and then advance to their objectives despite the floods , against much German artillery and small @-@ arms fire .

= = = Second stage = = =

The second stage on 30 October was intended to complete the capture of the positions the Canadian Corps had attacked on 26 October and gain a base for the final assault on Passchendaele . The objective line ( Blue Line ) was approximately 600 yards ( 550 m ) east of the objective line of the previous stage . The advance was meant to capture the strongly held Crest Farm at the southern end of the advance and in the northern sector , the hamlet of Meetcheele and the Goudberg area near the Corps 's northern boundary . The northern flank of the Canadian Corps advance was to link up outside Goudberg at Vapour Farm with the British Fifth Army , which would be advancing with the 58th Division and 190th Brigade , 63rd ( Royal Naval ) Division along both sides of the swamped Lekkerboterbeek creek . The southern advance was to link up with the I Anzac Corps along the Ypres ? Roulers railway line south of Vienna Cottage . The southern flank of the main assault would once again be the responsibility of the 4th Canadian Division , which planned to attack with the 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade . The northern flank remained the responsibility of the 3rd Canadian Division , which would advance with the 7th and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigades .

The night before the attack , a battalion assault by the Canadians captured a particularly troublesome German pillbox on the northern bank of Ravebeek creek , which had held up the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade during the first stage . The action advanced the southern edge of the 3rd Canadian Division 500 yards ( 460 m ) in parity with the line of the 4th Canadian Division to the south . The main attack began at 5 : 50 am on 30 October and was preceded by a rolling barrage

with a preliminary artillery bombardment directed largely at pillboxes . The southern flank quickly captured Crest Farm and had begun sending patrols beyond its objective line and into Passchendaele , which they found the Germans evacuating . By 8 : 30 am , the 4th Canadian Division commander , Major @-@ General David Watson , reported that all objectives between the Ypres ? Roulers railway and the Ravebeek creek had been taken . Northwest of Crest Farm , the ground was so badly flooded that consolidation had to be carried out short of the objective line .

On the northern flank , the 3rd Canadian Division was again met with exceptional German resistance . The 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade managed to capture Source Farm and later Vapour Farm at the corps boundary , just short of the objective line . However , the brigade had difficulty getting through the swampy ground in the Woodland Plantation , resulting in a division in the line . The 58th Division and 63rd ( Royal Naval ) Division infantry were caught by German artillery fire at their jumping @-@ off line and made only slight progress in deep mud against German machine @-@ gun fire and were unable to reach their rendezvous objectives , leaving the Canadian troops at Source Farm and Vapour Farm in precarious and largely unsupported positions . Two companies later advanced through the Canadian sector to capture Source Trench but were only able to reinforce the Canadian outpost at Source Farm and form a defensive flank to Vapour Farm . In the centre of the assault was the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade . Advancing between Ravebeek creek and the roadway to Meetcheele , one section of the brigade captured its intermediate objective , a pillbox known as Duck Lodge , by 7 : 00 a.m. To the west of the roadway and Meetcheele , the advance captured Furst Farm , albeit with heavy casualties . Later in the afternoon , the brigade succeeded in overcoming a number of pillboxes and captured the crossroads at Meetcheele . However , the Germans continued to hold a strong position at Graf House along the bank of the Ravebeek creek , producing a salient in the Canadian line directly between the two Canadian divisions .

The advance appeared to have reached its limit by late afternoon and reports of a large number of Germans concentrating north of Mosselmarkt indicated a possible counterattack . As a result , the 3rd Canadian Division ( although not having achieved all its objectives ) was ordered to consolidate its positions and patrol , rather than occupy , the Woodland Plantation swamp between the 7th and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigades . There was some question as to whether the positions at Source Farm and Vapour Farm could be maintained without the support of the 63rd ( Royal Naval ) Division . Currie and Plumer ultimately decided that every effort should be made to hold the line in the hope of not having to retake the positions before the assault on Passchendaele . The night ultimately passed without any major counterattacks taking place , permitting the Canadians to consolidate their positions . When the second stage ended on 30 October , the Canadian Corps had suffered 2 @,@ 321 casualties , consisting of 884 killed , 1 @,@ 429 wounded and eight taken prisoner . Further north the 63rd Division had 3 @,@ 126 casualties from 26 ? 31 October .

= = = Tactical pause = = =

To give time for inter @-@ divisional reliefs , there was a seven @-@ day pause between the second and third stages . The British Second Army was ordered to take over a section of the British Fifth Army front adjoining the Canadian Corps , so that the central portion of the assault might proceed under a single command . On 2 November , General Plumer relieved the XVIII Corps of the British Fifth Army with II Corps . The role of II Corps in the next stage would be limited to providing the Canadian Corps with artillery support . Immediately north of the Canadian Corps , the 63rd Division was able to close up to the Paddebeek by attacking at night between 1 November and the night of 4 / 5 November , a method which took more ground than its attacks in October for a loss of 14 killed and 148 wounded . 3 ? 5 November were rainless which aided logistical preparations and reorganization of the troops for the next stage . Hundreds of pack animals were used to move supplies , including gun ammunition . The 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions moved forward by rail from their reserve area east of Cassel to take over from the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions respectively . The reliefs were completed by the morning of 5 November . To the south of the Canadian Corps , the I Anzac , IX and VIII Corps were to simulate attacks along a 4 miles ( 6 @.@ 4

km ) front extending south to Zandvoorde . During the night of 5 November , the assault units moved to their jumping off positions and were ready by 4 : 00 a.m. on 6 November . The Germans also took advantage of the break in fighting to relieve exhausted units . The 11th Division had arrived from the Champagne sector on 3 November to relieve the 39th Division between the Ypres ? Roulers railway and the Mosselmarkt road .

= = = Third stage = = =

The Corps objectives for 6 November lay along the Green Line , a rough semicircle that ran 1 @, @ 000 yards ( 910 m ) from Graf House ? the centre of the salient in the Canadian line . Besides Passchendaele , it encompassed the hamlets of Mosselmarkt and Goudberg to the north @-@ west . The 2nd Canadian Division would send the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade to attack Passchendaele from the north side and one battalion from the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade to attack it from the south . In the 1st Canadian Division sector , the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade would advance on either side of the Meetcheele ? Mosselmarkt road and along the northern corps boundary , one battalion was to execute a subsidiary operation against Vine Cottages , a strong @-@ point which the Germans were holding 350 yards ( 320 m ) south @-@ east of Vapour Farm .

The third stage began at 6 : 00 a.m. on 6 November , with a preliminary bombardment under largely clear skies . The German counter @-@ bombardment fell mainly behind the advancing troops . Almost everywhere the attack went well for the Canadians . The 2nd Canadian Division encountered its chief opposition from pillboxes at the north end of Passchendaele but less than three hours after the start of the battle the village had been secured . The 1st Canadian Division encountered stiff resistance from the defenders of Vine Cottages , however by 8 : 00 a.m. the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade had reached and consolidated the Green Line .

= = = Final attack = = =

A small final action to gain a nearby crossroad and the remaining high ground north of the village , in the vicinity of Hill 52 , was set to be launched 10 November . The road junction was 1 @, @ 000 yards ( 910 m ) north of Passchendaele along the highway to Westrozebeke . Hill 52 , the highest point on the northern end of the Passchendaele Ridge , was 500 yards ( 460 m ) beyond the crossroad . Possession of both features would permit observation over German positions to the north @-@ east . The attack was made the responsibility of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade , with support from one battalion of the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade . The Germans had taken advantage of the break in the fighting to relieve exhausted units . Regiments from the 4th Division and 44th Reserve Division replaced those of the 11th Division on 9 November . Nevertheless , the assault was launched from the Green Line , north and north @-@ east of Mosselmarkt , on the morning of 10 November . The assault made good initial progress , capturing the crossroad , over @-@ running Venture Farm and capturing four 77 mm field guns . However , north of the Canadian Corps boundary , the supporting advance by the British 1st Division ran into difficulties when a German counterattack got between two diverging battalions . This permitted the Germans to fire against the British inner flanks , resulting in significant casualties and forcing both formations to withdraw . As a result , the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade was forced to fill the gap and throw back a defensive flank along the corps boundary ending any further progress . The action of 10 November brought to an end the long drawn @-@ out Third Battle of Ypres . Though Haig had hoped to have the entire Passchendaele ? Westrozebeke ridge as a winter position , the line was still short of Westrozebeke village .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Analysis = = =



On 24 October , The Austro @-@ German 14th Army under General der Infanterie Otto von Below inflicted a great defeat on the Italian Army at the Battle of Caporetto . In fear that Italy might be put out of the war , the French and British Governments each promised to send six divisions to the Italian Front . All troops were rapidly and efficiently transferred between 10 November and 12 December , due to good administrative preparations made by the French Chief of Staff Ferdinand Foch , who had been sent to Italy in April 1917 to plan for just such an emergency . The Third Battle of Ypres came to an unsatisfactory close as a result of the diversion of British forces , with Haig being forced to end his advance just short of Westroosebeke . On 14 November , a gradual relief of the Canadian divisions by the VIII Corps began and on 20 November , Currie resumed command along the Lens ? Vimy front .

= = = Casualties = = =

In the German Official History ( Der Weltkrieg volume XIII ) the Reichsarchiv historians recorded 20 @, @ 500 casualties from 21 ? 31 October and 9 @, @ 500 casualties from 1 ? 10 November . From 11 November ? 31 December another 15 @, @ 000 casualties were recorded .

= = = Subsequent operations = = =

Local operations continued after 10 November . German air activity and artillery @-@ fire remained intense and the British continued to attract German attention , to assist the attack due at Cambrai in late November . German defences consisted of a line of advanced outposts , with garrisons of as few as six men , about 500 yards ( 460 m ) in front of a covering line , to which the forward troops could retire and a main line of resistance set further back , which made it relatively easy for the British to regularly capture prisoners . On the night of 24 / 25 November , two battalions of the 8th Division attacked without artillery support and advanced the line to the ridge crest , which increased the depth of observation into the German lines by 400 yards ( 370 m ) . A German counter @-@ attack at 6 : 00 a.m. on 30 November , was anticipated and stopped with many German casualties inflicted by British small @-@ arms fire and a prompt artillery barrage .

VIII Corps and II Corps planned a larger operation for the night of 1 / 2 December . In the salient at Passchendaele , the 33rd Division faced east along the ridge , the 8th Division held the apex of the salient facing north @-@ east and the 32nd Division faced north . The main attack by the 32nd Division was intended to expand the west side of the salient , while an advance north along the ridge was to gain observation over the valleys to the north and east . To exploit the German practice during a British attack of first bombarding the British front line , then swiftly moving the artillery @-@ fire back to the German outpost line , the plan called for the infantry to cross the danger zone without artillery support , before the German artillery could react . Consequently , the British artillery did not begin firing until eight minutes after the attack began at 1 : 55 a.m. Owing to the moonlight , the British infantry had to form up well behind their outpost line and many of the troops got stuck in the mud , while others were caught by German artillery @-@ fire .

German machine @-@ guns commenced firing as soon as the British infantry attacked , which slowed the advance and left some troops in the German barrage zone , despite German artillery not firing until a minute after the start of the British barrage . Both sides suffered many casualties in the confusion . The German outpost zone was overrun and the main line of defence breached at one point . At dawn a local truce allowed wounded to be recovered and at noon a German counter @-@ attack forced the 32nd Division troops back to their start line , with the 8th Division dug @-@ in about 100 yards ( 91 m ) forward on the left and 200 yards ( 180 m ) on the right . Further attempts by the British to advance were easily stopped by the Germans and at 4 : 10 p.m. a German counter @-@ attack from the east was dispersed by British artillery . The British attack failed to gain much ground but the German 25th Division suffered so many casualties that it had to be relieved by the 16th Division on 3 December .

The New Zealand Division concurrently prepared an attack on Polderhoek Spur , to the south @-@ west of Passchendaele , that had last been assaulted on 26 October . It was intended to occupy the

low , east @-@ running ridge and deny German observation over the area between Cameron Covert to the north and the Menin road to the south @-@ west . An advance of 600 yards ( 550 m ) on a 400 @-@ yard ( 370 m ) front , would deprive the German defenders of observation and shield the new line from German observers on the Gheluvelt spur further south . Heavy artillery bombarded the Polderhoek Château and pillboxes on 28 November and again on 30 November , while howitzers cut the German wire . The attack was set for 3 December but was conducted separate from the attack at Passchendaele by II Corps and VIII Corps . Two battalions planned a daylight attack , in the belief that the unusual time would surprise the German defenders , who would be under cover sheltering from the regular bombardments being fired at that time of day . The British planned smoke and gas bombardments for the Gheluvelt and Becelaere spurs on either side and the local bombardment was timed to begin at the same time as the infantry attack .

Some of the British artillery dropped short as the attack began and the German defenders proved alert , engaging the New Zealanders from the château , pillboxes in the grounds and Gheluvelt ridge . A strong west wind ruined the smoke screens and the British artillery failed to suppress the German machine @-@ guns , which gradually stopped the attack ; New Zealand machine @-@ gunners did the same to German parties on the Becelaere road when they attempted to counter @-@ attack . The New Zealand advance was held up 150 yards ( 140 m ) from the first objective and a resumption of the attack after dark was cancelled , after German reinforcements were seen reaching Polderhoek Château and because the moon was full . Next morning , German troops assembling for another counter @-@ attack were dispersed and German artillery bombarded the area all day ; after dark the New Zealanders consolidated the new trench line . A German counter @-@ attack at dawn on 5 December was repulsed and German artillery @-@ fire then resumed in clear weather , assisted by an observation balloon . A German attack later in the day was also stopped by British artillery ; the captured ground was lost to a German attack on 14 December .

= = = Victoria Cross = = =

Nine Victoria Crosses , the highest military decoration for valour awarded to British and Commonwealth forces , were awarded for actions during the battle .

Acting Captain Christopher O 'Kelly of the 52nd ( New Ontario ) Battalion .

Sergeant Robert Shankland of the 43rd ( Cameron Highlanders of Canada ) Battalion .

Private Thomas William Holmes of the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion .

Private Cecil John Kinross of the 49th ( Edmonton ) Battalion .

Sergeant George Mullin of Princess Patricia 's Canadian Light Infantry .

Acting Major George Pearkes of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion .

Lieutenant Hugh McKenzie of the 7th Canadian Machine Gun Company .

Corporal Colin Fraser Barron of the 3rd ( Toronto ) Battalion .

Private James Peter Robertson of the 27th ( City of Winnipeg ) Battalion .

= = Commemoration = =

For the Canadian Corps , participation in the Second Battle of Passchendaele is commemorated with the Passchendaele Memorial located at the former site of the Crest Farm on the southwest fringe of Passchendaele village .