

Delaying Action at Landrecies 25th August 1914



The action on 25th August 1914 in the First World War, in which the British **4th (Guards) Brigade** kept the pursuing German army at bay, in a night of fighting in the French town of **Landrecies**.

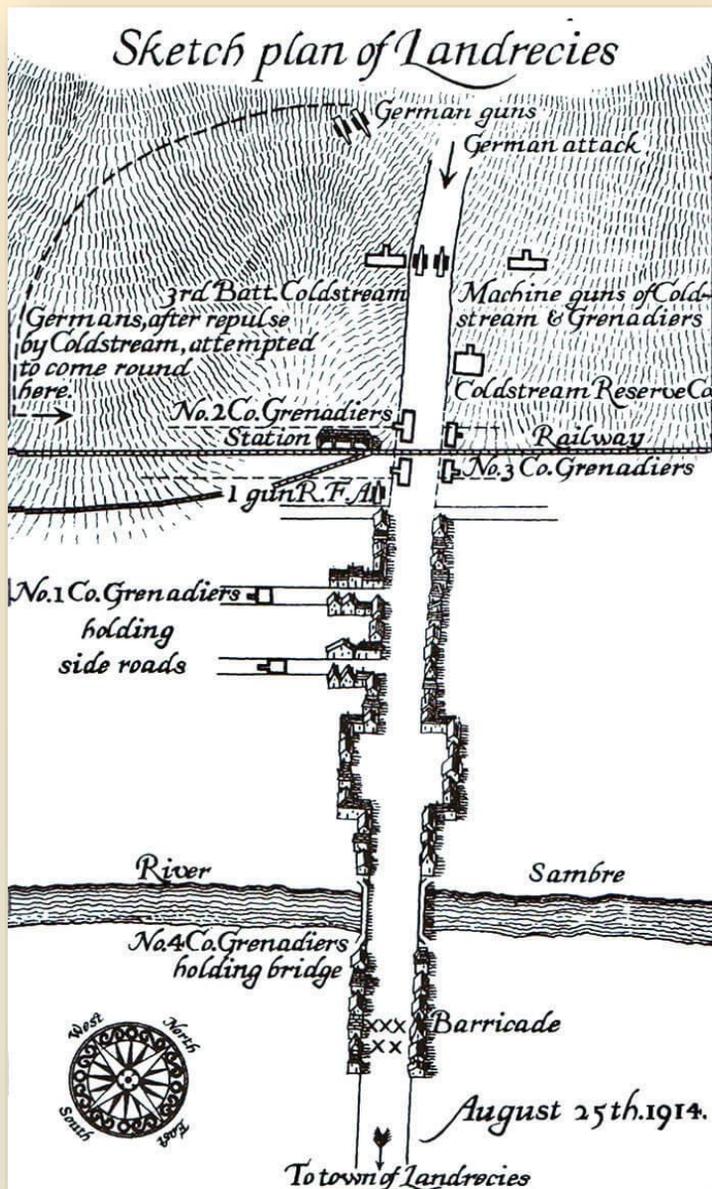
Following the fighting along and behind the Mons Canal on 23rd and 24th August 1914, the BEF retreated south before the oncoming German First Army; the **British II Corps and the Cavalry Division** taking the route to the west of the **Forest of Mormal**, a dense area of woodland, 10 miles from north to south and 6 miles across; the **British I Corps** marching down the route of the **Sambre River** to the east of the forest.

The British Guards reached **Landrecies** during the afternoon of 25th August 1914, at the end of a 'hurried and painful march'. **3rd Coldstream Guards** as the first battalion into **Landrecies**, and took up quarters in the French infantry barracks to the north of the town.

The rumours of the German approach caused the battalions of the **4th (Guards) Brigade** to adopt defensive positions around **Landrecies**: **3rd Coldstream** at the northern end of the town, **2nd Grenadiers** on the western side, **2nd Coldstream** on the eastern and southern edges of the town, and **1st Irish Guards** fortifying the centre.

Number 2 Company of **3rd Coldstream**, commanded by Captain Heywood, was in position at the northern end of the town, where the road to the north-west forked into two routes, both leading around the southern end of the **Forest of Mormal**. The battalion machine gun section deployed at the forks, with one gun aimed down each road.

2nd Grenadiers were posted with Number 2 and 3 Companies, under Major Lord Bernard Lennox, at the railway level-crossing, deployed to either side of the road. Number 1 Company, under Major Hamilton, occupied positions on the left of these companies. Number 4 Company, under Captain Colston, held the bridge over the **Sambre River**. The battalion was directed to barricade the main street leading north, which they did using the battalion's tool carts and the houses along the road were occupied and put in a state of defence.



During the afternoon, Number 2 Company of **3rd Coldstream** engaged German mounted patrols and drove them off, thus confirming the French reports.

One German Hussar patrol was reported as penetrating, unopposed, into the centre of **Landrecies**. These various attacks and the Hussar incursion made the point forcibly to the brigade, that they could not assume, as they had until then, that there were other British infantry brigades between them and the Germans.

At 7pm, Heywood's Number 2 Company of **3rd Coldstream** was relieved by Captain Monck's Number 3 Company. Monck received reports that French troops were expected through his position. In due course, a body of troops approached in the dusk, singing in French. Monck shouted a challenge and was answered in French. A torch was shined on the approaching troops. The leading files seemed to be in French uniforms, but they were followed by German troops (this seems likely to have been a misidentification in the dark, perhaps arising because the German troops in question were wearing forage hats and not helmets). Before the **3rd Coldstream** could open fire, the Germans rushed the forward piquet, bayoneted the gunner at the machine gun, and dragged his gun away. The piquet opened fire and the machine gun was recovered, the Germans falling back in the face of the British retaliation.

With this attack, the brigade resumed the defensive positions prepared earlier in the evening.

During the night, the Germans launched repeated attacks down the two roads from the North West, all of which were held and driven back by **3rd Coldstream**. The position of a farm building at the right hand end of the British line enabled the Germans to enfilade the **3rd Coldstream** with a machine gun. The Germans were supported by a field gun, firing up the road. This gunfire set a haystack near the **3rd Coldstream** line on fire. The sudden blaze illuminated the British troops, and made them easy targets.

One of the German attacks, infiltrating round the left flank of **3rd Coldstream**, reached as far as the railway station, where it was repelled by Number 2 Company of the **2nd Grenadiers**, commanded by Major Lord Bernard Lennox.

The **2nd Grenadiers'** machine gun section, commanded by Lieutenant Cecil, moved forward and provided additional support to the **3rd Coldstream**, who were suffering from the fire of the single German field gun, directed down the street.

The **3rd Coldstream** Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Fielding, brought up a howitzer from the supporting **RFA battery**. The howitzer was manhandled up to the level-crossing and opened fire on the German gun. The third round put the German gun out of action.

German attacks had also fallen on the east of the town. **1st Irish Guards** launched a counter-attack in that area, at around 3am. The German attacks on the town lost their momentum and finally ceased in the early hours of 26th August 1914.

At dawn, the **4th (Guards) Brigade** marched out of **Landrecies** to the south, heading for **Étreux**, unimpeded by the Germans. Instead of much needed rest, the brigade had spent the night fighting.



Delaying Action at Landrecies

25th August 1914

This historical scenario for **1914** broadly follows that of **Cover the Retreat** from the main rule book.

Orders of battle – see below.

Reserves –
N/a

Scenario Rules –

- Random Operation Length
- Dug in and Waiting

Initiative – the attacker goes first.

Deployment – The defender deploys using hidden deployment within the area indicated on the scenario map.

The attacker deploys up to one full move from their table edge (As indicated on the scenario map).

Primary objective is to break through the defender's lines. The “breakthrough” area is a zone 12”/30cm deep and 24”/60cm wide centred on the defending player's table edge. An attacking unit must be in this area at the end of the game to claim this bonus.

Length of Game

The battle ends instantly when:

1. The attacker has lost half its bases (**13 bases**).
2. The defender has lost two-thirds of its bases (**11 bases**).
3. Six turns have elapsed (7 if *Random Operation Length* determines so)

Victory Conditions – If none of the three conditions have determined the victor, score as follows:

- Each enemy base destroyed: +1
- Each enemy battalion wiped out on the table top: +1
- Primary objective taken: +2

British Forces (Defenders)

4th (Guards) Infantry Brigade

Command Tokens: 12

Points: 161

Brigadier-General Scott-Kerr

2nd Coldstream Guards Btn
4 trained bases infantry + MG
50pts

2nd Grenadier Guards Btn
4 trained bases infantry + MG
50pts

RFA Brigade Half Battery
1 trained base of artillery
11pts

1st Irish Guards Btn
4 trained bases infantry + MG
50pts

At the start of the game, place any reserves on this Order of Battle. At the start of a turn, place at least one command token on each unit and three command tokens on the General. Distribute your remaining command tokens on the recipient units as required.

German Forces (Attackers)

14th Infantry Brigade	
Command Tokens: 22	Points: 258
Major-General von Oven	
1 st Bn Infantry Regiment 27 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts	1 st Infantry Regiment 165 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts
2 nd Bn Infantry Regiment 27 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts	2 nd Infantry Regiment 165 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts
3 rd Bn Infantry Regiment 27 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts	3 rd Infantry Regiment 165 <i>3 regular bases Infantry + MG</i> 40pts
Field Artillery Regiment 66 <i>2 regular base of artillery</i> 18pts	
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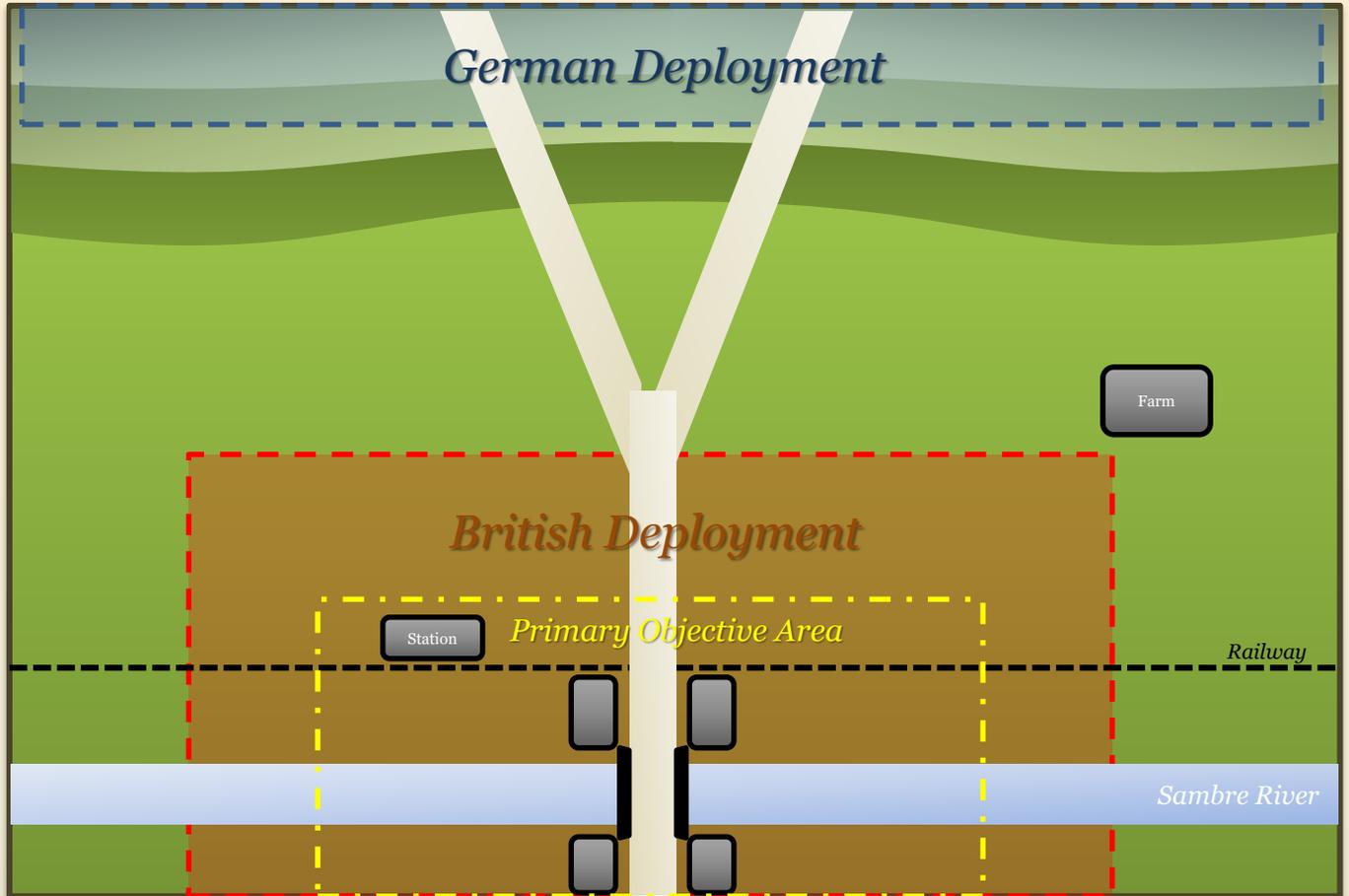
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From
Le Quesnoy



Table Size: 120 x 90cm.



To Town of
Landrecies