

this objective. The first thing, therefore, that the 1st Canadian Division had to do was to take the Fresnes-Rouvroy line, the greater part of the Vis-en-Artois Switch, Upton Wood, and the two strong obstacles known as Château Wood and the Crow's Nest, or, in other words, to advance its line some 3,000 yards before launching the big attack.

As the Divisional Commander did not wish to incur any risk of dissipating the strength of the two brigades earmarked for the breaking of the Drocourt-Queant line, he decided that the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade—in divisional reserve—should carry out this preliminary operation. The date set was at dawn on August 30th.

The task confronting the 1st Brigade was no light one. There was the strong Fresnes-Rouvroy trench line that already had stopped one attack by Canadians; there was the Vis-en-Artois Switch line, cutting this system diagonally; there was the fortified obstacle presented by Upton Wood, lying between the Fresnes-Rouvroy line and the Hendecourt-Dury road, and there was Cemetery Trench, running in a north-easterly direction from our right flank and passing just east of Upton Wood.

At first it was decided to attack this area frontally. Later, however, when the Brigade Commander heard that British troops had captured the village of Hendecourt, thus breaching the Fresnes-Rouvroy system just to the south of his right flank, he evolved a daring plan for the attack. Two battalions—the 1st and 2nd Battalions—were to assemble in the vicinity of Hendecourt and attack north-east and north respectively, the first going up Cemetery Trench and the other “rolling up” the Fresnes-Rouvroy Trench from the south. The 3rd Battalion was ordered to attack astride the Vis-en-Artois Switch and burst the Fresnes-Rouvroy line at its junction with that trench. The artillery then worked out a complicated barrage, or rather two, one protecting each of the attacks from the flanks, and then merging together and sweeping eastwards.

The attack opened at 4.40 o'clock in the morning. All went smoothly and the objectives were taken. Heavy fighting continued