



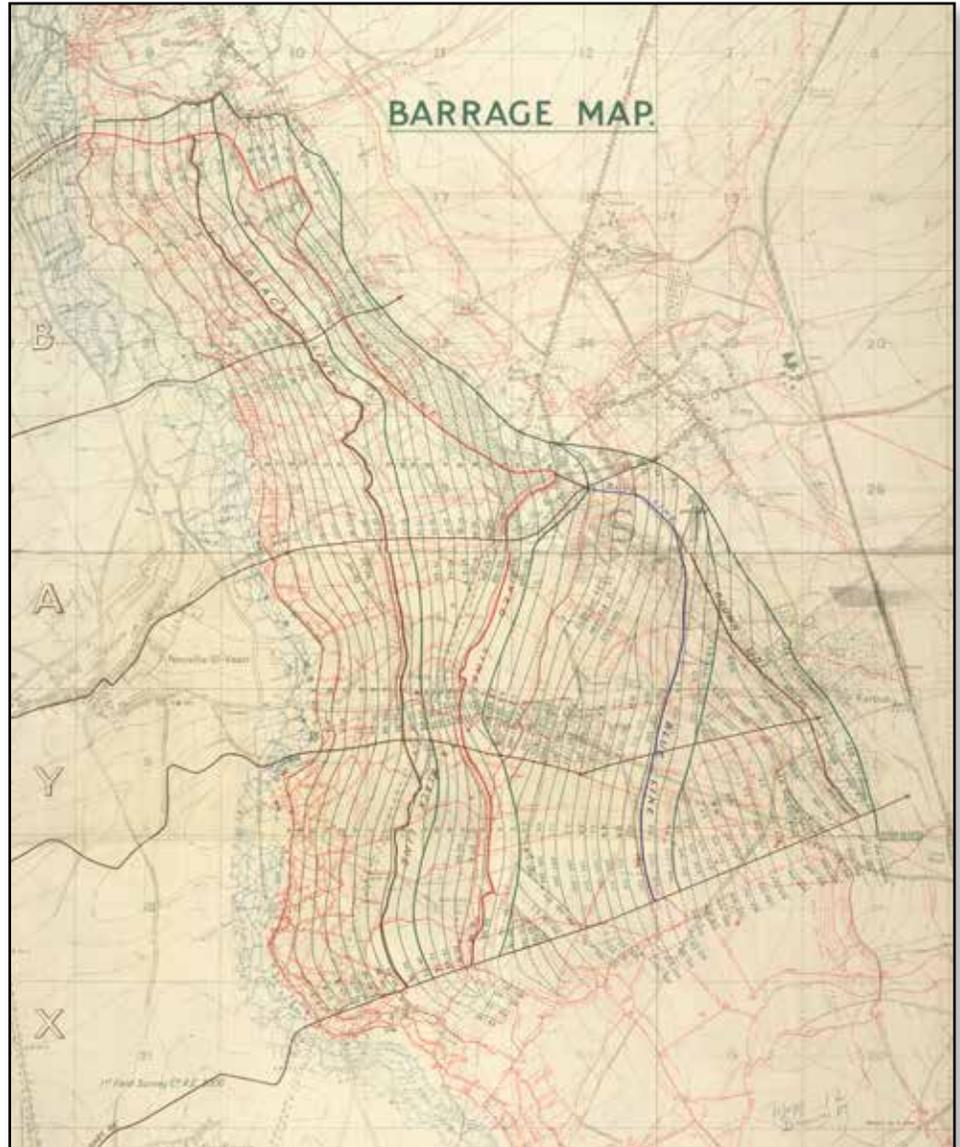
BARRAGE MAP

At precisely 5:30 a.m. on Monday April 9, 1917, 850 Canadian guns and 280 from the British 1st Army, began firing, signalling the start of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

The artillery fired on the first German trenches. And then every three minutes moved the barrage 90 metres further into German held land. This tactic is called the creeping barrage and allowed Canadian troops to advance behind the protective curtain of the big guns.

At the beginning of First World War the basic tactic of trench warfare was to fire lots of artillery at enemy trenches for a continuous period of time and to stop firing just before the infantry attacked. This method proved largely unsuccessful because the Germans had built strong, deep bunkers and were able to reach their defenses in the time between the bombardment ending and the infantry reaching the frontlines.

The creeping barrage method became a solution to this problem. Instead of just aiming at the same target, the creeping barrage moved forward at a prearranged pace. This meant that a bombardment could start in No Man's Land as infantry left the trenches and moved forward, just in front of attacking troops.

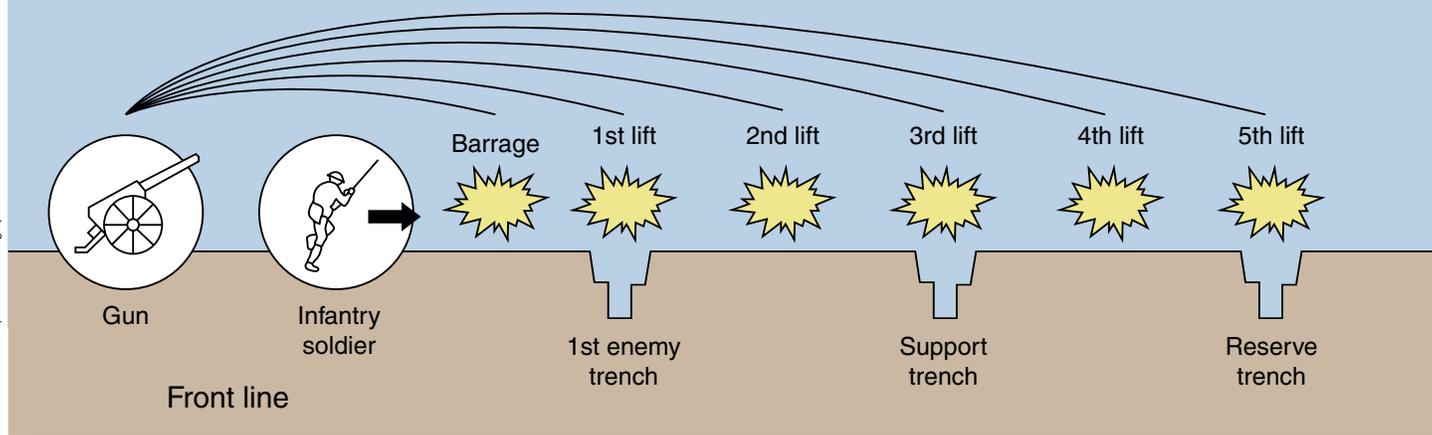


As the war progressed, the creeping barrage became more effective. It was used successfully by the Canadians at Vimy Ridge, where the men had been extensively trained to move forward 90 metres every three minutes, keeping the infantry behind the advancing artillery barrage. This technique was made possible by detailed maps called barrage maps.

Many coordinated artillery pieces were required to create the creeping barrage. Critically, the curtain of artillery fire had to be lifted and moved forward every few minutes in order to stay ahead of the advancing troops. Soldiers' lives depending on the accuracy of the maps and the coordination of the guns, so this tactic required the ultimate in coordination and it was only made possible through detailed barrage maps.

A barrage. At first guns were trained on enemy front lines. The gun barrels were gradually lifted higher and higher so the shells would land on support and then on reserve trenches. Later a 'creeping' barrage was invented. This moved forward on a timed basis ahead of the soldiers.

Photo: Alissa Dicaire/Canadian Geographic



WAR AND MAPS

During the war, mapping the battlefields and strategic positions became an integral part of planning for any successful offensive. Maps helped soldiers familiarize themselves with enemy-held terrain, weapon positions and other obstacles. Maps also became essential for planning maneuvers such as creeping barrages.

Many different types of maps were created during the war:

- 1. Situation maps** showed front line trenches, shell holes and craters, networks of ammunition dumps and railway lines.
- 2. Positions maps** showed all enemy battery positions located by aerial photography.
- 3. Barrage maps** (1:10,000) were developed after the Battle of the Somme, covering 10 to 15 miles of the Western Front and were used at Vimy Ridge. Barrage maps were used to choreograph the moving curtain of artillery fire behind troops as they advanced. From his aircraft high above No Man's Land, Canadian Air Ace Billy Bishop described it as 'clockwork warfare'.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Ask students to work in small groups or pairs to answer the following questions about the barrage map:

- ★ What symbols are used on the map? What do these symbols represent?
- ★ Identify the direction "North" on the map. How do you know?
- ★ Which colours are used on the map. How are they used? Why?
- ★ How are numbers used on the map? Why?
- ★ Do any words stand out? What do these words tell you?
- ★ Why was this map created? How do you know? Who was it created for?
- ★ What do you know about the map maker from clues on the map?
- ★ What do you know about this time in history by looking at the map?
- ★ What does the map tell about places?
- ★ What does the map tell about people?
- ★ Compare this map to the Vimy Ridge floor map. In what ways are they the same? In what ways are they different?

FIRST WORLD WAR VOCABULARY

Artillery: Large-caliber guns used in warfare on land, also called ordnance or heavy guns.

Bombardment: A continuous attack with bombs, shells, or types of artillery.

Bunker: A fortified shelter, often buried partly or fully underground, designed to protect troops from falling bombs or other attacks.

Creeping barrage: A bombardment that slowly creeps toward the enemy lines to create cover for the soldiers advancing behind. It became a key strategy in the First World War.

Field Artillery: Light, moveable guns (cannons, howitzers), as opposed to the immovable fixed or heavy guns, used by armies in the field especially for direct support of front-line troops.

Infantry: Soldiers on foot.

No Man's Land: The unoccupied area between the trenches of opposing armies.

Trench: Long, narrow ditch dug by troops during wartime to hide from enemies.