TRENCH ASSAULT

The Race to the Parapet 1916
Version 1   **© Jim Wallman 2008**

Introduction

Purpose of this game is to simulate the rush across no-man's-land during a typical battalion assault in 1916. These assaults could be very varied in outcome – from very successful to devastatingly unsuccessful – and many factors, including copious quantities of plain luck would determine the outcome. These rules are simple and fast-moving and in many cases have glossed over a range of technical detail to achieve this.

Units

Each infantry company is represented by 8 infantry bases and an officer figure. Some companies will have a Lewis gun base or two.

In the case of defending infantry there will be a number of rifle and MG team bases – generally fewer than the attackers – typically 2 MGs and 8 rifles.

An attacking British battalion is represented by 4 companies plus a battalion HQ group = 4-5 players, typically.

If more players are available, then the defenders may be played rather than umpire controlled.

Models can be any size – 1/300 or 6mm would be ideal as they are closest to the ground scale.

Scales

1 Turn   = 3-4 minutes
1cm   = 5m
Infantry Base = 5cm frontage – depth as convenient, but as thin as possible as infantry deploy in long thin lines.

Company frontage = 40cm

Playing Area

Ideally there should be a defenders trench line and attacker's start trench. Realistically these should be between 150cm and 200cm apart. The battlefield needs to be wide enough to field a battalion in line – ideally at least 160cm (about 5'4") wide.

If there is room, the defenders might have a second trench line about 30-50cm back from the first.

Sequence of Play

Before Start: Roll for bunker hits from preparatory bombardment.

1. **Artillery Shell landing location and effects.**

2. **Direct fire – both attacker and defender simultaneously.**

3. **Company Morale**

4. **Attacker Movement (unless pinned).**

5. **Defender Movement (unless pinned).**

6. **Hand to Hand Combat.**

7. **Roll to Unpin units**

Communications

Once the assault starts, players may not discuss their actions with other players unless their Officer figures are in base-to-base contact, or they a have access to the telephone network.

Players may always 'send a runner' with a written note to other players. The runner is moved on the battlefield and at risk like anyone else. If killed, a runner's message is lost.

Preparatory Artillery

The defenders will start in their deep bunkers typically there should be 2 or 3 such bunkers on the battalion's front.

The preparatory bombardment will cover the wire and the defender's trench. Stray shells will fall in no-man's land during this time (which might be important if the attackers choose to creep up during the final stages of the barrage).

There is a small chance that a bunker is hit – this has the effect of blocking its entrance and delaying deployment. Roll 1d6 for each bunker under the preparatory bombardment – score 5 or 6 for the entrance to be blocked.

The attackers are not told where or whether this has happened – the umpire notes it and tells the defending player (if any).

The bombardment may gap wire in a number of places as determined by the umpire.

The Race to the Parapet.

Once the bombardment is over the defenders can leave their bunkers.
Each defending bunker will disgorge its occupants at a rate of 1 base per turn.
The bases then move down the trenches to their assigned positions.
If the bunker entrance is blocked as a result of the preparatory bombardment, it will take 1d6 turns to unblock.

Step 1 : Defensive Artillery

The Germans bring no-man's-land under fire from artillery as soon as an attack is detected and this keeps up throughout the assault.
This artillery fire is pretty random – 1d6 shells landing in no-man's-land per turn.
This is represented by projecting shells onto the map at random locations and noting their impact point.
1d6 for every unit within 10cm of impact point:
1, 2 or 3 = Pinned
4, 5,or 6 = Killed

Step 2 : Direct Fire

Units that fire cannot move in step 4 or 5.

The effect of different weapons is reflected by the number of 'shots' they get.
These can be allocated to the same target or to several targets so long as they are adjacent to each other. Also the allocation must be to targets of the same type (all 'moving in open' or all 'pinned'). The effect of direct fire is simultaneous.

Target	Rifle	MMG / Lewis Gun
Advancing or retreating in open	2 shots	4 shots
Pinned or stationary in open	1 shot	2 shots
In trenches / gun position	0 shots	1 shot

Roll 1d6 per 'shot'

Score:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Up to 100cm	-	-	Pin	Pin	Pin	Kill
Over 100cm	-	-	-	-	Pin	Kill

Step 3 : Company Morale

After a Company has taken 50% losses, roll 1d6 **every turn** –
-1 if Nervous last turn.

Score	Result
4 or more	Fine : Carry on
2 or 3	Nervous : may not advance (may retreat unless pinned down).
1 or less	Demoralised : must make back for start trench if attacker when no longer pinned. Defender must attempt to escape back to next defensive line. If the enemy are within 15cm then surrender to them.

Step 4 and 5 : Movement

Infantry moving in the open   40cm
Crossing gapped wire or through friendly wire count distance as double
Crossing un-gapped wire count distance as x4 (in doing so they gap the wire for later waves)

Runner moving in open or through gapped wire 50cm
Runner moving through un-gapped wire   15cm

Lateral movement down trenches   20cm

Tanks moving over all terrain   30cm.
If crossing trench or boggy ground, roll 1 or 2 to get stuck.
If crossing wire it automatically creates a gap.

Step 6 : Hand to Hand Combat Melee

If the attackers get into an occupied trench then 'hand to hand' might occur.
Face each base off against an enemy (up to a maximum of 2:1)
Roll 1d6 per side, the highest score wins:
-2 if outnumbered
-2 if demoralised
-1 if cornered.
-1 if MG crew
+1 if bombers

If the win is by 1 or 2 then the loser is forced back 15cm.
If unable to escape count as 'cornered' next round.
If the win is by 3 or 4 then the loser is killed
If the win is by 5 or more then the loser is captured,

Step 7 : Un-pinning

Roll for each pinned base. Score   2+ to un-pin.
If no officer within 40cm   -1
If company morale 'nervous'   -1
If demoralised   -2