

world of Polygon Wood

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Polygon Wood is small but safe—dense stands of hardwood offer countless escape routes to the quick and the cautious. At its center is a treeless oval, once used as a race course, but long abandoned to the encroaching forest. Now it is a vast meadow. At the northeast tip of the Wood is the *Butte de Polygone*, the highest point for miles around. From atop the Butte, Polygon Wood lies in an ocean of cultivated farmland as far as the eye can see. An hour's hop to the north is the village of Zonnebeke. In the fall, men will choose this place to fight, and thirty thousand of them will fall here in nine days. Polygon Wood is a setting about the gradual accommodation of the unthinkable and unendurable. It ends in a nightmare from which no rabbit can reasonably hope to escape—some of the most vicious fighting of the First World War. Like frogs being slowly boiled, the danger and violence gradually ramp up until the landscape itself is transformed by soldiers who bring the apocalypse with them. It's best played over multiple sessions across a single year—1917, although the poor rabbits won't know that, of course.

Questions: The Warren

- Is the warren large, small, or in between?
- How many generations ago did you cross the ocean of cultivated farmland from Zonnebeke?
- Where's the ancient oak tree? The oval once used as a race course but long abandoned? The *Butte de Polygone*—highest point in the Wood?
- How are decisions made in the warren? Who is in charge?
- Who's unhappy about the way things are?
- Why is life here so good?
- What would make the warren a better place?

Questions: Relationships

- With whom do you spend afternoons exploring?
- Who do you trust? Who makes you angry?
- Who is destined to be your mate?
- Who has always protected you?

Questions: Stakes

- What happens when a new rabbit arrives?
- What is your relationship with the Laflèche warren on the other side of the Wood?
- How do you deal with the stoat family that you share the Wood with?
- Why are the fields around the Wood so deadly?
- What will happen if you are driven from the warren?

Questions: Situation

- Is it day or night or somewhere between?
- Why are you all away from the warren?
- When did you realize your route back to the warren was blocked?
- Who is hurt or trapped?
- What animal just approached you? A harvest mouse, a badger, a long-eared bat? Something else?
- What predator has just revealed itself? The stoats? A fox? A hunter? Something else?

Names

Kinds of Trees

Beech and chestnut give way to birch and larch. Scots pine. A few magnificent old oaks hold court.

Fat Hutch Rabbits

Loys, Melchior, Absolon, Veytman, Glaude, Samuel, Bartels, Bekker, De Boer, De Visser, Hardenburgh, Van der Laan, Van Loon, Camille, Lore, Fran, Oona, Luna

Big Country Rabbits

Léo, Hugo, Maël, Jules, Rouge, Pruche, Bleuets, Hêtre, Allard, Aubert, Berger, Brochard, Léna, Inès, Chloé, Noisette, Chêne, Cèdre, Bavure, Lemoine, Rochette, Pernet

Dead Mice Baert has known

Barbara, Wilhelmina, Gisela, Ingeborg, Sigrid, Jutta, Uta, Susanne, Lulu and little Hans

Trench Rats

Leon, Otto, Randolph, Günther, Gustav, Astrid, Hilde, Ida, Veronika, Wilma, Moody, Owens, Tom, Nestor, Kenneth, Nyla, Catherine, Fairfax, Liza, Metta

The first rats arrive in early summer and soon they are everywhere. The rats in the eastern trenches speak with German accents and the rats in the western trenches speak with Australian or New Zealand accents.

Other animals

Cuvier, Garcet, Lazard, Laflèche, Delafosse, Mazet, Bessette, Cailloux, Duclos, Hennequin

Beavers, hares, hedgehogs, long-eared bats, wildcats, and domestic pigs grazing the wood, savoring a moment of freedom might all turn up, particularly early in the year.

...What do you do?

the
warren

www.bullypulpitgames.com/games/the-warren

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NPCs

BAERT, Harvest Mouse

Trait: Depressed

Voice: French-accented

- Remember the good old days
- Invite himself (on a journey, to dinner, into a warm burrow)
- Calculate the odds, which are always poor
- Mourn all the mice he has known and enumerate the ways in which they perished
- Share encyclopedic knowledge of Polygon Wood

MOCKER, Pigeon

Trait: Courageous

Voice: Bombastic

- Laugh at danger
- Fly like the wind
- Instantly become fast friends
- Appear out of nowhere to complicate and/or save the day
- Have memory lapses and bouts of confusion due to war wounds (Mocker is missing the top of his skull and one eye)

ENNO & LOTTE, Trench Rats

Trait: Sneaky

Voice: German-accented

- Announce a new project requiring volunteers
- Brag about human connections
- Eat something unspeakable
- Offer surprisingly practical battlefield advice
- Take advantage of a “friend”

NAMELESS BABY BADGER, Badger

Trait: Innocent

Voice: Naive, hapless

- Ask if anyone has seen any other badgers
- Try to root for worms and grubs and fail
- Believe anything it is told
- Get in trouble and need help
- Mention that it is hungry and lost

KAISERIN, Horse

Trait: Cheerful

Voice: Slow, German-accented

- Express joy in ways dangerous to smaller creatures
- Find a way to get her harness off
- Tell frightening tales of men and war
- Think she is a rabbit and take up way too much space
- Escape the men who seek to reclaim her

Predators

MR. & MRS. GOOSEN, a Pair of Stoats

Trait: Murderous

Voice: Calm, respectable shopkeepers

- Creep around, run fast, slide into a burrow
- Do a weirdly hypnotic acrobatic hell beast dance
- Bite a rabbit's neck and gently ease it into death
- Set up shop in a nice deep hole some rabbit has dug
- Seek relief from an agonizing louse infestation

JENS, Fox

Trait: Thoughtful

Voice: Intellectual student

- Reluctantly chase and kill, apologizing all the while
- Utterly lose his shit at loud noises
- Openly weigh both sides of an issue before siding with not starving
- Fantasize about all the vixens he's going to meet
- Make a deal that fills his belly

CORPORAL QUANTRELL, Sporting Dog

Trait: Sportsmanlike

Voice: English upper class

Trait: Sporting dog

- Play fair, but play hard
- Dig holes and bury things
- Chase and, of course, catch
- Keep an eye on the situation and report back
- Exercise noblesse oblige occasionally

ARTILLERY

Trait: Merciless storm of steel

Voice: BOOM!

- Mutilate and transform the landscape
- Collapse a tunnel, lay a burrow bare
- Freeze thought and provoke madness
- Shred flesh with jagged metal shards
- Fill the air with toxic smoke and foulness

Note: May trigger the Shell Shock, Gas Attack, or Tunnel Collapse moves as well

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Custom Moves

SHELL SHOCK

When you find yourself above ground during an artillery barrage, focus on one of your senses and describe a past trauma, then Panic. When you recover, reset your Panic score to 0.

GAS ATTACK

When you are enshrouded in the green gas, roll+strong. On a 10+, you get through the worst of it - increase your panic by 1 and choose 1. On a 7-9, increase your panic by 2 and choose 2.

- You are temporarily blind
- You are coughing and wheezing
- You are lost in the haze

TUNNEL COLLAPSE

When a tunnel collapses around you, raise your Panic score by one, then Resist Panic. If you ever want to see the sun again, Dig.

Threats

THREAT OF SPRING

Intent: To presage doom

- Laburnum, hyacinth and daffodil bloom, followed by hawthorn, lily-of-the-valley and columbine as summer draws near.
- Sounds of thunder from the west shatter the calm on some evenings.
- Humans come and go in great numbers, traveling on a road through Zonnebeke to the north. Occasionally a few men come hunting in Polygon Wood.
- The Lafèche warren sends emissaries with visions of impending calamity.

THREAT OF EARLY SUMMER

Intent: To despoil the land

- Heather and campanula bloom, and wild strawberries are suddenly everywhere, followed by raspberries. When the blackberries and hazelnuts arrive, fall is in the air.
- The thunder grows ever closer amid unseasonably heavy rain.
- Men arrive and begin working. The Butte, in particular, is transformed by a massive concrete observation post. Smaller machine gun emplacements and barbed wire obstacles are carved into the Wood. Trees are felled, including the majestic old oaks.
- Men dig holes in the mud, start living in them, and gradually extend them until they are trenches. They are happy to kill and eat any rabbit that crosses their path, even as they live beneath the earth in burrows of their own.
- The first horses and dogs arrive.

THREAT OF LATE SUMMER

Intent: To plunge the world into chaos, terror and darkness

- The rain is relentless.
- Sometimes there is a tremendous, terrifying explosion that leaves behind a smoking ruin, and anything nearby is killed. The only place safe from them is underground, and sometimes not even there.
- Huge swathes of Polygon Wood are demolished by fire and explosives. The landscape grows progressively more barren and dangerous.
- The men dig their trenches deeper and add concrete block houses with machine guns inside. They are no longer thinking about rabbits.
- Animals that live above ground must seek shelter below or die.

THREAT OF AUTUMN

Intent: To destroy, to kill, to raze

- The few trees that remain turn golden and russet, then shed their leaves among the last wildflowers as they are violently shaken by explosions. Sweet chestnuts arrive on the few trees still standing on the east end of Polygon Wood, but these are soon annihilated.
- Thousands of new men arrive to fight the thousands who came first. They dig trenches, too. The stretch of "Wood" between the two lines of trench is now an uninhabitable hellscape of barbed wire, rotting corpses, and shell craters.
- The Lafèche warren is wiped out without a trace.
- The men lob explosives at each other. Some of the shells contain poison gas, which sinks to the lowest level it can find below ground.
- The trenches themselves are home to newcomers - vicious rats who grow fat on stolen rations and the corpses of the dead.

THREAT OF WINTER

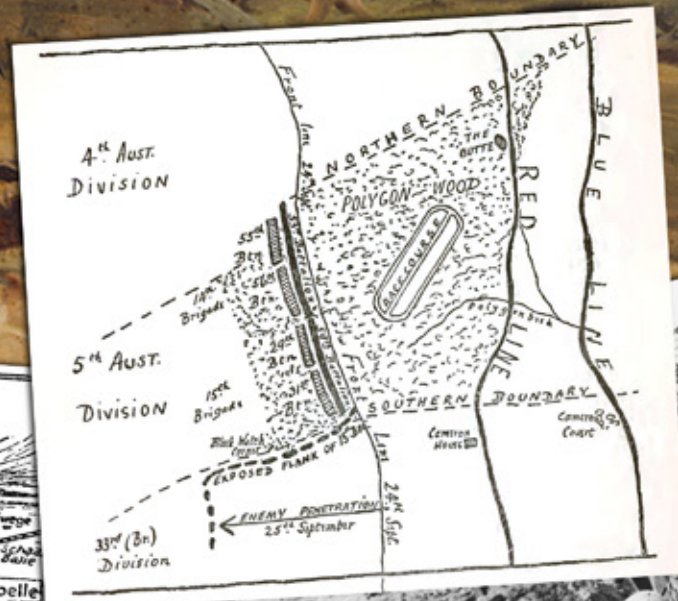
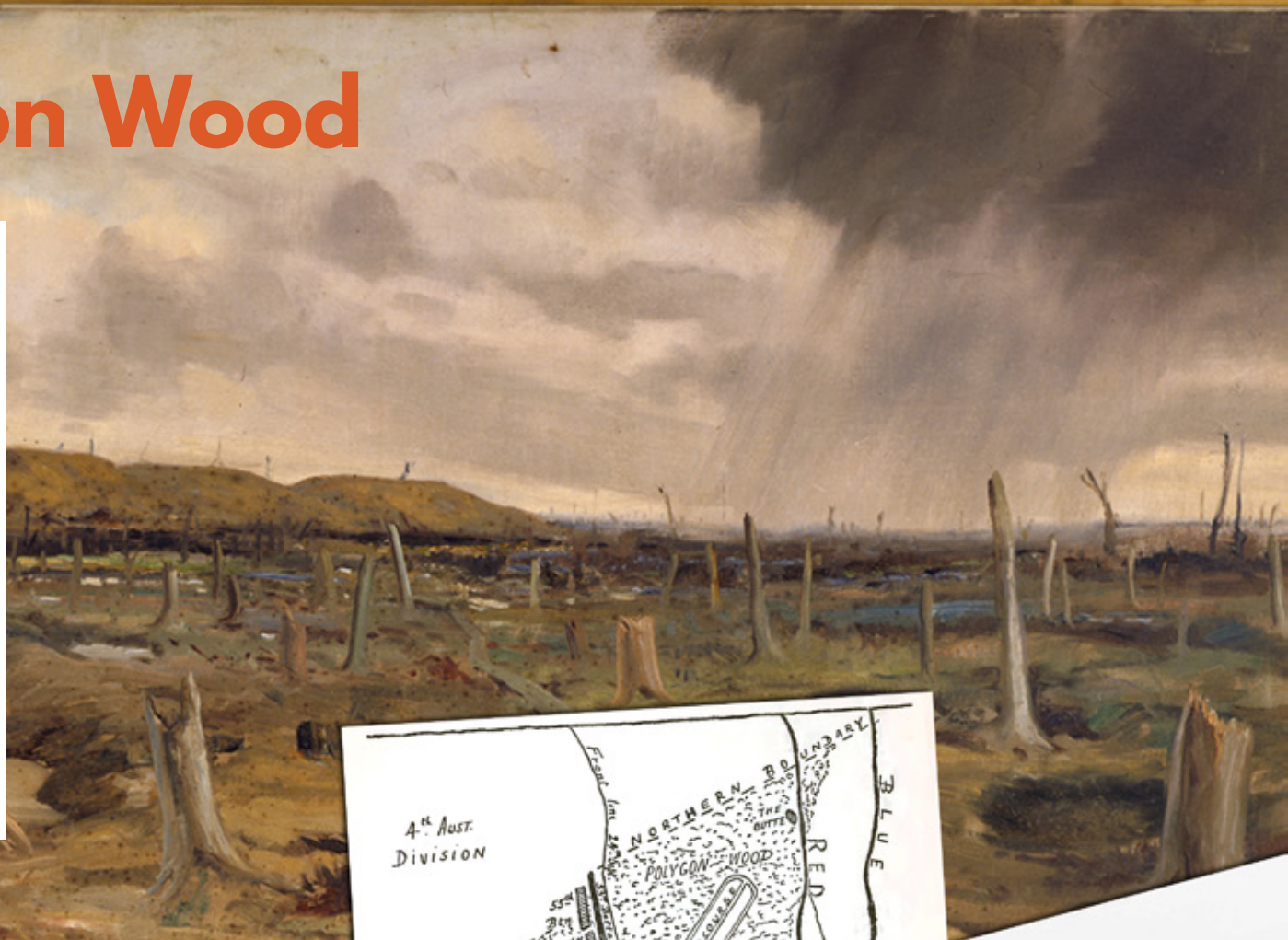
Intent: To freeze and starve whatever still breathes

- The men are gone, leaving an apocalyptic disaster behind them.
- Not a single tree is standing.
- Crushing cold freezes the deepest burrow.
- Food cannot be found.
- The earth itself is poisoned and the rats still feast.

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Inspiration

- Remember that nervous rabbits like to chew things, including carefully concealed telephone wires
- Pigeons can be mouthy jerks but take messages very seriously.
- A lot of pigeons got drafted and most just want to get back home in one piece, though a few have done multiple tours.
- Sometimes tunnels empty into trenches and it's easy to get cornered when you're in a trench.
- Larger predators may be too scared to hunt, may become a pathetic whimpering mess when pinned (they don't call it a fox hole for nothing), or might even become temporary allies!
- Soldiers love pets and will sometimes do brave things for them.



talkative birds

safe spot

careful!

hill

spring flowers

tall grass

marsh

warm rocks

singing stream

the person's trail

no cover

farmer's road

lazy dog

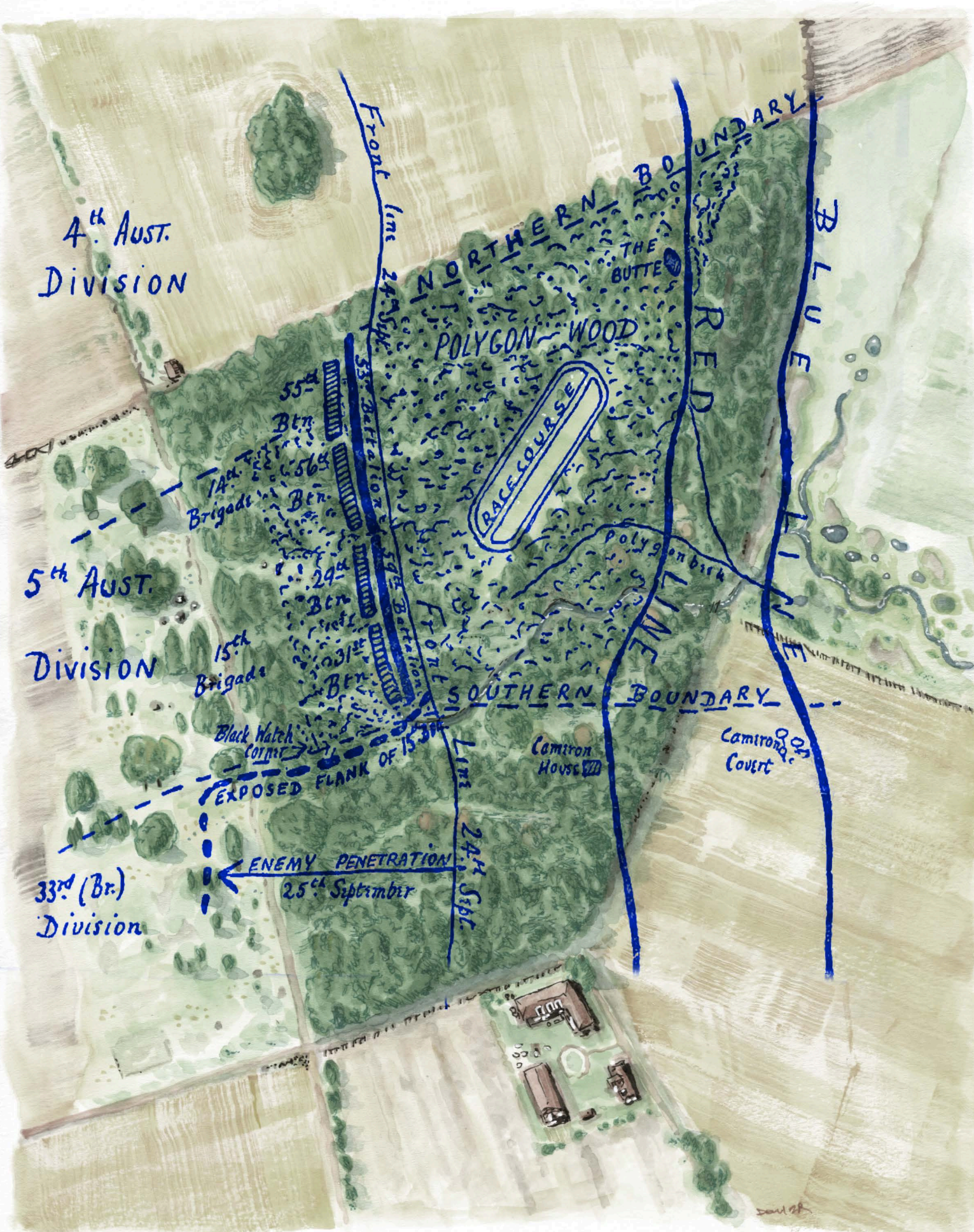
2012



4th Aust. Division

5th Aust. Division

33rd (Br.) Division



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