# FORGOTTEN HOPE 2

**Mapping La Horgne by La-Hire**

In this series of dev blogs, we would like to share the large amount of research and effort that has gone into making our 2.6 French release as accurate as possible. The following mapping blogs give some explanations of our work and show some historical or gameplay details of the incoming maps. Of course those are nothing compared to the great informations that you'll find in the various books and websites that we will list in our bibliography down below. In fact, some of the information below is taken verbatim from these sources.

You'll find next the map La Horgne, made by La-Hire and CptBocquier, that depicts the 1st Panzer Division's struggle for the village of La Horgne against the 3rd Spahi Brigade on May 15th,1940.

# La Horgne

Finding informations about the battle of La Horgne was pretty simple since a thesis was defended for a PhD degree at the Paris-Sorbonne University by Thierry Moné in 2016, specifically about this battle and the French unit involved in, the 3rd Spahi Brigade (cf. Thierry Moné, *15 mai 1940, le mercredi de La Horgne : de la mémoire à l'histoire. La campagne de mai-juin 1940 de la 3e Brigade de Spahis*, Université Paris 4 Paris-Sorbonne, 2016). Luckily, this thesis, richly illustrated with maps, was available on internet.

All the needed and detailed information was there. Many FH2 maps are made with much less !

The battle of La Horgne occured in May 15th in the French Ardennes, only twenty kilometers west of Sedan, where the Panzers made their famous breakthrough two days before. Since a major offensive was not expected in that area, the sector was quite poorly defended: overwhelmed, the French HQ threw into battle all immediatly available units to try to gain at all cost the necessary delay to mobilise the reserves. In that context of power inbalance, the fight of La Horgne remains known for being an example of a rare successful resistance. With almost no anti-tank means, the Spahis managed to delay one long day the tanks of the 1. Panzer-Division, thus accomplising their mission. Just after the campaign, this feat of arms became it's own little legend, relayed by both the Germans and the French, not without some amplifications. Thus was born the myth of the heoric horseback charge of the Africans cavalrymen against the Panzers, causing, respectively, approximately 700 and 1000 losses! (in reality, ~200 and 133, including the wounded)



Albert Brenet, *Les combats de La Horgne*, 15 mai 1940, Saumur Cavalry Museum.

Illustrating his notoriety, at least in military circles, this famous episode inspired a painting of Albert Brenet which was exhibited in the officers' mess of the prestigious Cavalry School of Saumur (nowadays in the Cavalry Museum of the same city). But, as Thierry Moné shows, this cavalry charge never happened. As you may know, the cavalry was supposed to fight on foot in the era of World War Two.

Concerning the Spahis, they were a colonial unit recruited in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. They were mainly composed of native North Africans but also of some Metropolitans French and *Pieds-Noirs* (« Black-Feet », Europeans or Jews of North Africa). The 3rd Spahi Brigade (*3$^e$ Brigade de Spahis, 3$^e$ BS*) at La Horgne was composed of the 2$^{nd}$ Algerian and 2$^{nd}$ Morrocan Spahi Regiments. In terms of equipment, the 3e BS was the last Spahi unit equipped with old Berthier Mousqueton Mle 1916 carbines, specially designed for artillery and cavalry troops, while the others were already delivered with MAS-36s.

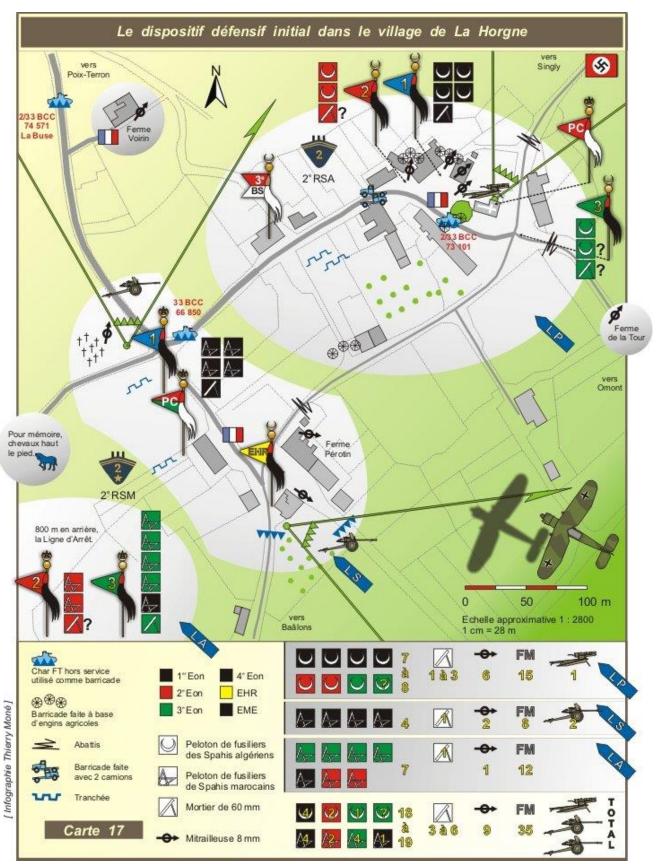The Spahi platoon was organised like following:



In theory, a converter existed for the Mousqueton to use the VB launcher, but we don't have a proper model for it. However, soldiers generally prefered long rifles in a launch-grenade role, so we decided to use the Berthier Mle 1916 rifle instead, which wasn't playable with VB grenades in any other of our maps.

Each regiment of the brigade was composed of two Squadron Groups composed of two Squadrons, themselves composed of four Platoons. The First Squadron Group of each regiment had two SA34 25mm AT guns attached to them, and the second one, one SA34 and one Mle 1916 37mm gun (which wasn't technically designed for antitank tasks). These guns were towed by horses. In addition, each Squadron

had one 60mm mortar companies and two 8mm Hotchkiss machine guns companies attached to them. On paper, the 3e BS had then in total 64 MAC 24/29 Fusil Mitrailleurs (FM), 8 mortars, 16 machine guns, 8 SA34 AT guns and two Mle 1916 37mm guns. But considering their previous losses, and the fact they had to give some of their guns to another unit, the Spahis of the 3e BS had only 35 FMs, 3 to 6 mortars, 9 machine guns, two SA34s and one 37mm gun at La Horgne.

According to Thierry Moné, the defences of the Spahis were organised like following (the black arrows ➤ represent machine guns):



*« The initial defensive plan in the village of La Horgne »*, in Thierry Moné, op. cit., p. 217.

All the machine guns (except one replaced with a FM) and all the guns are placed in the same place as in real life in game. However, as we don't have yet a proper model for the 37mm gun, we placed a SA34 as a place holder inside the church, where the Spahis dug a hole in the wall to hide it.

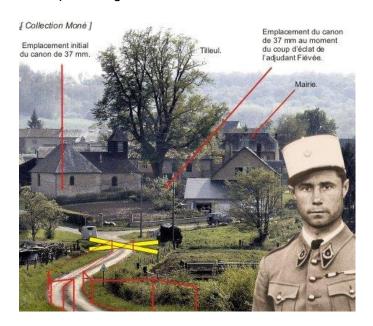Our church and the war memorial were made by CptBocquier from real life pictures.



Comparison between real-life pictures and ingame screenshots of the church of La Horgne

The following logos ⚙⚙ ⟱ ᴜᴜ on the map respectively represent barricades made with furnitures and agricultural devices, abattis, and trenches (dug during the Phoney War). You could find them at the same place in game as well.







Various types of barricades set by the Spahis before the German attack

The trucks and tanks logos  , on the other hand, represent barricades made with trucks and three Renault FTs abandonned by another unit (the 33ᵉ BCC) under unknown conditions.
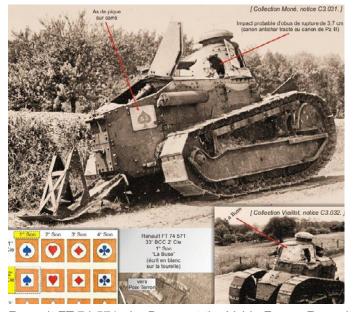



Renault FT 73 101 in front of the townhall and the church - Renault FT equipped with 37mm SA18 gun




Renault FT 66 850 at the crossroads near the cemetery - Renault FT-31 equipped with Reivel MAC-31 machine gun




Renault FT 74 571 «La Buse» at the Voirin Farm - Renault FT-31 equipped with Reibel MAC-31 machine gun

For the trucks, they belonged to the 3ᵉ BS and were actually Matford trucks. Still, we used the more common Citroën U23 as a place holder in game. Still, their markings are the correct ones of the 3ᵉ BS. Trucks and Renault FT were made by Seth_Soldier and converted into statics by CptBocquier.



According to Thierry Moné, the trucks were probably burnt during the battle from a nearby house fire.

In general, the map was made in 1:2 scale, notably using that aerial photo taken in January 1940 as a reference :



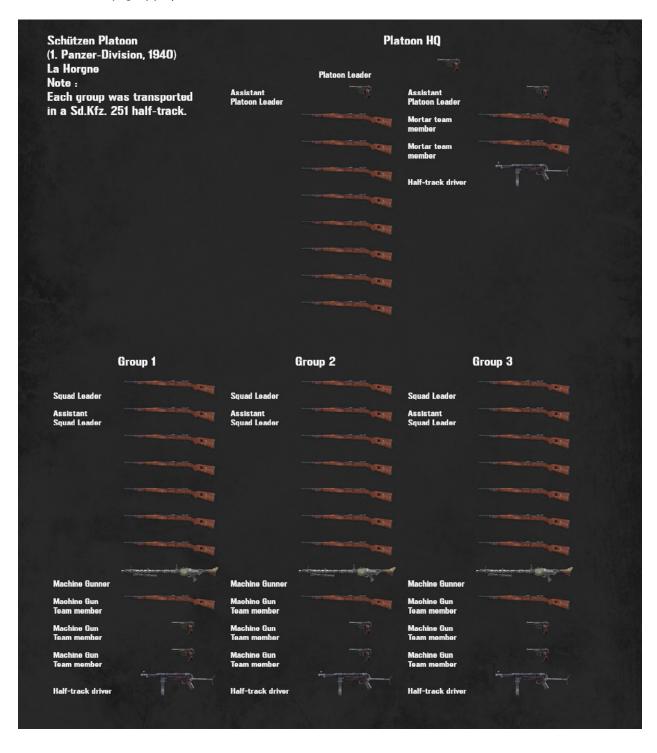Aerial photo from January 1940, available on Remonter le Temps by IGN (remonterletemps.ign.fr)

Note that the North is located on the left of the picture !

All flags are placed at the different French strongpoints. They were organised into two main lines (LP and LS on the map, for *Ligne principale* and *Ligne de soutien*, « Main line » and « Support line »), the second one used to cover the first one. A third line was established in rear (at the French mainbase in game ; LA on the map for *Ligne d'arrêt*, « Stop line ») from where counter-attacks could be launched to restore the cohesion of the other lines if they were overwhelmed. This is also where the horses were kept during the fight.

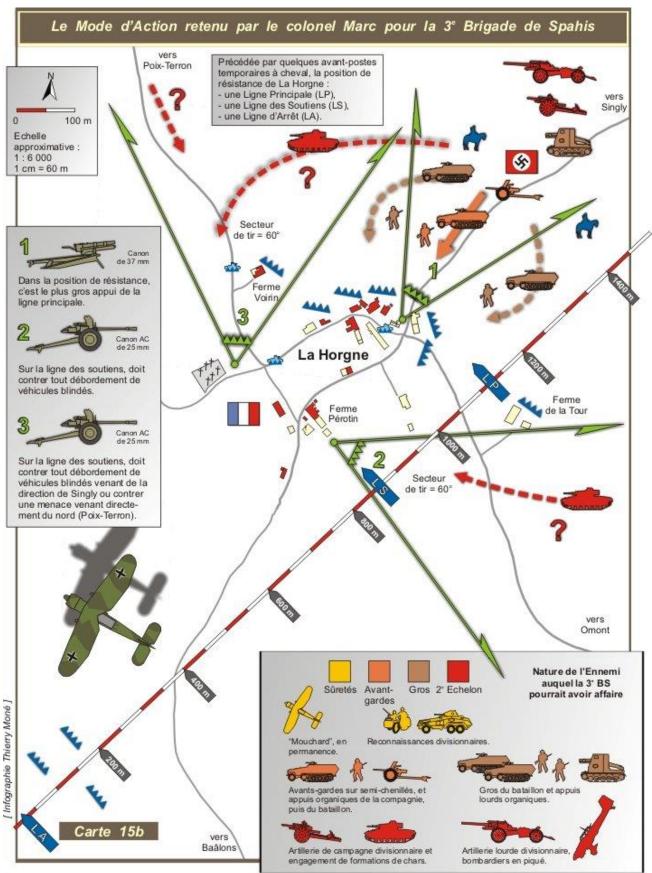This meager defensive plan found an enemy who did not expect to meet strong resistance at La Horgne.

On the morning, the first elements of the 1. PzD founded themselves surprised by the sudden fire of the Spahis as they prepared to clear the barricade before the town. They were a *Schützen Kompanie* of the *Gefechtsgruppe Krüger*, a mechanised infantry unit equipped with new Sd.Kfz. 251 half-tracks, of which the 1. PzD was one of the few units to be equipped in May 1940.

The *Schützen* would become later the *Panzer-Grenadier* while the *Gefechtsgruppe* was an ad hoc mix of motorised infantry and tank units called after the name of it's commander (this kind of organisation would later be named *Kampfgruppe*).

The doctrine of use of this new material wasn't clear yet and, at La Horgne, instead of using them simultaneously, the *Schützen* attacked alone at first and, only then, the Panzers would come in support. At this moment, after six hours of a fierce fight, the Germans finally managed to bypass the French positions and encircle the Spahis in La Horgne.

In game, for balance reasons, we prefered giving to the Germans their Panzers already at the start. You can also note the presence of a Storch recon plane: there was one flying over the battlefield during all the battle in real life.



*« Action plan selected by Colonel Marc »*, in Thierry Moné, op. cit., p. 216.

At the end of the day, the French decided to organise a counter-attack from their rear line to uncircle the remaining Spahis stucked inside the town. Three Hotchkiss tanks had come from another unit to support this action but they considered it became pointless considering the amount of Panzers thrown into the battle. Without any tanks, air or even artillery support, the Spahis still decided to launch their counter-attack and, at the cost of heavy losses, managed to reach the village and then to fall back back in the woods along with some of the soldiers who were in La Horgne. In game, we decided to represent the possible intervention of the three Hotchkiss tanks which spawn at the French mainbase if they are bleeding.



German assets at the beginning of the battle, note the Storch in the background



Two Hotchkiss H39 will reinforce the French team at their mainbase if the Spahis lose too many flags

As you may see, we have taken a lot of informations from the thesis of Thierry Moné. It also depicts the various actions of the 3rd Spahi Brigade before and after the battle of La Horgne, gives informations about the 1. Panzer Division and depicts the various destinies of the spahis in detail. Mr Moné has searched into German and French archives, has managed to gather a lot of photographies from the battle notably, has met some of the veterans or their families and, when it was not possible to illustrate his intentions, has realised various paintings and graphics. We can not thank him enough for his work.

Last but not least, we want to propose you some comparison pictures between some ingame screenshots and real life pictures or postcards in the next pages.
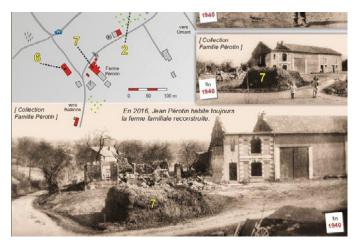
Townhall, church and the lime tree at the beginning of the XXe century and the same location ingame



View from the townhall place during the summer 1940 and the place ingame
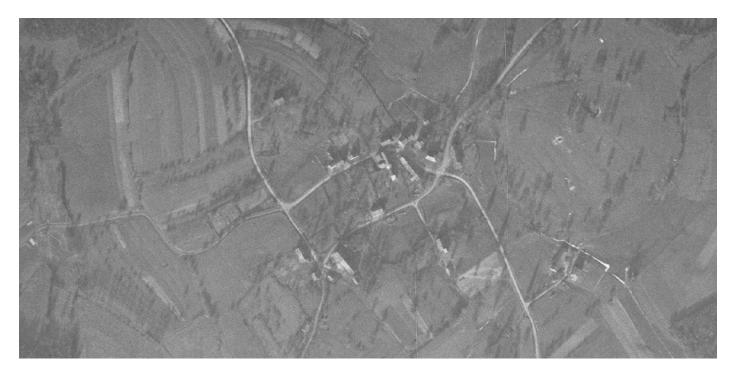


Perotin Farm few months after the battle and the Perotin Farm area ingame



Comparison between La Horgne war memorial in 1926 and the one ingame

Aerial photography of La Horgne from January 1940 and ingame minimap

We tried to reproduce the settings as much as possible, while keeping the gameplay enjoyable and challlenging for both sides. We also invite you to read our other devblogs !

We hope you enjoy this dev blog! 'Till next time!

## References

Thierry Moné, *15 mai 1940, le mercredi de La Horgne : de la mémoire à l'histoire. La campagne de mai-juin 1940 de la 3ᵉ Brigade de Spahis*, Université Paris 4 Paris-Sorbonne, 2016.
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