

Archives départementales de Seine-et-Marne

ARCHIVES

THE ARMY OF 1914 IN SEINE-ET-MARNE

The mobilization that started on 2 August 1914 triggered the application of the mobilization plan. Seine-et-Marne, like all other French departments, would then see its various regiments depart.

Organization of the French army in 1914

In 1914, the mobilization established an army of 3,780,000 men of which 2,690,000 would fight under the orders of Joffre, distributed into 71 infantry divisions, 12 territorial Infantry divisions and 10 cavalry divisions.

The command of the French Army was structured in several groups :

- **General HQ** : which provided the command of the entire French battle corps between 1914 and 1919. It was organized into four offices: one to manage staffing, equipment and mobilization; a second to manage intelligence and the secret services; the third managed operational orders and instructions; and the fourth was in charge of stages and transportation.
- **The army groups** : these were the command and decision-making bodies and did not engage in combat. Several were established during the war: the Army Group of the North, the Army Group of the Centre, the Army Group of the East, the reserve armies group, the group of armies of Flanders, the "British Expeditionary Forces" (under British command).
- **The armies** : they were responsible for directing operations on the battlefield. When the German attack occurred in August 1914, the General Headquarters triggered Plan XVII and five armies were deployed. Nine others would follow during the conflict.
- **The army corps** : these were the execution and tactics corps including the general staff, service departments, an artillery regiment, two infantry divisions, two infantry regiments with two battalions (army reserve corps), a cavalry regiment with six squadrons, a 75 mm artillery regiment with 4 groups of 3 batteries (48 weapons), four companies of engineers, a detachment of sapper/telegraph operators and section of projectors. Each corps consisted of 45 000 men.
- **The divisions** : the active division included 16 000 men. It consisted of two brigades of two regiments with three battalions, a reserve regiment of two battalions, an artillery regiment if nine batteries (36 x 75 mm guns), a cavalry squadron and a company of engineers. The reserve division had two infantry brigades with three regiments of two battalions, two cavalry squadrons and three artillery groups of three batteries.
- **The brigades** : each brigade consisted of two or three regiments grouped under the command of a general.
- **The regiments** : the active regiment consisted of 3,400 men, a general staff, a non-combatant company, three battalions of four companies and a section of two machine guns. The reserve infantry regiment consisted of two battalions of four companies and a section of two machine guns. The territorial regiment consisted of three battalions of identical formation to the active battalions.
- **The battalions** : a battalion consisted of four companies (i.e. about 1,000 men) under the command of a commander or captain.
- **The companies** : a company consisted of four sections (about 250 men) under the command of a lieutenant.
- **The sections** : a section consisted of four squadrons (i.e. about 60 men) under the command of a lieutenant.
- **The squadrons** : a squadron consisted of about 15 men.

The Seine-et-Marne garrisons and their specifics

The Infantry regiments

» army of 1914

46th infantry regiment, Paris, Fontainebleau



- From 1886, the regimental depot was located in the Damesme barracks, Rue Saint-Merry, Fontainebleau and hosted one of its battalions. The soldiers underwent long weeks of training there and reservists went there regularly to carry out "periods". These men had finished their active military service long before but were required to undergo instruction in order to take their place in the 246th Infantry Regiment, the reserve regiment of the 46th.
- In early August 1914, the 46th infantry regiment left Fontainebleau for the front. After a mass held at 5:00 am, the regiment was reviewed by Colonel Maletterre who reminded his soldiers of the objectives of the war: " You will take back Alsace and Lorraine at bayonet point. I can see victory in your eyes, as you can read it in mine".

31st infantry regiment, Paris, Melun



- From 1900 until the Great War, the regiment remained in Paris (2nd and 3rd battalions) and Melun (1st battalion), where it was first stationed at the Breton barracks, and then, from 1905, at the current Augereau barracks where it occupied just two areas of the main building, while the Breton barracks became the clothing store.
- It was on 7 and 8 August 1914 that the regiment left its garrisons under the command of Colonel Coudein. In field uniform, the regiment passed through Melun to the cheers of the crowds. It was engaged in the Longwy region from 21 August 1914 and was involved in its first battle on 22 August.

76th infantry regiment, Paris, Coulommiers



- A battalion of the 76th infantry regiment was at Coulommiers from 1911 to 1914, but the bulk of the regiment was in Paris, in the Clignancourt barracks.

32nd field artillery regiment, Fontainebleau



- This regiment was mobilized in Fontainebleau and set off on 12 August 1914 in Thomery. They alighted from the train at Anor-Hirson on 13 August and joined up with their division, the 38th, to which they had been assigned for the whole campaign.

5th squadron of the train des équipages, Fontainebleau



- This regiment was deployed in Avon in the Lariboisière barracks. The Train was the resource that was used to organize and coordinate logistics, transport (materials, ammunition, supplies) and support for the movement (including road traffic) of the Army.

The territorial infantry regiments

» army of 1914

34th territorial infantry regiments, Fontainebleau



- Mobilized at Fontainebleau from 2 August 1914, the 34th territorial infantry regiment embarked on 11 August for Langres, where they were responsible for the defence of the Northeast.

35th territorial infantry regiments, Melun



- This regiment was mobilized at Melun from 2 August 1914. It was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Pelliât and had three battalions consisting mainly of soldiers from Paris and Seine-et-Marne. Before embarking on 10 August to the Langres army base, the regiment was inspected on 8 August, place Saint-Jean in Melun.

36th territorial infantry regiments, Coulommiers



The cavalry regiments

» army of 1914

8th hussars, Meaux



- On 31 July 1914 at 18:30, the regiment received the order to get ready. It embarked the next night and set off to Auvillers-les-Gorges (Ardennes). Under the command of Colonel Delaine, it was composed of men from the recruitment of the Centre and the Paris region to which some Bretons had been added.

29th dragoons, Provins



- On Friday 31 July 1914 at 19:00, the 29th dragoons received the order to mobilize their squadrons and make ready to depart. The next morning, at 08:00, the general staff and the 1st squadron left their billet in Provins and went to the train station where the units were to embark. The local population lined the streets along which the regiment passed. On 2 August, in the morning, the 29th dragoons had arrived in the area of Mezieres.

7th dragoons, Fontainebleau



- Forming a brigade with the 13th dragoons of Melun, the 7th dragoons occupied a billet in Boufflers (named after the Duke of Boufflers, a Marshal who died at Fontainebleau in 1711) or the general HQ of the cavalry, on rue Saint-Honoré, a former hotel of the Garde du Corps, converted into barracks during the Revolution.

13th dragoons, Melun



The reserve infantry regiments

» army of 1914

231st infantry regiment, Melun



246th infantry regiment, Fontainebleau

- This regiment was formed on 4 August, 1914 and consisted of soldiers from Paris and Seine-et-Marnais who, barely a month after mobilization, went to defend their land, villages and towns. Half of them fell during the Battle of the Marne.

276th infantry regiment, Coulommiers

- This reserve regiment of the 76th infantry regiment was established in Coulommiers from 4 August, 1914, taking men from the officer and NCO cadres of the 76th infantry regiment to form the active core of the regiment and reservists of all ranks. On 10 August, 1914, at 05:00 the regiment left its billet to travel to the station. One of the most famous soldiers of the regiment was reserve lieutenant Charles Peguy.

Documentary resources

The shelf numbers enable the documents to be consulted in the reading room of the departmental archives.

- Copie et extraits du Journal de marche du 276ème régiment d'infanterie. Shelf mark : J437
- Campagne de 1914-1918 : historique du 35ème régiment d'infanterie territoriale. Shelf mark : AZ1114H(.).
- Moulin, Notice historique sur le 7ème régiment de dragons, 1913-1914, 14 p. Shelf mark : MDZ806
- Yves Barjaud, "Un régiment seine-et-marnais : le 31e R.I.", In Bulletin AH(.)C., n°5, juillet 1974. Shelf mark : MDZ1300
- René-Charles Plancke, "Le 29e régiment de dragons", In Notre Département : la Seine-et-Marne, n°3, octobre-novembre 1988, p. 23. Shelf mark : REV1705/1
- René-Charles Plancke, "Insigne : le 31e régiment d'infanterie", In Notre Département : la Seine-et-Marne, n°14, août-septembre 1990, pages 40 à 44. Shelf mark : REV1705/3
- René-Charles Plancke, "Garnisons de Seine-et-Marne : le 76e R.I. et le 276e R.I.", In Notre Département : la Seine-et-Marne, n°12, avril-mai 1990, pages 22 à 25. Shelf mark : REV1705/3
- René-Charles Plancke, "Les garnisons de Seine-et-Marne", In Notre Département : la Seine-et-Marne, n°22, décembre 1991 - janvier 1992, pages 26 à 28. Shelf mark : REV1705/5