

## **The right wing: the action at Gilly.**

The French advance to Gilly.

Pajol (except for the 1<sup>st</sup> regiment of hussars) and the division of Domon left Charleroi for Gilly. The distance between the bifurcation to the north of Charleroi and Gilly is three and a half kilometres. The entrance of Gilly was formed by a continuous row of houses on both sides of the street; this defile, being risky to pass, was entered by the French cavalry and as soon as Pajol saw the opportunity of forming his troops in columns of regiments he did so. Accordingly, he sent general Ameil with his 5<sup>th</sup> hussars forward to reconnoitre the position. However, as soon as these hussars reached the other end of the village, they were met by Prussian musket- and artillery-fire. At the same time, a company of sappers of the Imperial guard advanced in order to entrench the houses. Infantry of the Young Guard entered Gilly soon after. <sup>1</sup>

At that time, Grouchy arrived at Marcinelle with the corps of Exelmans. It was here that he learned about the situation of Pajol. He left the dragoons, rode through the town and passed along the troops of the Imperial guard to reach Pajol's cavalry. At that time (it was around 12.45 p.m.), Napoleon was at the château Puissant and for this reason they didn't meet.

In the meantime, Pajol had been able to occupy Gilly and soon after Grouchy observed the position the Prussians of Pirch II had taken up at the other side of the village. Grouchy estimated the Prussians to be around 20.000 men strong. <sup>2</sup> Now, he sent his aide de camp Pont-Bellanger to Charleroi to ask for further orders what to do. Pont-Bellanger found Napoleon at Belle Vue. <sup>3</sup> As a result, Napoleon decided to join Grouchy near Gilly. By then it may have been around 4 p.m. <sup>4</sup>

The distance between Belle Vue and Gilly is around three and a half kilometres. Though the road was crowded with troops it can be assumed that Napoleon arrived on the fields near Gilly at around 4.30 or 4.45 p.m. According to the local tradition, Napoleon took up a position in the windmill Corail (or Vivier, or à Corvées), on a high ground, nearly 500 metres south of the church of Gilly. <sup>5</sup> The mill was not far away from a house which was owned by a man called Lambert. He was the owner of a local charcoal mine, with whom Napoleon apparently spoke too. <sup>6</sup>

Napoleon observed the Prussian position and would have judged the enemy to be about 10.000 men strong. <sup>7</sup> A plan of attack was drawn up immediately after. Pajol and one division of the corps of Vandamme would attack the Prussian front. Meanwhile, Exelmans would turn them in their flank via the watermill of Delhatte (south west of Chatelineau) by wading through the brook so as to prevent them from reaching the wood. <sup>8</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> corps under Vandamme, however, had not arrived and now Napoleon left Grouchy in order to speed it up. <sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the emperor returned to château Puissant where his headquarters were installed. It was here that he received some notables and had a small meal. <sup>10</sup>

As Grouchy had to wait for infantry before he was able to do anything at all, Napoleon returned to Gilly the moment infantry had begun to arrive, which took place shortly before 6 p.m. <sup>11</sup>

## The action at Gilly.

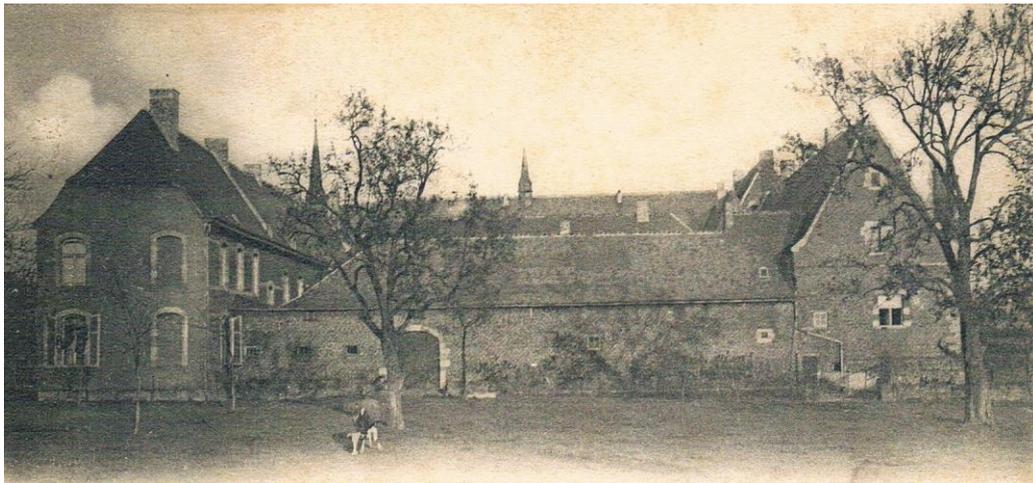
The field.

The maps of Ferraris (1777) and Capitaine (1796) are the most useful maps for describing the field where the action took place. However, they differ on two major points. Ferraris shows a wood between Gilly and Châtelineau, while this is not on the map of Capitaine. In addition, Capitaine shows a cobbled road which runs from Gilly to Fleurus. This road is missing on the Ferraris map.

For these reason it is possible that the wood has been cut down between 1777 and 1796. It also explains the course of the attack of the attack of the French infantry (see below). The cobbled road may well have been established at that time.<sup>12</sup>

The Prussian position was on a plateau which runs from Chatelineau towards the abbey of Soleilmont (<sup>13</sup>), with a deep, narrow cut towards the hamlet of Pironchamp (=Pierreronchamp on the Ferraris map). At the foot and parallel to this plateau ran a small stream which found its way towards the abbey, where it split in two in a northern and eastern direction.

Between Saint Francois (a hamlet about one and a half kilometres northeast of Châtelineau) and the abbey was the large Bois de Trichehève. From east to west this wood was cut by small roads leading from Gilly to Fleurus and Lambusart. At the junction of the roads from Fleurus and Lambusart was a house called " *Sart Culpart* ". About 750 metres further, at the right hand side of the road which runs to Lambusart was the oak called "*Chêne de Vescourt*".<sup>14</sup> About halfway between Gilly and Châtelineau was the farm called "Trieu Kezin".<sup>15</sup> The area here was filled with coal-mines. North of Gilly was the large wood of Ransart.



The abbey of Soleilmont.

The Prussian position.

Pirch II had his troops, around 6500 men, over a front which covered around 3000 metres, between the abbey and Chatelineau. He had taken up his position at 3 p.m.<sup>16</sup> It was in the

position of Gilly that he wrote to Zieten at 5 p.m.:

*Ich habe zum General Von Steinmetz geschickt und ihn gebeten, Ransart zu besetzen, weil meine rechte Flanke sonst sehr offen ist, er liest mir sagen, er könne es nicht, indem es zu weit links vorwärts von ihm läge. Ich habe schon ein Bataillon in die Abbaye Soleilmont gelegt, und lasse den Wald und das Thal zwischen dieser Abtei und Ransart patrouilliren, was der Feind so eben auch thut. Die Kanonade ist bei Jumet und nimmt jede Minute zu. Ich bitte um Befehl wann ehe ich die Position verlassen soll, falls der Feind auf Ransart geht ? Meine Verbindung mit der 3. Brigade ist hergestellt.*

*Im Bivouacq bei Gilly, 5 Uhr Abends*

*Es ist unter den französischen Truppen viel Freudengeschrei, was man hier sehr deutlich hören kann.*

*Von Pirch II* <sup>17</sup>

Pirch II had placed the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment as follows. Its 1<sup>st</sup> battalion stood on the road to Lambusart in the Bois de Trichehève, in reserve. <sup>18</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion was placed under cover north of the road to Fleurus, near the abbey. Thirty men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment West-Prussian dragoons had joined it. These troops had orders to defend the abatis on the road. It also had to keep open the communication with the 1st brigade towards Gosselies; for this reason the battalion had a picquet of one officer and 30 men in the plain. <sup>19</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion had its position on the extreme left flank, towards Châtelineau and Châtelet, with a picquet in Châtelineau itself. <sup>20</sup>

Of the 6<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment (West-Prussian nr.1), the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion were both in the wood, on the road to Lambusart, in reserve about 200 paces in rear of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment. <sup>21</sup> The fusilier battalion was on the left, in a small wood which covered the most outward slope of the ridge. The volunteers of this battalion stood behind the hedges and between the guns. The battalion had its position to the right of the fusilier battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment. <sup>22</sup> In front of the position here was an officer with thirty cavalry-men to observe the French positions. <sup>23</sup>

Of the 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment Westphalian Landwehr, the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion wasn't present at Gilly (see below). The 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion covered the artillery on both sides of the road which runs to Fleurus. <sup>24</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion had been almost entirely destroyed (see below).

Its is not clear whether Pirch had the four squadrons of the 1<sup>st</sup> regiment Westphalian Landwehr cavalry at Gilly. <sup>25</sup> What he did have were the remains of the two squadrons of the 1st regiment Prussian Dragoons nr.2 under the command of lieutenant colonel Woisky. These dragoons were on the extreme left flank of the position and were from their position of the declivity of the ridge in observation of the valley of the Sambre. They had communication with the post at Farciennes of major Von Stuckrad of the brigade of Von Jagow. <sup>26</sup>

Of Pirch's battery, foot battery nr.3, four guns under lieutenant Von Neander were to the right of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.1) as to cover the low ground in front. Another two guns were between these guns and the road which runs from Gilly to Fleurus and two guns were to the right, i.e. to the north of this road. All guns were covered by a

mass of skirmishers.<sup>27</sup> The road was blocked by trees.<sup>28</sup> Neither Gilly, nor Ransart were occupied.<sup>29</sup>

The French position.

The first French troops to reach the Prussian position were the horsemen of Pajol and Domon. They remained at the exit of Gilly in observation, until the dragoons of Exelmans arrived as well. At that time, the imperial guard had its position between Gilly and Charleroi.<sup>30</sup>

Exelmans' dragoons took up their positions on the right flank, opposite Chatelineau, south east of the farm of Trieu Kezin.<sup>31</sup> Pajol and Domon had their positions between Gilly and this farm. The French horsemen had order to wait for the infantry of the 3rd corps of Vandamme to arrive; as soon as its advance guard did, some units got to the front.

The attack was prepared near the windmill (see above) which was located near the farm of Trieu Kezin, in the corner of the roads Charleroi - Gilly - Fleurus and the one Brussels - Châtelet. The farm of Trieu Kezin was about one kilometre away of this mill; the church of Gilly around 500 metres.<sup>32</sup>

The action.

Near the farm of Trieu Kezin most probably two infantry columns were formed.<sup>33</sup> The attack was supported on the extreme French right by the dragoons of Exelmans.<sup>34</sup> The French artillery, two batteries of the third corps, opened fire from their position south of Gilly.<sup>35</sup> It was 6 p.m.<sup>36</sup> Just before that time, at 5.45 Pirch II wrote a short report to Zieten. It reads:

*Der Feind hat eine Batterie von 6 Piecen in den letzten Häusern von Gylly [sic] etabliert und zeigt Infanterie, ich halte das Gefecht noch, werde aber wenn Ich gedrängt werde, nach Lambusart gehen.*

*15 Juni, ¾ 6 Uhr, Nachmittags bei Gilly  
Pirch II<sup>37</sup>*

Just 15 minutes later, at 6 p.m., Von Röder wrote from his position to Zieten:

*Hier auf der grossen Strasse nach Gilly vorgeschickte Patrouille meldet, dass der Feind sich stark mit Kavallerie gegen die auf Lambusart führende Strasse wende.*

*Von Röder<sup>38</sup>*

The moment the French infantry columns were approaching the Prussian units – the Prussian and French skirmishers were just in contact – , Zieten ordered Pirch II to retreat through Lambusart to Fleurus.<sup>39</sup>

Accordingly, the artillery retreated and the battalions in the first line got the instruction to go back to the wood in columns whereas both the fuselier battalions of the regiment nr.28 and of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.1), plus the dragoons of Von Woisky had to

relieve their position.<sup>40</sup>

Napoleon, seeing how the Prussians got away, immediately launched his four duty squadrons under the command of one his aide de camps, general Letort. It seems that Letort didn't take the time to assemble all the squadrons available and left with a part of them only.<sup>41</sup> The squadrons left from Napoleon's position which was still probably near the windmill, south of the road which leads from Charleroi to Fleurus. From here, Letort probably led his men down the low ground slightly to his left towards the junction of roads leading to Fleurus and Lambusart, called Sart Allet. In this way, they attempted to charge the Prussian battalions, which were moving towards the road which leads to Lambusart.<sup>42</sup>

The two Prussian battalions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment Westphalian Landwehr and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment, however, were able to reach the Bois de Trichehève in time and to post a line of skirmishers in its edge.<sup>43</sup> The two other battalions, 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.1) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment, went back but were not able to reach the wood behind Pierreronchamp in time. Initially, both were around 1200 metres away from this wood.

Meanwhile, the brigade of Vincent of Exelmans corps of dragoons in particular, had been able to penetrate from the south as far as towards the two battalions as well.<sup>44</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment formed square, but wasn't able to pull in its skirmishers. The battalion successfully repelled two French charges and continued to withdraw to the wood but just before it reached it near Pierreronchamp, the enemy cavalry charged again. The 10<sup>th</sup> company faced front while the remainder of the battalion tried to continue its retreat to the wood. Though the company held out for some time by firing by sections at a short distance, the battalion was destroyed. Most of the Prussians were sabred or made prisoner; only a minority escaped.<sup>45</sup> The battalion would have lost about two thirds of its total strength.<sup>46</sup>

During the charge of Letort, dragoons of Exelmans would have run over the dragoons of lieutenant colonel Woisky.<sup>47</sup> Also the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.1) under major Von Henne was charged at 500 paces distance of the wood. Though the battalion had seen the destruction of the fusilier battalion of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment, the battalion had pulled in its skirmishers (led by captain Von Wohlgenuth), formed a square and succeeded in pushing back the French cavalry three times, letting them advance within 30 paces and then firing its rounds of musketry fire. Only once a few imperial lancers succeeded in penetrating the square but they were killed right away by bayonet thrusts. Meanwhile, the battalion gained the wood with few losses.<sup>48</sup> The moment the battalion reached the wood it placed two platoons of skirmishers led by lieutenants Von Gerdtel and Von Diecelski along the edge of it in order to keep off the French cavalry.<sup>49</sup>

A pursuit by the French cavalry, in which the brigade of Chastel had joined in by this time, followed. At that moment, one Prussian company succeeded in reaching the wood and inflicted heavy losses to the cavalry by its fire. During this action Letort was mortally wounded by a musket ball which hit him in the abdomen.<sup>50</sup> The skirmishers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.1), posted in the wood, now came under heavy French infantry fire. They held out for a long time, despite heavy losses.

They even caused numerous dragoons to dismount and to reply their fire.<sup>51</sup> However, gradually they became scattered in the wood and most of them didn't hear the signals for the retreat, so that by the time they were pushed back by the French infantry they were taken prisoner by

French cavalry which had turned the wood. <sup>52</sup>

The infantry was of the 3<sup>rd</sup> corps which by now had approached the wood in rear of the former Prussian position and now it took a course along the road which led from Gilly to Fleurus. Exelmans' dragoons were there to support Vandamme, as well as Pajol, who by now had moved to the front in pursuit of the enemy. In this, they also took several hundred prisoners. <sup>53</sup> What has become of the Prussian foot battery nr.3 is not clear, but in all probability it went back in time. <sup>54</sup>

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1 .Colonel Biot, H.F. - Campagnes et garnisons. Souvenirs etc. p. 237-238  
Grouchy mentions the presence of two battalions of the Young Guard. In: Relation succincte p.12

<sup>2</sup> Grouchy. In: Relation de la campagne de 1815 n.d. p.10

3 .Le Sénécal. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.126 Le Sénécal states Grouchy informed Napoleon, but doesn't mention the name of the messenger.

Bella, aide de camp of Grouchy. In: Relation succincte etc. 4<sup>e</sup> série p.30

Grouchy himself claims he rode over to Napoleon himself. In: Mémoires du maréchal Grouchy. Vol. V p.166

4 .Hamilton-Williams gives 3.45 p.m. In: Waterloo, new perspectives. p.162

G.de Grouchy claims it was after 4 p.m. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.III p.459

F.Beaucour (in a note in the account of Jardin, member of the imperial stables) also claims it was at 4 p.m. In: Beaucour, F. - La campagne de Waterloo vue etc. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, (1992) nr.14 p.30

5. This mill, constructed in 1796, has been demolished in 1890 (though traces were still there in 1898).

It is of the same type as the ones of Mont Saint Jean and Bussy.

For this reason the mill can be found on the those of Capitaine (1796) and Van der Maelen (1850), but not on the one of Ferraris. The street which leads to the spot where the mill has stood is still called the "rue de l'observatoire".

The mill was demolished to make room for the coal-mines of Viviers Réunis, now Trieu Kaisin. In: Haulot, L. - Napoleon à Charleroi. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, nr.5 (1952) p.20-26

Cf. Prunieu, P.J. - Notice sur la ville de Charleroi p.20 According to Prunieu the mill lost two wings during the fight.

<sup>6</sup> Libioulle, M. - Napoleon à Beaumont et à Charleroi. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, no.45 p.15-16

There is another story which tells us that immediately after his arrival, Napoleon would have ridden to the watermill of Delhatte near Chatelineau, where he crossed the brook of Soleilmont and ascended the height on the other side towards a house, which contained a tiny chapel dedicated to Sainte Anne. From here he would have observed the Prussian position for a short while. Yet, this is too near the enemies position to have taken place.

Cf. Libioulle, M. - Napoleon à Beaumont et à Charleroi. In: Bulletin of the SBEN. No.45

1964 p.17

Kaisin, J. - Annales historiques etc. p.383-384

7. Houssaye, H. - 1815. Waterloo. p.125

The fact that Napoleon observed the enemies position with Grouchy is confirmed in the document called "Défense de Grouchy etc." In: SHD, C15

<sup>8</sup> Grouchy. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.166

9. Grouchy. In: Relation de la campagne de 1815 n.d. p.10

In: Relation succincte p.11

The officer Ph.Gerbet (37<sup>th</sup> regiment line - division Lefol) says that the divisions of the corps were taking up positions on the plateau of Charleroi and halted. It was here that Napoleon passed them hurrying back to Charleroi. See: Gerbet, Ph. Souvenirs etc. p.8

<sup>10</sup> Libioulle, M. - à Beaumont et à Charleroi. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, no.45 1964 p.17

11. 5 p.m. is claimed by Ropes. 5.30 p.m. by Houssaye. In:

Ropes, J.C. - The Waterloo campaign. p.47

Houssaye, H. - 1815. Waterloo. p.125-126

Delloye mentions a time of arrival shortly after 6 p.m. In: Napoleon dans sa dernière campagne. Special edition of the Bulletin of the SBEN. 1996. p.39

<sup>12</sup> The road was constructed around the middle of the 18th century. Cf. Jacquet, Ch. - Souvenirs sur la petite ville de Fleurus p.40

13. Nowadays this abbey is a ruin. It was founded in 1085, but the actual buildings date from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

14. This tree no longer exists.

15. Map Vandermaelen. Capitaine calls it "ferme Trieu Kaisin". It's not indicated on the Ferraris map. The building has been demolished. It was located at a site called "Le Corbeau", just at the motorway E41.

16. Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. In: KA, VI.E.13 In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.II.6.p.3

Report of lieutenant colonel Von Stack (1<sup>st</sup> West-Prussian regiment of infantry nr.6). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.63 in: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.3C.p.5

Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

Pirch II had six and three quarters battalion, two squadrons of cavalry (dragoons) and 8 guns. This is excluding the remains of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment Westphalian Landwehr (6500 men is inclusive).

<sup>17</sup> KA, nr.VI.E.15.II.31 In: GSA, VPH-HA.VI., nr.II.10.p.18  
Cf. Beleuchtung etc. In: MWB, 1846 p.48-49 This version is dated 5.15 p.m.

18. Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.163  
Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5  
Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, special nr.65 p.14  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461  
Pirch II claims it was *à cheval* on the road. Cf. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.4

19. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.4  
Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. In: KA, VI.E.13 In: GSA,VPH-HA VI, nr.II.6.p.2 and nr.VII.3.p.16  
Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, nr.65 p.14  
Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.163  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461  
Cf. Beleuchtung etc. In: MWB, 1846 p.48  
However, this communication couldn't take place due to the French occupation of Ransart.

<sup>20</sup> Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, Special nr.65 p.14  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461

21. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5  
Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.163  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462 Die  
Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, special nr.65 p.14

22. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.3 and VII,3c.p.30  
Report of major Von Henne of the battalion. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.73 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI  
nr.VII.3C.p.21  
Reiche, L.von Memoiren etc. p.163  
Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments, In: ABN, Special nr.65 p.14  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461  
Cf. Conrady, E.von - Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.241

<sup>23</sup> Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.4  
Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461

24.Reiche, L.von Memoiren etc. p.163  
Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments, In: ABN, special nr.65 p.14

<sup>25</sup> According to Hofschröder, these were not present, but on their way to Fleurus. In: 1815. The

Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.181

26. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5

Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, special nr.65 p.14

Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. In: KA.VI.E.13 In: GSA,VPH-HA VI, nr.II.6.p.2 and nr.VII.3.p.16

Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

<sup>27</sup> Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.3-4 and VII.3c.p.30

Conrady, E.von Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.241-242

28. Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.163

Conrady, E.von - Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.242

Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.461

Wagner, Plane etc. p.17

29. Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.163

Some historians assert there were two battalions of Jagow's brigade between Farciennes and Lambusart. Which battalions this could have been remains unclear; at that time the 3rd battalion of the 7<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry (West-Prussian nr.2), as well as two companies Silesian skirmishers, were at Farciennes and Tamines.

30. De Mauduit says that the troops got the order to halt on the other side of Charleroi though they had carried out a forced march before and that the enemy had taken up its positions. In: Les derniers jours de la grande armée. Vol.II p.13

<sup>31</sup> Colonel De Bloqueville confirms that Exelmans' dragoons were secretly led to the right flank, across the low ground towards a covered position, so as to be able to fall upon the Prussian left flank. In: SHD, C15

Cf. Grouchy. In: Relation succincte p.11

Pirch II mentions the presence of two regiments of cavalry which charged his position as coming from Chatelet [= Chatelineau]. Cf. his report. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.3-4

32. Map Vandermaelen and Capitaine.

For the fact that the attack was launched from here, see: Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

33. Pirch II himself states there were two columns of infantry, each consisting of 4000 to 5000 men. This seems a very high estimate. Cf. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI, nr.II.6.p.5

The history of the Prussian 28<sup>th</sup> regiment also mentions the attack of two columns of infantry, followed by some bodies of cavalry. In: Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments,In: ABN, nr.65 p.14

As both these accounts mention the presence of two columns of infantry, this may have been closer to the truth as the picture as given by Von Damitz (see below).

Ph.Gerbet (37<sup>th</sup> regiment line, brigade Corsin, division Lefol) says: "nos colonnes s'ébranlent; elles gravissent les pentes des hauteurs qu'occupaient les prussiens et les en chassent." From these words it is not clear whether it was the brigade of Corsin which actually attacked. In: Souvenirs d'un officier etc. p.9

The same applies to the version of lieutenant Putigny (33<sup>rd</sup> regiment, division Berthézène). In: Le grognard Putigny baron d'Empire. p.168

There is one casualty in officers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> corps, as referred to in a "combat devant Charleroy" and this may well have been the action at Gilly. It is a *sous-lieutenant* of the 15<sup>th</sup> regiment of light infantry. This regiment was part of the brigade of Billard of Lefol's division. Cf. Martinien, A. - Tableaux etc. p.427

Thiers mentions two columns of the 3<sup>rd</sup> corps and one of the Young Guard. In: Thiers, A. - Histoire du consulat et de l'empire Vol.VI p.435

Houssaye claims there were three columns, each consisting of two battalions. In: 1815.Waterloo. p.126 The source for this statement remains unknown.

34. Pirch II claims there were four regiments of French cavalry, of which two threatened the left flank of his positions through Châtelet. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5

Von Reiche, chief of staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Prussian army corps, confirms the presence of three regiments of Exelmans cavalry on the Prussian left flank. In: Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.164

Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments also mentions the troops of Exelmans on the Prussian flank. See: ABN, nr.65 special edition p.14

Kaisin mentions the presence of French dragoons near the Chemin des Grands-Trieux and the Fosse Sainte Pauline. Cf. Kaisin, J. - Annales historiques etc. p.384

35.The number of 16 guns is mentioned by Pirch II. Cf. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5 He confirms the French fire was superior to the fire of his battery, the foot battery nr.3

Colonel Simon Lorière says the action was opened by the fire of one battery under the command of general Doguereau (notes about the 15th and 16th of June 1815). In: SHD, C15

Von Damitz asserts that the Prussian guns initially replied the French fire with success but that gradually the French guns dominated the situation. In: Geschichte des Feldzuges etc. p.90

Von Reiche confirms that the action was opened by 16 French guns. In: Memoiren etc. p.164 Cf. Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

36. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.5

Report of Pirch II of 5.45 pm. to Zieten. In: KA, VI.E.15.II.33 In: GSA,VPH-HA

VI,nr.II.6.p.7

Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.III p.460

Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, nr.65 p.14

Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.164

Wagner - Plane etc. p.17

Others claim it was 5 p.m.

Cf. the official French bulletin. In: Napoleon Bonaparte.Correspondance. Nr.22056.

Report of lieutenant colonel Von Stack (1<sup>st</sup> West-Prussian regiment of infantry nr.6). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.63 in: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3C.p.5

Report of captain Von Guionneau, for major Von Rohr (commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> West-Prussian regiment of infantry nr.6), dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 1815. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.p.70 in GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3C.p.18

Report of major Von Henne of the battalion. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.73 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3C.p.21

Von Plotho and Petit give 3 p.m. ! In: Plotho, C.von. Der Krieg des Verbundeten etc. p.30

Petit in The English historical review. Vol.XVIII.1903. p.323

Clausewitz claims its was between 5 and 6 p.m. In: Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.41

Houssaye also adds it was 5.30 p.m. In: 1815.Waterloo p.125

<sup>37</sup> Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.15.II.33 In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.7 and VII.2.p.9

<sup>38</sup> Report of Von Röder. In: KA, VI.E.15.II.35 In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,II.6.p.9

<sup>39</sup> Wagner indicates the directions of the three French infantry columns: the first one advanced towards the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> WestPrussian regiment nr.6, the second towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment Westphalian Landwehr, leaving Gilly at its left. The third column would have turned Gilly.

Yet, in this version Von Damitz gives the attack a strong orientation to the left (even beyond Gilly), which it didn't have. In: Plane etc. p.17

Cf. Damitz, Von - Geschichte etc. p.90

40. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.6

Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.164 He thinks it was 6.30 p.m.

Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, special nr.65 p.14

41. Colonel Gourgaud confirms that Letort didn't want to wait for all his squadrons to assemble and charged. Gourgaud would have been sent by Napoleon to Letort in order to speed up the charge. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 1314 AP30

Major general Berton only mentions the dragoons. In: Berton, J.B. - Précis historique etc. p.13.

<sup>42</sup> Houssaye erroneously claims that they crossed the brook north of the road of Fleurus, crossed this road again (at Sart Allet) and passed along the front of the columns of Vandamme. In: 1815. Waterloo p.126

<sup>43</sup> The dragoons led by Von Woyski would have advanced the moment the French cavalry approached, in order to gain time for the musketeers to reach the wood, but apparently there was no confrontation of cavalry. Cf. Report of Pirch II. In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.3c.p.31

44. It is Exelmans himself who basically mentions the role of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> regiment of dragoons in particular - so the brigade of Vincent - during the action at Gilly. In: SHD, C15, nr.5

Cf. Grouchy. Relation succincte 3<sup>e</sup> série p.16

Berton, from his side, only mentions the involvement of a squadron of the 15<sup>th</sup> regiment of dragoons in scattering a Prussian square. In: Précis etc. p.13

The official French bulletin confirms the participation of three squadrons of the 20<sup>th</sup> regiment of dragoons. In: Correspondance. Nr.22056.

Major general Bonnemains stresses the role of his brigade and the one of Burthe in supporting the duty squadrons; he doesn't mention the one of Vincent at all. Cf. his account in: SHD, C15.5

45. Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.165

Cf. Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, nr.65 p.15

Conrady, E.von - Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.242

The commander of the battalion doesn't explicitly say the battalion was destroyed. His version is: after the battalion had driven off the French cavalry, it returned and encircled the battalion. Meanwhile both sides would have suffered severe casualties. The battalion, meanwhile, went slowly back to the wood, until it was charged again and then broke in two parts, one on each side of the road. After the action, the battalion would have counted 7 officers, 6 subalterns and 54 men. Report of major Von Müller (fuselier battalion of the 28th regiment). In: KA, VI.E.7.I.76 in GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.nr.3C.p.25

In his report of the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, Grouchy mentions the brigade Vincent having taken in the action about 300 prisoners and these coming from this battalion. Exelmans completes this picture by explicitly mentioning Vincent's share in the action (cf. his report of the next day).

The Prussian prisoners of that day were led through Charleroi towards Beaumont from where they were escorted by two battalions of national guards to Laon and from there to Soissons. Cf. Soult's orders to maréchal de camp Dentzel, lieutenant general Radet and the commanders at Avesnes and Soissons. In: Mouvement des troupes. Enrégistrement de la correspondance, commencée le 11 Mai 1815 p.53-54 In: Collection François Gianadda, Martigny.

<sup>46</sup> Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. KA, II.M.207 In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.3.p.17-18

Report of Pirch II. In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3c.p.31

Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion (about 600 men) only major Müller, 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant Von König, captain Von Wolfersdorf and lieutenant Lentz, Schröder and Brusse escaped as well as 76 NCO's and men. Lieutenant Von Mach, Neumann, ensign Entner and 120 men had been killed. The remainder (400 men) had been wounded or taken prisoner, among whom were captain Neuhaus, von Plessen, lieutenant Gross, Von Packensti, Scherbenning, Storm and Hadt. Several officers distinguished themselves during the action, like there were: NCO Selbach, lieutenant Sturm, sergeant Wolter of the 12<sup>th</sup> compagny, J.Zerres of the 9<sup>th</sup> company, C.Bergerath of the 9<sup>th</sup> company, H.Rüttger of the 10<sup>th</sup> company, W.Zimmermann of the 12<sup>th</sup> company, fusilier Chr.Bonner de Lobsheid of the 10<sup>th</sup> company, J.F.von Mülheim a.d.Ruhr, G.Römisch van Wupperfürh, H.Kürkenhaus van Mahn and the fuselier Kaufmann of the 12<sup>th</sup> company. In: Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, nr.65 p.16

47. Report of Pirch II. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.64. In: GSA,VPH-HA VI,nr.II.6.p.6

Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.165

Hofschröer claims that thanks to this Prussian cavalry the majority of the infantry was able to reach the wood. In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.184

Cf. Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

<sup>48</sup> Briefe eines Preussischen Offiziers über den Feldzug etc. In: MWB, 1822 p.462

Report of Pirch II. In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3c.p.31

Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. KA, II.M.207 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3.p.18

Report of major Von Henne of the battalion. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.73 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3C.p.21-22 According to Henne, captain Wohlgemuth and lieutenant Babel distinguished themselves in saving the battalion.

Von Pflugk Harttung states the battalion owed its survival to its order, rest and condition. Cf. GSA, VPH\_HA VI, nr.6.p.13-14

49. Die Geschichte des 28.Regiments. In: ABN, nr.65 p.16

Diary of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. KA, II.M.207 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3.p.18-19

Report of major Von Henne of the battalion. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.73 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3C.p.22

Pflugk Harttung, J.von. In: GSA, VPH\_HA VI, nr.6.p.13-14

Conrady, E.von - Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.242-243

Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.165

Here too, Reiche refers to the battalion as a mass in not a square.

Some historians claim that this battalion has been destroyed too. Cf. Vaudoncourt, G.de. Histoire des campagnes etc. Vol. III p.129

Houssaye, H. - 1815. Waterloo. p.126

Colonel Gourgaud. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 1314 AP30

Conrady states the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the 1st West-Prussian regiment nr.6 lost captain Von Owitski (killed), lieutenant Krögelmann (wounded and taken prisoner), 9 nco's and 205

fusiliers dead, wounded and missing. Cf. Conrady, E.von Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.242

Cf. Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI, nr.II.11.p.51

50. Letort's fall took place at the edge of the Bois de Trichehève, near Sart Allet. Cf. Kaisin, J. - Annales historiques etc. p.385 He calls the wood here the Bois des Masuirs.

Vandermaelen gives on his map a point just north east of Sart Allet, to the right of the road, where he states " où périt Letor 1815 [sic] ", which is approximately the same.

Van Bastelaer erroneously situates the point at a site called Bonne Femme, about 200 metres south of Campinaire, in the wood. Cf. Bastelaer, D.A.van - Le vieux Charleroi p.14

Some accounts say it would have happened near mine nr.8 (between Sart Allet, Farcienne and Chatelineau); however that would be the mine called Pays Bas, between Montignies sur Sambre and Châtelet.

Letort was taken to the house of the notary called Clément Delbruyère at Charleroi where he died during the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. In 1815 this house was located at the Sambre, but is now at the Boulevard Tirou nr.88 There is a commemorative tablet to the wall stating: " Le général comte Letort aide de camp de l'empereur Napoleon Ier est mort dans cette maison le 16 Juin 1815. "

On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> of June Napoleon wrote in a letter to his brother Joseph that Letort was improving. In: Correspondance nr.22057.

The French surgeon D.d'Héralde (surgeon of the 12<sup>th</sup> regiment light infantry of the division Girard) informs us that Letort still lived on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. In: Delloye, S. Les mémoires du chirurgien Dominique d'Héralde In Bulletin of the SBEN (1991) nr.14 p.27

According to the regimental history of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment fusilier Kaufmann killed Letort earlier, i.e. while he tried to convince the Prussians to desert. Cf. Neff, W. - Geschichte des Infanterie-Regiments etc. p.23

Colonel Gourgaud mentions that he informed the emperor of the injury of Letort. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 1314 AP30

Count Flahaut mentions the case of Letort being wounded in a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> June [to ?]. In: The first Napoleon etc. p.114

The surgeon who took care of Letort was Blondy, a surgeon of the second class of the dragoons of the imperial guards. In: Delloye, S. - Les mémoires du chirurgien Dominique d'Héralde In Bulletin of the SBEN (1991) nr.14 p.34

After the action, Letort was succeeded by colonel Hoffmeyer.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Grouchy's report of the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> of June.

<sup>52</sup> Conrady, E.von Geschichte des Königlich etc. p.243

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Grouchy's report of the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> June.

In a later account he speaks of 700 to 800. In: Relation succincte p.12

54. Lehmann, the commander of the artillery of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps, claims the battery saw some action that day but does not specify in what way. Cf. Report of lieutenant colonel Lehmann. In: KA, VI.E.7.I.197 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII,3 E.p.21

Vaudoncourt claims the loss of five guns of the six which were posted south of the road which runs to Fleurus. Here he may refer to the claim as mentioned in the official bulletin published about the Prussians having lost 5 guns that day; however, in the context of Lehmann's report there are very strong doubts about this claim. In: Correspondance. Nr.22056

In: Histoire des campagnes de 1814 et 1815 en France. Vol.III p.129