The action at Gosselies.

Introduction. [1]

The bivouac of the 29th regiment infantry (Jagows brigade) was at Jumet, Gosselies and Heppignies. In the early morning of the 15th of June, the regiment collected at Gosselies and marched off towards Fleurus. However, on its way, it met colonel Von Rüchel with orders of the brigade-headquarters for the regiment to return to Gosselies. This was around 8 a.m. Between 10.30 and 11 a.m. the advance guard of the regiment reached Gosselies. [2] Von Rüchel occupied Gosselies itself with the 2nd battalion, facing south-west, and placed the battalion under the command of Von Lützow (see below). The four Schützen platoons of the 2nd battalion, led by captain Von Rohr, were thrown out towards Jumet with the 7th company at the south-west exit of Gosselies in support. The three remaining companies were drawn up in line south of the road to Fleurus, 200 to 300 paces east of Gosselies.
Von Rüchel placed the 1st battalion between Heppignies and Ransart, facing south east. About noon, the Schützen platoons of this battalion occupied Wangenies. The 3rd battalion was assigned a position in rear of the Bois de Lombuc, thereby covering the left flank. Both these battalions were kept by Von Rüchel under his own orders. [3]
At Gosselies, the 29th regiment would have found the 6th regiment of uhlans (more than 400 men). It was left there by general Von Röder to maintain the communication between the 1st and the 2nd brigade. [4] It had a position about 300-400 paces to the east of Gosselies, probably to the right of the three companies of the 2nd battalion of the 29th regiment. [5]

The action. [6]

Clary's hussars were able to drive back the outposts of the uhlans towards Gosselies. [7] By that time it was around 1.30 p.m. [8] In front of Gosselies, however, the hussars were surprised by the well-directed musket-fire of the 2nd battalion of the 29th regiment. [9] After a short fire fight, the Prussians fell back for some distance.
Now both parties started to observe one and another and a mutual skirmishing took place; Clary and Gourgaud decided to keep one squadron hussars on the chaussée and three squadrons were sent into the fields in battle order. The hussars, though insecure about their situation and cautious, were superior to the Prussians and gave a heavy fire with their carbines; the uhlans in their turn made short and sharp charges to fend off the hussars. [10]
By the time the French got reinforcements, around 3 p.m., the Prussians started to fall back to Gosselies. The French pursued, but didn't push through; in fact, they halted. Now, the Prussian lancers boldly advanced. The Schützen attacked in Jumet, while the uhlans did so on the road: here the French skirmishers were much stronger and their carbines were also more lethal as the pistols of the uhlans. The result was that the uhlans charged in small groups, of which one charge was particularly successful: the French were driven back deep into Jumet and back as far as a position north of a hamlet called Les Hayes. Baron Gourgaud went to the emperor to ask for support. [11]

The reason for the French caution was the fact that the French troops were far in advance of Charleroi and that the road was lined with houses, therefore visibility wass poor. Some hussars were killed and wounded, but also the Prussians suffered some losses: three officers and ten uhlans were taken prisoner.
The French recoiled for the Prussian action was caused by the fact that from the west the 1st brigade of major general Von Steinmetz was approaching (around 3 p.m.).
The Prussian advance gave the time for major De Chevallerie (accompanied by his adjutant lieutenant Von Fuchsius) to move forward with the 7th company of the 2nd battalion of the 29th regiment, led by captain Von Buttler, towards the windmill of Gosselies to receive the Schützen which now started to fall back to the east. At the same time, Schützen of the 8th company led by lieutenant Hartwig was involved in a successful rear-guard action as well further to the east.
In all these actions, captain Von Rohr, the four Schützen officers, lieutenant Hartwig, Preuss, Kühlen, Meese and Fuchsius distinguished themselves. By now, the 5th company had taken over the former position of the 7th company southwest of Gosselies. [12]
Meanwhile, the moment his brigade *had* passed the Piéton at La Motte, Von Steinmetz detached captain Von Gillhausen with his 2nd battalion 1st Westphalian Landwehr to turn Gosselies and cut off any possible French units which might come from Marchienne-au-Pont, thereby annoying the French left flank. [13] At the same time Von Steinmetz directed the fuseliers of the 12th regiment of infantry (2nd Brandenburg) ahead through Gosselies and then turn to the right to fall on the French right flank. [14]
In the centre, major Von Chevallerie was meant to be relieved by the fusiliers of the 12th regiment of infantry (2nd Brandenburg) but somehow this did not take place; however, major Von Hymmen now ordered Von Chevallerie to fall back to the Bois de Lombuc, which he accordingly did. It was there until it was relieved by the 1st brigade. [15] The uhlans were also about to turn to the east, but they were instructed by Von Steinmetz to keep their position south east of Gosselies as a rear-guard for his brigade. [16]
Initially, Von Gillhausen followed a track towards Gosselies but soon found out that Prussian troops were still there and therefore headed more to the right. In this way he ended up far more south. Now, as Von Gillhausen approached the southern part of Jumet he touched upon Reille's advance guard, consisting of the divisions of Bachelu and Piré. With his skirmishers, Von Gillhausen drove away the French skirmishers and his battalion immediately followed in column, but soon he was faced by two battalions of Bachelu's division, which were in a favourable position to cut him off. A fire fight ensued, but at the same time Von Gillhausen decided to make his way through the central street through Jumet to gain the Brussels road in order to find support there. Meanwhile, he was pursued by the enemy who fired, but in most cases too high. During this movement a group of skirmishers led by captain Von Rappardt got isolated. [17]
It was near the Brussels road just south of Gosselies that Von Gillhausen saw the 2nd battalion 29th regiment which was retreating before the advancing hussars of Clary towards the fields to the east of the road and along the mill of Gosselies towards the Bois de Lombuc (see above). Now, Von Gillhausen followed the same track, weakly pursued by Piré. In doing so, Piré took some stragglers prisoner, but didn't charge the battalion of the 29th regiment. [18]

By now, Von Steinmetz had collected the other units of his brigade to the north of Gosselies, awaiting further events, while the fusiliers of the 2nd Brandenburg infantry nr.12 had turned south to the east of the village.
As other units of Reille advanced towards Gosselies, Von Steinmetz didn't wait for a confrontation and pulled off using the fuseliers as a rear-guard. By now it was about 4 p.m. [19]
After the retreat of the units of Von Chevallerie and Von Gillhausen these fusiliers, as well as the skirmishers of the 2nd battalion of the 29th regiment, were involved in a short successful rear-guard action with some French voltigeurs. [20] Now, the infantry was received by the horse battery no.7, firing some rounds [[21]] , while the 1st Silesian hussars and 6th uhlans deployed as well to cover the retreat of the infantry. Von Steinmetz now moved his whole brigade further to the east, towards Heppignies. [22]
Gosselies was now open for a French action. By now Piré and Bachelu had arrived in full force.
They advanced towards Gosselies resting with their right flank upon the fields immediately to the east of the Brussels road. The advance was not so much an attack, as more an offensive reconnaissance. [23]
The moment the French columns had started their advance, marshal Ney arrived. He was accompanied by the light cavalry of the guard, commanded by general Lefebvre Desnouettes. By then it may have been about 4.30 p.m. [24]
Though Reille gives the impression that his whole corps took Gosselies, there were only the divisions of Bachelu and Piré available to do the job. All the other troops were further behind, in a vast column stretching from Jumet to Marchienne-au-Pont. [25] The fact that Ney took Gosselies with the divisions of Bachelu and Piré is also confirmed by Ney himself, but which units of these divisions were actually involved in the action remains unclear. [26]
The moment the 1st Prussian brigade actually approached Gosselies it was not yet taken by the French; it was occupied by the French after reinforcements had arrived after 4 p.m., and by that time the 1st brigade had already started to pull off to the east. [27]

First version: 1st June 2005- Last revised: 3rd April 2015 - Copyright © Pierre de Wit

[1.] For the positions etc. Major Von Steinmetz. Beleuchtung etc. p.43 (see below). It should be remarked that this article in the Militär Wochenblatt was not written by major general Von Steinmetz, but his son, major Von Steinmetz.
Also in: Wellmann, R. Geschichte des Infanterie-Regiments etc. p.69-70 Wellmann used the report of Von Rüchel of the former Kriegsarchiv.

[2.] Report of colonel Von Rüchel (29th regiment). In: KA. VI.E.7.I.126 in VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3D.p.12
Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.8

[3.] Report of colonel Von Rüchel (29th regiment). In: KA. VI.E.7.I.126 in VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3D.p.12
Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.9
The 1st company of the 2nd battalion would have been in the Bois de Lombuc and a few elements of the 6th regiment of uhlans covered the Schützen platoons. Cf. Delpierre, Ph. – Jumet: journées de Juin 1815 p.21

4. Zieten, in his report, mentions the whole of the reserve-cavalry which would have advanced to Gosselies to support Steinmetz.

[5.] Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.10

[6.] In 1846, the son of major general Von Steinmetz published an article in the Militär Wochenblatt, entitled “Beleuchtung einiger kritischen Bemerkungen etc.” and in it is in this article that the action of Gosselies is given the attention it deserves.

7. Colonel Gourgaud. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30
Ensign Larreguy de Civrieux (93rd regiment, division Foy, 1st corps) mentions the troops of his regiment passing along the corps of Prussian infantry sabred down by the 1st hussars. This was near Gosselies. In: Larreguy de Civrieux, S. - Souvenirs d'un cadet 1812-1823. p.164
According to Navez the fight started around 3 p.m. Cf. Navez, L. - La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.94

[8] Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, HA VI, Nr.II.2.p.12-13

[9.] Cf. Report of major Von Rüchel, commander ad interim of the 3rd brigade. In: major Von Steinmetz’ Beleuchtung etc. p.45

[10] Pflugk Harttung, J.von. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.14-15
Wagner - Plane etc. p.15

11. Report of captain Von Petersdorff (6th regiment uhlans). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.177 in GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3 E.p.56-57
Baron Gourgaud. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30
Berton mentions the capture of a Prussian colour, but this is not confirmed. In: Précis historique etc. p.13
Delpierre speaks of an action towards la Coupe, through Goysart towards La Mallavée. In: Jumet: journées de Juin 1815 p.21

12 Report of major Von Chevallerie (2nd battalion 29th regiment). In: KA, VI.E.7.I.131 in GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII, 3D.p.6-7
Cf. Wellmann, R. - Geschichte des Infanterie Regiments etc. p.70-71

13 Report of captain Von Gillhausen (2nd battalion 1st regiment of Westphalian Landwehrinfantry). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.35 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII,nr.3B p.8

14 The report of the battalion, written by major Von Götz confirms its activity at Gosselies, but doesn't enter into any detail. In: KA,VI.E.7.I.36, In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII,nr.3B p.1

15 Pflugk Harttung, J.von. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.28-30

16 Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.30

17. Diary of the 1st corps. KA, II.M.207 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3.p.21
Report of captain Von Gillhausen (2nd battalion 1st regiment of Westphalian Landwehrinfantry). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.35 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII,nr.3B p.8-9
The skirmishers rejoined the battalion the next day at Saint Amand. Cf. report of captain Von Gillhausen in: Beleuchtung etc.p.44

18. Report of captain Von Gillhausen, in: Beleuchtung etc. p.44 And in: KA, VI.E.7.II.35 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII,nr.3B p.8
Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.33-37
Cf. Harkort, F. - Die Zeiten des ersten Westphalischen Landwehrregiments p.41 According to Harkort, the battalion would have done a bayonet charge at the Brussels road in order to reach the other (east) side of it. In: Die Zeiten des ersten etc. p.41
Somehow, the 1st regiment of *chasseurs à cheval* of the French division of Piré was pushed back by a Prussian unit in the vicinity of Jumet, but there is no clear idea which Prussian unit this may have been. On this occasion the regiment lost 20 to 25 men. Cf. report of Reille, dated 9 p.m. 15th of June. In: SHD, C15, nr.22

19 Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.44-46

20. Cf. report of major Von Götz (3rd battalion 2nd regiment Brandenburg infantry). In: Beleuchtung etc. p.183

Mueller, H.von - Geschichte des Grenadier-Regiments etc. p.160

[21] The battery would have fired with four guns 49 pieces of round-shot and 10 grenades. Cf. KA, VI.K.53 Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.46

[22.] Cf. Reports of major general Von Steinmetz, major Von Rüchel (commander ad interim of the 3rd brigade) and major Von Steinmetz. In: Beleuchtung etc. p.45, 50
Pflugk Harttung, J.von. In: GSA, VHP-HA VI,nr.II.2.p.38,44 and KA, VI.E.7.I.26 and II.19 In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA VI,nr.III, p.8
The fact that the 6th regiment of uhlans did some feint charges is confirmed by captain Von Petersdorff (6th regiment uhlans). In: KA, VI.E.7.II.177 in GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3 E.p.56-57

[23] That is also as Reille describes it: he just says his troops marched to Gosselies, without mentioning anything like an attack whatsoever, which is another indication that the village wasn't in Prussian hands anymore or would have to be retaken. In: Notice historique In: Documents inédits p.56

[24] Others give 4 p.m. Cf. Ollech, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.102
Delpierre puts his arrival between 4.30 and 5 p.m. In: Jumet: journées de Juin 1815 p.50

25 Reille. In: Notice historique etc. In: Documents inédits, p.56
Strangely enough, Reille doesn't mention the fighting in and around Gosselies at all in his report of the 15th of June, 9 p.m. In: SHD, C15, nr.22
According to baron Gourgaud the division of Girard would have taken Gosselies, having a division on each of its flanks and one in reserve. Piré would have had a position to the right, towards Fleurus. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30
Captain Robinaux (2nd regiment line infantry, division Jérôme) mentions the fighting around Gosselies, but doesn't give the impression that his division participated there at all. According to Robinaux the fighting would have taken about two hours, till 6 p.m. In: Journal de route du capitaine Robinaux. p.206

[26.] See his report of the 15th of June, 11 p.m. In: SHD, C15 nr.5

[27] Cf. Diary of the 1st corps. KA, II.M.207 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3.p.22

According to the report of the 1st corps, the 1st brigade would have reached Gosselies by the time the French had already taken it, and that Von Steinmetz retook it by storm.
The report of the 1st army-corps. KA, VI.E.7.I.3 In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3A.p.2

According to Von Zieten the fuselier battalion of the 1st regiment Westphalian Landwehr infantry lost many men while forming the rear-guard, but this was the battalion of the 2nd

Brandenburg regiment of infantry nr.12. Cf. Report of Von Zieten, 8th July 1815 in: Reiche, Von Memoiren etc. p.416
The report of the 1st army-corps. KA, VI.E.7.I.3 In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.3A.p.2

Major Von Diericke, adjutant of Von Steinmetz, claims the brigade reached the fields east of Gosselies and that the village, now taken by the French, was retaken by Von Steinmetz. Cf. his report. In: Beleuchtung etc. p.45

However, Von Steinmetz himself doesn't mention any fight for the retaking of Gosselies at all.
Report of major general Von Steinmetz. In: KA, VI.7.I.26 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI, nr.VII, nr.3B p.5
Also in: Beleuchtung etc. p.50

This version is essentially adopted by Von Damitz, and, later, by Von Ollech and Von Lettow Vorbeck.
Cf. Damitz, Von - Geschichte etc. p.85-86
Ollech, Von - Geschichte etc. p.101
Lettow Vorbeck, O.von - Napoleon's Untergang Vol.III p.261-262

On the other hand, Von Steinmetz' account is a bit confusing about the role of the 2nd battalion of the 1st Westphalian Landwehr. As he writes it, he gives the impression that this battalion had its share in the action <u>after</u> the passage of the brigade through and north of Gosselies, while this must in all probability was during this passage. He writes: "Das Defilee von Gosselies umgangen, nahm die 1.Brigade das Gefecht an, welches besonders vortheilhaft dadurch sich wendete, dass das am Piéton postierte 3. [sic] Bataillon des 1sten Westpreussischen [sic] Landwehr Infanterie Regiments, unter Befehl des Kapitain v.Gillhausen, dem naheweis vorgedrungenen Feind auf Befehl in die linke Flanke nahm."
Report of major general Von Steinmetz. In: KA, VI.7.I.26 In: GSA,VPH-HA,VI, nr.VII, nr.3B.p.5

The way he describes it, it was simply impossible for the battalion to reach the <u>left</u> flank of the enemy's column after having passed Gosselies. He himself recognizes the fact by stating that it came from the Piéton.