

The centre and right columns of Wellington's army were composed of the following cavalry units: the brigades of Somerset and Ponsonby, those of Von Dörnberg and Grant, the 13th regiment of light dragoons (brigade of Von Arentschildt), one squadron of the 11th regiment of light dragoons (brigade Vandeleur), as well as the horse artillery of Mercer and Whinyates. The extreme rear-guard was formed by the 23rd regiment of light dragoons and the 7th hussars, both covered by the Household brigade. ¹ The Household Brigade had its bivouac that night in the hollow opposite the farm of Mont Saint Jean, to the west of the road, in front of the brigade of Collaert. ² The Union brigade stood on the ridge observing the latest rear guard actions, before retiring towards a clover field in a depression in rear of the 5th division, south-east of the farm of Mont Saint Jean. ³ The squadron of the 11th regiment of light dragoons, led by captain Schreiber, re-joined its regiment that evening. ⁴



The fields east of the Brussels road and north of the Ohain-road; in the rear the farm of Mont Saint Jean is visible.

The 13th regiment of light dragoons (attached to the brigade of Grant) and the 15th regiment of hussars took up a position between Gomont and Braine l'Alleud, west of the Nivelles-road. ⁵ A picket of the 13th regiment of light dragoons was in the immediate vicinity of Gomont. ⁶ The 23rd regiment of light dragoons, as well as the other regiment of the brigade of Grant, the 7th regiment of hussars, was in the extreme rear-guard of the central column. ⁷ It was for this reason that the regiment arrived later as the other regiments of the brigade. Additionally, it took up

another position, 175 metre north of the Ohain-road, east of the Brussels road, in rear of the 5th division.⁸

The moment the 7th hussars took up its position, its pickets were involved into skirmishing with the French. One of these pickets was half a squadron led by captain Heyliger, which had a sharp engagement with a French picket.⁹ It was then that captain Heyliger distinguished himself, and this happened just under the eye of the duke of Wellington who ended the engagement and praised the captain some time after.¹⁰

After dark, the squadron of captain Verner, reinforced by some members of other squadrons, went out as a picket for the night.¹¹ During the retreat, the 23rd regiment of light dragoons had not been hindered at all, but it was just south of the farm of La Haye Sainte that the pursuing French cavalry attempted to charge. As a result, its commander, the earl of Potarlington, deployed the regiment in battle order in the hollow of the farm west of the road. From then on, the French cavalry refrained from any further advance.

At the very same time, the French and Anglo-Netherlands-German artillery were engaged in a mutual bombardment.¹² After that, the regiment went back to a position in rear of the Nassau troops of Von Kruse, west of the farm of Mont Saint Jean, where the two other regiments of the brigade had been stationed, the 1st and 2nd regiment of light dragoons KGL.¹³ Here, major general Von Dörnberg got the instruction to send out pickets in front of the right wing of the army. These pickets consisted of one squadron of the 23rd regiment of light dragoons, one of the 2nd regiment of light dragoons KGL and one of the Cumberland hussars.¹⁴ They communicated through small patrols and had outposts on the foot of the French position in front.

The squadron of the 23rd regiment of light dragoons had its position on the Brussels-road, between the inn of La Belle Alliance and the farm of La Haye Sainte. The squadron of the hussars may have been somewhere between the ridge and the wood of Gomont.¹⁵ The squadron of the 2nd regiment of light dragoons had a position in a hollow east of Gomont.¹⁶

A picket of the 2nd regiment of light dragoons KGL, consisting of a half squadron led by lieutenant Von Hugo, stood west of Gomont. This was engaged successfully in skirmishing with French cavalry between Gomont and the farm of Mon Plaisir.¹⁷ There would also have been a picket consisting of one squadron of the 1st regiment of light dragoons KGL led by captain Von Sichart, but its exact location is unknown.¹⁸

That night, the brigade of Hussey Vivian was bivouacked in and around the hamlet of Vert Coucou, at 1300 metres north-east of Mont Saint Jean, and at the extreme southern edge of the forest of Soignes.¹⁹ The officers were in three houses here.²⁰ That evening and night the squadron led by captain Grant of the 18th regiment of hussars was posted in front of the complex formed by the hamlet of Smohain and the farms of La Haye and Papelotte. An advanced post was there too and further south was a chain of sentries.²¹ Patrols of the 18th regiment of hussars were sent out towards Ohain as well.²²



A building of around 1750 at Vert Coucou.

The brigade of Sir Ormsby Vandeleur was established some 500 metres further to the west, on the crossroads of two tracks.²³ These were the those leading from La Haye to Jolibois and Vert Coucou to Mont Saint Jean. Gardiner's troops was that night near the brigade of Vivian, in and around Vert Coucou.²⁴ There are no details available about the British-Hanoverian horse and foot artillery, but it can be assumed that the batteries were all near to the divisions to which they were attached.²⁵ The battery of captain Mercer bivouaced in the orchard of the farm of Mont Saint Jean.²⁶ The battery of Norman Ramsay had its bivouac near Mercer's that night and the one of Whinyates was in an orchard west of the Brussels-road, near the windmill of Mont Saint Jean.²⁷

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1. Lord Uxbridge. In: BL.Add.Ms.34.706 p.185-192

2. Cf. Account of private Nicholson (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.704 p.3-4
 Surgeon J.H.James (1st Life Guards). He states the bivouac was in a wood near some houses at the road leading to Brussels. What he means here was the orchard of the farm and the houses of the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean. Cf. Vansittart, J. (ed) - Surgeon J.H.James's journal p.31
 North of Genappe, James was accompanied by the surgeon J.Gideon van Millingen of the general medical staff.

3. Captain Kennedy Clark. In: BL. Add.Ms.34.703 p.3-5
 Sergeant major Dickson and lieutenant Mills. In: BL, Add.Ms.34.703 p.223-226
 Plan of lieutenant Wyndham (Scots Greys). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.704 p.171-174
 Journal of captain Radclyffe. In: De Ainslie - Historical record of the first or the royal regiment of dragoons, p.151 By then it was around 8 p.m. Cf. Major Clarke (Scots Greys). In: The Cavalry Journal 1926 Vol.16 p.76
 Journal of sergeant Clarke (Scots Greys). In: NLS, MS 15379 6
 Journal of lieutenant Hamilton (Scots Greys). In: NWMS, nr.A.213.2.07
 Cornet Clape (Scots Greys) adds his unit reached its bivouac by 7 p.m. Cf. his letter to his mother, dated about one week after the battle of Waterloo. In: Almack, E. – The history of the second dragoons p.70

4. According to Schreiber himself it was 9 p.m. In: BL, Add.Ms.34.707 p.145-146

5. Account of lieutenant colonel Leighton-Cathcart-Dalrymple (15th regiment of hussars). In: NAM, nr. 7207-22,14-21
 Lieutenant Doherty (13th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.703 p.229-230
 Major Lautour (23rd regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.704 p.286-289
 Diary of captain J.Thackwell. In: Wylly, H.C. - The military memoirs of etc. p.70
 Dalrymple mentions the approach of French cavalry coming from a wood on the other side of the road; this was the Bois de Neuve Cour.
 Assistant surgeon Gibney (15th regiment of hussars) adds that before the regiment took up a bivouac, some baggage of the regiment which had got behind was taken by the French; on the other hand, the skirmishers of the regiment took some French prisoners. In: Eighty years ago etc. p.182

6. Lieutenant Maclean (13th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.708 p.154-157
 Two further detachments were sent out on the Nivelles-road by the 13th regiment of light dragoons and the 15th regiment of hussars to escort a column of baggage. While doing so they skirmished with the French cavalry. In: History of the 13th hussars

7. Major general Von Dörnberg. In: NHH, Hann.Des.41E, XXI k, nr.3, 1-4

8. Captain Robbins (7th regiment of hussars). In: BL, Add.Ms. 34.705 p.127-130
 Lieutenant O'Grady (7th regiment of hussars). BL, Add.Ms. 34.705 p.73-75
 Cotton states it was in a field near the spot where Picton fell on the 18th, which is more or less the same. In: Une voix de Waterloo, p.27
9. According to Cotton the half squadron led by Heyliger was a part of the left squadron which was led by captain Verner. In: Une voix de Waterloo, p.27
10. Lieutenant O'Grady (7th regiment hussars). BL, Add.Ms.34.706 p.287-292
11. Account of captain Verner (7th regiment of hussars). In: Reminiscences of William Verner
 In: p.43
12. Lieutenant Banner (23rd regiment of light dragoons). BL, Add.Ms.34706 p.301-311 and 34.706 p.400-401
 Lieutenant Warin of the 3rd regiment of carabineers (brigade Trip) mentions an engagement between the British light cavalry and French dragoons. This may have the same action as referred to here.
 Cf. his account in an undated letter. In: Rijksarchief of the province of Utrecht, family archive of Van Ortt,74 inv.nr.157
13. Major Lautour (23rd regiment of light dragoons). BL, Add.Ms.34.704 p.286-289
 Adjudant Fricke (1st regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.69-72
 Cf. Nettelbladt, A.von - Die Althannoverschen Uberlieferungen etc. p.35
14. Major general Von Dörnberg. In: NHH, Des.41E XXI k, nr.3 1-4
15. Major Von Dörnberg. He says: "vor ein kleines Holz, welches auf unserm rechten Flügel lag". This may have been the wood of Gomont. In: NHH, Des.41E XXI k, nr.3 1-4
16. Major general Von Dörnberg. In: NHH, Des.41E XXI k, nr.3 1-4
17. Report about the 2nd regiment of light dragoons KGL. In: NHH, Des.38D, A.1 nr.3 and nr.2 (Journal)
 Report about the same regiment of captain Seeger. In: NHH, Des.41^E, XXI k, nr.3 p.17-22
 During this action, three carts with wounded were retaken.
 Captain J.Thackwell (15th regiment of hussars) has a slight different version of these events. He believes it was on the Nivelles-road near Lillois that some squadrons of French light cavalry threatened to take some cattle and some carts with wounded. This enemy cavalry however was prevented from doing so by the squadron of the 15th hussars led by captain Wodehouse, a half squadron of the 13th regiment of light dragoons and some KGL cavalry.

Some French were taken at this occasion. Cf. Diary of Thackwell. In: Wylly, H.C. - The military memoirs of etc. p.70

According to C.R.B.Barrett the 13th regiment of light dragoons and the 15th regiment of hussars detached a platoon to escort some baggage on the road; some skirmishing took place but the French didn't push through. In: History of the XIII Hussars p.272

18. Journal of the regiment. In: NHH, Des.38D, A.1 nr.2

19. Sir H.Vivian. BL. Add.Ms.34.707 p.50-57

And in his letter to his wife, dated 23rd June 1815. In: Vivian, Cl. - R.H.Vivian, first baron Vivian etc. p.278

Lieutenant colonel Manners (10th regiment hussars) In: BL.Add.Ms.34.703 p.23

Lieutenant Duperier (18th regiment hussars) In: BL. Add.Ms. 34.703 p.103-108

An anonymous officer of the 18th regiment of hussars. In: Kelly, Chr. - A full and circumstantial account of the memorable battle of Waterloo etc. p.145-146

Lieutenant colonel Murray (18th regiment hussars) In: BL. Add.Ms. 34.704 p.106-116 and p.205-209) and in the NAM, Documents relating to the 18th hussars at Waterloo nr.7612-19

Murray mentions the presence of a wood consisting of young trees. This is confirmed by sergeant Coglant of the 18th regiment of hussars. Cf. his letter dated 19th of June 1815, in: History of the 18th hussars

Captain Shakespear (10th regiment hussars) mentions the presence of some houses. In: NAM, Manuscript letters and journals of the service of captain Arthur Shakespear nr.7706-17Cf.

20. Captain Shakespear (10th hussars). In: NAM, Manuscript letters and journals of the service of captain Arthur Shakespear nr.7706-17

Lieutenant colonel Manners (10th hussars). In: BL. Add.Ms. 34.703 p.103-108

At least one of these houses is still there [1994]; it dates from 1750 and bears the name of Vert Coucou.

21. Captain Taylor erroneously mentions Ohain, but in his description he means Smohain. Cf. BL. Add.Ms. 34.703 p.80-90

Also see: Captain Taylor (10th regiment of hussars). In a letter to Mr. Brownrigg, dated 16th July 1815. In collection A.Lagden.

22. Lieutenant colonel Murray (18th regiment hussars). BL. Add.Ms.34.704 p.106-116

Lieutenant Duperier (18th regiment hussars) BL. Add.Ms. 34.703 p.90-91

General Guyot, of the heavy cavalry of the imperial guard, in position that night in and around Maransart, claims British patrols went up to his position during the evening. Cf. his letter dated 27th of April 1835 to general Pelet. In: Carnets de campagne p.395

23. Colonel Ponsonby (12th regiment light dragoons). In: BL. Add.Ms. 34.706 p.116-118

Surgeon J.Gordon Smith (12th regiment light dragoons) In: Brett-James, A. - The hundred

days p.95

Lieutenant Hay (12th regiment light dragoons) In: Reminiscences p.174. Hay adds the regiments formed in columns of squadrons on quarter distance, with the men dismounted. Before the brigade took its bivouac, it had halted for some time in the position it was to take later the next day.

Lieutenant Luard (16th regiment of light dragoons) claims it was a clover field they used for the bivouac. In: BL. Add.Ms.34.704 p.133-140

In another letter (including the plan) however, lieutenant colonel Ponsonby assigns the 12th regiment of light dragoons another bivouac, immediately in rear of the Ohain-road, to the right of the bifurcation of the road towards Ohain and Smohain. Cf. BL. Add.Ms. 34.704 p.116-119

Ponsonby would have dined with major general Pack in a small village (probably Mont Saint Jean). Cf. The 9th/12th Royal Lancers Regimental Journal Vol.II March 1964 nr.1 p.74

24. Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Gardiner). In: BL. Add.Ms. 34.703 p.266-271 and in his diary. In: RAI, nr.MD 797

Lieutenant Swabey (battery Gardiner) claims the bivouac was in the forest of Soignes, which should be in the edge of it. Cf. his letter dated 24th June 1815 (see above).

Surgeon J.Gordon Smith (12th regiment of light dragoons) situates his bivouac in the field in rear of the farm of Mont Saint Jean. In: The English army in France etc.p.120

25. The only batteries of which we know this for sure are those of Lloyd and Cleeves (Alten's division); these were in front of the division, on the ridge, west of the Brussels-road. Cf. Captain Rudyard. In: BL, Add.Ms.34.706 p.473-478

Ross' troop must somehow have been in the vicinity of Genappe at some point of time as gunner John Edwards mentions seeing British cavalry charging the French there. In: Laws, M.E.S. (ed.) – A Waterloo letter. In [?] – Vol.LXXXI nr.4 p.306-307

26. Mercer, C. Journal of the Waterloo campaign Vol.I p.282-285. Also see Mercer's letter dated 24th January 1866 to an unknown person. In: RAI, nr.MD88

27. Lieutenant Dansey. In: BL, Add.Ms.34.708 p.25-28