

## **The first French offensive: observations.**

### **The bombardment of the French grand battery.**

The main, grand attack of the day was to be preceded by a bombardment of the grand battery which was installed in the heart of the French position.

Obviously, the effect of the use of this battery not only depended upon its rate of fire, but also upon its position. Though some believe that the battery was placed upon the intermediate ridge [<sup>1</sup>], there is no doubt that this ridge was *not* the one where the battery could have been situated even though this could be expected from the pure range of the French artillery. <sup>2</sup>

First of all, if the battery would have been placed there, it would have been about 250 metres from the far end of the orchard of the farm of La Haye Sainte and it would be very unlogical to be situated within such an immediate vicinity of the enemy. No member of its garrison mentions any gun in such proximity and its establishment would have been most obvious. <sup>3</sup>

Further, in this situation, the grand battery would be placed far out in advance of the French line, fully exposed and unsupported by other arms.

More importantly, it is general De Salle himself who states that some time after he had reconnoitred a “position plus avancée afin de l’ocuper plus tard“, the guns which advanced after the start of the attack took up a position there and were run over in that position by the allied heavy cavalry (see below). All this could not have taken place if the grand battery had already stood on the intermediate ridge. <sup>4</sup>

The grand battery was composed of 12- and 6 pounder batteries. Their maximum and effective ranges were 1800 / 900 and 1250 / 750 metres respectively. As the field was muddy, the ricochet effect in the effective range was decreased significantly. The 6 inch howitzers could cover with their air burst shells a maximum range of between 650 and 1000 to 1200 metres. <sup>5</sup>

Distances to the enemy were 1000 metres to the crossing of the Brussels and the Ohain-road, 1200 metres to Pack’s units, 800 metres to the farm building of La Haye Sainte and about 1500 metres to the allied cavalry behind the centre of Wellington’s line. <sup>6</sup>

Taking into account these effective ranges of the French guns, it becomes clear that they could not use them to their full extent, simply as the distance was too large. On the other hand, on what kind of enemy units the French gun-crews were actually shooting at was a mystery, as these were all hidden behind the ridge of Mont Saint Jean. All that the gun-crews could actually see from the enemy’s position in front of them were the light infantry and skirmishers on the slopes of the ridge of Mont Saint Jean, the guns and their crews and some cavalry to their far right. Soon, visibility in general was reduced to almost nil due to omnipresent dense clouds of smoke produced by the discharges of the guns. <sup>7</sup>

Allied eye-witnesses often speak of heavy gunfire, but whether it was actually heavier as under “normal” circumstances is hard to assess. What we do know, however, is that there are no accounts of any significant casualties in the brigades of Kempt and Pack. In fact, an officer in Picton’s division wrote: “A furious fire of artillery from the whole line opposite to Picton’s burst upon us. The greater part, fortunately, went over our heads, carrying one off here and there. This fire was much too high; the old hands said it was meant to intimidate as usual.” <sup>8</sup>

Of the brigade Van Bijlandt, at least the 7<sup>th</sup> battalion of the line suffered “assez de ravages.” <sup>9</sup> More apparent, on the other hand, are the strong casualties of the brigades of Trip and Ponsonby which were both at a distance of about 1500 metres from the grand battery and which were both moved as a result. Also, the regiments of the Household brigade experienced losses which made them lie down, while the men held the bridles in their hands. <sup>10</sup>

This all seems to indicate that the majority of the French balls hit an area which was in a range of roughly 1200 to 1500 metres long and with a front of about 500 metres and extending on both sides of the Brussels road in Wellington's very centre. This part of Wellington's line was the selected part of his line where the decisive attack after all had to place.<sup>11</sup>

From the fact that the British heavy cavalry suffered from French gunfire until shortly before their advance and charge would indicate that the French guns kept on firing until the very moment that the French infantry columns actually ascended the slopes of the enemy's position. By that time it was around 2.15 p.m. (see below) It is another indication that the grand battery, while firing from an elevated position, used a long range trajectory, aiming at a virtually invisible enemy behind the ridge of Mont Saint Jean while avoiding hitting any fellow forces in their advance.

The fact that the target of the artillery was virtually invisible and that its range was used in its maximum extent instead of its effective extent, seems to indicate that the bombardment was probably intended not so much as to actually create havoc in the enemy's ranks, but more as to break his morale. In this context general De Salle puts it thus: "J'avais d'abord ordre de mettre en batterie toutes les pièces dans la position que nous occupions, à mi-côte, sur une seule et de commencer le feu de toutes à la fois pour étonner et ébranler le moral de l'ennemi."<sup>12</sup> As Lenient puts it: "beaucoup de fracas et peu d'effet."<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, there was nothing Napoleon could do about the invisibility of the enemy, but one could wonder why he placed the grand battery at such a distance from Wellington's position. This brings up the discussion about the use of the ridge which extends beyond the farm of La Haye Sainte and which is in its highest point of the same height as the one of La Belle Alliance. Yet, as has been shown above, there were two simple reasons for Napoleon not to use the ridge for the grand battery: in this way it would be too near the enemy's line and – as such – unsupported and therefore unnecessarily exposed. The ridge could be an option as a stage for an advance later in the battle so as to batter Wellington's weakened centre (as it was meant to be), but not as a position right from the start.<sup>14</sup>

### **The French advance.**

Traditionally, the starting point of observations on the role of the infantry of the 1st corps in the attack has centred around the quality of the formation of divisional columns of the corps. For a deeper understanding and a proper analysis of the structure of the whole event, however, it is pivotal to make sure about the proper number and identity of columns which attacked Wellington's position in more detail first before jumping to conclusions on the merits of the type of column as such.<sup>15</sup>

When it comes down to the *total* number of columns of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps involved, the French eyewitnesses remain silent. In general, they express themselves merely about the column of the unit of which the participant was himself a member. This is enhanced by the fact that there are no accounts available from the high command referring to the number of columns. Also, the official French report about the battle doesn't mention anything at all about the formation of the corps.

For more solid proof regarding the number of columns involved one therefore has to resort to the accounts of those who fought the action on the allied side. Basically, about the total number of columns, participants are virtually unanimous: three. Depending upon the location of the eyewitnesses on the battlefield it becomes clear that by far the most of them are speaking about the divisions of Quiot (Bourgeois), Donzelot and Marcognet.<sup>16</sup> This number can also be explained by the fact that the fourth, the one of Durutte, was further to the rear compared to the other three. At the same time, accounts also give an indication of their separate strengths as varying between 3000 and 4000 each.<sup>17</sup>

Integrating these sources, they eventually confirm the unambiguous conclusion that on the whole there were in total seven columns attacking Wellington's position:

- two composing the brigade of Quiot's division, both attacking the farm of La Haye Sainte
- four columns attacking Wellington's position on the front extending from Kempt's to the right and Best's brigade to the left. These were the columns of the brigades of Bourgeois and Pégot and those of the divisions of Donzelot and of Marcognet
- one column composed of one regiment of one brigade of Durutte's division, attacking Wellington's position in front of the farms of La Haye and Papelotte.<sup>18</sup>

As has been stated before, the choice for the formation of each divisional column is a subject of great significance. Compared to the smaller battalion column, the large columns used had several pros and cons. Because of their sheer size and massiveness, they could be able to break through the enemy's line. In case of a threat of cavalry there was also the possibility to form a square in one dense mass. Further, because of the deployment of each individual battalion in line it had a wider range of fire as the traditional battalion column.

Eventually, the decline in the quality of the army since 1809 - which was due to heavy losses in the past and the large number of relatively untrained conscripts - led to a loss of tactical flexibility and greater deployment in depth and the type of column used for the 1st corps at Waterloo was no exception.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, a column of this size was in itself much more difficult to handle, not to mention the influence of elements of battle such as the terrain, the distance of the men in the centre to the officers around the column, the noise etc. Because of this, to maintain alignments was a serious challenge. To form regular squares from this type of column against cavalry was virtually impossible and - eventually- the dense mass of men made it of course an easy target for enemy gunfire.

As the formation of the corps is often regarded as the main reason for the failure of the attack of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps, clearly the quality of the formation has been a subject of discussion since some years after the battle.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, it exposes the responsibility of general command why it was chosen the more as it was clear to all those involved that the attack was supposed to be the crucial attack of the day. Those involved were of course primarily Napoleon, Ney and d'Erlon.

While Ney and d'Erlon remain silent about the formation of the corps altogether, Napoleon himself does the same but at the same time he doesn't criticize both Ney and d'Erlon for having chosen the formation as they did and he could easily have done so in order to blame them for the failure of the attack.<sup>21</sup>

More than that, having taken position near the Decoster-house before 2 p.m., Napoleon could see for himself how the corps was formed. In fact, there can be no doubt that the change of his post there is immediately related to the preparations and start of what was to be the main attack of the battle. It has been suggested that a misunderstanding in the transmission in orders from general headquarters to d'Erlon could have been the cause of the formation of the attack, but this is highly improbable. First of all, those involved were experienced men of war and in the weighing of the pros and cons in the situation of the moment, the cons must not have been compelling enough to convince them to choose for another formation.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, d'Erlon had experience with Wellington from the Peninsula and he most probably put this experience into the discussion. At the same time, Napoleon did not have this experience and - from this - might have been tempted to use the weight and firepower of this type of column, thereby sacrificing speed and flexibility. Napoleon's contempt for Wellington, coupled to his haste to reach Brussels, also might have played a role in the decision how to carry out the main attack.

In the circumstances, the formation of the corps was considered as the proper striking force in an approach which was to soften and weaken Wellington's line by a preparatory bombardment first and then to push on by sheer force or shock of massive columns. As the impression of a certain level of complacency in the choice of the formation cannot be avoided, the French may have felt convinced that the mere appearance of these heavy columns would be sufficient to decide the issue.

Ultimately, the value of the formation of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps should be seen within the context of the *total set-up* of the main attack of the day as it has been sketched before: to penetrate into Wellington's centre with an attack which was designed on a far larger scale as only the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. It formed part of a massive strike, prepared by a grand bombardment and consisting of the 1st corps in front, the 6<sup>th</sup> corps and heavy cavalry in the second line to consolidate the breakthrough, and the Imperial Guard as the force to crown the success. This context played a dominant role in the choice for the formation as it took place.

Skirmishers used as a screen in front of infantry columns were a common feature of Napoleon warfare. In their role, it was essential that the enemy be kept under fire and distracted until the last possible moment before the skirmishers would expose the front of the assaulting columns. After that they would rally in the intervals between the columns. At Waterloo, this main attack was no exception to this. It may have been because of their accepted omnipresence, that their performance is rarely referred to in this attack, but that they had their share in the attack is indisputable.<sup>23</sup>

The quality of this share is under debate however. Under normal circumstances, skirmishers were used to unsettle enemy troops by their irregular fire given from a short distance. At the same time, they could keep the enemy firing line occupied while the attacking force drew near. To accomplish this, the skirmishers obviously would have to be able to draw near enough to the enemy firing line. In this case, it did not work that way and the significance of this lack of result should be stressed. Though the numbers of French skirmishers were considerable (some 2000 in all), it seems first of all as if they were only engaged during the actual advance to yield the results they could have. They accompanied the attacking columns, but what they should have done is to put a vigorous pressure upon their enemy counterparts long before the actual attack of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. In this way, it would have enabled the French skirmishers to push their enemy counterparts back upon the first main line and push through their own efforts against this line accordingly.<sup>24</sup> Obviously, this line was also masked by the terrain, but it should be noted that the system of heavy swarms of skirmishers of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps working against Wellington's left wing from about 4 p.m. onwards *did* work: it forced the allied units to adapt to changing circumstances all the time, making them in this way more vulnerable for attacks of closed units of French infantry and / or cavalry, but these were then unavailable.

The basic pattern upon which the divisional columns were to advance in the attack was the echelon, in this case with the left one in front. The background of the echelon in general was to deliver a succession of blows along the enemy's line with hopefully the heaviest and most disruptive arriving first against a vulnerable point, in this case Wellington's centre.<sup>25</sup>

The depth of the echelon is not exactly known, but from the fact that both Donzelot's and Marcognet's divisions were touched upon by Ponsonby's brigade almost at the same time it can be taken that the depth of the column itself must probably have been the one the echelon. In other words: the front-line of the second column which was in echelon in relation to the first started where the rearmost one of the first ended.

The initial interval between the columns in a lateral direction was about 200 to 235 metres. As the columns converged upon Wellington's line, the intervals decreased to about 150 metres which was the interval which fitted to a regular advance to the position in this situation.<sup>26</sup>

As has been shown before, it did not work that way, neither in depth, nor in a lateral way. Due to the fact that Bourgeois' column was delayed and deviated from its initial course, the lateral interval with Donzelot shrunk to about 75 metres. In case Bourgeois would have kept to its original course, it would also have kept a neat distance of about 150 metres towards Donzelot as well.

With the other exterior column, the one of Pégot's brigade, it was no different at least in depth as it had been delayed right from the start. As it most probably kept a course which brought it to a lateral interval of about 150 metres towards Marcognet, it most probably slowed down its advance as it was touched upon by the Scots Greys some 250 metres from the Ohain-road and a short time later by the light dragoons of Vandeleur at about 150 metres from the same spot.<sup>27</sup> The overall result was that the second echelon (Donzelot) hit the allied position first and was actually able to cross the Ohain-road with its vanguard. Therefore it crowned the crest of the ridge for a very short while. The first echelon (Bourgeois) was delayed and diverted from its original target by the terrain and enemy and repulsed some 35 metres south of this road, while the third (Marcognet) was just still at the French side of the road when it shared the same fate. The fourth (Pégot) never got into the immediate vicinity of the road at all and fell back in the low ground in front of it.<sup>28</sup>

At least the start of the advance of the columns would have been swift, but soon the speed decreased due to the fatigue of the men and the state of the ground.<sup>29</sup> First of all, in their advance, the French infantry had to cope with the soil which was saturated with rain from the previous night. Other than that there was the presence of high corn, but generally speaking not all fields where the columns advanced covered with high corn, but also with low vegetation like grass, vetch and potatoes.<sup>30</sup> Taking the average speed of the columns in mind (about 40 metres per minute), combined with a delay (due to the state of the ground, the fatigue etc.) and the distance to be taken (about 800 to 900 metres), it can be assumed that it took the columns 20 to 25 minutes to cover the space of ground between both frontlines.

As has been stated before, more forces were staged for the main attack as the 1st corps only. The successful advance of the 1st corps was only the first stage of a much larger manoeuvre which was meant to consolidate its success. From that point of view, it is of great significance to have a closer look at the support assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> corps.

When it comes down to artillery, the support for the 1st corps was first of all restricted to the preparatory bombardment of the grand battery. The efficiency of its fire has been commented upon.

In the set-up of the attack of the 1st corps, artillery was expected to advance in the wake of the corps in order to support it by firing from a more pronounced position. The advance was planned to be carried out per battery, and each to be firing in halts while advancing. For that reason, general De Salle had been sent out in reconnaissance and he had the intermediate ridge pointed out for the purpose involved.

Eventually, three batteries of 12-pounders followed the 1st corps in its wake not long after its departure. Yet – if we may believe general De Salle – they did so prematurely, as they left just before De Salle was about to ask Ney permission to set off with the artillery to support the infantry in its attack. The three gun crews had just established themselves upon the right wing of the intermediate ridge and fired a few shots, when they were forced to hold their fire as their fellow infantry comrades started to stream back. De Salle was – apparently without the consent of Ney – about to order the remaining 6-pounder batteries to advance and support them, but it proved too late: two of the three batteries were disabled by the British heavy cavalry of Ponsonby.<sup>31</sup> In case De Salle's version of the events is correct, there was a serious problem of coordination within the leadership in the grand battery about its further role in the

support of the infantry of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. This may also explain why no guns were dragged forward from the left wing of the grand battery to the intermediate ridge above La Haye Sainte so as to fire upon Wellington's centre from there.

The advance of the heavy 12-pounders through the low ground between both ridges proves that - despite the heavy soil - manoeuvring as a support for the infantry was possible; from their original position, the guns advanced over a distance of about 450 to 500 metres.<sup>32</sup>

De Salle gives no indication of the tardiness of the three batteries, on the contrary, but all in all, their advance was in fact too late to prevent the serious setback the infantry of the 1st corps suffered from the allied arms, both in infantry, cavalry and artillery.

In cavalry, the cuirassiers of Dubois were used as a direct support for the first strike of d'Erlon upon Wellington's centre. As such, it was an integral part of the total set-up of the main attack, and not some isolated action which took place to the left of the chaussée.

Meanwhile, Lobau, formed with his full corps a massive infantry support on the intermediate ridge which was to be sent forward as a follow-up in the wake of the 1st corps after this would have penetrated into Wellington's position. Half of Milhaud's corps was in the immediate vicinity of Lobau as well, ready to be used in a following shock action to exploit the success further by rolling up Wellington's centre.

The engineer companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps, as ordered by Napoleon earlier that day, were all advancing within the divisional columns, ready to entrench Mont Saint Jean after the assault.

Ready to crown the success of the main attack, the Imperial Guard was eventually pushed forward to a position in the immediate vicinity of the emperor himself, in the fields of the house of Decoster to the right of the high road. In the total set-up of the attack, the 2<sup>nd</sup> corps was supposed to advance "à mesure à la hauteur du comte d'Erlon", i.e. slightly to its left rear.

### **Wellington's position.**

Wellington's choice of battlefield was in a high degree dictated by the means to mask his troops until the moment of actual conflict. It therefore required a skilful occupation of the ground which not only allowed protection from enemy fire, but also the possibility to use the element of surprise and to carry out small-scaled vigorous counter-attacks.

Reference has been made to the significance of the French formations for a proper understanding of the attack. This is at least as important for the way Wellington's left wing was composed in more detail, as also here confusion reigns in several aspects. This confusion is not so much in the arrangement of the different units from the left to right or vice versa. It more has to do with their extensions in line, measured against the total available front-width.

As has been shown, this was about 700 metres. On the west side the unit at the far end here, the 32<sup>nd</sup>, did not exceed to the other side of the Brussels road. At the same time, the infantry unit on the opposite flank, the 92<sup>nd</sup>, had its left flank towards the bifurcation of the Ohain-road. At the same time, it is a fact that the front-width of the French column which approached this battalion was of virtually the same length as the line of the 92<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>33</sup>

This means that the front-line of the 92<sup>nd</sup> was about 80 metres long. Taking a front of 60 cm per soldier as a starting point, it means that the 92<sup>nd</sup> would have counted about 260 men in its main formation alone.<sup>34</sup>

The approach and size of the French column of Bourgeois gives another hint to the formation of the British, in this case Kempt's brigade. This column, after it had made a sharp turn around the hedge above the sand-pit, approached the right wing of the 28<sup>th</sup> and the left of the 79<sup>th</sup>. By doing so, it approached the middle of the total length of both these battalions, which was about 180 metres, taking into account that the front of Bourgeois' column was about 79 metres. Including the 32<sup>nd</sup>, Kempt's brigade covered a front of about 300 metres, while having the 95<sup>th</sup> in front.<sup>35</sup>

Between the brigades of Kempt and Pack there was a gap, in front of which stood a part of Van Bijlandt's brigade. Taking into account that the three battalions of Pack may have covered a similar front line in length as Kempt's three battalions (plus the very small front of the 5<sup>th</sup> battalion of national militia to its immediate right) it can be deduced that this gap had a length of about 100 metres.

The brigade of Van Bijlandt acted as first line in front of the British and therefore had its battalions spread over a front which extended from the left flank of the 42<sup>nd</sup> regiment towards a point in front the left wing of the 28<sup>th</sup> regiment. Here, the 27<sup>th</sup> battalion stood slightly en echelon to the 7<sup>th</sup> battalion of the line, which in its turn stood in front of the gap between both Scottish brigades. The extension of the front of the brigade is determined by the simple fact that there are no accounts of members of the 92<sup>nd</sup>, nor of the 79<sup>th</sup> and the 32<sup>nd</sup> which confirm the presence of members of this brigade *in front* of them. In this way, the brigade had a total extension of about 375 metres.<sup>36</sup>

### **The confrontation with the allied artillery and infantry.**

All gun-crews kept firing on the French columns as long as it was possible to do so. In those cases as the enemy got too near, the crew-members left their guns at the Ohain-road and fled back to the safety of the nearest infantry or cavalry.<sup>37</sup> Shortly before the three columns of Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet were about to assault Wellington's position, the French skirmishers fell back between them. In their ardour, they managed to push back or to run over the first line of infantry over their total front length, but that's where their success virtually came to an end.

Because of the resolve in their advance towards the Ohain-road and the resulting musketry volley, Kempt's battalions were able to abort the deployment of Bourgeois' column.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, the deployment was not a planned one but one which arose as an emergency response to the necessity of the situation. Yet, even in these grave circumstances, the French were able to give off a musketry fire right at the moment the British infantrymen crossed the road and lost their ranks for a moment. This did not prevent them however to continue their advance and to prolongue their success without any physical contact between both bodies; no cavalry was involved either in the actual defeat.

This was different with Donzelot's column. After having penetrated into the position after the repulse of the Belgian unit in front of it, it met virtually no more resistance apart from some fire of the 28<sup>th</sup>. For that reason it did not attempt to deploy and if it would have been considered to do so at all, it was already at the mercy of the cavalry which stood just here in the second line and not in the third (see below).

As with Bourgeois' column, it was with Marcognet that the British used the Ohain-road as the defence line to act upon. It was from here that an imminent volley of the French was aborted by the timely one of the British. No further French deployment took place as there was no time for it, if it was felt necessary at all.

In the claim of the British volley and success against Marcognet, the focus is entire upon the 92<sup>nd</sup> regiment.<sup>39</sup> As there is at least one account confirming the advance of the 42<sup>nd</sup> towards the Ohain-road it can be assumed that the 1st did the same.<sup>40</sup> It should also be noted that both these battalions stood between the points where the columns of Donzelot and Marcognet hit the Ohain-road, and as such at least the 42<sup>nd</sup> - as well as the 8<sup>th</sup> battalion of national militia - could have fired upon Marcognet's left flank. The 44<sup>th</sup> regiment was too far out to the left and rear to have played any role in the actions against d'Erlon's corps.<sup>41</sup>

At the far right, Durutte's efforts in both battalions columns and skirmishers stranded upon the Nassau troops scattered in the broken ground and outbuildings on Wellington's left flank.

## **The confrontation with the allied cavalry.**

### Introduction.

After having observed large masses of the enemy moving towards the centre and the left wing, lord Uxbridge writes about the way he engaged the heavy cavalry: "I immediately galloped to the heavy cavalry, and ordered the Household Brigade to prepare to form line, passed to sir William Ponsonby's, and having told him to wheel into line when the other brigade did, I instantly returned to the Household Brigade, and put the whole into motion."<sup>42</sup> It is possible that both brigades deployed into line at more or less the same time, but Uxbridge's claim that he put the the whole (i.e. both brigades) into motion is not fully supported by the circumstances. From Evans' account it becomes clear that the actual start of the advance of the Union brigade was caused by a most specific moment chosen by both Ponsonby and Evans and that was the moment that the head of Donzelot's column had just crossed the hedges of the Ohain-road. For Lord Somerset it was the moment that the cuirassiers had been repulsed by the squares of the allied infantry. It was the fleeting opportunity seized by both men to maximize the effects of their charge. As both these incidents occurred at more or less the same time, both brigades - on both sides of the Brussels road - advanced virtually in one line.<sup>43</sup>

### The Union brigade.

The total front of the three regiments of the Union brigade, deployed in line, was almost similar to the length of the sector occupied by the three foremost French columns when they hit the Ohain-road.<sup>44</sup> As this extent was about 525 metres, the three regiments had their total front length on a comparable size.<sup>45</sup>

As Ponsonby used the moment of derangement of the head of Donzelot's column (after having undergone enemy's fire and having crossed the hedges) to charge with the Royals and Inniskillings, the Scots Greys fell upon the one of Marcognet just after it had undergone the volley of the infantry. In the latter case, however, the hedges and the road, deranged the cavalry in some way. In both cases, the dragoons were faced with fire from the front enemy's ranks at a short distance and which brought some of them down. In their hesitation and moment of confusion, the French were probably unable to give off a regular volley, which in turn could stimulate the cavalry to push through their charge. Yet, this was implicitly linked to the speed in which a charge was carried out, as speed could give the horsemen the confidence to disregard the enemy's fire.

It is this element of speed which merits special attention. As the men of the of the Union brigade met their opponents in the immediate vicinity of the Ohain-road, the confrontation took place upon the crest of the ridge.<sup>46</sup>

Though obviously the charge was meant to come as a surprise to the French, it was also for the dragoons a surprise what they would find on the opposite side of the slope.<sup>47</sup> Yet, as the heavy cavalry stood about 90 to 100 metres away from the road, there was virtually no time for both parties to ponder what to do, before they were upon each other. Least of all, this means that the charge was carried out in a high speed. Though it was impetuous in the sense of initiative and a swift *start with speed* (a canter or at least a trot), within some metres it evolved into a moderate pace, or better, a walk, in which the horsemen eventually met with the French infantry.



This speed is not only the one which is used in eyewitness-testimonies to describe the charge, it also matches the simple calculation combining the two elements as given by its participants: the time needed to cover the distance between the cavalry and the enemy. As the distance involved (90 to 100 metres) was covered in one to one and half minute, it can easily be deduced that the men advanced in a relatively slow speed.<sup>48</sup>

Despite their slow speed, the impact of the sudden charge of the British dragoons upon the columns of Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet was comprehensive. The surprise was such that it caused the French to give off an ineffective fire, which in turn encouraged the cavalry to head on, even though they had a relative low speed. It was a typical example of how the effect of surprise could balance out such a speed.

Bourgeois was unlucky enough to be overrun by both enemy and friendly cavalry on its front and both flanks.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the British dragoons had the advantage of going downhill. And last but not least, the element of surprise of the charge and the cooperation with the other arms surely paid off: the ridge was cleared from French infantry within 10 minutes.<sup>50</sup>

Major Evans writes as the charge had taken place: “The heavy cavalry (though not 20 paces distant still nearly masked by the smoke and its situation on the inner declivity) now charged in line. The shock was irresistible – the firing at this point ceased. The smoke cleared away. Those masses a moment before, so menacing and conspicuous, and on which all eyes were turned, had disappeared, or left only the traces of a dispersed tabble flying over the plain. Vast numbers unable to escape the cavalry abandoned their arms and threw themselves on the ground. Here, were seen horses trampling down whole ranks, and plunging with difficulty through the bodies. There, a crowd of French soldiers surrendering as prisoners, many defending themselves to the last, yet terrified, and scarcely knowing what they did. Others again, rising up after being rode over by the dragoons, firing their pieces and making off, while the slope of the position appeared literally strewed with dead.”<sup>51</sup>

And major Winchester of the 92<sup>nd</sup> regiment adds in this respect: “ [...] and the Scots Greys actually walked over this column, and in less than three minutes it was totallly destroyed – 2000 besides killed and wounded of them, having been made prisoners, and two of their eagles captured. The grass field in which the enemy was formed, which was only the instant before, as green and smooth as the 15 acres in the Phoenix park, was in a few minutes covered with killed and wounded – knapsacks and their contents, arms and accoutrements etc. etc. so literally strewed over, that to avoid stepping on either one or other was quite impossible. In fact, one could hardly believe had he not witnessed it, that such complete destruction could have been effected in so short a time. Some of the French soldiers who were lying wounded were calling out “Vive l’empereur” and others firing their musquets at our men who had advanced past them in pursuit of the flying enemy.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, lord Uxbridge writes: “My impression is that the French were completely surprised by the first cavalry attack. It (our cavalry) had been hidden by rising ground immediately before their position. I think the left wing of our infantry was partially retiring, when I determined upon the movement, and then these 19 squadrons pouncing down hill upon them so astonished them that no very great resistance was made, and surely such havoc was rarely made in so few minutes.”<sup>53</sup>

Though unable to form a square in time [<sup>54</sup>], Durutte’s main column did not suffer that much havoc as the others. In its instability, the front ranks were even able to unleash some fire which brought some of the Scots Greys down. Yet, it did not prevent the horsemen from continuing their exalted advance towards the intermediate ridge in the French position leaving the column in its unstable situation. It was in this situation that its fate was sealed shortly after by Vandeleur’s dragoons: these horsemen dispersed the column to such a degree that it then fell back in confusion.<sup>55</sup>

The confrontation with the dense masses of French infantry automatically slowed the British cavalry down even more and also cohesion was lost. Having spent their charge by scattering the columns, the main thing for the cavalry now was to maintain speed, to run to open space to rally and to be supported by other cavalry from behind.<sup>56</sup>

The Household brigade.<sup>57</sup>

After Somerset had deployed his brigade, it had a frontline which extended over a distance of about 525 metre. In this way, they covered almost the complete frontline in rear of the brigades of Von Ompteda and Kielmansegge.<sup>58</sup> The Blues were in support.<sup>59</sup>

The time needed for the preparation of the charge was so short that there was no chance to form a proper line, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards on the far left hadn't finished it as the brigade had already started its advance. Also, Somerset charged in a line as good as the ground would admit of, being extremely broken and steep at first. As the Brussels road was not perpendicular to their front, but pointing to the right, the left of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards, as a necessary consequence, crossed the road before they came in contact with the enemy.<sup>60</sup>

Though the start of its advance was swift [<sup>61</sup>], the state of the boggy ground and the slope rendered it very difficult during the advance to the Ohain-road to put the horses into a trot.<sup>62</sup>

The enemy of the British dragoons was a body of cuirassiers of which the exact identity is not described by anyone present. While it can be ascertained from colonel Ordener's account that on the one hand at least his regiment formed part of it, on the other it has been suggested by lord Uxbridge that its strength was at least 600 men. Uxbridge having a trained eye, it can be expected that this could be not far from the truth.<sup>63</sup>

While the cuirassiers did not charge beyond the squares of Kielmansegge on their left flank, they were restricted on their right flank by the hollow road. This implicates that the total front on which the cuirassiers charged Wellington's frontline was about 250 metres. Taking into account that they charged in column [<sup>64</sup>], no other conclusion is possible that the force engaged was a brigade, in this case most probably the one of Dubois (1st and 4th regiments of cuirassiers, division of Wathier, corps Milhaud).<sup>65</sup>

Dubois, having dealt with the Lüneburg battalion, made the 22° slope from the low ground of La Haye Sainte and along the farm towards the crest of the ridge of Mont Saint Jean.<sup>66</sup> The boggy ground made the ascent not easy and speed was low.<sup>67</sup>

In practice, the normal response of cavalry when attacked by enemy horsemen, was to counterattack with a charge of their own. The two charging bodies did not always meet, for one side might lose heart and give way before contact was made. In other occasions when neither side broke before contact, both sides would pass through each other, while cutting and pointing.

More commonly, and this is what happened now, is that both sides would hold their nerve: each would slow as it approached and the lines would become ragged as some men pressed forward while others held back. In this case, the cuirassiers, upon the ridge but not advancing, presented a broken wall and were attacked by their opponents. There was no regular shock and the result was a *mêlée*.<sup>68</sup> In this *mêlée*, the dragoons had to cope with the great "disadvantage arising from their swords, which were full six inches shorter than those of the cuirassiers, besides its being the custom of their service to carry the swords in a very bad position whilst charging, the French carrying theirs in a manner much less fatiguing, and also much better for either attack or defence." This was the opinion of lieutenant Waymouth of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards.<sup>69</sup>

Lord Uxbridge disagreed on this point. In his view "no sword should be moved until you are *aux prises*, and then you should point and surely cut. I did not consider in the *mêlée* the shortness of our swords was any disadvantage." And about the cuirass itself he wrote: "I think

the cuirass protects, but it also encumbers, and in a mêlée I am sure the cuirass causes the loss of many a life.”<sup>70</sup>

In other respects French heavy cavalry was unhappy with its “long cumbersome swords” which “were virtually useless in hand-to-hand cavalry fighting, and whose power of penetration was not improved by having the point on the upper edge of the blade.”<sup>71</sup>

Summarizing, though shorter and having a short handle and a flat sword-guard which made it more difficult to hold, the French sabre was more cumbersome and demanded more strength to handle it. At the same time, the length of the blade of British sabre fitted better to its width.<sup>72</sup>

Whatever the use of the mutual weapons may have been, the mêlée was of a short duration. It was decided - as was common in such cases - by a collapse of resolution amongst the cuirassiers which was caused by the fact that the dragoons had been able to penetrate the line if the cuirassiers.<sup>73</sup> Other factors for the French like fatigue and the fact of actually physically being pushed back downhill may have come on top.

As has been described extensively, the brigade of Somerset went into an actual long pursuit instead of carrying out a limited counterattack.

In this pursuit, the regiment to the left, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards, plus the left and centre squadron of the King’s Dragoon Guards were delayed by the broken terrain. This did not apply to the right squadron of the King’s Dragoon Guards: they had their front open and also had the wide and strong slope downhill along the farm of La Haye Sainte which may have given them even more speed.

It gave them a headstart to the 1st regiment of Life Guards on its right, as this most probably had to cope with the irregular slope a bit further to the right. In this impetus and success, the squadron penetrated beyond La Haye Sainte some way into the very heart of French position, where it would become obviously highly exposed and which it would pay dearly for.

After their success, the majorities of both brigades of heavy cavalry became uncontrollable, by pursuing their advantage with excessive zeal.<sup>74</sup> The leadership did attempts to prevent the situation of deteriorating, but failed in a high degree. For Ponsonby’s brigade, major Evans writes that Ponsonby himself and other officers attempted to prevent a further pursuit, but finding that they were not successful in stopping the troops, they were forced to continue on with them in order to continue their exclamations to halt.<sup>75</sup>

In the charge of the brigade, Ponsonby himself started in front of the Royals. After that he extended his command to the left of the brigade, as it was with the Scots Greys that he was eventually cut down.<sup>76</sup>

Somerset himself states, despite his efforts, that the King’s Dragoon Guards penetrated as far as the French position in their sanguine pursuit; the other regiments also got too far out, but Somerset was somehow able to pull them out at an earlier stage.<sup>77</sup> The right squadron of the King’s Dragoon Guards, the one which had wheeled round the farm of La Haye Sainte had bore the brunt in terms of an actual confrontation with fresh enemy troops of all arms.

As the pursuit was continued for too long, the cavalry got dispersed and blown and in that situation the men and horses fell in with well-formed bodies of French cavalry, infantry and artillery to whom they were an easy prey.<sup>78</sup>

As Fletcher puts it: “the British cavalry in the Peninsula had acquired the unavoidable – and undeserved – reputation of “galloping at everything” to use Wellington’s own words, a reputation gained after a few very high-profile misadventures, such as Vimeiro and Maguilla. They had tarnished their initially successful charges by failing to halt and reform, with the result that on more than one occasion, they were in turn roughly handled by enemy cavalry.”<sup>79</sup>

The impetuosity of the men, after their success, can be understood but what were the major causes that this could end up to such catastrophe? The question brings up the elements which

form the heart of cavalry tactics. These were, as Muir puts it, mundane points such as “preserving a reserve, maintaining proper intervals, guarding against flank attacks, reconnoitring the ground and such like; simple, obvious things in theory, but often very difficult to achieve in practice. They were one half of the equation; the other, equally necessary, was the courage and élan to charge with confidence, combined with the discipline to maintain order and to rally when the charge was spent.” And, after a vigorous pursuit “the importance of supporting troops and reserves can hardly be overstated: they would check the enemy’s pursuit and provide secure cover behind which defeated cavalry could rally, catch their breath and regain their courage.”<sup>80</sup>

These elements will be discussed here in the context of the final stages of the charge of the British cavalry against d’Erlon’s infantry and Dubois’ cavalry.

Though there was very little time to prepare the charge, there is no doubt that the commanders of both brigades of British heavy brigade have observed the enemy in front of them so as to assess the right time to charge. It gave them the opportunity to have a better look at the field in front of them to see what chances it could afford them. For Ponsonby it meant a pretty straightforward advance down the slope of the ridge to the lower grounds in front of it, while for Somerset it was clear that the broken ground north of the farm of La Haye Sainte and this farm itself would break up his squadrons, thereby limiting the supervision over his men.

In their charge from the face of the position, the dragoons had the advantage of moving downhill. Yet, as they returned from their pursuit which had been carried too far, they faced also difficulty of returning up the hill with distressed and tired horses.<sup>81</sup>

In their advance, the dragoons of both brigades had no protection of their flanks, which proved fatal for the Scots Greys as they headed south and the King’s Dragoon Guards as they headed east: in both cases the units were charged in their flank by French lancers.

In the situation, many of the horsemen remained in constant physical contact with their foes and this gave the charge a momentum of its own which was not interrupted until the participants had reason to look to their commanders and officers for further instruction. Yet, this moment came for many too late as the cavalry was dragged from one enemy’s mass to the next.<sup>82</sup>

Tempted by their success, the dragoons expressed an excess in élan, but at the same time it was just in this that they showed their lack of experience. According to one member of the Household brigade it “hardly knew how to act due to the fact that it had never been on service before.”<sup>83</sup> The lack of restraint was also due to the standard low number of officers in front to control the horsemen. With the Union brigade this got even worse due to the number of officers held back for guiding back the French prisoners.<sup>84</sup>

In case the cavalry would get out of hand at the end of their charge it was extremely vulnerable to a counter stroke from the enemy. It was therefore of prime importance that their commanders kept part of their force as a reserve to cover their withdrawal.<sup>85</sup>

It is Lord Uxbridge himself who enters into this most important factor in the unsuccessful finalisation of the charge: the absence of a reserve and supports held well back. He says: “After the overthrow of the cuirassiers I had in vain attempted to stop my people by sounding the rally, but neither voice nor trumpet availed; so I went back to seek the support of the second line, which unhappily had not followed the movements of the heavy cavalry. Had I, when I sounded the rally, found only four well-formed squadrons coming steadily along at an easy trot, I feel certain that the loss the first line suffered when they were finally forced back would have been avoided, and most of these guns might have been secured, for it was obvious the effect of that charge had been prodigious, and for the rest of the day, although the cuirassiers frequently attempted to break into our lines, they always did it *mollement* as if they expected something more behind the curtain. [...] This forces from me the remark that I committed a great mistake in having myself led the attack. The *carrière* once begun, the leader

is no better than any other man; whereas, if I had placed myself at the head of the second line, there is no saying what great advantages might not have accrued from it. I am the less pardonable in having deviated from a principle I had laid down for myself, that I had already suffered from a similar error in an affair at Irtragau [?], where my reserve, instead of steadily following as I had ordered, chose to join in the attack, and at the end of it I had no formed body to take advantage with.”<sup>86</sup> In describing the reserve as having actually joined in the charge, it is clear that Uxbridge refers to both the Blues and Scot Greys. At the same time, Uxbridge refers to cavalry which had *not* followed the Household and Union brigade and these were clearly *not* the Blues and the Scots Greys and this suggests that these were not in reserve. This ambiguity brings up the question of Uxbridge’s general order which he had issued in the morning to all commanders of cavalry brigades to act discretionally, as it might be impossible to send orders on every occasion. The “general object was always to support movements in their front.”<sup>87</sup>

The question is whether this order was explicit enough and how it was applied. Shortly before the main French attack would hit the allied line, several brigades of allied cavalry were on the move in the second line to take up positions as a support to the first line (infantry) and second line (cavalry). It were those of Ponsonby, Somerset, Vandeleur, Vivian Trip, De Ghigny and the Cumberland hussars. At least of the first four brigades it becomes clear that they were brought forward by Uxbridge himself.

The others might have acted upon their responsibility to act discretionally. If this would be the case, the fact that they would not have advanced at all might be applicable to Trip and the Cumberland hussars. The question with the other ones was not that they did not advance, but that they did so *too late* (see below). If it would come down to the bare fact that the second line did not follow the first, it could apply to the brigade of Trip and the Cumberland hussars. Resuming, the situation that both the Household and Union were not sufficiently supported was caused by the combination of a certain naievity of Uxbridge in that other brigades would follow, late orders to do so and a general order issued before which apparently had not been explicit enough. And this order was not only the one of Uxbridge; Wellington had given orders that morning that the “troops were, on no account, to leave the position to follow up any temporary advantage.”<sup>88</sup>

A few participants of the British heavy cavalry claim that this force pushed as far as the grand French battery, near La Belle Alliance. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that this claim is simply nonsense.<sup>89</sup> Let alone the simple fact that this extent of the advance would physically be impossible for the horsemen and their chargers in getting there and returning, there are numerous circumstances which clearly indicate that the ridge which the British heavy cavalry reached was the intermediate one.

First of all, there is the temporary presence of the three French batteries there which has misled both participants and non-participants in the description of the battle, as being of the grand battery. Further, the plans which are available of members of the British cavalry clearly refute the claim as they simply show an advance up to the intermediate ridge referred to.<sup>90</sup> It would also have been impossible for the French lancers to appear on the left flank of the Scots Greys if they would have pushed as far as the grand battery; in that case they would have done so to their far left rear instead.

The presence of infantry units on the opposite (=intermediate) ridge has confused historians to such an extent that variations upon the formation of the 1st corps have been made up so as to explain this presence, while at the same time other units have been involved which in fact played no role whatsoever.<sup>91</sup> As has been shown before, it were the units of the 6th corps which stood there.

About the time the action of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps commenced, both major general Vivian and Vandeleur received an order from Lord Uxbridge “to engage the enemy whenever they could do so with advantage without waiting for orders, and subsequently an order came from the duke of Anglesey to close to the infantry, which had left a vacancy by closing to its right.”<sup>92</sup>

In the context of this timeframe, it is highly probable that both commanders received this order from Uxbridge the moment he was about to launch the heavy cavalry against the French 1st corps and the accompanying cuirassiers.

The initiative for the advance to the position to the left of Pack’s brigade was therefore Uxbridge’s. At that moment Ponsonby had already been repulsed and as it took Vandeleur some time to cross the low ground between his former and second position, he brought forward his brigade as quickly as was consistent with order.

In these circumstances it was impossible for Vandeleur to act as a proper reserve and support for Ponsonby in his charge as it was simply too late to do so. Vandeleur now merely could save the remains of the Union brigade which were now retiring precipitately and in disorder to their original position.<sup>93</sup>

Vandeleur left his 11th regiment in reserve as Vivian’s brigade had to cross the same low ground.<sup>94</sup> Eventually, this regiment had a role in receiving its fellow regiments.<sup>95</sup> Of these, the 16th light dragoons had been successful against the French lancers and returned in relative good order.

Previous to the charge, both regiment had been ordered by Vandeleur not to pass the hollow ground in front. Yet, after its success against the French infantry, the 12<sup>th</sup> regiment of light dragoons was tempted to do so, just as it happened with the Scots Greys. Similarly, it got into the counter-actions of French infantry and cavalry thus facing serious losses. Its commander, lieutenant colonel Frederick Ponsby, says about this: “I have said that a good many men fell on the crest of the French position. I know we ought not to have been there, and that we fell into the same error which we went down to correct, but I believe that this is an error almost inevitable after a successful charge, and it must always depend upon the steadiness of a good support to prevent serious consequences. In a great battle the support is at hand, and I am therefore firmly of opinion that although we sustained a greater loss that we should have done if our squadrons had remained compact, the enemy suffered a greater loss, was thrown into more confusion, and required more time to re-establish order, than if greater regularity had been preserved.”<sup>96</sup>

The excuse of Ponsonby has some truth in it when it comes down the column of Durutte, but if the regiment might have stuck to this success only, such high casualties as it sustained now would in all probability have been avoided.<sup>97</sup> They resulted in the regiment advancing beyond this mass of infantry towards the intermediate ridge and that was the moment Ponsonby should have attempted to rally his men. There is no indication that he did so; shortly after Ponsonby himself was severely wounded.

By the time Vandeleur approached the extremity of the intermediate ridge, a French combined force of all weapons was there: the cavalry of Jacquinet, the 85th regiment of the line and to its left the artillery of its division. These guns must therefore have been in the near vicinity of the place where the three intact batteries of the grand battery had stood shortly before.

Sir Hussey Vivian had orders not to engage and be kept entire, until the arrival of the Prussians.<sup>98</sup> Yet, Vivian moved to his right to assist Vandeleur. As a compromise, he left one of his regiments in its original position.

The initiative of Gardiner to move up two of his guns was an infringement upon the orders for Vivian to be kept entire. Originally, their advance was intended to assist the Union brigade but they were delayed due to the state of the ground. Eventually, their action was cut short

prematurely by the French gunfire and this, apart from the infringement, was an additional reason to withdraw them instantly.<sup>99</sup>

As the three regiments of British light dragoons pulled back through the infantry, the French lancers were apparently that bold in their pursuit that it was felt necessary by both Constant Rebecque and De Ghigny to engage at least the 4th regiment of light dragoons to cover their retreat in turn. The regiment was successful in driving them off but in its impetuosity it almost fell into the same error as the Scots Greys and 12<sup>th</sup> regiment of light dragoons had done by pushing as far as the French position. In historiography, the representation of De Ghigny's share in defeating the 1st corps has seriously suffered from distortion due to the lack of proper sources.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, those sources which are available are often incomplete in describing the whole context of the involvement or simply remain silent about specific details, which makes their interpretation more difficult.

In his account, De Ghigny himself doesn't have a differentiated approach when it comes down to the share of each of his regiments. In fact, he only enters upon the action of the light dragoons and says nothing about Vandeleur's situation.<sup>101</sup>

Colonel Van Heerdt, De Ghigny's chief of staff, doesn't mention Vandeleur either. Yet, he makes a clear difference between the roles of each of both regiments of the brigade.<sup>102</sup>

Constant Rebecque, in his turn, is rather general in his version of the events but is more explicit in the purposes of the advance of both regiments.<sup>103</sup> In what these three accounts have in common, the basic pattern upon which the involvement of the brigade of De Ghigny can be reconstructed.<sup>104</sup>

It should be noted that, originally, the Union brigade would have been supported by the horse battery of captain Whinyates, had it not been seriously delayed. Though the rockets might have caused more amazement as actual harm, it now had its share in shattering the enemy's morale after its defeat even more.<sup>105</sup>

In an overall assessment of the charge of both the Household and Union brigade, lord Uxbridge wrote: "the first part of the advance was perfectly regular but soon the irregularity of the ground and the various obstacles and the difficulty of making a passage through the infantry (not two squadrons having been able to effect this in a similar manner) broke the regularity of the line. It soon, however, reformed but then each squadron was so very soon upon the opposing masses that it at once became a mêlée and ended in the total confusion and dispersion of the French cavalry, infantry and artillery."<sup>106</sup>

And sir Hussey Vivian stated about the one of the Union brigade: "Whilst about the same time the desperate attack of the brigade of heavy cavalry under the command of major-general sir William Ponsonby on the columns of French infantry advancing against our position on the left of the road, and its complete success, had an influence on the battle infinitely greater than has ever been admitted; indeed, having myself witnessed from my position on the left the complete success of the charge, and the consequences to the French infantry, I cannot but consider it as one of the most important features of the battle."<sup>107</sup>

There is no doubt whatsoever that in the charge the element of surprise came to a climax and that it was most destructive to the French forces in what ought to have been their main attack. Vivian says about it: "its complete success had an influence on the battle infinitely greater than has ever been admitted; indeed, having myself witnessed from my position on the left the complete success of the charge, and the consequences to the French infantry, I cannot but consider it as one of the most important features of the battle."<sup>108</sup> In itself this correct, but it should be emphasized that this success could only be possible in the context of the efficient

use of the terrain and the previous engagement of the French with the allied infantry and artillery, brief in the context of Wellington's defensive tactics.

### **The actions around the farm of La Haye Sainte.**

Situated in front of Wellington's line, the farm of La Haye Sainte presented an advanced post which could serve as a breakwater to absorb energy of the enemy's attacks.

In the actions as they developed during the attack of the 1st corps, it served its purpose well: it consumed about 2000 men into an action which was basically meant as a preparatory one for the main attack of this corps.

That is why it took off at an earlier stage as the main attack of the majority of the corps did (see below). The way the French assaulted the farm, however, does not reflect a full-scale neutralisation as one would expect for what was to be the main attack of the battle.

During his survey of Wellington's position, it could have become clear to colonel Haxo and his escort that the farm, with its walled courtyard and outbuildings, presented a rectangular and closed complex which afforded little access. Though both main gates were open, it could be expected that these would be closed when the moment was there to do so.

Taking this impression further, a full-scale neutralisation would first of all demand a preparatory bombardment to make sure access was possible by turning these buildings into a pile of rubble. As the farm was within range, siege-artillery could easily have done so but this type of artillery was not available. The farm in French hands would also allow them to approach Wellington's line from a much closer range.

Now, the assault took place under the fire of the grand battery which basically fired over the heads of the units involved. Also, no escalades were attempted as apparently materials to do so were unavailable. Also, no pioneers were present with materials to cut down or blow up the main gates.<sup>109</sup>

In their superior numbers it could be expected that the French easily took the orchard from the Hanoverians, but in the actual confrontation with the farm itself the French assault restricted itself to a mutual musketry-fire on the east-side of the farm. On the west-side the only point where the French could be actively engaged was the main gate of the barn, which was open. At the same time, other parties of the French gradually advanced along the closed flanks of the farm thereby reaching the garden on its other side.

The combination of the very restricted accessibility of the farm for the French on the one hand and the high number of them on the other, gives the struggle more the impression of a containment as of a full-scale neutralisation.

From this perspective one could wonder how and why about 2000 men were used to assault the farm. Seen from the conditions in which the attack took place, there can be no doubt that the majority of these forces had a far more passive role as is often portrayed.<sup>110</sup>

As the action eventually developed, even before the French infantry could actually press home its attack upon the farm-buildings themselves, it was swept back by the British cavalry coming down on both sides of the farm.

The role of the brigade of cuirassiers was initially restricted to cover the actions of the infantry around the farm of La Haye Sainte. For the French, this worked out well as soon as attempts were done by Hanoverian units to reinforce its garrison. As soon as the French advance around the farm and the main attack had sufficiently developed, the cuirassiers were launched to cover the left flank of the first echelon which was to hit Wellington's centre on the other side of the farm.

Though the farm had the aspect of a fortress, it was not used by the garrison to its full extent. This was due to a lack of material and manpower. Most of the material which could have been used for scaffolding was no longer there as it had been used to make bivouac fires. Even the



main gate on the west side of the farm was removed for that reason. Other than that, the pioneer section of the battalion was sent to Gomont on the night before.

As a result, the garrison had to improvise in blocking the west-gate. And in the east-wall the number of apertures was restricted to three, but this was also because there was simply no place for more.<sup>111</sup>

At the moment of truth, the east-gate was closed in time, while the open one on the other side of the farm was defended successfully. The small door on the north-side of the farm was kept open for communication but it is not sure whether it was closed off in time.

As an advanced post, it was for the allies obviously most important to keep open the communication with the main position and this was accordingly done as soon this was threatened. Though these attempts were brief counter-strokes against French infantry hovering around the farm, they proved to be insufficient without sufficient support of cavalry. It was because of the overall success of the allied forces against the French attack that the farm was not isolated from the main position.

### **The actions around Gomont.**

The starting point and background for assessing the French actions in and around Gomont is its neutralisation before the moment the grand first offensive was to take place, i.e. around 1.30 pm. As long as the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> corps in this offensive wasn't fully secured, Gomont kept its significance for the French.

In the initial phase of the action, the wood was taken, but also easily lost. The intervention by high command to speed up its occupation again clearly shows that the attack on Gomont was an integral preliminary action for the grand offensive. Apparently, the first attempt to take and maintain the wood consumed a lot of forces.

Although not strictly necessary for the general aim of the attack, a first attack upon the buildings and garden was deemed proper to see whether they could be taken without too much trouble. There is no doubt that the French knew about their existence as they were clearly visible from the west. The attempt proved to be futile.

Despite the local success in the wood, the French front line at Gomont had by 1 p.m. not developed as it should have done within the time-frame and in the way as set by high command that morning. It was therefore that another intervention took place which resulted in a bombardment of the buildings, another advance against them and a strong emphasis on the one against the orchard to make sure the front line was established all way through.

Both Reille and Guilleminot are clear on the fact that a second and any other subsequent attack on the buildings weren't part of the deal.<sup>112</sup> At battalion level, chef de bataillon Jolyet is just as clear: the men were not supposed to attack the buildings, but the skirmishers of his battalion were yet tempted to do so.<sup>113</sup> Jérôme's role here remains obscure, the more as he remains silent about this phase of the action himself; in fact, he doesn't speak about the presence of any buildings at all.<sup>114</sup>

From these circumstances it seems that the decision to attack the buildings after the first attempt was made on the spot, by local commanders. At this phase of the action, in the sector alluded to, colonel De Cubières and Soye were in charge. Although obviously aware of his instructions, colonel De Cubières in his attempt to turn the buildings to his left seems to have been induced by the retreat of the British. Eager to seize a local success, but not specifically bent upon taking the buildings, De Cubières drove the British forces back along the complex. In the process, the French were surprised to find the north gate on their immediate right and made an impulsive attempt to break into the courtyard from there.

A strong skirmishing line could be maintained in front of the buildings and garden and with the loss for the allies of orchard by 2 p.m. the French aim had strictly spoken been attained,

but it was to be of a short duration, as the orchard could not be consolidated. And if it had been, it was overtaken by the failure of the first grand offensive.

For Wellington's defence, the complex of Gomont offered several pros and cons. As a total complex it lay in the open fields and in such a way that any approach by the enemy was clearly visible from the main allied position. This visibility made it possible to intervene from a larger perspective there at the appropriate moment. Additionally, French access from outside the complex was vulnerable to enemy gunfire, particularly to the east of the complex. This became all too clear during the action.

At the same time, this situation made it impossible for Wellington to cover the post on its flanks.<sup>115</sup> This made it particularly vulnerable for attacks there, but these were not carried out in a combined way and on a larger scale in a way to envelop the complex as a whole. It was used by the French though against the wood, which proved successful. Its proximity to the enemy's position and its open character with low cover against musketry fire made it hard for its garrison to maintain a prolonged defence anyway and was therefore duly given up.

The west side of the complex was vulnerable to enemy gunfire, which eventually was taken advantage of by the French. They did not push through this success however due to the fact that this did not serve as a direct protection of the grand offensive.

In rear of the wood, the buildings, the garden and the strongly hedged orchard allowed the garrison to establish a strong defence line, which was accordingly done.<sup>116</sup> In this way, the wood served as the perfect breakwater for this line.<sup>117</sup> Within this defence line, a strong lateral support from the garden to the orchard was possible.<sup>118</sup> This was also the case between the buildings and the garden (and vice versa) in case of necessity.

An overall tactical control and command within these sectors proved impossible though due to the restricted visibility and broken ground. Overall, there were three sectors: first, the orchard which initially was under the command of lord Saltoun and later of colonel Hepburn. The garden and the buildings around the northern courtyard were under the command of colonel Woodford, while most of those around the southern courtyard fell under the command of major Büsgen. All of these commanders acted according to their own discretion.<sup>119</sup>

### **General observations.**

Traditionally, the time-line in the attack of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps is that the advance for the attack upon La Haye Sainte took place at the same time as the one of the remainder of the 1st corps. This representation, however, is incorrect. The starting point for this statement is the fact that cuirassiers of Dubois' brigade emerged on Bourgeois' flank the moment this column was driven down the slope by Kempt's brigade. This means that the *mêlée* of the cuirassiers and the Household brigade on the ridge preceded the advance of Kempt's brigade. The same was the case with the confrontation of the column of Donzelot with the Royals at the Ohain-road. As both the Union and Household brigade charged at virtually the same moment, it means that the confrontation of both this French division and the cuirassiers with their opponents took place at about the same time. By the time the cuirassiers of Dubois had reached the ridge, they had witnessed the events around the farm of La Haye Sainte.

In case both brigades of Quiot and Bourgeois would have left their respective positions at the same time, it would mean that the actions around the farm took as much time as it took Bourgeois to cover the distance to Wellington's position, which is almost 20 to 25 minutes.

This sequence is impossible. It took the infantry of Quiot and the cavalry of Dubois much more time to advance towards the farm, to take its orchard, to attack the farm itself, to advance along its flanks towards its garden on the opposite side and to repel the attempt of

the Hanoverians who came to the aid of the garrison. This process must at least have taken three quarters of an hour.

The moment of touch-down at the allied front-line of both the cuirassiers and the divisions of Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet was almost the same. This moment most probably was around 2.15 p.m.<sup>120</sup> This would mean that Quiot's brigade left its position at least around 1.30 p.m. The remainder of the corps departed from its positions after 1.45 p.m. as it needed about 20 to 25 minutes to cross the space between both front-lines.<sup>121</sup>

As has been shown before, the confrontation of the French infantry with the allied infantry and cavalry along the ridge was of a short duration, 10 or 15 minutes at the most. This means that by 2.30 p.m. the corps was in full retreat.<sup>122</sup> As the full attack had run to its end by 3 p.m., it means that the actions which took place after the initial defeat of the infantry of the 1st corps at the Ohain-road took almost half an hour.<sup>123</sup>

In historiography, Napoleon's leadership in the attack of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps is most of all restricted in relation to the formation of the corps. As has been shown, however, this formation was just a part of the much larger proportions of the main attack. It was an integral part of a combination of a grand battery, two and a half infantry corps, a large mass of heavy cavalry and the Imperial Guard. From that perspective, there is no doubt whatsoever that the emperor was the one who was responsible for the design of the total set-up of the attack. This explains why he was in a position to witness it all from close-by. It was to be *the* event of the day.

Right from the start, both the 1<sup>st</sup> corps and the brigade of Dubois were engaged and this was obviously on the direct orders of Napoleon and Ney, the more as Ney had the command over the grand attack.<sup>124</sup>

While Napoleon was preparing his grand attack, his opponent was watching the struggle for Gomont. Lord Uxbridge writes: "I had been visiting the extreme right of the cavalry, and those placed in support of the attack on Hougoumont, when, on my returning towards the centre of the position, I observed very large masses of the enemy, both cavalry, infantry (supported, too, by a tremendous discharge of artillery from all parts of the line), moving upon our left, but principally on La Haye Sainte, the road from Genappe to Brussels appearing to be nearly the centre of their advance.

I immediately galloped to the heavy cavalry, and ordered the Household Brigade to prepare to form line, passed to sir William Ponsonby's, and having told him to wheel into line when the other brigade did, I instantly returned to the Household Brigade, and put the whole into motion."<sup>125</sup>

There are no accounts confirming that Wellington, from a position in his centre or its immediate vicinity, observed Napoleon's preparations for his main attack. From lord Fitzroy Somerset's account it does not really become clear what Wellington did at this stage. He describes that the duke watched the events around Gomont for about one and a half hours after the start of the battle and that he then, before 2 p.m., headed for the centre of the line.<sup>126</sup>

The most probable scenario is that Wellington left his position in front of the left flank of the Foot Guards of Maitland's brigade towards 2.15 p.m., the moment the clash of both the French cuirassiers and the 1<sup>st</sup> corps on the ridge took place. As he approached the event, he was in time to witness the advance of the Household brigade down the slope of the ridge and its subsequent success. This was most probably from a place on the high ground between the brigades of Von Ompteda and Kielmansegge, some 180 metres west of the Brussels road. It was also there that Uxbridge, as he returned from the charge, met him, surrounded by his staff.<sup>127</sup>

The absence of Wellington and Uxbridge in the centre of the position the moment the French grand battery unleashed its bombardment brings up the question of what they thought about

this event. At that moment both were further to the right, i.e. Wellington above Gomont and Uxbridge beyond this point.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, sir J. Byng wrote to the duke of York: “the duke of Wellington himself in the early part of the day gave his particular attention to that point [Gomont] and when called to the left by a serious attack at that point, he confided it to my care etc.”<sup>128</sup>

Some 20 years later, Uxbridge wrote: “I had been visiting the extreme right of the cavalry, and those placed in support of the attack on Hougomont, when, on returning towards the centre of the position, I observed very large masses of the enemy, both cavalry and infantry (supported, too, by a tremendous discharge of artillery from all parts of their line), moving upon our left, but principally on La Haye Sainte, the road from Genappe to Brussels appearing to be nearly the centre of their advance.”<sup>129</sup>

From both these descriptions it becomes clear that for both men at least the bombardment of the grand battery was absorbed by the extant gunfire and that it apparently did not implicate for them some action further their left. For Wellington it meant that he was called to the left as that a major attack was about to take place, while for Uxbridge it was by sheer coincidence that he discovered the imminent confrontation.

There is no doubt that the local commanders in centre and left wing were at some point of time aware that some major action was about to take place by the preceding bombardment and the subsequent advance of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps to the low ground in front of the ridge of La Belle Alliance for its formation in columns there. This formation may have partly been screened by the intermediate ridge, but observers on the opposite ridge felt right then that some major event was about to take place. It was also for this reason – amongst others – that both brigades of heavy cavalry advanced towards the ridge without the interference of lord Uxbridge. From there, it was Uxbridge himself who launched them into their charge, but if he would not have been there there is no doubt that they would have done so themselves.

How many men of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps after its defeat were still capable of fighting is – at best - impossible to estimate.<sup>130</sup> The number of prisoners was most probably around 1900.<sup>131</sup> Additionally, the 1<sup>st</sup> corps lost two eagles, those of the 45<sup>th</sup> and the 105<sup>th</sup> *régiment de ligne*.<sup>132</sup> Also, some guns had been disabled as the crews were partly killed or wounded or scattered, but how many these were remains unclear.<sup>133</sup>

As for Wellington’s forces, overall casualties are equally virtually impossible to determine, especially for the infantry and artillery.<sup>134</sup> To some extent though, they can be deducted for several cavalry units as several sources refer to a reorganisation immediately after the attack into smaller formations.

One of them was the 12<sup>th</sup> regiment of light dragoons. In the charge its casualties were such that it was reduced from three into two squadrons. This means that it lost about one third of its strength.<sup>135</sup>

At the end of the battle, the regiments of the British heavy cavalry were all seriously depleted. Often, this situation is connected to the casualties as they had suffered them after their successful charge against d’Erlon’s corps and the cuirassers. Even though these losses were strong, the military valour of both brigades had not been annihilated at that moment. After the charge, the regiments of the Union brigade were each reformed from three into two squadrons.<sup>136</sup> Using this reorganisation, plus 900 men as the total initial strength of the brigade as a reference point, it would mean that the brigade lost roughly about one third of its strength, i.e. about 300 men. As one squadron of the Inniskillings was used after the attack to escort the French prisoners to Brussels, the brigade was eventually left with about 500 men in the field.

Of the Household brigade, both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards and King’s Dragoons Guards suffered the most and these were most probably reduced to one and two squadrons respectively.<sup>137</sup> For the other regiments there was probably no reason to be re-organized because of their lower casualties

and their *total* losses might count for about one squadron. The brigade in all probability went through a similar process as the Union brigade after its initial charge against d'Erlon and the cuirassiers. Summarizing lord Edward Somerset's references, it could be inferred that his brigade counted by the end of the charge about six squadrons, i.e. some 700 men.<sup>138</sup> From all this it can be concluded - at least in the sense of numbers - that by 3.30 p.m. both brigades of British heavy cavalry had *not* lost their military potential altogether.<sup>139</sup>

### **Evaluation of the attack of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps.**

In knowing the outcome of the first French offensive, it is tempting to criticize the French deficiencies on the one hand and the allied successful measures on the other to explain Wellington's success. Obviously, these should be weighed to find out where the causes of the French defeat can be found.

As has been shown, however, the event contained many physical and tactical features which make a further analysis more complex as it seems to be at first sight. While recognizing these complexities, two of them however stand out in the crux of the event. They are: nerve and timing.

Starting point in this, is the moment the division of Donzelot was able to penetrate into the allied position on the ridge, where it advanced unchecked until it was charged by Ponsonby's brigade. At the same time there was the division of Marcognet hesitating in front of the British infantry after having undergone its volley.

Had the heavy British cavalry not been present at the right moment to prevent him from doing so, Donzelot would have been able to establish his division upon the ridge as a solid mass. This situation would have brought both this division, as well as probably the one of Marcognet as a result, in a protracted firefight with the surrounding enemy infantry. As captain Kennedy Clark put it in 1839: "I ask you as an officer of experience, how long the British army could have held its position if the count d'Erlon's corps had been able to occupy the ridge that the head of their columns had gained ? I may be in error, but I cannot help thinking it the most critical moment of the day."<sup>140</sup>

Of course Kennedy Clark also wrote this to enlarge the significance of the charge of his own brigade, yet the example is merely to show that there was a fleeting opportunity for the French in this moment of partial success to engage their massive cavalry reserve (Milhaud and Lefebvre Desnouettes) to break the local stalemate in their favour in a shock action. In the situation as it evolved, however, it was the British cavalry which did so in theirs by their timely intervention.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shaw Kennedy, J. – Notes etc. p.86, 107  
Adkin, M. - The Waterloo companion p.295, 353  
Uffindell, A. - On the fields of glory p.163

<sup>2</sup> The distance between the centre of the intermediate ridge to the Ohain-road is 650 metres and to the farmbuildings of La Haye Sainte about 500 metres.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for instance major Baring (2<sup>nd</sup> battalion light infantry KGL). In: VPH, nr.30

<sup>4</sup> In: Souvenirs et correspondance sur la bataille de Waterloo p. 53

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gassendi's artillery manual. In: [www.napoleonistyka.atspace.com](http://www.napoleonistyka.atspace.com)  
Haythornthwaite, Ph. – Napoleon's military machine p.44

<sup>6</sup> Lenient ignores the differences in distances by simply stating that the French battery was positioned 1500 metres from Wellington's line. In: La solution des énigmes de Waterloo p.438

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ensign Mounstevan (28th regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.104-106  
Memorandum of captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94  
Captain Rogers (battery Rogers). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.227-234  
Captain Ingilby (battery Gardiner). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.266-271 and in his diary. In: RAI, nr.MD 797  
Private Farmer (11th regiment of light dragoons). In: The light dragoon p.154  
Corporal Dickson (Scots Greys). In: Bruce Low, E. – With Napoleon at Waterloo p.143  
Cf. Major Evans. In: NLS, adv.46.9.19

<sup>8</sup> Cited by Adkin. In: The Waterloo companion p.301  
The identity of the officer is unknown as Adkin gives no source.  
Major Müller (Bremen battalion) confirms that the fire was aimed too high, as initially very few men were hit. Those who were, were the Nassau and cavalry units in his rear. Some time later, the range of fire would have been adjusted thereby bringing about some casualties, after which the men had to lie down. In: VPH, nr.40

Sergeant Dewar (79th regiment) writes in a letter dated 5th August 1815: "Our brigade was ordered to cover about 30 pieces of artillery and we suffered severely from the enemys big shot etc." In: NWMS, nr.1960.2

<sup>9</sup> Cf. First lieutenant Scheltens. In: In: Souvenirs d'un vieux soldat Belge de la garde impériale p.200  
Captain Rogers (battery Rogers) states he lost some horses by gunfire. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.227-234

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.265-268, 281-284  
Captain Naylor. In: King's Dragoon Guards Museum. Nr.CARDG 1985-1199  
Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94  
Private Hasker of the same regiment confirms that balls went whistling over the height, hitting the regiment now and then. Cf. his account. In: <http://www.qdg.org.uk/diaries.php?dy=36>

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Captain Elton (KDG) writes that his regiment moved forward so as to evade the French gunfire; after they had done so, it passed over the heads of the members of the regiment, of which its place was taken by cavalry of the army of the Netherlands [Trip]. In: former [www.1815.ltd.uk](http://www.1815.ltd.uk) Original in: Wiltshire and Swindon archives, nr.413/382

Captain Von Brandis (aide de camp of Von Ompteda) confirms that the British (Household brigade), Netherlands (Trip) and Hanoverian (Cumberland) cavalry in his rear suffered from the French gunfire. In: Dehnel, H. *Erinnerungen deutscher Officiere etc.* p.287

Later, as Von Vincke's two battalions stood in the centre, French gunfire passed over them but hitting the medical post in its immediate rear. Cf. report of Surgeon Lauprecht. In: VPH, nr.97

<sup>11</sup> Muilwijk comes to an area of about 1200 metres long and 400 metres deep. In: *Standing firm at Waterloo* p.124

Adkin makes a distinction between a target area A and B, south and north of the Ohain-road respectively. However, as Adkin's starting point – a position of the grand battery on the intermediate ridge – is incorrect, his conclusions about Wellington's casualties in these areas hencewith bear no ground. Other than that, these figures are simply impossible to calculate and therefore too far open for conjecture. Cf. *The Waterloo companion* p.298-299

Captain Von Scriba says that around 2 p.m. his battalion moved a bit to the right to get some more shelter against the French gunfire. Cf. Scriba, C.von *Das leichte Bataillon etc.* p.91

Also, it was by 1 or 1.30 p.m. that all three battalions of Von kruse's brigade had been drawn slightly towards the slope of the ridge to shelter them more for the French gunfire. Cf. previous chapter.

Ensign Batty (1<sup>st</sup> Foot Guards) adds that before 4 p.m. both battalions had been lying down for a few hours on the slope of the ridge because of the fire. Cf. Letter dated 23rd June 1815 p. 14 Private collection.

<sup>12</sup> In: *Souvenirs et correspondance sur la bataille de Waterloo* p. 52

<sup>13</sup> In: *La solution des énigmes etc.* p.437

<sup>14</sup> Lenient, in his criticism for not using the intermediate ridge, uses arguments of accessibility through the main road and the better state of the higher ground, and also a start from an earlier hour as it happened now.

Yet, apart from the fact that it would have brought the grand battery far too near to Wellington's line and exposed, the high road and more time would not have added anything material as the 1st corps was on the night of the 17th of June extended all along the frontline which both the 1st and 2nd corps would have on the 18th. In: *La solution des énigmes etc.* p.436-439, 446, 455

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Aerts, W. *Etudes etc. Livre V (manuscript)* p.55

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lord FitzRoy Somerset. In: NAM, nr.6507-1

Sir H.Vivian. In: BL, Add.ms.34.99-107a

Major general Kempt in his report dated 19th of June. In: WSD, Vol.X p.535-537

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From his position, Kempt could most probably not see Durutte's column. More specifically, Kempt speaks about a "mass of infantry" approaching his brigade [Bourgeois] and of a "separate column that had come up to our left where Pack's brigade was stationed." [Donzelot] In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.305-306

Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld (2<sup>nd</sup> division of the army of the Netherlands). In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: NA, nr.2.13.14.01 nr.8

Private Rem (7<sup>th</sup> battalion of national militia). In: Aantekeningen van een veteraan etc.

Both Rem and Van Zuylen van Nijeveld speak from a more central position from which they could see the columns from Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet.

Captain Van Bronkhorst (7<sup>th</sup> battalion of national militia) speaks of "dichte massa's." In: Letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> July 1815. In: Ons leger (1983) 67 nr.6 p.32-38

Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.83-84 and in a letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> of July to his brother (three columns counting at least 9000 men in all). In: [www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200/](http://www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200/)

Lieutenant Clifton (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.73-76

Both Clifton and Muter also speak from a central position of the Union brigade charging three large columns (in this case those of Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet).

Lieutenant colonel Miller (Inniskillings) mentions three or more columns or squares being charged by the Union brigade. This correct: Ponsonby charged four columns of the corps (those of Bourgeois, Donzelot, Marcognet and Durutte). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.79-81

Lieutenant colonel Gomm speaks of the right column as heading for the 92nd regiment. [Marcognet] This means that for him there were two other columns (a central and right one) further to its left [Donzelot and Bourgeois]. In: BL, Add.34.706 p.200-296

In his other account he confirms this impression by stating that two columns were going through the low ground [Donzelot and Marcognet], while the third one was heading towards the Brussels road [Bourgeois]. From his position, he apparently missed the one from Durutte. In: Letters and journals p.358

The only allied eyewitness who states there were four columns is lieutenant Simmons (1st battalion, 95th regiment). In: A British rifleman etc. p.365

Here, taking it from his position, he might be speaking of the ones of Quiot (attacking La Haye Sainte), Bourgeois, Donzelot and Marcognet. It might also be that he took this number from a later source.

<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant Hope (92<sup>nd</sup> regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.18-21

Major Evans. In: NLS, Adv.46.9.19

For the individual column of Donzelot the high strength is confirmed by captain Kennedy Clark (Royals) (he mentions 4000) and ensign Mounsteven (28th regiment) ("an immensely strong corps of support"). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.10-12 and 34.707 p.104-106

Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskilling Dragoons) speaks of the destruction by his brigade of three heavy columns at least 9000. Cf. his letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> of July to his brother. In private collection. In: [www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200/](http://www.nam.ac.uk/waterloo200/)

<sup>18</sup> Koontz, who carried out a more extensive study on the number of columns in the attack of the 1st corps, writes: "I am now in a position to offer an alternative to the accepted modern account of d'Erlon's formations in his attack. I offer this as nothing more than a hypothesis, in full awareness of the fact that it is an over elaborate construction for the data employed, and suffers from the defect of depending on the no doubt clouded memories of those who were at the receiving end of the attack, not those who delivered it."



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Although the divisions started their advance as divisional columns (except for those of Bourgeois and Pégot), his hypothesis is that - by the time they hit the allied line, at least those of Donzelot and Marcogent had each split into two smaller columns *en echelon*.

By facing a lack of both British and French sources (in fact he virtually only uses those accounts as published by H.T.Siborne in 1894) or by simply making incorrect interpretations of those he has, Koontz concludes that there were more as the one brigade column of Bourgeois and the two divisional columns of Donzelot and Marcogent attacking Wellington's frontline in that formation.

Also, by not including the division of Durutte in the attack alluded to and by simply supposing that battalions stepped off from the columns while advancing (as would have been *intentional* by d'Erlon himself), Koontz makes the picture more complicated as it actually is. His statement of the columns of Bourgeois and Donzelot crossing each other while advancing, makes the picture even more puzzling. Koontz is misled by the capture of the eagle of the 105th as having taken place right in front of the centre squadron of the Royals in the confrontation right away, while it occurred some time later and a bit further to the right.

Eventually, by excluding the corps of Lobau as being the forces in rear of the artillery in the French position (as these would be too far back), Koontz concludes that these could only be of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps. In relation to this, his extent of the charge of heavy cavalry towards the French position remains unclear.

Moreover, Koontz' remark that Pack's brigade did not have any confrontation with the French while one of his sources clearly mentions it, is simply unacceptable. In: Notes on d'Erlon's first attack at Waterloo. Part II In: Empires, Eagles and Lions. Nr.79 (1984) p.19-44

Koontz published his study in 1984, but its main conclusions and characteristics had already been described in the same way by William Siborne some 150 years earlier. So Koontz' alternative was not "an alternative to the modern account of d'Erlon's formation."

At the same time, a number of Siborne's conclusions are even more unacceptable simply because of the fact that he *had* access to many more *British* sources, which Koontz had not. A few examples of such conclusions are:

-the switching of Quiot's and Donzelot's divisions, based upon the capture of the eagle of the 105<sup>th</sup>

-the small front of the columns of the French (about 37 metres instead of 80 to 90)

-the parallel advance of the forces attacking La Haye Sainte and the remainder of Wellington's position

-the creation of columns which did not exist in relation to the charge of Union brigade

-to assign front extensions to the British battalions which are too large in general (cf.plan of his model)

-the total neglecting of the share of Pégot's brigade in the attack

In: History of the war etc. Vol.II p.3-42

<sup>19</sup> Muir, R. - Tactics and the experience of battle etc. p.103

<sup>20</sup> Cf. separate note.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mémoires pour servir etc. p.141

Ney in his account to the duke of Otrante. In: LMB, As.1301

D'Erlon. In: la vie etc.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. extensive note with an overview of the criticism upon the formation of the 1<sup>st</sup> corps.

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Bleibtreu also explicitly denies the possibility of a misunderstanding. In: England's grosse Waterloo Lüge p.289

<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant Kincaid (1<sup>st</sup> battalion 95<sup>th</sup> regiment) writes: "our files [...] opened such a fire on the advancing skirmishers as quickly brought them to a standstill; but their columns advanced steadily through them, although our incessant tiralade was telling in their centre with fearful exactness." In: Adventures etc. p.333-334

Captain Van Bronkhorst of the 7th battalion of national militia writes about the French skirmishers: "Zij waren in dichte massa's verenigd en werden voorafgegaan door een groot aantal tirailleurs die ons veel moeilijkheden bezorgden." In: Ons Leger 1983 JG.67 nr.6 p.32-38

Cf. Scheltens, 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant - Souvenirs etc. p.201

Last but not least, it was general Picton who fell from French skirmisher-fire.

<sup>24</sup> As has been shown, the brigade of Van Bijlandt and the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion / 95<sup>th</sup> regiment acted as first line and they had both their light troops as skirmishers in front, as the units of Kempt's brigade had. For those of Pack's brigade there is no evidence for this, however.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Griffith, P. - French Napoleonic infantry tactics 1792-1815 p.25

<sup>26</sup> Kempt, in his report dated 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1815, confirms the fact that the three columns directed their heads on the right [Bourgeois], centre [Donzelot] and left [Marcognet] of the position to the left of the chaussée. In: WSD, Vol.X p.536

<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant Wyndham (Scots Greys) mentions a distance of about 300 metres (average), while captain Childers (11<sup>th</sup> light dragoons) states he met the column at about 90 to 135 metres from the Ohain-road; his impression was that it was moving on apparently not being aware of the main attack having failed. In: BL, Add.34.707 p. 21-22 and 34.704 p.165-166

<sup>28</sup> According to Janin, both the columns of Bourgeois and Marcognet converged upon the one of Donzelot, but for the one of Marcognet we have found no proof for this. In: Campagne de Waterloo etc. p.33

<sup>29</sup> Captain Duthilt. In: Les mémoires du capitaine Duthilt. p.302

<sup>30</sup> Lieutenant Martin (45<sup>th</sup> regiment of the line) confirms both the presence of high corn and mud. In: Souvenirs etc. p.287

Both lieutenant Winchester (92<sup>nd</sup> regiment) and lieutenant Riddock (44<sup>th</sup> regiment) confirm that at least the terrain where the column of Marcognet approached and hit the allied position was covered with low vegetation. Winchester speaks of grass, while Riddocks believes the vegetation was composed of vetches and potatoes.

Winchester writes: "... on the 18th June and immediately in front where the 92<sup>nd</sup> was stationed at the commencement of the battle, was a grass field which went all the way from the hedge down to the channel which divides the valley between La Haye Sainte and La Belle Alliance, and indeed I think the whole of the ground in front of our position from the road at La Haye Sainte to the enclosures at Papelotte was a grass field. The position to the left of the road which the troops stood upon previous to the battle commencing had had a crop of grain on it, but which had been cut down before we took up our ground on the afternoon on the 17<sup>th</sup> - to the rear of the left of our position where the 92<sup>nd</sup> stood was a clover field."

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William Siborne made a survey of the ground during the 1830's, enquiring from the local farmers what the types of crops had been on the battlefield in the early summer of 1815. It is impossible to assess what value can be attributed to these data, but his Waterloo model at least confirms that the land where the 1st corps passed over was *not* fully covered in high crops, but that it comprised a mix of high and low crops.

The model also confirms that at least in Wellington's position most of the terrain was covered with corn, while those areas where both Marcognet and Donzelot's divisions hit the allied line were most probably covered with very low vegetation, which matches Winchester's testimony.

The area surrounding the knoll of the sandpit would have been covered with higher grains.

Captain Whinyates, while being far in front (probably about 450 metres) firing away his ground rockets states the field there was still covered with untouched, high standing corn. This was in the vicinity of the trajectory where Bourgeois' column had advanced.

Lieutenant Winchester (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338

Lieutenant Riddock (44th regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.122-126

Captain Whinyates (battery Whinyates). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.466-470

<sup>31</sup> Cf. general De Salle. In: Souvenirs et correspondance etc. p.53

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Lenient, E. – La solution des énigmes de Waterloo p.461

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Winchester (92nd). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.259 (plan)

<sup>34</sup> Casualties at QB had been considerable.

Lieutenant Kerr Ross confirms the battalion was very weak. In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.341-344

Lieutenant Hope mentions a strength of 230 men. In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.18-21

The claim of lieutenant Winchester (92nd) of having formed a line of four deep is impossible to maintain as this formation was highly unusual in the British army and would have reduced the firepower of the battalion even more. In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338

<sup>35</sup> The 32nd formed in 6 divisions, after the heavy losses on the 16th of June. Cf. Lieutenant Belcher (32nd). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.53-54

<sup>36</sup> Core of the problem with the frontages involved is that the strengths as given in official tables for the 18th of June are simply impossible with the space available.

For the British there is the table as drawn up by lieutenant colonel Waters, assistant adjutant general, and which gives the following strengths for the battalions involved on the morning of the 18th of June:

28th: 556

32nd: 503

79th: 440

1st: 453

42nd: 329

92nd: 422

In: WSD, Vol.XII p.486-487

Comparing the strength of the battalions of the brigade of Van Bijlandt of the 15th of June with the casualties as given in an official report yields the following results:

Battalion	Strength 15th June	Casualties 16th June	Strength 18th June
27th chasseurs	693	262	431
7th battalion of the line	622	95	527
7th battalion of national militia	593	-	593
5th battalion of national militia	424	294	130
8th battalion of national militia	462	27	435
	2794	678	2116

The grand total of about 2100 men would, excluding the 5th battalion of national militia (which stood in the second line), about 400 skirmishers, staff etc., into some 1550 men which would in turn lead to a total front-length of about 465 metre in men only and some 525 metres including the intervals. As this is impossible, the strength, as with the brigades of Kempt and Pack was far lower as those taken from the tables. The actual front of about 375 metres would tend to point to a total strength of the brigade of about 1200 men.

In this context, it is lieutenant colonel Grunebosch (27th chasseurs) who claims his battalion was composed on the 18th of June of 250 to 300 men (and not the 431 as from the table). Cf. his letter to colonel Nepveu, dated 17th of April 1836. In: NA, 2.13.13.09 nr.204

For the table cf.

NA, nr.2.13.52 nr.1103

Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom – La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.200

Hussey is also struggling with the same problem, using 2000 men as a rough estimate (after deducting losses and skirmishers), being unable to squeeze them into a front of for instance 360 metres in front of the road, let alone the 180 metres between the British brigades, as used by Siborne in his atlas or 270 metres as suggested by Craan in his plan.

In: Bylandt's brigade at Waterloo p.80-82

<sup>37</sup> Lieutenant colonel Gomm. In: Letters and journals p.358

Captain Rogers (battery Rogers). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.227-234

Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.76-78, 91-94, 151-154 and 34.708 p.10-12

<sup>38</sup> The total length of the 28th and 79th, in the middle of which the column of Bourgeois rushed forward, may have counted about 250 men (2 x 125). Even with this low estimate, it would mean that their total length overlapped the total front of the column which was about 79 metres. It means therefore that the column received musketry fire in both its front and flanks.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Hope (92nd). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.260-262

Hope mixes up the 42nd and the 44th and erroneously claims that both the 42nd and 1st were driven back by two French columns.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Anton, sergeant (42<sup>nd</sup> regiment). He mentions the advance of the battalion towards the hedges of the road, but when the battalion was in the act of breaking through them, the general order was given to open ranks for the cavalry. In: *Retrospect of a military life* p.210 After that, Anton keeps his account very general and doesn't specify any French columns or further actions against them.

For the 1st regiment, neither lieutenant Black, nor captain Macdonald, nor an unspecified officer mention any details about their unit. Black merely states that the division gave a volley from right to left which made the French stop and turn into disorder.

In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.500-501

Lieutenant Black (1st regiment). In: Letter to his father dated 10th July 1815. In: NLS, nr.MS10488

An anonymous officer merely states that "with very little interruption the entire day they [the French] formed a line of skirmishing in front of the brigade" which refers more to the episode after the first French offensive. In: Wetherall, J. – *An historical account of His Majesty's first, or the royal regiment of foot* p.200

Ensign Mudie (1st regiment) has published two accounts: a so-called diary and another, more elaborate account. They both share the same puzzling details. First of all, he mentions the attack of two strong columns, almost 2 hours separate. From the details, however, it becomes clear that they are both of the 1st corps in its grand attack.

Of the second he claims that it penetrated as far as the crest of the allied position, that it counted at least 4 regiments of French infantry and that the allied infantry outflanked it. His own battalion would have kept its initial formation, a column at quarter distance and would not have moved forward.

The first column, about 5000 strong, would have advanced to the brow of the ridge and would have undergone a British volley. It would, as the other column, felt the charge of the British cavalry. In this first column's attack, this cavalry would have passed through the ranks of Mudie's regiment.

If there is any truth in Mudie's statements, apart from the impossible gap in time between both columns, it can only be concluded that he mixes the columns up, as those details which he regards to pertain to the second column fit in a general way to the first (Donzelot's), while those of the first fit in the same way to the second (Marcognet).

It would also mean that the battalion would still have been in column at quarter distance the moment Donzelot penetrated the allied line and that it was shortly after that it deployed into line to advance to the Ohain-road. From Mudie's account it also becomes clear that at least parts of his battalion advanced beyond this road to assist in securing French prisoners.

In: *The diary of ensign C.Mudie, 3rd Bn.The Royal Scots. Describing the battle of Waterloo and occupation of Paris, 1815.* In: *The Thistle.* April, July and October 1931 p.183-185, 229  
Operations of the fifth or Picton's division in the campaign of Waterloo, by an officer of the division. In: *United Service Journal* (1841), part II p.176-181

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Hope (92<sup>nd</sup>). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.2602-262

The sole available witness of the 44<sup>th</sup> is lieutenant Riddock and he expresses himself merely in a general sense about the division: "They [the French] were received in the coolest and bravest manner by the 5<sup>th</sup> division of old warriors and the Hanoverians who advanced to the charge supported by the three regiments of heavy cavalry, a division of light cavalry with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> line of infantry and when about 25 paces from the enemy's column the division halted and fired a volley which took such dreadful effect etc." In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.122-126

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Lieutenant colonel Gomm mixes things seriously up here, not only with the 44<sup>th</sup>, but also more in a general way. First of all he claims that both the columns of Bourgeois and Donzelot penetrated as far as over the Ohain-road. Secondly, he has the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> advance against Bourgeois and let them get into a *mélée* while he thinks that both the left of Kempt (28<sup>th</sup>) and the right of Pack (44<sup>th</sup>) advanced against Donzelot.

He only speaks of Van Bijlandt in connection to Marcognet who would have driven them back, as well as some Hanoverian forces. Eventually, it would have been the 42<sup>nd</sup>, the 92<sup>nd</sup> and Ponsonby to drive this column off.

In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.200-206 and in Letters and journals p.358-359

<sup>42</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156

From this account it becomes clear that Wellington had no role in engaging the British heavy cavalry; at this stage he was also further west to have been able to do so.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.244-247

<sup>44</sup> Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.83-84

<sup>45</sup> Captain Kennedy Clark gives the following calculation for his regiment (the Royals) and the Union brigade: taking into account a width of one horse of 90 to 100 cm and squadron intervals as one third of their front, he comes for the Royals (with 312 men) to a front-length of about 165 metres (140 metre for the squadrons themselves, plus two intervals making up 25 metres). With this, he comes to about 540 metres for the whole brigade, and this matches this front extension of the French columns as referred to by Muter. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.87-90

In his plan, however, Kennedy Clark assigns to the Royals only a front of about 250 metres, which is too much. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.151-154

In his sketch, lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards) assigns to the Union brigade a front of about 465 metres. In: BL, Add.34.703 p.244-247

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94

Lieutenant colonel Miller (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.79-81

Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.74-76

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.74-76

Lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.244-247

Records of the Inniskillings. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.11-15

<sup>48</sup> In a walk, cavalry covers roughly 100 metres per minute [about 6 km per hour]. In trot this is about 200 metres [12 km per hour] and in a gallop 300 metres [18 km per hour]. Cf. Nafziger, G. *Imperial bayonets* p.215

For the testimonies involved, cf.

Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.34.707 p.76-78, 89-90, 91-94, 148-150

Major Evans. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.119-123

Lieutenant Hamilton (Scots Greys). Cf. his letter dated 24th June 1815. In: NWMS nr.A.213.2.07

Major Winchester (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338

Thorburn equally comes to the conclusion of a walk, and no gallop or “charge.” In: *The Royal Scots Greys at Waterloo*.

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Bronner, in his article, denies this conclusion by submitting the statement that the Union brigade would have manoeuvred all their horses off at a canter at least, if not a full out gallop, with many in the nearby second line at a fast trot or canter before striking the French infantry. In the discussion in general, there is a difference in speed in moving off and in hitting the French and this nuance is not given by Bronner. He also uses the 20 yards as mentioned by Thorburn as the initial distance between the horsemen and the French, which is incorrect. More importantly, however, Bronner - in his technical approach - completely disregards what the eyewitnesses themselves say about the speed of the charge. Eventually, Bronner also underestimates the surprise of the sudden appearance of the cavalry and the fact that the advance was uphill, through the infantry and over the road which did not allow to use a high speed. In: *The Greys charged into history*  
Cf. M.Adkin. In: *The Waterloo companion* p.351

<sup>49</sup> Major general Kempt claims that “not one single cavalry soldier cooperated with his brigade throughout the day.” In the strict sense of the word he is right: Ponsonby did not cooperate with his brigade as acting from the ridge, only when the horsemen were down the slope when the French of Boyrgeois’ brigade had retired. He is wrong, however, in his conclusion that the defeat of Bourgeois was completely effected, when Ponsonby charged a separate column that had come up to his left [Donzelot]. In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.305-306

<sup>50</sup> Lord Uxbridge. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.185-192 and 707 p.152-156. In the first version he speaks of 10 minutes and in the second of “a few minutes”.  
1st lieutenant Scheltens (7th battalion of the line). He mentions a time-frame of 10 minutes for the defeat of the corps. In: *Souvenirs etc.* p.202  
Major Winchester (92nd). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338 Here, he states that Marcognet’s column was shattered within three minutes.  
Corporal Dickson (Scots Greys) claims he rode through the French infantry in five minutes. In: Bruce Lowe, E. *With Napoleon etc.* p.144

<sup>51</sup> In: NLS, adv.46.9.19

<sup>52</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338  
The other day, captain Tomkinson (16th regiment of light dragoons) passed over the terrain where the 1st corps had been, where he saw how French infantry had laid down their muskets in great regularity, i.e. in two lines. In: *The diary of a cavalry officer* p.300. And in: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.131-132

<sup>53</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156

<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Kerr Ross (92nd regiment) claims however that Durutte did form square. In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.341-344

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Lieutenant colonel Ponsonby (12th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.116-118  
The claim as done by several men of the Scots Greys as having completely dispersed Durutte is incorrect. Cf. Sergeant Johnson. In: Atkinson, C.T. - *A Waterloo journal* p.38  
Sergeant Clarke. In: NLS, MS15379  
Corporal Dickson. In: Bruce Lowe, E. – *With Napoleon etc.* p.144

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Durutte himself doesn't enter into the fate of his one brigade; he gives the impression as if it was charged by the Scots Greys and that these were driven off the French lancers. There is nothing of the charge of the light dragoons and the retreat of the brigade upon the 85th regiment of the line. In: *Mouvements etc.* p.78

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Bronner, F. - The Greys charged into history. In: *First Empire* (2009) nr.110 p.8-11  
Baron Schmitz, commander of the 1st brigade of the 2nd division (Donzelot) gives quite a different picture of the way how his division handled the British cavalry. After having sketched that his division followed the ones of Marcognet and Durutte he writes: "La cavalerie ennemie ayant chargé et mis en déroute ces deux divisions [the 3rd and 4th], la seconde arrêta dans la position où elle se trouvait, forma la carré par le moyen de remplir l'intervalle des bataillons par des pelotons des ailes, et repoussa dans cette position la cavalerie avec une perte extrêmement considérable. La division ainsi arrêté et rendu nulle l'impétuosité de l'ennemi, sauva la vie à un nombre infini de soldats de 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> divisions qui eurent été taillés en pièces."

Although the report of Schmitz is dated 25th of June 1815, his version of the events is highly incorrect as he fully neglects the fact that his division *did* get in touch with Wellington's position. His assertion that the British cavalry was repelled and that the 2nd division escaped unhurt is also simply impossible to maintain. In: Brouwet, E. "Mémoires et documents sur la campagne de 1815." In: *Revue des études Napoléoniennes.* (1932) p.360-365

<sup>57</sup> The analysis of the charge of this brigade is biased in favor of the King's Dragoon Guards and 2nd Life Guards, as by far the most eyewitness accounts derive from these regiments.

<sup>58</sup> This figure is taken from the combination of the strengths of the three regiments in the first line of the brigade (the 1st Life Guards, 250 men, the 2nd Life Guards 230 men and the King's Dragoon Guards, 575 men), and the calculation as given by captain Kennedy Clark. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.87-90

In his sketch, lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards) assigns to the Household brigade a front of about 400 metres. In: BL, Add.34.703 p.244-247

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Lord Edward Somerset. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.135-140

There is some contradictory evidence on this point. Captain Clement Hill (Blues) states that his brother, Robert Hill, the commander of the Blues, was quite sure that his regiment was in the first line, the more as he saw colonel Ferrior (commander of the 1st Life Guards) fall to his right. In: BL, Add.34.707. p. 269-270, 277-278

According to lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards) this incident occurred in a later stage of the battle. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 281-284

Waymouth also cites from lieutenant colonel Lygon (2nd Life Guards) that the Blues charged in their place in line with the brigade, so not in support. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.265-268

According to Waymouth, the Blues were in support on the primary arrangement of the first charge, and then finding themselves in front line before they almost knew where they were. The impetuosity with which the front line swept over the enemy left behind quite a sufficient number for the blues to deal with when they came up, and even to lead them to imagine themselves quite in front. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.273-276

Somerset's account, however, is considered as conclusive.

<sup>60</sup> Lord Uxbridge. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.546-548



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<sup>61</sup> According to captain Elton (King's Dragoon Guards), his regiment set off at full speed. Cf. his letter to lieutenant general Fane, dated 15th July 1815. In former [www.1815.ltd.uk](http://www.1815.ltd.uk)  
Original in: Wiltshire and Swindon Archives. 413/382 and copy in NAM, 6310-36

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Captain Clayton (Blues). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.201-203

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Colonel Ordener (1st regiment of cuirassiers). In: Lot, H. - Les deux généraux Ordener p.91

Uxbridge. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.546-548

He also states that the French cavalry greatly exceeded Somerset in numbers. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 548-551

Captain Von Scriba (Bremen battalion, Kielmansgge's brigade) states there were about 700 cuirassiers in this charge. In: Das Leichte Bataillon etc. p.91

Lord Somerset himself speaks of a large body of cuirassiers and carabiniers. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.135-140

Referring to his brigade (which had a total strength of about 900), lieutenant Hibbert (King's Dragoon Guards) is clearly exaggerating in stating that the cuirassiers were double the number of the brigade. Cf. his letter dated 13th July 1815. In: Collection of lieutenant Hibbert. Lieutenant Kincaid (95th regiment) says he saw about 100 cuirassiers and 100 British dragoons in pursuit passing along his regiment. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.39-41

<sup>64</sup> According to lord Uxbridge, the French cavalry at Waterloo always charged in column and never at speed. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.185-192

Colonel Ordener (1st regiment of cuirassiers) states: "je mets sur le champ mon régiment au trot, en colonne, par escadron à grandes distances." In: Lot, H. - Les deux généraux Ordener p.91

<sup>65</sup> The 1st regiment of cuirassiers was composed of 447 men, the 4th of 416 men, so in all 863 men, which confirms the number higher as 600. Both regiments had each three squadrons. Depending on the interval between the regiments, the brigade charged in a front varying between 200 and 300 metres. Cf. SHAT, C15.34

Major Von Schkopp (battalion Verden) confirms his square was attacked by a force of 4 to 6 squadrons, which is about one and half regiment. The remainder of Dubois was further to its right acting against Von Ompteda. In: Franklin, J. – Waterloo. Hanoverian correspondence p.128

Major Müller (Bremen battalion) speaks of one regiment of cavalry. In: VPH, nr.40

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Delloye, S. – Métamorphoses etc. p.53 Delloye also adds that the entrance of the slope here was about 250 metres wide.

<sup>67</sup> One witness speaks of a moderate trot in the charge. Report of captain Von Scriba (battalion Bremen). In: VPH, nr.41 and in: Das leichte Bataillon p.90

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Lord Uxbridge. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.546-551  
Muir, R. - Tactics etc. p.123-125

<sup>69</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.244-247

<sup>70</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.185-192, 34.707 p.546-551

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<sup>71</sup> Muir, R. – Tactics etc. p.109

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Aerts, W. – Notes p.69

<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards) writes: “having once penetrated their line, we rode over everything opposed to us.” In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.244-247

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Major Evans. In: The reappearance of Buonaparte on the shores of France p.11

In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.119-123

Cf. Evan’s report to Sir G.Murray. In: NLS, Add.ms.46.9.19 p.113

<sup>75</sup> In: BL, Add.m.s.34.707 p.124-126

<sup>76</sup> Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.87-90

According to J.Morewood sir William Ponsonby initially rode in front of the Royals. In: An ornament to his profession. The Waterloo Journal, Vol.18 nr.1 p.5, 6

<sup>77</sup> Cf. his letter dated 23rd June 1815. In: Bodleian Library. MS Eng.hist.d.140 ff 49-60

Lord Greenock, adc of lord Uxbridge, confirms that the King’s Dragoon Guards in particular were too eager in their pursuit and were therefore almost annihilated; the Life Guards and Blues were better kept in hand and therefore sustained less casualties. In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.187-189

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Muir, R. – Tactics etc. p.121

<sup>79</sup> In: Galloping at everything p.128

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Muir, R. – Tactics etc. p.122,126

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Captain Tomkinson (16th regiment of light dragoons). In: The diary of a cavalry officer in the Peninsular and Waterloo campaigns 1809-1815 p.300

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Read, M. – Charge ! A reappraisal etc. p.14-15

<sup>83</sup> Cf. lieutenant Hibbert (King’s Dragoon Guards) in a letter dated 13th July 1815. In: collection of lieutenant Hibbert.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Hamilton (Scots Greys) in his journal. In: NWMS nr.A.213.2.07

Moorewood, J. - An ornament to his profession p.6

<sup>85</sup> Muir, R. – Tactics etc. p.118

<sup>86</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Sir Frederick Stovin. In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.151-152

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Captain Kincaid (1st battalion, 95th regiment). In: Adventures in the Rifle Brigade p.336

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<sup>89</sup> For this claim, see:

Corporal Dickson (Scots Greys). In: Bruce Low, E. *With Napoleon at Waterloo* p.

Captain Ingilby battery Gardiner). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.266-271

Cornet Crawford (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.23-27

Lord FitzRoy Somerset. In: NAM 6507-1

Lord E. Somerset says his brigade advanced for about a mile, but in reality it was about 650 metres (taken from the Ohain-road). Cf. his letter dated 23rd June 1815. In: Bodleian Library. MS Eng.hist.d.140 ff 49-60

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Mills (Scots Greys). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.223-226

Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.151-154

Lieutenant Wyndham (Scots Greys). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.171-174

Both Kennedy Clark and Wyndham show an extent of about 450 to 500 metre.

Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Gardiner). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.266-271

Lieutenant Waymouth (2nd Life Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.703 p.244-247

Major Evans, in two descriptions. In the first he mentions the “first ridge occupied by the enemy”. In another account he mentions the “ridge on which the enemy had occasionally their advanced batteries in the early part of the battle” which is the intermediate ridge, specifying the three batteries which advanced. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 119-123

Major general Pack states that the body of major general Ponsonby was found about half a mile from his former position, which corresponds to the (foot of the) intermediate ridge. Cf. his letter dated 19th June 1815. In: Ponsonby, J. *The Ponsonby family* p.220

<sup>91</sup> Meant here is the division of Bachelu, of which light troops would have fired from the banks of the Brussels road upon the dragoons of the 1st Life Guards. This division, however, at that time stood some 300 metres further south-west and played no role whatsoever at this stage of the battle. Cf. Trefcon, T.J. – *Carnet de campagne* etc. p.187-188

For those mentioning Bachelu, see for example:

Siborne, W. – *History of the war* etc. Vol.II p.4, 36, 38

He assigns the division a position between La Belle Alliance and La Haye Sainte having there the task “to maintain that point, to be at hand as a reserve to the attacking force and to keep up the connection between the right and left wing of the frontline of the French army.” A nice terminology, but totally beside the point.

Mann, M. *And they rode on* p.45

According to Adkin, it would have been the troops of the 1st division around the farm of La Haye Sainte firing at the British cavalry. Cf. Adkin, M. *The Waterloo companion* p.353

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Vandeleur himself. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.169-170

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Baker (16th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.502-503  
Moorewood, J. – *An ornament to his profession* p.5

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Major general Vandeleur. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.167-170

<sup>95</sup> Sir Hussey Vivian agrees with Vandeleur in leaving the regiment in reserve, but at the same time believes Vandeleur might have advanced it somewhat further as he did now. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.185-187

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<sup>96</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.116-118

<sup>97</sup> The fact that the regiment suffered and got back in confusion is recognized by:  
Captain Tomkinson (16th regiment of light dragoons). In: p.301  
Captain Schreiber (11th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.145-146  
Major Barton (12th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.184-191  
Private Farmer (11th regiment of light dragoons). In: The light dragoon p.154

Other participants though remain silent about it, such as:

Major Vandeleur. In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.349-350

Major Luard (16th regiment of light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.133-140

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Gardiner). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.465-467  
Cf. Ingilby's diary as well. In: RAI, nr.MD 797

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Gardiner). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.465-467

Lieutenant Ingilby's account about the events of the attack of the 1st corps is confusing. He describes Ponsonby's advance as diagonal over the field and in which this brigade appeared to annihilate the French cavalry which had come from the right wing and which was in front (dragoons), after which its support (a column dressed in red) went back to its former position.

After that, part of Ponsonby's brigade would have spent 15 to 20 minutes in the vicinity of the French guns, and then to leave them at their leisure.

At the same time, Ingilby – from his position - sees that the conflict was evident, but the charges of cavalry, the fire and the movements of the troops appeared to him *pêle mêle* and confused.

In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.109-111, 34.703 p.290-296. RAI, nr.MD 797

By the time Ponsonby charged, Ingilby stood near Vivian's brigade. He is incorrect in the fact that the Union brigade charged diagonally, that it was successful against the French cavalry and that members of this brigade spent 15 to 20 minutes near the French artillery; this was just some minutes. His impression that the British dragoons almost annihilated the French cavalry is also incorrect.

He describes the French cavalry as acting in two bodies (dragoons first and supported by horsemen in red), but the moment Ponsonby got in touch with French cavalry only the 4th regiment of lancers was involved. By the time, both a regiment of dragoons and lancers were involved, this was against Vandeleur's brigade but by then Ingilby was moving to the right and front. By the time his section got there, this brigade of light cavalry returned from its charge.

For the refutation of Ingilby's claims, also see the accounts of Hussey Vivian. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.99-107

<sup>100</sup> For example see:

Van Löben Sels, E. - Bijdragen etc. p.610

Siborne, W. – History etc. Vol.II p.41-42

Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.358

<sup>101</sup> In: Bas, F.de – La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.416-417

<sup>102</sup> In: Family archive Van Heerdt. In: CBG, inv. Nr.95

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<sup>103</sup> Journal of Constant Rebecque In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

<sup>104</sup> Lieutenant colonel Renno of the 4th regiment of light dragoons says nothing about his charge in this stage of the action. Cf. his notes. In: Groninger Museum (Stichting Offerhaus).

Major Kraijenhoff, of the same regiment, speaks in this stage about two charges, but gives no details about the second one. As for the first, he merely states that it was a good one, but that it yielded very little result. Kraijenhoff neither gives the motive for the charges, nor does he enter into the presence of any British light dragoons. His sketch of the French front is also extremely confusing by mentioning units of Travers and Bourgeois' brigades and the divisions of Bachelu, Marcognet and Jacquinet at the same time. In: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, prentenkabinet nr.NM 10255.b

The sole British eyewitness mentioning De Ghigny is lieutenant colonel Sleigh (11th regiment of light dragoons). He writes: "with reference to the Belgian cavalry, who joined in covering the retreat, there were some in the rear of our brigade to the left, a few of them went down following the 12th dragoons; but I cannot say I observed them to take any part in the attack, nor would the ground admit of their doing so on the left, as the 12th advanced close to the hedge from which they suffered the severe loss the regiment sustained." In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.302-305

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Colonel Heymès. In: Documents inédits etc. p.15

<sup>106</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.548-551

<sup>107</sup> In: BL, Add.703 p.109-120

<sup>108</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.109-120

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Graeme (2nd battalion of light infantry KGL). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.497-508

<sup>110</sup> Odd enough, no detailed information is available about the retreat of these units, neither from the French, nor the allied side.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Lieutenant Graeme (2nd battalion of light infantry KGL). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.497-508

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Reille. In: Documents inédits p.61

Conversation between Guilleminot and colonel Woodford, as mentioned by Woodford. In: BL, Add.sm.34.706 p.423-426

<sup>113</sup> In: Souvenirs et correspondance etc. p.77

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Jérôme's letter to his wife, dated 15th July 1815. In: Mémoires et correspondance du roi Jérôme et de la reine Cathérine etc. p.22

<sup>115</sup> The enclosures with their trees, hedges and ditches to the west of the buildings were to small and scattered to allow for a prolonged resistance.

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<sup>116</sup> Ensign Standen (light company, 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards) refers to the hedge of the orchard as a bullfincher, as he never saw before. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.19-22

<sup>117</sup> It was from the commanding open fields in the south-east corner of the complex however that the French skirmishers were able to annoy those who were passing between the garden and the southern courtyard. Cf. Colonel Woodford. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.423-426

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Colonel Hepburn (2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.311-316

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Colonel Hepburn in a letter to sir W.Scott, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1815. In: Franklin, J. – Waterloo. 3<sup>rd</sup> regiment of Foot Guards p.437

Cf. More reminiscences of Waterloo. The defence of Hougoumont. USJ, 1836 Pt.2 p.353  
Major Büsgen states that during his presence at Gomont he was never assigned to any other superior commander. So, despite the British command, he kept his own command over his companies which were divided over the garden, the orchard and the buildings. In: VPH, nr.75

Mercer gives the impression that the command over the units in the orchard devolved from Lord Saltoun on him, without mentioning major Hepburn. Cf. his statement dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 1834. In: [www.1815.ltd.uk](http://www.1815.ltd.uk) Original in: National Archives of Scotland. GD 172/1201/1

The subject of command here has been a subject of controversy in the United Service Journal. In this, it has been claimed by an anonymous writer that it was lieutenant colonel Francis Home who had a separate command in this sector for more than two hours and that major Hepburn only arrived after 4 p.m. and that, by then, the most important fighting had been over. Home would have tried to get in touch with Woodford and MacDonnell by sending out a sergeant, but somehow he couldn't find both commanders. Sometime later, however, Home met them after all and after he returned to his sector in the orchard, captain Mercer was in charge there.

This claim of the command of Home is being supported by the (erroneous) statement of Wellington in his official dispatch written for Lord Bathurst.

All these statements are justly refuted by Hepburn's brother. First of all, the Duke's mentioning Home has been officially corrected in a staff meeting after the campaign, in which Home and Hepburn were present and in which Home was distinctly informed that the detachment of two companies under his orders had at no time been considered as a separate command and that he had acted under the orders of Hepburn. Other than that, in a letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1816 to Sir R.H.Elphinstone (3<sup>rd</sup> Foot Guards) Sir J.Byng clearly states that it was about 2 p.m. (it was actually one hour later) that he gave Hepburn the order "to go down towards the wood and the orchard which adjoin the farm of Hougoumont, with four companies of his battalion, and to take under his orders those previously sent." Cf. USJ, 1836, II p.352-356, III, p.256-258 and 1835, III p.384

<sup>120</sup> Others claim that units of the British cavalry advanced at 2 p.m.

Cf. major Clarke (Scots Greys). Cf. his letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1815. In: NWMS, no reference.

Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Whinyates). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.266-271

Private Hasker (King's Dragoon Guards). Account in King's Dragoon Guards Museum.

Captain Naylor (King's Dragoon Guards). Diary in King's Dragoon Guards Museum, nr.1985.1199

General Guyot, commander of the heavy cavalry of the imperial guard, reports that by 3 p.m. the British cavalry charged the French right wing. In: Carnets de campagne p.295, 396

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<sup>121</sup> Adjudant Gastinieu (13<sup>th</sup> regiment of light infantry, division Donzelot) says he received the order to march against the enemy at 2 p.m. Cf. his memoirs in: Coppens, B & P.Courcelle – La Haye Sainte p.75

<sup>122</sup> Lieutenant Hope (92nd regiment) says his unit advanced at 3 p.m. and that it went back again by 3.15 p.m. In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.18-21 and in Letters etc. p.255  
The retreat of Durutte is set at 2.30 p.m. by De Mauduit. In: Les derniers jours Vol.II p.313

<sup>123</sup> Sir Hussey Vivian confirms that Ponsonby's brigade had returned from its charge within 30 minutes. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.95-98

Corporal Dickson (Scots Greys) states that his charge took 30 minutes. In: Bruce Lowe, E. With Napoleon etc. p.147

Major general Vivian contests the claim of lieutenant Ingilby that the Scots Greys would have spent 15 to 20 minutes at the French guns on the opposite ridge; in his mind it was not more than a few minutes. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 99-107 and 34.703 p.266-271

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Mémoires pour servir etc.p.137  
Napoleon's general order of 11 a.m.

<sup>125</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156

<sup>126</sup> In: NAM, nr.6507-1

<sup>127</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156 and p.546-548

Uxbridge clearly states that he did not receive an order from the duke to charge with the British heavy cavalry. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.451-454

Houssaye has this absurd conclusion that Wellington took shelter in the hollow road near the so-called "Wellington-tree" – it is unclear from where he takes this. In: 1815 – Waterloo p.349

<sup>128</sup> In: former [www.1815.ltd.uk](http://www.1815.ltd.uk) - original in Regimental HQ Scots Guards

<sup>129</sup> In: BL, Add.34.707 p.151-156

<sup>130</sup> According to De Mauduit, the division of Durutte lost 300 men, of which 200 prisoners, but upon which source he bases these figures remains unknown. In: Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II p.308

According to lieutenant Martin (45<sup>th</sup> regiment) his division had several hundreds men left after the attack. This is highly improbable, as the total division counted about 3900 men and it is unlogical to suppose that it lost more as roughly 3000 men, particularly as Martin assigns the corps a total loss of 5000 men. In: Souvenirs etc. p.292, 293

Chef de bataillon Bosse (95th regiment, division Durutte) claims he lost 40 men in the attack in both killed, wounded and prisoners. In: Doise, J - Remarques etc. p.19-25

Colonel Ordener (1st regiment of cuirassiers) states that one half of the corps was annihilated, while the other was demoralized. In: Lot, H - Les deux généraux Ordener p.93

<sup>131</sup> The study as done by Chamberlain on the records of Dartmoor prison shows that by far the most of the 12 infantry regiments charged by the British heavy cavalry of the 1st corps have an average of about 125 prisoners per regiment. Exceptions are the 105<sup>th</sup> of the line [201] and

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the 45<sup>th</sup> of the line [380]. The high numbers of prisoners of these two regiments are reflected in the higher percentages of casualties of these, as given in the records at Vincennes.

This totals to an overall count of about 1900 prisoners: about 325 for the brigade of Bourgeois, 600 for the division of Donzelot, 750 for the division of Marcognet and 250 for the brigade of Durutte. This is 15% of the infantry (12.800 men) involved.

In: Chamberlain, P. – From Waterloo to Dartmoor etc. p.26

SHAT, nr.C15, nr.35

Captain Beslay, using the same table from Vincennes, states that the 45th regiment of the line shows a high number of men missing, but most of these were prisoners. In: *Historique du 45<sup>e</sup> régiment* etc. p.295

Already shortly after the event, the figure given for the number of French prisoners taken in the attack varies between 1000 and 3000.

Cf.

1000: Major general Pack to his brother. In a letter dated 19th of June. In: Ponsonby, J. - The Ponsonby family p.220

1200: Major general Pozzo di Borgo in his report to king Wolkonsky. In: VPH, nr.123

1200-1500: major general Van Bijlandt. In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.265

2000-3000:

Major Clarke (Scots Greys). In a letter dated 11th of July 1815. In: NWMS, no reference  
3000:

Lieutenant Hamilton (Scots Greys). Letter dated 24th June 1815. In: NWMS nr.A.213.2.07

Von Hügel to the king of Württemberg. In: VPH, nr.122

At a later stage, it varies between 1200 and more than 3000.

Cf.

1700-1800: Sergeant Costello (1st battalion 95th regiment). In: *Adventures of a soldier* etc. p.195-196

2000:

Lieutenant colonel Muter (Inniskillings). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.74-76

Major Evans. In his account. In: NLS, Adv.46.9.19. n.d.

Lieutenant Hope (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.18-21

Major Winchester (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.335-338

Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94

Sir Basil Jackson. In: *Notes and reminiscences* etc. p.90

Lieutenant colonel Clifton (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.73-76 (he mentions there were 40 officers amongst them).

2000-3000:

Major Evans. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.119-123

3000:

Lieutenant Wyndham (Scots Greys). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.19-20

Lord Uxbridge. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.152-156 and 706 p.185-192

<sup>132</sup> Cf. separate note.

<sup>133</sup> Delloye speaks of the loss of 27 guns, but gives no proof for this claim. In: *La grande batterie* etc. p.14

<sup>134</sup> Of the staff of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division of the army of the Netherlands, colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt had got wounded, while the commander of its 1st brigade, Van Bijlandt, suffered the same way. Of Van Bijlandt's staff, 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant baron Van Haren got killed.



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The commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> battalion of national militia, captain Westenberg, had got wounded and was succeeded by captain Blom van Assendelft.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Captain Barton (12<sup>th</sup> regiment light dragoons). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.184-191  
He states that the regiment lost about one hundred men. In case this was about one third of the regiment, then this matches the strength as given by lieutenant Hay as he assigns the regiment an overall strength of about 300 men (i.e. three squadrons of 43, 53 and 48 files).  
Lieutenant Hay, however, give a higher proportion of casualties by stating that after the charge two squadrons were left of 24 and 23 files, which makes almost one hundred men. In: Reminiscences etc. p.184

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94  
Captain Phipps (Royals) states his regiment counted by 7 p.m. two weak squadrons, so it was stronger by 3 p.m. In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.141-142  
Captain Von Goeben (3<sup>rd</sup> regiment of hussars) adds that his regiment was reinforced by two squadrons of the Scots Greys by 6 p.m., so here the same conclusion can be drawn. In: VPH, nr.60 and Add.ms.34.704 p.246-251  
Major Clarke (Scots Greys) believes, however, that his regiment mustered some 100 men after the charge, so about one third in total. Cf. his letter datd 11<sup>th</sup> July 1815. In: NWMS, no reference.

Major Miller (Inniskilling dragoons) believes that the brigade was left with three squadrons after the charge, but this situation is referring to a later stage in the battle. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.67-69

Cf. Captain Kennedy Clark (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.91-94

Major Dorville (Royals). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.231-232

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Somerset's account for William Siborne. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.135-140

<sup>138</sup> In his letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1815, Somerset sketches a development of the strength of his brigade going from ten squadrons to three later in the day, and half a squadron at the very end of the battle (i.e. one in conjunction with the Union brigade). At the same time, he adds that by the 23<sup>th</sup> of June he was able to form five squadrons. Apparently, numerous dragoons had rejoined by that time.

In: Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.hist.d.140 ff.49-60

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Read, M. - Charge ! A reappraisal of the exploits of the British heavy cavalry at Waterloo p.13

<sup>140</sup> In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.76-78

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Adkin, M. – The Waterloo companion p.413  
Muir, R. – Tactics etc. p.80