

The death of the duke of Brunswick.

Between 5 and 5.30 p.m., the duke of Brunswick got mortally wounded about 100 metres east of La Bergerie.¹ At that moment he had none of his staff around. Some members of the Leib-battalion, corporal Külbel (2nd company), accompanied by trumpeter Aüe and Jäger Reckau, stepped out of the ranks to bring the duke in rear of the front-line. They picked him up, and brought him upon muskets to the battalion which was falling back. As it did, a section stepped away, to lead the party further to the rear of the battalion, where the duke was put upon blankets which were taken from British soldiers who had fallen. The duke asked for water, but he didn't take it as he lost consciousness.²

Still south of the Namur road and probably excited by the noise of cannon shortly after, the duke asked for Von Olfermann. Von Olfermann wasn't present, but was looked for by captain Bause.³ As there was no doctor and as he was still not safe, the group decided to carry him further to the rear towards the Namur-road, where the party met colonel Von Wachholtz and adjutant Von Lübeck.

From there they went through the fields to the farm of La Baraque, 400 metres north of Quatre Bras. Just before reaching this farm, the group met surgeon Pockels who joined them. At La Baraque, Pockel examined the Duke. It became clear that the Duke was hit by a musket-ball in his right-wrist, had entered the right side of his body, traversed his liver, midriff and left-lung, to leave it again on the other side. Shortly after the examination, the duke died.⁴⁻⁵



The farm of La Baraque, around 1890.

That same evening, and the day after, his body was brought to Laeken where it arrived by 4

a.m. ⁶ From there it was brought to Antwerp, to the Hôtel du Grand Laboureur, Place de Meir where it arrived by 4 p.m. on the 17th of June. ⁷ From there it was transferred through Den Bosch, Greve, Kleef, Münster, Osnabrück and Hannover to Braunschweig where it arrived on by midnight of the 22nd of June. ⁸ The body was escorted all the way through by major Von Grone and major Von Marenholz. ⁹ The duke was buried in the crypt of the St.Blasius cathedral in Braunschweig on the 3rd of July. ¹⁰

In 1840, duke Wilhelm, son of the Duke of Brunswick and regent of the duchy of Brunswick, tried in vain to erect a mausoleum for his father on the battlefield. In 1885, a committee was installed to erect a monument for the Duke. A piece of ground was acquired on May 27th 1889, and on the 16th of June 1890 a monument was inaugurated by lieutenant general Von Wachholtz, son of the former chief of staff of the Duke of Brunswick. ¹¹

On the day of the inauguration, the committee arrived at 10 a.m. on the railway-station of Genappe. Present were the German ambassador, count Von Alvensleben, the military attaché major Von Smettau and lieutenant general Von Wachholtz. After a reception in the chateau in Thy the group was expected at la Baraque where a tablet was installed commemorating the place where the Duke expired, the Maison Nimal (which was not the actual place, see below).

After the ceremony near the monument itself, a ball was given in the evening in the salon of Emile Taburiaux, hotel owner on the Place de l'Empereur in Genappe. ¹²

The monument itself is formed by a nine metres high granite foot, having the Belgian lion on top. This lion measures three metres in height. It holds the emblem of Brunswick under one of its claws. On the west-side of the monument there is a médaillon, holding the portrait of the Duke and the family-weapons. The inscription reads (French translation):

"Frédéric-Guillaume, duc de Brunswick et Lunebourg, est tombé non loin de cette place en combattant à la tête de ses troupes, le 16 Juin 1815."

On the opposite side it reads: "A la mémoire du héros et de ses guerriers tombés avec lui pour l'Allemagne. La patrie reconnaissante. MDCCCLXXX" Cf.Speeckaert, G.P. Les 135 vestiges etc. p.46

¹ It was between 5 and 5.30 p.m. as the Brunswickers arrived around 3.45 p.m. After their advance to the front (which occurred around 4 p.m.), they remained there under French fire for about an hour, and after that they went back, in which movement the duke was hit.

In one version, colonel Olfermann mentions a time of 6 p.m. In his report of the night of the 16th of June. In: VPH, nr.9

Yet, in another account, he claims it was between 5 and 6 p.m. Cf. his letter to the duchess of Brunswick. In: Schneidawind. Der letzte Feldzug etc. Annex XIII p.155

Surgeon Schütte (Heinemann's troop) says it was 4 p.m., but Schütte wasn't present at that time of the battle. In: VPH-LBA, nr.95

Corporal Külbel (Leib-battalion) states it was after 7.30 p.m. that the duke was wounded. In: Die letzten Augenblicke etc. p.5

For the site where he fell:

Külbel, E.C. Die letzten Augenblicke etc. plan

Major Von Wachholtz. Geschichte etc. plan

Scheltema confirms he fell at about 400 paces (200 metres) of the farm of Quatre Bras, which is around the same place. In: Verhaal van een reisje langs de slagvelden van Belle Alliance etc. In: Vad.Letteroefeningen, 1815 II p.593

Another Brunswick report claims he fell when he led the uhlans against some French artillery, but this was west of the Brussels-road. In: VPH-LBA, nr.1

Külbel adds that the duke came from the right, about 25 paces in front of the Leib-battalion, on his own, and about mid-way between the battalion and the French cavalry in front. While the battalion was firing, the duke was hit and fell. In: Die letzten Augenblicke etc. p.5

² Spehr, L.F. - Friedrich Wilhelm, Herzog von Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Oels p.215

Von Wachholtz situates this incident further north, i.e. north of the Namur-road and east of the Brussels road, so before reaching La Baraque.

He doesn't mention the trio, but the presence of his full staff – including himself - in his immediate vicinity the moment the duke fell.

After Külbel had given several lectures about the incident and had published his “Die letzten Augenblicke unsers Durchlauchtigsten Herzogs Friedrich Wilhelm bei Quatrebras den 16.Juni 1815” in 1859, Von Wachholtz son charged him for insult and libel of his father because of his denial of his presence at that moment, but on the 4th of July 1860 Külbel was officially put in the right. Cf.

http://www.wikiwand.com/de/Ernst_Carl_K%C3%BClbel

Geschichte des herzoglich etc. p.30 + plan

³ Report of colonel Von Olfermann, dated 16th June 1815. In: VPH-LBA, nr.9

Letter of Von Olfermann to the duchess of Brunswick. In: Schneidawind - Der letzte Feldzug etc. Annex.XII p.155

⁴ Cf. Reports of colonel Von Olfermann.

Corporal Külbel (Leib-battalion). In: Die letzten Augenblicke etc. p.6

Colonel Von Herzberg. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.23-55

Spehr, L.F. - Friedrich Wilhelm, Herzog von Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Oels p.215-216

Tarliers and Wauters have a rather bizarre version of the facts. They claim the duke was buried on the southern border of the Namur-road, about 400 metres west of Quatre Bras. The site would initially have been covered with a stone slab holding an english and a latin inscription; later this one was replaced by another, flat, square, blue stone which was fixed on a 30 cm high brickwork. A small footpath lined with hedges would have led to the spot. Cf. Tarliers, J. & A. Wauters. Géographie et histoire des communes Belges. Province de Brabant. Canton de Genappe p.38

⁵ Van Noeyen refutes the claim of the maison Nimal at La Baraque as being the house where the duke expired. Detailed research on the local conditions revealed that the ground where the house was built was bought in 1828, which resulted in the building of the house in 1830. He states the real place was the Cabaret de la Baraque, which was still in existence in 1890 and in the possession of a man called Paquet. It stood to the west of the Brussels-road and had a thatched roof until early in the 20th century. According to van Noeyen it is the only contemporary building which matches the site of the Cabaret as indicated by Capitaine. Cf. Noeyen, J. van - Le duc de Brunswick aux Quatre Bras. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, 1953 nr.10 p.25

Actually, corporal Külbel of the Leib-battalion, and who accompanied the duke there, confirms the duke expired in the farm of La Baraque. He gives a much later hour of the event though, 8 p.m. In: Die letzte Augenblicke etc. p.7 + plan

Cf. Navez, L. - La campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.57

The building has since long been torn down.

⁶ Waterloo the day after the battle. By an eyewitness. In: With fife and drum p.13
Colonel Von Olfermann to the duchess of Brunswick. In: Cf. his letter to the duchess of Brunswick. In: Schneidawind - Der letzte Feldzug etc. Annex XIII p.155

Scheltema asserts that the Duke was lied in state in the inn of Le roi d'Espagne at Genappe during the night of the 16th of June. In: Verhaal van een reisje langs de slagvelden van Belle Alliance etc. In: Vad.Letteroefeningen, 1815 II p.591

⁷ Spehr, L.F. - Friedrich Wilhelm, Herzog von Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Oels p.217
Lieutenant Hope (92nd regiment) records that he saw the bier just north of Genappe on the 17th of June. In: Letters from Portugal etc. p.239

Lieutenant general Van der Plaat, commander at Antwerp, also confirms that the duke's body arrived in Antwerp on the 17th of June; that night it was to be transported further to Brunswick, through Breda. Cf. his report to baron Tindal, 17th of June. In: NA, 2.02.01 nr.6585

⁸ Cf. Colonel Von Olfermann's letter to the duchess of Brunswick. In: Schneidawind. Der letzte Feldzug etc. Annex XIII p.155

Spehr, L.F. - Friedrich Wilhelm, Herzog von Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Oels p.217

⁹ Cf. Report of colonel Von Olfermann of the 16th of June.

Spehr, L.F. - Friedrich Wilhelm, Herzog von Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Oels p.217

¹⁰ Cf. Traupe, C. - Le corps de Brunswick etc. In: Bulletin de la Société Belge d'Etudes Napoléoniennes (1989) no.10 p.15

¹¹ This piece of ground is not the place where the Duke fell: it is too far south-west, as the Duke fell further to the north-east of it, in the fields.

¹² Cf. Gilson - Genappe à travers les âges p.143