

La Belle Alliance ¹

The inn of La Belle Alliance is to be found at Ferraris' map as "cabaret La Belle Alliance." Craan states La Belle Alliance. ² The origin of the name of La Belle Alliance has different explanations. ³

The first one was published in the Oracle of 7th July 1815 and in this article it is said that the inn was built in 1758 by a certain Dave. He married a young woman called Barbe, who came from Petit Chaux. Soon after Barbe died, Dave remarried but soon after this wife died too. The Dave married with his servant, a girl called Delbauche. At that time the name came into existence.

The second version comes from the writer Scott. ⁴ According to him the name would have been derived from the alliance between the British, the Dutch and the Germans.

Walter Scott, the famous writer, published in 1816 a report on his travel to Waterloo. In the local traditions, it would have been a scandal which would have caused the name of La Belle Alliance. A woman, having been a widow twice, remarried one of her servants which caused the people to give the building the name of La Belle Alliance.

The fourth version is given by Le Mayeur. ⁵ He writes about the owner, a remarkable woman who married a remarkable man, which caused the vicar to speak about a Belle Alliance.

Bouquéau's version goes back to a marriage between the old Monnoie, from Arquennes, with a young woman from the farm of de la Haye, near Feluy. However, after 5 to 6 years Monnoie died and then his wife married Dave, who passed away soon after. Then she remarried a man called Delbauge. Both Dave and Delbauge came from Placenoit. Immediately after they were married the inn was called La Belle Alliance.

Gore (⁶) speaks about a woman who lost her husband twice and then remarried, but lost him soon after. Then she married the inn-keeper himself, after which the inn was called La Belle Alliance.

Colonel Von Reiche thinks the name was derived from a very happy marriage of the owner. ⁷

Addison (⁸) tells us about a scoundrel from Placenoit who married a woman of a low character too. Together they opened the inn, which was soon called La Belle Alliance. According to Cotton too the name came from a marriage of low company. ⁹

In the actual history of the farm there is a woman who married three times. Her name was Barbe Marie Tordeuse.

However, in those days remarrying wasn't unusual: a woman remarried soon after the death of her husband for economic reasons.

That the name may have been derived from the exceptional beauty of Barbe herself, cannot be traced.

The site where the inn would be built is mentioned for the first time at the end of the 17th century. On 31st October 1697 Pierre Doudelet, being short of money, sold three pieces of land to the seigneur of Placenoit, one on the site of Remeval and two between the Brussels road and the village of Placenoit. Totally it was 2.75 hectares.

The new owner became the famous Jacques Pastur, also known as general Jaco. He died in 1723. After that, his son, André Pastur, inherited the area. He sold the two areas between the Brussels road and Placenoit in July 1752, in the inn of La grande Béguine at Waterloo.

As a result, on the 10th of August of the same year, Francois Pierret, from Brussels, became the new owner of the area.

His wife sold it on 6th March 1761 to a man called Antoine Joseph Art and his wife Marie Noëlle Gouttier. At that time, the area was on loan to Jacques Nicaise.

On 17th February 1764 the site was sold to Albert Joseph Monnoye.¹⁰ On 26th April 1762 the brothers Monnoie sold the heritage of their mother to an uncle, called Badart.

At the end of 1763 Albert Monnoie decided to start living at Plancenoi where he owned a bit of land.¹¹ At the same time, through a contract with the heirs of Jean Philippe Arazola de Oniate, lord of Gomont, he acquired almost half a hectare of land at Trimotiau.

Additionally he also acquired through purchase 1.75 hectares of land at Rond Chenau. That was on 17th February 1764. He then decided to build there.¹²

In 1764 he also married a woman called Barbe Marie Tordeur, of the farm of de la Haie-sous-Feluy, Petit Chaux, at Arquennes. In 1765 they got a child, Emmanuel Joseph Monnoie. Albert Monnoie died in the autumn of 1765.

In 1766 Barbe remarried with Jacques Dedave, the son of a local farmer near the church of Plancenoi. However, already in 1770 Dedave died. In 1772 Barbe remarried with Jean Jacques Delbauche.¹³ They got four children. Barbe herself must have died somewhere between February 1777 and October 1778. Albert Monnoie built only the house of the farm and the stable at its northern side. Jacques Dedave probably didn't change anything, but it was Jean Jacques Delbauche who built behind the yard a barn and a stable, as well as a bakery at the southside.

Probably it was Jean Jacques Delbauche who gave the inn also an agricultural function. For this purpose he enlarged the main building with a barn and a stable. However, in 1773 Delbauche and his family built a house in Plancenoi and rented the farm-inn on the 18th May 1775 to Jean Baptiste Taymans, a bachelor and son of a farmer of the abbey of Forest at Overysche.

Delbauche changed his house in Plancenoi into an inn, but this enterprise wasn't very successful. Delbauche got debts and he was obliged to sell La Belle Alliance. This sale took place on the 27th February 1783 and the new owner became a man called Jean Maréchal.

Jean Maréchal maintained the farm and the inn, traded horses and transported sand which was needed for the maintenance of the road to Brussels. On 4th of August 1800 Maréchal rented La Belle Alliance to Pierre Antoine Deppe from Nivelles.

La Belle Alliance was sold to Antoine Delpierre on January 16th 1807. This was just for a few years however: his son Nicolas Antoine Delpierre (a brewer from Plancenoi), bought the building on the 9th July 1813. He, in his turn, rented the building to Jean Joseph Dedave; Dedave used La Belle Alliance alone as an inn and exploited the land attached to it.

After the battle of Waterloo La Belle Alliance served as an inn for the numerous tourists who came to visit the field of battle.¹⁴

On the 25th of November 1815 La Belle Alliance was sold for 12.500 francs to a rich Scotsman, Richard Ramsay. This Ramsay had been living in Brussels for some years. He died in 1816 but he left seven children. The oldest son, Thomas, was an officer in the British army. The second oldest child, a daughter was married to a lawyer from Brussels, who became the guardian over the three remaining children who were under age.

The third child, Richard, was suffering from a lack of money and on the 8th of December 1816

he sold his right of inheritance to his sister. As the inn wasn't very successful either, it had to be sold two years later. The new owner became Jean Ignace Gambier and his wife, Jeanne Marie Vandenbrande. Though they were the owners, the former Jean Joseph Dedave and his wife, Félicité Sergent, were able to live there.

Dedave died on 30th August 1828, at 49 years of age and he left a wife and four children.

Félicité Sergent remarried on the 2nd of February 1830 with Jean Philippe Leclerc. Going bankrupt, they sold the inn to Jean Baptiste Cornet and his wife, Marie Cathérine Cheruwier.

In this period the building lost its function as an inn, and became a farm only. This was caused by the fact that the transport of coal over the Brussels road was seriously declining and the tourists were now all attracted to the lion monument.

Cornet kept the farm for 45 years. On 27th November 1876 he sold the farm of La Belle Alliance to Emile Henne and Désirée Nicaise, both farmers at Plancenoit.

They in their turn sold La Belle Alliance on the 31st May 1906 to the family Scoup-Debout, farmers at Heffelingen for the use by Vanderbeen-Tordeur. After that, La Belle Alliance came into anonymity.

Nowadays, La Belle Alliance is still a small farm, but containing no direct memories to the battle. The barn on the north side of the main building dates from the 19th century (post 1815) and was built by a man called Jean Baptiste Cornet. In 1942 it burnt down for partially, but it was rebuilt after the war.

During the first decennia of the 20th century there has been a marble tablet on the front of the building which reads: “Belle Alliance. Rencontre des généraux Wellington et Blücher lors de la mémorable bataille XVIII juin MD.CCC.XV se saluant mutuellement vainqueurs.” During the restauration of La Belle Alliance was removed and replaced by a new one. The old one can still be seen in the museum of Le Caillou.

Numerous illustrations enable us to reconstruct how La Belle Alliance must have looked like in June 1815.¹⁵ One of the sources available is the deed of sale dated 1805 which describes the building as:

“Un corps de logis et les écuries y tenant, joignant la chausse de Bruxelles à Charleroi sont batis en briques et couverts de tuiles, le corps de logis seul contient 4 places au rez-de-chaussée [¹⁶], un vestibule, deux caves, un grenier, idem avec grange y contigue batie en pierres, partie en briques couverts en pailles de plus, après avoir traversé la cour où se trouve un puits, une grange et une écurie batie en briques, couvertes en paille, deux rangs de cochons et un hangar.”¹⁷

The announcement for the sale on 25th July 1815 states that the whole complex contained two hectares, 47 ares and three bonniers.¹⁸

Taking all details together one could describe La Belle Alliance in June 1815 as follows. The north side of the main building was blind. It had a sign stating in black: Hotel de La Belle Alliance.¹⁹

On the south side of the main building was a small annex, probably the bakery. Its roof was sloping with a high chimney and its walls were blind.

The roof of the main building was covered with red, round tiles and had two stone chimneys. Its front had a door a bit right of the middle. On top of it was a small window. Next to the door, on

both sides, were two windows. All these windows were divided into two parts: a larger lower part and a smaller higher part. Only the lower parts could be covered with shutters.²⁰

To the left in the front of the main building was a smaller door, with a curved top, but this door had since long been bricked up.²¹ On top of this door was a small rectangular opening in the wall.²²

How the east side of the main building looked like in 1815 is not very well known. Probably, there was still a small barn which had a thatched roof and was partly built of natural stones and partly of brickwork.

In 1815 there was a well in rear of the main building. It consisted of a square brick basis with a wooden frame on top of it. It was covered by a slate roof in the form of a pyramid. Since long, this well has been demolished.

In 1815 there was an annex at some distance to the rear of the main building. It contained a barn, a shed and some pigsties. Its northern part was lower than its southern part.

The front of this building (to the west) of the southern part had in the middle a door and two windows on both sides of it. The northern part had four, lower entrances in a row.²³ This annex was covered with a thatched roof as well.

In the beginning of the 20th century la Belle Alliance contained a so-called *Chambre historique de Napoleon*. This must have been a kind of very small museum. There is no proof however that Napoleon ever entered the inn before or during the battle.

In the late 20th century the main building has been restored. As a result the shutters have been removed and the bricked door on the left side of the facade is installed again. The south side of the annex on the south side has a small window. Nowadays, in the left side of the east side of the building a door can be found with a window ; there are two windows on the first floor.

The right part contains a door and a window as well, with three windows on the first floor. The east side of the small annex has a small window right on top and two lower. All in all, the building has lost its authentic character of 1815 completely.

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¹ This chapter is mainly based on Logie. Cf. “La Belle Alliance.” In: Cahiers du Musée Wellington (1979), nr.2

Another extensive study is done by J.P. Tondeur, P.Courcelle, P.Meganck and J.J.Pattyn. In: La Belle Alliance (1). L’attaque de la Moyenne Garde. Waterloo 1815. Les Carnets de la campagne no.7 p.3-16 and nr.9 p.139-153

An even more detailed study has been done - but never finished - by a Belgian lawyer, called Duvivier. The papers belonging to this study are kept in the Musée de l’Armée in Brussels (fonds Duvivier).

2. Craan, W.B. Plan du champ de bataille de Waterloo etc.

3. Logie, J. La Belle Alliance. Cahiers du Musée Wellington.1979.nr.2

4. Scott, lieut.general – Battle of Waterloo; or, correct narrative of the late sanguinary conflict on the plains of Waterloo etc. p.134

5. Mayeur, A.J.J.le. Ode sur la bataille de Waterloo etc.

6. Gore, A. An historical account of the battle of Waterloo p.96 (note)

7. Reiche, L.von. Der Krieg der Franzosen gegen Russland etc. p.217

8. Addison, as cited by Logie. La Belle Alliance p.9

9. Cotton, as cited by Logie. In: La Belle Alliance p.9

10. He was born on 20th July 1720 at Arquennes-lez-Nivelles.

11. This bit of land corresponds with the place of the barn of La Belle Alliance.

12. Probably the inn was completed in 1765.

13. He was born at Lasne-Chapelle-Saint-Lambert on 8th August 1726.

14. See chapter on tourism of the battlefield.

15. Cf.

Colour-print of Reeve (1816)

Collection de 12 vues de Waterloo nr.11

Th.Fleischman. La Belle Alliance. Anonymous sketch, dated 1815. In: Bulletin of the SBEN. No.18 March 1956 p.14

Logie, J. Waterloo, l’évitable défaite p.94

Chalfont, Lord. Battle of three armies. (prints of Dennis Dighton and Bowyer) p.114
Lachouque, H. Waterloo p.115
La ferme du Caillou dans la bataille.Musée du Caillou p.23
Mudford,W. An historical account of the battle of Waterloo. London.1817, prints O, M and N
(Rouse)
"Waterloo" , catalogue - 1965 (plate XII).

¹⁶ There were two rooms in front and two in the rear. Simpson, A visit to Flanders etc. 3^e ed
p.96

17. Logie, J. La Belle Alliance. Cahiers du Musée de Wellington.1979,nr.2

18. Cf. the announcement from the Oracle of 25th July 1815, cited by W.Aerts and
Th.Fleischman. In: Bruxelles pendant la bataille de Waterloo p.213

¹⁹ Simpson. A visit to Flanders etc. 3^e ed. p.96
Anonymous sketch of La Belle Alliance, in the Gloucestershire Record office nr.D1833/Z5

20. Dighton shows single instead of double shutters. Cf. Chalfont, Lord. Battle of three
armies. (prints of Dennis Dighton and Bowyer) p.114
Sources which leave out the shutters altogether are:
Collection de 12 vues de Waterloo nr.11
The catalogue Waterloo 1815
Some sources show a double line of windows on top of each other. Cf.
Collection de 12 vues de Waterloo nr.11

21. Print of Reeve.
Sketches and notes relating to the battle of Waterloo. In: Gloucestershire Record Office.
D1833/25
Dighton, D. In: Chalfont, Lord. Battle of three armies p.114
The catalogue Waterloo 1815
Anonymous sketch of La Belle Alliance, in the Gloucestershire Record office nr.D1833/Z5
E.Stanley shows an open door (summer 1816). In: Before and after Waterloo p.267

22. Dighton shows it as being square. In: Chalfont, Lord. Battle of three armies p.114

23. E. Stanley. Before and after Waterloo p267 (summer 1816).
Sketches and notes relating to the battle of Waterloo. In the Gloucestershire Record office
nr.D1833/25