

Wellington's headquarters at Brussels.¹

Some time after he had written his letter to general Clinton, Wellington sat down to have dinner, but with whom is not known.² In the meantime, it was now running towards 3 p.m., it was the prince of Orange who arrived in Brussels and once there he went to see Wellington right away. He told the duke what he had learned at St.Symphorien about a French attack against the Prussian army, though be it in a very general way, and what measures he had taken. Wellington apparently did not see any reason to issue any orders straight away, and most probably told the prince that he wanted to wait for further information from both the Prussian sector and his own in front of Nivelles. It led the prince to leave the duke and to write to Constant Rebecque the following letter around 4 p.m.:

Brussels, this [sic] 15 June 1815

My dear Constant,

Unless you have news since this morning which make you deem it necessary to keep the troops outdoors all night, I request you to send them orders on my behalf to render themselves to their cantonments but to be assembled again tomorrow morning at 4 a.m. at those points fixed for this purpose. Please be so kind as to tell Abercombry, on my behalf, to do the same for the British forces. The duke of Wellington wishes me to stay here this evening so I will not leave from here until midnight or at 1 a.m.

All yours,

Willem, prince of Orange³

It was most probably also around 4 or 5 p.m. that Von Dörnbergs report – dated 9.30 a.m. - from Mons reached Wellington.⁴ The same may have applied to Behr's original report from Mons which was most probably forwarded by Constant Rebecque to the prince (a copy was included with Berkeley's note). In his turn, it might also have been around the same time that general Tindal, at Brussels, also received a similar report from Behr.⁵ Not long after, Berkeley's note which accompanied the report of Von Dörnberg and a copy of the report of Behr reached lord FitzRoy Somerset. In respect of the distance involved, it was around 5 p.m.⁶ Wellington got it soon after, as well as the prince. The flow of information did not stop there, as it was towards 6 p.m. that Von Müffling handed over Zieten's report of 9 a.m. to Wellington.⁷ It was this last message which led the duke to issue his first set of orders somewhere between 6 and 7 p.m.⁸ The memorandum reads:

Memorandum for the deputy quarter master general. Movements of the army. Bruxelles, 15 June 1815

General Dörnberg's brigade of cavalry, and the Cumberland hussars to march this night upon Vilvorde, and to bivouac on the high road near to that town.

The Earl of Uxbridge will be pleased to collect the cavalry this night at Ninhove, leaving the 2nd hussars looking out between the Scheldt and the Lys.

The 1st [sic] division of infantry to collect this night at Ath and adjacents and to be in readiness to move at a moment's notice.

The 3rd division to collect this night at Braine le Comte, and to be in readiness to move at the shortest notice.

The 4th division to be collected this night at Grammont with the exception of the troops beyond the Scheldt, which are to be moved to Audenarde.

The 5th division, the 81st regiment, and the Hanoverian brigade of the 6th division to be in readiness to march from Bruxelles at a moment's notice.

The Duke of Brunswick's corps to collect this night on the high road between Bruxelles and Vilvorde.

The Nassau troops to collect at daylight tomorrow morning on the Louvain road, and to be in readiness to move at a moment's notice.

The Hanoverian brigade of the 5th division to collect this night at Hal, and to be in readiness at daylight tomorrow morning to move towards Bruxelles and to halt on the high road between Alost and Assche for further orders.

The Prince of Orange is requested to collect at Nivelles the 2nd and 3rd division of the army of the Low Countries; and, should that point have been attacked this day, to move the 3rd division of British infantry upon Nivelles as soon as collected.

This movement is not to take place until it is quite certain that the enemy's attack is upon the right of the Prussian army, and the left of the British army.

Lord Hill will be so good as to order the Prince Frederick of Orange to occupy Audenarde with 500 men, and to collect the 1st division of the army of the Low Countries and the Indian Brigade at Sotteghem, so as to be ready to march in the morning at daylight.

The reserve artillery to be in readiness to move at daylight.

*Wellington*⁹

It should be stressed that this text of this memorandum has been compiled after 1815 by the editor of Wellington's despatches, colonel Gurwood, as the original instructions of Wellington to colonel Delancey seem to have gone missing.¹⁰

In this compilation, the 1st division is mentioned, whereas the 2nd is meant. This division was located in and around Ath, while the 1st was in and around Enghien and instructions for this division are lacking. Another available copy does mention the proper instruction for the 1st division as: "The 1st division of infantry to remain in its present situation but in readiness to march in a moment's notice."¹¹

The Hanoverian brigade of Von Vincke was to collect that night at Halle and "and to be in readiness at daylight tomorrow morning to move towards Bruxelles and to halt on the high road between Alost and Assche for further orders."

However, this last instruction is not applicable to the brigade of Von Vincke, but must refer to the one of Lambert which is not mentioned in the orders and which was located in and around Ghent. Instructions for the cavalry division of Collaert are missing completely, though these are available through the note written by Constant Rebecque after he received the concentration-orders through captain Russell later that evening.

The orders triggered Von Müffling, who by now had returned to his quarters, to write a letter at 7 p.m. to Blücher and which reads:¹²

News has just arrived that lieutenant general Von Zieten has been attacked. The duke of Wellington has ordered that all his forces assemble at their rendez-vous, and the prince of Orange is to report to him whether columns are directed upon Nivelles, as either the enemy moves along the Sambre in order to join in with columns which come from the vicinity of Givet, or he attacks near Fleurus, and then it is probable that he also attacks near Nivelles. As soon as the moon rises the reserve will march off, and in case the enemy does not attack near Nivelles at the same time, then the duke will be tomorrow in the vicinity of Nivelles with

his whole army to support Your Highness, or, in case the enemy has already attacked you, to move in his flank or rear according to an agreement which is to be made. I believe Your Highness will be pleased with this explanation and actions of the duke. I hope we will be able to celebrate victory on the 17th.

Brussels, the 15th Jne 1815

7 p.m.

*Von Müffling*¹³

After the duke of Wellington had spoken to Von Müffling, who accordingly wrote his letter at 7 p.m., the duke had a walk through the park at the Place Royale where he was accompanied by the Spanish representative, count Alava.¹⁴ Later, when he had returned to his headquarters - towards 9.30 p.m. - he wrote letters to the dukes De Berry and De Feltre, both stationed at Ghent. The one to the duke De Berry reads:

At Brussels, this 15 June 1815

9 1/2

Sir,

I have the honour to inform Your Highness that the enemy has attacked the Prussian posts at Thuin this morning and appears to threaten Charleroi. I have ordered our troops to prepare to march by daybreak, and I request Your Highness to concentrate yours in Alost.

I have the honour etc.

*Wellington*¹⁵

And at 10 p.m. he also wrote to the duke De Feltre [¹⁶]:

At Brussels, this 15 June 1815

10 p.m.

Dear duke,

I receive news that the enemy has attacked the Prussian posts this morning at Thuin at the Sambre and seems to threaten Charleroi. I have heard nothing from Charleroi since 9 o'clock this morning.

I have written to the duke of Berri to ask him to assemble his forces at Alost, and I request you to report to His Majesty about this event and to have the goodness to advise him to prepare a departure from Ghent in case this would become necessary. I will write you as soon as I will have more news.

I have the honour to be etc.

J'ai l'honneur d'être etc.

*Wellington*¹⁷

While he was writing both these letters, around 9.45 p.m., a messenger coming from Blücher at Namur arrived at Von Müffling's quarters. Having read the report, Von Müffling

immediately set off for the duke's headquarters. He delivered the letter which Blücher had written him at Namur at mid-day. Having this information from the Prussian central headquarters in his hands, Wellington now issued new orders immediately. They have gone into history as the so-called "after orders" and they read:

*Movement of the army.
Bruxelles, 15th June 1815*

After orders, 10 o'clock p.m.

*The 3rd division of infantry to continue its movement from Braine le Comte upon Nivelles.
The 1st division to move from Enghien upon Braine le Compte [sic].
The 2nd and 4th divisions from Ath & Gramont [sic], also from Audenarde to continue their movements upon Enghien.
The cavalry to continue its movement from Ninove upon Enghien.
The above movements to take place with as little delay as possible.*

Wm.de Lancey, QMG ¹⁸

In these orders, those for prince Frederik, as well as for the reserve-artillery, the 2nd and 3rd division of the Netherlands and for the cavalry-division of Collaert are absent. ¹⁹ For this reason the prince of Orange wrote the following additional order on the back of the copy of the orders which were meant for him

The cavalry division of the Netherlands will move from Haine St.Paul and St.Pierre to Arquennes and will take up position in rear of this village.

Willem, prince of Orange

Central headquarters has to move tomorrow from Braine to Nivelles.

G. P. of Orange

Brussels [?] 15 June ²⁰

Having established these orders, Wellington saw the moment fit to leave for the ball of Richmond; by then it was around 11.30 p.m. Meanwhile, the events led Von Müffling to send his adjutant Wucherer to Blücher towards midnight "to inform him about everything what he needed to know or could be useful to him." ²¹ It is most unfortunate that Von Müffling doesn't describe what this was, yet as Von Müffling had reported some five hours before so the report most probably dealt with the developments in this frame of time. ²²

The ball of Richmond.

The ball of Richmond had been arranged for the night of the 15th of June since some time. In 1814 and 1815 a lot of noble British families settled in Brussels as life here was much cheaper as in England. One of them was the family of the Duke of Richmond. The house where the Richmond family was living in 1815 was established at the rue de la Blanchisserie nr.23. ²³ Originally, this street was called the rue de la Fontaine, as the street ended near a fountain which was located just on the other side of the ramparts of the town. Both, ramparts and fountain, have

since long disappeared. The Boulevard du Jardin Botanique is now located where the ramparts were before.

The rue de la Blanchisserie got its name from a bleachery which was established in this street. Just next to this building was since the beginning of the 18th century a large garden, in which centre stood a large and simple mansion dating from the 17th century.²⁴ Its front was directed towards the ramparts and its door had steps and a balcony on top of it. A garden-wall indicated the ground-plan of the ramparts.

This house was owned by Michel Jean Simons, son of a famous coach-builder at the end of the 18th century. He had rented the house in September 1814 to Charles Lennox, fourth duke of Richmond, son of general George Henry Lennox.²⁵

In 1807 the Duke of Richmond became lord-lieutenant of Ireland and was colonel of the 35th regiment (Sussex); in 1818 he became a governor of Canada. In 1815 he had no post. He was married to Charlotte Gordon, a woman of exceptional beauty. The Richmonds had at least five of their children in Brussels, three sons and two daughters, Louisa en Georgina.^{26,27}

Three sons served in 1815 in Wellington's army: Charles Gordon Lennox, count of March and 5th duke of Richmond, captain in the 52nd regiment and extra aide de camp of the prince of Orange; lord George Lennox, lieutenant in the 9th regiment light dragoons and aide de camp of Wellington and finally Lord William Pitt Lennox, cornet with the Blues and adjutant of general Maitland.²⁸

The ball which was planned since the end of May 1815 and was much spoken about (²⁹), was held in a room to the left of the entrance of the house. In fact it was no ball-room, but a storage of the coach-builder Simons, which was converted into a ball-room.³⁰ At what time the ball actually started is not known.³¹ Wellington himself, accompanied by Von Müffling, arrived around midnight.³²

The moment dinner was served lieutenant Webster announced himself. He carried the letter sent by Constant Rebecque from Braine le Comte at 10.30 p.m.

Webster left Braine le Comte shortly after that time. The distance from here to the centre of Brussels is about 30 kilometres. It was around 00.30 a.m. that Webster dismounted at the prince of Orange headquarters at the rue de Brabant. Accompanied by a guide he went on foot further to the house of the Richmond family at the rue de la Blanchisserie where he arrived around 1 a.m. of the 16th of June. Even taking account these hours, Webster made the whole stretch with an average speed of 15 kilometre per hour !³³ The prince of Orange took the dispatch over from Webster, read it and delivered it to the Duke of Wellington.³⁴ His first reaction was one of disbelief and he said that he had no orders to give.^{35,36}

The moment the dinner had ended and the ball was resumed, Wellington asked the prince of Orange to leave for his headquarters at Braine le Comte. Accordingly, he discretionally dispatched all the officers and commanders present.³⁷ Not much later, Wellington himself left the ball.³⁸

So as far as the communication about the hostilities was concerned, the 15th of June was concluded by the arrival in Brussels of Constant Rebecque's note, carried by lieutenant Webster, who delivered it to the duke about 1 a.m. on the 16th of June at the house of the duke of Richmond. It informed the Duke about a French presence immediately south of Quatre Bras and the subsequent reinforcement of the Netherlands units there.

As a result, Wellington ordered his reserve (including the Brunswick corps) to move to Mont Saint Jean (the fork of the roads towards Charleroi and Nivelles) by daybreak. This order was probably issued between 1 and 2 a.m.³⁹

The action at Frasnes was communicated to Brussels through headquarters at Braine le Comte. Yet, there are strong indications that there also was a communication over the road leading from from Frasnes / Quatre Bras to Brussels.

On the 16th of June, at 3 a.m. in Brussels, J.F.L.Basslé, a lieutenant attached to the military command of the Netherlands at Charleroi, wrote his report for general Tindal. The situation was that Basslé had not been able to find him and therefore wrote his report, which reads:

Bruxelles this 16 June at 3 a.m.

To His Excellency the minister of defence of Belgium

Sir,

I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that I have just arrived (with an order) from Charleroy, from where I have left at noon, the enemy having entered by the lower city between 11 a.m. and noon.

I have travelled with the archives from Fleuris [sic] where it was expected to receive the enemy; a numerous artillery was placed on the heights awaiting Blücher's circle and who hadn't arrived yet by 1 p.m.

From there, I have left for Gemappes [sic] in the expectation that the enemy would be pushed back and Charleroy retaken. Having got there at 5 o'clock a confrontation took place near Gauchely [sic] and I saw our batteries advancing. I did not doubt for a moment that the enemy would be put to flight and I saw myself lodging in Charleroy. The officers of the regiment Orange-Nassau cried with rage as their units had no orders and not knowing what was taking place having received not a single piece of information the whole day. The officers witnessing the French in flight invited me to stay with them and go to Charleroy. At 7 p.m. the drummers of the regiment Orange-Nassau were awaited and soon after the captain in command received the instruction to take up a position at 8 o'clock. The enemy skirmishers have come to this point (at Quatre Bras at half a league from Gemappe) and was cut off, but the moment I left the batterie has arrived.

H.R.H. the prince of Sacsen Weimar [sic] was in the inn opposite the road from Mons to Namur.

Aware of the fact that the commanding officers were not able to send a report to Your Excellence, I have come myself to give a written detail about this interesting affair.

I have been to the general commissariat of the war department where I was told by the door-keeper that His Excellence did not stay there; at my arrival at the hotel a general has advised me to make the report for general Wellington, who did not know anything about it and thanked me for it and told me he would inform Your Excellence.

I have met carts near Gemappes [sic] loaded with grains and I have warned the commander of the convoy involved to take his precautions.

(signed) J.F.L.Basslé, major of the place of Charleroy ⁴⁰

It becomes clear that Basslé left Charleroi by noon for Fleurus, carrying the town-archives. From there he left for Genappe, from where he hoped to return to Charleroi again. However, while heading south, he witnessed, from a distance, the action at Gosselies and lingered at Quatre Bras until the action of Frasnes was over. Then he left for Brussels where he would have been advised to make his report to Wellington.

In case Basslé "venait d'arriver" he spoke to Wellington, which he very probably did after lieutenant Webster had arrived. The confusing element, however, is that Basslé claims that the duke had no knowledge of all he reported about. ⁴¹

From Waterloo, a lieutenant of the royal military police wrote the following report in the late afternoon of the 15th of June to his superior (a major) who probably forwarded it to baron Tindal later that day. He wrote:

“On the 14th, several French deserters had warned general Zieten at Charleroy that Bonaparte would attack us that night and which actually took place this morning as they suddenly fell at 3 a.m. on the line of outposts which had to pull back to Charleroy, and which we evacuated at 11.30 a.m. by taking the road of Fleurus, Sombrefe, Marbais, Quatre Bras; we had barely got there, or the enemy presented himself and entered into a strong fire-fight, which made me speed up my march to Waterloo where I arrive just now.”⁴²

From the description it can be concluded that the man probably left Quatre Bras around 7 p.m. (cf. action at Frasnes), and got at Waterloo by 9 p.m. His report reached Brussels, and there probably baron Tindal, on the 16th of June.⁴³

Baron Van der Capellen, secretary of state for the Belgian provinces at Brussels, did not attend the ball in full, as he wrote at midnight to king Willem the following report:

Brussels, 15th June, midnight

The circumstances we have learned about today are to me of sufficient significance to inform Your Majesty about them as soon as possible.

According to the most authentic information coming from H.R.H. the prince of Orange and the duke of Wellington, whom I just left, the Prussian line at Thuin and Lobbes has been attacked this morning by French forces. The Prussian outposts have retreated and Charleroi would have been evacuated, but this has not been said with so many words. The French are upon both banks of the Sambre. The prince of Oranje has just left for his headquarters at Braine le Comte, while prince Frederik will move his tomorrow to Enghien. The duke of Wellington will concentrate the majority of his army in the vicinity of Nivelles. Blücher's headquarters has been transferred from Namur to Sombref and (according to Baron Van Brockhausen) the 4th corps would take up a position near Tirlemont and Louvain.

The garrison here has received the order to leave from here for Nivelles, for some part this night and for another in the early morning. Van het vertrek van den hertog van Wellington schein nog niets stellig bepaald.

I write Your Majesty on behalf of the prince of Orange, as well as the duke of Wellington who has requested me to inform you that both will inform you soonest about the important events which probably unfold the next few days.

I will arrange with general Van Reede that, when he will have left with the duke, to receive news which I will then transmit to Your Majesty right away. However, as we have here no couriers and therefore other persons have to be used, I hope you will approve that at least two couriers will be assigned to me and sent here, so as to be able to send my reports to Your Majesty. This will speed up the correspondence.

In a few moments I will arrange with mr. Appelins about the measures which have to be taken relative to the cash kept here. Your Majesty will approve that in the event of a sudden enemy invasion, myself, as well as the heads of the departments, will stay here up to the very last moment and then to move to Antwerp accordingly.

I cannot imagine this will occur, but yet take the freedom to ask Your Majesty for appropriate instructions.

Van der Capellen.

P.S. General Pozzo di Borgo has told me the Russian forces start to cross the Rhine between Mannheim and Mainz. It is told that Murat would lead the cavalry and that he would be at Beaumont. Yesterday, Buonaparte would have slept at St.Amand and he would have reached Maubeuge today. Everything here is quiet. As I write this, I hear the men who are assembling to march off. ⁴⁴

The most likely chain of events is that Van der Capellen was at the ball, met the prince and Wellington there between 11 p.m. and midnight and that he heard from them for the first time about the actual situation. Accordingly, he left the ball for his quarters, to write his report at midnight. ⁴⁵

That evening or during the night, an aide de camp of lieutenant general Van Toll – who had arrived on the 14th of June – left for general allied headquarters at Heidelberg to report about the start of hostilities. Additionally, he took a letter written on the 15th of June by count Pozzo di Borgo as Lord Cathcart wrote to lord Castlereagh on the 18th of June: “[.] The report of the movement of the enemy, commencing from Maubeuge on the 15th, was received this morning by the aide de camp of lieutenant general Toll, an officer of the Russian Quarter-Master-General’s staff, recently sent to the duke of Wellington by the emperor, and who also brought a letter from Pozzo di Borgo. General Toll remained to see the event and both letters speak with great confidence of the state of the preparation of the Duke’s and Blücher’s armies.[.]” ⁴⁶ Having returned to his headquarters, Wellington caught some sleep, to be disturbed again between 4 and 5 a.m., the moment Von Dörnberg arrived from Mons. ⁴⁷

First version: 23rd August 2009- Last revised: 18th December 2013 - Copyright © Pierre de Wit

¹ A separate note deals in more detail with the communications running to and from Wellington's headquarters.

² One of the persons of whom we know who was present with Wellington right at that moment however was sir Pulteney Malcolm (1768-1838). As a naval officer, he commanded a naval force in the North Sea. Cf. Sir H.Vivian. In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.150-158
His correspondence dated 1815 and some years beyond unfortunately does not reveal anything about his meeting with Wellington on the 15th of June. Cf. NLS, Acc.6684, 6990, 13175, and Mss.2326-36, 2574-76

³ In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

⁴ Von Müffling - The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.230

Wagner - Plane etc. p.21

Cf. Damitz - Von Geschichte etc. p.105

Von Pflugk Harttung erroneously believes it came in at 10 p.m. Cf. Vorgeschichte der Schlacht bei Quatre Bras p.209 and in GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.II.12 p.103

⁵ Cf. chapter on the Netherlands army, 15th of June.

⁶ Cf. Hofschröder, P. - 1815.The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.198

Hofschröder, P. Waterloo myths p.28

Hussey, J. - Conversations with the Duke of Wellington etc. In: First Empire, no.73 p.11

Hussey, J. - The fog of war etc. p.16

Robinson, M. - The battle of Quatre Bras p.55

Pollio, A. Waterloo p.149

Lord FitzRoy himself says: "About five o'clock in the afternoon the duke of Wellington while at dinner received from the prince of Orange, who was at Braine le Comte, a report sent to His Royal Highness from his advanced post (probably from Mons or l'Evêque) [sic], informing him that the French had attacked the Prussians' advanced posts on the Sambre"

The way FitzRoy Somerset puts it, it is news which Wellington received during dinner time from the prince (who was actually at Brussels by the way) without FitzRoy Somerset himself as an intermediate. In that case this was the oral report of the prince made at 3 p.m.

Yet, at the same time, FitzRoy Somerset refers to a message actually sent to the prince and here he actually refers to the letter which was sent by Berkeley, though he doesn't mention him as such. He mixes both messages up. It is also that FitzRoy Somerzet gives the impression as if this news triggered Wellington to issue his concentration orders, which it didn't. FitzRoy Somerset doesn't mention Zieten's report and which actually did (see below).
In: NAM, nr.6507-1

This interpretation of FitzRoy's account also confirms the absence of the prince of Orange the moment the news of Berkely reached FitzRoy and Wellington. The prince had gone off to write Constant Rebecq and after that to dine with count Alava (cf. memorandum below).

By 6 p.m., a civilian traveler, a man called N.Smith, spoke to an "aide de camp of the prince of Orange" in the lobby of the Hôtel d'Hollande and who had just arrived in Brussels with dispatches for Wellington "announcing the advance of the French upon Charleroi and their victory over the Prussians there" – though the content of the message doesn't fully match the information as formulated by Berkeley, it may very well have been his information referred to

here. The aide de camp in question might have been lord March. In: Flying sketches of the battle of Waterloo etc. p.16-17

For some unknown reason, Miller believes that De Lancey received Berkeley's note the moment he had dinner at Alava's place. In: Lady De Lancey at Waterloo p.57

⁷ In taking the words "...advanced on the 15th of June and *attacked the Prussian posts at Thuin* [italics are mine] and Lobbes, on the Sambre at day-light in the morning.." as they are, Wellington is right in so far that he learned about this between 5 and 6 p.m. (through De Paravicini and Zieten).

Von Müffling was not with the duke the moment he received Zieten's report. He went there, discussed the report and then went back to his office. Cf. Von Müffling himself. In: The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc.229

Count Hügel. In: Pfister, A. - Aus dem Lager der Verbündeten 1814 und 1815 p.366

⁸. Von Müffling states in his memoirs it was at 6 or 7 p.m. In: The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.229

In his former account of the campaign he says it was 6 p.m. In: Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.9

Von Pflugk Harttung believes they were issued at 7.15 p.m. In: Vorgeschichte etc. p.62

Other historians take the 5 p.m. version of the 2nd edition of the Despatches of 1852, but this indication is not a reliable reference (cf. notes)

Cf. Siborne, W. - History of the war etc. Vol.I p.77

An officer of the staff of colonel De Lancey writes in this connection: "I was sauntering about the park towards seven o'clock on the evening of the 15th of June, when a soldier of the Guards, attached to the Quartermaster-general's office, summoned me to attend sir William Delancey. He had received orders to concentrate the army towards the frontier, which until then had remained quiet in cantonments. I was employed, along with others, for about two hours in writing out "routes" for the several divisions, foreign as well as British, which were despatched by orderly hussars of the 3rd regiment of the German Legion, steady fellows, who could be depended on for so important a service. To each was explained the rate at which he was to proceed, and the time when he was to arrive at his destination; he was directed also to bring back the cover of the letter which he carried, having the time of its arrival noted upon it by the officer to whom it was addressed. This business being over, which occupied us till after nine etc.[..]" The officer also adds that most of the orders were sent out in copy as well "in order to guard against the possibility of mistake." It is another confirmation that the orders had been drafted by Wellington before 7 p.m. and that it also took a while to work them out and dispatch them. In: Recollections of Waterloo, by a staff officer p.3

The officer involved may be captain Jessop, of the 44th regiment, as he makes a reference to an ex-colleague of his of this regiment.

⁹. HL, MS61 WP 8.2.4 and 8.2.5
WD, Vol.XII (1838) p. 472-473

¹⁰ The first edition of the Wellington despatches was in 1838, while the same instructions in the edition of 1852 (Vol.VIII p.142-143) read thus:

Instructions for Colonel Sir W. De Lancey, the D.Q.M.G., to be sent forthwith to lieutenant-general Lord Hill, the Prince of Orange and the Earl of Uxbridge.

Brussels, June 15, 1815, 5 p.m.

1. General Dörnberg's brigade and the Cumberland hussars to march this night upon Vilvorde.
 2. Lord Uxbridge to collect his cavalry this night upon Ninhove, leaving the 2nd hussars looking out between the Scheldt and the Lys.
 3. The 1st division to remain as they are at Enghien, and all in readiness to march at a moment's notice.
 4. The 2nd division to collect this night at Ath and adjacent, and to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice.
 5. The 3rd division at Braine le Comte, the same.
 6. The 4th division to be collected at Grammont, with the exception of the troops beyond the Scheldt, which are to be brought to Audenarde.
 7. The 5th and 6th division in readiness at a moment's notice.
 8. The brigade at Ghent to march to Brussels in the evening.
 9. The Duke of Brunswick to collect tonight on the high road from Brussels to Vilvorde, the Nassau troops on the Louvain road and both ready to march in the morning.
 10. The Prince of Orange, who is now at Alava's, to be directed to collect at Nivelles the 2nd and 3rd divisions of the Army of the Low Countries; and in case that point should have been attacked this day, to move the 3rd division and the 1st division upon Nivelles as soon as collected. This movement is not to take place until it is quite certain that the enemy's attack is upon the Prussian right or our left.
 11. Lord Hill to be directed to order Prince Frederic of Orange to occupy Audenarde with 500 men, and to collect the 1st division of the Army of the Low Countries and the Indian Brigade at Sotteghem, so as to be ready to march in the morning at daylight.
- The reserve artillery etc. to be in readiness to move at daylight.

The main differences are in the timing of the instructions, the mentioning of the division of Cooke in both point nr.3 and 10 and the lack of those for the brigade of Von Vincke.
Cf. separate note.

¹¹ HL, MS WP 8.2.5

¹² A time of arrival towards 6 p.m. would mean a ride of about 8.5 hours, covering a distance of about 50 kilometres (average of almost 6 kilometres per hour).

Taking into account an average speed of a courier, which is about 10 kilometres per hour, the message could have been delivered about 4.30 p.m.

There is not a trace of information about what could have caused this serious delay. The Prussian communication system had its deficiencies, but the confusing element here is that the stretch Charleroi – Brussels was a pretty unambiguous one, in the sense of a paved road, running in a straight line. In the months before, Zieten sent numerous couriers along the same stretch, so the experience was there.

A well paved connection, between Liège and Brussels and stretching over a distance of almost a hundred kilometres, could be covered by a rider in about 8 ½ hours, as colonel Hardinge wrote to sir Hudson Lowe: "I send you back a route which I forgot to do before by which you will observe the communication can be kept up in 8 ½ h." In: BL, Add.ms.20.114 f.84

Also, for instance, on the 17th of June, adjutant and captain De Pestre carried a message from Brussels to the prince of Orange to whom he delivered it near Le Caillou. It took him 2.5 hours (from 13.00 to 15.30 p.m) to cover this distance of about 25 kilometres.

Cf. his report, dated 17th of June 1815. In: NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

13. In: GSA, Nachlass Gneisenau, Paket 23 fol.93-94

Originally from the Gneisenau Archive, Sommerschenburg. A40, p.93 Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.55

In: Delbrück, H. - Einziges zum Feldzuge von 1815 p.658-659 and Delbrück, H. - Das Leben des Feldmarshalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau Vol.IV, p.365

The letter was written on different paper as the other ones from Von Müffling, the envelop with the address would have been marked with the word "immediate" along with three crosses (x x x) indicating that it was sent by a top priority courier; it was also sealed by a British seal. This all means that it was sent out from British headquarters and not from Von Müffling's personal office. Cf. Delbrück, H. - Einiges zum Feldzuge von 1815 p.668

Cf. Hofschröder, P. -1815.The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.213, 334 and in Wellington's smallest victory p.256

Yet, in 1902 and 1903 Von Pflugk Harttung found out that the seal had been cut in two and that the larger half of the envelope, with the address and the crosses had gone missing. In: Vorgeschichte etc. p.56, Die Vorgeschichte der Schlacht bei Quatre Bras p.508

The markings involved have all gone since then.

¹⁴ Cf. Flying sketches of the battle of Waterloo etc. p.18

FitzRoy Somerset. In: NAM, nr.6507-1

15. HL, WP 1.470

WD, Vol.X p.474

¹⁶ Henri-Jacques-Guillaume Clarke, comte d'Hunebourg, duc de Feltre(1765-1818).

Clarke entered the French army in 1782. With the outbreak of the french revolution. Clarke served in the early French revolutionary wars in the Army of the Rhine and by 1793 had been promoted to *general de brigade*. In 1795 Clarke was briefly arrested. After his release, Clark lived in the Elzas until Lazare Carnot sent him to Italy to serve as Napoleon's chief topographical officer until he was sent to Sardinia. After 18 Brumaire, Clarke served as Chief of the Topographical Bureau, State Counciler, state secretary for the army and navy. During the war against Austria in 1805, Clarke was appointed governor of Vienna, during the war against Prussia in 1806 he served as governor of Erfurt and of Berlin.

In 1807, Napoléon appointed Clarke Minister of War. His role in thwarting the British invasion of Walcheren in 1809 lead to the emperor creating him *Duc de Feltre*. Clarke served as Minister of War until the end of Napoléon's reign. When the allies neared Paris, Clarke mounted an ineffectual defense of the capital and was one of the generals pressing for Napoléon's abdication. After Napoléon's abdication he was replaced as minister of war by Dupont de l'Etang but Louis XVIII of France made him a Peer of France. When Napoleon landed in Southern France in March 1815 to reclaim his throne, Clarke was again made Minister of War and served until the Bourbon government fled. When the King fled to Ghent, Clarke followed him. After Napoléon's second abdication, Clarke was made Minister of War once more and served in that capacity until 1817 when Gouvion Saint Cyr took over. He was then given command of the 15th Military Division.

In 1816 he was made a Marshal of France. Clarke died in 1818. Source: Wikipedia encyclopedia.

17. HL, WP 1.470

WD, Vol.X , p.474

¹⁸. KHA, Nr.A40 XIII 10

The one of Wellington has very slight variations. In: HL, MS61 WP 8.2.4
WD, Vol.XII p.474

As with the concentration orders, the set dated 1852 (Vol.VIII p.142-143) is different and reads:

Additional instructions, issued June 15,1815,10 p.m.

The troops in Bruxelles (5th and 6th divisions, Duke of Brunswick's and Nassau troops) to march when assembled from Bruxelles by the road of Namur to the point where the road to Nivelles separates; to be followed by general Dörnberg's brigade and the Cumberland hussars.

The 3rd division to move from Braine le Comte upon Nivelles.

The 1st division from Enghien upon Braine le Comte.

The 2nd and 4th divisions upon Enghien from Ath and Grammont, also from Audenarde, and to continue their movement upon Enghien. The cavalry upon Enghien from Ninhove.

The most conspicuous difference is the presence of instructions here for the reserve.

As the original of the KHA is available, the second version of this set of orders as published in Wellington's despatches dated 1852 is under serious doubt.

¹⁹ Captain James Fraser (90th Foot) and attached to the quarter master general's department (5th division) claims he brought orders on the night of the 15th of June to the prince of Orange, "at the house of the late duke of Richmond" as well as "to the duke of Brunswick, the Nassau corps, prince Frederik of Orange and other generals commanding divisions."

These instructions could have been the after orders, delivered at the house of the duke of Richmond where the ball may just have started; yet, the confusing element is that Fraser mentions units of the reserve, which didn't get any formal instructions then.

All in all, it may very well have been that Fraser actually did bring these over to the commanders involved. The next morning, Fraser asked permission to return to the 5th division but he was refused to do so and spent the remainder of the campaign on the general staff; he doesn't enter into any details any further, however. Cf. his account dated 19th october 1829, and written for the prince of Orange. In: KHA. A.40.XIII.0

²⁰. In: KHA, A 40XIII-10

A copy in: NA, nr.2.13.14.01 Archive Constant Rebecque

There is a note on top of this second document stating: "ordre recu à 2 1/2 h. du matin le 16 Juin". On the bottom, the prince of Orange gives the destinations for the other divisions as well, but then in English:

British:

3rd div. to Nivelles

1st div. to Braine le C.

2nd [...] div. to Enghien

Cavalry to Enghien

²¹ Von Müffling. In his letter to Von Hofmann. In: Zur Geschichte etc. p.131

In his memoirs, Von Müffling refers to a "courier" as being ready to leave with Von Müffling's report and which he did around midnight. In: The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.230

Lieutenant Wucherer lived from 1790 to 1865. Cf. Grypa, D. (ed.) – Leopold von Ranke. Briefwechsel. Band I. 1810-1825. De Gruyter, Oldenbourg p.726

²² It is in this connection a statement as done in a footnote in the diary of colonel Von Nostitz should be mentioned. After citing from Von Müffling's letter from 7 p.m. it is stated: “[..] In addition, Müffling reported from Brussels towards midnight that Wellington's army would be concentrated in 12 hours time, and that by 10 a.m. the next morning there would be 20.000 men at Quatre Bras. Eventually, a letter from Wellington from Frasnes from the 16th of June timed 10.30 a.m. arrived, in which he stated that three army corps were ready within distances of about 18 kilometres [..].”

It is first of all important to note that this text is not one of Von Nostitz himself, but from the editor of his diary. As such it is not one as coming from an eye-witness.

In fact, it comes from Delbrück. In his biography of Gneisenau he states: “Thus Müffling reported (towards midnight) to the Prussian high command that the allied army would be concentrated within 12 hours, and that 20.000 men would be the next morning by 10 a.m. at Quatre Bras and the cavalry corps near Nivelles.” (Leben etc. p.367). This description, in its turn, is a contraction of the mission of lieutenant Wucherer on the one hand (as far as the hour was concerned) and of two other documents (as far as the content was concerned) on the other.

First of all it is a report from Gneisenau of the 17th of June to Von der Kneesebeck and in which he writes: “[..] On the morning of the 16th of June, the duke of Wellington promised to be at 10 a.m. with 20.000 men in Quatre Bras (the crossing of the road from Namur to Nivelles with the one from Charleroi to Brussels), his cavalry in Nivelles.[..].”

For the incorrectness of this statement I would like to refer the reader to the observations as done on the meeting at Bussy on the 16th of June (see below).

The second document is a letter which Gneisenau wrote on the 6th of August 1815 to consul Gibsone and in which he states “[..] The misfortune which struck us on the 16th was based upon the fact that the duke of Wellington was unable to concentrate his army. He had promised this concentration several times and reiterated it just on the 15th of June, and then within 12 hours; and he had agreed with us, in case the enemy would attack one of our armies, that the other would then fall in his rear. Yet, the duke was unable to carry out his concentration, probably due to errors in the calculation of time and space.” In: Delbrück, H. Einiges etc. p.659

It is from this letter that Delbrück has taken the element of the 12 hours and which he linked to the words as uttered by Gneisenau on the 17th of June, which were – in their turn – a muddling up of events. As an additional element, by midnight, Quatre Bras played for Wellington no role whatsoever (cf. observations below). The conclusion is therefore that the claim as done by Delbrück is totally unfounded. Cf. Hussey, J. - Müffling, Gleig etc. p.265-266

Hofschröer repeats the statement of Delbrück and adds as an additional source the memoirs of Von Müffling, but Von Müffling mentions that Wellington dispatched towards midnight orders for the concentration of the army at Nivelles and Quatre Bras.

Apart from the fact that this is wrong in itself (cf. observations on the role of Von Müffling specifically in a separate note), by midnight, however, Quatre Bras played for Wellington no role whatsoever (cf. observations below). In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.215

Von Pflugk Harttung does make a slight allusion to the mission of Wucherer without mentioning any details. Cf. Vorgeschichte etc. p.64

23. In fact between this street and the Boulevard du Jardin Botanique, and not, as some claim to be, at the rue de la Blanchisserie.

²⁴ The total area measured 4064 square metres. In: National Army Museum, Brussels. Fonds Duvivier. Archieffonds Franse periode. Part III Box 25, I.3

25. The duke himself arrived here in August 1814 and the rest of the family followed later. In: Brocklebank, B. - "Home of the Waterloo ball." In: Country life. (1975), nr.11 p.1711

26. The Richmonds had fourteen children:

1. Charles Lennox (1791-1860)
2. John George Lennox (1793- ?)
3. Henry Adam Lennox (1797-1812)
4. William Pitt Lennox (1799-1881)
5. Frederic Lennox (1801-1829)
6. Sussex Lennox (1802-1874)
7. Arthur Lennox (1806-1864)
8. Mary Lennox (-1847)
9. Sarah Lennox (-1873)
10. Georgina Lennox (1795 - 1891)
11. Jane Lennox (-1861)
12. Louisa Magdalena Lennox (1803 – 2nd March 1900)
13. Charlotte Lennox (-1833)
14. Sophia Georgina (-1902)

27. Georgina Lennox married in 1824 William Fitzgerald de Roos (later De Ros), captain in the 1st regiment Life Guards. It was her daughter, Mrs. Swinton, who wrote a biography about her mother entitled "A sketch of the life of Georgiana, Lady De Ros etc.", London 1893. Thanks to her, there is some evidence of where the ball actually took place. In: F. de Bas, Prins Frederik en zijn tijd Vol. III, 2 p.1173-1178

²⁸ Lord William Pitt Lennox fell from his horse during a match on the 13th of April, after he had hit the branch of a tree with his head and arm. His arm was broken at two places and he was blinded on one eye. It did not prevent him from being present at the ball of Richmond and later, for some time, at the battle of Waterloo. Cf. Fifty years' biographical reminiscences p.224, 241-244

29. Captain Verner (7th regiment hussars) informs us that he was the one who brought the invitation to the officers of the cavalry at Grammont. See: Verner - Reminiscences of William Verner etc. p.40

Captain Van der Meere, aide de camp of general Van Geen, military governor of the province of Brabant, was asked by the duchess of Richmond to help drawing up the list of guests. In: Mémoires du général comte Van der Meere p.33.

³⁰ Cf. Notes.

31. On the 15th of June, a detachment of the Foot Guards would have been called up from Enghien as guard for the ball. In: Archive of the Guards, cited by D. Hamilton-Williams, Waterloo, new perspectives p.172

32. Von Müffling. The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.229
According to Duvivier Wellington went to the ball around 11 p.m.

Von Pflugk Hartung erroneously claims Wellington arrived at the ball before 10 p.m. and that he got Dörnbergs information half an hour later. This would have been the reason for his departure, to come back again around midnight. In: *Vorgeschichte etc.* p.80

Ropes cites from the journal of lady J.Dalrymple Hamilton who claims to have met Wellington when he entered the ballroom at around 10 p.m. In: *The campaign of Waterloo* p.89

33. Webster himself says he left Braine le Comte after 10 p.m. and that he covered the stretch in one hour, thanks to two fresh horses and the full moon. Further he claims the distance to have been 10 miles, which is incorrect, as well as the time he required to cover it. In: *A memoir of Ch.M.Young*, p.307

For 1 a.m. cf. Glover, M. - Wellington as a military commander. p.197.

³⁴ The prince had left lieutenant Webster at Braine le Comte on call so that he might be able to bring him any dispatches if necessary. Cf. Webster's account. In: *A memoir of Ch.M.Young* p.307

W.P.Lennox, son of the duke of Richmond, erroneously claims that the prince had left the ball two hours before Webster delivered him the note of Constant Rebecque and that therefore the prince returned to the house of the Richmonds to show it to Wellington. Additionally, he erroneously believes the duke had issued orders for the concentration of his forces at Quatre Bras by 10 p.m. In: *Fifty years etc.* p.233-235

35. Cf. the following note made the prince of the Orange at the back of the letter:

“this 15 June 1815. Letter of general Constant Rebecque announcing to me that my posts at Frasnes had been attacked; I have received it at Brussels and then informed the duke of Wellington about it who didn't want to believe it.” In: KHA, nr.A40 XIII.10

Though this note is dated on the 15th of June, this could well be an error in date as it was just after midnight.

FitzRoy Somerset erroneously claims the duke learned about the French advance towards Frasnes on the 16th of June, while being on his way from Brussels to Quatre Bras. In: NAM, nr. 6507-1

36. Legend has it that the Duke of Brunswick, in apprehending the events, anticipated his death. Holding the prince de Ligne on his knee, he would suddenly have dropped him as a result.

Cf. Cotton, E. - *Une voix de Waterloo* p.15

37. Sometimes it is being asserted that a lot of officers didn't have the time to get dressed for battle and therefore fought in ball-dress. Cf.

Kelly, Chr. - *The memorable battle of Waterloo etc.* London.1817.p.46.

Van der Meere, count - *Mémoires du comte général Van der Meere* p.34.

However, also this statement is one of the numerous legends around the ball of Richmond Cf. Gore in the *United Service Journal* of June 1842

Captain Verner (7th regiment of hussars) says just as he arrived (with lieutenant O'Grady) all guests left for their destinations. See: Verner, *Reminiscences of William Verner* p.40

Lady Hamilton Dalrymple witnessed that the Duke of Wellington was charming but concentrated that night. Cf. her account in: H.Maxwell - *The life of Wellington Vol.II* p.13.

Wellington would also have had a long conversation with Lord Uxbridge. Cf.letter of captain T.Wildman, extra aide de camp of Uxbridge, 19th June 1815. In: NAM, nr.1981-12-53-557

Baron Van der Capellen, in his report dated midnight of the 15th of June, asserts that the prince had left for Braine le Comte, but this is not possible. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.8

38. By then it was towards 2 a.m. Cf. Glover, M. Wellington as a military commander p.197

Robinson, M. - The battle of Quatre Bras p.112

This would mean that the Duke was at the ball for almost two hours. Wellington's cook, James Thornton, confirms this. Cf. Thornton, J. - Your most obedient servant p.94

3 a.m. is given by Von Müffling in his memoirs, but this is too late. Cf. The memoirs of baron Von Müffling p.230

E.Heeley, assistant of lieutenant colonel Scovell, being present at the ball, mentions that the ball was interrupted around midnight; so, this was later. In: Journal. In: NAM, Nr.8409-98

Lady J.Dalrymple Hamilton reports in her diary that Wellington was still at the ball around 2.30 a.m. In: Maxwell, H. - The life of Wellington. Vol.II p.13

³⁹ Cf. Constant Rebecque in his account. He erroneously states though that the reserve was ordered as far as Quatre Bras. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Colonel Von Herzberg, of the Brunswick general staff. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.23-55 He clearly mentions the reserve and not only the Brunswickers.

Gurwood is mistaken in joining the orders for the reserve to those issued by 10 p.m. (after orders) in his edition of Wellington's despatches of 1852. He describes them as: "The troops in Bruxelles (5th and 6th divisions, Duke of Brunswick's and Nassau troops) to march when assembled from Bruxelles by the road of Namur to the point where the road to Nivelles separates; to be followed by general Dörnberg's brigade and the Cumberland hussars." In: WD, Vol.VIII p.142-143

⁴⁰ In: Archives générales du royaume in Brussels , inventaire nr.108, box nr.5 item 150a. Cited in: Couvreur, L. - Le drame Belge de Waterloo p.76-77

⁴¹ The report is confirmed to have reached Tindal on the 16th of June. Cf. note which gives a summary of the report in a document entitled "Lettres confidentielles reçues le 16 Juin 1815." In: NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

It is unclear when Basslé left Quatre Bras or Genappe; in case he did so after 8 p.m. he would normally have been able to reach Brussels towards midnight.

⁴² The original is in the Archives générales du royaume at Brussels, inventaire nr.108

Cited in: Couvreur, H.J. - Le drame Belge etc. p.71

From the description it can be concluded that the man probably left Quatre Bras around 7 p.m. (cf. action at Frasnes), and got at Waterloo by 9 p.m.

The fact that the report reached Brussels, probably baron Tindal, on the 16th of June can be taken from the note which gives a summary of the report in a document entitled "Lettres confidentielles reçues le 16 Juin 1815." In: NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

The officer involved probably spoke to Van Saxon Weimar, as he writes:

"Since the morning of the 15th of June I noticed an extraordinary movement on the high road of many people coming from Charleroi telling French troops having passed the border had approached their city; some time later the officer of our military police stationed at Charleroi confirmed this news, adding the French had already passed his residence. [...]"

In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.263

⁴³ Cf. note which gives a summary of the report in a document entitled “Lettres confidentielles reçues le 16 Juin 1815.” In: NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

⁴⁴ In: NA, 2.02.01 nr.6585

Though Van der Capellen for instance states that the prince of Orange had left for Braine le Comte and that the reserve was ordered to leave Brussels -which both took place after the arrival of lieutenant Webster-, it is impossible that he wrote after Webster did so. Let alone the hour at which the letter is dated, he mentions elements from the reports which had dropped in that afternoon and (indirectly) from Blücher’s letter (i.e. the transfer of Prussian headquarters) which had dropped in towards 10 p.m. Additionally, if Webster would have dropped in, Van der Capellen would certainly have mentioned this.

⁴⁵ The fact that baron Van der Capellen reported back to the king that night about the commencement of the hostilities is also confirmed by Van der Capellen himself. In: Grovestins, baron C.F.Sirtema van – Gedenkschriften van den graaf Van der Duyn van Maasdam en van den baron Van der Capellen p.478

⁴⁶ In: Vane, Ch. W. (ed.) – Correspondence, despatches and other papers of viscount Castlereagh p.380-381

⁴⁷ Von Dörnberg. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.292