

The movements of the French cavalry-reserve (except for the 1st corps).

During the night of the 14th of June, the cavalry corps of Exelmans stood at Bossu-lez-Walcourt. In following the recommendation, as given by Soult on the 14th of June, the corps most probably followed the road which led it through Silenriex, Vogenée and Yves to the road which connects Philippeville and Charleroi. This "grand chemin" leads from Philippeville to Gomezée, through Ferrière la Grande, Tarsienne, along Louveral and Couillet to Marcinelle and from there to Charleroi. ¹

Exelmans dragoons could have left their positions around 5.30 a.m. ² While the Imperial guard was passing through Charleroi, Exelmans dragoons somehow arrived in front of the 3rd corps (around 2 p.m.) as they followed the Imperial guard and left from Charleroi before Vandamme did so. ³ Grouchy himself joined the dragoons but soon went ahead. ⁴

Soon after joining the men of Pajol, Grouchy sent Exelmans troops to a watermill, near a ford in a stream. The dragoons passed it and, unseen by the Prussians, took up a favourable position on the Prussian left flank. ⁵

About the marches and situation of the corps of Kellerman nothing substantial is known. On the night of the 14th of June, the bivouac of one of its divisions, the one of Roussel d'Hurbal, was at the southern edge of the Bois du Gaiolet west of Milhaud's corps, while the one of Lhéritier was near Solre-le-Château. At the end of the 15th of June the corps had its position somewhere near Charleroi. ⁶ It can be assumed, however, that it followed the same track as Exelmans did, but in relation to the positions of the divisions it should not be excluded that the division of Lhéritier moved in rear of the division of Wathier of the corps of Milhaud (see below). Having received no report of Kellerman, by the time he wrote his report of the 16th of 5 a.m. Grouchy presumed its position to be somewhere near Charleroi. ⁷

Milhaud's division of Delort was not mentioned in the "ordre du jour" of the 13th of June, but it was in the *ordre de mouvement* of the 14th of June where is stated: " Le général Gérard donnera ordre à la 14e division de cavalerie [Delort], qui a dû aussi arriver aujourd'hui à Philippeville, de suivre le mouvement de son corps d'armée sur Charleroi, où cette division joindra le 4e corps de cavalerie ". In reading this order the division was supposed to be at Philippeville. However, neither the order of the 14th of June for Milhaud, nor Grouchy's report of the 14th of June mention the division to be in Philippeville. Both documents mention the cavalry of the 4th corps as a whole. By the evening of the 14th of June, the division of Delort bivouacked somewhere between Couvin and Rocroi, so it was still way in rear of the 4th corps.

Delort's division marched separately from the 13th division (the one of Wathier), which was located in bivouac at the southern edge of the Bois du Gaiolet, east of the 3rd cavalry corps. There is an order of Soult for Delort, which is not dated and which states:

Charleroi, 15 Juin 1815

Ordre au général Delort de prendre position en arrière de la ville.

Soult ⁸

This order matches the *ordre de mouvement*, which states that both divisions were supposed to

be re-united near Charleroi. However, in reality Delort followed the track to Châtelet, just like the corps of Gérard.

No details of Delort's march are known, but on the evening of the 15th of June Gérard wrote about the division: "La division de cuirassiers du général Delort est encore en arrière sur la route de Philippeville; je lui ai envoyé successivement trois officiers, pour lui faire prendre la direction de Châtelet." ⁹ From this it can be inferred that the division actually followed the 4th corps, but apparently on a considerable distance. However, both divisions joined somewhere in the night at St.Francois, a small hamlet two kilometers north of Châtelet, as at 3 a.m. on the 16th of June, Grouchy writes in his report: " Le 4e corps a rallié sa seconde division et est au village de St.Francois et censes environnantes. " ¹⁰ In this respect it can be assumed that Delort crossed the Sambre via Châtelet and Wathier via Charleroi. In his orders for Gérard on the 16th of June, Grouchy doesn't mention Delort as a separate unit.

Wathier's marches during the 15th of June have remained a mystery so far, except for the fact that it most probably preceded the 3rd cavalry corps in its advance towards Charleroi and for its position in and around St.Francois during the night. ¹¹

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¹ Cf. Map of Ferraris.

2. The distance between Bossu and Marcinelle (via Yves, Tingremont, Louverval) is 38 kilometres. If Exelmans' men would have left at 5.30 a.m. then they would have covered this distance in a speed of about 4,4 kilometre per hour.

Menuau believes it was around 5 a.m. Cf. Menuau, H. - Historique du 14^{me} régiment de dragons p.289

3. Grouchy - Relation succincte p.11

Who had ordered this remains an open question. Grouchy himself indicates that Exelmans was delayed by the congestion in Charleroi. Cf. SHD, C15

Taking into account a total distance of about 38 kilometers, Exelmans moved with an average speed of about 4.4 km / hour.

4. Grouchy in: Réfutations du livre Gourgaud etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.166

5. Mauduit, H.de - Les derniers de la grande armée. Vol.II p.16

6. Houssaye gives a position north of Chatelineau, but his source for this assertion remains unknown. In: 1815.Waterloo. p.135

⁷ SHD, C15, nr.5

8. In: SHD, C15, nr.5

Copy in register of staff. In: BNP, FR.Nouv.acq.4366

⁹ Gérard to Soult, report of the evening of the 15th of June. In: SHD, C15 nr.5

10. The fact that the division of Wathier, at least the 1st regiment of cuirassiers, was at some point of time that night near Charleroi is corroborated by its regimental history. Cf. Histoire du 1^{er} régiment de cuirassiers p.161

¹¹ Cf. order of Grouchy to Kellerman (see above).