

Wellington's orders and ideas on the 16th of June.

By 00.30 a.m. Wellington learned that a French force was in front of Frasnes and that the position was reinforced by the other half of the 2nd division of the Netherlands.

Taking the observations on the after-orders further, there were no orders for the reserve, but I think it is most probable that after the arrival of Constant's report, Wellington decided to order the reserve – after being assembled – to march “by the road of Namur to the point where the road to Nivelles separates.” This order still gave Wellington the possibility to keep two options open: either to let it march towards Nivelles or Quatre Bras later. ¹ Fact is that by 4 a.m. the 5th division started its march from Brussels for Waterloo.

In relation to Wellington's pre-occupation with his own sector between Mons and Binche, the moment Von Dörnberg reached Brussels is a moment in time which needs attention.

This moment lay somewhere between 4 and 5 a.m. on the 16th of June, and what Von Dörnberg carried was information from Mons which dated from the early evening.

It was this information which led Wellington to issue his orders around 5.30 a.m. as this connection is the only logical connection why Wellington issued these orders just then. In theory, according to these orders, the army was supposed to be on the line Quatre Bras – Nivelles – Braine le Comte – Enghien, while having the reserve at Mont Saint Jean. ²

Also this position was basically a triangle, covering the roads from Mons, Binche and Charleroi to Brussels.

In this position, the main part of the army would then be concentrated in and around Nivelles: the 1st and 3rd British divisions of infantry, the cavalry of Collaert and the 3rd division of the Netherlands. The 2nd British division of infantry and the cavalry would be at Braine le Comte (plus possibly the units under prince Frederik of the Netherlands), while the 2nd division of infantry of the Netherlands covered the Brussels road at Quatre Bras.

In this sense the army had actually moved further east, towards Blücher, as far as Quatre Bras, but most of the army was still in the sector it was before, with a concentration of the main part of it in and around Nivelles. Meanwhile, the major part of the reserve, as well as Wellington himself (cf. his order for Hill), were still in a flexible position at Waterloo, either to be engaged on the road towards Nivelles or towards Quatre Bras. It was in this position that Wellington apparently still strived for covering the main access roads to Brussels, while at the same time approaching Blücher and having his reserve in a flexible position as long as possible.

The moment Wellington left Brussels, his idea about the French offensive may only have been fed by the report of Von Dörnberg, which basically confirmed the total absence of French troops in front of Mons. Wellington was clearly aware of a French presence on the road leading from Charleroi to Brussels, so apparently the Prussians had evacuated this road, but where Napoleon's main army was, was yet unclear.

The departure of Wellington from Brussels on the morning of the 16th of June is usually described as a logical step which was inevitably linked to the action at Quatre Bras later that day. This is, however, again a product of hindsight as the duke could not be aware of this action as he was still quite in the dark about the French movements, at least to the east of Binche. That was just the reason why he left the capital to see for himself at the outposts on the Brussels road, either at Frasnes or possibly further north. Later that day, one thing led to another, but it should be stressed that by the time Wellington left Brussels the general feeling was that he was to return later that day. ³

The moment Wellington ordered the reserve towards Genappe and his cavalry towards Nivelles, there was a change in his ideas again, based upon supplementary information. In this, there could only have been one reason for him to do so and that was the arrival of the

report of the prince of Orange.⁴ It triggered Wellington to secure his extreme left flank, and with that, to secure the access to Brussels, by pushing the reserve further south to a defensive position immediately in rear of the Dyle river, near Genappe.⁵

Had the cover of the road leading from Charleroi to Brussels initially been a responsibility of the Prussians, now, having both the information of both Webster and the prince of Orange it became clear that it now fell to Wellington's army only. At the same time, the manoeuvre also served as pushing the reserve towards Nivelles, as compared to the positions of the 2nd corps. At the same time, however, Wellington didn't change the dispositions taken by the prince of Orange to defend both Quatre Bras and Nivelles; in fact, the prince of Orange had sent more reinforcements to the latter place and sent colonel Abercromby there to choose a defensive position for the troops there. Nivelles had been and still was the focus upon which the Netherlanders had their attention and the fear for an attack upon Nivelles was fed by the silence of the French in front of Quatre Bras. It should not be forgotten that Quatre Bras was reinforced gradually, as other units reached Nivelles to make these reinforcements possible.

It also was during his ride towards Waterloo, or later towards Genappe and Quatre Bras, that Blücher's letter of 11 p.m. of the 15th of June reached Von Müffling and, subsequently, Wellington. Unfortunately, its complete content is not known, but it at least informed Wellington further about the hostilities and about the actual concentration of the army in the position of Sombrefe. At the same time, the Prussian leadership asked Wellington to inform it about his intentions.⁶

It has been claimed by Von Müffling that Wellington learned to his astonishment about the evacuation of the Brussels road by Von Zieten only after he had reached Quatre Bras. There, it would have been Von Müffling who learned through hussars of the group led by lieutenant Sellin about the loss of the Sambre, the actions around Charleroi, Marchienne-au-Pont, Gosselies and Frasnes.⁷

It may have been very well possible that Wellington and Von Müffling learned at Quatre Bras about actual details of these actions, as the last moment Von Zieten had written to Von Müffling was towards 9 a.m. on the 15th, while Blücher's letters of noon and 11 p.m. of the 15th of June were and may have been very general in their description of the events. Yet, Wellington, in the combination of all the reports he had (including the one of Constant Rebecque), could be fairly sure that Zieten had given up the Brussels road.

The Frasnes-letter.

The communication Wellington sent out from the heights near Frasnes at 10.30 a.m. should be seen as a reaction to the request which contained Blücher's letter of 11 p.m. Blücher had informed Wellington the day before that he would go to Sombrefe and major Von Brunneck had informed him in this sense as well, so it was there that Wellington dispatched the report.

From this brief report, four important elements become apparent. First of all, the letter is notably brief and crude: it seems to have been written in haste and corrections are missing.⁸

But the situation Wellington was in, this haste is understandable: having spoken to Wucherer and having got Gneisenau's letter, he realized that the latest information the Prussian staff had from him was dated 7 p.m. of the evening before. In this context, the letter was meant as a very concise report on his situation.

First of all, the report breathes a sense of ease as Wellington believes he has the time to complete his concentration in the vicinity of Nivelles as he had promised the day before at 7 p.m. (thoughbeit then still in a conditional way) and as to make arrangements with Blücher upon what was expected of him.

What is most important to state here is that in the period between 7 p.m. on the 15th of June and 10.30 a.m. on the 16th of June, Wellington's concept of his own situation had gradually evolved from a defensive into an offensive approach, in the sense of the background as depicted at the beginning of this chapter. This all had to do with his concept of enemy's presence.

By now, Wellington got convinced that the enemy would not strike him through Binche or beyond further to his right, so in that sense the condition as had hung on his promise of support to the Prussians was no longer valid. At the same time, he saw some French in front of him but their numbers were not high (these were the lancers of the guard plus a battalion of infantry).

The last information Wellington had from the Prussians about the whereabouts of the French army was from the day before, from the report which had been issued from Sombreffe around 11 p.m. From this document it could be inferred that the French had advanced along the Sambre, that they were around Charleroi and that from there they were stretching towards Fleurus and Gosselies.

It is not possible to take from his report what idea Wellington then had about the presence of the main part of the French army, but apparently he thought it had been moving along both banks of the Sambre towards Charleroi to oppose Blücher in front of Fleurus but possibly not in force, as he did not exclude – at least on the evening of the 15th of June- the possibility that another French column would manoeuvre from Givet through Namur.

Having his hands free in the sector of Binche and Mons, now Wellington intended to complete his concentration around Nivelles and await further information from the Prussian army so as to be able to support them directly, or “nach einer zu nehmende Abrede gerade in seiner [Napoleon's] Flanke oder in seinen Rücken zu gehen.”

In that sense the Frasnes letter was not a direct promise for support for the battle as we know it, as by the time the letter was written both commanders obviously did not have a clue about a large-scale battle which was about to take place near Fleurus that afternoon. It formed the basis for a support in a more general sense as coming from the surroundings of Nivelles in a confrontation between Blücher and Napoleon near Sombreffe or possibly further east, towards Gembloux. So, Wellington did see possibilities for support for such a confrontation, but he deemed he still had ample time to prepare for such a scenario.

This can be determined by a simple calculation. In Wellington's framework as described in the letter, he could have news back from Blücher by 1.30 p.m. In case Wellington was supposed to move from the area around Nivelles and Genappe towards Sombreffe, the first moment any units could leave from there would be possibly around 3 p.m. Having to cover distances of 20 and 15 kilometres respectively, it would take them about 4 to 5 hours to get there. So, at the very earliest, troops could start dropping in near Sombreffe by 7-8 p.m.

By describing the time still needed for the cavalry and the reserve to reach Nivelles and Genappe respectively, Wellington apparently saw these places, as well as Braine le Comte (for the 2nd corps), as parts of the area of concentration of his army in the vicinity of Nivelles. And this was in line with the way as it was mentioned in Von Müffling's letter of the 15th of June, i.e. as a starting point for support to Blücher in case Napoleon would not move against Wellington himself.

Though Blücher had asked Wellington about his intentions, it is in this that Wellington puts it back not only in the completion of his own concentration, but also in his awaiting of further news from Blücher. In this sense the letter is also clearly a continuation of the concept as Von Müffling had sketched it in his letter of 7 p.m. of the 15th of June. As such, the letter didn't add very much to what had been said before to the Prussian general staff, apart from the positions of Wellington's army.

The way any necessary cooperation could be worked out, depended upon the news of Blücher and the completion of Wellington's concentration by the beginning of the afternoon. It is in this last element that Wellington gives a very optimistic impression of the whereabouts of his army at 10.30 a.m.

The positions of the army will be briefly summarized here, in relation to the claims done in the letter, with a reference to the time it was written, at 10.30 a.m. on the 16th of June.

For the 1st corps it was obvious that the 2nd division of De Perponcher stood at Quatre Bras and Frasnes. For the 3rd division of Chassé he had ordered it to Nivelles himself the previous evening, but he also learned through the prince or Constant Rebecque that it was heading there. The same was the case for the cavalry of Collaert. He also felt confident that his orders for the division of Alten could be complied with.

In general, his calculations proved right: most of the 1st corps actually was in and around Nivelles by 10 a.m. The only division which wasn't was the one of Cooke. It had been ordered by the prince before 7 a.m. to proceed from Braine le Comte to Nivelles, but for some reason the division halted near Braine le Comte for about 4 hours. In his calculations, Wellington had not taken in such a delay, but in his general idea of its whereabouts he was not that far from truth.

As for the reserve, Wellington himself had ordered it around 9 a.m. to march upon Genappe. In relation to the place where the duke issued this order (on the Brussels road, near Plancenoit), it can be presumed that at least Picton received it at 9.30 a.m. Taking into account the time to prepare and the distance between the place where the 5th division stood and Genappe (10 kilometers), it could be possible that Picton's first units could reach Genappe towards 12.30 o'clock.

The reserve, in this case, is to be understood as the division of Picton and the Brunswickers; units as the brigades of Von Vincke, Von Kruse, Cole and the reserve-artillery were further to the rear. The cavalry was ordered around 5.30 a.m. to proceed to Braine le Comte. By 10.30 a.m., however, the duke claims it was to reach Nivelles by noon. This means, first of all, that the cavalry was ordered there between 5.30 and 10.30 a.m. and, secondly, that Wellington presumed it to be at about 1.5 hours distance from Nivelles, which is around Braine le Comte.

In his calculation, Wellington might have supposed that the cavalry was assembled around Ninove before daybreak and that it could have left from there for Enghien, where it could have arrived by 7 a.m. Having received the orders to proceed to Braine le Comte towards 9 a.m. it might have got there between 11 a.m. and noon; yet from there it still had to cover the 15 kilometres to Nivelles, where the first units could have arrived – in the most optimal scenario – by 2 p.m. In reality, by 10.30 a.m. some units were underway towards Enghien or at Enghien, while others were on their way towards Grammont.

The 2nd corps was not at Braine le Comte as Wellington claimed it to be at 10.30 a.m. In fact, by that time the main part of the 4th division was still in and around Grammont and Audenarde, while the 2nd division only reached Braine le Comte by the late evening of the 16th of June. The units of prince Frederik of Orange were by 10.30 a.m. moving towards Sotteghem and Audenarde.⁹

Wellington's calculation that by 10.30 a.m. the 2nd corps would be at Braine le Comte is impossible to maintain. Taking the calculation for the 2nd British division in a scenario which could be a realistic one, I cannot avoid coming to this conclusion.

Suppose the concentration order for this division left Brussels by 7 p.m. it could have been delivered at Ath by midnight (60 kilometres). Taking the distances between the units of the division and the division's headquarters, it could have been possible to have most of them concentrating from 2 or 3 a.m. onwards. Taking this further, it could mean that by 6 – 7 a.m. the division could have been concentrated in and around Ath.

In case the "after orders" would have been delivered there by 5 a.m. and supposing the division would leave immediately, it still had to cover 35 kilometers before it was able to reach Braine le

Comte, and this would probably take at least 12 hours more. So, even in a more favourable situation, the division would not be able to get there before the evening of the 16th of June. The units of the 4th division and those of prince Frederik of Orange were even more distant from Quatre Bras as the 2nd division was.

Taking everything together, Wellington gave Blücher a very optimistic picture of the situation for a part of his army, while for another part (the 2nd corps) he made a claim which is virtually impossible to maintain.

And even though the shortness of the report may have played a role in the way it was written out, this cannot be an excuse for stating as if the 2nd corps was at Braine le Comte – it would then have been closer to truth if Wellington had used Enghien here.¹⁰ It might have been that he used his latest order for lord Hill as a representation of the situation four hours after this order had been issued, but it is still hard to believe that an experienced general as Wellington would take it for granted that Hill was in and around Braine le Comte. It was also not a matter of bad staffwork, as both De Lancey and Wellington were highly experienced.

Wellington's letter suggests that he thought he had time to bring up units of his army to Nivelles and Genappe - while having others at Quatre Bras - and that this element, as well as Blücher's news, would decide his operations for that day.

All in all, Wellington still hung on these two elements, as if there was plenty of time. And in his view there was enough time apparently, as his further decisions would only follow after midday and after Blücher's further news. In that sense, it fits into his idea that a decisive battle would be fought on the 17th and not on the 16th of June.¹¹

It makes clear that Wellington on morning of the 16th of June wasn't aware of the whereabouts of Napoleon's main force and an imminent battle of Ligny. It is also here that Wellington's concern for his right flank comes back again in the mentioning of Binche and his right wing, clearly a sign that he had thought Napoleon might penetrate there after all and that it would be important for Blücher to know. Of course it would, but by noon Blücher already knew where Napoleon was about to strike with his main force: at Ligny.

But the problem was that this was not what Wellington could know: by 10.30 a.m. on the 16th of June he didn't have full proof that Napoleon's main army had turned towards Blücher and that a battle near Sombreffe was imminent already the same afternoon. Of course he had seen that the Prussians had evacuated the Brussels road and that they were probably concentrating at Sombreffe as Blücher had informed him, but since about 10.30 p.m. of the previous night he had no more direct information of the Prussian staff, neither about the situation of the Prussian army, nor about the enemy's actions in front of it.

The "De Lancey disposition."

This chapter is about a document - which will be referred to here to as the "disposition" - and which according to numerous historians would have been used by Wellington to write his letter to Blücher. It was published for the first time in Wellington's despatches of 1847.

It reads:

1st divisionBraine le Comtemarching to Nivelles and Quatre Bras
2nd division Braine le Comtemarching to Nivelles
3rd divisionNivelles.....marching to Quatre Bras
4th divisionAudenardemarching to Braine le Comte
5th divisionbeyond Waterloomarching to Genappe

6th division Asschemarching to Genappe and
 Quatre Bras
 5th Hann.brigadeHalmarching to Genappe and
 Quatre Bras
 4th Hann.brigadebeyond Waterloo marching to Genappe and Quatre Bras
 2nd division
 3rd division Army of the Low Countries.....at Nivelles and Quatre Bras
 1st division
 Indian brigade Army of the Low Countries Sotteghemmarching to Enghien
 Major general Dörnberg's brigade
 and Cumberland hussarsbeyond Waterloo.....marching to Genappe and Quatre
 Bras
 Remainder of the cavalry.....Braine le Comtemarching to Nivelles and
 Quatre Bras
 Duke of Brunswick's corps.....beyond Waterloomarching to Genappe
 Nassaubeyond Waterloo.....marching to Genappe

The above disposition written out for the information of the Commander of the Forces by Colonel Sir W. De Lancey. The centre column of names indicates the places at which the troops had arrived or were moving on. The column on the right of the paper indicates the places the troops were ordered to proceed to at 7 o'clock a.m.16th June, previous to any attack on the British.

*(signed) De Lacy Evans*¹²

Before entering into the details as contained in this document regarding the positions of the forces, several details regarding the document itself should be pointed out. The first time the document was published, in Wellington's despatches of 1847, its title is given as "Disposition of the British army at 7 o'clock a.m., 16th June.*" and the asterisk refers to the explanation given below by De Lacy Evans, which itself is printed in italics. The second time the document was published, in the Supplementary despatches of 1852, the title is given in italics without the asterisk and the explanation in plain text. This difference is remarkable and important to note. In the first edition of the despatches, all titles of document are given in italics, while in the second they are given in plain text. In the Supplementary despatches, however, italics are re-used for the titles and this is the correct and more subtle way of publishing, thereby making a clear distinction between what is the actual text of the document and any titles or later additions.¹³

First of all, this means that the title of the document "Disposition of the British army at 7 o'clock a.m., 16th June" is *not* a part of the original text of the document as it has been published.

Clearly, the title has been derived by colonel Gurwood, the editor, from the explanation given at the bottom of the document. Obviously, this explanation is not contemporary, and has been added later by De Lacy Evans. In 1815, major Evans was formally acting as an extra adc to major-general Ponsonby, but he acted as a deputy assistant QMG.¹⁴ It is also the signature of "De Lacy Evans" which is proof that the explanation / post scriptum cannot have been written during the campaign as the title of "De Lacy Evans" was a title Evans used *after* the campaign.

Taking these points together it would mean that the original document, written during the campaign on the 16th of June, would have been merely the table, bearing neither an entry of

the date, nor a specific hour, an introduction, an explanation of the columns used and a signature.

A handwritten original or even a copy of the document has never been found: the only one available is the printed copy in the Supplementary despatches, published for the first time in 1847. The same is the case with all documents which Gurwood would have used as coming from Evans for the memoranda of the 15th of June, so in this sense the disposition is no exception.¹⁵

It has also justly been made clear by several historians that the positions of the different units of Wellington's army were not there where the disposition claims them to be at 7.a.m. For reasons of completeness, these conclusions can be summarized thus:

- the 1st division of Cooke was moving from Enghien to Braine le Comte
- the 2nd division of Clinton was concentrating in and around Ath
- the 3rd division of Alten was moving from Braine le Comte to Nivelles
- the 4th division of Colville was moving towards Grammont and Audenarde
- the 5th division of Picton was moving from Brussels towards Waterloo
- the 6th division of Cole (in fact Lambert's brigade) was on the road leading from Ghent to Assche
- the 5th Hanoverian brigade of Von Vincke was probably at Halle
- the 4th Hanoverian brigade of Best was moving from Brussels towards Waterloo
- the 2nd division of De Perponcher was at Quatre Bras and between this crossroads and Nivelles
- the 3rd division of Chassé was on its way from Beaume to Nivelles
- the forces led by prince Frederik of the Netherlands were concentrating at Sotteghem and Audenarde.
- major-general Von Dörnberg's and major Cumberland's brigade were probably near Enghien, or moving there (from Ninove).
- the "remainder of the cavalry" was concentrating in and around Ninove; these were the brigades of Somerset, Ponsonby, Vandeleur and Vivian. Those of Grant, Arentschildt and Estorff were at and around Grammont, southwest of Sotteghem, near Courtrai, Ypres, Menin, at Kester and Peruwelz and west of Brussels and south of Mons.
- the Brunswick contingent was moving from Laeken towards Waterloo
- Von Kruse was concentrating north-east of Brussels, near the Porte de Louvain
- Collaert's cavalry is not mentioned in the disposition, as neither is the reserve-artillery of the army of the Netherlands.

By 7 a.m., the concentration of (most of) Wellington's army at Quatre Bras had not been ordered, as at that time this was no issue, so much as it has become much later in history.¹⁶

In taking all evidence relative to those units which were ordered to Quatre Bras on the 16th of June together (see above, in the movements of all divisions) , it becomes clear that – apart from the 2nd division of the Netherlands, which had been directed there by their leadership on the 15th and 16th of June - the divisions of Cooke and Alten have been ordered there by 2 p.m. on the 16th of June, probably by the prince of Orange.¹⁷

In fact, at 7 a.m. the prince of Orange wrote to Wellington: " I ordered a cavalry brigade over here, the other two are to remain at Arquennes. A brigade of the British 3rd division is to occupy the height behind Arquennes, the rest to be in position on the ridge behind Nivelles and that town to be occupied. I ordered the first division to Nivelles from Braine le Comte." The duke of Wellington received this report while he was riding out south from Brussels, and apparently accepted the prince's measures. Of Collaert's cavalry division, one brigade was ordered – also

by the prince of Orange - to the crossroads by 6.30 a.m. Of the reserve, at least the division of Picton and the Brunswickers were ordered to Genappe by 9 a.m.

And it was when Wellington passed these units at Waterloo around 8.15 a.m. that he did not express any surprise seeing them there, while – according to the disposition- at 7 a.m. they would have been moving beyond Waterloo, marching to Genappe; another indication that the disposition was incorrect also in this respect.¹⁸

The initial intermediate position of the division of Picton and the Brunswickers at Genappe is a detail which has been neglected in most studies of the campaign. Somehow, Wellington thought this position to be a strong one, and thereby creating a front line which stretched from there, through Nivelles and Braine le Comte to Enghien.¹⁹ But as the action would be engaged in the position of Quatre Bras, Wellington was forced to fight it there.

The same order probably applied to the brigade of Von Kruse, though proper details are lacking. From the marches of the different units of the cavalry it can be taken that they were taken east in stages, and that orders for actual movements as far as Quatre Bras were issued around 2 p.m.²⁰ All remaining units of Wellington's army didn't get any instructions to proceed as far east as Quatre Bras whatsoever.

So, in general, it can be concluded that the only units ordered south by the duke of Wellington before the action at Quatre Bras were those of Picton's division and of the Brunswick corps and then not to Quatre Bras itself, but to a position near Genappe.

It remains obscure who actually ordered these units towards Quatre Bras, as by the time they left this place, by 2 p.m., Wellington himself was still at Bussy.

Wellington, before leaving for Bussy, left the prince of Orange with powers what he deemed necessary what to do in case he would be attacked in his absence. In this context, also the orders for Cooke and Alten issued towards 2 p.m. should be seen.²¹ All other units which reached Quatre Bras that day were ordered there by the duke after the action had started.

In this connection, the words as uttered by the prince of Orange to the Prussian major Von Bruneck on the morning of the 16th of June have been used by historians to prove that Wellington would have taken the decision to concentrate his forces at Quatre Bras in the night of the 15th of June. This subject will be dealt with in a later stage.²²

Back to the De Lancey disposition. Often in Waterloo historiography, a connection is made between the De Lancey disposition and the Frasnés-letter, the more as the timing of 7 a.m. - as mentioned by De Lacy Evans - is taken for a fact while it is just in the post scriptum were the confusion starts.²³

First of all, in case the second column would indicate the places the troops were ordered to proceed, why are the words "marching to" used here, while these actually fit to those in the centre column ? Here, as the original is merely a naked table bearing no date, signature or title, Evans mixes up the columns in relation to the meaning he assigns them. Secondly, if the document was written at or around Quatre Bras (or possibly Genappe) around 2 p.m. - a time that Wellington wasn't around - what would have been the use of mentioning the positions the units had about 7 hours before ?

Taking together all aspects of the document – which should be regarded as genuine as Evans considers it this way - the most probably line of events was thus: either upon the initiative of Wellington or upon his own instigation, De Lancey wrote a table for the duke the moment the French started their actual preparations for an attack or the moment it started (between 1.30 and 2 p.m.) so that Wellington would have a resumé on the whereabouts of his army for the moment he would return from Bussy. In the same document, De Lancey compared the situation of the army with that of 5 / 6 a.m. It was drafted merely as a state, no more, and survived the campaign in this way.²⁴ After that, it got into the hand of De Lacy Evans. As it lay dormant until the moment Gurwood asked Evans for documentation about the campaign,

Evans retrieved it from his papers and wrote the explanatory post-scriptum from his memory, thereby mixing up the columns. In this state it reached Gurwood, who published it without any comments.²⁵ - ²⁶ Despite the fact that even in this way not all of its details are fully consistent, this scenario is the most plausible for the disposition to fit in.²⁷

One of the very few writers who has studied the disposition in further detail is general C.W. Robinson, in his article "Waterloo and the De Lancey memorandum".²⁸ He tries to explain the disposition with his interpretation, which is based upon the disposal of the army and not its positions. In applying this theory, in the sense of the arrangements made for the army, and directions given to its various divisions, he concludes that the center column is substantially correct with Wellington's instructions. As far as the right hand column is concerned, Robinson sees the absence of the majority of orders for this columns, but then comes up with the theory that De Lancey, while drafting the memorandum, received these new orders of Wellington by 7.a.m. which then were processed in this column right away.

While analyzing the memorandum with the instructions of Wellington of the 15th of June, it is with those of the 16th of June that Robinson misses the point, as he simply ignores the factual evidence relating to those last ones, as the majority was issued later as 7 a.m.²⁹

He just wants to show, by analyzing both columns, that there was a relation between the document and the Frasnés-letter, thereby legitimating the existence of the document as it has come to us without getting deeper into the actual orders of Wellington for the concentration at Quatre Bras and the specific characteristics of the document itself.³⁰

The meeting at Bussy.

About one and half hour after he had written his report on the heights near Frasnés, Wellington suddenly decided to ride to Blücher and meet him.³¹

Again, there is a clear difference in the situation here. In case Wellington would have learned by 10.30 a.m. what he now apparently learned about one and half hour later, he would not have phrased the report as he did. Yet, about noon, he apparently had a compelling reason to actually meet Blücher in person. The trigger for Wellington to leave for Sombreffe was not the fact that he heard that Blücher himself was at Sombreffe (as he already knew this much earlier), but the news he got that French forces were coming from Fleurus *in force*.³² How he learned about this is yet still unclear. At the same time, the duke felt the need to see for himself about the Prussian concentration, as his last news about it dated from 11 p.m. the other day, and since then nother 12 hours had passed. Having arrived there, Wellington realised the true situation of the French advance, that Napoleon by that time (between 1 and 2 p.m.) had moved most of forces opposite Blücher's army, while the emperor probably had a smaller force in front of Quatre Bras.³³

The concentration of the army at Quatre Bras.

The actual concentration of a part of Wellington's army at Quatre Bras was ordered for the units of the Netherlands (2nd division and the brigade of Van Merlen) by their leadership during the 15th of June and the morning of the 16th of June.

The measures for the concentration of those units which finally reached the crossroads on the 16th of June later were taken by Wellington and the prince of Orange the moment the action at Quatre Bras started and while the action took place. Though it has been asserted by several eyewitnesses and later historians that Wellington ordered his army to Quatre Bras in the (early) morning of the 16th of June, it becomes evident from the orders for the different

marches of those units which reached Quatre Bras that day, that these orders couldn't have been despatched earlier as in the afternoon of the same day.³⁴

There is another witness of Wellington's staff who confirms this. It is colonel Sir F. Hervey, assistant quarter master general. He makes a clear distinction between the reserve and the remaining units of the army. Of those units in and around Brussels he claims that they were ordered to leave by daybreak for Quatre Bras; though this is not fully true as they were ordered to Waterloo). However, what is far more important is further that he first describes the arrival of Wellington at Quatre Bras, then his meeting with Blücher and only after that Wellington ordered the remaining units of the army to go to Quatre Bras. Though it was not for all the rest of the army, Hervey makes it clear that the (partial) concentration at Quatre Bras was ordered much later as is often claimed it to be.³⁵

Additionally, it was by 7 a.m. that Wellington himself was not at Quatre Bras, but at Waterloo: if he would have seen Quatre Bras as a major concentration point then he would have ridden there right away.³⁶

Here, a few examples will follow of those participants and historians who claim that Wellington did order (a part of) his army towards Quatre Bras during the night of the 15th and / or the morning of the 16th of June.

One of the most important ones is Wellington himself. It is already in his despatch dated 19th of June that he writes: "In the meantime, I had directed the whole army to march upon Les Quatre Bras etc."³⁷ Here he refers to the (early) morning only, and that claim is totally unfounded: in fact, that morning Wellington himself did not order one single unit to Quatre Bras itself; the only ones he did order to Genappe were the division and the Brunswick units. Further, it was only a brigade of Collaert's division which was ordered to Quatre Bras by the prince of Orange.³⁸ Other divisions, like the 2nd and 4th British, were only ordered to Quatre Bras after the action.

And in 1842 he suggested in his memorandum as if he had ordered the centre and left wing of his army to Quatre Bras during the 15th of June and the morning of the 16th of June.³⁹

In this memorandum, which Wellington wrote to defend himself against accusations written by Von Clausewitz in his history of the campaign, the duke writes about the halt of Picton's division near Waterloo. Von Clausewitz had written that the division had actually halted there on orders of Wellington, in: "Während dieser Zeit scheint die Reserve an dem Ausgange des Holzes Quatrebras, weitere Befehle erwartet zu haben."⁴⁰

Wellington writes: "The historian [Von Clausewitz] asserts that the duke of Wellington had ordered these troops [the reserve] to halt at the point at which they quitted the *forêt de Soignies* [sic]. He can have no proof of this fact, of which there is no evidence etc."⁴¹

Von Clausewitz may not have had real evidence, but this is available in the numerous accounts of members of the 5th division about this halt there (see above).

It is also in this context that the passage written by captain Bowles about the duke of Wellington shortly he had been informed about the French presence in front of Quatre Bras at the ball of Richmond should be mentioned. It says: "Before he actually left the house he would have asked the duke of Richmond for a good map of Belgium. The duke of Richmond showed him one in his dressing-room and Wellington would have said: Napoleon has humbugged me, [by God] he has gained 24 hours' march on me." Then the duke of Richmond would have asked Wellington what he was planning to do, and then Wellington would have said: "I have ordered the army to concentrate at Quatre Bras; but we shall not stop him there, and if so I must fight him here (at the same time passing his thumb-nail over the position of Waterloo)." Then Wellington left the house."⁴²

This account, citing from the duke of Richmond, and him citing the duke of Wellington is illustrative for the projection of events into a situation which were yet to come. As such it is a typical example of using all kinds of erroneous statements to show as if Wellington was clairvoyant about the campaign: at the time he left the ball he didn't have a clue about a possible action at Quatre Bras, let alone near Waterloo.⁴³

Von Dörnberg is also not correct in the way he writes however about his share in the concentration at Quatre Bras. After having written that he arrived at Brussels between 4 and 5 a.m., he claims he met the duke of Wellington who told him "dass wir uns wahrscheinlich den Tag bei Quatre Bras schlagen würden". The result was that he sent Von Dörnberg out to order Picton, at Waterloo, to leave for the crossroads immediately. Von Dörnberg then would have ridden to Waterloo, where he found Picton. Shortly after the 5th division moved off, Wellington himself arrived.⁴⁴

This, however, in all its detail, is an impossible line of events. First of all, if Von Dörnberg would have arrived at Brussels between 4 and 5 a.m. and supposing he left there towards 6 a.m., he may have reached Picton by 7.30 a.m. However, by then the division was just approaching Waterloo and was still in a marching column.

Von Dörnberg then suggest as if the division, halting, started its march towards Quatre Bras right away after he had joined it; the reality, however, was that it only did so by 11.30 a.m. That Wellington passed at that moment is incorrect as well: he actually passed Picton by 8.15 a.m. and then the division was halting; the moment the division re-started its march, around 11.30 a.m., Wellington was at Quatre Bras.

It is also in this connection that should be referred to the report of major Von Brunneck from 6.30 a.m. on the 16th of June at Quatre Bras in which he writes "17 englische Bataillons sind von Brüssel aus zur Unterstützung des Punkts von Quatre Bras in Marsch gesetzt worden." He had learned this from the prince of Orange who had just reached Quatre Bras. The prince had left Brussels by 1.30 a.m. and had traveled through Braine le Comte and Nivelles to the crossroads.

It is another indication that immediately after the news which was brought in by captain Webster, Wellington decided to move his reserve (which was the 5th division plus the brigade of Best, in fact 16 bataillons) south as far as Waterloo. In that sense, the use of the name of Quatre Bras here is incorrect and a product of hindsight.

Before entering into the sector of the army of the Netherlands, some observations should be made first on the technical aspects of the concentration of Wellington's army in general.

As has become clear, this army was taken east in stages, by different sets of orders. These orders were issued in a sequence which – for good reasons though - didn't take the practical situation in the field into account. Their sudden and demanding character could only add up to possible problems in their compliance. And these problems did turn up.

It led for instance to some roads being used extensively, resulting in their dilapidated state which, in turn, delayed other troops which were to use it later. And this, while other roads were not used at all.

While in some cases the orders, due to their arrival, allowed some halts for resting, others didn't and pushed units to the limit of their endurance. Other than the state of the roads, the presence of all sorts of baggage which was left behind obstructed roads and led to the inevitable delays. . In other cases, marches simply crossed each other. As the confrontation at Quatre Bras came up, the nearest units were suddenly urged to increase their speed and to arrive there as soon as possible.⁴⁵

The sector of the army of the Netherlands.

Taking the events of the 15th of June and of the very early morning of the 16th of June together, it becomes clear that De Perponcher wanted to hold Quatre Bras and Nivelles both at the same time, as he feared the main attack could come from Binche upon Nivelles, while at the same time the action towards Quatre Bras could only be a feint or one of a flank column. Yet, it was in this context that both commanders there, Van Saxon Weimar as well as Van Bijlandt got the instruction - in case of a French attack - to hold their positions as long as they could and, if really necessary, to retreat towards Mont Saint Jean. This advice remains inexplicable in the sense of the whole background of the concentration of the 1st corps in general and the 2nd and 3rd corps of the army of the Netherlands in particular, as such a movement would isolate these brigades from the main army.⁴⁶

Yet, as De Perponcher learned more about the evacuation of Charleroi and the French advance to his left as well as about the movements of the division of Chassé and of the cavalry of Collaert towards Nivelles, he shifted some of his forces from Nivelles towards Quatre Bras. Yet, even then the majority of the 1st brigade was kept at Nivelles.

The shift of the 2nd division towards Quatre Bras was completed not by De Perponcher (who then was at Quatre Bras), but by the prince of Orange in the early morning. He could do so, as by then he knew that Chassé and Collaert were about to reach Nivelles.

For De Perponcher, Nivelles was a point of great importance, but where did his fear for a French move against this town come from? Evidently, it was during the afternoon on the 15th of June that he was informed about a French presence on the road which came from Charleroi. Yet, from a possible French presence elsewhere he knew nothing. Constant Rebecque had issued orders for him, but at the same time hadn't mentioned anything about what he knew from the French, not so much only from where they were, but most importantly, where they were *not*.

This lack of information fed De Perponcher in his fear for the safety of Nivelles especially through the line coming from Binche. Yet, it was just in that direction that the road was covered by Chassé and the cavalry of Collaert. Yet again, it seems that also from there De Perponcher didn't get any information about the situation there (i.e. of French absence). At the same time, there was no cavalry at hand to find out what was happening in his front and to the south-east. It is to some degree understandable that, initially, De Perponcher feared for a French attack from the south-west, wherever this fear may have come from. Yet, later that day, he should have understood that apparently nothing happened in the sector between Binche and Mons, the more as he had the divisions of Chassé and Collaert covering his front there. And if it would, this information would certainly have reached him.

In what way a lack of communication may have played a role here is hard to determine, even though Constant Rebecque clearly had attempted to link all divisional commanders as far as this communication and coordination of mutual support was concerned.⁴⁷ In absence of the prince, he was careful not to take command and issue orders; in fact he pushed Perponcher to be acting commander, with authority to call on Chassé's and Collaert's forces.⁴⁸

De Perponcher was eventually too careful in keeping his 1st brigade in Nivelles, but at the same time he was not the only one who clung so much to Nivelles (see below, for the prince). As far as communication was concerned, Van Merlen's brigade had been ordered north-east that morning, to a position west of Binche. Later that morning, Van Merlen himself and, later, Constant Rebecque, learned about the French advance along the Sambre and the Prussian retreat towards Gosselies and the Brussels road, and possibly beyond this road. From that moment on, it was clear to Constant Rebecque, that the left flank of Chassé and the extreme southern front of De Perponcher were open to a possible French threat. As both divisions had no cavalry whatsoever, Constant Rebecque should have ordered Van Merlen to send out patrols north-east along the flank and front of these divisions in this sector in order to secure them on the one hand, and to find out about any enemy's presence here on the other.⁴⁹

As Von Steinmetz had fallen back towards the Brussels road (and beyond), a gap arose which was not sufficiently patrolled to protect the army and to find out about the enemy's presence, the more as this sector had now become one of potential danger as it gave Napoleon the opportunity to move his army between those of Wellington and Blücher.

The pre-occupation of the Netherlanders with Nivelles has been referred to. Yet, even though the prince of Orange forwarded almost all remaining units of Van Bijlandt's brigade which stood there further towards Quatre Bras, in the early morning the 7th battalion of the line was kept there as a last link between both the 2nd and 3rd division of the Netherlands. It was only as Chassé actually arrived in front of Nivelles, that this battalion left for the crossroads.

And as these forces were pulled to Quatre Bras, a defensive position was taken up in and around Nivelles that morning. While Chassé came immediately south of Nivelles, covering the roads coming from Mons and Binche, Chassé himself was covered in his front by two brigades of Collaert which were in a position in rear of Arquennes.

At the same time, Alten's division, of which the vanguard had reached Nivelles by 9.30 and took up a position in Nivelles and to the east of it in accordance with the orders of the prince of Orange. Clearly, for the prince Nivelles was of prime importance.

In the historiography of the Waterloo-campaign, Bernard van Saxen Weimar, Constant Rebecque and De Perponcher in particular have been praised for having taken the measures to secure Quatre Bras, and in doing so, not to follow Wellington's concentration orders which told them to move the 2nd division of the Netherlands to Nivelles. This praise comes from all nations involved. Apart from the fact that this praise is usually directly linked to opinions about Wellington's actions on the 15th and 16th of June, it is taking things beyond their proportions.

In this theory, the Netherlanders would have allowed Wellington to concentrate a part of his forces there after all, and this, in turn, would have prevented Ney of crushing Blücher at Ligny by not being able to move around his right flank during the battles of Quatre Bras and Ligny.

First of all, the way the operations were carried out on the extreme left flank of the Anglo-Netherlands-German army on the 15th of June and on the early morning of the 16th of June had nothing to do with the Prussians at all: they had to do with a general alarm caused by the French advance over the road which came from Charleroi and which created a general assembling of the brigades of the 2nd division in their respective areas, of which one was in and around Quatre Bras and the other in and around Nivelles.⁵⁰

The fact that, in time, more forces were drawn towards Quatre Bras had to do with the fact that an actual French threat was there. The gap with the Prussians was felt, but not in relation to a combination of French manoeuvres through Quatre Bras against the Prussians. Instead, a French possession of this crossroads was seen by the Netherlanders as a direct route to reach Brussels.⁵¹

At the same time, however, a strong fear for a major French attack - through Binche - upon Nivelles (and Brussels) fixed a large part of the Netherlands forces in this sector. Secondly, stating as if the occupation of Quatre Bras that night and morning would have allowed Wellington to concentrate a part of his forces there after all is assigning Bernard van Saxen Weimar, Constant Rebecque and De Perponcher knowledge of an action which was yet to come and which they obviously couldn't have, simply as this was no issue at that moment.⁵²

As stated before, Quatre Bras was only *one* of the two places which got the attention of the Netherlanders. Nivelles, in fact, got more attention as the crossroads did. Both places, in the idea of De Perponcher in particular, were threatened and accordingly measures were taken to protect them, nothing more and nothing less. A relation to any concentration of Wellington's

remaining forces or some imminent action at Quatre Bras and its role then in a combination with a battle against the Prussians the next day is pure fiction. Such reasoning also presumes that the point of Quatre Bras would have a high strategic importance in the French plans for the 15th of June and the morning of the 16th of June, which, in fact, it hadn't – at least not until in the afternoon of the 16th of June (see below).

He doesn't say so with so many words, but it is Constant Rebecque who gives the strong impression as if he, more as the prince of Orange, and already during the events, saw more of the importance of Quatre Bras, while the prince held on to Nivelles. From the facts, however, it can be seen that only once during the 15th of June he clearly pointed to the importance of Quatre Bras, other than Nivelles (at 10.15 p.m.), while later on he followed the instructions of the prince without adding any personal comments relative to Quatre Bras at all. It may have been that he did not agree with these orders for himself, but that he formally had to comply with them, while forwarding them as they were.⁵³

Yet, the impression Constant seems to give is nothing compared to the way Napoleon handles the activities of the Nethelanders on the 15th and 16th of June. He would have said: “En résumé, j'ai trop compté sur la victoire. Battre l'ennemi était la cheville ouvrière de mon opération, tout dépendait d'une grande victoire qui rejeterait les alliés au delà du Rhin, et sans l'héroïque détermination du prince d'Orange, qui, avec une poignée d'hommes, a osé prendre position aux Quatre Bras, je prenais l'armée anglaise en flagrant délit et j'étais vainqueur, comme à Friedland. Le prince d'Orange a fait preuve, dans cette journée, qu'il a le coup d'oeil et le génie de la guerre. Tout l'honneur de cette campagne lui appartient; sans lui, l'armée anglaise était anéantie sans avoir livré bataille et Blücher n'aurait trouvé de refuge qu'au delà du Rhin.”⁵⁴

It is here that Napoleon wants to make believe as if the whole campaign hung on the position of Quatre Bras, while in reality it was for him just meant as a station for a march to Brussels (see above). It is in this way that Napoleon arrogates the wrong idea as if the position of Quatre Bras was of eminent importance in his plans for the campaign right from the beginning. It is this eloquent praise which has been adopted by defenders of the idea as if the high importance of Quatre Bras was seen by the Netherlanders right from the beginning.

Knoop is one of the first, and he – in his turn – accordingly hangs the success of the complete war upon the decision of De Perponcher (and later the prince of Orange) to hold the crossroads.⁵⁵ It is also in this connection that he cites from a letter of Gneisenau to the Prussian king, dated 12th of June 1817, in which he writes: “Si le lieutenant général De Perponcher avait suivi l'ordre du duc de Wellington, s'il avait marché sur Nivelles et n'avait pas fait une aussi bonne résistance, le maréchal Ney arrivant à Quatre Bras, aurait pu tourner à droite et arriver sur les derrières de l'armée qui combattait à Ligny sous le commandement du prince Blücher, et causer ainsi sa destruction totale.”⁵⁶

This is a typical version of the way the Netherlands initiative has been enlarged to much larger proportions as that it was at that very moment.

Houssaye doesn't approach the initiative of the Dutch leadership in a pure way either, and uses it in his negative attitude against Napoleon's generals by stating: “Ah ! Si Napoleon avait eu comme chef d'état-major un simple Constant Rebecque, et comme lieutenants seulement des Perponcher et des Bernard de Saxe-Weimar !” And here he unnecessarily enlarges this initiative as well, by pulling Quatre Bras into a wider context it didn't have at that moment: the role of it in the plan which Napoleon developed in the course of the afternoon of the 16th of June.

Houssaye does the same again, but then in a reverse way, by criticizing Saxon Weimar of having occupied the crossroads with his battalions, which he never would have done if he had understood “les vrais principes de la guerre [...] au risque d'y être écrasé par toute l'armée française.” Again, this is meant to be a kick in the back of Ney by not taking the crossroads on

the 15th of June and this, in turn, stems from the theory which is built upon an importance of Quatre Bras it didn't have then, but got later.⁵⁷

In the context of this theory, Ropes praises De Perponcher as well, but erroneously claims *he* decided to concentrate his complete division at Quatre Bras, which, actually, he didn't. And the forwarding by Constant Rebecque of Wellington's concentration-orders for Nivelles to De Perponcher, Ropes mentions "a mere form", but yet he doesn't explain this further. Ropes even goes a step further by claiming that if Wellington would have known the same of the French and Prussian army as what the Dutch knew about them, he would have done the same. Yet, this is also a case of using the theory of the importance of Quatre Bras as it would have later.⁵⁸

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¹ It is count Vincent who confirms that Wellington first sent his reserve to a position just south of the forest of Soignes. In his letter to Schwarzenberg, dated 16th of June 1815. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Archivalische Beiträge p.510

Constant himself, in his journal confirms that after the arrival of his report, the duke of Wellington ordered the units at Brussels to march to Quatre Bras; in fact, it was Waterloo. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Hofschröer cites Constant as if Wellington would have ordered **all** his forces to Quatre Bras and contests this. Yet, Constant specifies it as the “troupes stationnées à Bruxelles”, though the destination (Quatre Bras) is incorrect. In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. The German victory p.332

On the other hand, the possibility should not be excluded that Wellington seriously considered to send out his reserve to the south the moment he sent out his concentration-orders between 6 and 7 p.m. For the reserve these orders stated “to be in readiness to move at a moment’s notice” while at the same time it is about this reserve that Von Müffling wrote at 7 p.m. : “Sobald der Mond aufgeht setzt sich die Reserve in Marsch [...]”

This cryptic description would mean that the reserve would march about 1 p.m. on the 16th of June (as then the moon rose), but what Von Müffling probably means is daybreak, i.e. sunrise. Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.57

Sergeant Dewar (79th regiment, division Picton) writes in a letter to his brother on the 5th of August 1815 that his division was ordered to march, after the news had come in by an express at 11 p.m. of the French advance on the Brussels road. Here, Dewar probably refers to Constant’s report. Yet, due to the scattered state of the division it could only leave by 4 a.m. In: NWMS, M1960.2

² Quatre Bras: division Perponcher and brigade Van Merlen
Nivelles: divisions of Chassé, Collaert, Alten and Cooke
Braine le Comte: British / Hanoverian cavalry, division Clinton
Enghien: prince Frederik and division Colville

³ That morning, also sir G.Wood and colonel Carmichael Smyth, commanders of the royal artillery and engineers respectively, would have left Brussels to see for themselves what was happening; yet, they did not anticipate anything to happen that day and reckoned to be back some two hours later. Cf. Captain Oldfield (royal engineers). In: NAM, 7403-147

⁴ It’s been calculated the messenger to have left Quatre Bras by 7.30 and taking about 10 kilometres an hour.

⁵ Cf. Robinson, M. – The battle of Quatre Bras p.153

⁶ Von Müffling writes in his memoirs after his arrival at Frasnès: “As the enemy remained quiet, and intelligence had meanwhile reached me that the Prussian army was assembling at Ligny etc.” This detail a very well refer to the letter involved. In: The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.230

It should also not be excluded that both Von Müffling and Wellington learned about the actual Prussian concentration near Sombreffe through major Von Brunneck or a Prussian patrol. Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Die preussische Berichterstattung etc. p.59-61

⁷ In: Hofmann, G.W. - Zur Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 etc. p.131-132

⁸ Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.148

⁹ The positions as sketched match in most details those as shown in a document titled “Sketch showing positions of various corps of the allied army at 10.30 a.m. 16th June (1881) int.dep.no.28 –lithographed, War office. In: NAK, WO 78 nr.5541

¹⁰ Von Pflugk Harttung points out to the situation which asked for a brief report, but also recognizes the too optimistic character of most of its contents. In: Vorgeschichte etc. p.152-153

¹¹ See above, in relation to Von Müffling’s letter dated 7 p.m. the previous day.

¹² 2nd edition - WD, Vol.VIII p.143 (first publication)
In: WSD, Vol.X p.496 (second edition)

¹³ For instance, in the Supplementary dispatches, original titles such as a “Memoir by the comptrollers respecting the subsidies to the three great powers. From mr.Rosenhagen.” and Wellington’s “Memorandum on the battle of Waterloo” are printed in plain characters, while titles which were assigned later are not; these are in italics.
In: WSD, Vol.X p.404, 513

¹⁴ Cf. Spiers, E.M. – Radical general p.13

¹⁵ In 1910, Robinson didn’t succeed in locating the original document in the Wellington papers either. Robinson adds that “colonel Gurwood is said to have returned all MSS to the owners and sir De Lacy Evans’s papers have not, it is understood, been preserved.” From where he draws these conclusions remains unclear. In: Waterloo and the De Lancey memorandum p.590

For the relation between Evans and Gurwood, see the extensive note about unlocated manuscripts relating to the campaign of 1815.

¹⁶ Cf. Hofschröder, P. Old myths die hard p.38
Hofschröder, P. - The De Lancey disposition – can it be genuine ? Unpublished paper.

¹⁷ At that time, the duke of Wellington wasn’t present at Quatre Bras as he had gone off to Brye; it may have been that the prince took the decision to pull the divisions towards Quatre Bras himself (both were part of the 1st corps of which he was the commander), or that Wellington had left him instructions to do so, if he felt this necessary to do it. Hofschröder believes it was the prince himself who took the decision; this may very well be possible Cf. Hofschröder, P. - Quatre Bras, the Netherlands victory p.5 (unpublished) and in: Waterloo 1815. Quatre Bras and Ligny p.108

Count Van Limburg Stirum confirms that Wellington left the prince at noon in the confidence that the situation was well in the hands of the prince; he also adds that he also pulled more units towards Quatre Bras; these were the ones of Alten and Cooke. In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.265

Delbrück erroneously believes Wellington ordered Alten, Cooke and the cavalry towards Quatre Bras when he was at Brye, by 1.30 p.m. In: Einiges zum Feldzuge von 1815 p.679

¹⁸ Hofschröder, P. - The De Lancey disposition – can it be genuine ? Unpublished paper.

¹⁹ Cf. events on the 17th of June.

²⁰ According to Von Dörnberg, after he had reached Quatre Bras, Wellington sent orders for lord Uxbridge to move his forces to Quatre Bras immediately, but this is not correct. If he did send orders then, he did so for Uxbridge to move to Nivelles as this fits in the general idea of Wellington of that particular time of day, and that was between 10 and 10.30 a.m.

The explanation for this can be found in the so-called Frasnes letter where he states the cavalry could reach Nivelles towards noon. This means an order for the cavalry to go there was issued between 7 a.m. (when it was ordered to Braine le Comte) and 10.30 a.m.

Cf. his account. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Die Vorgeschichte etc. p.292-293

²¹ Major Van Limburg Stirum in fact informs us that Wellington “verder beleid van den dag aan Z.K.H. over [liet] zeggende dat het in goede handen was.” In other words: the prince would have had full power to do what he deemed necessary. In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.265

Hofschröer believes Wellington ordered Picton to Quatre Bras at 11 a.m. In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.108

²² Cf. Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p. 93

In this, F.de Bas adds: “[...] plusieurs faits tendent à prouver que lord Wellington, sans donner à ses généraux présents au bal des ordres absolues, leur a indiqué Nivelles et les Quatre Bras comme leur but de marche, se réservent de leur faire dire, au cours de la matinée, après avoir apprécié de visu la situation, lequel de ces deux points ils devraient gagner.”

Apart from the fact that De Bas doesn't mention these “facts”, there is no proof for this at all. In: La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.431

²³ It is highly probable that De Lacy Evans wrote the explanatory statement for Gurwood's edition of the Wellington dispatches. By the way, Evans' version of the 15th and 16th of June is extremely brief; he writes: “On the 16th were fought the sanguinary battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras. In both cases, the enemy possessed a vast numerical superiority. The 4th Prussian corps being yet absent, as was the whole of the British cavalry, besides a large portion of artillery and infantry.” In: NLS, Add.ms.46.6.19 p.111

Also in: Hofschröer, P. - 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.341

²⁴ Miller believes the absence of any headings over the columns might have to do with the fact that it was either explained orally, that it was some standard format used or that it was written in a rush and forgotten by Evans altogether. In: Lady De Lancey at Waterloo p.188

²⁵ It can be questioned, by the way, whether Evans ever possessed the original as coming from De Lancey and not possibly a copy, as he had copies of other documents coming from De Lancey as well (cf. extensive note on unlocated manuscripts). It is also remarkable that the De Lancey disposition has been published in the Wellington dispatches at all, as it is no document written by the duke himself, but *for* him.

²⁶ Some do not consider the De Lancey disposition to be authentic and to have been written after the campaign, for some reason or another.

Cf. Hofschröer, P. - Old myths die hard p.36-39

Hofschröer, P. - The De Lancey disposition – can it be genuine ? Unpublished paper.

He claims the document was written after the campaign and sees a relation with Wellington's memorandum of 1842 as the disposition was not present in the volume of his Dispatches dated 1838, while it was in the one of 1847. In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.336, 341

Delbrück identifies it as "schwerlich echt oder wenigstens nicht zuverlässig kopiert." In: Einiges zum Feldzug etc. p.670

Ropes believes it is authentic, and therefore (erroneously) concludes that it implied that further orders had been issued to the army to move to Quatre Bras other than those of which we have copies. He incorrectly believes Wellington took the decision to move his entire army – or the main body thereof – to Quatre Bras during the ball of Richmond and that the orders for Lord Hill were issued before 2 a.m. In: The campaign of Waterloo p.81, 87-88, 93

Other authors who recognize its authenticity are for example:

Aerts, W. - Etudes etc. p.418

Horsburgh, E.L.S. - Waterloo, a narrative and a criticism 2nd ed. p.51

Fletcher, I. - A desperate business p.50

Miller, D. - Lady De Lancey at Waterloo p.192

Miller justly points out that if it had been a fraud, people of Wellington's staff still living by 1847 and beyond would have discovered, like there were lord FitzRoy Somerset (d.1855), Abercromby (d.1853), Gomm (d.1875), Greenock (d.1859), Scovell (d.1861) and Woodford (d.1879).

²⁷ The result would be:

<i>Unit</i>	<i>ordered to proceed to upon orders of 5-6 a.m. or earlier orders</i>	<i>Arrived at / moving to by 1.30 / 2 p.m.</i>
1 st division	Braine le Comte	marching to Nivelles and Quatre Bras
2 nd division	Braine le Comte	marching to Nivelles
3 rd division	Nivelles	Marching to Quatre Bras
4 th division	Audenarde	Marching to Braine le Comte
5 th division	Beyond Waterloo	Marching to Genappe
6 th division [=brigade Lambert]	Assche	marching to Genappe and Quatre Bras
5 th Han.brigrade [=Vincke]	Halle	marching to Genappe and Quatre Bras
4 th Han.brigrade [=Best]	Beyond Waterloo	Marching to Genappe and Quatre Bras
2 nd and 3 rd division of the Low Countries	At Nivelles and Quatre Bras	
1 st division Indian brigade Army of the Low Countries	Sotteghem	Marching to Enghien
Major general Dörnberg's brigade and Cumberland hussars	Beyond Waterloo	Marching to Genappe and Quatre Bras
Remainder of the cavalry	Braine le Comte	Marching to Nivelles and Quatre Bras

Duke of Brunswick corps	Beyond Waterloo	Marching to Genappe
Nassau [=Von Kruse]	Beyond Waterloo	Marching to Genappe

Remarks:

- 1st division: this division was directed to go to Nivelles by the prince towards 7 a.m.
- 4th division: according to the “after orders” the division was to go to Enghien, so Audenarde is incorrect
- 1st division of the army of the Netherlands and the Indian brigade: these were to proceed to Enghien according to the orders of 5-6 a.m., so Sotteghem is incorrect
- the places where the 2nd, 4th and 6th divisions were marching to were best guesses, based upon orders issued between 5/6 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.
- by 1.30 / 2 p.m. the 3rd division (Alten) would be moving upon Quatre Bras, while the 5th (Picton) and the Brunswickers were not. This would mean that the order for Alten to move towards Quatre Bras was issued earlier as the one for the 5th division and the Brunswickers.

Glover claims that the second column relates to the destinations up to the orders of 5 / 6 a.m. (which he dates at 7 a.m.), and that the third column relates to the subsequent orders issued at 7 a.m. [= 5 / 6 a.m.] and later, but this is incorrect, at least for the 2nd division and the cavalry, as for these Braine le Comte is mentioned while this comes from the orders of 5 / 6 a.m. In: Waterloo: myth and reality p.56-57

²⁸ In: Royal United Service Journal. 1910 Vol.54 p.582-598

²⁹ About those issued on the evening of the 16th of June from Genappe, he writes in a footnote: “There are written orders (issued on the 16th from Genappe) for troops to proceed to Nivelles and Quatre Bras on the 17th, but this is quite another thing.” (p.591)

In my view it is not, and this is a crucial point: they were the actual orders for those divisions, resulting from former ones which didn’t direct them there at all.

³⁰ For this connection between the disposition and the Frasnes-letter, also see:
Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.106-108

³¹ According to Von Dörnberg, Wellington would, at Quatre Bras, have learned about Blücher’s presence at Sombreffe by a Prussian patrol of hussars. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Vorgeschichte etc. p.293

We do not exclude this possibility as there would have been such a patrol near Villers Peruin, and which would have been in touch with the Anglo-Dutch-German units at Quatre Bras. Das Tagebuch des königlich etc. In: GSA. VPH-HA, VI,nr.VII nr.3a p.26-27

³² Von Dörnberg only says: “Hier [at Quatre Bras] kam auch eine preussische Husaren-Patrouille, von der Herzog erfuhr, dass der Marschall Blücher bei Sombref sei. Er sagte mir, er wolle dahin reiten und Ich möchte ihn begleiten.” In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Vorgeschichte etc. p.293

³³ Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.161

³⁴ Maxwell, Sir H. - The life of Wellington Vol.II p.16-17 He states: “it is probable that it was not till the duke had himself inspected Quatre Bras and that the attack on Ligny to be a

genuine one, that he issued final orders for the concentration of all his forces on the Prussian right.”

Hofschröder, P. - 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.345

Cf. Crofton, Sir Morgan - The Household brigade cavalry and the Waterloo campaign p.98, 279

Crofton saw in 1911 that the concentration at Quatre Bras was ordered much later as had been supposed it was before, at least after noon on the 16th of June.

One of these eye-witnesses is Fitzroy Somerset. He actually ties the orders for Quatre Bras to those which are usually called the “after orders”. In: NAM, 6507-1

In hindsight, Hussey claims Wellington’s focus upon Quatre Bras started right after he had received the news through Webster, but this is incorrect. It was only when the French actually started to attack at Quatre Bras and that the duke had seen that Napoleon had deployed that his focus should be fully at the crossroads. In: The Frasnes letter, a reconsideration etc. Part 2 p.16 Part 3 p.20-21

³⁵ In: A contemporary letter on the battle of Waterloo In: Nineteenth century. Jan - June 1893.p.431-432

³⁶ Cf. Wellington’s order of 7 a.m. to lord Hill (see above)

³⁷ In: Bas, F.de - La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.438

³⁸ Cf. Hofschröder, P. - Quatre Bras, the Netherlands victory p.1,3 (unpublished)

Hofschröder, P. - 1815. The Waterloo campaign. The German victory p.322

Hofschröder, P. - Wellington: the genesis of his Waterloo myths. In: www.napoleon-series.org

³⁹ In: WSD p.524

⁴⁰ Von Clausewitz. – Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.37

⁴¹ In: WSD, p.525

⁴² Captain G.Bowles (Coldstream regiment of guards). In: A series of letters of the first earl of Malmesbury etc. Vol.II p.445-446 The same version of events, though somewhat shorter, is also given by Georgiana Lennox in her memoirs published in the work of J.R.Swinton, A sketch of the life etc. p.133

The same applies to her brother, W.Pitt Lennox. In: Fifty years’ etc. p.235

⁴³ Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.83

A.Roberts – Napoleon and Wellington p.153

⁴⁴ Cf. Von Dörnberg. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.292

⁴⁵ Cf. Pflugk Harttung, K.von – Vorgeschichte etc. p.116-119

Lord Greenock to colonel Gurwood, 18th September 1842. In: HL, MS61 WP 8.2.3

The RHA didn’t march in a coordinated way with the cavalry, but each weapon did this on its own accord. Cf. R.Cusick - The Royal Horse Artillery at Waterloo p.2

⁴⁶ For the 1st brigade, cf. De Perponcher himself in his report of the 11th of July 1815 and for the 2nd brigade, cf. the report of colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvel. Both in: Bas, F.de - La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.280 and 296

Bernard van Saxon Weimar also makes it clear again that it was De Perponcher (and not the prince of Orange) who took the decision to defend Quatre Bras. In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.265

⁴⁷ Cf. Constant's report for the prince of Orange, sent out at 10.30 p.m. In this report Constant Rebecque suggests as if he had sent an officer out to Nivelles and Fayt to do so, but in fact he had asked De Perponcher to do that (see his order of 22.15 p.m).

⁴⁸ Cf. Hussey, J. – The Frasnes letter. A reconsideration part 3 p.17

⁴⁹ Jonnet also sees a lack of proper reconnaissance on the extreme left flank of the 1st corps. In: Das Constantsche Tagebuch etc. p.667

Of course, both De Perponcher and Chassé had placed their sentries, but these were not able to patrol the area further to the south and east.

⁵⁰ For Quatre Bras, cf. major Sattler. Cf. his account In: HHA, Abt.202 inventory nr.1015

⁵¹ Cf. Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.300

⁵² To indicate the scope of the measures taken and their proportions, it is important to cite Van Saxon Weimar himself here, in relation to a possible reproach on his address as far as a lack of transmission of the information he had gathered that afternoon of the French advance over the road which came from Charleroi towards Brussels. Here, he states that he had to do with headquarters at Hautain-le-Val and Nivelles; he didn't know anything about the general situation of the army. In: NL-ZuRAZ, Van Löben Sels, 0302, inv.nr.265

Van Saxon Weimar's reaction may have to do Napoleon's version of the events, in which he criticizes him for not transmitting this news right away to Brussels, thereby gaining 5 hours time. Napoleon suggests as if Wellington would then have learned about the Prussian evacuation by 6 p.m. (in stead of 11 p.m.). However, the time of 11 p.m. is incorrect, while it would take more than 3 hours to cover the distance between Quatre Bras and Brussels. In: Mémoires etc. p.191-192

⁵³ Cf. Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁵⁴ Bas, F.de - La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.443

He takes the citation from the Journal de l'armée Belge, (1852) Vol.III, p.264-291 In here it was taken from an account of general De Montholon, published in 1847.

⁵⁵ Knoop, W.J. - Quatre en Waterloo p.36

⁵⁶ In: Navez, L. - Les Belges à Waterloo p.17

⁵⁷ Houssaye also highly exaggerates the situation by suggesting as if "toute l'armée française" would advance upon Quatre Bras. In: 1815.Waterloo p.133,154

⁵⁸ Cf. Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.102-103