

## The 3rd corps.

On the night of the 14th of June the 3rd corps was in position south of Clermont, towards the road leading from Beaumont to Philippeville.

The division of Domon had its position in front of Clermont, while the reserve and the park were massed behind this division. Habert's and Berthézène's divisions were in front of Beaumont, along the road of Clermont, to the right towards the château / farm of De Jettefeuille (two kilometers south of Clermont). Lefol's division was in front of Habert's in the same direction on the height behind Clermont.<sup>1</sup>

According to the "ordre de mouvement" of the 14th of June the corps had to leave for Charleroi at 3 a.m. In his march, Vandamme had to keep the sappers and miners of the imperial guard, plus half a unit of pontoneers, immediately behind his first regiment of the advance guard.

Taking into account the bivouac positions of the corps, the column of the corps must have had the following composition: one regiment of the division Lefol, the sappers and miners of the guard, the division Lefol, Habert and Berthézène.

However, things were to be going different as planned as the departure of the 3rd corps was seriously delayed.<sup>2</sup>

The 6th corps of Lobau would follow the 3rd corps, with one hour interval, that is at 4 a.m. The corps was about one kilometer in rear of the 3rd corps.

Lobau, having set his troops into motion at 4 a.m. soon bumped into the rearmost units of Vandamme. Having waited for about one hour, Lobau sent out his assistant chief of staff Janin to Vandamme to enquire what was happening. Soon Janin found out that these troops were all still in deep rest in their bivouacs.

Janin tells that he rode out to find general Vandamme himself. While doing so he met an "officier général" who told him that Vandamme had received no orders at all as the messenger who had conveyed them that night had broken his thigh while doing so.<sup>3</sup>

Taking into account the march of the 6th corps and the fact that Janin had to look for Vandamme, it must have been about 5 a.m. that Janin must have talked with Vandamme himself. This would mean that Vandamme was already waiting for orders for more than three hours. Vandamme now put his troops into march very quickly, but only after "un certain laps de temps, que les explications nécessaires rendaient indispensable".<sup>4</sup> All in all, the time needed to send out orders and the breaking up of the bivouacs must have meant that the first troops did not leave their positions before 6 a.m.<sup>5</sup> The corps moved through Clermont, Donstienne (or between Thuillies and Houssogne), Marbais, Ham-sur-Heure, Les Hayes de Nalines, tombe de Marcinelle and Marcinelle to Charleroi.<sup>6</sup>

In all probability, the 3rd corps arrived in front of Charleroi around 4 p.m.<sup>7</sup> The corps would not have marched through the town, but along its ramparts.<sup>8</sup>

Somehow, the sappers and miners of the guard and the pontoneers under Rogniat and Haxo must have left their positions in time, otherwise they would never had reached Charleroi in time to be able to support Pajol in penetrating into this town. It would have been towards 11 a.m. that Rogniat's men reached Marcinelle.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. preambles.

<sup>2</sup> Domon, not operating under Vandamme at that time, had left in time, at 2.30 a.m.

<sup>3</sup> Janin, M.E.J. Campagne de Waterloo etc. p.6

<sup>4</sup> Janin, M.E.J. Campagne de Waterloo etc. p.8

5. Lobau in his report of 8 p.m. In: SHAT, C15, nr.5

Ph.Gerbet (an officer in the 37th regiment line, division Lefol) confirms this hour. See: Gerbet, Ph. Souvenirs etc. p.5

Houssaye says it was 7 a.m. In: 1815.Waterloo. p.119

Quinet says it was 7.30 a.m. In: Histoire de la campagne de 1815. p.81

Thiers claims it was somewhere between 5 and 6 a.m. In: Histoire du consulat et de l'empire. Vol.VI p.431

General Berthézène writes it was at 8 a.m. that the first troops left their bivouacs. In: Souvenirs militaires etc. p.360

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lobau's report dated 15th of June, 8 p.m. In: SHAT, nr.C15/5

7. Others claim it was 3 p.m. Cf.

Lieutenant B.Putigny (33rd regiment). Le grognard etc. p.168

Von Pflugk Harttung, J. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.II.12. p.37

Mauduit, H.de. Les derniers jours de la grande armée. Vol.II p.10

Houssaye, H. Waterloo. p.124

According to general Berthézène the corps reached the Sambre at 4 p.m.. See: Berthézène, P. Souvenirs militaires etc. p.360

According to Aerts the corps arrived in front of Charleroi at 5 p.m. His time of the start of the action at Gilly is 6 p.m. and this time cannot be matched to the distance to be covered between Charleroi and Gilly, which is about five kilometers.

Taking into account a time of 4 p.m., the corps must have marched with a speed of about 2.6 kilometers per hour (a distance of 26 kilometers).

Ph.Gerbet (37th regiment line, division Lefol), however, says it was between noon and 1 p.m. that the corps arrived near Charleroi. In: Souvenirs etc. p.8

1 p.m. is given by Gourgaud. In: Campagne de dix huit cent quinze. p.37

8.Gerbet, Ph. Souvenirs etc. p.5