

## **The action of Quatre Bras: observations.**

The position of Quatre Bras.

The action of Quatre Bras was not one which was planned by the duke of Wellington and therefore the position as such was not one which was studied before.

In case, theoretically, for instance the line stretching from the farm of Grand-Pierrepoint in the west towards Piraumont in the east would have been a strong one for a prolonged defense, this was simply no option as by the time Wellington had to fight the action this line was taken by the French.

North of this line, the low ground running between the farm of Gémioncourt and the Etang Materne certainly offered possibilities for a defence, thereby linking this line up further west to the tip of the Bois de Bossu. The front-line in that case could have been just in rear of the low ground, on the slopes of the heights further north and upon these heights themselves, thereby using the farm of Gémioncourt as a post in front to break a French attack.

In this situation, the hamlet of Piraumont would have been too far out to occupy.

In general, the access to the plateau of Quatre Bras here from the south was restricted: to the east it was by the low ground of the stream running between Gémioncourt and the Etang Materne. Though in the centre the chaussée cut right through, this road was dominated by the heights to the north. To the west of the road, the area was restricted because of the presence of the Bois de Bossu.

By the use of the Namur-road to the east as a second defense line and the Bois de Bossu to the west as another defense line, a kind of cul-de-sac was formed.

Quatre Bras itself was not a dominating position. Though it was on a higher point, it was dominated by higher ones further west, south-west and those north of Frasnes and these offered favourable positions for enemy artillery.

The Bois de Bossu afforded very little possibilities for a strong advance towards Quatre Bras west of the Brussels-road, while the wood itself screened the advance of forces coming from Nivelles. In that sense it afforded the defender to collect his forces from there before committing them into an action east of it. On a strategical level, the wood also screened any forces assembling in and around Nivelles. Though it could be turned in its western boundary by the enemy, this would be a time-consuming process.

From the north, the Brussels-road of course also gave ample possibilities for the arrival of reinforcements from that side of the field of action.

To the east, the presence of the Etang Materne on the south side and the Bois des Censes on the north side offered the chance to block access towards the crossroads of Quatre Bras from there.

The forces of the army of the Netherlands.

The moment the French started their attack at 2 p.m. from their centre and right wing, the prince of Orange had in infantry ten battalions and one company to oppose Ney, of which he had four battalions plus one company in, in front and in rear of the Bois de Bossu (his right wing), five in and around Quatre Bras (his centre) and one on his left wing.

In this position, the accent was clearly on his right wing, with a reserve in the centre from which he could draw in troops as any action would develop. On the other hand, his left wing was clearly not so much occupied as it could have been and this must all have had to do with the fact that the prince was very much pre-occupied with the communication with the main

army; clearly, the communication with the prussians was no priority in the way that he arranged his troops.

The prince may have tried to mislead the enemy about his strength by stretching out his line over the line Piraumont – Bois de Bossu, but at the same time he had no garrisons in the strongholds of this line, as the hamlet of Piraumont and the farm of Gémioncourt.

Had Ney developed all his force there right from the start, presuming he knew the Emperor's intentions in more detail, it would have been an enormous risk the prince took of giving the French a free hand from there to intercept the communication with the prussians.

It was his luck that Ney wasn't fully aware of the situation he was in, having an incomplete mission, and that on top of that Reille was extremely cautious in his advance towards the Netherlands position (see below).

In its extended order, the 27th battalion of chasseurs had no chance of halting Bachelu's division, even though its advance must have been slow and not without difficulty. Meanwhile, the prince of Orange had the chance of sending forward his 5th battalion of national militia towards his centre, but neither this battalion, nor the 27th had the chance, nor strength, to occupy the farm of Gémioncourt. Although some time later the 5th battalion of national militia, in connection with the 7th battalion of the line, the 27th battalion of chasseurs and the 8th battalion of national militia made a stand against the French infantry and cavalry on the line between the farm of Gémioncourt and the tip of the Bois de Bossu, this effort didn't last long.

In several cases it is shown as if the 5th battalion of national militia retook the farm of Gémioncourt, but in fact this farm had never been really occupied right from the beginning, nor there has been a real fight for the farm with the French.<sup>1</sup> As the French infantry must have been hovering around the farm, the battalion advanced again and may have driven the French away for a short time from its surroundings, but an actual attempt to retake it never took place.

The moment Wellington arrived at Quatre Bras, the artillery units of the 2nd Netherlands division were still in the field, but not for long. All, except possibly for the section of lieutenant Winssinger and the horse artillery of Gey, had left the action by 4 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. at the latest and did not return.<sup>2</sup>

During the time only the Netherlands units were engaged with the enemy, the line of command does not seem to have been very transparent. On the one hand, the prince of Orange was in formal command of all the troops, while on the other hand it appears as if prince Bernhard van Saksen Weimar had a more or less independent command in and around the Bois de Bossu. It even seems as if he had units of van Bijlandt under his orders; at least they were engaged in or around the wood. Though Bernhard van Saksen Weimar may seem to have been left more or less on his own in the wood, on the other hand the prince of Orange must have been directing the battalions of the other brigade of the 2nd division that day, as major general van Bijlandt only received two orders the whole day, i.e. to advance two battalions (probably the 5th and the 8th battalions of militia).<sup>3</sup>

The share of the Netherlands units in the action of Quatre Bras has been, and still is, a subject of debate between historians, particularly between British and Dutch / Belgian ones. In several accounts, British historians depict the share taken by the Dutch / Belgians as very minimal, cowardice or leave it out altogether.<sup>4</sup>

In some cases, French historians are very general about the share of the Netherlanders in the action.<sup>5</sup>

As a reaction, historians have endeavoured to render the Netherlands troops the honour they would deserve.<sup>6</sup> The mostly British presumption has been based on a lack of knowledge of what actually happened before around 3 p.m., the moment the first British units started to arrive on the field of action. On the other hand, right at that moment the units of the prince of Orange were facing a hard time and what the British saw was the retreat of those units, so to claim their legitimate share in the action wasn't too hard at all.

Taking the complete picture of the action, however, there is no reason to make a sharp ceasura between both shares if there is any at all. The action developed as it did and the fact that all Anglo-Netherlands-German units involved were not present right from the beginning was a consequence of the way the concentration of the Anglo-Netherlands-German army was handled. The fact that the Netherlands were there was the situation of the moment, nothing more.

As Picton's units started to arrive at Quatre Bras from 3 p.m. onwards, units of the prince of Orange were near Gémioncourt and in the period between 3 and 4 p.m. the situation became critical as those units had to fall back towards Quatre Bras. To make matter even worse, also the cavalry of Van Merlen had to do the same, even though it had dropped in a bit later as Picton did.<sup>7</sup> About one hour later, however, most of all units of the Netherlands (see below) had left the field of action, except for those in the Bois de Bossu.

The decision to charge the French cavalry with Van Merlen, taken by the prince of Orange, was an overhasted one and as the brigade hadn't completed its formation and position, the charge could not produce the success it should have achieved. In all probability the prince wanted to give his retreating units some air by charging with the cavalry, but one can suppose whether it wouldn't have been better for Van Merlen's regiments to complete their formation in rear of the Namur-road and charge the French cavalry after the discharge of the 92nd regiment.

The Anglo-Netherlands-German forces.

The reason for Wellington, who arrived on the scene of the action about the same time as the vanguard of his 5th division did, to deploy this division along the Namur road must have been that he must have felt the need to consolidate his left wing in order to keep open the communication with the prussian army. For this last element he also gave a priority to the occupation of Piraumont and the area north of it, so at least to keep the chaussée open.

By positioning Picton in this way, he would also be able to defend the position in his usual way, from behind a ridge or a low ground, in this case the Namur road and it was just here that the French 5th division attacked.

Yet, by doing so, Wellington drew his extreme defense line here back to the most northern line he had for the protection of the crossroads. By doing so he took a high risk in case of a French success as this would not only probably throw him back upon Quatre Bras, it would also cut him off from the communication line towards Blücher's army.

At the same time, however, Wellington also must have considered to retake the farm of Gémioncourt, probably in an attempt to support the Netherlands units there so as to delay the French advance, but soon he realized it was too late to do so.

After the échec of the French division of Bachelu against Picton, Wellington drew his defense line further south, pivoting on the 79th regiment on his left. It was a line stretching from this regiment in the east, along the Bergerie (400 meters south of Quatre Bras) further west towards the elbow in the edge of the Bois de Bossu (about 800 meters from Quatre Bras) where the Brunswickers were, and further into the wood.

Initially, these were in reserve near Quatre Bras, but soon after, as the French had taken up positions near Gémioncourt and as (parts of) Jérôme's division were advancing along the Bois de Bossu, he must have felt uneasy about the position between the Brussels road and this wood and then sent them to the front-line stretching from the Bergerie to the wood in order to secure the ground there.

The choice for this defense-line became specially important the moment the French infantry had gained the heights north of the low ground of Gémioncourt and from which it could attack the Anglo-Netherlands-German position.

At the same time Best's brigade, until then further to the rear, was used to fill up the gap Picton left. During the action, however, only its battalions Verden and Lüneburg became involved in the fighting; of the ones of Osterode and Münden only the skirmishers were engaged.<sup>8</sup>

And it was this new line of defense which Wellington tried to keep up at all costs for the remainder of the day.<sup>9</sup>

Not far behind it, to observe the action from the central point and to control the point from where his reinforcement joined from the north and the west, Wellington remained very close to Quatre Bras probably during the whole action.<sup>10</sup>

The choice for this defence-line is also the reason that Wellington made such an effort with the 92nd regiment to prevent the enemy from getting a foothold in the Bergerie in front of Quatre Bras, after the Brunswickers had evacuated their sector. In fact, what happened was that this unit was enough to sweep this sector - which was formerly held by the Brunswickers (west of this house) - clean from enemy's forces and shortly after this same sector was filled by the units of Colin Halkett's brigade without meeting any French resistance whatsoever. Apparently, the action of the 92nd must have been very efficient.

So, basically, this brigade prolonged Picton's defense line, which had been abandoned by the Brunswickers; the link was the 69th, near the Bergerie.

Yet, all these units in this defense-line had no cavalry supports whatsoever and in their second line only a few infantry units were present, like most of the battalions of Best's brigade, possibly the 2nd battalion of Orange-Nassau and the battalions of Kielmansegge though these were placed further towards the extreme left flank.

As for the artillery, Wellington used the most of this arm to support his front-line in the centre, thereby using the units of Koopman, Cleeves, (the main part of) Lloyd, Von Kühlmann and Von Rettberg. The priority of securing the left wing was there, but with one battery only (Rogers). All in all, the duke of Wellington was able to assist his infantry, without losing any gun.<sup>11</sup>

After the retreat of the Brunswick cavalry, Wellington had no cavalry available during the remainder of the day.

In the defense of the plateau of Quatre Bras it could have been effective against Piré which hovered around the units of Picton after 5 p.m. and against the French infantry columns which approached the crossroads further east. Last but not least, it could also have been involved against the cuirassiers, in rear of the squares of the brigade of Colin Halkett, when these horsemen tried to push through to the crossroads.

In his official account of the action, Wellington summarizes the action as a successful one, but he doesn't enter into any detail. The units which in his view distinguished themselves must have been determined mostly by what he saw, only mentioning units of Picton's division (the 28th, the 42nd, the 79th, the 92nd and a Hannoveran battalion).<sup>12</sup>

In the chain of command at Quatre Bras, lieutenant general Alten, though commander of the complete third division, was probably limited to leading his brigade of Kielmansegge on the left of the front-line in order to reinforce the Riflemen's position.

His other brigade, the one of Colin Halkett, was somehow temporarily attached to Sir Thomas Picton; at least he followed his orders as to where his place his brigade.<sup>13</sup> As a result it also linked up to Picton's right flank, after the retreat of the Brunswickers.

After the Netherlands units had left the field, the role of the prince of Orange is obscure, although he was superior to Alten. He doesn't seem to have been involved in the positioning of Sir Colin Halkett's brigade, but apparently was when the 69th, while in the act of forming square, was ordered by the prince to move back in line, when the cuirassiers attacked.<sup>14</sup>

He was there, however, directing Maitland's brigade into the Bois de Bossu.

The actions in and around the Bois de Bossu.

In most accounts of the action of Quatre Bras, the actions in and around the Bois de Bossu are not dealt with in detail, simply because of a lack of sources, especially about the period the units of the prince Van Saksen Weimar were involved.<sup>15</sup>

Even having several accounts of him available, his share in the fighting there cannot be fully elucidated as he does not enter into that much detail either, and other accounts about single battalions virtually lack or are stated in such general terms that no solid conclusions can be drawn. Of some battalions we do know a bit, but not the whole picture. Of others, we know virtually nothing even though they must have kept their positions for some time. Yet, the complete picture doesn't give much reason to believe the share of Van Saksen Weimar's must have been very impressive. He may have been able to hold his positions until about 5 p.m. but it seems this was not so much caused by the strong French pressure in and on the wood, but more his fear of being cut off, and having been left without orders, that he decided to fall back to the west.

In this action, again, the role of the prince of Orange is not clear, neither as is the one of De Perponcher: both seem to have been over-concentrated to what happened to the front of Quatre Bras, but not so much with their right (or left) wing. The impression is that Van Saksen Weimar seemed to have had an almost independent command in the wood, but this seems to have been somehow influenced by the fact that his superior commanders had other things on their mind and these things were, in their turn, determined by the way the French developed their offensive actions (see below).

From van Saksen Weimar himself it can be read that he drew his forces from the wood before the division of Alten got there, but for the units of the brigade of van Bijlandt this is not fully clear.<sup>16</sup> In carefully reading the accounts of members of the battalions involved it could be possible that the 7th battalion of national militia was still in the wood after the evacuation of it by Van Saksen Weimar, but for the 8th battalion of national militia this is extremely unlikely.

<sup>17</sup> About the whereabouts of the 7th battalion of the line there is no information at all.<sup>18</sup>

The possibility that by 7 p.m. (the moment the brigade of Maitland reached the wood) there were still remnants of Van Bijlandt's brigade in the wood I feel is very small, and this corresponds to the accounts of members of the Foot Guards, which mention the very minimal presence or total absence of them.<sup>19</sup>

About the role of the Brunswickers in the wood practically no information is available. Though we know that right from the beginning there would have been two companies of carabinieri of the Advance-guard battalion, I have no records about their role further in the action. Von Olfermann's report is very unclear about it as well.<sup>20</sup>

The reason for Wellington to deploy his Foot Guards into the wood was obviously to secure Alten's right flank, as the French advanced through the wood.<sup>21</sup>

Taking the action of Quatre Bras as it was (so not in a larger strategical framework) and taking into account the circumstances given, it can be concluded on the one hand that Wellington most skilfully used the forces he had available, while on the other hand he was very lucky in the way the action evolved on the French side.

First of all, being confronted with a position which he had not chosen himself, he was yet able to react to new situations all the time and to use his available forces, with all their limitations, effectively.

Of course, the way Wellington used the position itself did contribute to this success as well. Given the difficulties of the ground and the access to the plateau of Quatre Bras, Wellington profited from the fact that the French did not have ample space to deploy their forces all the way out and that they in a way rushed into the cul-de-sac of the Anglo-Netherlands-German frontline.

But, as stated before, Wellington was also extremely lucky in the way the action was fought by the French, and this particularity in combination with the concentration Wellington had to carry out right in front of the enemy.

After the initial hostilities with the 2nd division of De Perponcher, the French had reached the low ground of Gémioncourt and were about to enter the plateau of Quatre Bras.

Right at that time, however, Picton reached Quatre Bras and was able to deploy in time for the first major attack of the French: the one of Bachelu. Had it been an hour later, then Bachelu would probably have advanced up to the crossroads and the action with Picton might have been fought further north.

Fortunately for Wellington, Bachelu suffered a devastating blow in his attack upon Picton, even as this last division had no cavalry available to finish the counter-attack. It forced Bachelu to fight as skirmishers for the remainder of the day, while Foy in the centre kept hanging in front of Wellington's centre without attempting to force it in force (see below). Further to the right, the Brunswickers couldn't hold their positions and this could have been exploited in full by the French, but it wasn't. They penetrated as far as the Bergerie, but this attempt had not the strength for the French to establish themselves on the plateau right in front of Quatre Bras.

And, again, it was just at that time that Wellington got the reinforcements of Alten's division to fill up the gap after the Brunswickers had left. And it could have been worse still: it was just here that half an hour later, the cuirassiers of Guiton tried to force their way through Wellington's centre.

This attempt failed for other reasons as the presence of Alten as well, but – again – it was here that Wellington's frontline was supported right in time just before a major French action took place.

From the French side, two major offensive actions were staged: the attack of the division of Bachelu and the charge of the cuirassiers and both were driven back by recently arrived reinforcements. In this element, Wellington was extremely lucky in the time these reinforcements reached the field of action.

Generally, the way in which Wellington handled the action and the reinforcements he got during the action were on the one hand in some kind of balance with the way the French fought the action: not in an integrated way and impulsively (see below). Eventually, Wellington was able to turn the scale in his favour and this he probably did on his right wing, as the 1st division of Cooke was able to take the Bois de Bossu and from there - in combination with other Anglo-Netherlands-German forces - to drive the French back to their centre and from there towards Frasnes.

So, having to fight an action in a position he hadn't chosen himself, while having to concentrate his forces piecemeal right in front of the enemy and while having almost no

cavalry at hand, Wellington did a very good job in improvising all the way through, but it has to be stressed that it was also thanks to the deficiencies on the way the action was fought on the French side that he was able to prevail.

## **The French.**

Before entering into a general analysis of the way the French fought the action, I will first deal with the different units in detail.

Though the advance of the division of Bachelu may not have been too easy due to the ground and the heat, as far as resistance was concerned the division found no strong opposition of the thin line of troops of the Netherlands. After the central point of Gémioncourt had been taken, probably by units of Foy, the division started what I feel would have to be the most important attack on Wellington's position, the attack on the plateau of Quatre Bras at 4 p.m. Had the division initially a direction towards Quatre Bras, it diverged to the right to deal with Picton's division. However, what should have become a clear success became a nightmare: the division was pushed back by the British infantry so violently, that it was no more capable of carrying out integrated attacks after that, as from then on all regiments acted as skirmishers. The division must have suffered that much, that even two days later, during the battle of Waterloo it was spared.

In the centre, the brigade of Jamin (division Foy) had a role in and around the farm of Gémioncourt and on the Brussels road. However, there is no such indication of the other brigade of this division, the one of Gauthier.

Foy himself specifies the role of the regiments of Jamin's brigade in the action in the centre of the frontline, but of the other brigade (Gauthier's) he merely mentions that it was formed on the plateau in front of the farm of Lairalle and doesn't refer to it again.<sup>22</sup>

This is all corroborated by Reille himself who gives the impression that one brigade was actually involved and the other not (without mentioning names though).<sup>23</sup>

The chief of staff of Foy, chef d'escadron Lemonnier-Delafosse, situates the division in the centre and on the right wing, without specifying the brigades.<sup>24</sup>

This leads to the impression that the 1st brigade of Gauthier may not have been involved as it should have been.

As soon as Foy had his men firmly in position in and around Gémioncourt, he must have led them towards Quatre Bras along the Brussels road and to the west of it, but to state this was done in an integrated and bold way is too strong. The impression of the action here is that of a static and careful approach.<sup>25</sup>

Ney, in his report, is very positive about the share of Jérôme's division in the action, but he gives no details.<sup>26</sup> This division, by far the strongest of the 2nd corps with its 6700 men, must have been led along the Bois de Bossu when it arrived.<sup>27</sup>

Here it must have been operating (as Piré did) under the immediate command of Ney himself.<sup>28</sup> At some point of time members of the division must have entered the Bois de Bossu pressing back the units of Van Saksen Weimar, but I cannot avoid the impression that of this division large parts have been very superficially used or not used at all. With a force of this size, especially in combination with a part of the division of Foy, much more could have been achieved as that it was now.<sup>29</sup>

By the time the Foot Guards entered the wood, about 7 p.m., some accounts explicitly mention the presence of the French, but real details about their number and progress are missing or contradictory. While some say that by that time they had reached the extreme

northern part and were about to cross the Namur-road, others claim they had taken a part of the wood, whatever that may have been.<sup>30</sup>

As by 7 p.m. the 92nd and the 33rd regiment still must have been in or near the elbow of the wood, I believe the French could not have been that far in the wood at all, otherwise the Anglo-Netherlands-German units north-east of it would not have held their positions for fear of being turned. Therefore, I think it is the most probable that the French penetrated possibly a bit further as the low ground in which the rivulet crosses the wood, but not much further.

Apart from the extent of their advance, the resistance of the French in the wood against the Foot Guards was probably not that strong either; most British accounts do not witness any strong resistance at all and show as if the Foot Guards drove the French out without any real problems. The fact that they had to withdraw was not caused by the French infantry, but by the strong French artillery fire which made the position in its most southern part very hard to maintain and by the fact that the Foot Guards had lost their order due to the thickness of the vegetation.<sup>31</sup>

The division of Piré was almost omni-present: there was almost no moment that it was **not** engaged. And if it wasn't, it was just for a short while before being involved in the next action.

After its initial actions against the Netherlands battalions between 2 and 3.30 p.m., it moved up towards Quatre Bras where it was opposed by Van Merlen's brigade twice. About one hour later it charged the Brunswick hussars, followed by its actions against the battalions of Picton. Yet later Piré would have followed the cuirassiers, but too late to actually support it. Later that evening the division must have been used to cover the French retreat, primarily on the French left of the Brussels road.<sup>32</sup>

Ney's artillery (consisting of 30 guns) must have done a very good job. Though the Anglo-Netherlands-German artillery was well handled as well, the French must have been far superior during the whole action.<sup>33</sup>

Though not all batteries can be individually identified, it is clear that Bachelu's battery must have kept a position in front of Piraumont during the whole action. Bachelu probably kept it there as a precaution to cover his division in case of a retreat, and to keep the Namur road under fire.<sup>34</sup>

Foy's battery was during the initial stages of the action probably in the centre near Le Balcan; from there it must have fired on the Netherlands centre and possibly on the Bois de Bossu too; it may have been that Piré's artillery was there as well.<sup>35</sup>

The wood in question must have been under a heavy artillery fire during the whole action, and this may very well have been coming from the batteries of Piré and (later) Jérôme.<sup>36</sup>

By the time the French centre was well consolidated in and around Gémioncourt, the French artillery here must have used the position which was used by Bijleveld some time before, i.e. the height south-west of Gémioncourt, on the west side of the Brussels road and south of the track which leads to the farm of Grand-Pierrepont.<sup>37</sup> The artillery involved may have been the guns of Foy. From here they must have fired while Picton was taking up positions and, shortly after, as Bachelu attacked this division and as the Brunswickers took up position in front.<sup>38</sup>

Later, by 6 p.m., these French guns must have been positioned even further north, just on the plateau, about 750 meters south of Quatre Bras. By doing so, they were able to annoy the Anglo-Netherlands-German units of infantry and artillery.<sup>39</sup>

By that time, French guns also must have skirted the Bois de Bossu, probably in an attempt to dislodge the Anglo-Netherlands-German units from the wood to their centre, but which was prevented by Lloyd's guns.

Though there is quite some information about which units must have been charged by the cuirassiers, it is not entirely clear how these French horsemen actually were divided over the Anglo-Netherlands-German line and whether all cuirassiers actually penetrated as far as in front of Quatre Bras. From the position of the different Anglo-Netherlands-German squares and the way Kellermann describes the charge it could be concluded that both regiments of cuirassiers may have split up to the right and left, but whether both actually got even far north is not clear. It is very well possible that the 8th did, but then dragged the 11th regiment along to the rear, while fleeing back to the French lines, but it may also have been the other way around, or that both regiments reached the position just in front of the crossroads more or less at the same time. <sup>40</sup>

That night, Kellermann wrote about this charge:

*Monsieur le Maréchal, J'ai exécuté la charge que vous m'avez ordonné: j'ai rencontré l'infanterie ennemie placé dans un vallon au dessous de ses pièces. À l'instant, sans laisser aux troupes le temps de réfléchir, je me suis précipité, à la tête de l'escadron du 8e cuirassiers avec le général Guiton sur l'infanterie anglo-hanovrienne; malgré le feu le plus vif de front et de flanc, les deux lignes d'infanterie ont été culbutées, le plus grand désordre était dans la ligne ennemie que nous avons traversé deux à trois fois. Le succès le plus complet était assuré, avec les résultats que vous attendiez, si les lanciers nous eussent suivis, mais les cuirassiers, criblés de coups de fusil de tous les cotés, n'ont pu profiter de l'avantage qu'ils avaient obtenu par une des charges les plus résolues et les plus hardies, contre une infanterie qui ne se lasa point intimider et qui fit son feu avec le plus grand sang-froid, comme à l'exercice.[...] la brigade ayant fait une perte énorme et ne se voyant pas soutenue, se retira dans le désordre ordinaire en pareille circonstance [...]* <sup>41</sup>

Being the sole, most authentic description of the whole of the charge, it deserves being analysed in detail.

As indicated in the account of the action, the charge must have been one which was initiated by Ney and which was not prepared as it should have been. Being pushed probably by the arrival of Soult's order of 3.15 p.m., the news about d'Erlon and the lack of progress in the action, Ney must have felt the need to crush Wellington's centre once and for all. At least Kellermann would have realised the risk he ran by rushing right into the very centre of Wellington's line, which was just reinforced and well prepared for the action (except the 69th), and being without a direct support of extra cavalry and infantry.

It was therefore that he protested but as this was in vain, he decided to rush the charge even more to prevent the officers and men from realising in what kind of position they were heading. All in all, a fully irresponsible act.

Kellermann is not free from exagrating the success he had: though he was able to run down the 69th, he surely did not run down both lines of infantry as he writes in his report. In this he clearly generalizes this success.

Further, he claims the brigade traversed the Anglo-Netherlands-German lines twice or three times, but there is no further proof for this assertion at all. In general, the report is contradictory: by starting to give the idea that the charge was an overall success (which it wasn't) and that the enemy was in disorder, he ends by stating that he couldn't win due to the lack of support of Piré and the strong tenacity of the Anglo-Netherlands-German squares.

The fact is that the brigade, though successful against the 69th, completely panicked and fled back as far as Frasnés, but that is something Kellermann doesn't write about. For the reasons for this failure we probably have to look at the losses the cuirassiers must have suffered from the enemies fire and the lack of support. The panick may have been caused by the fact that the men must have realised that they were trapped, having no support, being encircled by enemy

units and by the losses endured during the charge – what triggered this disorder I do not know (it may have been the fire of Von K hlmann’s guns or the fall of Kellermann himself), but that the charge completely failed is certain.<sup>42</sup>

Obviously, the charge should have been supported by more cavalry, and at least by infantry to make sure the strike would be successful. Pir  did follow, but too far off; the infantry (in this case Foy’s) must have made no effort whatsoever to support Kellermann.<sup>43</sup>

For some reason, probably to enlarge their own role, a lot of eye-witnesses of the Anglo-Netherlands-German army depict the French cavalry as cuirassiers (as being the most feared type of cavalry of the French army). In supposing this to be right, it would have meant that these cuirassiers would have charged just about everywhere and at any time, while in most of these cases units of Pir  are meant.

Though this depiction is somehow very persistent, in fact **one** charge of French cuirassiers took place and that was the one at about 6.30 p.m. by Guiton.<sup>44</sup>

Ney was advised by Napoleon not to use the light cavalry of the Imperial Guard, and it is not very probable that he actually did.<sup>45</sup>

About the way how Ney himself actually handled the action there is almost no information available, except that which derives from anecdotes which are repeated over and over again.

What we do know, however, is that he had the direct command over the divisions of Pir  and J r me Bonaparte, though they formally fell under Reille. Reille himself led his other two divisions, those of Bachelu and Foy. What may have been the reason for this division in command, I do not know.<sup>46</sup>

In the overall picture of the action it didn’t help in coordination; as a matter of fact it helped to create an atmosphere which was characterised by a lack of integration and cooperation of all arms.

The action of Quatre Bras from the French side seems more like a series of separate attacks and charges which were poorly coordinated and which more seem to stem from situations at different moments, as from a bigger plan.<sup>47</sup> That is why the confrontation cannot be described as a battle but as an action.

The action started with an offensive advance which gives the impression of one in which the three arms were combined, but after that this was basically no more the case. Bachelu attacked without the support of Pir  and Foy, while Pir , in his turn, wasn’t supported by Bachelu or Foy. It is for this reason that their efforts, in combination with the Anglo-Netherlands-German resistance, failed.<sup>48</sup> Another typical example of such a lack of support is the charge of the cuirassiers (see above). The result was that the action of Quatre Bras from the French side can be mostly characterised as one of skirmishing, cavalry charges and bombardments.<sup>49</sup>

Reille had experience with the British in the Peninsula, but here at Quatre Bras, after the  ch c of Bachelu, he seems to have been acting even more cautious, nowhere actually trying to break through the Anglo-Netherlands-German position with a well prepared, strong blow. Ney, in his turn, didn’t do so either: as far as the division of J r me Bonaparte is concerned this division didn’t make a firm push anywhere while the one of Pir  was over-used, thereby exhausting it, without properly combining it with infantry.

Another factor in this was of course the growing number of Wellington’s forces; this factor of superiority of the Anglo-Netherlands-German troops is given as a cause of the lack of success of the French.<sup>50</sup>

In this connection count Flahaut writes about Ney at Quatre Bras:

“Enfin, le maréchal Ney parut et l’affaire s’engagea, mais il n’y eut point d’ensemble dans les dispositions. On attaqua comme on dit, le taureau par les cornes, lançant des troupes successivement à mesure qu’elles arrivaient, et malgré la bravoure qu’elles déployèrent, on n’obtint aucun résultat.” And: “J’ai assisté près de Ney à toute l’affaire des Quatre Bras. On ne saurait montrer plus de courage, je dirais même plus de méprise de la mort. Mais là finira mon éloge; car l’affaire s’est bornée à des attaques déçues, et l’absence de toutes dispositions.”<sup>51</sup>

However, the Anglo-Netherlands-German superiority as such cannot be disconnected from the way the French staff handled the action: both are inseparable, and Flahaut also sees this in Ney’s lack of manoeuvring.

Taking these words of Flahaut further, there are indeed on the one hand no indications that Ney has ever tried to turn the Anglo-Netherlands-German forces on their left or right wing, with neither weapon or a combination of weapons.<sup>52</sup> But on the other hand, no well integrated and combined attacks on the Anglo-Netherlands-German front were carried out either.

The historiography of the action.

Two of the first French accounts about the action, those from Gourgaud and Napoleon, which are very similar to each other, are very superficial and even in the representation of the very few facts they give, most incorrect. There is also no integration of those facts, even though they are incorrect, into a larger framework of the action. As such, both accounts do not add anything serious to a thorough research into the action.

Von Wagner (1825), probably as the first German author, writes on Quatre Bras. Yet, even though his account contains all kind of details of which the sources remain unknown, it lacks cohesion. Apart from that, the sequence in which the different actions have been set is not always correct.

Von Damitz (1837) apparently uncritically follows the account of Von Wagner and should therefore be disregarded as a study of any importance in this subject.

The one of captain Van Löben Sels (1842), however, can be seen as an important one as he used accounts of Netherlands officers who were actually present at Quatre Bras for the first time. While this is the great merit of Van Löben Sels, his account of the action on the whole is yet highly unbalanced as the major part of his account is taken up by the part as taken by the Netherlands troops. The sources of most of this other part of his account remain unknown, although for French aspects of it, he used the publications of the duke of Elchingen and of De Vaudoncourt.

What Van Löben Sels is for the Netherlands, is Siborne for the British. While he treats the initial stages of the action, in which the Netherlands units were involved, in a most general way, he elaborates on those of the British after that. In some cases the representation of certain details Siborne even doesn’t lack a sense of heroism and chauvinism, and in all its detail, it contains some material errors.<sup>53</sup>

In 1854, De Mauduit gave the action more weight in working out the French side a bit more, though in this way his representation has become rather one-sided.<sup>54</sup>

Three years later, Charras publishes a more coherent account in his study on the campaign as it had been done before, but as with much more of these studies no sources are given.<sup>55</sup>

Although Jonxis wrote a special study on the action of Quatre Bras in 1875, it doesn’t add anything relevant to the subject, as the writer took his details mostly from Van Löben Sels, De Vaudoncourt, Siborne, Charras and De Mauduit.

Houssaye’s study (1895) is not a full-scale archival study as well, even though he used a number of them, most of them French.<sup>56</sup> For the Netherlands and British part he refers back

to Van Löben Sels and Siborne. He deals with the part as played by the Netherlands units most superficially.

F.de Bas and T'Serclaes de Wommerson deal with this part very extensively, thereby apparently relying upon archival material, but what this is remains unclear.<sup>57</sup> The intention is clearly to refute the allegations done by Oman and Von Pflugk Harttung in particular. In this approach, the account of the total action is a most unbalanced one as all the remainder of the action is treated very briefly.

It is Aerts' merit (1914) -in his highly balanced account- to have corrected several erroneous interpretations as done by F.de Bas, Siborne and Charras, but Aerts doesn't seem to have carried out any archival research himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.435

F.de Bas asserts four companies of Westenberg's battalion were placed east of the farm, along the stream, but as the French cavalry charged the 27th battalion of chasseurs, these companies fell back into the farm. As the French infantry then threatened to turn it, Westenberg would have gone back, a short time later to retake the farm as Van Merlen arrived. In: La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.497-499

<sup>2</sup> Major Van Opstall. In: VLS nr.II.4.nr.1

2nd lieutenant Koopman (battery Bijleveld). In: VLS nr.II.4.nr.9

Colonel Osten. In: VLS nr.II.4.nr.4

Lieutenant Van der Wall (battery of Stevenart). In: VLS nr.II.4.nr.2

Captain Bijleveld claims he halted his fire towards the evening, but this is not correct. In: VLS nr.II.4.nr.7

<sup>3</sup> Major general van Bijlandt. In: VLS nr.II.3.nr.6

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Siborne, W. History of the war etc. He says virtually nothing about their share and leaves the opinion on their share to the discrimination and judgement of the public, but at the same time he gives examples as if their spirit was very bad (basing himself on the accounts of members of the 1st British division) and thereby setting a line for future historians.

In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.161

On the other hand, one should not forget that at the time his first edition was published, for instance the work of Van Löben Sels had not been published, so there was not much material available to draw from, and in his Waterloo letters details were lacking as well.

Wellington, in his official despatch, enters into the initiative taken by the Dutch to occupy the crossroads, but doesn't mention the initial Dutch resistance during the action at all; in fact he has it start the moment Picton arrived. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.438

Yet, it is colonel Sir Carmichael Smyth, commander of the Royal Engineers, who recognises the part played by De Perponcher before Picton arrived, as he writes: "The Dutch division, previously to its being reinforced, defended itself with great gallantry. It was, however, compelled to fall back from Frasnes towards Quatre-bras, having suffered much." In: Chronological epitome of the wars etc. p.381

<sup>5</sup> Thiers, A. Histoire etc. Vol.VI p.456-457

Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.198-201

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Knoop, W. Quatre Bras en Waterloo p.40-50

Bas, F.de la campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.I p.492-529

Boulger, D. The Belgians at Waterloo p.14-20

Van Löben Sels, E. van Bijdragen etc. Vol.IV p.518-554

In his account, captain Oldfield (British engineers) states that the Netherlanders at Quatre Bras fought well, until they were relieved by British units. In: NAM, nr.7403-147

<sup>7</sup> In fact, sergeant Anton (42nd regiment) mentions the Dutch / Belgian skirmishers (of the 27th battalion of chasseurs) falling back through the ranks of his battalion. In: Fitchett, W. Wellington's men p.291

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Lieutenant colonel Grunebosch also mentions the presence of the Scottish units in rear of his battalion. In: VLS nr.II.3.nr.7

1st lieutenant Barre (5th battalion of national militia) states his battalion was in the field at least till 7 p.m. but this is far from correct. In: VLS nr.II.3.nr.10

<sup>8</sup> Major general Best. In: VPH-LBA , nr.7 and 8  
Ensign Oppermann (battalion Münden). In a letter to his parents dated 23rd June 1815. In: Kannicht, J. Und alles wegen Napoleon p.203-204

<sup>9</sup> For this line, the possession of the farm of Gémioncourt was of no use as it was way too far out in front. Secondly, being in a hollow, it could not be seen from the main position.

<sup>10</sup> At least there is no account in which Wellington is being mentioned as having been anywhere else, as near the crossroads.

Cf. Report about the brigade of Kielmansegge. In: VPH, nr.6

Report captain Cleeves. In: VPH-LBA, nr.15

Both reports the duke was there at 6 p.m.

Lieutenant Winchester (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.242-247

Sergeant Robertson (92nd regiment) In: The journal of sergeant D.Robertson p.146

Private Kay (92nd regiment) Cf. his plan, in: BL.Add.ms.34706 p.216-223

All these confirm his presence near Quatre Bras around 3 p.m.

By 7 p.m., Wellington was also in the vicinity of the crossroads. See the account of lieutenant Von Wussow, member of Blücher's staff. In: Ollech, Von Geschichte etc. p.139-140

<sup>11</sup> Reille, however, claims the 72nd regiment (brigade Campy, division Bachelu) took a gun and a howitzer, but this fact is not being corroborated by any of the Anglo-Dutch-German artillery units. Cf. his official report dated 17th June 1815. In: SHAT, nr.C15.22

It is confirmed however for one gun by Ney in his report of the evening of the 16th of June to Soult. In: SHAT, C15 nr.5

What is probably meant is a bespannen ammunition-waggon, taken by a section of this regiment, led by lieutenant Chapuzot. In: Historiques des corps de troupes de l'armée française, cited by W.Aerts. In: Etudes etc. p.451

The ammunition spent by the Anglo-Dutch-German units was:

Rogers: 11 grenades and 90 balls.

Von Rettberg: 24 grenades and 270 balls.

Lloyd: 30 grenades and 94 balls.

Cleeves: 17 grenades and 205 balls.

Von Kühlmann: 31 grenades and 130 balls.

Sandham: 8 balls.

This would suggest Sandham's units had a share in the action, but further sources are missing.

<sup>12</sup> Here he probably means the Lüneburg battalion, which was posted very close to Quatre Bras.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Report of Alten himself. In: The battle of Waterloo, also of Ligny and Quatre Bras etc. Vol.I p.192

Letter of Sir Colin Halkett. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.276-279

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<sup>14</sup> The fact that two witnesses do not wish to mention the name of the officer might be an indication that we have to do with the prince. Cf. Major general Colin Halkett. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706.75 Halkett doesn't mention the prince himself, but " an officer high in rank ". Also in: 34.707.14

Captain Barlow (69th regiment) doesn't want to enter into detail about the identity of the person either. In: NAM, nr.6507-1

<sup>15</sup> Even Van Löben Sels, in all his detail about the share of the Dutch in the action, is not able to give a proper account of the actions in the wood, also to his regret. In: Bijdragen etc. Vol.IV p.551

Aerts regrets the same. In: Etudes etc. p.441 In this, he mentions the confusing report of colonel van Zuylen van Nijevelt.

<sup>16</sup> Major Sattler (1st regiment of Nassau) claims his regiment was in action until dusk, but this is not true. In: VPH, nr.18

It is in this sense most remarkable that prince Bernard van Saksen Weimar, for some strange reason, claims the division of Alten drove the French from the wood, but lost it again – for this I have not a single indication whatsoever from members of this division.

Cf. Prince Bernard van Saksen Weimar. Diary. In: THW, Grossherzogliches Hausarchiv A XXIV 30 and in his letter dated 19th of June to his father. In: Bas, F.de la campagne de 1815 Vol.IIIp.564

For the same conclusion, see Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

<sup>17</sup> While privates Rem and Rentenaar give some kind of impression that the battalion held out in the wood for the whole day, private Allebrandi doesn't.

Cf. veteran Rem (7th battalion of national militia) In: Aantekeningen van een veteraan etc. Account of fusilier Rentenaar (7th battalion of national militia). In: Private collection.

Herinneringen uit mijn tienjarige militaire loopbaan. By S.A. 1835

The autobiography of Willem van de Hull, the brother of Pieter van de Hull, 2nd lieutenant in the same battalion doesn't help either. Van den Hull got wounded at Waterloo and it was his brother Willem who was informed about this by his comrade, 1st lieutenant Van Zanten. In: Autobiografie (1778-1854) p.475-500

<sup>18</sup> Colonel van Zuylen van Nijevelt claims that by the time Cooke had arrived (see below) parts of the 2nd division still were in the Bois de Bossu, as well as west of it, but for the 7th battalion of the line he writes that it went back to the rear of the wood and gives the impression it saw no action any more. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.314-320

<sup>19</sup> Ensign Batty (2nd battalion / 1st Foot Guards). In: Collection Hanington.

Ensign Standen denies Lord Saltoun's statement that a lot of Dutch / Belgian troops left the wood, but at the same time says he saw no Dutch / Belgians amongst the killed and wounded in the wood. In: BL, Add.ms.34.708.120, 121 and 122

Van Löben Sels believes there were still Dutch battalions in the extreme northern part of the wood, but is not specific about this. In: Bijdragen etc. Vol.IV p.534

Aerts believes there were still remnants of Nassau units, as well as Brunswick Jäger, in the most northern part of the wood by 6 p.m. but also confirms a lot of them left it in large numbers some time later. In: Etudes etc. p.455-6

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<sup>20</sup> His report dated 16th of June is very confusing. He claims that the Leib-battalion and the 2nd light battalion were fighting in the wood and that they lost and retook it three times, but the 2nd light battalion wasn't in the wood at all: it was near Piraumont - additionally, the Bois de Bossu wasn't lost and retaken three times. In: VPH-LBA, nr.9

<sup>21</sup> According to lord FitzRoy Somerset it was Wellington's original intention to have Cooke support the centre, but as the French advanced in the wood, the division was sent there. In: Account in the NAM, nr.6507-1

<sup>22</sup> Foy. In: Girod de l'Ain. Vie militaire etc. p.272  
De Mauduit believes Gauthier actually advanced on Gémioncourt and that Jamin was kept in reserve. In: Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II p.145

<sup>23</sup> Reille. In: Notice historique etc. In: Documents inédits p.59  
Losses in officers of Jamin's brigade were much higher as the ones of Gauthier. In: Martinien, A. Officiers tués et blessés

<sup>24</sup> In: Souvenirs militaires p.206

<sup>25</sup> Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.451

<sup>26</sup> Cf. his report dated 10 p.m. 16th June. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5

<sup>27</sup> Reille. In: Notice historique etc. In: Documents inédits etc. p.59

<sup>28</sup> Reille in his report of the 17th of June. In: SHAT, C15.22

<sup>29</sup> Reille, for the reason mentioned above, (unfortunately) remains silent about the role of his 6th division, as well as Piré's.

Jérôme himself remains virtually silent about the participation of his division at Quatre Bras; he restricts himself to stating that his division "s'est couvert de gloire" and that he had got wounded himself by two bullets. In: Letter dated 15th July 1815. In: Coppens, B. – Waterloo. Les mensonges etc. p.512

For some reason, the 1st regiment of the line suffered much more in officers as all other regiments but it remains unclear what has been the cause of this. Cf. Martinien, A. Officiers tués et blessés p.117

Sometimes it is asserted that the brigade of Foy was sent into the wood, but there is no direct evidence for that. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.202

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ensign Batty (2nd battalion 1st Foot Guards) on the one hand, and for instance major Van Gorcum and ensign Standen on the other.

In: private collection, family-archive Gorcum and BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.324-327 respectively. Ensign Macready (30th regiment) says the French had taken nearly the whole of it. In: Brett James, A. p.62 and in BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.227-229

According to colonel Heymès the French had taken the wood by 3 p.m. In: Relation de la campagne etc. In: Documents inédits etc. p.8

Lemonnier-Delafosse suggests the wood was taken and retaken, to be definitively retaken for the fourth time by the allies. In: Souvenirs militaires p.206

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<sup>31</sup> Captain Powell (1st Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.143-148  
Captain Saltoun (1st Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.431-434  
Ensign Standen (2nd battalion / 3rd Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.324-334  
He adds there were actually very few French in the wood.  
Major van Gorcum, present with the Foot Guards, actually confirms the French yielded without any serious resistance. Account. In: family archive, Gorkum.  
The only officer witnessing serious resistance is ensign Batty (2nd battalion 1st Foot Guards), stating the French contested every bush. In: collection Hanington.

<sup>32</sup> In the midst of “confusion” of all different cavalry charges of both Piré and Guiton, J.Grehan has listed all charges mentioned by other historians without drawing conclusions himself, however. I will not do either as especially in the later part of the action there is no clear idea about the number of charges of Piré’s units. Taking my current version of the facts together, one or more regiments of this division must have at least charged nine times, the cuirassiers once. Cf. Grehan, J. Quatre Bras confusion. In: The Waterloo Journal Vol.19 nr.3 p.19-22

<sup>33</sup> Reille. In his report dated 17th June 1815. In: SHAT, nr.C15.22  
Colonel van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In VLS nr.II.3.nr.11a  
Wellington in his official despatch. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.440  
Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.316

<sup>34</sup> Trefcon, colonel. Carnet de campagne p.183  
Captain Rogers (battery Rogers) confirms the battery was stationary. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.240-241

<sup>35</sup> See the bombardment on the 8th battalion of national militia and the 1st battalion of Orange-Nassau, both in front of the forest.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. accounts of Bernard van Saksen Weimar and members of the Foot Guards (see above).

<sup>37</sup> Plan of Von Wachholz. In: Geschichte etc.

<sup>38</sup> Aerts states it was Jérôme’s battery, but gives no reference. In: Etudes etc. p.444

<sup>39</sup> Captain Von Cleeves (Cleeves’ battery). In: VPH-LBA, nr.15  
Captain Von Kühlmann (Von Kühlmann’s battery). In: VPH-LBA, nr.14  
Captain Von Rettberg (Von Rettberg’s battery). In: VPH-LBA, nr.16  
Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.441  
Major general Best claims artillery advanced with Kellermann to the front, but that his brigade took one of the guns. I have no further proof for this. In: VPH-LBA, nr.8

<sup>40</sup> Houssaye gives the incorrect impression as if all cuirassiers were kept together and charged the British battalions in the sequence: 73rd [he writes 69th and puts it in the first line, which it wasn’t], 69th, 30th and 33rd [which he claims was run over, which it wasn’t], and then to run to Quatre Bras. He also says they dispersed a Brunswick square as well as a battery, but for all these facts there is no evidence. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.214

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Aerts, in his turn, clearly opposes to the versions as given by Charras, Houssaye, Thiers and De Bas. In his version, the 8th regiment of cuirassiers would have charged the 69th, and the 11th regiment of cuirassiers the Brunswickers and the 73rd first and then the 30th - all in vain – and then to approach the crossroads of Quatre Bras, where it was pushed back; on the 8th regiment he doesn't come back at all. In: Etudes etc. p.460-461

Siborne, in his turn, gives the impression as if the whole of Kellermann's corps charged (he writes it arrived completely), the more as he also mentions dragoons as taking part. In the course of the action he claims the corps diverged from the 73rd, 33rd and the Brunswickers towards the Brussels road, while another part advanced into the open space on the right of that road, charging Picton's squares. In this picture, dragoons were the horsemen which charged the 69th – in all, a completely incorrect version of the facts. In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.140-144

<sup>41</sup> In: SHAT, C15 nr.5

<sup>42</sup> Heymès claims it was Kellermann himself getting dismounted. In: Relation etc. In: Documents inédits etc. p.9

De Mauduit blames the panick on treason or disorder. In: Les derniers jours etc. p.162

Houssaye writes the cuirassiers were faced with fire from all sides at Quatre Bras, but his assertion that it came from Dutch from the wood is not proven; neither were it British soldiers who fired from the Namur-road, but Hannoverian. He also mentions *batteries* of Kühlmann, while this was one battery. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.215

<sup>43</sup> Kellermann himself in his account. In: SHAT. Observations sur la bataille de Waterloo etc. In: SHAT, Mémoires et reconnaissances, no.719

Heymès claims all the infantry was "sérieusement occupées" Cf. Relation de la campagne etc. In: Documents inédits etc. p.9

De Mauduit, H. Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II p.162-163

Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.459

<sup>44</sup> Kellermann in his report of 10 p.m. that night. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5

Kellermann. Observations sur la bataille de Waterloo etc. In: SHAT, Mémoires et reconnaissances, no.719

Reille. In: Notice historique etc. In: Documents inédits etc. p.59

Ney in his report to Soult dated 16th June, 10 p.m. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5 - He explicitly mentions one charge.

By far the most of those who mention cuirassiers (but which were in fact chasseurs à cheval and / or lancers) are members of Picton's division or of De Perponcher's. Cf.

Lieutenant Forbes (79th regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.703 p.1-2

Lieutenant Winchester (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.242-247 and 34.707 p.7-10

Lieutenant Kerr Ross (92nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.252-256

Sir W.Gomm. In: BL, Add.ms.706 p.200-206 and 34.706 p.1790184 and in Letters and journals p.353

Lieutenant Blake (1st regiment). In a letter dated 10th July 1815. In: NLS, MS104488.i

Captain Ross Lewin (32nd regiment). With the 32nd etc. p.257-258

Private Vallence (79th regiment). In: The Waterloo Journal Vol.21 nr.2 p.15

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Ensign Mudie (1st regiment). In his diary. In: Diary of ensign C.Mudie, 3rd Bn.The Royal Scots. Describing the battle of Waterloo and occupation of Paris, 1815. In: The Thistle. April, July and October 1931

Lieutenant Riddock (44th regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.293-297

Lieutenant Martin (44th regiment). In a letter to his father dated 29th June 1815. In: Essex Regiment Museum, Chelmsford.

Private Gunn (42nd regiment). In: JSAHR, Vol.49 p.115

Captain van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: NA, nr.2.21.180 inv.37

Colonel van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.318

Count Van Limburg Stirum. In: VLS nr.II.3.4

Scheltens. In: Souvenirs etc. p.198

Anonymous member of the section Gey. In: Bredasche Courant. 5th July 1840

In most cases it may have been a deliberate wrong description, as cuirassiers – one would expect – should have been quite distinctive by their armour; on the other hand, others may have seen the members of the 1st regiment of chasseurs à cheval as cuirassiers as these probably wore helmets in stead of shakos. Cf. Haythornthwaite, Ph. Uniforms at Waterloo p.146

Van Löben Sels sees the two types of cavalry (light and heavy cavalry, i.e. cuirassiers) as being written about in accounts, but doesn't enter into conclusions. In: Bijdragen etc. Vol.IV p.527 (footnote)

Several eye-witnesses, however, do describe the lancers unmistakably as lancers indeed while others also do describe chasseurs à cheval. Lancers wore helmets too, by the way.

Cf. Lieutenant colonel Grunebosch (27th battalion of chasseurs). In: VLS nr.II.3.nr.7

Brevet major Van Balveren (6th regiment of hussars). In: VLS nr.II.5.nr.2

Captain Van Royen (6th regiment of hussars). In: VLS nr.II.5.nr.6

Sergeant McEween (42nd regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.455-456

Basing his account on so many British eye-witness accounts, mentioning cuirassiers (while they were not), Siborne writes an account in which cuirassiers take a prominent role, for instance before 5 p.m. against the 42nd / 44th and even against Van Merlen – and this while the cuirassiers were not engaged before 6.30 p.m.. In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.126,130

Eventually, Dellevoet sees the same problem, but apparently has not been able to solve the contradictory accounts and concludes that the “controversy warrants a closer investigation.” In: The Dutch-Belgian cavalry etc. p.120

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Napoleon's order of the morning of the 16th June. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5

Ney's report of the evening of the 16th of June. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5

Colonel Heymès. Relation de la campagne etc. In: Relation etc. In: Documents inédits etc.p.7

Houssaye cites the notes of chef d'escadron De Stuers of the Red lancers stating that the regiment lost on the 16th of June 50 men, without De Stuers specifying how, however. This may correspond to the 2nd regiment of lancers which somehow suffered two casualties on the 16th in officers, but how this could have happened remains unsolved. Cf. Martinien, A. Officiers tués et blessés p.101

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Houssaye also cites from a letter written by general Colbert himself stating that the division of the light cavalry of the guard was kept in reserve on the 16th of June. In: 1815. Waterloo p.215

I have not been able to trace this letter.

He also cites from Damitz that this cavalry of the guard might have charged the 5th battalion of national militia, but this assertion is not of a status which is credible at all. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.214

Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt does mention the lancers of the guard as having pushed back Nassau troops in front of the Bois de Bossu, but at the same time mentions them as having charged the 27th battalion chasseurs, which was, in fact, Piré, so we presume he means Piré in both cases. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.312-316

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Reille's report of the 17th of June (see below).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.467

Pollio, though, describes the action as one in which the three weapons were well combined and as a result he regards it as "une des plus belles actions tactiques que l'histoire militaire nous rappelle, tant en ce qui concerne la direction que l'exécution." In: Waterloo p.254

<sup>48</sup> Henckens, lieutenant Mémoires p.225, 229

Chef de bataillon Jolyet (1st regiment of light infantry) complains about the serious lack of cohesion and direction; he even speaks about a disorder in the staff. In: Souvenirs et correspondance p.76

<sup>49</sup> Cf. major general Best. In: VPH-LBA, nr.8

<sup>50</sup> Reille. In: Notice historique etc. In: Documents inédits p.59

In his report dated the 17th of June Reille claims the enemy had a force which was three times stronger as the French. This is not correct. In fact, Wellington ultimately had about 34.000 men while Ney had almost 19.000 men. In: SHAT C15, nr.22

<sup>51</sup> Count Flahaut in two letters, dated 1857 and 1861 to A.H.Brialmont and F.Lavalette respectively. In: The first Napoleon etc. p.314-315

In another one he writes:

"J'étais auprès du maréchal Ney pendant toute l'affaire. Il a montré son courage et sa résolution habituels, mais n'a pris aucune disposition, se bornant, toutes les fois qu'il arrivait de nouvelles troupes à les lancer ou les mener contre l'ennemi, prenant comme on dit le taureau par les cornes dans une position extrêmement forte et n'ayant pas lui-même des forces suffisantes pour réussir; enfin la nuit venue l'ennemi ne voulant que défendre la route qui mène des Quatre Bras à Fleurus, l'affaire cessa de part et d'autre, de guerre lasse." In: Bernardy, F. Charles de Flahaut

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Aerts, W. Etudes etc. p.467

Bernard van Saksen Weimar mentions a French threat on his right hand side without specifying this further; I believe this must have been the French penetrating in the part of the Bois de Bossu which was further west. In a letter to his father dated 19th of June 1815. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.566

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Private Kay, in his plan, actually draws French skirmishers / units as having been west of the same wood, but there are no further indications for that. Apart from that, Kay has not been there and his plan is inaccurate in much more ways. In: BL, Add.ms.706 p.216-223

<sup>53</sup> Siborne suggest as if Ney wanted to encircle Wellington on both his flanks and further he makes the following erroneous claims: that the 5th battalion of Dutch national militia contested the possession of the farm of Gémioncourt with the French several times, that the Dutch cavalry charged the cuirassiers of Kellermann, that Soult's order of 2 p.m. reached Ney after the charge of Kellermann, that the 92nd regiment charged after the charge of the cuirassiers, that the order of Soult of 3.15 p.m. reached Ney at 6.30 p.m. In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.100-158

<sup>54</sup> De Mauduit uses the account of Kellermann (now in the SHAT), while Von Wagner already did so in 1825. Kellermann had sent it to Von Wagner on the 6th of april 1825. Cf. footnote. In: Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleons Untergang p.355  
In giving a relative very detailed account of the share of the 108th regiment of the line in the action at Quatre Bras, De Mauduit also must have had an account of a member of this regiment, possibly of its colonel, Higonet. In: Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II p.148-150

<sup>55</sup> Charras mentions Renard as well as “des rapports Hollandais”, of which at least he knew the one of De Perponcher (this is probably the one as published later by F.de Bas, from the archives of the ministry of defense). In: Histoire de la campagne etc. Vol.I p.196-197

<sup>56</sup> Like the accounts of Foy, Reille, Kellermann and Jérôme Bonaparte. In: 1815.Waterloo p.198-218

<sup>57</sup> References given in the subject are Renard, Remoortere, Eenens, all being no sources. Those given as actual sources are the Waterloo letters (as edited by Herbert Siborne), the journal of Constant Rebecque, the Historiek of the 2nd Dutch infantry division and the report of the prince of Orange of the 17th of June. In: La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.490-530