

The evening and night of the 17th of June.

The positions of the Anglo-Netherlands-German forces in the position of Mont Saint Jean.

It was during the afternoon and evening of the 17th of June that Wellington's army arrived in the position of Mont Saint Jean.

The division of Perponcher had arrived in the position early that afternoon. Initially, it took up a position east of the Nivelles-road, leaning with its left on the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean and to the right on Merbraine.

Here it stood in line, with on the height on its right (which is about 900 meters north of Gomont) two guns and two companies of flankers for cover. The remaining guns were in the second line. It was here that the troops had started to cook their meal.¹

The intention was that the division of Chassé would prolonge the right flank of the division of Perponcher. However, at 6 p.m. Perponcher was ordered by colonel De Lancey to lead his division towards the left wing of the army.² Then the division moved out to the left, while crossing the position of the Foot Guards and the Brunswickers. It did so in column, with sections to the left, and led by the brigade of Van Saksen Weimar towards the crossroads north of the farm of La Haye Sainte. Here it took the Ohain-road. However, while the brigade of Saksen Weimar proceeded over this road, the brigade of Van Bylandt turned right and took a position in line on the southern slope of the ridge, having its right flank near the farm of La Haye Sainte.³ It was during this operation that the French vanguard was developing and the French bombardment started (see below).⁴

The brigade was covered by a chain of 400 skirmishers about 150 to 200 paces in front, in the low ground. On the right of the brigade was the battery of Bijleveld, covering the Brussels-road and the adjoining fields. In marching into this position, the section led by 2nd captain Koopman had led the way.⁵

The units of the brigade of Saksen Weimar took their bivouacs to the north of Papelotte, La Haye and Smohain. These bivouacs were covered by pickets and small garrisons in Papelotte and Smohain.⁶

On the 16th of June most of the men of the Nassau Volunteer Jäger company had expended all of their ammunition and all these were sent back to Brussels by their commander, captain Bergmann on the evening of the 17th of June. They were led there by 1st lieutenant Von Bierbrauer. Bergmann kept 10-12 of his men, as well as 2nd lieutenant Schnabelius, and it were these men only who fought during the battle the next day.⁷

On a height approximately 500 meter northeast of La Haye the section Winssinger of the foot-battery Stevenart (two guns), as well as one gun of the horse-battery of Bijleveld, led by sergeant Koppij, took up a position.⁸

The cavalry brigade of Van Merlen probably arrived in the position shortly after the 2nd infantry division of the army of the Netherlands. Her bivouac was established west of the Brussels-road, near the farm of Mont Saint Jean.⁹

The brigade of Von Kruse was in rear of the division of Alten, between the roads leading to Nivelles and Brussels.¹⁰

The Brunswick contingent had a bivouac between Merbraine and the Nivelles-road, having the advance guard battalion to the right, on the other side of Merbraine.¹¹ The 2nd and 3rd battalions of light infantry, having formed the rearguard, spent the night near the 3rd division of Alten and rejoined the corps the next morning.¹²

It was near La Belle Alliance that the 1st British division left the great road to take a small track which led to the left to the fields north of Gomont.

Initially, the division took up a position in rear of the hollow road which ran immediately in rear of Goumont. Shortly after, however, the division proceeded to a position in rear of the Ohain-road, east of the Nivelles-road.¹³

It was around 6 p.m. that the four light companies of the division (those led by Lord Saltoun, lieutenant Ellison, captain Macdonell and lieutenant Evelyn) got the instruction to occupy Goumont and its enclosures, with strict orders to bring the post into a state of defence.¹⁴

Supported by a few sections of sappers (like those of the 2nd battalion of light infantry KGL¹⁵) the buildings were entrenched, platforms erected, loopholes cut and entrances barricaded.¹⁶

Especially the south-gate was barricaded and some of the plankings above it were taken out to be able to fire on the enemy whenever this would be needed.

These activities were all carried out under the protection of the pickets of the 1st regiment Foot Guards and those of the 13rd regiment Light Dragoons, led by lieutenant Drought. The large door at the west side, as well as the north-gate, were kept open.

The two light companies of the brigade of Maitland occupied the orchard, while those of Byng came into the buildings and the garden.¹⁷ During the night there may have been French outposts in the edge of wood of Goumont, but they must have left it again in the morning of the 18th.¹⁸

In taking the Ohain-road, the division of Picton and the brigade of Best took up a position north of the ridge, their right leaning against the Brussels road and having pickets on the southern side of the ridge.¹⁹ The artillery must have been on the ridge in rear of the Ohain-road, but exact positions are unknown.²⁰

As the brigade of colonel Von Vincke approached the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean, and only after repeated requests for instructions of its commander, it was ordered to take up a position on the extreme left wing of the army.²¹ The 5th British division was placed per brigades.²²

Immediately to the east of Cooke's division came Alten's 3rd division. Its bivouacs were most probably placed just south of the Ohain-road on the brow of the ridge and reached up to the Brussels road.²³

Later that evening, the 2nd battalion of light infantry KGL was ordered to form the garrison in the farm of La Haye Sainte and when they got there they immediately started to entrench it.²⁴

On orders of the duke of Wellington, the grenadier-company of the 5th line battalion KGL was detached from its battalion to assist to keep open the Brussels road and therefore didn't participate in the battle.²⁵

After having reached the ridge of Mont Saint Jean, the different infantry units of the extreme rearguard (except for those of the Brunswickers – see above) rejoined their respective divisions.

1. Journal of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25
Diary of Van Saksen Weimar. In: ThHStAW, Grossherzogliches Hausarchiv A, XXIV 30, p.192-194

General major Van Bijlandt in a letter dated 31st May 1841. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.6

Bernard van Saksen Weimar in a letter dated 29th August 1841. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.5

The fusilier S.A. of the militia battalion nr.7 mentions a position towards Braine l'Alleud and Lembeek [!]. Cf. Herinneringen uit mijn tienjarige militaire loopbaan

2nd lieutenant Koopman of the horse artillery led by captain Bijleveld claims he had a position at about 800 paces from the Brussels-road, with a section led by him in front and which was covered by a company of chasseurs.

Cf. his letter to captain Van Löben Sels. In: VLS, nr.II.no.4.9

2. Cf. journal of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

It was major Van Gorkum, an officer of the general staff, who actually led the division to the left wing and who placed the battalions there. He did so in accordance of orders as issued by sir Charles Broke. Yet, he claims Perponcher had initially even passed the village of Waterloo. Cf. his account (memoirs, p.78-81 in private collection).

The veteran called Rem (7th battalion of national militia) says it was at 4 p.m.

2nd lieutenant Koopman (horse battery Bijleveld) claims it was in the late in the afternoon.

Cf. his letter. In: VLS, II.no.4.9

Bernard van Saksen Weimar claims the troops had their bivouac here for 2-3 hours, but this must have been at least 4 hours. Cf. his letter dated 29th August 1841 to captain Van Löben Sels. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.5

3. Journal of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijevelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F..de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom. La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.326

Scheltens

J. Rem (7th battalion of national militia). In: Aantekeningen van een veteraan dato 16 Augustus 1815

Fusilier S.A. (7th battalion of national militia). In: Herinneringen uit mijn tienjarige militaire loopbaan

4. Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijevelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F..de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom. La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.326

J. Rem (7th battalion of national militia). In: Aantekeningen van een veteraan etc.

It must have been between 6.30 and 7 p.m. - Rem claims it was about 5.30 p.m.

⁵ Account of 2nd lieutenant Koopman. In: VLS, nr. II.no.4.9

Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijevelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F..de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom. La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.326-328

One of the companies put out as skirmishers in front was the one of the 7th battalion of national militia led by captain Van Bronkhorst. Cf. his letter dated 9th July 1815. In: *Ons leger* (1983) nr.6 p.32-38

J. Rem (7th battalion of national militia). In: *Aantekeningen van een veteraan* etc.

⁶ At least one company of the 2nd battalion Oranje-Nassau was in Smohain that night. Cf. Eberhard, C.F. *Nassauische Erinrungen an Waterloo*. In: *Der Uhrturm*. Heft 27, juli 1940 p.552

Captain Von Rettberg states the 3rd battalion Nassau had on its right the 2nd battalion Nassau and further to its left the 1st battalion Orange-Nassau, but he doesn't specify exactly where. Cf. his report. In: *Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Belle Alliance* etc. p.210

⁷ Cf. Account of captain Bergmann. In: Domarus, M. *Die Oranien-Nassauische Freiwillige Jägerkompagnie* etc. In: *Nassauische Heimatblätter*, 1915 p. 19

Odd enough, it is captain Bergmann himself who claims in a report dated 20th of July 1815 that his unit was ordered into the front line on the evening of the 17th of June. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in: HSA, Abt.202 nr.1163

8. Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: *Historisch verhaal* etc. In: Bas, F..de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom. *La campagne de 1815 Vol.III* p.326

Bernard van Saksen Weimar. Cf.his letter dated 29th August 1841. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.5

2nd lieutenant Koopman of the battery of Bijleveld. In: VLS. Nr.II.no.4.9

Colonel Sattler. In: HHW, VIII Nassau, Kriegsdepartement nr.532

Major Rettberg (3rd battalion 2nd regiment Nassau. In: HHW, VIII Nassau, Kriegsdepartement nr.532

Report of Von Kruse. In: HHW, VIII Nassau, Kriegsdepartement nr.532

Report of lieutenant colonel Grunebosch from 1841. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.7

According to major Von Rettberg the 2nd battalion Nassau was to the right of the 3rd battalion; the 1st battalion Oranje-Nassau was further to the left. HHW, VIII Nassau, Kriegsdepartement nr,532

According to major general Von Vincke the farm of Papelotte would not have been occupied during the night, as this one was plundered by as the allies as well as the French. NHH, Des 41 E, XXI k, nr.3

Lieutenant Winssinger himself states he was sent to the extreme left flank via the Ohain-road – however, as a result of the bad road, it was only between 11 p.m. and midnight that he took up a position there. In his opinion, the third gun came on the late morning of the 18th. In: Eenens, A. *Dissertation sur la participation* etc. p. 52

Eenens, by the way, doesn't give any information where the original report can be found.

Bernard van Saksen Weimar confirms the number of three guns which were led by lieutenant Winssinger. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.5

Contradictory to this is the fact that major Van Opstall mentions the presence of eight guns in the battery of Bijleveld (of which six to the right and two to the left). Cf. VLS, nr.II no.4.1

Lieutenant Hay (12th regiment light dragoons) mentions the presence of a battery of artillery of the army of the Netherlands (of which the members were clothed in dark uniforms) which would have been directed against the arriving dragoons of Vandeleur that evening. Cf. Reminiscences under Wellington p.172

9. Norden, J. Het leven en de lotgevallen van de gebroeders Jan en Anthonie Norden p.396. Jan Norden was a brigadier in the 6th regiment of hussars.

10. Major Lautour (23rd regiment light dragoons). In: BL, Add.Ms.34.706 p.316-320
Diary of the 1st Nassau regiment. In: KA, Sekt.II, Kap.XII, nr.3663

11. Schneidawind, F. Der letzte Feldzug etc. p.83

Cf. Wachholtz, F.von Geschichte des herzoglich Braunschweigischen Armee-Corps etc. p.37
Colonel Von Herzberg, of the Brunswick staff. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.23-55

According to major Von Dreves, member of the battalion Osnabrück of the brigade H.Halkett, during the night Merbraine was occupied by a unit of [Brunswick] uhlans and that two battalions of Brunswick line-infantry as well as some artillery were to the east of the village.

In: NHH, Des 41 E. XXI k, nr.2

¹² Cf. Wachholtz, F.von Geschichte des herzoglich Braunschweigischen Armee-Corps etc. p.39

Report of major Von Wachholtz, dated 16th September 1841. Here he adds that both these battalions had reached Mont Saint Jean together with the brigade of Von Dörnberg. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in: NSA, VI HS.18 nr.8

Colonel Von Herzberg, of the Brunswick staff. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.23-55

Captain Von Dreves of the Osnabrück battalion (H.Halkett's brigade) claims Brunswick uhlans were at Merbraine, with 2 battalions of line-infantry and artillery of the same contingent to the right of this village. In: NHA. Hann.41.XXI, nr.151 p.70-72

Major Meijer (4th battalion of the line KGL) confirms Brunswick cavalry was in his rear, while his unit stood near Merbraine. In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.270-273

13. Lieutenant Powell (1st Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.143-148

Lieutenant Pratt (30th regiment). In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.88-94

Ensign Short (2nd battalion of Coldstream Guards). Cf. his letter dated 19th June 1815.. In: NAM, nr.7702-5

Ensign Ch.Lake (3rd Foot Guards) confirms a position above Goumont. Cf. his journal in www.1815.ltd.uk Original in Regimental Headquarters Scots Guards.

Ensign Tighe (1st regiment of Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.83-86

He depicts in his plan the 2nd and 3rd battalion in column near the Nivelles-road.

¹⁴ Ensign R.Batty (1st Foot Guards). Cf. his letter dated 22nd June 1815. In: private collection.p.10

15.Major Graeme (2nd battalion of light infantry KGL). In: BL, Add.ms.34.707 p.497-508

16.Captain Fairfield (3rd regiment Foot Guards) was in the vegetable-garden of Goumont and says that the platforms were supported by stones which were taken from the wall between the farm and the garden. Also, a window had been cut in the southern wall of the house of the gardner in order to have a passage into the garden. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.129-131, plus sketch.

Sir A.Woodford adds here that the platforms had been erected with planks, panels, shutters and doors. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.478-479

The fact that Goumont was entrenched is confirmed by the Spanish general Alava in his report to the Secertray of State, P.Cevallos, dated 20 june 1815. In: Kelly, Chr. - A full and circumstantial account of the memorable battle of Waterloo etc.p.64-67

According to an anonymous witness the loopholes in the garden wall were only cut on the morning of the 18th of June, around 10 a.m. Cf. Note in: Papers relating to the battle of Waterloo, BL Add.ms.19.590 f.31

17.Lieutenant Ellison (1st Foot Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.1-2

Colonel Woodford (Coldstream Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.490-493

Ensign Gouch (light company, 2nd battalion Coldstream Guards). In: BL, Add.ms.34.708 p.299-302

According to captain Fairfield (3rd regiment Foot Guards) the light company of the 3rd regiment led by captain Evelyn occupied the vegetable-garden. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.129-131

In reading the account however of private Clay (light company of the 2nd battalion of the 3rd Foot Guards) one understands that this company was posted in a shallow ditch at the southern hedge of the orchard. Cf. private Clay (2nd battalion 3rd Foot Guards). In: In his recollections etc. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in Regimental Headquarters Scots Guards.

MacKinnon is somewhat unclear about the situation of the light companies. Initially, he places those of Byng in the orchard where they were soon relieved by those of Maitland. He then situates them in the wood, but also in and on the right of the chateau.

In: Origin and services etc. p.214

18.Lieutenant colonel Woodford claims it to have been logical that the French were in the possession of the wood all night. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.490-493

According to private Clay (of the light company of the 2nd battalion of the 3rd Guards, at the southern hedge of the orchard) the enemy was "close at hand". Cf. Private Clay (2nd battalion 3rd Foot Guards). In his recollections etc. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in Regimental

Headquarters Scots Guards.

Chambers claims the wood was in Anglo-Netherlands-German hands during the night. Cf. Chambers, B. The men of the 1st Foot Guards p.21

According to Adkin, there was a clash between the Foot Guards and a French patrol around 7.30 p.m. and another incursion at 2 a.m. into the wood which was driven off by a picquet under captain Evelyn - this would mean the wood was not in French hands during the night. Cf. Adkin, M. The Waterloo companion p.337

19. Journal of sergeant Robertson. In: With Napoleon at Waterloo etc. p.150

Reports of major general Best, indicating that his troops advanced on the early morning of the 18th of June. So this means they had a more rearward position on the night of the 17th of June. This also must have been the case for the units of Von Vincke. In: HstA. XXI k nr.2

This is corroborated by the account of adjudant Von Berckefeldt (battalion Münden) who states his brigade was on the slope of the ridge, in rear of the Ohain-road, about 800 meters east of the Brussels-road. In: Geschichte des Königlich Hannoverschen Landwehr p.223

Lieutenant Kincaid (1st battalion 95th regiment) states that his battalion came in the second line, to its right leaning on the Brussels road. In: Adventures etc. p.328

Captain Caddell (28th regiment) places the bivouac of his battalion in the northeast corner of the Brussels road and the Ohain-road. In: BL, Add.ms.34.705 p.217-222

20. According to captain Von Rettberg it was not easy to get a position due to the fact that the enemy was harrasing the rearguard. Cf. his report in HstA 41 E, XXI k. nr.2

According to lieutenant Heise of the same battery, it had left two guns in the rearguard; these guns rejoined the battery later that day, but before it took up its position of Mont Saint Jean. In: BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.375-376

21. Cf. the report of colonel Von Vincke, dated 7th January 1825. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Belle Alliance etc. p.94 In all probability, the brigade had the instruction to go to Waterloo.

22. Cf. report of major general Best. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Belle Alliance etc. p.82

23. Captain Von Scriba (battalion Bremen, brigade Kielmansegge). In: NHH, Des 41 E, XXI k, nr.2

Von Scriba adds that his battalion set out a sentry of 2 subalterns and 40 men, led by lieutenant Büttner. Cf. Scriba, C.von Das leichte Bataillon etc. p.87

Note about the KGL and Hanoverian troops in the battle of Waterloo. In: NHH, Des 41 E, XXI, k nr.6

Sergeant Morris (2nd battalion 73rd regiment of foot). Recollections p.73

Journal of the 5th line-battalion KGL. In: NHH, Des.38 D, A.1. nr.7

According to lieutenant colonel Von Linsingen this battalion was in rear of the farm of La

Haye Sainte, near the Brussels-road. In: NHH, Des.41 E. XXI k, nr.3

The fact that the brigade of Von Ompteda was on the right of and close to the road is confirmed by captain Von Brandis, aide de camp of Von Ompteda. In: Dehnel, H. Erinnerungen deutscher Officiere etc. p.285 He asserts von Ompteda himself spent the night in the farm of La Haye Sainte.

Lieutenant Pratt (2nd battalion, 30th regiment). BL. Add.Ms.nr.34.705 p.88-94

The 2nd battalion / 33th regiment was placed as a picket in front of the division of Picton to the east of the Brussels road. Its sentries must have been down the valley, near the French ones. Cf. lieutenant Hope Pattison (2nd battalion, 33rd regiment). In: Recollections etc. p.16

Also in: BL. Add.Ms.34.707 p.509-512

Ensign W.Thain (33rd regiment). In his diary, in: Duke of Wellington's regiment archive, Halifax. Lieutenant colonel Elphinstone (2nd battalion, 33rd regiment. BL. Add.Ms. 34.703.86

The battalion of Bremen (brigade Kielmansegge) had in a picket composed of lieutenant Büttner with two NCO's and 40 men in the hollow near the farm of La Haye Sainte. Cf. Report of lieutenant colonel Von Müller. In: NHH, Des.41 E, XXI k, nr.2

For the fact that the division was most probably placed in front of the Ohain-road and on the brow of the ridge, cf.

FitzRoy Somerset's account. In: NAM, Book of manuscript copies of Waterloo letters. Nr.6507-1

Ensign Wheatley (5th battalion of the line KGL). In: Hibbert, Chr. (ed) , The Wheatley diary; a journal and sketchbook kept during the Peninsular war and the Waterloo campaign p.64

24. Cf. Major Baring. In: Erzählung der Theilnahme des 2ten leichten Bataillons der Königlich Deutschen Legion an der Schlacht von Waterloo p.72

That night, all the hay from the barn must have been used by the men to establish their bivouacs; wood was also removed to get fires going and cattle was slaughtered.

Lieutenant Biedermann (2nd battalion light infantry KGL). In: Von Malta bis Waterloo p.181 Two companies were placed in the orchard that evening. Cf. Lindau, F. Ein Waterloo-Kämpfer p.129

25. Journal of this battalion. In: NHH, Des.38 D, A.1. nr.7

Ompteda, L.Fr. von Ein hannoversch-englischer Offizier vor hundert Jahren etc. p.285