

## **The passage of the valley of the Lasne by the Prussian units on the 18th of June 1815.**

According to Von Bülow himself it was the information of major Von Falckenhausen which led Blücher to decide to cross the valley of the Lasne and to occupy the Bois de Paris.<sup>1</sup>

Others believe it was major Von Lützow's information which led Blücher to do so.<sup>2</sup>

From shortly before 10 a.m. onwards, Von Lützow had, accompanied by lieutenant Von Massow and a detachment of the 2nd regiment of Silesian hussars (<sup>3</sup>), observed the positions of Wellington and Napoleon from a covered position in the western edge of the Bois de Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Von Lützow reported to Blücher that the Bois de Paris was not occupied and that the French right flank wasn't secured at all. Before he did so, Von Lützow left lieutenant Von Massow with the hussars behind in the wood.

Some patrols had crossed the valley of the Lasne. One of them reported:

*Der Weg nach La Haye durch Lasne führend geht ziemlich sanft herunter das diesseitige Ufer ist bei weitem steiler. Der Weg ist, so lang das Defilée, mit 20 Fuss hohen Wenden eingeschlossen. ... Der Bach der Lasne ist nur unbedeutend 2 bis 3 Fuss tief.*

[..] Block<sup>5</sup>

It was Von Valentini himself, who, accompanied by a farmer and a private called Dieterichs, also acquainted himself with the fact that both the village of Lasne and the Bois de Paris were not occupied by the enemy.<sup>6</sup>

After the 2nd regiment of Silesian hussars had entered Chapelle Saint Lambert, it detached one squadron to Lasne to verify whether it was occupied.

Further to the rear, the remainder of the regiment advanced towards Couture.

As soon as it became clear that Lasne itself wasn't occupied, Von Bülow had it occupied by two companies of the 2nd battalion of the 18th regiment, led by major Von Koschkul.<sup>7</sup>

The advance from Chapelle Saint Lambert was not only screened by the cavalry towards Couture and by the two companies towards Lasne, also two battalions of the 3rd regiment of Silesian Landwehr infantry under the command of major Von Krahn covered it towards the south. They took up a covered position in a small wood to the south of Chapelle Saint Lambert.

Towards 2 p.m. the vanguard of the 4th corps slowly started to descend the valley of the Lasne, starting off from Chapelle Saint Lambert, and to take up a position in rear of the Bois de Paris.<sup>8</sup>

Von Grolmann now ordered the battalions of major Von Koschkull and the 2nd regiment of Silesian hussars forward to occupy the Bois de Paris.<sup>9</sup> By now, the brigade of Von Losthin was reinforced by the horse battery nr.11 and the 2nd Neumark Landwehr cavalry of Von Watzdorff, as it lacked cavalry after detaching Von Falckenhausen.

Both battalions which had been detached to the south were pulled in again.

The first brigade to enter the wood was the one of Von Losthin and then Von Hiller's; then the reserve-cavalry followed.

As the 13th brigade of Von Hacke had halted somewhere between Lasne and the Bois de Paris, Prince Wilhelm was allowed to proceed further towards the front and to take up a position in

rear of the 16th brigade.<sup>10</sup> The reason for doing so must have been that Blücher would have all weapons available in sufficient numbers during the battle.

As Von Hiller was in the immediate rear of Von Losthin, this brigade must only have halted at Chapelle Saint Lambert for about one hour.<sup>11</sup>

Hacke's brigade must have left Chapelle Saint Lambert around 2.30 p.m. Having passed through Lasne it halted for a short time and then waited at the Bois de Paris for the brigade of Von Ryssel to come up (this brigade would have left Chapelle Saint Lambert around 4 p.m.). Von Hacke arrived at the east side of the wood around 5 p.m.

At that time the 13th brigade entered the wood and the 14th brigade followed in its rear; both brigades arrived at the battlefield between 5.30 and 6 p.m.

Von Ryssel had been delayed by the presence of the reserve-artillery in front and by the fact that it carried the baggage of the whole corps.<sup>12</sup>

Somehow it doesn't become clear when the reserve-artillery arrived at the battlefield: though it followed the 13th brigade, it seems as if the 14th brigade had overtaken it in order to reach the wood immediately after Von Hacke.<sup>13</sup>

The area.

The Lasne streams north-east; its valley had a plateau to the left on which the Bois de Paris [<sup>14</sup>; on its right hand side were the heights on which the village of Chapelle Saint Lambert is located.

The road which led from Chapelle Saint Lambert to the battlefield was a sand-track which led to the hamlet of Le Culot (at one kilometer of Chapelle Saint Lambert). Then the road continued along the farm De la Porte Verte (to the left of the road) and the chateau De la Kelle (to the right [<sup>15</sup>), and then to go down into the low grounds of the Lasne. Here, the road crossed the Lasne stream by a stone bridge.<sup>16</sup>

Because of the continuous rain during the previous night, the road was in a dreadful state. On top of that, the Lasne had swollen and the low ground was marshy.

From the low ground, the road continued to the left, on the height, towards the Bois de Paris by a steep slope. There it led through the wood to the battlefield.<sup>17</sup>

On regular intervals the road was reinforced by tree-trunks, placed horizontally. The distance between Chapelle Saint Lambert to the east side of the Bois de Paris was 2.5 kilometers.

It was over this road that Blücher led his men towards the battlefield.<sup>18</sup> The Prussians had a very tough job to cross the Lasne: it was not only the area itself, but the men were tired from the previous march. To get the heavy material forward was particularly difficult, though Blücher in person would have encouraged his men.<sup>19</sup>

The brigade of Von Losthin had taken up a position in rear of the Bois de Paris [<sup>20</sup>] by 3.30 p.m., it must have been between 3.30 and 4 p.m. that the first units entered the wood.<sup>21</sup>

As they arrived they were carefully placed in the wood, the one of Von Losthin first, then the one of Von Hiller. They must have done so as silent as possible.<sup>22</sup>

The brigade of Von Losthin came to the right of the road which leads to Plancenoit [<sup>23</sup>] and the one of Von Hiller to its left; both brigades had their infantry in closed columns.

The reserve-cavalry had passed the reserve-artillery as well as the brigade of Von Hacke.<sup>24</sup> By

doing so it had got to the rear of the 16th brigade [<sup>25</sup>] and now it took up a position behind the wood, ready to follow. Prince Wilhelm was missing his 1st regiment of Silesian and the 2nd Pommeranian Landwehr, but now the 2nd Silesian hussars as well as the 2nd Neumark Landwehr cavalry regiment (both from the 16th brigade) joined him in exchange. They took up their positions in front of the other regiments of the reserve-cavalry.<sup>26</sup>

By 4.30 p.m. Von Bülow had his 15th and 16th brigade, as well as his reserve cavalry, available at the Bois de Paris.<sup>27</sup>

To prevent anybody from entering or leaving the wood, all entrances of the wood were guarded by outposts.<sup>28</sup>

Blücher and Von Gneisenau themselves had gone to a position on the western edge of the wood to observe the enemy.<sup>29</sup> From this post, the French right wing, centre as well as the reserves near La Belle Alliance could be observed.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, Von Bülow himself had also ridden to the western part of the Bois de Paris and observed the situation.

Blücher sent him the order to attack through Von Nostitz but Von Bülow sent Nostitz back with the remark that he had only two infantry-brigades and the reserve-cavalry available. Nostitz was however immediately sent back again to Bülow by Blücher with the explicit order to attack. The remaining troops of Von Bülow and Pirch I got instructions to speed up their march towards the battlefield.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report of Von Bülow. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III.p.524

2. Damitz, K.von - Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.256

3.Damitz, K.von - Geschichte des Feldzugs etc.287

Colonel Von Hiller confirms that a party of this regiment had found the wood unoccupied earlier that day. In: Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

4.Damitz, K.von - Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.287

Lieutenant Ingilby (battery Gardiner) mentions in his diary the presence at 11 a.m. of a Prussian picket near some trees; this may have been the party of major Von Lützow. In: RAI, nr.MD 797

The fact that Von Lützow was there by 10 a.m. means that he was sent out even before the vanguard of Von Bülow was at Chapelle Saint Lambert.

<sup>5</sup> Cf.Report of Block (former Kriegsarchiv). In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.623

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.623-624

7. Cf. Wedell, Von - Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 18.Infanterie Regiments p.164  
Pflugk Harttung, J.von Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.618

8. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.625

Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.377

Colonel Loebell adds that his troops rested after they had put down their muskets. Cf. Account of colonel Von Loebell, commander ad interim of the 15th brigade. In: MWB 1904 nr.29 p.738

9. Von Bülow. In: Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommerson. La campagne de 1815 aux Pays Bas. Vol.III p.524

Nostitz, Von Das Tagebuch etc. p.41

Cf. Wedell, Von Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 18.Infanterie Regiments p.164

The fact that at least a part of the said cavalry-regiment occupied the forest is confirmed by colonel Von Hiller. Cf. Hiller, Von - Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

10.Also see: Hiller, Von - Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

11. This would mean a halt from 1 till 2 p.m. This vanguard must have been waiting from 10.30 a.m. till 2 p.m.

Colonel Von Hiller doesn't mention a long halt at Chapelle Saint Lambert, but says that the brigade of Von Losthin was far ahead. Cf. Hiller, Von Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.240 and 242

<sup>12</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.629

The report of the battery nr.13 indicates that this battery was taken to the front of the brigade the moment it had passed the village of Lasne. Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.629

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance. P.628-629

Von Pflugk Harttung cites major Von Ziegler of the reserve artillery that it followed the main body of the corps and that its column was very long and broken up.

According to Hofschroer, the artillery followed the 13th brigade, having the 12p. in the lead. Cf. Hofschroer, P. 1815 The Waterloo campaign. The German victory p.98

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the Bois de Paris, see a separate note.

15.This very impressive farm dates from before 1550. Other names are "de la Kelle", "Delle Kelle " or "La Kelle". This name is derived from the name of Van der Kelen, a family which was the owner of the farm for a long time. Cf. Tarliers, G. en A. Wauters La Belgique ancienne etc.

Of the farm De la porte verte only some ruins of the entrance, as well as some of the foundations of the facade remain. Though the farm still existed in 1896, there is no clue when the farm has been demolished. Cf. Navez, L. Waterloo (1896), map

16.According to Logie there was only a passage for pedestrians; waggons had to wade through. Cf. Logie, J. Waterloo, l'évitable défaite p.166

17.Between Chapelle Saint Lambert-Lasne there was a difference of 30 meters in height and on the distance Lasne – western edge of the Bois de Paris it was 50 meter; both distances are 1500 meters.

18.Tarliers and Wauters claim that the Prussian officers were looking for the name of " Les Quatre Hurées " (pronounced as " Caturia " or " Caturiaux ") (500 meter south of Le Culot), but it wasn't here that the troops passed. Cf.Tarliers, J. en A.Wauters. La Belgique ancienne etc.

Aerts asserts that Siborne claims that Von Bülow crossed the Lasne in two columns: one through Lasne and the other 2300 meters further north, at Renipont.

On the other bank, both columns would again have merged towards the battlefield.

Aerts has his doubts about this claim, but at the same time remarks that the local tradition at Renipont claims a passage of Prussian troops. In: Waterloo. Opérations etc. p.210

Apart from the fact that there is in Siborne's work no reference to such a statement, this movement would only delay the advance more, so I do not believe the Prussians did so.

19.Blücher would have said: "Vorwärts Kinder ! Es heisst wohl es geht nicht, aber es muss

gehen. Ich habe es ja meinem Bruder Wellington versprochen. Hört Ihr wohl ? Ihr wollt doch nicht dass Ich wortbrüchig werden soll ? "

Cf. Die Befreiung, 1813-1814-1815 p.478

Colonel Von Hiller confirms that men of the infantry helped their comrades of the artillery to get the guns forward.Cf. Hiller, Von Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

The fact that the Lasne defile was hard to cross, particularly for the artillery, is confirmed by prince Thurn und Taxis. Cf. Memoirs of prince Von Thurn und Taxis, Bavarian plenipotentiary at the headquarters of Blücher. In: Aus drei Feldzügen etc. p.331-332

<sup>20</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.626

21. Colonel Von Hiller says his brigade got the order to halt at 3 p.m. Then his brigade had arrived at the Bois de Paris. Cf. Hiller, Von Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242.

4 p.m. is confirmed by:

Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.378

Siborne, W. History of the war in France etc. Vol.II p.127.

<sup>22</sup> Gneisenau in a letter to his wife, dated 19th June 1815 and in one to Hardenberg, dated 22nd June 1815. In: Delbrück, H.Das Leben etc. Vol.IV p.525, 531

<sup>23</sup> About the exact formation of the brigade in the wood is conflicting information: on the hand it is stated that the brigade advanced in two lines – in the first one were the 1st and 3rd battalion of the 18th regiment as well as the 1st and 2nd battalion of the 3rd Silesian Landwehrintantry regiment, and in the second line the 4th Silesian Landwehrintantry regiment. Cf. Ber.38, the diary of the brigade. Cf. Wedell, Von Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 18.Infanterie Regiments p.164

The other source states that the battalions got the order to form columns and to send skirmishers in front to occupy the inner edge of the wood (Ber.3 of the 18th regiment.52). Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.626

The 2nd battalion of the 4th regiment of Silesian Landwehr was sent to the left part of the wood to guard it against a French flank attack. Cf. Diary of the 15th brigade in the former Kriegsarchiv, in: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.627

<sup>24</sup> Cf. diary of the 13th brigade in the former Kriegsarchiv. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.626

<sup>25</sup> Report of prince William of Prussia (V.I.E.35.81) in: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Von - Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.613

26.Nostitz, Von Das Tagebuch etc. p.41

Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.627

Hiller, Von Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

<sup>27</sup> Cf.Nostitz. Das Tagebuch p.40

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Report nr.VI.E.35.113 of the former Kriegsarchiv. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.626

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.631

30.Hiller, Von - Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.631

Thurn und Taxis. Aus drei Feldzüge p.333-334

<sup>31</sup> Thurn und Taxis - Aus drei Feldzüge p.332

Nostitz, Von - Tagebuch p.40