

French headquarters.

At dawn, the first thing Napoleon had on his mind was to make sure whether Wellington still held his position. From several reports it soon became clear that he did.¹

As a result Napoleon issued – through Sault – from Le Caillou the following order for the necessary preparations; by then it may have been about 5 a.m.²

Au quartier-général impériale, 18 juin, 1815

L'Empereur ordonne que l'armée soit disposée à attaquer l'ennemi à neuf heures du matin.

MM. les commandants des corps d'armée rallieront leurs troupes; feront mettre les armes en état, et permettront que les soldats fassent la soupe; ils feront aussi manger les soldats, afin qu'à neuf heures précises chacun soit prêt et puisse être en bataille avec son artillerie et ambulances, à la position de bataille que l'Empereur a indiquée par son ordre d'hier soir.

MM. les Lieutenants-généraux commandant les corps d'armées d'infanterie et de cavalerie enverront sur-le-champ des officiers au Major-Général, pour faire connaître leur position et porter des ordres.

*Le maréchal d'Empire, major-général
Duc de Dalmatie³*

Apparently, Napoleon felt it was possible to start the attack by 9 a.m. but in the following hours of the early morning more information must have dropped in at central headquarters about the state of the ground.⁴ After the drenching rain of the night, roads and fields were sodden and unsuitable for moving artillery.

The mud was one of the subjects the duke of Bassano, seated at Le Caillou, wrote about to the minister of foreign affairs at a time that the situation was developing:

Son Excellence le ministre des affaires étrangères. De la ferme de Caillou près Plancenoit, le 18 juin 1815

Monsieur le duc,

J'ai reçu les deux tables de chiffre d'après la méthode de M. Henrichs que Votre Excellence a bien voulu m'envoyer. Je la prie de vouloir bien me faire connaître si elle a eu la complaisance d'envoyer une table pareille à M. le comte Berlier pour ma correspondance avec lui. Cette correspondance sera très suivie et ce serait un avantage que de pouvoir se servir alternativement du chiffre ordinaire et du chiffre nouveau.

Dans la situation actuelle de l'armée, les communications sont faciles d'un corps à l'autre, mais cet état de choses changera vraisemblablement bientôt. S.M. ordonne de me pourvoir d'un certain nombre de tables que je puisse donner au major général pour cette correspondance. J'ai l'honneur de vous prier de m'envoyer d'abord six, puis six autres et d'ordonner qu'elle soit différente de celle que je viens de recevoir. Peut être même conviendrait-il qu'il n'y eut pas plus de trois tables semblables. Le chiffre d'un des corps d'armée peut tomber entre les mains de l'ennemi et trahirait tous les autres.

La campagne a commencé par un très beau succès. La victoire de Ligny sous Fleurus est d'une très haute importance. La droite et le centre ont écrasé l'élite de l'armée Prussienne. Le moral de cette armée s'en ressentira longtemps. La gauche n'a pas obtenus des résultats aussi décisifs mais ils ont aussi leur importance.

Lord Wellington commandait en personne au combat des 4 chemins, entre Sombreffe et Nivelles. Les anglais, surtout les écossais ont été très maltraités. On évalue leurs tués et leurs blessés à 4 mille hommes. Notre armée est aussi bonne que dans nos temps les plus prospères. Quoique le temps nous contrarie, nous aurons bientôt d'autres nouvelles à vous annoncer. À l'exception du général Letort, qui a été grièvement blessé, dès le début et avant les affaires d'importance toutes les personnes que Votre Excellence connaît à l'armée se portent bien.

*Veillez agréer etc.
Le duc de Bassano*⁵

It may have been at Le Caillou that a local guide, with the name of Jean Baptiste Decoster, was led to Napoleon. Decoster was a Flemish peasant, owing a tiny farm on the east-side of the Brussels-road, between La Belle Alliance and the farm of Rossomme, about 800 meter north of this farm, in the corner of the road and the track leading to Plancenoit. His capacity of speaking French must have been poor.

Having fled for the French army on the evening of the 17th of June to the forests of the abbey of Aywiers, Decoster and his family had spent the night there. The next morning he visited the church at Plancenoit and from there he went to his see his brother in Plancenoit. Here he was asked by French officers whether he knew the surroundings. Having said he did, he was sent to Napoleon, accompanied by a letter of recommendation.^{6 - 7}

It may have been towards 7.30 a.m. that Napoleon sat down for breakfast at Le Caillou with some members of the imperial staff, like Bertrand, Soult, the duke of Bassano, his brother Jérôme, Drouot, Ney and others.⁸ It is unclear what has been discussed here, but there is no doubt that one of the main subjects must have been the time needed for the troops to arrive in the front line, the time needed for the fields to dry up and the situation of the enemy.⁹

It led Napoleon to see about all these for himself and after finishing his breakfast he accordingly left Le Caillou, followed by his staff. By then it may have been about 8 a.m.¹⁰ From Le Caillou, he advanced over the chaussée as far as La Belle Alliance and possibly a bit beyond, to the line of skirmishers.¹¹ From here he assured himself about the enemy's presence and gave colonel Haxo, commander of the engineers the instruction to find out about any entrenchments in Wellington's position.¹²

As Napoleon was near La Belle Alliance, he was in the immediate vicinity of the 1st corps taking up its positions and from there he probably went for some distance into its positions east of the Brussels road.¹³ Wherever Napoleon went, acclaims of those units in his immediate vicinity were obviously inevitable.

It has been suggested as if Napoleon, when leaving his post near La Belle Alliance for Rossomme, would have inspected his full army as it took up its positions.¹⁴ Yet, this so-called "inspection" was restricted to his passage to and from the centre of his frontline and - for some extent - to one for some distance into the 1st corps on the right wing.¹⁵

Napoleon must have been dressed in his usual outfit: the long grey greatcoat, the typical black cocked-hat and black boots. His uniform may have been the one of a colonel of *the chasseurs à cheval* of the Imperial Guard, i.e. a green dolman, with white facings and white trousers.¹⁶ He rode his charger called Marengo.¹⁷

As he was heading back, Napoleon could see for himself how the 2nd corps, the 6th corps and the Imperial Guard were advancing towards their positions in the order of battle as he had designed it the evening before.

The initial position chosen by the emperor for conducting the battle was not that far in front; it was one on a knoll just south of the farm of Rossomme, to the west of the road, and south of a

track which leads from there to the Bois du Caillou. Napoleon and his staff most probably reached it somewhere between 9.30 and 9.45 a.m.¹⁸

Napoleon and his staff installed themselves on the height as straw had been put on the ground, furniture had been installed and maps were unfolded.¹⁹ As Napoleon sat down, Soult was in his immediate vicinity and the others at some distance awaiting instructions.²⁰

Soon after his arrival, Napoleon saw reasons to write to Grouchy and on his instruction, Soult wrote him accordingly:

*En avant de la ferme du Caillou
Le 18 juin 1815, à 10 heures du matin*

Le maréchal duc de Dalmatie major général, à S.Ex.M.le Mal.Grouchy, à Gembloux ou en avant

Monsieur le Maréchal, l'Empereur a reçu votre premier rapport daté de Gembloux. Vous ne parlez à Sa Majesté que de deux colonnes prussiennes qui ont passé à Sauvenières et à Sart-à-Walhain; cependant des rapports disent qu'une troisième colonne, qui était assez forte a passé à Géry et à Gentinnes, se dirigeant sur Wavre. L'Empereur me charge de vous prévenir qu'en ce moment Sa Majesté va faire attaquer l'armée anglaise qui a pris position à Waterloo, près de la forêt de Soignes.

Ainsi Sa Majesté désire que vous dirigiez vos mouvements sur Wavre, afin de vous rapprocher de nous, vous mettre en rapport d'opérations et lier les communications, poussant devant vous les corps de l'armée prussienne, qui ont pris cette direction et qui auraient pu s'arrêter à Wavre, où vous devez arriver le plus tôt possible.

Vous ferez suivre les colonnes ennemies, qui ont pris sur votre droite, par quelques corps légers, afin d'observer leurs mouvements et ramasser leurs trainards.

Instruisez-moi immédiatement de vos dispositions et de votre marche ainsi que des nouvelles que vous avez sur les ennemis et ne négligez point de lier vos communications avec nous. L'Empereur désire avoir très souvent de vos nouvelles.

*Le maréchal d'Empire, Major général,
Duc de Dalmatie*²¹

The order was handed over to colonel Zenowicz and he left with the order around 10.30 a.m.²²

Being informed by Haxo about the absence of any entrenchments [²³] and after having observed how the weather was improving and how the different units of the army were still taking up their positions, Napoleon now dictated his plan for the battle which was written by Soult at 11 a.m. for Ney.²⁴ It reads:

Une fois que toute l'armée sera rangée en bataille, à peu près à 1 heure après midi, au moment où l'Empereur en donnera l'ordre au maréchal Ney, l'attaque commencera pour s'emparer du village de Mont Saint Jean où est l'intersection des routes. A cet effet, les batteries de 12 du 2me corps et celles du 6me se réuniront à celles du 1er corps.

Ces 24 bouches à feu tireront sur les troupes de Mont Saint Jean, et le comte d'Erlon commencera l'attaque, en portant en avant sa division de gauche et la soutenant, suivant les circonstances, par les divisions du 1er corps.

*Le 2e corps s'avancera à mesure pour garder la hauteur du comte d'Erlon. Les compagnies de sapeurs du 1er corps seront prêtes pour se barricader sur-le-champ à Mont Saint Jean.*²⁵

It must have been somewhere between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. that the report was delivered to Napoleon which Grouchy had written at 6 that morning from Gembloux.²⁶ In respect of the distance between Gembloux and Rossomme (30 kilometers) and the fact that the letter of Soult dated 10 a.m. doesn't refer to the report, it is highly probable that the time at which it could have reached Napoleon was probably between 10.30 a.m. and 11 a.m.²⁷

It was between 12.30 and 1 p.m. that Soult wrote his second order that day for Grouchy as a result of it. It reads:

Monsieur le maréchal, vous avez écrit à l'empereur ce matin à 6 h que vous marchiez sur Sart à Walhain. Donc votre projet était de vous porter à Corbaix et à Wavre. Ce mouvement est conforme aux dispositions de Sa Majesté que vous ont été communiquées. Cependant l'empereur m'ordonne de vous dire que vous devez toujours manoeuvrer dans notre direction et chercher à vous rapprocher de l'armée, afin que vous puissiez nous joindre avant qu'aucun corps puisse se mettre entre nous. Je ne vous indique pas de direction, c'est à vous à voir où nous sommes, pour vous régler en conséquence et pour lier nos communications ainsi que pour être toujours en mesure de tomber sur quelques troupes ennemies qui chercheraient à inquiéter notre droite, et les écraser. En ce moment la bataille est engagée sur la ligne de Waterloo

ce 18 à 1h après midi

*Maréchal Duc de Dalmatie*²⁸

Immediately after writing to Grouchy, at 1.15 p.m., Soult wrote to Davout the following letter:

du bivouac en avant de Caillou, le 18 juin, à une heure un quart

Au ministre de la guerre,

Monsieur le maréchal, nous nous battons en ce moment; l'ennemi est en position en avant de la foret de Soignes, son centre à Waterloo.

Nous allons consommer beaucoup de munitions; nous en avons usé une grande quantité à la bataille de Ligny. L'Empereur ordonne que vous en fassiez diriger sur les places du Nord, sur Avesnes, par des moyens accélérés. Ces munitions seront escortées d'Avesnes au moyen des bataillons qu'on a ordonné d'y établir pour l'escorte de prisonniers; la direction que vous devez leur faire donner est celle de Beaumont sur Charleroi pour rejoindre l'armée.

*Vous sentirez, monsieur le maréchal, combien il est important que les ordres de l'Empereur soient promptement exécutés. Je vous prie de me prévenir de ceux que vous donnerez à cet égard.*²⁹

Just as Soult was about finishing this second letter, a Prussian officer was led to the imperial headquarters. He had been taken prisoner by a French patrol and was the bearer of a letter of general Von Bülow to the duke of Wellington. It learned the French general staff that the 4th Prussian corps was supposed to fall upon the French right flank.³⁰

It was this information which led the staff to turn their binoculars towards Chapelle Saint Lambert. There is no indication, however, what they actually could see: the distance Rossomme - Chapelle Saint Lambert is, as the crow flies, seven kilometers.³¹ And in case something was to be seen near Chapelle Saint Lambert, one couldn't be sure what it was.

After an assessment of the situation and instigated by Napoleon, Soult decided to make some

additions to his letter to Grouchy dated 1 p.m. and which was still pending to be sent out. First of all, he rumpled the following words between the last line of his letter and his own signature, thereby specifying more precisely the position of the main army: “[*En ce moment la bataille est engagée sur la ligne de Waterloo*] *en avant de foret de Soignes, le centre de l'ennemi est à Mon Saint Jean, ainsi manœuvrez pour joindre notre droite.*”

Secondly, he added a post scriptum which reads:

*“P.S. Une lettre qui vient d’être interceptée porte que le Gal.Bülow doit attaquer notre flanc droit. Nous croyons apercevoir ce corps sur les hauteurs de St.Lambert ainsi ne perdez un instant pour vous rapprocher de nous, et nous joindre et pour écraser Bülow que vous prendrez en flagrant délit.”*³²

Eventually, it must have been around 1.30 p.m. that the officer who was supposed to carry the letter was despatched to Grouchy.

It can be assumed that Napoleon, having got the intercepted Prussian letter, decided to send both cavalry divisions of Domon and Subervie to his right flank.³³ It must then have been around 1.30 p.m. Both divisions must have been acting under the supervision of general Domon.³⁴ These divisions had to occupy the entries to the battlefield to prevent Von Bülow’s arrival and to get in touch with Grouchy’s right wing.³⁵

From his position, which was most probably in the fields between the small wood south of Fichermont on the left and the farm of Hanotelet on the right, Domon observed the Bois de Paris; he may have sent out some patrols, but he didn’t occupy the wood, let alone that troops were sent to the other side of it.³⁶

Meanwhile, the despatch of Soult’s letter to Davout had been delayed as well. In view of the significant events which had just taken place this can easily be explained. Finally, by 2.30 p.m., Soult also gave this document a post scriptum which reads:

*P.S. Il est deux heures et demie; la canonnade est engagée sur toute la ligne; les Anglais sont au centre, les Hollandais et Belges à droite des troupes allemandes, les Prussiens sont à la gauche; la bataille est générale; quatre cent bouches à feu tonnent en ce moment.”*³⁷ From this, it can be concluded that the document was most probably sent out between 2.30 and 3 p.m.³⁸

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¹ Cf. Baudus, M.E.G. de - Etudes sur Napoleon p.224
General Drouot. In: Cf. Additional particulars to the battle of Waterloo etc. Vol.II p.111
Colonel Gourgaud's account. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30
Gourgaud. La campagne de 1815 p.71
Mémoires pour servir etc. p.121 Here Napoleon claims he received this information from reconnaissances and also two Belgian deserters.

² According to Houssaye it could have been between 4 and 5 a.m. In: 1815.Waterloo p.316

3. In: SHAT (copy), nr.C15 nr.5
WSD, Vol.X p.501
Duc d'Elchingen. Documents inédits p.52
De Pontécoulant, erroneously, dates it at 8 a.m. In: In: Souvenirs militaires p.339

Marchand claims that Napoleon dictated a text to Gourgaud early that morning; this may very well have been this document, yet as written down by Soult and not Gourgaud. In: Mémoires etc. p.163

⁴ Sources from which Napoleon would have acquired this information vary.
Marchand claims that Napoleon sent out colonel Gourgaud by daybreak to find out about the state of field. Drouot, from his side, would also have pointed to the dreadful state of the ground. In: Marchand, L.J.N. - Mémoires de Marchand etc. p.162-163

For the 1st corps, it was general De Salle who made a short enquiry about whether the Brussels road was suitable for moving artillery. In: Souvenirs et correspondance p.52

⁵ Tondeur, J.P., P.Courcelle, P.Meganck, J.J.Pattyn - Le Caillou. Waterloo 1815. Les Carnets de la campagne no.10 Editions de la Belle Alliance, 2007 p.88

6. Jean Baptiste Decoster (1762-1826) came from Korbeek-Lo, near Leuven. He was married and had seven children. After 1815, he went living at JoliBois as his farm had been badly mauled during the battle and as the house had to be reconstructed he couldn't afford the rent. According to Decoster himself, he owned in 1815 more than 1.5 hectares of land (2 bonniers). The house of Decoster is not indicated on the map of Ferraris. Now, it is called the ferme De Koster. Other names of the house are: maison Lacoste, maison Gorlier, maison Ledecq, ferme Minne. Nowadays, the house is very hard, if not impossible to recognize, as it has highly changed by modern brick facades, the extension with a barn on its south side and the addition of an extra floor (in 1947).

Cf. Barral. - L'épopée de Waterloo p.111

Barral, G. - Itinéraire etc. p.121

Navez, L. - Le champ de bataille etc. p.102

Neck, L.van - Waterloo illustré p.112

Lachouque, H. - Waterloo p.191

Navez, L. - Le champ de bataille et le pays de Waterloo en 1815 et actuellement p.170

In total, three accounts of Decoster are available. These are no direct accounts, but ones written down by others on his behalf. In some respects they overlap, but in many others they don't and are therefore extremely confusing.

The first one is one taken by a traveler from Decoster at Waterloo on the 15th of August 1815. It recalls that Decoster would have been led to Napoleon but where remains obscure. It situates Napoleon between 1 and 4 p.m. near Rossomme and between 4 and 7 p.m. on the roof of [!] Decoster's house.

Cf. The battle of Waterloo also of Ligny and Quatre Bras etc. Vol.I p.153-154

The second would have been given by Decoster at Waterloo at the cabaret Jean de Niveles, this version being translated from an attested copy in Brussels, on the 16th of January 1816.

Here it is suggested as if Decoster met Napoleon in the farm of Rossomme in the early morning. Napoleon would have left the farm at noon for a position on the opposite knoll, which he would have kept until 5 p.m. when he moved to a position opposite the farm of Decoster himself.

Cf. Additional particulars to the battle of Waterloo etc. Vol.II p.116-121

Smithers, H. - Observations made during a residence in Brussels and several tours through the Netherlands etc. p.258-263

Both accounts make no allusion to Napoleon's visit to the frontline. The third account, however, does. It is not dated and states that Decoster was introduced to Napoleon in a house opposite the place where Napoleon had spent the night [Le Caillou]. From there, Napoleon advanced beyond La Belle Alliance from where he observed the enemy's position. No mention is made of the position near Rossomme. Cf. The battle of Waterloo also of Ligny and Quatre Bras etc. Vol.I p.154-155

In the first account, Decoster is portrayed as someone of whom Napoleon particulars "about every house, tree, wood, rising ground etc." while in the second his information seems to have been limited to that one the distance of several cities in Brabant in relation to the battlefield.

About this last element one can have serious doubts about its correctness: first of all as Napoleon was not a fool and was well able to read maps and secondly while it cannot be expected from Decoster, as a local peasant, to know about all these distances.

All in all, there is reason to have doubts whether Decoster would not have been of very much use to Napoleon.

Napoleon would also have asked him for information only before the battle, not during the battle itself. Cf. Decoster cited by jonkheer Reneke de Marees van Swin, who met him on the battlefield on the 29th of June 1818. In: Mededelingen van de Vereniging Officieren Cavalerie, Dec.1966, nr.4

Adkin expresses his doubt whether Decoster has ever been a guide at all, as a careful investigation of his credentials would have cast serious doubts on this. When confronted with a blacksmith from La Belle Alliance, Decoster would have been unable to refute that they had been in hiding together some 10 miles away on the day of the battle. Where Adkin has acquired this information is unclear. Cf. The Waterloo companion p.148

7. According to a local tradition, another guide would have been led towards the emperor. This man was Joseph Bourgeois, from Odeghien (a hamlet about 8 kilometers northwest of Braine l'Alleud). Being too nervous, however, he was dismissed. In: Houssaye, H. – 1815.Waterloo p.322

⁸ Napoleon dates the breakfast at 8 a.m. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.124

Marchand puts the breakfast later, at 9 a.m. In: Marchand, L.J.N. - Mémoires de Marchand etc. p.163

Gourgaud, in his turn, states it took place around daybreak. In: La campagne de 1815 p.72

The presence of Jérôme and Reille is confirmed by Marchand. In: Mémoires etc. p.163
For Jérôme, cf. the letter of Jérôme to his wife, dated 15th July 1815. In: Bonaparte, J. Mémoires et correspondances etc. Vol.VII p.21 and in Martinet, A. Jérôme Napoleon, roi de Westphalie p.273

Colonel Trefcon, chief of staff of the 5th division of Bachelu, says that Reille himself was with his corps and that he met Napoleon outside near Le Caillou, just as the emperor had finished his breakfast. In this situation, hours more or less match: as Napoleon was leaving Le Caillou (at 8.a.m.) Reille was about to halt his corps near this farm. In: Carnet de campagne p.185-186

Reille himself doesn't mention any meeting with Napoleon that morning at all. In: Documents inédits p.60-61

Reille's presence at the breakfast held in Le Caillou is therefore highly unlikely.

Napoleon mentions the presence of several officers, but doesn't give any names, except for Ney. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.124

Saint Denis mentions Bertrand and Soult. In: Souvenirs du mameluck Ali sur l'empereur p.110

⁹ By daybreak, Ney had sent out his aide de camp Levavasseur to find out about the intentions of the enemy and about the state of the field. Levavasseur learned from the vedettes that it seemed as if the enemy was intending to threaten the French right wing. He then went to Ney, whom he found with Napoleon [at Le Caillou] and to whom he told this information. In: Souvenirs etc. p.295-296

¹⁰ Couquébau. In: La Belle Alliance. Ode dédiée à S.A.R. la princesse d'Orange etc.

Couquébau is the pseudonym of Henri Boucqueau, the son of the proprietor of Le Caillou in 1815.

Jardin, equerry of Napoleon, claims it was 9.30 a.m. Cf. his account. In: Beaucour, F. - La campagne de Waterloo vue par Jardin L'Aîné, un écuyer de Napoleon In: Bulletin de la Société belge d'Etudes Napoléoniennes (1992), nr.17 p.27

Decoster, Napoleon's guide, believes it was 6 a.m. In: Smithers, H. – Observations etc. p.258

Delloye puts the departure on 9 a.m. In: Napoleon dans sa dernière campagne p.49

For adjudant Zenowicz it was 9 a.m. In: Waterloo, déposition etc. p.28

The fact that Napoleon left after his breakfast to the frontline is corroborated by Marchand. In: Mémoires etc. p.125

Also see Gourgaud. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30

¹¹ Mémoires pour servir etc. p.125

Gourgaud. La campagne de 1815 p.72 and in: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30

Marchand. Mémoires etc. p.163

D'Erlon confirms the visit of Napoleon to his outposts to verify himself of the fact that Wellington had chosen position. He would have said to d'Erlon: "Ordonnez aux troupes de faire la soupe, de mettre les armes en état, et nous verrons vers midi." In: Le maréchal Drouet, comte d'Erlon etc. p.97

The instructions were probably given at a much earlier hour (cf. the order of the very early

morning), but the expectation to assess the situation towards noon confirms the order as issued by 11 a.m. (see below).

Since long, the Fédération touristique du Brabant has marked a position not far from La Belle Alliance on the high bank on the south side of the road which leads towards Plancenoit as the observation post of Napoleon during the battle. In itself, this is incorrect, but it might be that it was this position which Napoleon used as a vantage point during his brief reconnaissance in the morning hours.

¹² Mémoires pour servir etc. p.125

Lieutenant Riddock (44th regiment, brigade Pack) states that around 9 a.m. a group of about 30 horsemen passed the Anglo-German-Netherlands frontline at a distance of about 100 meters of the line from right to left. They were fired at by the brigade of Best, and then went off. This group may very well have been the reconnaissance as done by Haxo.

This also applies to the group of French officers, protected by a squadron of hussars, which - according to major Van Gorkum - advanced over the Brussels road almost to the farm of La Haye Sainte. He mentions a time of 8 a.m.

In: BL, Add.ms.34.704 p.122-126

In: Nagelaten papieren (private collection).

¹³ This position may have a relation to the position as marked as an observation post by the Fédération touristique du Brabant, on the north side of the road which connects La Belle Alliance to Plancenoit, not far from La Belle Alliance. In: Speeckaert, G.P. & I.Baecker. Les 135 vestiges etc. p.128

The source of this allocation remains unknown.

Zenowicz, however, mentions the brief observation as done by the emperor and Soult, while having the suite further to the rear from a knoll in front. In: Waterloo. Déposition etc. p.28

14. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.132-132

Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815. Waterloo p.326

Saint Denis does the same but situates it the moment after the units had taken up their positions.

In: Souvenirs etc. p.145

15. Lieutenant Martin (45th regiment of the line) In: Souvenirs etc. p.284

Canler, L. (28th regiment of the line) In: Mémoires de Canler p.26

Marchand mentions the enthusiasm of the troops the moment Napoleon left Le Caillou, but as such doesn't mention an inspection. In: Mémoires etc. p.163

However, colonel Trefcon, chief of staff of the division of Bachelu, clearly states the enthusiasm of the division in seeing Napoleon. In: Carnet de campagne p.186

According to captain Chapuis, his regiment, the 85th of the line (Durutte's division), was not allowed to cheer as it passed the emperor when it moved towards its position in the frontline. In: Waterloo. Notice p.45

On the 16th of June a general order had gone out stating: "Ordre de ne point rendre d'honneurs à l'Empereur quand il se trouve aux avant-postes."

A visit of Napoleon on his right wing was obviously caught up by allied units, such as those of Best and others. Cf. General Best. In: VPH, nr.24 and in BL, Add.Ms. 34.704 p.278-282

Lieutenant Müller of the Hanoverian artillery. In: Kannicht, J. - Und alles wegen Napoleon p.70

16. According to lieutenant Putigny (33rd regiment, division Berthézène) Napoleon wore the uniform of a colonel of the grenadiers of the Imperial Guard during his visit on the battlefield of Ligny on the 17th of June. In: Putigny, B. - Le grognard Putigny, baron d'Empire n.p.
Decoster confirms the boots, the trousers, the coat and the hat. Yet, he mentions that Napoleon wore a violet waistcoat. Decoster spoke to professor Benzenberg in the summer of 1815. Cf. Benzenberg's letter to Gneisenau, dated 30th august 1815. In: Delbrück, H. Das Leben etc. Vol.IV p.614

17. The horse would have got wounded on the tigh; after that Napoleon would have ridden his white Arabian mare called Marie. Cf. Maxwell, H. The life of Wellington. Vol.II p.60.
Another historian claims he rode on Marie first, then Desirée and then Marengo. He would have left it at Le Caillou during the general retreat to switch for another horse. Cf. Uffindell, A. On the fields of glory p.145
According to Decoster he would have ridden a small, grey horse. Decoster spoke to professor Benzenberg in the summer of 1815. Cf. Benzenberg's letter to Gneisenau, dated 30th august 1815. In: Delbrück, H. Das Leben etc. Vol.IV p.614

¹⁸ Gourgaud confirms the return from the frontline to a knoll near Le Caillou. In: AN, Fonds Gourgaud 314 AP30

Mémoires pour servir etc. p.133

On the other hand, the plan in the Mémoires situates him around 10 a.m. west of the *chaussée*, about half way between the farm of Rossomme and the Decoster house.

Baudus. Etudes sur Napoleon p.225

Craan, W.B. An historical account etc. p.14

Mauduit, H.de – Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II plan (position nr.1)

Lemonnier-Delafosse, J.B. – Souvenirs militaires p.230

Aerts, W. – La nuit de Napoleon etc. p.12-18

¹⁹ Baron Petiet. In: Souvenirs militaires p.213 He assigns him a position near to La Belle Alliance by the way.

Jardin, equerry of Napoleon. Cf. his account. In: Beaucour, F. - La campagne de Waterloo vue par Jardin L'Aîné, un écuyer de Napoleon In: Bulletin de la Société belge d'Etudes Napoleoniennes (1992), nr.17 p.27

Baudus – Etudes sur Napoleon p.225

²⁰ Lemonnier-Delafosse – Souvenirs militaires p.406-407

This aide de camp of general Foy must have been for about two hours waiting for the divisional artillery not far north of Napoleon's position on the Brussels road.

21. Copy in register of staff. In: AN, Nouv.acq. nr.4366

Aerts, W. - Opérations etc. p.227-228

Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.79, Vol.V p.161-162 and p.229-230

Grouchy, de - In: Fragments historiques etc. p.21

Cf. Grouchy, In: Appendice. Campagne de 1815. Pièces officielles etc. p.18

22. Zenowicz, G. - Waterloo.Déposition etc. p.29-30

Zenowicz himself states he arrived at Le Caillou at 10 a.m. and that he had to wait there for at least one hour, and then left towards noon, which would have been a few minutes before the battle started. As this was actually around 11.30 a.m., it would then have been towards 11.30 a.m. that he left.

Yet, in connection to the distance he had to travel (more than 45 kilometers) and his time of arrival (4 p.m.), it is not more than logical to suppose that Zenowicz left around 10.30 a.m. as it would take him at least 5 hours to cover the distance involved.

Zenowicz must have ridden through Rossomme, Le Caillou, Genappe, Quatre Bras, the Roman road, Gembloux and Walhain to the heights of Wavre. The fact that Zenowicz rode through Gembloux is confirmed by Zenowicz himself.

It remains a mystery why Zenowicz was allowed to carry out this mission. Not being an imperial aide de camp or *officier d'ordonnance*, it was highly exceptional for an officer of his status to carry out a delicate mission like this. Cf. Maes, P. - 18 Juin 1815. Enquête sur un ordre du Caillou etc. In: Special ABN, nr.65 p.52

²³ Gourgaud. La campagne de 1815 p.73

Mémoires pour servir etc. p.125

Baron Petiet. Souvenirs militaires p.212

Haxo himself states he was sent out to find out about the enemies strength; he estimated them to be about 80.000 strong. Cf. his notes taken by M.Maurice on the 25th June 1815. In: Mélanges et documents etc. p.375

²⁴ Both Napoleon himself and Gourgaud confirm that Napoleon dictated an *ordre de bataille*, which was in fact a plan for the battle. Cf. La campagne de 1815 p.72 and Mémoires pour servir pour servir etc. p.125

Drouot shifts the start of the battle to 12 o'clock. In: Additional particulars to the battle of Waterloo etc. Vol.II p.111

25. Cf. copy in SHAT, nr.C15, nr.5

This copy has the following note at the bottom:

“Collationné. Certifié conforme à la pièce originale non signée, mais ordre de l'époque et d'une écriture connue communiquée en 1859 par la famille du général Rogniat, Paris le [...] Septembre 1859. Le colonel, conservateur des archives du dépôt de la guerre Brabant [?].”

The version as published by the duc d'Elchingen comes from one as written by Ney in pencil and to which he would have added on the bottom of the document the following note:

Le comte d'Erlon comprendra que c'est par la gauche que l'attaque commencera, au lieu de la droite. Communiquer cette nouvelle disposition au général en chef Reille.

Additionally, he wrote on the rear of the document the following note:

"Ordres dictés par l'Empereur, sur le champ de bataille du Mont Saint Jean, le 18, vers onze heures du matin, et écrits par le maréchal Duc de Dalmatie, major général. Paris, le 21 Juin 1815. Le maréchal Prince de la Moskowa, Pair de France, Ney.

In: Documents inédits nr.XIX p.53-54

Napoleon's version is different as in this version of each corps just one battery is mentioned: "A cet effet, la batterie de 12 du 2^{me} corps et celle du 6^{me} se réuniront à celle du 1^{er} corps." Ney's note is left out altogether. Cf. Correspondance. Nr.22060

Colonel Levavasseur, an aide de camp of Ney, had been assigned to inform the generals of the order of attack dated 11 a.m. First, Levavasseur would have gone to Jérôme Bonaparte and then to d'Erlon; Reille is not mentioned. In: Souvenirs p.296-297

²⁶ Cf. Navez, L. – La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.262

27. Houssaye believes it was after 10 a.m. In: 1815.Waterloo p.342

Von Lettow Vorbeck believes it was 11.30 a.m. In: Napoleons Untergang. Vol.III p.418

F.de Bas is too late stating it was noon and is incorrect in his conclusion that Zenocwicz carried the order dated 1 p.m. Cf. Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommerson. La campagne de 1815 aux Pays Bas. Vol.II p.102

Lieutenant general Von Boguslawski says it was 5 a.m. but he makes the incorrect presumption that it was Grouchy's report dated 2 a.m. Cf. Zur Auffassung des Feldzuges von 1815. In: Militär Wochenblatt nr.59 p.1567

28. This version is the one from the facsimilé of the original as published by Houssaye. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo n.p.

Houssaye states he used the original as coming from Grouchy's papers, and being communicated to him by M.Francois Saint Maur, former president of the *cour de Pau* and nephew of Mademoiselle Huat, the second wife of marshal Grouchy. In: 1815. Waterloo p.344, 466

29. Copy in register of staff. In: AN, Nouv.acq.nr.4366 and in SHAT, nr.C15, nr.5

Also see:

Grouchy, E.de - Mémoires Vol.IV p.176-177.

The strange thing is that the letter apparently has not been signed.

Soult mentions the existence of this letter in his report to Davout, dated 19th June. In: SHAT, C15 nr.15

In this connection, De Mauduit cites part of a letter written by Soult after 3 p.m. to lieutenant general Evrain, director of the artillery at the war office in Paris, asking him for a constant supply of ammunition, as: "Que, quelle que fut l'issue de la bataille, qui se livrait, de lui faire arriver, jour et nuit, des munitions; que l'on était dans les plus longs jours, et obligé de recommander de les ménager pour en avoir même jusqu'à la nuit." In relation to the letter cited, the existence of such a letter is highly questionable. Cf. Mauduit, H.de - Les derniers jours de la grande armée Vol.II p.317-318

³⁰ Napoleon claims that he scanned the horizon before he started his main attack and that as a result a discussion took place about what could be seen near Chapelle Saint Lambert: enemy's forces or something else. All this would have to suggest that the imperial staff wasn't surprised. In real life, however, it was by the intercepted letter and the result was the

observation towards Chapelle Saint Lambert. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.137

Baudus, in his turn, as he is used to do, pleads for Soult by stating that it was him who saw the Prussians first. In: Etudes sur Napoleon. Vol.I p.225

Napoleon claims that the bearer of the letter was a hussar dressed in black, who was led to him by a "colonne volante de 300 chasseurs" about 15 minutes after the above mentioned discussion took place. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.139

Other than that the column of chasseurs never existed, there is some confusion about the identity of the messenger who carried the letter of Von Bülow.

It was certainly not a plain hussar, as Napoleon suggests it was, certainly not in case he was able to speak French, as Napoleon suggests he did.

Baudus assigns the Prussian messenger the rank of *maréchal de logis* of the cavalry. In: Etudes sur Napoleon Vol.I p.225

A black uniform is no clue for his identity either, as the only horsemen who wore such a uniform were those of the 8th regiment of hussars (brigade Von Watzdorf of the reserve cavalry). Houssaye claims it was a member of the 2nd regiment of Silesian hussars nr.6 (brigade Von Schwerin, reserve cavalry), as this regiment formed part of the advance guard of Von Bülow, but this regiment was dressed in green. In: 1815.Waterloo p.341

Colonel Von Hiller, commander of the 16th brigade, explicitly mentions the denial of the same regiment as having lost a member as being taken prisoner by the French. In: Dekwürdigkeiten etc. p.242

Whatever way the messenger was dressed, it must have been an officer who was a member in Von Bülow's general staff, and not necessarily a member of the cavalry which was in the advance guard of the corps.

The officer was most probably captured by a patrol of Jacquinet's cavalry, as this brigade was protecting the extreme right flank of the army. Marbot, colonel of the 7th hussars of this division of cavalry, says it was a platoon of his regiment which took the prisoner, but this cannot be fully relied upon as Marbot's account is in a lot of respects highly unreliable (cf. separate note). For instance, Marbot also claims the man was taken prisoner on the other side of Chapelle Saint Lambert, a place where French cavalry never came. In: Marbot, J.B.A.M. de - Mémoires du général baron de Marbot Vol.III p.378

31. Chapelle Saint Lambert itself wasn't visible from the heights of Rossomme, but in clear conditions the immediate surroundings of Chapelle Saint Robert were.

32. After the original (fascimilé).

33. Cf.Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.346

Napoleon claims both divisions have been detached before the Prussian hussar was brought in. De Mauduit claims Napoleon detached Domon first, and then, after the receipt of the Prussian letter, the 6th corps of Lobau. After that Subervie would have been detached and placed in columns of squadrons near the division of Jacquinet.

Cf. Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France etc. p.137

Gourgaud. La campagne de 1815 p.76

Mauduit, H.de - Les derniers jours de la grande armée Vol.II p.287-289

34.Gourgaud, C. Campagne de dix huit cent quinze etc. p.76
Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France etc. p.137

35. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.346
Gourgaud, C. Campagne de dix huit cent quinze etc. p.76

36.Cf. Hiller, kolonel von Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.242
Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, HA-VI, nr.V.3.p.16
Houssaye is right in remarking that Napoleon is incorrect in stating that Domon was at a distance of 3000 toises (which is equivalent to 5580 meters) to the right. This would mean that the cavalry would have pushed as far as Lasne, which was not the case. In: 1815.Waterloo p.346
Cf. Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France etc. p.137

37.Cf. the reference above.

38. Gneisenau, in his report dated 20th June 1815 mentions a letter which would have been sent at 3 p.m. to Paris, announcing the imminent French victory. Maybe it is this letter he refers to, but this one doesn't contain this news as such.
In: Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommerson. La campagne de 1815 aux Pays Bas. Vol.III. nr.31.3A