

natural, a consequence of an ill-prepared attack. This farm was still in possession of all of the means of defense, and the troops stationed there, as well as those in the cover along the road to its rear were able to lay down upon the flank of the column a murderous fire, the more effective in view of the depth of the column. It was quite natural that it should recoil and attack instead Bijlandt's Brigade; ..."

The interpretation of these somewhat obscure remarks appears to be that van Lüben-Sels was aware of earlier German sources which claimed that the leftmost French Division delayed its attack, so that the second one in line advanced first, receiving the fire of the unsubdued farm of La Haie-Sainte, and veering further to its own right, to fall upon Bijlandt's Brigade. He notes, however, that this is inconsistent with the fact that the 105e, forming part of Alix's 1st Division, was involved in the attack on Bijlandt, according to these same authorities, since this would imply that the second Division in line was the 1st, contrary to French authorities. He proposes instead that the 1st, on the French left, advanced to attack La Haie-Sainte, was turned aside by the fire of the defenders, and instead attacked Bijlandt. He actually suggests after this that this first Division was the only one to attack at this time. We know that he was wrong, but we can sympathize with his frustration in trying to account for the fact that the 1st, on the French left, and intended to attack La Haie-Sainte, managed to participate in the attack on Bijlandt as well. What is important for our present purposes is that he reports that some German authors believed that the advance of Alix was delayed. For these purposes, I will assume that this delay occurred after the Division had gotten as far as La Haie-Sainte, perhaps as a consequence of dropping off the 1st Brigade to attack that farm.

At any event, I believe that the 2nd Division passed the 1st Division by, and its leading brigade, the 2nd, comprising 51e and 19e, was fired into by the defenders of La Haie-Sainte and, particularly, by the 95th rifles in the Sand Pit and behind a hedge in the rear of the Pit. As a consequence, the brigade [2nd/2nd] veered to its right slightly and came up against the 95th and the other skirmishing detachments of the 8th Brigade, at the hedge mentioned. It may have been at about this point that Bijlandt's men panicked, but probably not because of the 2nd/2nd, but, rather, because of the approach of additional French forces further to the French right, perhaps the 1st/2nd, to the right rear of the 2nd/2nd. While Bijlandt's men fled past the British cavalry in the rear (already advancing), and angered the flanking regiments of the British 8th and 9th Infantry Brigades [cf. Siborne 1891:396], the 8th Brigade, under the command of Kempt, was advancing. It may have encountered the 2nd/2nd at the point that this brigade was stalled at the edge behind the Sand Pit. Supposedly the 2nd/2nd was trying to deploy, an action which we may suppose was carried out by bringing up the rearward and rightward 19e on the right of the leading 51e. Evidently these were in some disorder perhaps from the fire of La Haie-Sainte, perhaps from the fire of the 95th and other skirmishers of the 8th Brigade, and very probably because they were advancing straight into the combined fire of the batteries of Rogers and Bijleveld. Kempt's description of his attack suggests that he was familiar with the theories of Paddy Griffith. "I met it at the charge with the 28th, 32nd, and 79th Regiments in line, and completely repulsed [it], driving it in a state of greatest confusion down the slope of the position. [Letters, 237]." It is possible that the column had actually advanced as far as the hedge along the road at the point of contact, but it had evidently not actually passed it. It also appears that the British troops fired at least one volley into the French, who responded in

kind [see the extracts from the 8th Brigade in section 5]. The exchange, at any rate, was not prolonged, though it sufficed to kill Picton, exhorting his men from a position near Rogers's battery. During or just before the firefight (such as it was), the British troops scrambled across the hedge and sunken road, after which they pursued the retreating French as far as the Sand Pit hedge.

It was as this was occurring that the 2nd/1st Brigade (Bourgeois) evidently came up, passing the 8th Brigade on its left, and apparently reaching and crossing the Wavre road. This column had the 105e leading, with the 28e following at some distance in its right rear. Probably both regiments were still deployed, with their battalions closed up on each other, creating, in effect, two six-deep lines with a good deal of wavering and separating in them. Faced with this flanking column, the 28th spontaneously separated into two wings, as the left extreme of its line instinctively wheeled, or rather lagged, to deal with this new threat.

Simultaneously, the 1st/2nd Brigade was coming up still further to the French right. It would have consisted of the 13e légère, with the 17e de ligne echeloned to its right rear. This brigade was somewhat further back, perhaps because it had been assigned a supporting role. To the right of this brigade was Marcognet's 3rd Division, which seems to have been in a single echeloned column. There was, nevertheless, some separation between the echelons, enough so that they could be seen as a series of separate columns.

The moment when the columns comprising the 2nd/1st, 1st/2nd, 2nd/3rd, and 1st/3rd Brigades arrived was, it appears, the moment when the British 2nd Cavalry Brigade reached the crest of the ridge from its own side. They found Pack's 9th Brigade still advancing to the crest, or perhaps partially in flight, while Kempt's 8th Brigade was for the most part, or entirely, across the road and either re-forming, or still advancing. The cavalry were unaware of the 8th Brigade defeat of the 2nd/2nd French Brigade, and the sequence of events they had just experienced - successive waves of Netherlands and perhaps British troops in flight, followed by an encounter with distinctly disordered British troops at the road and behind it, and an echelon of French columns reaching and even crossing the hedge at the road, left them convinced that the Infantry had been bested, as, indeed some of it had. One suspects that the cavalry did not distinguish clearly between Dutch-Belgian and British infantry, and even Kempt's victorious 8th Brigade must have had a swarm of casualties, casualty-bearers, and assorted casualty-well-wishers trailing well back from it by this time.

The Royals [1st Dragoons] simply went through or around the 28th, of Kempt's 8th Brigade. No doubt the "wheel" executed by the 28th left wing seemed extremely convenient. Passing the British 28th, the Royals assailed the 105e, leading the 2nd/1st French Brigade, broke it, and took its Eagle. Meanwhile the left squadron continued downslope to the French right and attacked the French 28e, as witnessed by the soldiers of the British 28th. the 28e was broken, and the Royals continued their career, coming up against the artillery in the French rear, as well as other troops, including either reserve battalions from the 1st or 2nd Division or rallying knots of French soldiers. In the former case, we must assume that the columns already encountered had been made up of fewer battalions than I have asserted. Perhaps the supporting second echelon in each column had only one battalion.

On the left of the Royals were the Inniskillings [6th Dragoons]. The French columns that they encountered had not yet reached the

hedges, perhaps because the French columns as a whole had also been echeloned with the leftmost leading. This was certainly what Napoleon and Ney had ordered. The Royals claimed to have seen three columns. These were presumably the two regiments of the 1st/2nd Brigade, i.e. the 13e *legere* and the 17e *de ligne*, and one of the flanking columns, either the 28e at the rear of the 105e in the 2nd/1st Brigade, or the head of Marcognet's 3rd Division. In either event, they managed to break two or three of these columns, and continued on, perhaps passing the French artillery and going far enough to see the Vth Corps in its rear.

On the extreme left of the line of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade were the Scots Greys [2nd Dragoons]. They passed through the British 42nd and 92nd, which may have been falling back, crossed the hedge at the road, and overran the leading regiment of Marcognet's 3rd Division. This was the 45e, which lost its Eagle. Without stopping, the Greys continued on down the echelon of the 3rd Division, in which each successive regimental column broke as it was approached. The Greys, too, went deep into the French position before they were driven back by the French cavalry.

The events described are summarized (rather simplistically) in figure 7.1.

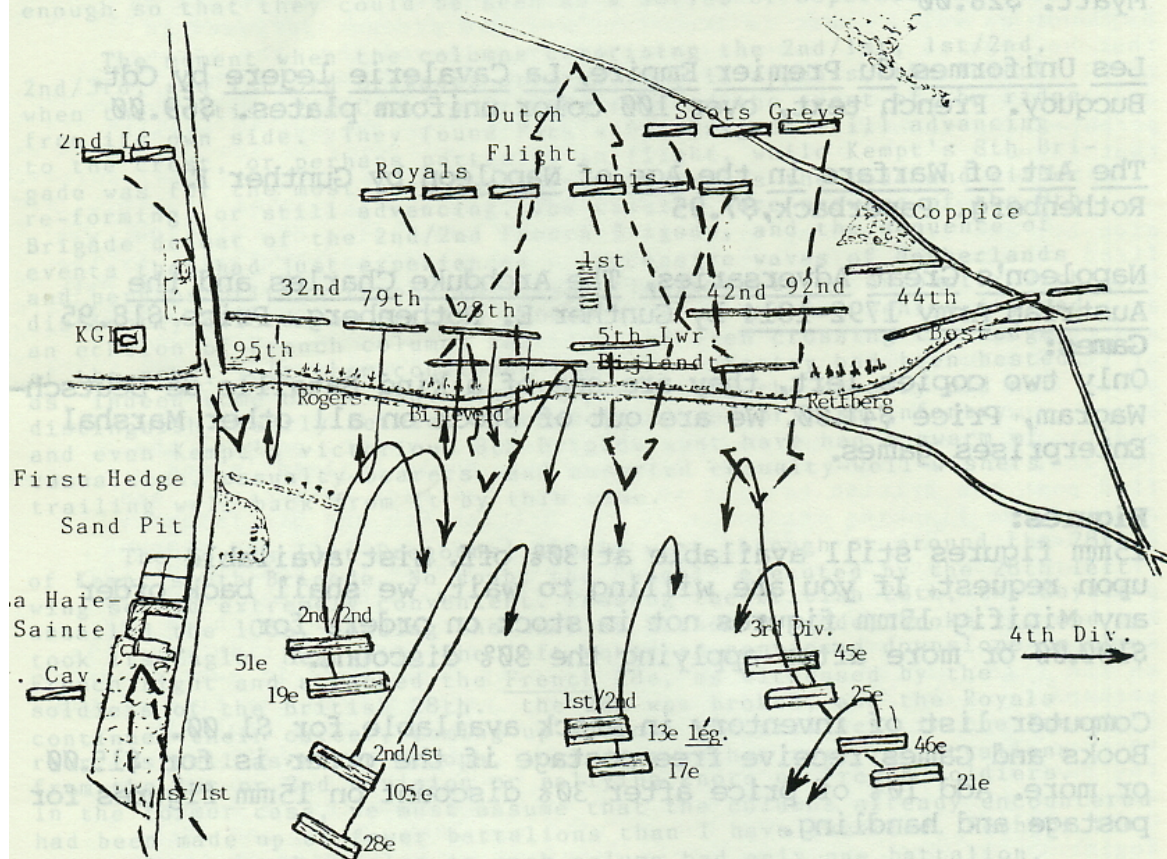


Figure 7.1 Summary of d'Erlon's Attack

Notes

1. I will adhere to the convention of using "Division," with a capital letter, to mean a unit made up of several brigades, and

- "division," with a small letter, to mean a pair of platoons.
2. Full interval means at distances equal to the frontage of the subunits separated. half interval is at distances half the frontage of this units separated.
3. Left-in-front [see section 6] means with the left flank of the line at the head of the column. Right-in-front is the reverse, with the right leading.
- 3a. For the order of battle of the 1st Corps, see EEL 74:35-37. Note the following correction: in the 2nd Division, 1st Brigade, the 13th Line should be the 13th Light.
4. Leftmost is meant in the sense of leftmost in the unit as it would be arrayed when it was fully deployed into line. See note 3.
5. Général en chef refers to a lieutenant-général commanding a Corps, as opposed to one commanding a Division. It is not an actual rank, but a courtesy title.
6. Lieutenant-général Alix or Allix commanded the 1st Division, but he was actually absent at the start of the campaign (through Waterloo), in the 16th Division Militaire [Military District], performing some unknown function. He was replaced by marechal de camp baron Quiot du Passage, the senior brigadier. Van Løben-Sels says that Guyot, presumably lieutenant-général comte Guyot, commander of the Guard Heavy Cavalry Division, led the Division in the first attack at Waterloo.

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READERS FORUM

1.0 COMMENTS ON D'ERLON'S FIRST ATTACK AT WATERLOO by Ned Zuparko

In reading John Koontz's article on d'Erlon's first attack at Waterloo, I am reminded of a couple of passages that relate to it in a peripheral way. The first was pointed out to me by George Jeffrey, and appears on page 82 in the Hippocrene edition of Petre's "Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany", concerning the battle of Lutzen: (the underlining is mine, NZ)

"(Napoleon) ordered Drouot to form a battery of 80 guns south-west of Kaja to sweep the space between the four villages. Between this battery and Kaja the Young Guard was drawn up in four columns, each of four battalions, in line, one behind the other. Behind the Young Guard was the Old, behind them was the Guard cavalry. At 6:30 all was ready, and, with the words, "La Garde au feu," Napoleon ordered the advance."

This would seem similar to d'Erlon's formation two years later. It also indicates that Napoleon either ordered or, at least acquiesced in such an "unwieldy" formation. Under cover of a heavy bombardment, these Guard columns took their village objectives. There is at least a superficial similarity again with Waterloo, where a heavy bombardment was to precede the attack and also that the left of d'Erlon's corps was sent against La Haie-Sainte and his right against another build-up area. One might speculate that d'Erlon's deployment was not without precedent after all and only noticed because it failed so miserably.

The second passage is one I found in Pelet's "The French Campaign in Portugal, 1810-1811," Ed. Donald Horward on page 109. (Pelet, one must remember, was no friend of General Drouet (d'Erlon). It is of interest not only because of the opinion about d'Erlon, but also because of Ney's opinion. Remember that in 1815 it was d'Erlon's recall by Ney before Quatre-Bras that led to I Corps' inaction and that Ney commanded d'Erlon at Waterloo.)

"I also told him (Ney, NZ) about the arrival of the twelve thousand men under General Drouet, and he made a face as if it had been reinforcement for Wellington himself."

To amplify this point, Horward added the following footnote:

"Many observers believe that Drouet had little ability as a military commander. Thiebault declared: "The Count d'Erlon was certainly one of the most estimable men I ever knew, but so thoroughly established was the opinion of his weakness as a general that, without noticing it, everybody spoke of him as the Count d'Erlon, nobody as GENERAL d'Erlon." See Paul Charles Thiebault, "The Memoirs of Baron Thiebault", translated by A.J. Butler (London, 1896), II, pp.29091."

Obviously Pelet, in his writing, DID refer to d'Erlon as "general"; yet it would seem that Ney, Pelet and Thiebault share a poor opinion of d'Erlon's military abilities; if such feelings were widespread it might be another reason for the blame d'Erlon has taken about June 18th.

2.0 SOME COMMENTS ON ISSUE 72 by Philip Haythornthwaite

Relating to French Colours "captured" at Salamanca; as stated by the extract published in issue 76 (from United Service Magazine), there were two "Eagles" and "several" other flags captured (or acquired) by the British after the Battle of Salamanca, the number of which is revealed by Wellington's Salamanca Dispatch:

"It is impossible to form a conjecture of the amounts of the enemy's loss in this action; but, from all reports, it is very considerable. We have taken from them 11 pieces of cannon (The official returns only account for 11 pieces of cannon, but it is believed that 20 have fallen into our hands), several ammunition waggons, 2 eagles and 6 colors..."

(Wellington's Dispatches, Vol. IX (London, 1837), p.305; Wellington to Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State).

The "6 colors" would almost certainly be battalion fanions, the marker-flags carried by battalions which did not possess an "Eagle". Napoleon ordered these small flags to be designed in plain colours and undecorated, for the specific reason that they would therefore be regarded as of no importance by an enemy, and unable to be exhibited as trophies if captured; but many regiments disregarded these orders totally, emblazoning their fanions unofficially with all manner of symbols and designs, which defeated the object of the exercise completely. These flags were accorded no special status by the French army and were not even "lodged" at battalion headquarters, but usually remained with the N.C.O. whose responsibility it was to carry the battalion fanion, but military esprit de corps being what it is, it is not impossible that in some cases the fanions did assume certain importance, thought never approaching the veneration with which consecrated Colours were regarded in most armies. Though in many cases it appears that the fanions weren't displayed in battle.

Napoleon's enemies couldn't be expected to understand this, however; fanions were virtually unknown in the British army (though "camp



Readers Forum

1.0 SOME COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM NEW ZEALAND by Digby Green

(1) In EEL 68, pp.2 & 3, Valentini seems to say that the battalions-massen were very effective forms of defense against a frontal cavalry charge. Whilst I do not doubt this, it seems that a Battalionsmasse was the same as a close column of other armies, and therefore I am tempted to ask if these were just as good a form of defense against cavalry. It would appear that they should be, but one never hears of it, so is Valentini wrong here?

(2) From reading Ned Zuparko's series 'charges, Firefights and Morale' it appears that the British were very good at awaiting in line for a French attack to close, then giving a good volley followed by an immediate charge. I have put this feature into my new rules - Le General - (see page 44) but now I wish to know if any readers have evidence that other nations did this. Perhaps Peter Hoshöer has some examples of Prussians doing it? It seems strange if it is only confined to British. Phil Barker seems to believe that the British learnt this practice in the American War of Independence.

2.0 COMMENTS FROM MANAGING EDITOR

What I like about the above questions - also take a look at the points raised in ON THE BACKGROUND OF NAPOLEONIC WARFARE section, pp. 16-17, by Paddy Griffith and Digby Green - is that they make us conscious of the importance of some of the basic points on tactics and formations used in the Napoleonic period, which were nothing more - as pointed out - that the evolution of previous tactics. Something many of us have a tendency to forget.

I am not about to try to answer any of the above very pertinent questions. Each of them would require at least a complete issue of EEL, assuming we have all the necessary data available. However, I would like to make several points:

POINT 1: It is one of EEL main purpose to answer and debate such basic questions.

I know from some of the letters I receive from the readership that some readers are simply AGAINST debating questions on a large scale. I must confess that I fail to fully understand some of the true reasons behind that line of thinking - Perhaps, one hard point to admit is that many of us have concepts of their own they don't want to change and that they belong to a definite "SCHOOL" of thought such as the "FIREPOWER SCHOOL", the "CHAOS SCHOOL", the "ALL BY THE DRILL BOOK SCHOOL", just to name a few...- and they simply feel right and don't really (perhaps subconsciously) have any desire to change...

POINT 2: Answering such questions requires a very LARGE DATA BASE in order to be sure of the basic points we intend to bring out.

The larger the data base - and that is an ABSOLUTE BASIC PRINCIPLE in solving any problem, evaluating anything or any point or answering any question - the GREATER the confidence level. It has been pointed out several times in EEL that one can find examples to support almost any

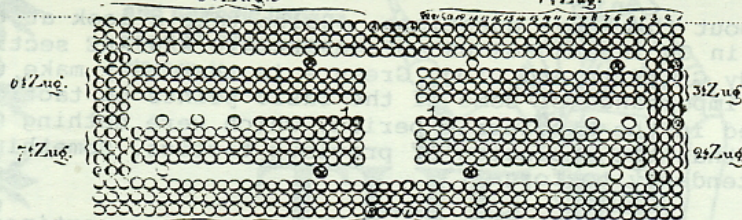
point. That is certainly quite true. But...in doing so how many are guilty of considering only an unusual partial event or chain of events seldom occurring...and ignoring other available data just to prove a point! Hence the importance of the large data base!

Getting a LARGE DATA BASE on any given subject is something difficult to achieve. It requires a great deal of work and a lot of cooperation from many Napoleonic authorities around the world...Is that possible? I believe so. EEL will be glad to publish, as usual, any well documented full or in part answer to any of the above questions.

POINT 3: A great amount of basic data has been already published in many past issues of EEL and have been either forgotten or ignored.

For instance, I frankly don't know - and it's not a point I intend to prove or disprove here - if a Battalionsmasse was a better formation to repulse cavalry than the other nations similar formations, i.e. other species of the 'closed square', called by the French a "carré plein" (was it the formation of the Middle Guard at Waterloo, as suggested by Paddy Griffith [see EEL 69, p. 2], as an answer to my article in EEL 68, pp. 27-30 ?) or by the Prussian "Quarree Plein" already presented in EEL 44, p.11 (R.G. Durand "And Still More Comments on the Austrian Battalionsmasse").

Abbildung eines Quarree plein welches auf der Grundlinie rückwärts formirt ist.



Erklärung der Farben und Zeichen

○ Offiziere die Zug führenden haben die schwarzen Vorgesetzten
● Feldwebel
● Unteroffiziere

○ Grenade
○ Spillarte
○ Front. Stock

PRUSSIAN "QUARREE PLEIN"

However, I do know that a great deal of material on squares and formations to repulse cavalry has been presented in many past issues of EEL far to numerous to mention here. However some of the most important are:

- (1) John Koontz series': "Material for the Study of Infantry Formations Against Cavalry" (EEL 49 to 53).
- (2) John Koontz's "Prussian Squares", EEL 41,
- (3) George Nafziger's "The French Carré d'Egypte", EEL 69, pp.18-19,

Perhaps, we at EEL, should consolidate all these articles and publish them in separate booklet, each dealing with a specific subject.

Comments from the readership on that idea would be appreciated.