



NAPOLEON

HIS LIFE • HIS WARS • HIS WORLD



Battle Within a Battle

The struggle for Hougomont –
vital British strongpoint
at Waterloo

Toward Understanding Napoleon

An Interview with
Harold T. Parker: teacher,
scholar, and author of
Three Napoleonic Battles



PLUS: Book Reviews
Macintosh Computer Game Review • and more!

2006 ANNIVERSARY SERIES
Bonaparte wins at Rivoli and
captures Mantua, but the Austrians
continue the war

"The success of the battle of Waterloo depended



on the closing of the gate of Hougoumont.”

— Duke of Wellington

Battle Within A Battle

by John Brewster and the staff

Waterloo is one of the most famous battles in history, probably the most well-known battle of the Napoleonic Wars. Within the battle, the struggle for control of the walled farm of Hougoumont is perhaps as significant to the British as the defense of the Little Round Top at Gettysburg during the Civil War is to Americans.

Despite its fame, there are still many unanswered questions and even some mystery surrounding what happened at the Hougoumont chateau on 18 June, 1815. The staff of *Napoleon magazine* attempts to answer some of these questions, reveal some myths, and offer the most detailed presentation to date, using both French and English sources.

Continued on page 4

The combination of drama, historical and technical accuracy captured by Keith Rocco in his latest masterpiece, "The Great Gate of Hougoumont", makes this painting an instant classic.

Rushing into the British garrison are members of the 1st Battalion of the 1st *Ligne* Regiment, led by *sous-lieutenant* Legros (raised as or hand) of the *carabinier* company. Although most of the assailants depicted are *carabiniers*, including the corporal leaping against the gate on the right-hand side of the painting, two *voltigeurs* of the battalion are also shown. In the light infantry, *carabiniers* were an elite company equivalent to the grenadiers of the line battalions. *Voltigeurs* were the elite light company. The regular companies were called *chasseurs*. In a light battalion (*liger*) and *fusiliers* in a line (*ligne*) battalion. The French are wearing the so-called 1812 uniform [see details on page 24].

Rocco correctly shows the French soldiers in their parade dress uniforms which, unless circumstances prevented, they invariably wore into battle. In addition, some of the *carabiniers* are sporting the new plumes as published in the 1812 *Journal Militaire*.

Rocco is also to be highly commended for his accurate portrayal of the French going into battle *without* their cumbersome backpacks - a historical fact that seems to have escaped notice by almost every artist and military miniature designer attempting to depict Napoleonic subjects. Although instances of the French carrying their backpacks into action may be found, the overwhelming majority of documented cases show Napoleonic infantry going into battle carrying only their weapons, canteens and up to four cartridge pouches, each pouch holding about 15 rounds of ammunition.

The defenders are also depicted accurately. The British shown attempting to close the gate are members of the light company of the Coldstream Guards (each Guards battalion had one light company), who dropped their packs in the confines of the farm before the battle began. Also of note next to the gate is the open-fronted cart shed that burned down during the battle and was not rebuilt.

— Scott Bowden



The diorama photos on this page, and pages 18 and 22, were created and photographed by Rick Schuld of Scenic Effects. Schuld studied the chateau and visited the site in order to design the 15mm scale buildings of the famous Hougoumont farm as it appeared in 1815 (see ad on page 45). Figures displayed include Battle Standard miniatures made specifically for the Hougoumont set, plus Old Glory French along with some Battle Honors and Imperial Miniatures.



Above: The French are stopped by the tall walls surrounding the garden, but troops enter the orchard at far right. Above right: The south gate and gardener's house were well protected by defenders along the adjacent garden wall. Right: British Guardsmen close the north gate after just defeating the only French attack to break into the chateau.



While only a part of the larger battle of Waterloo, the fighting around the chateau of Hougoumont has become almost as famous as the battle itself. The Duke of Wellington thought he came close to losing Waterloo there (note the Duke's famous quote at the top of pages 4-5). Most historians believe that the wasteful French assaults against the chateau are a major reason Napoleon lost. In any event, puzzling aspects to the Hougoumont fighting remain; and, despite all that has been written about Waterloo, considerable questions remain.

The fighting at Hougoumont should have been a diversion, part of the French efforts to wear down the Anglo-Allied army. Napoleon was trying to distract Wellington from the true object of his attacks, the Anglo-Allied center. He hoped to drain Wellington's reserves by attacking Hougoumont, but he did not anticipate any key result there. Napoleon often tried to use a small portion of his forces to neutralize a considerable proportion of the enemy's; however, on this occasion, Wellington may indeed have turned the tables on him. Yet even this is not incontrovertible. In holding this objective Wellington had to commit far more of his strength than is gener-

ally recognized (see sidebar on page 19 and the comparative orders of battle on pages 20-21).

The use of the walled farms of Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte as outworks to the main allied position on the ridge behind is often quoted as typical of

At Waterloo, Wellington had little choice but to occupy Hougoumont.

Wellington's tactics. It is similar to his use of the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro (3-5 May, 1811) to anchor his line in the battle of that name, where again he skillfully fed in reinforcements to wear down French assaults. But Wellington was not the only general who knew how to use strongpoints to anchor his line. Aspern-Essling (21-22 May,

1809) has already been described in a *Napoleon* #3. Marshal Davout's use of the village of Hassenhausen at Auerstadt (14 October, 1806) and Marshal Marmont's use of Mockern in 1813 at Leipzig are also masterful examples of this tactic.

Hougoumont Must Be Defended

At Waterloo, Wellington had little choice but to occupy Hougoumont. Not only did it prevent the deployment of the French massed batteries there against the allied troops behind it, but it also blocked a dangerous covered way into the heart of his position, for the ridge line on which Wellington made his stand comes to an end behind Hougoumont. In fact, Wellington came close to losing the battle by undergarrisoning Hougoumont; such a mistake helped cost him La Haye Sainte.

Properly known as the Château de Goumont, the map most of the generals were using (Ferran's) showed it as Hougoumont. The main house, or chateau of Hougoumont was a substantial brick building. North and south of it were courtyards formed by similarly sturdy brick buildings. The northern courtyard was sur-



Nassauers skirmishing in the woods to the south of Hougoumont. These troops gave a good account of themselves all day long.

fringed by farm buildings, and a large gate in the westernmost side of its north wall provided the main entrance to the complex. This gate was closed by two large wooden doors, held in place by a heavy wooden bar, but it was kept open initially to allow communication to friendly forces on the ridge to the north.

The southern courtyard, closest to the French, was surrounded by the gardener's house, some stables, and some offices. It had a gate on the southern side which was so firmly secured it was never in danger of being forced during the battle. In the east side of the southern courtyard was another gate, which led into a large garden. This was laid out in a very formal style and, more importantly, was enclosed to the south and east by a high brick wall. The wall's defensive benefits were improved with loopholes and firing steps to make them very strong positions.

East of the garden was a larger area, devoted to an orchard. It was lined with a high, thick hedge. The hedge on the north side continued to serve as the northern boundary of the garden as well, and hid a sunken road which followed the northern side of the Hougoumont complex until it reached the northern gate. This sunken road was an invaluable reserve position and rallying place for the defenders.

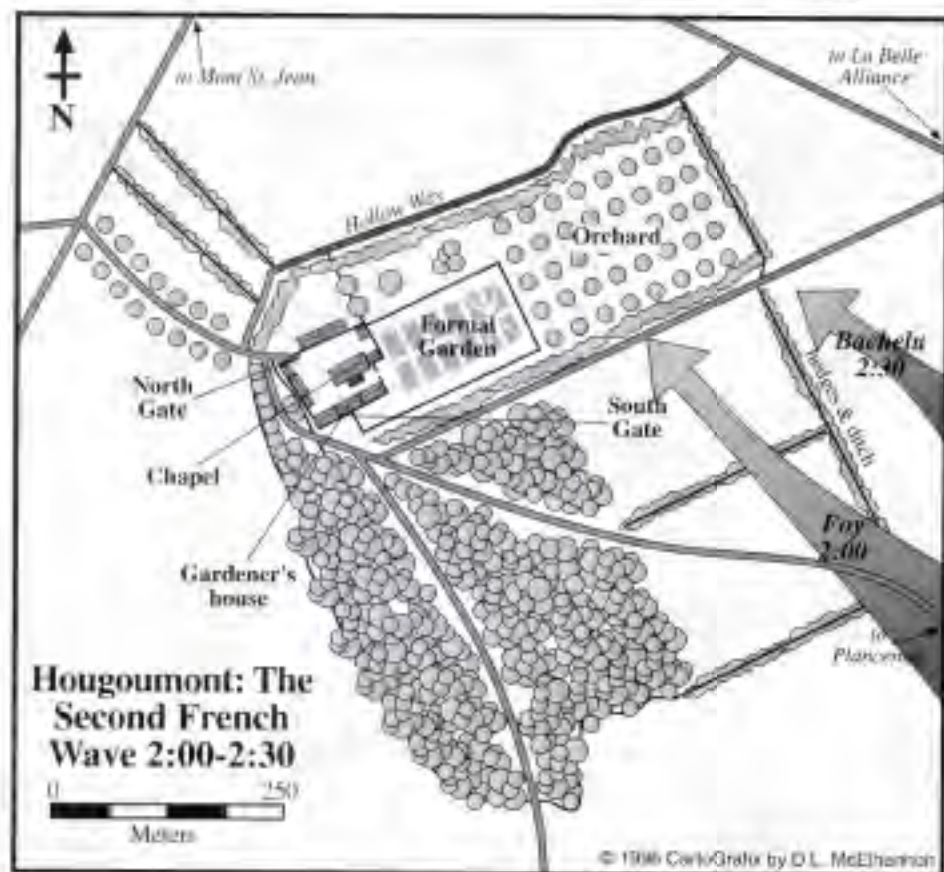
A narrow lane ran along the south side

of the buildings, garden and orchard. Its hedge, a prolongation of the orchard hedge, with a row of apple trees, served to disguise the formidable nature of the garden walls from the French coming from the south.

South of this lane, opposite the buildings and garden, a wooded area extended for about 350 yards, and was a little less than three hundred yards wide. To its east, and south of the great orchard, were two enclosed fields, fenced with more hedges, and ditches on the inner sides.

From the ridge to the north, a road lined

While generally recognized as excellent infantry, British Guardsmen were never regarded by the rest of the army with the same respect enjoyed by their French counterparts.



with five tall chimneys running down past the western side of the buildings, connecting with the sunken road and the north gate, and splitting as it went south. One spur was the lane which passed along the south side of the garden and orchard. Another spur went due south into the French position. A path led southeast across the wood and fields towards the village of La Belle Alliance.

The position was garrisoned by the light companies of the British Guards battalions (4 companies), the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Nassau Regiment, and 100 Hanoverians from Battalion Lüneburg and a company of jäger of Kielmanssegge's Hanoverian brigade. The Hanoverian jäger were armed with rifles. Rifles could be loaded and fired as quickly as the smoothbore muskets most infantrymen were equipped with. However, rifles could also reach a greater range with much better accuracy than muskets if special rifle ammunition requiring a longer time to reload were used, as the attacking French learned to their regret.

The light company of the 2nd (Coldstream) Guards were in the buildings, while the light company of the 3rd (Scots) Guards was in the garden, except for a section which took position by a haystack just to the southwest of the buildings. These were under command of Colonel James Macdonell.

The light companies of the two battalions of the 1st Guards took position on the ridge above the orchard under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Saltoun. The 1st Guards would earn their name of Grenadier Guards later that afternoon (see sidebar about the British Foot Guards on pages 16-17).

While generally recognized as excellent infantry, British Guardsmen were never regarded by the rest of the army with the same respect enjoyed by their French counterparts. Any reverse the Guards suffered was seen by the rest of the army not with dismay, but rather a certain jealous satisfaction. However, Wellington did not risk any morale problems by placing them in an exposed position.

The Hanoverian jäger had a uniform and a rifle very similar to a British rifleman's. The Lüneburg Battalion was also considered a light battalion and dressed in British rifle green. As the Nassauers were also uniformed in green, the woods around Hougoumont were filled with green-clad German light infantry, while behind them the buildings, garden and orchard were held by Guards light infantry dressed in red. The Guards, Nassauers and probably the Hanoverians had been engaged at Quatre Bras on the 16th (two days before Waterloo), but the Guards light companies

had not suffered as much as their parent battalions.

Oddly enough, the Nassau detachment was from the 2nd Nassau Regiment, whose brigade was on the extreme east flank by the village of Papelotte, rather than from Kruse's 1st Nassau Regiment, which was on the center of the ridge not far off. This meant that most of the defenders, both the Nassauers and Guards, had fought at Quatre Bras against the same French of General Reille's 2nd Corps now facing them across the valley.

Opposite the Hougomont complex stood General Foy's division, but General (and Napoleon's youngest brother) Jérôme Bonaparte's division just off to the west began the assault. Jérôme's left flank was covered by General Piré's cavalry division, while General Bachelu's division stood between Foy and the French center. All four divisions belonged to Reille's corps and most of them became entangled in the Hougomont "battle within a battle". Reille's corps had seen hard service at Quatre Bras two days earlier, but seemed confident as the day began. With Napoleon and the rest of the army present, they expected a happier outcome.

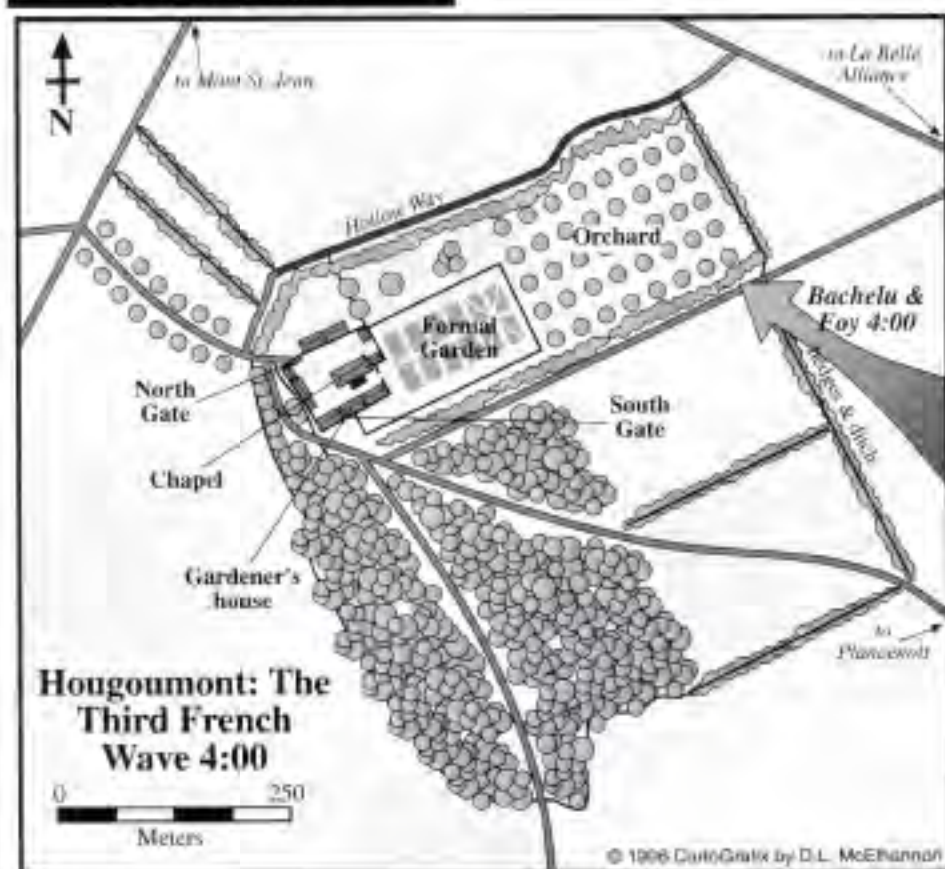
The First French Assault Gains the Woods

Jérôme started the battle at 11:30 A.M., when he sent forward Baudin's brigade. (In some sources, especially French, command of this division is ascribed to Guilleminot, the second in command, presumably as he was a well-respected general, and Jérôme Bonaparte was not.) The five battalions advanced in echelon, the left leading, preceded by a strong line of skirmishers. They were met by fire from the Germans in the woods.

Jérôme's batteries opened fire to support

...already things had started to go wrong for the French.

the advancing troops, and on the Emperor's orders General Kellerman's 3rd Cavalry Corps's two horse artillery batteries were added to the French gun line south of Hougomont. Piré's horse artillery battery was also drawn in; it found a small mound



near the Nivelles road where it could enfilade some of the British batteries acting in defense of Hougomont. This was probably an error: it was a misuse of horse artillery, which was valuable in closer support due to its mobility, and the lack of it would be felt dearly later in the day when not enough horse guns were available to support the massed cavalry attacks on the center of the Anglo-Allied line.

Bull's battery, Royal Horse Artillery (RHA), fired the first gun from the British side. It was apparently on target with its opening shot: it was said to have caused three casualties to the (st) *Ligeo* Regiment. Sandham's battery joined in, followed by Cleey's King's German Legion (KGL) Foot battery. A brisk artillery duel followed, the French guns trying to silence the British ones, the British guns maintaining a steady fire on Jérôme's columns. The British artillery was evidently well-handled and accurate this day.

The French columns were checked for a while by the British guns and the obstinate resistance; already things had started to go wrong for the French. Baudin was killed at the beginning of the assault, but his men forced their way into the woods, driving back the Hanoverians and Nassauers.

Wellington in person directed Bull to fire his howitzers over Hougomont and the

Continued on page 14

R. Ellison, Lieutenant, 1st Foot Guards:

"In looking at the plan [Siborne's sketches for his famous model of the battle], I cannot help thinking that the wood at Hougomont is represented as much thicker and closer than it actually was. It had no underwood, and was easily traversed in all parts by Light Infantry, and the communication of files kept up with the greatest facility.

"I can speak to that point, as I was sent at one time of the day (I believe about two o'clock) from the orchard with some Light Troops to drive the French Tirailleurs back, who had become very annoying to the farm, and were gradually gaining ground, particularly on the right flank of our position.

"We drove them quite out of the wood upon three French Columns, which were posted at the bottom of the hill outside the wood, ready to move up and renew their attack upon the farmhouse, two of these Columns just beginning to move; the third unpling arms and falling in to the support. We of course, were driven back immediately."

Hougoumont Today

By Cal Hurd

On our sixth trip to Europe, my wife Lisa and I were finally able to visit the Waterloo battlefield. After attending *Le Mondial de la Figurine*, the Historical Figure World Expo '96 in Paris, we took the high speed (180 mph) train from Paris to Brussels.

Many visitors to Waterloo go to Brussels first. You will be in good company. King George IV and Tsar Alexander I stayed there while visiting the battlefield. Fortunately, Brussels is one of the least expensive cities in Europe. A meal in a good restaurant in Brussels costs about half what it does in Paris.

There are two ways to see the battlefield. First, you can book a regular guided tour with *Les Guides 1815, Centre du Visiteur, Route du Lion 252, 1420 Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium*. It costs about \$79 US per person. In addition to Waterloo you will get to see the little jewel-box castle, *Gaasbeek*. It alone is worth the price. Second, you can take a "W" bus from the *l'Europe* square in central Brussels

and tour on your own. We did both and spent two days at Waterloo.

If you tour on your own, tell the bus driver that you want to get off at "Waterloo Eglise" (buses leave every half hour). The trip costs just under \$3 US. After a short drive through suburbs you will arrive across the street from the Wellington Museum in the village of Waterloo. The actual battlefield lies two miles south.

The Museum is housed in the old post office that the Duke used as his headquarters. There are many interesting items on display including well done dioramas using 54mm model soldiers. The best of these is of the French assault on the farm of Hougoumont. There are, of course, many of the Duke's personal items and the bed in which Wellington's aide Lt-Col. Gordon died. In an attached building is a fine collection of Napoleonic uniforms.

After the Museum, take the bus again and tell the driver that you want to get off at "Le Lion" (another \$1 US).

You will be dropped off in sight of the "Butte d'É

Lion". This massive artificial hill erected on the site where the Prince of Orange was wounded.

The Waterloo Visitors Center with the panorama painting of the battle is a quarter mile walk.

The Center also has a "spectacular" (two interesting movies for about \$7 US per person), and sells tickets to the Lion Mound (yes, you have to pay to climb the hill) and the panorama painting. You can get your Lion Mound and Panorama tickets as a package deal.

Rumors had the big circular painting in bad shape. Fortunately, the local govern-

ment has completely refurbished it. The panorama shows the battle at the moment of the French cavalry charge. Your view point is right behind Captain Mercer's Royal Horse Artillery battery's position. Don't miss it. [Lachouque's book *Waterloo* (1975) has photographs of the panorama.]

Leaving the building, turn left and take the narrow lane called "Chemin 1815". Fields bordering the lane are planted with wheat and sugar beets and look about as they did in 1815. Walk along the base of the

Our feeling...was similar to that we had near the Bloody Pond at Shiloh or on the bridge across Antietam Creek

Lion Mound and you come out on the ridge line that was the British main line of resistance.

The country around Waterloo is "rolling" terrain, very much like that in the vicinity of Dayton, Ohio. I thought that references to ridge lines and hills, reverse slopes, etc., were exaggerated a bit and that the country was probably pretty flat. I was wrong. There is in fact a very pronounced ridge line with a steep slope going down into a shallow depression to the northwest. [This ridge line



The main gate as seen today.

**GUIDES
1815**



was more pronounced before the removal of so much earth to create the Lion Mound several years after the battle. The erection of the monument also obliterated part of the sunken road. Troops drawn up here would indeed be sheltered from French artillery fire coming from south of this position.

On your walk you come to a monument to the French cavalry and then another stone that marks the position of Captain Mercer's battery, your vantage point when viewing the panorama.

Our feeling, while walking down this lane, was similar to that we had near the Bloody Pond at Shiloh or on the bridge across Antietam Creek. A tremendous event took place where we were standing and an emotional echo of that event seems to linger at the site.

If you continue down the lane about another 1000 yards you arrive at the farm of Hougomont. This is a working farm, and while the owner does not object to visitors walking on the lanes, do not enter the farm itself. In June, on the anniversary of the battle, the farms and other private areas are more tolerant of visitors.

The defense of Hougomont by the British Guards and waggon train troops (the latter, along with the German defenders, are usually forgotten or ignored) is described elsewhere in this issue. The main building, tower, coach shed, cow shed, east stable and east gate into the walled garden were destroyed during the battle, and the wooded area has been almost completely eliminated. Otherwise, the gardener's house and surrounding buildings such as the main barns are much the same as they were 182 years ago.

The garden wall in the front of the farm, flanking the main gate, is still standing. It is, however, at least two feet lower than it was in 1815. The British soldiers knocked loopholes in the wall to fire through and afterwards the upper portion was knocked down. There are several memorial stones in the wall and buildings. Inside the farm is the chapel, the only remaining portion of the original main building. It is still a consecrated church and has a memorial to the soldiers who fell here.

Return now to the Visitors Center and the cluster of monuments next to a busy highway. Directly in front of you is La Haye Sainte farm; a strongpoint like Hougomont, but much smaller and one which fell to the French. The corner next to the main gate and small orchard are both gone, but it has not significantly changed otherwise. On the south side of the farm the walls still show the hits from French cannon balls, especially the ricochet shots about knee-high level. The road is heavily traveled; be



careful crossing!

Like Hougomont, La Haye Sainte is a working farm. Do not enter! Up the road, past the farm, is Napoleon's headquarters at La Belle Alliance with its Wounded Eagle, a beautiful and poignant monument to the Imperial Guard. To your left is the village of Plancenoit through which the Prussians attacked the French at the close of the day.

Waterloo is commercialized, but less so than Gettysburg. On the bus ride back to Brussels we remembered an exciting and moving experience, recommended for every student of the Napoleonic Wars who wants to really appreciate and understand the momentous event that was Waterloo!

Above: Hougomont after the battle (historical print courtesy of Greenhill Books, On the Fields of Glory)

Below: Close up of the Guards' memorial at Hougomont.



Left: The memorial to the Royal Waggon Train found at Hougomont.



garden. Bull's battery was unusually equipped, with only 5.5" howitzers, giving them an indirect fire capability. Given the

...the French infantry were repeatedly sent in to do the job in the most difficult way possible, something they had succeeded in doing many times in the past, and very nearly did so again.

inaccuracy of the guns of the time, coupled with the proximity of allied troops in the chateau and garden, Bull's battery did extremely well. Their fire is credited with hurting the French badly.

The French who came out of the wood opposite the garden and buildings soon fell

back from the intense fire that came from windows, loopholes and over the garden wall. More to the right, the German skirmishers were driven back into the orchard, but Saltoun's two companies standing by the hollow way behind it were unleashed in a counterattack. The French were driven back into the wood. Some accounts say that Bull's howitzer fire forced the French back, but it may have taken a bayonet charge to swing the balance. Saltoun's Guardsmen and the Germans took up positions in the orchard ready for the next stage.

The Second French Assault Nearly Captures the Chateau

Despite the reminder from Guilleminot, his second in command, that it wasn't part of Napoleon's plan to press the attack too far, Jérôme committed his only other brigade under Soye.

Certain actions might have led to French success, but none of these were executed. No effort took place to get any cannon through the woods to break down the walls, and no petards—explosive charges to blow down gates or walls—were provided. No ladders were issued or constructed, nor was any other method of getting over the walls pro-

vided to the troops. Clearly none of the commanders on the spot had thought out the requirements necessary for this assault, and in the heat of battle, no attempt to address these needs was ever made. Thus, the French infantry were repeatedly sent in to do the job in the most difficult way possible, something they had succeeded in doing many times in the past, and very nearly did so again.

With the support of Baudin's rallied men, this second attack got farther. Soye's brigade came up against the high garden wall. The only way over was to scramble up with the help of comrades below, none who made it over survived. (Ironically, the French memorial at Hougoumont is placed in the garden which they could never enter in force.)

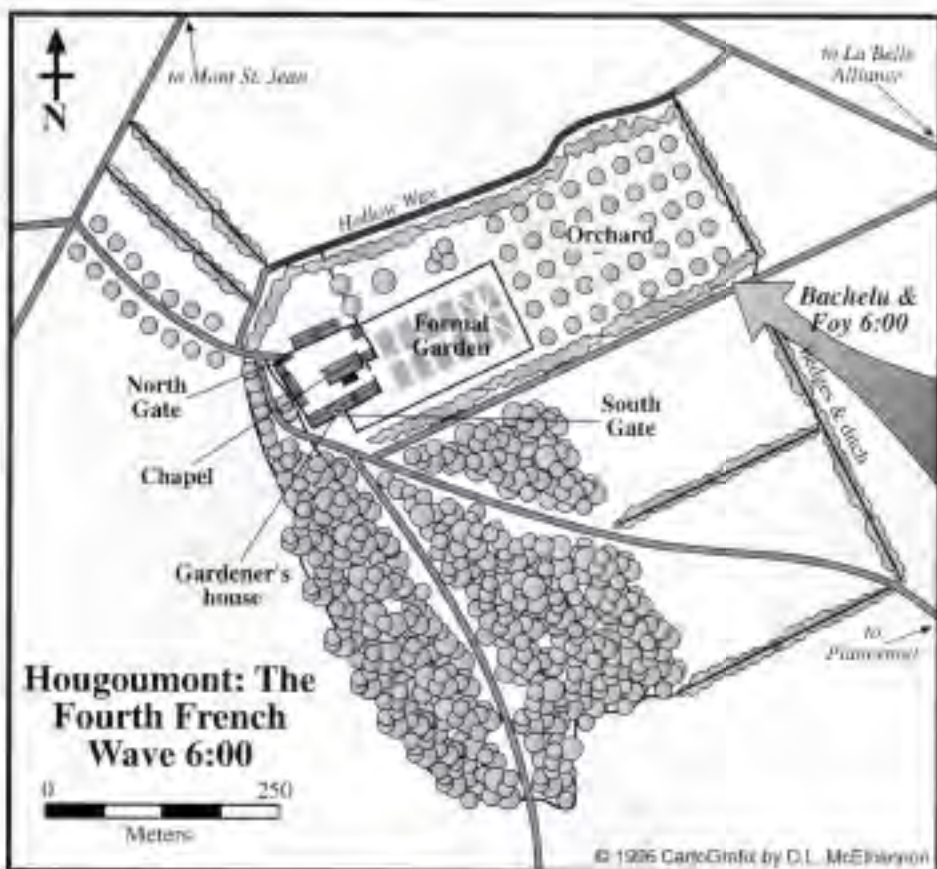
Baudin's former brigade was directed more to the left. Jérôme, Guilleminot, even the corps commander Reille, were all seen leading from the front.

Jérôme's second attack was taken under fire from Bolton's battery and also Sympher's Hanoverian horse battery, but counter-battery fire from Pire's horse battery suppressed much of Bolton's fire. Smith's battery, Royal Foot Artillery (RFA), and Kuhlman's Horse Battery, KGL, also got into the action.

Not only were the allies quickly pushed out of the wood again, but the more westerly approach took the defenders by surprise. The handful of Scots Guards and Coldstreamers by the haystack were quickly driven back, the haystack itself set alight. The defenders fell back into the buildings by the gate on the west side. The French from the 1st *Léger* tried to follow them in, and were only held out by fierce hand to hand fight-

Wielding a pioneer's ax, he forced his way into the courtyard, followed by about 40 men.

ing. The 1st *Léger*'s Colonel Cubières fell wounded outside the gate. In later years Cubières thanked one of the British Guards officers for his life. When he was hit and thrown from his horse, he could see that the defenders refrained from shooting at him.



His horse was seized however, and borne off in triumph by a Guards sergeant.

The danger of the still open gate soon became clear as the 1st Leger made another effort, led by a Lieutenant Lugnot, a large man nicknamed the *l'Enfermeur*. Wielding a pioneer's ax, he forced his way into the courtyard, followed by about 40 men (see Keith Bocco's painting on pages 4-5).

Macdonell, helped by four others, ran to the gate and forced it shut against more French trying to push into the courtyard. The deed called for great physical strength and courage for which Wellington later gave Macdonell and his fellows due credit. Meanwhile more Guardsmen converged on the intruders and slew all the French except for a young drummer boy.

More French skirmishers pushed past the left of the buildings and beyond to threaten the ridge. They succeeded in silencing Smith's battery, already galled by flanking fire from Piré's horse battery. To drive them off, four more companies of the Coldstreams descended the ridge. They were just in time, as French grenadiers were still trying to cut through the gate or climb over it. With the French driven back, these Guardsmen were added to the garrison of the buildings.

Despite the repeated successes by the defenders, the crisis was not yet over for the British. In fact, Hougomont came close to being lost for lack of ammunition, but officers were able to get Private Joseph Brewster (sometimes referred to as "Brewer") of the Wagon Train to drive a tumbril loaded with ammunition down to the buildings through a gauntlet of enemy fire.

Joseph Brewster (no relation to the author) may be the real hero of Hougomont. La Haye Sainte fell primarily because the defenders ran out of ammunition. Some accounts place this key resupply later in the day, but Fletcher and Poulter point out in *Gentlemen's Sons* it may have happened before the gates were closed or else how could the wagon have been driven into the chateau?

By 1 P.M., Guilleminot's (Jérôme's) two brigades, now weary and much fewer, had fallen back into the wood, wary of attacking the buildings and garden walls where they were shot down by well-concoiled defend-

Foy's Division Joins the Assault

The buildings were attacked again, probably with much less *élan* than before. The well defended garden walls were apparently too tough to break through, but entrance into the orchard was easier. By now there was a large gap in the hedge, and Jérôme's men surged in once more. Foy had seen that the defenders could also be outflanked by going down the chateau's east side. Salton's light companies and the Germans were pushed back tree by tree, until they were back in the hollow way.

Many wounded died in the flames as the officers held the Guardsmen to the defense of the still threatened chateau rather than to let them go off on rescue missions.

The French attempt to run down the east side of the orchard was visible from the ridge above, and it was pointed out to the Prince of Orange, who commanded one of Wellington's two infantry corps. He coolly remarked: "No, don't stir the Duke is sure to see that movement, and will take steps to counteract it." Two companies of the

Scots Guards were soon seen advancing down the eastern hedge of the orchard to stop the French. Meanwhile the French in the orchard found that defenders of the garden were able to maintain a dangerous fire from that side. Their impetus spent, and both flanks threatened, the French were unable to stand up to Salton's counterattack and were thrown out of the orchard again. Still, Foy's attack was described as "most desperate."

Foy had been seriously wounded and carried from the field. Jérôme had been hit in the arm, and also had to be carried off. They bow him to the Emperor; perhaps it rattled Napoleon to see his brother so disposed.

Howitzers Set Fire to the Chateau

Jérôme's and Foy's attacks were finished. General d'Erlon's 1st Corps had likewise been repulsed on the east side of the battlefield, and Marshal Ney was about to begin his famous cavalry charges in the center. French maneuvers were much inconvenienced by the narrow front available between La Haye Sainte and Hougomont.

Continued on page 11

THE FINEST IN 54mm Napoleonic FIGURES!

More than 100 different pieces to choose from, representing many regiments of the First Empire.

\$5 color catalog, refundable with first order



628 S. Myrtle Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016

Redoubt Enterprises presents Napoleonic-Peninsular War Wellington's Indian Battles



The finest 25mm figures, available in the U.S. exclusively from
Miniature Service Center
 1525 Bridge #163, Yuba City, CA 95993
 (916) 673-5169

The British Foot Guards at Hougoumont

by John Brewster

In December 1813 Wellington felt it necessary to issue a rebuke to his Foot Guards. The subject was umbrellas: "The Guards may in uniform, while on duty at St. James's, carry them if they please; but in the field it is not only ridiculous but unmilitary." It is difficult to imagine Napoleon having to send a similar order to his Imperial Guard.

As the accompanying article shows, much of the fighting at Hougoumont was done by elements of the three regiments of British Foot Guards. What were these Guards like?

The 1st Brigade, 1st Division was composed of the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 1st Foot Guards. The two battalions were represented at Hougoumont only by their light companies, but they literally made their name later in the day when they played a major part in repulsing the attack of the French Guards on the ridge above. As a result, they were given the name of Grenadier Guards that they bear today.

The two units comprising the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, were the 2nd battalion, Coldstream Guards, and the 2nd battalion, 3rd Foot Guards (soon to be known as the Scots Guards). All of this brigade fought at Hougoumont, except for small parties left on the ridge above to guard the colors, and perhaps to form a nucleus if the battalions ever needed to reform.

All the Guards regiments had essentially the same uniform. [See illustrations on facing page] red jackets with the blue facings that denoted a royal regiment. Other than the shako plate, it would not have looked that different from the uniforms of other royal regiments at Waterloo. The most visible difference between the Guards regiments was the arrangement of the buttons and button loops on their jackets. The 1st Guards arranged theirs singly, at regularly spaced intervals. The Coldstreams arranged theirs in pairs, and the Scots Guards in threes.

Naturally people tend to compare the British Guards with the French Imperial Guard, and the British Grenadier Guards did defeat some of their counterparts late in the day at Waterloo. But there are as many differences as similarities between the two forces.

The British Guards recruited their men directly, and never chose veterans from the line regiments. But the prestige of the Guards gave them great advantages in recruiting; thus, these regiments were usually closer to

regulation strength than the line regiments, and the Guards took great pains to get the best physical specimens. Certainly they did not want the "short-arsed" commonly seen in lesser regiments.

The prestige of the Guards came from their position of being the King's Guards, from their usual post in London, and their socially superior officer corps. Guardsmen could expect to escape dreary colonial postings, unless there was an interesting war, such as the one in the American colonies.

The Guards officer corps was not only truly aristocratic—only the best cavalry regiments could compare to them in social tone—but also affluent. During the Napoleonic Wars several Guards officers spent great fortunes maintaining appearances. Being socially higher and better connected, Guards officers had a decided edge in competition

A superb cadre of NCOs compensated for the shortage of officers.... In fact quite a few of them eventually got commissions, but never, of course, in the socially conscious Guards.

for plum staff positions. As a result the battalions were often understrength in officers.

A superb cadre of NCOs compensated for the shortage of officers. If companies of Guards were led by inexperienced and aristocratic lieutenants, the sergeant was always a highly seasoned, long service man. Considered the acme of drill instructors, Guards sergeants were often sent to other infantry corps to teach them how to do it. In fact quite a few of them eventually got commissions, but never, of course, in the socially conscious Guards.

The Guards had performed notably on continental battlefields since their creation. The long list of battle honors in turn served to increase their prestige. Four battalions had served in the Peninsular campaigns at various stages, and had seen hard service, especially in the retreat to Corunna in 1808 and

holding the center at Talavera in 1809. Of the four battalions at Waterloo, only the 3rd battalion of the 1st Foot Guards had served in Spain, but veterans were to be found in the other battalions. The Coldstreams had been serving in the Low Countries since 1814.

There were some critical differences between British and French Guards. The French Old Guard infantry, officers and men were selected from the best of the French infantry. French Guard officers were meant to be the finest in their service, and not simply socially superior. The French Guard provided a source of good officers and NCOs to their line counterparts, other than a few drill sergeants, the British Guards only provided an example of military and social graces. The French Guard lured away the best of the line, to a probably pernicious degree, while the British Guards, on the other hand, would never have accepted them.

The French and British Guards were also utilized differently in battle. The French Old Guard infantry was usually retained as final reserve, while the British Guards often served their turn in the front line like any other unit. As they were in combat more often, sometimes in tough spots, British line units were somewhat accustomed to seeing the Guards fighting, and if necessary running as they did at Talavera.

When the French Middle Guard were repelled in the final assault on the ridge at Waterloo, it had a shattering effect on the French army. The rout of the British Guards at Talavera, on the other hand, had not caused general demoralization. While the French Guard was the idol of the French soldier, and his desired post was in its ranks, this simply was not true in the British army. Common British soldiers could not aspire to join the Guards. Many British units at Waterloo thought they were as good, if not better than the Guards. The 52nd Light Infantry, the Black Watch, and Gordon Highlanders certainly did, as well as tough regiments like the 44th and 71st. The Guards were seen as first among equals, not the elite of the army, and many British soldiers ridiculed the social pretensions of the Guards mercilessly.

So, what would have happened if the British Guards had been routed at Waterloo? Perhaps the same as was alleged at Alma in 1854 in Queen Victoria's time, in a story that is perhaps apocryphal. As the Scots Fusilier Guards were sent reeling down the ridge by a Russian counterattack, the line units around are said to have cried, "Where are the Queen's pets now?" and eagerly went into the attack.





Out of the woods comes a massive attack against the south gate of the chateau in Hougomont.
Photo and diorama courtesy of Rick Schulte.

Bull's howitzers have already been praised for the effectiveness of their fire. Finally the French thought to return the favor. If Jérôme and Reille were too busy, Napoleon himself could see that howitzers would be effective against the strong chateau buildings. He ordered howitzers to be gathered from various batteries, and soon howitzer shells set Hougomont on fire. It was probably about 2:45 P.M., a short time before Ney's impetuous massed cavalry attack. The burning chateau formed, in the words of Colonel Frazier (commander of the RHA) "a striking feature in this murderous scene".

Inside the chateau the flames caused havoc. The defenders held on to their posts to the last moment, and then shifted to find other vantage points free of the flames. Many wounded died in the flames as the officers held the Guardsmen to the defense of the still threatened chateau rather than to let them go off on rescue missions.

However, there were exceptions. One of the men who helped Macdonnell to close the gate was Ser-



geant Graham of the Coldstreams. Later in the day, while stationed along the garden wall facing the wood, and at one of the heated moments of the battle, he asked Macdonnell's permission to fall out. Macdonnell expressed surprise at such a request at such a time. Graham explained that his brother lay wounded in one of the burning buildings. Given permission, Graham retrieved his brother, took him to a safer place, and returned to his post. The Guards still pride themselves at being very formal in stressful times.

After a long day repelling numerous assaults, the defenders were getting tired. The French continued to keep up the pressure. Most of General Byng's brigade of Guards was committed to Hougomont's defense. All but two companies of the Coldstream Guards were now defending the buildings and garden. The last two companies were on the slopes above, guarding the colors.

Colonel Hepburn led the remainder of the Scots Guards to defend the orchard. Salfoun's weary light infantrymen were able to rejoin the rest of the 1st Guards on the ridge above.

Despite the casualties, confusion and disorder caused by several failed attacks, the French once again forced their way into the orchard. But with converging fire from the garden wall and hollow way, it was still a killing ground and the attackers faltered. Colonel Hepburn led the Scots Guards forward in a sudden and vigorous rush. The retreating French suffered severely as they were forced to bunch at the gap in the fence as they retired. The Scots Guards then established themselves along the southern ledge of the orchard. The French attacks were becoming weaker and weaker as their morale disintegrated with each failed assault.

Hougoumont Consumes the French 2nd Corps

Bulle had clearly lost control of the 2nd Corps, as his third division, Bachelu's, got pulled into the fruitless attacks on Hougomont. Bachelu may have been trying to attack the British center in support of Ney's cavalry, but whether by British fire or by the attraction of the burning chateau, some of his troops were deflected west. As his columns turned they were raked by Cleeve's battery, KGL. His division fell back in confusion, a testament to what a single battery could do under optimal conditions.

At about 3:30, Bachelu led a second attack through the orchard with some of his reformed division, but this had no better luck than the attacks by Jérôme and Foy before as the British were stronger now. It was this sustained pressure that kept the Guards at their posts as the buildings burned around them.

Du Plat's KGL brigade was severely harassed by French skirmishers infiltrating up the ridge, using the smoke and confusion of Hougomont as cover. To counter this, Du Plat sent down his light companies, and then the 2nd Line Battalion, KGL. After fighting since late morning, the Nassauers may have finally been relieved at this point, but this is not clear.

The Brunswick Avant-Garde Battalion was also committed, but exactly where and how successfully is hard to determine from current sources. While the rest of the Brunswick contingent fought bravely in the center, the Avant-Garde may have been weakened by its efforts at Quatre Bras and dispersed somewhat. To the east of Hougomont, Captain Ross of the British 51st recorded: "There were some straggling Brunsvickers, who joined our ranks at this place, and a few of their old soldiers remained during the day with my company, as they recollected me when serving with them in the 7th Division (in Spain)".

This was not the end of the Anglo-Allied reinforcements coming down to Hougomont. About 5 or perhaps 6 P.M., two or three battalions of Hanoverian landwehr joined the Scots Guards in the orchard. General Halkett, their brigade commander, wrote that he remembered one of his battalions being sent into the wood, and two others occupying the ditches in the rear of Hougomont. At one point he tried to bring up the two battalions, but the officer sent to fetch them was killed, and he went into the final advance with only the Osnabrück Battalion. Three battalions of his brigade may have got into the Hougomont action or its fringes: Landwehr Battalions

Bremervörde, Quackenbrück, and Salgitter. With all these reinforcements, the Scots Guards and some of the German reinforcements retook the wood. The battle for Hougoumont was all but over by 7 P.M. Only desultory fire continued.

Why had the French generals become so obsessed with Hougoumont?

Reille tried to free his corps from the Hougoumont entanglement. He led Bachelu's and Foy's rallied divisions against the center of the British line about 6 P.M. They were cut to pieces as they reached the crest, and a quarter of the 5,000 men involved fell before they broke. This distraction was probably 2nd Corps's most valuable contribution to the French cause that day, but it was far too late to do any good.

Hougoumont in Retrospect

The intensity of the infantry fire around Hougoumont was enough that "the trees in advance of the chateau were cut to pieces by musketry." The exhausted defenders turned in for the night on the position they defended.

Clearly with two and a half divisions committed, Hougoumont absorbed almost the whole of Reille's corps; perhaps 13,000 infantry and 50 guns, including Kellerman's artillery, tied up for all or most of the day. It was a poor use of troops. It is possible, but unlikely, that Napoleon thought the 2nd Corps was too battered by the fighting at Quatre Bras to be of much use at Waterloo, and therefore was not concerned with it being drawn into the assaults on Hougoumont. If so, the French losses at Quatre Bras may have been more severe than most accounts describe.

It is difficult to estimate French casualties at Hougoumont, as the entire 2nd Corps, Bachelu's division particularly, had been so heavily engaged at Quatre Bras two days before. Post-battle returns exaggerate combat losses due to the scattering of troops during the retreat, so an estimate of 5,000, as given by Julian Pagan and Derek Saunders in *Hougoumont*, seems reasonable. An alternative method of estimating French losses

can be reached by tabulating French officer casualties at Waterloo. Using Scott Bowden's invaluable book *Armies at Waterloo*, it appears that the divisions of Jérôme, Foy and Bachelu had 28 officers killed at Waterloo, and 166 wounded or missing. Assuming twenty rank and file lost for each officer, this extrapolates to total casualties of just over four thousand.

The severity of the fighting is illustrated by the fact all three French division commanders were wounded at Hougoumont. Jérôme was wounded, Bachelu was seriously wounded by a shell splinter, and Foy was hit and carried from the field, though he was back in command late in the day.

Why had the French generals become so obsessed with Hougoumont? Perhaps it was because the position would have made a superb point from which to attack the heart of Wellington's main line if it had fallen. The loss of La Haye Sainte marked the nadir of Wellington's day; the loss of Hougoumont would have been fatal. Perhaps Wellington's gradual reinforcement of the garrison made it seem vulnerable for most of the day. The risks Wellington took may have had the benefit of luring the French to overcommit, but

it was a gamble he might have lost but for Macdonell's heroics.

On the other hand, Wellington's strategy may have mattered less.



© 1997 Keith Rowley

than the lack of a coherent French plan at Hougoumont. Reille's three division commanders each moved off to fight their own private battles, uncoordinated and undirected by Reille. Reconnaissance and preparations to assault a walled chateau were nonexistent.

Adding to the controversy, Julian Pagan and Derek Saunders have a very interesting footnote in their new book about a reminiscence of Jérôme several years later. Accord-

Allied Losses at Hougoumont

Formation	Strength	Killed/Wounded
Light Coys., 1st Guards	169	100*
2nd (Coldstream) Guards	1,100	56/263
3rd (Scots) Guards	1,160	45/214
1st Battalion/2nd Nassau	700*	150*
Hanoverian Jäger	180*	35*
Lüneburg detachment	100*	?
2nd Line Battalion, KGL	550	20/95
KGL Light Companies	150*	0
Brunswick Avant-Garde	635	7/20
Bremervörde-LW Bn	655	18/28
Quackenbrück LW Bn	609	2/35
Salgitter LW Bn	644	20/89

*These numbers are estimates; for casualties they are pro-rata estimates from the casualty totals of parent formations. Question marks represent unknowns, but these casualties are presumed to be negligible.

Some of these casualties, sometimes a significant proportion, may have been suffered from French artillery fire as the battalions waited on the ridge above. If more Brunswick or KGL battalions were present, it would raise the number of troops committed by a thousand or so, but not alter the casualty numbers significantly as their participation was limited.

The two light companies of the 1st Guards suffered nearly 61% casualties. The Coldstreams lost 24% while the Scots Battalion suffered 22% losses. The Nassauers, Hanoverian jägers and KGL Battalion lost about the same percentage as the Scots: 21% each. French percentage of losses is estimated around 35% for the divisions involved in the attacks. Overall the French lost three to four times as many men in the fighting at Hougoumont.

Continued on page 23

Elements of the Anglo-Allied Army

Detached from Maitland's Brigade

Light Companies, 1st Guards

 165

Detached from Byng's Brigade

2nd Battalion, 2nd Coldstream Guards

 1,100

2nd Battalion, 3rd (Scots) Guards

 1,160

Initially only the light companies of Byng's command were fighting at Hougoumont. Eventually both battalions were committed and this was the only complete British brigade to see action at the Chateau.

Detached from Saxe-Weimar's Brigade

1st Battalion, 2nd Nassau

 700

Detached from Kielmanssegge's Brigade

Hanoverian Field Jäger Companies

 160

Detachment of Lüneburg Bn. (Hanoverian)

 100

Detached from Du Plat's Brigade

KGL Light Companies

 150

2nd Line Battalion, KGL

 550

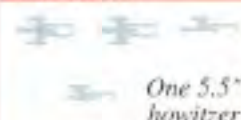
Detached from Brunswick Contingent

Brunswick Avante-Garde

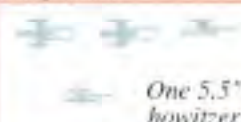
 635

The Brunswick Avante-Garde actually had two uniforms in use at this time. Half of the battalion wore the grey with green piping shown above and a Tyrolian hat. The other half wore black with the same green piping and a black shako.

Battery Sympher

 Five
9-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

Battery Smith

 Five
6-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

Battery Bull

 Six 5.5"
howitzers

Most likely other batteries were involved, but these batteries most definitely fired in the defense of Hougoumont. Additionally they participated in other actions elsewhere on the battlefield.

Detached from H. Halkett's Brigade

Bremervörde Landwehr

 655

Quackenbrück Landwehr

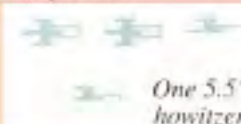
 609

Salgitter Landwehr

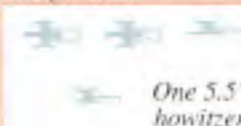
 644

British Batteries Involved at Hougoumont

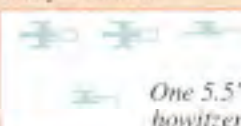
Battery Bolton

 Five
9-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

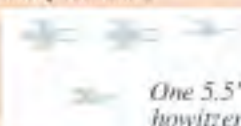
Battery Cleeves

 Five
9-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

Battery Kuhlman

 Five
9-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

Battery Sandham

 Five
9-pdr guns
One 5.5"
howitzer

Individual blocks represent either cavalry squadrons or infantry battalions. Triangles represent companies or detachments. Cannon symbols represent two guns. The block colors represent the coat colors of each regiment, and the lines enclosing the blocks represent the regiment's facing or cuff colors.

Order of Battle information primarily from *Armies at Waterloo* (1983), by Scott Bowden, published by Empire Games Press, Arlington, Texas.

Data compilation by John Brewster
Layout by D.L. McElhannon.

The Commitment of Allied Forces to Hougoumont

The initial defenders of Hougoumont consisted of the light companies of all four Guards battalions (4 companies), 2 companies of Jägers, a hand picked detachment of Lüneburg, and a battalion of Nassauers. In keeping with his command style, Wellington dispatched troops in penny packets to the chateau as the fighting began to heat up. The first reinforcements consisted of the Scots and Coldstream Guards battalions. Next came Du Plat's KGL battalion and then the Brunswick Avante-Garde. Finally, the three Landwehr battalions were pulled into the fighting. Although this would appear to be a recipe for disaster, it would seem that the British were more flexible in their command structure and were better able to adapt on the go, in much the same way as the Wehrmacht was able to do in World War II. What makes this ability to function even more incredible is that they were able to accomplish it long before the invention of the radio.



Struggle at Hougoumont 18 June, 1815

6th Infantry Division: General Jérôme Bonaparte

1st Brigade: General Baudin

1st Légère

1,888

2nd Légère

2,341

2nd Brigade: General Soye





1st Line

1,795

2nd Line

1,795

2nd Company, 2nd Foot Artillery Regiment

   Six 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers

This division had suffered only minor losses during the battle at Quatre-Bras on June 16th, with most of those being taken by Soye's brigade.

9th Infantry Division: General Foy

1st Brigade: General Gauthier

92nd Line

1,068

93rd Line

1,486

2nd Brigade: General Jamin





100th Line

1,118

4th Légère

1,634

1st Company, 6th Foot Artillery Regiment

   Six 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers

This division had suffered 800 losses during the battle at Quatre-Bras on June 16th, with most of those being taken by Jamin's brigade.

5th Infantry Division: General Bachelu

1st Brigade: General Husson

3rd Line

1,143

61st Line

858

2nd Brigade: General Campi





72nd Line

995

108th Line

1,107




18th Company, 6th Foot Artillery Regiment

   Six 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers




Bachelu's division had been heavily involved on the 16th at Quatre-Bras and was therefore significantly reduced in strength before the fight at Hougoumont. It is not certain this division participated at Hougoumont, but its conspicuous absence from anywhere else on the battlefield, plus the divisional commander's presence at the chateau lend credence to the fact that it probably fought there.

Additional Horse Artillery Batteries in Support




2nd Company, 2nd Horse Artillery Regiment

  Four 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers

3rd Company, 2nd Horse Artillery Regiment

  Four 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers

2nd Company, 4th Horse Artillery Regiment

  Four 6-pdr guns  Two 5.5" Howitzers

These guns were fairly effective in suppressing the British artillery during the day, but did little else to support the attacks upon the chateau. They would be sorely missed by Napoleon later in the day when not enough guns could be found to properly support the massed cavalry attacks in the center.

The Commitment of French Forces to Hougoumont

The initial attacks upon the chateau complex were designed to keep the Allies occupied while the main effort cracked the British center. To provide a convincing distraction the first group to attack the complex was an entire division, that of Jérôme Bonaparte, the 6th Infantry. Slightly behind that attack was one by the first brigade of the 9th division.

The final efforts were made by the divisions of Foy and Bachelu. Heavy fire from the main British line steered more troops into the fight at the chateau than Napoleon intended, a fact which was to come back to haunt him later in the day.

ing to them, Jérôme said that about an hour after the battle began, Napoleon told him, "If Grouchy does not come up or if you do not carry Hougoumont, the battle is decid-

...Wellington was lucky,
and Hougoumont was a
battle that suited him.

edly lost — *su go — go* and carry Hougoumont — *coûte que coûte*." Unfortunately, the authors do not mention their source, but if Jérôme is to be believed, Napoleon's encouragement to his headstrong but untalented brother was dangerous if not foolish.

The success of Wellington's strategy is often exaggerated by an underestimate of the forces he committed there. In all there were the two battalions of Coldstream and Scots Guards, the two light companies of the 1st Guards, several companies of Hanoverian light troops and perhaps three battalions of *landwehr*, a battalion of the KGL and perhaps more of their light companies, and a battalion each of Nassauers

and Brunswickers. This comes to 6,600 men committed, about half the French total engaged at Hougoumont. Of course, the allied troops were not all there at the same time, but this is where their major efforts were made.

Of this 6,600, about 4,200 appear to have become casualties. This is a much higher number than is sometimes quoted, but it is still clear that Wellington got a better return on his investment in this attritional struggle.

Some authors have tried to impose a rigid structure of phases to the Hougoumont action. It is true that there were major French surges as new formations were committed, which usually led to new waves of allied reinforcements in response. Emphasizing these as separate, specific phases gives a neat view in retrospect. But if the real thing had been so tidy, some very competent French generals would not have dashed so many good troops against such impossible obstacles. Instead, broken up by the woods, the hedges, and very effective artillery fire, French brigades stumbled into unseen or unexplored defenses. As officer after officer went down, brigade assaults disintegrated into repeated piecemeal attacks by battalions, companies, and finally handfuls of

men following some trusted officer or sergeant, until the arrival of a new wave of fresh troops.

Ironically, it may have been due to this very confusion that apparently futile French attacks came close to success a few times, especially when the gate was open, or when the garrison was running out of ammunition. But Wellington was lucky, and Hougoumont was a battle that suited him. Whereas the French command system collapsed, the Duke was at his best, economically deploying his forces bit by bit, by battalions or even companies, to the best advantage.



©1997 Keith Barco

Notes on the Orders of Battle

There is a surprising amount of confusion as to what troops fought at Hougoumont. Some of it stems from the difficulty of drawing a distinct boundary to the Hougoumont fighting. Allied troops that were behind the sunken lane or in action in the fields just to the east can be included or excluded from various reckonings just because of this vagueness.

Still, if there was as much confusion over where large bodies of troops fought in any of the major battles of the American Civil War, it would be considered a scandal, and scholars would be rushing to fill the void. Memoirs and unit histories of French and German participants should be able to clear up some of the gaps in our knowledge.

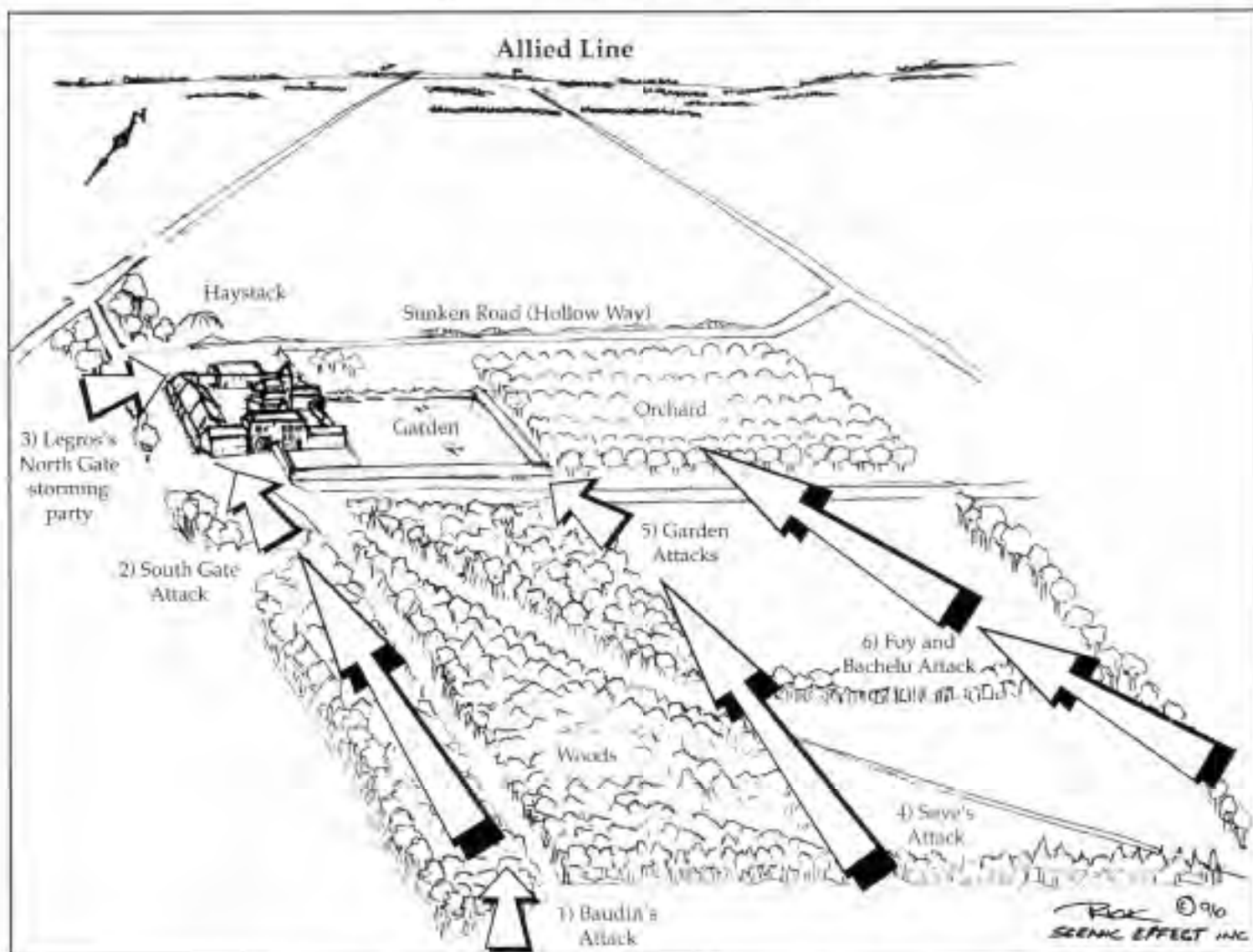
As to the French, it is fairly certain that all of Jérôme's division assaulted Hougoumont. There is some debate as to how much of Bachelu's division was committed. Some sources have a significant number fighting under Ney near La Haye Sainte. Bachelu's division had suffered the most at Quatre Bras, and probably was only about half strength at Waterloo. Most of the division may have been diverted to Hougoumont, where Bachelu was wounded in the vicinity. If it didn't fight here, it would be interesting to know where Bachelu's division suffered such high casualties. Some sources say only one brigade of Foy's division fought here, but as with Bachelu's men, if they weren't at Hougoumont, they made strangely little mark elsewhere, while Foy himself was present.

In the allied line-up, the presence of the Guards is well documented. The exact number of Hanoverian riflemen is sometimes disputed; the mass of British accounts presume one company, but two may have been



Diorama of the main house which was used as a first aid station-hospital. French howitzers set this building on fire, killing many wounded in the inferno. All that is left today is the chapel.

Plans and diorama courtesy of Rick Schultz.



This original illustration of the walled form of Hougoumont and surrounding area was rendered by Rick Schudt of Scenic Effects. About 11:30 A.M. Prince Jérôme sent in Baudin's brigade (1) which gained the woods and reached the south gate (2) and orchard. Unprepared to assault gates or walls, the French were pushed back. Despite Napoleon's orders not to press attacks at the chateau, Jérôme committed the rest of his division and sent in Sève's brigade (4) around noon which reached the garden wall (5). A few men scrambled over the wall; none survive. At this time Baudin's reorganized battalions pushed forward on the far left, the 1st Léger Regiment reached the north gate (3) where Legros and a group of light infantry forced their way inside. All are killed and the British Guardsmen secured the gate around 12:30 P.M. Except for nearly running out of ammunition, this was the closest the British came to losing Hougoumont. Jérôme's men continued to push into the orchard and attack the walls the rest of the day. They were joined by Foy's division (6) around 1:00-2:00 P.M. and part of Bachelu's division by 2:00. These uncoordinated thrusts were all successfully parried, but much of the chateau was destroyed by mortar fire. By the end of the day, the exhausted, demoralized French were thrown out of the woods by reinforcements sent down from the allied line.

Le Petit Empereur from Chipco Games

Fun, fast play rules for the Napoleonic Gamer in search of something really different. Just \$8.95 at your local dealer.

Available through: Berkeley Games, Chess, Brookhurst, and Greenfield in the US, Tabletop Games in the UK, and Sabre's Edge in Canada



French Line Grenadier of 1815

Observations by Scott Bowden

On 19 January 1812, a decree introducing sweeping changes in the uniforms of the French line and light infantry was first published in the *Journal Militaire*. The new regulations not only substantially modified the cut of the uniforms, but also called for standardization in uniforms among the musicians (to a green imperial livery) and other personnel comprising the “heads of the column”. Because this edict occurred early in the year and thus prior to the invasion of Russia in June, many publications, including numerous Napoleonic uniform guides, have promoted the French 1812 uniform as that which was worn in the field from Moscow to Waterloo.

But is that true? Could a uniform decree published in January, 1812, be realized throughout the Empire, or even just within the *Grande Armée*, in only a few months? Considering that existing depots and regimental stores of clothing had the old uniforms — not to mention what the men already had on their backs and on their heads — how quickly could the change be implemented? By consulting the inspection documents and reports found at the French Army Archives at the *château de Vincennes*, at the *Musée de l’Armée*, plus the famous eyewitness uniform manuscripts of Freyburg and Sauerweid that can be found in these archives, we know conclusively that the so-called 1812 French uniform was not seen at all until the spring campaign of 1813, and it wasn’t until the fall campaign of that same year that large numbers of the 1812-decreed uniform were seen. What’s more, only the units of Napoleon’s *Grande Armée* in Germany received the new uniforms while those units comprising Marshal Soult’s Army of Spain had to make do with the old (and still preferred) uniforms. As a result, it was not until the 1815 Waterloo campaign that the French forces were dressed uniformly according to the 1812 edict. Even then, some minor modifications at the regimental level were inevitable. Keith Rocco’s French line grenadier above correctly shows all the 1812 uniform details, including the parade-dress look (except no plume is worn by this subject) along with no backpack taken into action!

present. Sometimes Hanoverians from the Grubenhagen Battalion are said to be present alongside those from the Lüneberg Battalion.

On the Nassauers, there is more disagreement. One British observer, Sinclair, wrote of “about 300 of the Nassau troops, some of whom, however, did not stay long, owing, it is said, to their not having been sufficiently supplied with ammunition”. This and other accounts may have been swayed by national bias. Most sources are certain the entire battalion was deployed. Andrew Uffindell quotes the Nassauer’s after-action report that they actually had a company in the chateau’s buildings, which is never mentioned by any of the Guards’s accounts, and if true would be cause to reconsider the latter’s sources.

The presence of the 2nd Line Battalion,

*Some Brunswickers,
probably the Avant-
Garde, may have helped
clear the wood at the end
of the day...*

KGL, seems definite, but some sources mention the arrival of the rest of its brigade. Yet du Plat clearly retained a substantial force on the ridge above, so it is doubtful that more than the light companies descended to Hougoumont.

There is similar debate as to the deployment of Halkett’s 3rd Hanoverian Brigade. While some authors mention the entire brigade, as noted before his own account makes it clear that he kept the Osnabrück Landwehr Battalion with him. The Quackenbrück Battalion may have remained in reserve above Hougoumont; it suffered so few casualties they may have been the result of only artillery fire.

Some Brunswickers, probably the Avant-Garde, may have helped clear the wood at the end of the day, but there are few mentions of their presence, and it’s doubtful that additional battalions had more than a cursory role.

Some of the confusion over the participation of the German contingents comes from how they were deployed. Many of them were in reserve behind the sunken

road, critical in holding the ridge above and to the east. Assuming this to be their primary role, the German participation at Hougoumont has been downgraded. Peter Hofschroer's upcoming book on Waterloo using German sources may finally clarify these questions.



©1997 Keith Raven

Recommended Reading

Siborne's History and Letters were relied upon extensively for this article (both republished by Greenhill Books and available from Stackpole in the U.S.). Despite some criticism, Siborne's *History* is still the best account of the battle in English, and the *Letters* a great first-hand source. There is no French equivalent. We look forward to Greenhill's publication of the remainder of *Siborne's Letters*.

The primary published French source, *Charras's Campagne de 1815*, has no translation or recent edition, and will be difficult to find, as is Scott Bowden's excellent *Armies at Waterloo*, also currently out of print.

Three recent British publications are important, above all *Hougoumont* by Julian Paget and Derek Saunders, published by Leo Cooper and available from Combined Books in the U.S. [see review on page 59]. Also recommended is *Gentleman's Sons*, a history of the British Guards, by Ian Fletcher and Ron Poulter. *On the Fields of Glory*, a recent book by Andrew Uffindell, is a pleasant surprise, and well worth reading. Another quite useful reference is *Larry Linck's Napoleon's Generals: The Waterloo Campaign*.

About the Author:

John Breaster works in the publishing department of the Emperor's Press and has been on the staff of this magazine since its inception.

NELSON'S NAVY

ENGLISH FIGHTING SHIPS 1793-1815

by David Davies



An invaluable reference guide and an excellent narrative of the Napoleonic Wars from the perspective of those who fought on the high seas. Of all the causes of Napoleon's eventual downfall, none was of greater significance than Britain's Royal Navy. Includes detailed descriptions of Britain's Ships of the Line.

STACKPOLE
BOOKS

Available at your favorite bookstore or call
5067 Ritter Road • Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-6921
(800) 732-3669

Worley Publications

RECOLLECTIONS OF MARSHAL MACDONALD

A facsimile reprint of the English
edition of 1893.

VIII, 488 pages.

Frontis.

Hardback (20.9 x 12.8cm).

Published September 1996

Price \$ 50.00

ISBN 1 869804 45 7.



Originally not intended for the light of day or for public scrutiny, Macdonald penned his "recollections" in the simplest and most familiar style possible and dedicated them to his son. Subsequently, the manuscripts were published in 1892 by an ancestor, in the interest and for the advantage of history.

In the U.S. order from:
Emperor's Headquarters
5744 West Irving Park Road
Chicago, IL 60634

In the U.K. order from:
Worley Publications
10 Rectory Road East, Felling
Tyne and Wear, NE10 9DN