



CHAPTER 9

LA GARDE RECULE!

Napoleon's Last Throw of the dice

ANDREW FIELD

PREVIOUS

The view from Mont Saint Jean at the commencement of the grand charge made on the French at around 7 p.m. in the evening. (Anne S. K. Brown)

La Haye Sainte, the farmhouse that covered the very centre of Wellington's line, fell to the French at about 6 p.m. The implications of this were serious as Captain James Shaw Kennedy, a British staff captain, explains:

The possession of La Haye Sainte by the French was a very dangerous incident. It uncovered the very centre of the Anglo-Allied army, and established the enemy within 60 yards of that centre. The French lost no time in taking advantage of this, by pushing forward infantry supported by guns, which enabled them to maintain a most destructive fire upon Alten's left and Kempt's right, and to drive off Kempt's light troops that occupied the knoll in his front. By this fire they wasted most seriously the ranks of the left of Alten's and the right of Kempt's divisions; so much so that Ompteda's brigade having been previously nearly destroyed, and Kielmansegge's much weakened, they were now not sufficiently strong to occupy the front which was originally assigned to them.¹

It wasn't just Lieutenant General Charles Alten's Division that was suffering; Lieutenant Gawler, of the British 52nd Light Infantry, described Major General Peregrine Maitland's Brigade of Guards as reduced to the strength of 'a weak battalion', and General Sir Colin Halkett's Brigade to 'a few companies'.² In other British units, companies were being commanded by sergeants.³ Much of the Allied cavalry in the centre was also at the end of its tether.

A hole was developing in the centre of the Allied line and young Shaw Kennedy, who later rose to become a general, claims the credit for realising it:

We have already seen that La Haye Sainte was in the hands of the enemy; also the knoll on the opposite side of the road; also the garden and ground on the Anglo-Allied side of it;—that Ompteda's brigade was nearly annihilated and Kielmansegge's so thinned that those two brigades could not hold their position. That part of the field of battle between Halkett's left and Kempt's right was thus unprotected; and being the very centre of the Duke's line of battle, was consequently that point, above all others, which the enemy wished to gain. The danger was imminent; and at no other time of the action was the result so precarious as at this moment. Most fortunately, Napoleon did not support the advantage his troops had gained at this point, by bringing forward his reserve... I therefore, as the staff-officer present, galloped direct to the Duke, and informed him that his line was open for the whole space between Halkett's and Kempt's brigades... They [the French] had gained La Haye Sainte and its enclosures; held advantageous ground on its right and front; and were thus most advantageously placed for breaking through the Allied centre by a powerful effort of their reserves upon that point, supported by a general attack upon the whole line.⁴

The situation was serious, and if Napoleon had been able to launch a final, desperate attack, then there is no doubt that Wellington could well have faced defeat. But one important fact prevented the French emperor from seizing his chance: the Prussian advance on his right rear. Whilst Marshal Michel Ney had been fighting the battle against Wellington, Napoleon had been concentrating on what the Prussians were doing. He realised that until his right flank was secure he would be unable to organise and deliver the decisive blow against the Anglo-Netherlands Army.

The situation on the French right was critical; Georges Mouton Count Lobau's weak VI Corps had been pushed back by growing Prussian numbers to the edge of the village of Plancenoit and at 6 p.m., the time that La Haye Sainte eventually fell, the Prussians were on the point of launching an attack on that village. Lobau's tired troops could not hold and the village was lost. It was only after Napoleon had deployed the division of the Young Guard, and then two battalions of the precious Old Guard, into the village that his flank was temporarily secure.

Now, finally, the emperor could turn his attention to breaking the centre of Wellington's position. It was some time after 7 p.m.; Napoleon still had two hours of daylight to snatch a victory.

CONVERT TO
MONO

Napoleon and the Old Guard on the morning of the Battle of Waterloo. (akg-images)



PREPARATIONS



Count Lobau, the French commander of VI Corps. (Anne S. K. Brown)

Napoleon may well have thought that the window of opportunity was still open. La Haye Sainte was in his hands, and the shattered remains of General Jean-Baptiste Drouet, Count d'Erlon's I Corps, although exhausted after their earlier abortive attack, were now putting increasing pressure on the centre of an equally exhausted Allied line. The farm of Hougomont, which covered the right of the Allied line, had not been taken, but Wellington had been compelled to advance two brigades to ensure its security. General Gilbert Bachelu and General Maximilien Foy's Divisions, which had launched their abortive attack during the last flickering cavalry assaults between Hougomont and La Haye Sainte, had had sufficient time to reform along with the remains of the cavalry and might be depended on to deliver one more effort. Despite the failure of the earlier assaults, the Allied line appeared shaken and devoid of any fresh reserves.

Although the whole of the Young Guard had been deployed to Plancenoit, the majority of the Middle and Old Guards were still fresh and uncommitted: two of Napoleon's eight Old Guard battalions had been sent to Plancenoit, but the other four remained available to him. All of the six battalions of the Middle Guard were also available, giving him ten battalions for a total of about 5,500 men.



Napoleon musters his Guard. (Jean Auge, courtesy of Andrew Field)

However, he could not commit all these troops; the two battalions of the senior regiment, the 1st Regiment of Foot Grenadiers, supported by six 8-pounders and the *sapeurs* and *marins* of the Guard, were deployed to cover the junction of the road from Plancenoit with the main road. Given the Prussian threat from this latter village, they could not be spared for the assault. Furthermore, Major Duuring, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Foot Chasseur Regiment had been ordered to remain at Le Caillou to protect the



The Foot Grenadiers of the Old Guard were the senior regiment of the Imperial Guard. They did not wear their famous parade uniforms at Waterloo, but this plainer, more practical, but no less distinctive, uniform. (Courtesy of Patrice Courcelle)



General Foy, who was well known and respected among his British contemporaries. (Courtesy of Andrew Field)

Headquarters and the emperor's baggage. Thus, only three battalions of the Old Guard and six of the Middle Guard could be thrown into a final, desperate assault. However, although these represented relatively few troops with which to deliver it, they belonged to the superlative Imperial Guard, which had never failed to accomplish a mission given to them by the emperor. Napoleon gave the order for the available battalions to be moved to the north of La Belle Alliance.



On the ridgeline, Wellington, having been informed of the critical state of his centre right, took steps to reinforce it. To replace General Alten's battered division and the unsteady Nassauers, the duke called forward a brigade of Brunswickers. To their right stood the sad remains of General Sir Colin Halkett's Brigade consisting of the 30th, 33rd, 69th and 73rd Regiments. All had suffered at Quatre Bras two days earlier and after the hard fighting they had already been involved in the whole brigade now counted little more than a few companies. To their right was General Maitland's much-depleted brigade of foot guards; but next to them was General Adam's relatively fresh brigade, consisting of the 2nd Battalion and two companies of the 3rd Battalion of the 95th Rifles; and the 52nd and 71st Light Infantry. During the French cavalry charges Wellington had already had General Chassé's 3rd Netherlands Division called over from Braine-l'Alleud as the French had shown no inclination to sweep around his western flank. These were posted behind these weakened, but still defiant, British brigades.

The Allied cavalry in the centre was also much thinned and exhausted; the entire Union Brigade now counted only two weak squadrons. With the Prussians appearing in increasing numbers on his eastern flank, Wellington was able to draw to his centre the British light cavalry brigades of Major General John Vandeleur and Major General Hussey Vivian that had previously been posted there. These two brigades, consisting of three regiments of light dragoons and hussars respectively, had been deployed there to support the Nassau regiments in Papelotte, La Haye and Smohain on the Allied left and remained comparatively fresh.

Thanks to the Prussians, the duke had been given sufficient time to make the necessary preparations to meet the coming storm. Had the fleeting opportunity that the fall of La Haye Sainte offered Napoleon for the *coup de grâce* passed?



Napoleon had no intention of delivering his final, desperate attack with just the relatively few battalions of the Guard that were available to him. Orders were sent to both d'Erlon and Lieutenant General Honoré Reille to make a final effort with their exhausted men to second the Guard's assault by applying pressure onto the whole of the Allied line and attempts were made to put together a cavalry force still capable of concerted effort. Needless to say, the Grand Battery maintained its fire, and some guns had been dragged forward and were doing considerable execution to the crumbling Allied line.

General Lallemand led the French *Chasseurs à Cheval* of the Guard at Waterloo. Their involvement during the great cavalry charges meant they were unable to support the attack of the foot guard at the climax of the battle. (akg-images)



To re-invigorate his shattered and exhausted troops, Napoleon, perhaps genuinely encouraged by the sound of distant gunfire in the direction of Wavre where Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy's troops were engaged with the Prussian rearguard, now resorted to a risky stratagem. Aware that his own troops would be discouraged if they knew the full extent of the Prussian attack on their right rear, he appears to have decided to turn the sound of gunfire to his own advantage by portraying it as the arrival of Marshal Grouchy's 30,000 men in their support. One of Marshal Ney's aides de camp wrote:



Despite being in the privileged Guard, not all the Middle Guard had received their new uniforms when the campaign began. Many had to wear the uniforms of their previous regiments or a combination of the two. Few wore the famous tall bearskin caps of the Guard. (Courtesy of Patrice Courcelle)

At 6pm, General Dejean [one of Napoleon's aides de camp] arrived close to Marshal Ney, 'Monsieur le maréchal' he said to him, 'vive l'Empereur! Here is Grouchy!' The Marshal immediately ordered me to ride along the whole line and announce Grouchy's arrival. Breaking into a gallop, raising my hat on the tip of my sabre and passing along the front of the line; 'Vive l'Empereur!' I shouted to the soldiers, 'Here is Grouchy!' This sudden cry was repeated by a thousand voices; the excitement of the soldiers was indescribable, they all cried, 'En avant! En Avant! Vive l'Empereur!'⁵

Although Napoleon may have believed that Grouchy had arrived, this is unlikely; he had sent cavalry patrols in that direction and would surely have heard if 30,000 Frenchmen were entering the fight. It was, at best, a desperate hope and it was indeed a time for desperate measures. Spreading false news such as this risked disheartening the troops when they found out that it was not true, but if he could encourage them to one final effort it might just secure him victory.



General Antoine Drouot, commander of the Imperial Guard at Waterloo. (Anne S. K. Brown)

THE ADVANCE

Nine battalions of the Guard were available for the final attack, and Napoleon broke them down into two echelons. The first was to consist of the six battalions of the Middle Guard (the 1st/3rd and 2nd/3rd Grenadiers, the 1st/3rd and 2nd/3rd Chasseurs, and the single battalions of the 4th Grenadiers and 4th Chasseurs – the 4th Regiment of Chasseurs had combined its two weak battalions, weakened by the casualties suffered at the Battle of Ligny, into a single strong battalion, while the 4th Regiment of Grenadiers had entered the campaign with only one battalion due to recruiting problems). The second echelon consisted of the available battalions of the Old Guard (the 2nd/1st Chasseurs, the 1st/2nd Grenadiers and the 2nd/2nd Chasseurs).



Ney led many heroic actions such as when he commanded the French rearguard during the retreat from Russia, but was sadly unable to do the same for the French at Waterloo. (Courtesy of Andrew Field)

Once the Guard had assembled in the vicinity of La Belle Alliance, the six battalions of the Middle Guard were led forward in square by Napoleon himself into the bottom of the shallow valley that separated the two armies. Here they could not be seen by the Allied guns on top of the ridge.

After the disastrous commitment of the Guard cavalry during the afternoon, it appears that only a small, *ad hoc*, force of cuirassiers was available to support the attack. The only French cavalry that was fresh and uncommitted was that of General Piré (belonging to General Reille's II Corps), which was deployed on the extreme French left. But no effort seems to have been made to redeploy this still formidable force and the assault went forward without the support of fresh cavalry. However, some reserve artillery was available and a section of two guns from the Guard Horse Artillery was deployed between each square to give intimate support.

Instead of handing command of all six battalions over to Marshal Ney for the final assault, Napoleon took one of them (the 2nd/3rd Grenadiers) towards Hougoumont. Although this battalion might have been more usefully employed in the assault that was about to be launched it seems it was placed here to provide some protection in the direction of the large farm complex where several Allied brigades would find themselves on the flank of the assault.

As a result of the departure of the 2nd/3rd Grenadiers, five squares advanced behind Marshal Ney. General Petit, commander of the 1st Regiment of Grenadiers, reported:

It was about 7pm: ... the 3rd and 4th Chasseurs and [3rd and 4th] Grenadiers marched forward. They crossed to the left of the road where they were formed into battalion squares with the exception of the 4th Regiments that, because of their weakness of numbers, formed only one square each.⁶

By the accepted tactical principles of the day, the square was not considered an assault formation, and its use as such was very rare throughout the Napoleonic Wars. The reason for this is simple: it had been designed primarily as a defence against cavalry. In the assault, it was very difficult to keep it in good order marching over difficult ground and under fire and it could generate only a small amount of firepower to the front. In the large, unwieldy columns that his corps had used on the initial assault on the centre left of Wellington's line, General d'Erlon had tried to compromise between firepower and mass and yet got it

disastrously wrong. However, the lesson had clearly been learnt and the Guard were not going to suffer the same fate. The superb discipline and experience of the Guard allowed their commanders to accept the risk of attacking in this formation. Furthermore, whilst many assault columns did not even try to deploy into line to engage in a firefight, again, the discipline of the Guard allowed them this option.

Another noteworthy tactical aspect of this attack was that the Guard were not preceded by a cloud of skirmishers: a standard French practice and one that was generally accepted as a vital part of any assault. Although the Guard were quite capable of acting as skirmishers, no reason is given for this significant omission. Whatever the explanation, Captain Prax, the adjutant major of the 3rd Chasseurs, was later to complain:

I can't help thinking that if we had engaged the enemy first with some skirmishers which could have caused some disorder in his ranks, and that if we had marched behind them quickly and with the bayonet, our attack would have succeeded.⁷

The order of the battalions, in keeping with Guard seniority, was as follows: the 1st/3rd Grenadiers on the right, followed to the left and rear by the single square of the 4th Grenadiers, the 1st/3rd Chasseurs, the 2nd/3rd Chasseurs and then the large, single square of the 4th Chasseurs. This latter was over 800 strong on account of the joining of the two battalions. The single battalion squares averaged about 550 men. We can assume that each side of the square was three men deep giving a frontage of about 45 men: only about 35 metres.

Generals Friant and Poret de Morvan led the 1st/3rd Grenadiers, General Harlet the 4th. General Michel marched at the head of the 1st/3rd Chasseurs; Colonel Mallet, who had returned from Elba with his emperor, the 2nd Battalion, and finally, General Henrion with the 4th. Thus each square of the Guard had a general marching at their head, with a Marshal of France (Michel Ney) leading the whole.

From the shelter of the bottom of the valley, Ney led the advance to the left, away from the main road, skirting La Haye Sainte and heading towards the centre right of the Allied line. General Petit described the move:

Formed in square in echelon, they moved forward, General Friant at the head of the 1/3rd Grenadiers, marching parallel to the road, the others following in the best order, conserving their distances as far as La Haye Sainte which they by-passed pursuing the enemy at the *pas de charge*, despite the losses from heavy artillery fire and musketry.⁸

Some historians have criticised the route taken by the Guard because of the difficulty of the ground after the great cavalry attacks. However, an eyewitness suggests this was not the case; ‘The slope that led to the plateau was neither steep nor of difficult access...’⁹

And so these confident and well-disciplined battalions marched forward in immaculate order with the drums beating the *pas de charge* and to repeated cries

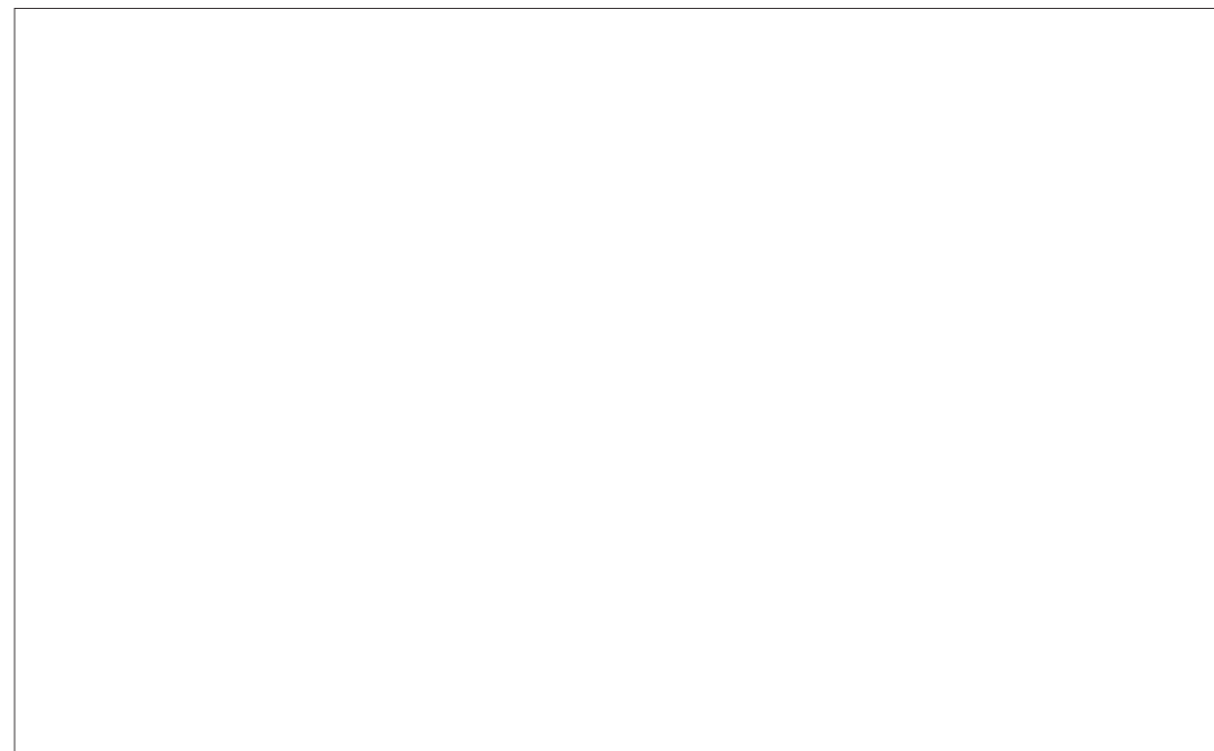


Despite their rather motley appearance, the Middle Guard advanced with an admirable steadiness and discipline that was commented on by their British opponents. (Courtesy of Patrice Courcelle)

of ‘*Vive l’empereur!*’ Although many accounts describe the advance coming under heavy artillery and musket fire it is probable that this is rather exaggerated; we know that most of the Allied infantry line remained on the reverse slope of the ridge and by this time of the battle the Allied skirmish line was thin and short of ammunition. Even the almost continuous line of artillery that had crowned the heights had suffered considerably and was no longer as formidable as it once had been. Indeed, one British eyewitness to the attack later claimed:

I assert with no fear of contradiction, that in front of Halkett’s brigade no single gun or skirmisher was in advance of or on the ridge to interfere with it [the attack of the Guard]... To my thinking, no body of the French army could have passed over to our front so little molested as the Imperial Guard. When they passed, where were the well-served batteries that had thundered on, or the lively skirmishers that had pelted their gallant predecessors?... In both cases silent. The French column that came to us, passed the ridge, as they say, *comme à la manoeuvre* [as on an exercise], without a skirmisher to cover it, and I cannot from my soul suppose why it should not.¹⁰

THE ATTACK OF THE MIDDLE GUARD





The attack of the Middle Guard.
(Jean Auge, courtesy of Andrew Field)

British accounts are unanimous in their respect for the order of this advance. Ensign Dirom of the 1st Guards, recalled:

The Imperial Guards advanced in close column with ported arms, the officers of the leading divisions in front waving their swords. The French columns showed no appearance of having suffered on their advance, but seemed as regularly formed as if at a field day.¹¹

Macready of the 30th Regiment simply recalled, "They ... came over the hill in beautiful order."¹²

THE ASSAULT

As Marshal Ney led the square of the 1st/3rd Grenadiers to the crest of the Allied ridge, his fifth horse of the day was killed beneath him. Freeing himself from the fallen animal, he continued to lead the attack on foot; bareheaded and with sword in hand.

The advance of the 1st/3rd Grenadiers had certainly impressed those waiting to receive them. A lieutenant of the British 30th Regiment remembered:

This column came over the hill as if marching on a parade. I saw an officer a pace or two in front, as if regulating the time. I distinctly saw them carry arms as they halted, and then pour in their fire.¹³

Ensign Macready of the same regiment recalled:

As they rose step by step before us, with their red epaulettes and cross belts put on over their blue great coats, and topped by their high hairy caps, keeping time, and their officers looking to their alignment, they loomed most formidably, and when I thought of their character, and saw their noble bearing, I certainly thought we were in for very slashing work...¹⁴

Before the 1st/3rd Grenadiers lay a ragged line of British and Brunswick infantry that opened fire on their square. Returning fire they saw the Brunswick battalions start to fall back and they were able to turn their attention on the British infantry, which continued to hold its position. The battalion commander, Major Guillemin reported:

Arriving on the plateau that dominated the battlefield ... we opened fire in two ranks. We remained in this position for some time, always losing many men... A battery of the Guard was a little ahead and to the left of this square. A little time afterwards, the battery was dismounted, the horses and the gunners killed or put *hors de combat*.¹⁵

Ensign Macready described the initial engagement:

Arrived within about eighty paces of us (on the following morning I measured the distance which separated our dead from theirs), they halted, and, for a moment, stood as if amazed at our effrontery in offering opposition to their onward movement; then, saluting us, they commenced that work of death so often narrated, when our thinned ranks told but too well with what precision their fire was given.¹⁶

The same officer later wrote:

... the fire thickened tremendously, and the cries from the men struck down, as well as from the numerous wounded on all sides of us, who thought themselves



The Prince of Orange leads a gallant, but futile counter-attack against the advance of the French Guard. He was wounded in the shoulder and the counter-attack thrown back. (Anne S. K. Brown)

Charles Warren 1816

abandoned, were terrible. An extraordinary number of men and officers of both regiments went down in no time ... at this instant we found ourselves commingled with the 33rd and 69th Regiments; all order was lost, and the column (now a mere mob), passed the hedge at an accelerated pace ...

The exertions of the officers, added to the glorious struggling of lots of the men to halt and face about, were rendered of no avail by the irresistible pressure, and as many cursing and crying with rage and shame, seized individuals to halt them, they were themselves jammed up against them and hurried on with the current, literally for many yards not touching the ground ... I cannot conceive

what the enemy was about during our confusion. Fifty cuirassiers would have annihilated our brigade ...¹⁷

Spectators of this action from the second line, some of the British cavalry, also thought things were going badly: Lieutenant Luard, of the 16th Light Dragoons, later wrote:

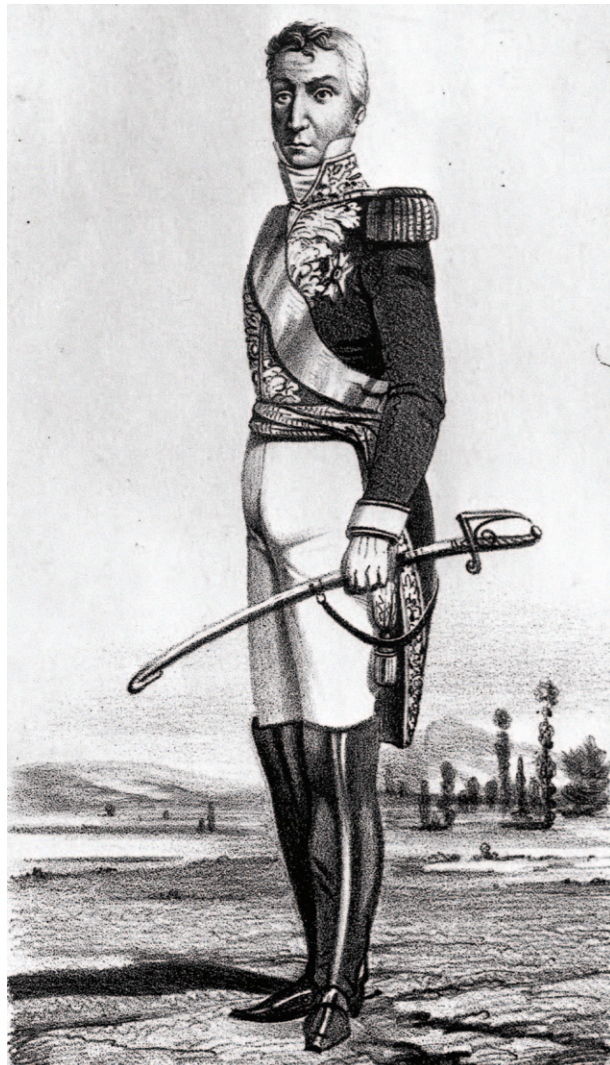
The fire became every moment hotter, and from the rapid way in which it approached us, appeared as if the enemy was carrying the hill by which we were partially covered, and I confess I thought at that moment the day was going hard with us, that the infantry were beaten, and that we (the cavalry), by desperate charges, were to recover what they had lost.

The foreign troops in our front appeared to think so also, but they had not resolved to recover the day, for they began to give way rapidly. We closed our squadron intervals, and would not let them pass through ...¹⁸

To the left of the 1st/3rd Grenadiers, the square of the 4th Grenadiers now came up parallel and started to exchange fire with the British battalions before it. As we have heard, the British troops nearest the 1st/3rd were now beginning to fall back in confusion and a hesitant infantry counter-attack (in fact led by the Prince of Orange) from the Allied second line was thrown back and the prince himself wounded.

At this moment, General Friant, the senior commander of the Guard Grenadiers, who was

As the senior commander of the Guards Grenadiers at Waterloo, General Friant marched at the head of the attack before being wounded and forced to retire. (Topfoto)



marching at the head of the attack, was wounded in the hand and forced to retire. In his memoirs, Napoleon wrote:

General Friant, who had been wounded, and was passing by at this moment, said that everything was going well, that the enemy appeared to be forming up his rear-guard to support his retreat, but that he would be completely broken, as soon as the rest of the guard deployed.¹⁹

There was now a real danger of the Allied centre breaking completely. The 1st/3rd Grenadiers must have thought that, despite the heavy casualties they had suffered, they were now on the point of victory. However, at that very moment, through the dense smoke, they came under a most devastating fire of case shot from almost point-blank range which staggered them and brought down many men.

General Chassé, a Dutch officer who had fought in the French Army for many years but who now commanded the 3rd Netherlands Division, reported:

At the same time I saw the *Garde Impériale* advancing, while the English troops were leaving the plateau *en masse* and moving in the direction of Waterloo; the battle seemed lost.

Seeing at the same moment that the French Guard was moving forward to attack ... I did not hesitate an instant to order the advance of our artillery, commanded by Major Van der Smissen, onto the height, who immediately opened a violent fire.²⁰

Again, Macready described the scene:

I can never forget the fearful slaughter which then took place in the ranks of the 33rd and 69th Regiments... But at that critical instant, Major Van der Smissen arrived with his light Belgian brigade of guns, and, taking up a position on our right, between us and the 33rd and 69th regiments, now warmly engaged, literally cut lanes through the column in our front ...

As they hesitated, another salvo of case shot smashed into their thinning ranks and then through the smoke came a column in overwhelming strength. Threatened with being crushed beneath its unstoppable momentum and with many of its officers already fallen, the square began to break up and suddenly disintegrated in flight.²¹

The appearance of this strong and fresh column of troops, Colonel Detmer's Brigade of Chassé's Division, was the last straw; having already suffered terrible casualties, lashed by the point-blank fire of the newly arrived, and hitherto



Napoleon, right, surveys the scene during the Battle of Waterloo. (akg-images)

uncommitted battery, and now threatened by a column of overwhelming strength, the morale and cohesion of the 1st/3rd Grenadiers broke and they disappeared from the ridge in a mob.

Major Guillemin, the commanding officer of the 1st/3rd Grenadiers, later wrote:

... Marshal Ney came into my square and said to General de Morvan, 'General, it is necessary to die here!' We remained for some time, but the musketry and case shot vomited death from all sides and, in an instant, the square was no longer.²²

To their left, the square of the 4th Grenadiers, although having had the satisfaction of seeing the British troops opposed to them breaking to the rear, had also suffered crippling casualties. Just as they saw their comrades break, and coming under close range artillery fire themselves, they realised they were in imminent danger of being outflanked and crushed by Detmer's column to their right. They had no option but to fall back also. Ensign Macready described their reluctant withdrawal:

There the 'Old Guard' stood, firm and undismayed, apparently doubtful how to act; no movement in advance, no movement to the rear. There they stood, with bold and manly front, when their comrades' disasters on their right shook that intrepidity and firmness of purpose which had hitherto marked their bearing... The cries of

'Vive l'Empereur' 'Vive Napoleon!' 'En avant!' the roll of the drums, the devotion of the men, availed not. With an apathy and coolness unequalled as it was, on our part unexpected, the French Guards wheeled to the right-about and retreated from before us, retracing the steps which, with a mien indicating anything but an intention to retire, they had just before taken!²³

To the left of the two squares of grenadiers came the two squares of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 3rd Regiment of Guard Chasseurs. As they advanced the interval between them had closed and it appears they crossed the ridgeline marching almost parallel. On this flank of the assault, the squares had suffered rather more from artillery fire than the grenadiers. A lieutenant in the British artillery recalled:

The battery fired case shot from the moment they appeared on the crest of the hill (about 200 yards), and during the advance along the plateau, from which they suffered severely, the column waving, at each successive discharge, like standing corn blown by the wind.²⁴

However, not all the Allied artillery was still in action as one of the chasseur officers, Captain Prax, noted: 'On our left was a numerous battery, unlimbered and abandoned by its gunners. These were not far away and their hesitation to return to their pieces was clear.'²⁵

As the two squares of chasseurs arrived on the crest of the ridge, the same officer reported, 'We were astonished to find it almost abandoned and covered with dead!'²⁶

Perhaps sensing victory the chasseurs moved forward. But hidden by the very summit of the ridge and crouching down in the rye lay two battalions of the imperturbable British guards (the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Foot Guards), commanded by Major General Maitland. The order for the brigade to rise and engage the French was given by Wellington himself: 'Now Maitland! Now's your time!' Colonel Crabbé, who had just delivered a message to Marshal Ney and was making his way back to Headquarters, described what happened next:

Sabre in hand, I cleared myself a passage, when I suddenly found myself in the middle of the 3rd Regiment of Foot Chasseurs of the Guard, who were continuing to climb the slopes of Mont-Saint-Jean. At this very moment, a mass of English Guards suddenly appeared on the crest and released a terrible volley on us that caused heavy losses, and then charged us.²⁷

Dutch officer, General Chassé, who had previously fought with the French. (Rijksmuseum)





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At the critical point of the attack of the Imperial Guard, the Duke of Wellington ordered the British Foot Guards to oppose them with the command 'Now Maitland, now's your time!' The British had been hidden and so were out of sight; their attack a surprise to the French. (Anne S. K. Brown)

The physical and morale effects of this volley, fired at the moment when the chasseurs felt they were on the point of victory, were terrible. Captain Prax reported that, 'All our heads of column were put *hors de combat*.'²⁸

It was said that 300 men fell from the first volley alone and the effect of the fire seemed to force the head of the square bodily back. Colonel Mallet, commander of the 3rd Regiment of Chasseurs, and the commanding officers of both battalions, Major Cardinal of the 1st and Major Angelet of the 2nd, were all killed and General Michel, the second in command of all the regiments of chasseurs, also fell. The death of General Michel was described by his aide de camp, Captain Berthelot:

General Michel fell from his horse crying out, 'Ah, my god! I have broken my arm again!' I quickly dismounted and unbuttoned his coat to locate his wound. My general was dead; a ball had passed through his torso.²⁹

Surprised by the sudden appearance of the wall of red soldiers, staggered and leaderless from the devastation caused by their volley, the two Guard battalions were unsure what to do and came to a halt about 20 metres from the Allied line.³⁰ Another British officer reported that:

The effect of our volley was evidently most deadly. The French columns appeared staggered, and, if I may use the expression, convulsed. Part seemed inclined to advance, part halted and fired, and others, more particularly towards the centre and rear of the columns, seemed to be turning round.³¹

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Others reported that the two squares attempted to deploy into line so as to be better placed to return effective fire. However, what is clear is that there was hesitation and confusion in their movements and when the British line advanced with bayonets lowered the chasseurs were unable to meet the charge and before cold steel was crossed their morale broke and both squares disintegrated in flight.

Captain Powell of the British 1st Foot Guards recalled:

Immediately the brigade sprang forward. *La Garde* turned and gave us little opportunity to try the steel. We charged down the hill till we had passed the end of the orchard of Hougoumont, when our right flank became exposed to another heavy column (as we afterwards understood of the Chasseurs of the *Garde*) who were advancing in support of the former column. This circumstance, besides that our charge was isolated, obliged the brigade to retire towards their original position.³²

The 'heavy column' that Captain Powell refers to was the final element of the assault, the square of the 4th Chasseurs. The rather disorganised British guards, in danger of being outflanked by this strong force, had no option but to withdraw. However, for whatever reason, the two battalions lost all cohesion and dashed back to the top of the ridge in something of a disorganised mob.

The 4th Chasseurs, no doubt heartened by this reaction to their advance, continued up the slope, 'with shouts, which rose above the noise of the firing'.³³ All that the chasseurs found in front of them was the battery of guns that had fired on their comrades with such telling effect. It was a most critical moment for the Allies, as Captain Millar of the 2nd Battalion of the 95th Rifles admitted:

The enemy [4th Chasseurs] advanced to the bend of the position, and forced back the left of my regiment, down the eastern slope of the ridge and the right of the one to the left [2nd/1st Guards], leaving an opening of between one and two hundred yards in the line. That appeared to me the most critical period of the battle; as there was only a line of Belgians behind, which would probably have made no great resistance, *all seemed lost* [his emphasis].³⁴

However, off to the flank of the enemy square, but hidden by the ridgeline, lay the 52nd Light Infantry; a regiment with a fine reputation from the Peninsular War and led by the famous Colonel Sir John Colborne. He had placed himself so that he could observe what was happening to his left and had seen the progress of the last square. Seeing it stop and open fire on the battery to his left, he sent his skirmishers forward against the flank of the square as he organised his attack.



PREVIOUS

Clad in a motley array of headgear and uniforms, Imperial Guardsmen in square formation brace themselves for impact as they prepare to repel enemy cavalry. The regimental eagle, of the pattern used in 1812–15, is visible alongside a pair of mounted senior officers in bicornes. (akg-images)

When the square of the 4th Chasseurs stopped, the front face opened fire on the battery and soon swept away the remaining gunners; a British officer recalled, ‘The brigade of guns in front of the 52nd right, which had fired incessantly during the first half hour, was now silenced by the intensity of the opposing musketry.’³⁵

At much the same time, the left face of the square opened fire on the 52nd’s skirmishers with telling effect. However, the skirmishers were suddenly replaced by the whole of the regiment, which delivered a crashing volley. Despite the square’s strength, it could only oppose this assault with a single face, which was soon being smashed by the British fire. Although it appears that the chasseurs made some attempt to deploy into line to meet this threat, it was too little, too late.

For an eyewitness account of this action we must turn to a British officer of the 52nd:

Our artillery ... had been playing upon the masses of the French Guard, but when we saw them there appeared to be no confusion amongst them; our advance put a stop to the fire of our artillery; it was not till the 52nd skirmishers fired into them that the Imperial Guard halted ... faced outwards and returned the fire; as the 52nd approached, our skirmishers fell back to the regiment, two of the three officers being severely wounded, and many of the men being either killed or wounded. The regiment opened fire upon the enemy without halting; the men fired, then partly halted to load, whilst those in the rear slipped round them in a sort of skirmishing order, though they maintained a compact line ... I consider that about 140 of our men were killed or wounded at this time, in the course of five or six minutes... As we closed towards the French Guard, they did not wait for our charge, but the leading column at first somewhat receded from us, and then broke and fled ...³⁶

The attack of the Middle Guard had been defeated.

French accounts of the battle would have us believe that it was only at the defeat of the Middle Guard that Napoleon’s subterfuge on the arrival of Marshal Grouchy was finally exposed. However, it is impossible to believe that most of the French Army was unaware of the Prussian appearance on the battlefield, given that they had started their attack at 4 p.m. By the time of the Guard’s advance they were at Plancenoit in the rear of the army.

It is rather too convenient for some to claim that it was only now that the arrival of the Prussians became common knowledge, as *Chef de bataillon* Octave-René-Louis Levavasseur, aide de camp to Marsahl Ney, wrote:

This news [that Grouchy had arrived] had hardly reached the end of our line when cannon fire was heard in our rear. The greatest silence, astonishment, anxiety followed the enthusiasm. The plain was covered with our wagons and a multitude of non-combatants who always followed the army; the cannonade continued and got closer. Officers and soldiers got muddled up, mixed with the non-combatants. Appalled, I closed up to the Marshal, who ordered me to go to find out the cause of this panic. I met up with General *** who said to me, ‘See, these are the Prussians!’ I returned to find the Marshal, but could not. Our army then only presented an unformed mass, with all the regiments mixed up. At this fatal moment, command had broken down, everyone was taken aback in the presence of a danger they could not define.³⁷

THE ROUT BEGINS

What is almost certainly true is that the repulse of the Guard coincided with the telling intervention of a second Prussian corps; that of Lieutenant General Hans von Ziethen. General Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr Count von Bülow’s IV Corps had already been fighting for some time at Plancenoit on the French right-rear. Ziethen’s men approached via the Allied left flank, and although there was an understandable delay as they orientated themselves, once they launched their assault on the apex of the French right, around Papelotte, the effect on the French troops fighting in this sector was catastrophic.

Wellington orders the advance after the repulse of the French Guard. The hussar officer in front of Wellington is the Earl of Uxbridge, his second in command and commander of the Allied cavalry. (Anne S. K. Brown)



The arrival of Ziethen's men soon tipped the balance as the French were now considerably outnumbered and, having committed the guard, had no reserves left. On the French right there was only a single, tired brigade, General Brue's of the I Corps, to oppose the whole of Ziethen's Corps. At first they put up a strong fight and General Charles-Claude Jacquinet, who commanded the cavalry division attached to the I Corps, even made some successful charges against the first tentative Prussian moves. However, as more and more of the Prussian troops came up the extent of their intervention became apparent and the French right flank started an increasingly disordered withdrawal.

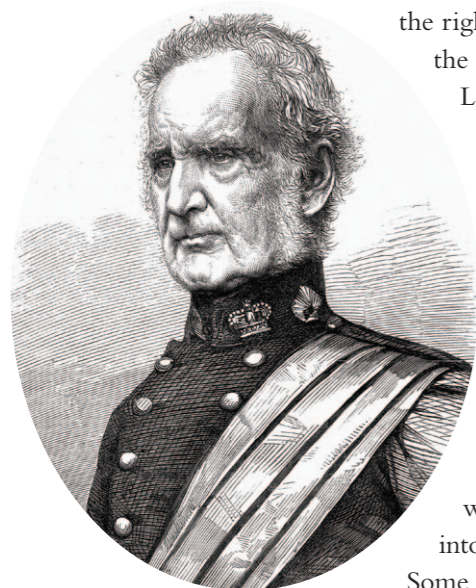
It is certain that the final rout of the French Army started in the area of Papelotte as Ziethen's men began to flood the battlefield. Having established his infantry beyond the difficult ground surrounding the hamlets on this part of the battlefield, his cavalry were then able to take up the advance. Lieutenant Pontécoulant of the Guard artillery reported:

Our line, that until then had gloriously held against all the forces of a superior enemy, was suddenly broken. The Prussian cavalry hurled itself into this breach and soon flooded the battlefield, sabring isolated soldiers and making it impossible for us to rally. The news, spread by malevolence or fear, that the Guard, the rock of the army, had been obliged to retire and was partly destroyed, augmented the disorder and the precipitation of the retreat. The crowd became terrified; no description can do it justice ...³⁸

The panic that had seized General Durutte's 4th Infantry Division, which was the right-hand division of the I Corps, began to communicate itself down the French line. It seems to have reached the centre of the line, around La Haye Sainte, just as the French troops there saw the unprecedented sight of the Guard retiring in chaos. It was the last straw; La Haye Sainte was given up without a fight and the troops in the area, threatened by the Prussians on their right and the British to their front and left, dissolved in panic.

As the debris of the Middle Guard attempted to rally on the valley floor a long line of red-coated infantry came over the ridge before them. Still in disorder and having suffered such heavy casualties in their assault, all hope for them was lost and they fled. After the repulse of the Guard, Wellington had waved his hat in the air, a sign that had been taken for a general advance. The move forward was led by Adam's Brigade who had continued their initial advance into the bottom of the valley in pursuit of the defeated Guard battalions. Some battalions, exhausted and low on ammunition, felt incapable of

Sir John Colborne commanded the 52nd Light Infantry at Waterloo, and his actions, along with those of his skirmishers, ensured the regiment retained its fine reputation as they defeated the final echelon of the Middle Guard. (Topfoto)



following and had slumped to the ground on the ridge; others, still resolute but equally exhausted, made a tentative advance but got no further than the floor of the valley. Colonel Hew Halkett's 3rd Hanoverian Brigade seconded that of Adam.

In the dead ground near to La Haye Sainte, lay the three battalions of the Old Guard: the 1st/2nd Grenadiers, the 2nd/1st Chasseurs and 2nd/2nd Chasseurs, and the 2nd/3rd Grenadiers that Napoleon had deployed to the left at the beginning of the attack. The emperor had originally planned to support the attack of the Middle Guard with these battalions but the situation had already changed dramatically and with the whole French Army slowly disintegrating around him, he had no option but to use them to form a screen behind which to try and rally the army before total disaster struck.

These four battalions were formed in square, 'in perfectly undisturbed steadiness',³⁹ and ran in a line between the main road towards Hougoumont. They had the sad remains of some cuirassier regiments in support and the French artillery was still firing over their heads. General Cambronne, commander of the 1st Regiment of Chasseurs was there, as was General Roguet, *colonel-en-second* of the Grenadiers.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE OLD GUARD

Meanwhile the 52nd, supported by the rest of its brigade, reached the floor of the valley, where they were confronted by the steady squares of the Old Guard. Here they hesitated, but were soon joined by Wellington himself who said, 'They won't stand, better attack them.'⁴⁰ The advance continued and the Guard battalions started their retreat.

The advance of the British line after the last desperate effort of the Imperial Guard had been frustrated by the steady and determined conduct of the Allied army. (Anne S. K. Brown)



Closest to Hougoumont, the 2nd/3rd Grenadiers, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Belcourt, were somewhat isolated from the other three battalions and thus rather vulnerable. In fact the advance of the Allied infantry had cut across their front to their right, towards the three battalions of the Old Guard. Standing alone therefore, they soon became the target of the Allied artillery and in such a dense formation they were soon suffering serious casualties. Sergeant Mauduit wrote:

The balls, shells, and a little later, the caseshot, inflicted terrible losses. Nevertheless, it [the battalion of the 2nd/3rd Grenadiers] did not abandon its post; it only re-dressed its ranks as each salvo opened a gap, firing at hardly a quarter range, and soon 150 grenadiers out of 550 were struck down ...⁴¹

The advance of the Allied infantry was closely followed by Vivien's and Vandeleur's brigades of fresh British cavalry. Vivien's troopers swept down on this isolated French battalion, but, secure in their square, the cavalry were repulsed. Seeing that the square maintained its discipline and cohesion, the cavalry quickly moved on to seek easier prey. Vivian's Brigade continued along the line of the main road, pressing the squares of the Old Guard in their retreat, whilst Vandeleur's Brigade pushed further to the west, turning the retreat of Reille's II Corps into a rout.

Given the helplessness of their position, Lieutenant Colonel Belcourt decided to withdraw. Continuing casualties forced them into a triangular formation as they had insufficient troops to remain in square. Later the triangle was attacked by Brunswick lancers, but again the cavalry was repulsed. However, it continued to suffer severely from the case shot being fired by horse artillery pieces that followed up their withdrawal. Eventually, the surviving guardsmen could take no more and the square broke up. Only 100 guardsmen, from the original 550, joined the 1st Regiment of Grenadiers near Rosomme.

The three remaining battalions of the Old Guard did not wait to encounter the advancing red line. An officer of the British 52nd Light Infantry recalled:

The squares of the Old Guard made no attempt to deploy; but, after opening a heavy fire from their front and flanks, as soon as the opposing line came too near, with great steadiness ceased firing, faced to the rear, and commenced their retreat by word of command, the two right squares directly to the rear on the right side of the *chaussée*, pursued by the 71st and skirmishers of the 95th. The left square, accompanied at first by the cuirassiers, passing obliquely to the left, crossed the *chaussée* (which was crowded with fugitives) below La Belle Alliance, and then hastened towards Rosomme, along the left side of the road, followed closely by the



52nd Regiment, the two British regiments still in lines four deep. On crossing the *chaussée*, the cuirassiers fronted as if to charge; but their opponents pressed towards them, presenting their bayonets, unwilling to lose time either by firing or forming square, and the cuirassiers declined the contest.⁴²

Major Guillemin, who had commanded the 1st/3rd Grenadiers during the assault on the ridge, wrote:

We retired, the Marshal [Ney], the General [de Morvan] and I, to the square of the old grenadiers commanded by General Cambronne. Passing close to the farm [presumably La Belle Alliance], we were struck by a discharge of caseshot from an enemy battery placed on the road and by the volleys of several battalions. The Emperor, who was next to this square, seeing the battle lost, gave the orders for it to retire.⁴³

General Cambronne later became famous for being the officer who, in response to a summons to surrender, is supposed to have replied, '*La Garde muert et ne se rend pas!*' ('The Guard dies, but does not surrender!') However, Cambronne himself is later quoted as saying, 'I did not say what is attributed to me, I replied with something else.'⁴⁴ Soon afterwards, wounded and trapped by his fallen horse, Cambronne was captured by Colonel Hew Halkett.

GNMX1043_241 [LOW RES FOR PLACEMENT, HI RES TO COME]

General Hill calls on the Imperial Guard to surrender to the Allies. (National Army Museum)



General Cambronne, commander of 1st Regiment of Chasseurs, who famously said '*La Garde meurt et ne se rend pas!*' ('the dies, but does not surrender'). (Anne S. K. Brown)

The 2nd/2nd Chasseurs formed the centre square of the three. Having received the order to retire, the commanding officer of this battalion, Major Mompez, directed it along the right of the main road. As it moved back it was in almost constant contact with Allied cavalry and infantry. A steady trickle of casualties and stragglers soon reduced the square to a mere handful of men. Further on they met the bloody remains of their sister battalion, the 1st/2nd Chasseurs, who had evacuated Plancenoit with the Eagle of the Chasseurs. However, despite this reinforcement the square could not maintain its order and it broke up, the men joining the flood of fugitives.

The third square, on the right of the line of three, was that of the 1st/2nd Grenadiers, commanded by Major Golzio. To its right were some weak regiments of cuirassiers and a regiment of *chasseurs à cheval*. Some French histories accuse this cavalry of deserting the grenadiers without orders and before they were seriously attacked. But the truth is, however willing they may have been, the debris of the French heavy cavalry was incapable of any further cohesive action. Colonel Ordener, who was commanding a brigade of cuirassiers, summed up the situation:

At this sight [the charges of Vivian and Vandeleur], the commotion penetrated our ranks; the devotion of our cavalymen was finished, the sense of self-preservation overwhelmed it. In vain did we make our final efforts to keep them in line; they went down the slopes in disorder, swirled around the squares of the Guard and dispersed under a hail of musket balls.⁴⁵

A British account illustrates the failure of the French cavalry to intervene:

... there are, however, described by others of the 52nd as having been three squares, with a body of cavalry on their right; they had three guns on their left, which fired a round or two of grape at us. The 52nd did not return the fire of these troops of the Old Guard. On our advancing, the French retired in good order. The cavalry on their right faced about to cover the retreat of their squares, but, on pressing on our pursuit, they prudently refused the encounter with our compact four deep line.⁴⁶

The same officer went on to say:

Only one of their squares retreated by our left of La Belle Alliance and the Charleroi road; and this square the 52nd kept in view for nearly a mile further,

until they lost sight of it about a quarter of a mile before it reached the farm house of Rosomme, where we brought up for the night.⁴⁷

The square followed by the 52nd, to the left of La Belle Alliance, was that of the 2nd/2nd Grenadiers. Having out-marched their pursuers, their eventual fate is described by the commander of the 2nd Regiment of Grenadiers, General Christiani: 'The English skirmishers appeared and opened fire. Then I began my own retreat with my battalion in square; several balls fell amongst us that caused some confusion in the ranks.'⁴⁸

These four Guard battalions, three of them of the Old Guard, had achieved little and were ultimately lost; so few troops, even of such high calibre, had no chance of stalling the general advance of the Allied Army, and the increasing flood of Prussians.

Despite the helplessness of their situation, all British accounts agree that these battalions put up a heroic resistance. A lieutenant in the 52nd Light Infantry recalled:

Vivian's brigade of hussars came up rapidly in echelon of regiments to the assistance of the 71st. The cuirassiers, worn out as they were, and discouraged as they had reason to be, with much devotedness fronted in the line of La Belle Alliance, to protect the squares of the Old Guard, but a squadron of the 10th [Hussars] dashing at them, followed immediately by one of the 18th [Hussars], they were dispersed in hopeless confusion. The compact battalions of the Old Guard were not so soon routed: a part of the 10th having rallied after the charge on the cuirassiers, found itself under the fire of one of the squares; the men fell very fast, and there was no alternative but instantly to retreat or to charge.

The near approach of the 71st to another face of the same square, decided Sir Hussey Vivian to order the latter. The charge was very gallantly attempted; Major Howard, who conducted it, fell upon the bayonets; some of the grenadiers were cut down by men of the 10th, but even under such circumstances, -charged home by cavalry on two faces, (for the 18th immediately followed to the assistance of their comrades) and under heavy fire of infantry on the other, -the veterans knew too well their strength, and in what their safety consisted, to shrink from the contest: they closed well together, beat off the cavalry with a very destructive fire, and, in spite of the approaching infantry, made good their retreat.⁴⁹



General Cambronne is taken prisoner by Colonel Halkett, having been wounded and trapped by his fallen horse. (Rijksmuseum)

This artwork depicts the moment of the final stand of the Imperial Guard at Mont Saint Jean during the closing stages of the battle. (Anne S. K. Brown)



As the Old Guard squares struggled to resist the Allied advance, a large part of the rest of the army had become nothing more than a mob. The battlefield was now being flooded by Prussian cavalry to the east of the main road, and the two brigades of fresh British cavalry to the west. Against these, and their supporting infantry, the shattered and exhausted remains of the Guard could offer little serious resistance. Eventually, Napoleon had no option but to commit the only fresh cavalry left under his own hand: the Service Squadrons. These squadrons provided his own personal bodyguard and were drawn from each of the guard cavalry regiments to a total of about 400 men. Their gallant charge was quickly overwhelmed.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE FRENCH ARMY

Most French histories state that the French rout almost certainly started in Durutte's Division and that this, combined with the repulse of the Guard, rapidly communicated itself to the rest of d'Erlon's I Corps. Lieutenant Martin of the 45th Line Regiment recalled:

Everyone was fleeing as fast and far as possible. I did the same as everyone else.

The other Corps disbanded at the same time. Panic had seized the entire army. There was nothing more than a confused mass of infantry soldiers, cavalry and guns that rushed, all mixed together, across the plain like an unstoppable torrent,

through the Prussian squadrons that charged them and the English battalions that descended from their plateau with cries of victory. Alone, several squares of the Guard, held back by Napoleon at the foot of La Belle Alliance, remained immobile as rocks in a raging sea. The crowds of fugitives passed between the squares and soon only the enemy surrounded them ...⁵⁰

Isolated from the immediate impact of the Prussian intervention, the situation on the French left was not yet so dire. The French II Corps did not break into



La Vieille Garde a Waterloo 18 Juin 1815. (Anne S. K. Brown)

irremediable confusion on the defeat of the Guard, but attempted a more regular retreat. Reille himself reported that his corps retired in good order, but Captain Robinaux of the 2nd Line Regiment wrote:

This [order] did not last long; we received several balls from behind us and the frightened soldiers, looking over their shoulders, saw our Polish lancers, whom they took for English cavalry [the French Guard lancers were dressed in red] and shouted, 'We are lost!' This call was repeated throughout the column and soon we were in complete disorder: each thought only of his own salvation. It is impossible to rally such lost soldiers.⁵¹

Marshal Ney is recognised for working hard to rally small bands of men and many French historians credit him with vain attempts to find death on the battlefield. The most common is his appeal to troops of Brue's Brigade of Durutte's Division. This account is based on a postscript to Durutte's own account of the battle in which he said:

Chef de battalion Rulhières, who was with the 95th Line, and therefore part of the 2nd Brigade, told me in Paris a little time after the battle of Waterloo, that Marshal Ney, seeing the good order of Brue's brigade at the very moment that I left it to look for a route through the ravine, directed it onto the main road, taking it back several hundred paces. He appeared to want to stop the enemy at this point. He shouted to it with energy ... 'I will show you how a marshal of France dies.'⁵²



As the battle drew to a close, Napoleon fled the battlefield on horseback, his last throw of the dice having failed, and his army disintegrating around him. (Rijksmuseum)



Escorted by the exhausted and much depleted survivors of his Guard, Napoleon retreats from the battlefield. (akg-images)

Wellington too, in advancing close behind his lead troops, put himself in considerable danger. Close to La Belle Alliance, which had been Napoleon's observation post for much of the battle, he met Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. Wellington later described the meeting: 'We were both on horseback; but he embraced me, exclaiming "*Mein lieber kamerad*" ["My dear friend" (in German)] and then "*Quelle affaire!*" ["What a business!"] which was pretty much all he knew of French.' Given the exhaustion of his troops, Wellington agreed that the Prussians should take on the responsibility for the pursuit; he gave orders for his own army to halt for the night. The 52nd Light Infantry had reached Rosomme; the cavalry of Vandeleur and Vivian only a little further.

For Wellington's Army the battle was over, but for the French the nightmare had much longer to run. The Prussians maintained a relentless pursuit and most Frenchmen were incapable of any further resistance; many were cut down unable to defend themselves. So complete was their disorganisation that the Prussians mounted a drummer boy on a stray horse and the sound of his drum was sufficient to keep the French on the run and prevent them from rallying.

Napoleon's last throw of the dice had resulted in failure and the total collapse of his army. Having ordered the three remaining battalions of the Guard near La Belle Alliance to withdraw, Napoleon had ridden back to the squares of the 1st Grenadiers at Rosomme. Showing some determination to stay with these squares and perhaps even seek his own death, he was bundled away by his closest staff. His hopes of rallying the army were hopeless in the darkness and chaos that surrounded him. His coaches, captured by the Prussians, were lost to him and he was forced to leave the battlefield on horseback; a weary path back to Paris, exile and ignominy.