

# “Napoleon at Waterloo”

## The Events of 18 June 1815

### Analyzed via Historical Simulation

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**Abstract:** The Battle of Waterloo is one of the most memorable actions in world history and has in consequence given rise to both an enormous historiography and many other forms of commemoration. “Napoleon at Waterloo” examines one such form of commemoration, namely the traditional board wargame, and it examines how this activity can be employed to further understand how the battle was fought and won.

**Keywords:** Battle of Waterloo, Napoleonic Wars, Napoleon Bonaparte, wargaming, historical simulation

## Introduction

The Battle of Waterloo is beyond doubt one of the most intensely studied battles in all history. Within days of the guns falling silent on the appalling charnel house to which the battlefield had been reduced, accounts of the struggle had started to appear in print while the very night of 18 June 1815 had seen the victorious Duke of Wellington write a report of the events of the day for the government in London. These early efforts to tell the story were but the first in a torrent that has continued all but unabated to this day, a deluge to which the author of this article has himself contributed via a walking guide to the battlefield and a counterfactual discussion of what might have happened

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Until his retirement in 2020, Dr. Charles J. Esdaile held a personal chair in the Department of History at the University of Liverpool. A specialist on the Napoleonic era, he is the author of many books on the subject including both general studies, e.g., *Napoleon's Wars: An International History, 1803–1815* (2007) and monographs, e.g., *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War* (1988); *Fighting Napoleon: Guerrillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain, 1808–1814* (2004); and *Women in the Peninsular War* (2014). Among his most recent publications is a guide to the battlefield of Waterloo, *Walking Waterloo: A Guide* (2019).

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had Napoleon Bonaparte succeeded in defeating Wellington and his Prussian counterpart, Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher.<sup>1</sup> In this work, impossible to ignore though it is, the primary aim will not be to retell the military history of the campaign of the Hundred Days yet again: around 20 such narratives were published in the course of the bicentenary in 2015, and there is little if any genuine originality that the current author could add to them. How Waterloo has been remembered is another matter, however: very few scholars have sought to look at this subject, while those that have been inclined to think in terms of more-or-less conventional subjects such as monuments, public commemorations, films, and works of art and literature. Most members of the wider public are likely to encounter Waterloo primarily through phenomena of this sort, but there is another field that could be considered as being ripe for discussion, namely the historical conflict-based board game. There are at least 25 products portraying either the full campaign of the Hundred Days or the climactic battle of 18 June 1815 that have appeared since the foundational moment represented by the establishment of the renowned Avalon Hill company in 1952. Considerations of space making it impossible to mount a full analysis of the subject, no attempt will be made to do so here.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the object of this article will rather be to examine one way in which the products of the game industry can be used to probe the course of events and draw out wider lessons relating to the conduct of war or, to put it more explicitly still, to show how historical board games are not just recreational artifacts but also a tool with which more fully to explore, analyze, and understand campaign design and battle execution. In this instance, the focus will be the campaign of the Hundred Days and the culminating Battle of Waterloo, but it will be understood that the same methodology can be applied to any one of the myriad conflicts with respect to which it is possible to purchase board games of one sort or another.<sup>3</sup>

Let us begin with a pair of definitions. In brief, the sort of products under discussion in this article offer two methods of approach. Both rely on the same foundation, namely the provision of systems whereby the manner in which war is conducted in a given historical period at the level of the tactical, the operational, or the strategic can be reproduced on the tabletop and the participants confronted with a series of problems whose resolution depends on the application of force as mediated by the mechanisms concerned. At the same time, both offer significant aids in respect of the learning process—there is, then, no suggestion that one is superior to the other—while both depend on an accurate depiction of the terrain. That said, they are very different. Thus, on the one hand, there is the wargame, namely a contest in which the belligerent parties can both engage with a significant hope of victory—a condition that is often satisfied by allowing for the possibility of significant changes in the course of

events (in the case of Waterloo, obvious examples include the appearance on the field of French Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy's command and the nonappearance of that of Blücher)—and are free, if not to move away from the historical deployment of their forces, then at the very least to employ alternative strategies in pursuit of the desired aim of the defeat of the enemy. As one authority notes, this can be a very rewarding activity. Thus, "By playing with the variables of tactics and strategy, reinforcement and supply and timing and preparation, [the historian-gamer] can gain a unique insight into the crucial factors of an engagement . . . why the actual results of a battle or war came about and how they might have been altered."<sup>4</sup> Yet, there is an obvious drawback in that the games concerned can become excursions into the world of fantasy or, still worse, exercises in wish fulfillment. If what is sought is realism, then, what is needed is rather the second approach on offer, namely that of historical simulation, this last being definable at the most basic level as the attempt to reproduce and work through certain given combat situations in accordance with the decisions taken by the actual commanders with respect to such matters as deployment and grand tactics. As will become clear, it is this latter course of action that has been adopted in this article, although the product on which the analysis is based is also one that is ideal for wargaming Waterloo, the purpose, indeed, for which it was originally designed.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, why the choice of Waterloo? One possible answer to this question is simply that the component parts needed for a simple wargame and/or simulation are, as we shall see, freely available from the internet, but, as true as this is, the events of 18 June 1815 are also such as cannot but fire the imagination: setting aside the fact that it was the one occasion when the two greatest commanders of the age faced one another on the proverbial "stricken field," the situation that had emerged was for both sides a desperate race against time. Meanwhile, Wellington, Blücher, and Napoleon were all at the head of armies that were in different ways desperately frail, the ranks of both the Anglo-Dutch and the Prussians containing far too many raw recruits and unwilling militiamen, and those of the French riven with doubt and suspicion, just as all three found themselves confronting difficult strategic choices. And, finally, there are, too, the numerous generic military problems with which the game provides insights, whether it is the importance of combined-arms tactics; the difficulties inherent in coalition management; or the best way to conduct a static defense, organize a full-scale attack, or feed troops into a major battle from afar, not to mention the way in which the defeat of Napoleon came to stand for the notion of the possibility of both fighting and ending a major war between the European powers in a matter of days, a belief that was to have a pernicious effect on the international relations of 1914. Add to all this the fact that, if far from totally

unspoiled, the battlefield is not so very different from the state it was in at the time that the battle occurred, and one can see many reasons why Waterloo is an obvious subject for discussion.

## **Historical Context**

It has been stated that the purpose of this article is not to provide yet another narrative account of the Battle of Waterloo. That said, the author's purposes will not be served unless some insight is provided into understanding the battle, and all the more so given the fact that this last differs considerably from the "received" version of events, which has tended to dominate the literature, as exemplified, for example, by the works of the preeminent Napoleonic historian, David G. Chandler. First of all, however, a few words may be in order with respect to the brief campaign by which the titanic conflict of 18 June was preceded. In brief, having escaped from exile on the island of Elba, Napoleon once again seized power in France, only to be confronted by the military might of virtually the whole of Europe. Anxious to win an early victory that might shatter the resolution of his opponents and possibly even win the war at a stroke, the emperor decided to attack the enemy forces that lay nearest the frontiers of France, namely the Anglo-Dutch army of the Duke of Wellington and the Prussian one of Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher, both of which were stationed in Belgium. Adopting a central position designed to split its foes in twain and expose them to defeat in detail, the French crossed the border on 15 June and succeeded in winning a substantial victory over the Prussians at Ligny, Belgium, the next day. That said, already the campaign was falling into disarray: not only had large parts of the army been very slow to get moving, but the chance of both a far bigger victory at Ligny and a defeat of Wellington's forces at Quatre Bras, Belgium, was lost due to poor staff work. Far from being driven asunder, then, on 17 June the two allied armies were able to retire in good order to mutually supportive positions a few kilometers south of Brussels at Wavre in the case of the Prussians and a dominant ridge known as Mont-Saint-Jean, leaving Napoleon and Grouchy—the commander he had sent to pursue the Prussians—groping blindly in their rear in the midst of a torrential thunderstorm that inundated the countryside and slowed progress to a crawl.<sup>6</sup>

What of the topography that was shortly to be the scene of such carnage? In the same way as many aspects of the battle, this has been much misrepresented.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the battlefield of Waterloo is commonly envisaged as a simple matter of two parallel ridges with a shallow valley in between. Rather what one has is a rolling upland pitted with a variety of dips, valleys, and indentations, with all the high ground being pretty much of a similar elevation. Having emerged from the forest of Soignies and passing through Waterloo, where Wellington had his headquarters, the Brussels-Charleroi highway rose gradually for the

3 kilometers (km) that it took to reach the battlefield. After perhaps three-quarters of the distance at a small hamlet known as Mont-Saint-Jean, a second highway branched off to the southwest in the direction of Nivelles, whereupon the Charleroi highway ascended a steep slope culminating in a long east-west ridge: known, like both the hamlet and the substantial walled farm halfway up the hill, as Mont-Saint-Jean, it was this that provided Wellington with his main fighting position, and here, too, that the upland mentioned previously begins. At the crest, the highway was crossed at 90 degrees by a lane stretching left and right, the junction being marked by a solitary elm tree. To the east, this lane, which ran from the town of Braine-l'Alleud 3 km to the northwest to the village of Ohain 3 km to the west, was lined on both sides by thorn hedges, but to the west the ground was completely open. In the immediate vicinity of the crossroads, both the Charleroi highway and the Ohain road were deeply sunken, the banks rising to as much as 10 feet on either side, while the forward slope of the ridge to the west of the highway was broken by a prominent knoll, immediately beneath which there was a shallow quarry.<sup>8</sup>

Insofar as the ground was concerned, to the east the battlefield was much as it has generally been portrayed: across a shallow valley perhaps a kilometer across, a second ridge ran from east to west more-or-less parallel to Wellington's position. However, several hundred yards to the west, rising a little as it did so, a broad ridge jutted out diagonally in the direction of the French lines, which it reached in the vicinity of the spot where they were crossed by the Charleroi highway; an important local watershed, this cut the battlefield completely in two and rendered it quite impossible for troops posted to the east of the highway to see what was going on to the west and vice versa. To the right of this feature, there was a deep hollow, which after about a kilometer it opened out into a broad north-south valley through which ran the dead-straight Nivelles highway, said hollow being crossed diagonally at its eastern end by a lane that ran in a roughly southeasterly direction from the Ohain road and joined the Charleroi highway just a little short of the spot where it reached the French ridge, this last being much more prominent to the east of the highway than it was to the west.

Even this passage does not exhaust the complications offered by the battlefield. As the Charleroi highway rose toward the French positions, then, it passed through a deep cutting occasioned by the presence of a significant swell in the ground (referred to in this work as the intermediate ridge) that ran parallel with the French position for much of its length, and was separated from it on both sides of the watershed mentioned above by a shallow valley. Behind the French right, meanwhile, there was a much deeper depression and then a ridge that connected the upland crossed by the Charleroi highway with a further mass of high ground known as the heights of Agiers, this last feature thrusting a pronounced shoulder southward that all but merged with the ridge that marked

the French front line and hid a deep reentrant that angled sharply back uphill from the valley beneath Wellington's extreme left flank and was home to the hamlet of Smohain (today La Marache).

From Smohain, a lane ran southward up the side of the reentrant and at the top of the slope this crossed what was to turn out to be the most important channel of communications on the battlefield, namely a country road that led westward from Wavre to Braine-l'Alleud. Having crossed a small river some distance to the west at the village of Lasne, this ascended the heights of Agiers via a thick wood called the Bois de Paris, and then ran due west along the ridge parallel to the rear of the French front line to a spot above a second and far more substantial village called Plancenoit situated in a deep valley to the left, at which point it turned sharply to the south and ran uphill to the high ground crossed by the Charleroi highway, where it turned sharply to the west once more and, crossing the highway, dropped down into the dip behind the intermediate ridge from whence it followed a generally northwesterly course in the direction of the Nivelles road and, beyond it, Braine-l'Alleud. To the left of this last stretch, the ground was undulating, with the most important feature being a pronounced eminence just beside the Charleroi highway, but it generally sloped upward to a further area of high ground that marked the southern edge of the upland on which the battle was fought.

With the exception of the need to note that, except for the Bois de Paris, patches of woodland on either side of the Wavre-Braine-l'Alleud road at the western end of the ridge above Plancenoit and various features at Hougomont and La Haye Sainte (see below), the battlefield was almost treeless and, further, that it was mostly given over to the cultivation of cereal crops grown in broad, open fields, there is little more that needs to be said about the physical geography. As for the human geography, this was limited. Setting aside the two villages and the farm of Mont-Saint-Jean, on the French side of the battlefield the course of the highway was marked successively by two wayside taverns, of which the first was known as La Belle Alliance and the second owned by a man named De Coster and, a kilometer to the south near the farther edge of the upland, a house called Rossomme. In the rear of the French left beside the Nivelles road was a large country house called Mon Plaisir and, more or less opposite it at the other extreme of the battlefield on the slopes overlooking Smohain, the château of Frischermont. However, the most important buildings on the battlefield by far were the four complexes that dotted the forward slope of Wellington's position, from east to west these being the farms of La Haye, Papelotte, and La Haye Sainte and the chateau of Hougomont.

Beginning with the first two, these stood side by side a few hundred yards from Smohain, though La Haye was a mere cluster of buildings while Papelotte was a stoutly built courtyard farm. Another courtyard farm, screened to its

south by a small orchard, La Haye Sainte constituted a compact rectangle built on a north-south axis immediately beside the Charleroi highway perhaps 250 yards south of the crossroads. And, finally, situated deep in the hollow beneath the watershed in advance of Wellington's right flank, Hougoumont was a much larger affair than any of the rest, comprising the château (a three-story building surrounded by a series of barns, stables, and store sheds); a large, formal garden protected on its southern and eastern sides by a high wall; a kitchen garden; an orchard; a paddock; and a large wood that stretched southward all the way to the summit of the intermediate ridge. Much of the perimeter was surrounded by a dense hedge and ditch, while a farther hedge separated the orchard from the paddock.

Hougoumont was linked to the Ohain road by a lane lined with a row of poplars, while other lanes besides the ones already mentioned crisscrossed the battlefield in various directions (e.g., from Hougoumont to La Belle Alliance; from Papelotte to La Belle-Alliance; from Smohain to Plancenoit; from Plancenoit to the Charleroi highway; and from Rossomme to the Nivelles road), but, though occasionally deeply sunken, particularly in the vicinity of Papelotte, they were to play little role in the battle. With the exception of the Charleroi highway and the Nivelles road, all the roads were mere country lanes with no paving of any sort, the heavy rain therefore causing muddy conditions even before the fighting began. Indeed, with the whole of the battlefield composed of a thick clay soil, the going was everywhere at best heavy and, in places, completely impossible.

With the scene duly set, let us proceed to a narrative of the battle. Although the rain stopped at first light, dawn on 18 June 1815 was a damp and miserable affair, while many of the French troops had yet even to reach the field. For a short time then, there was no chance of anything happening, and it was not in fact until about 1130 that the battle began. In consequence, the army of the Netherlands was able to deploy without the slightest haste, its order of battle showing the British general's mind all too clearly. Thus, believing that the Prussians would arrive very quickly, Wellington left his left flank but thinly held: from the crossroads to Smohain, there were the equivalent of a mere six brigades of infantry, of which only two were British, and three brigades of cavalry; still worse, several of the units concerned, especially the British brigade of Major General Denis Pack and the Dutch one of Major General Willem van Bijlandt, had suffered very heavy casualties at Quatre Bras, while two others were composed entirely of low-grade Hanoverian militia. By contrast, from the crossroads to the Nivelles road, there were six infantry brigades, of which four were either British or King's German Legion, and seven cavalry brigades, and from the Nivelles road to Braine-l'Alleud seven infantry brigades, of which three were either British or King's German Legion, most of the troops in this last section of

the line being held well back so as in effect to create a refused flank. Obviously enough, then, it was felt that the real danger rather lay in the relatively open ground in front of Braine-l'Alleud, Wellington being so concerned about his right that he posted a further 10,500 troops well to the west at Hal in case the emperor should try a wide outflanking movement. Quite why he should have thought this was a possibility, however, it is hard to see, for, even if successful, an attack on his right flank would only have driven him toward the Prussians, this being precisely the object that Napoleon was least likely to desire.<sup>9</sup>

In assessing Waterloo, Wellington's many admirers have made much of the strength of the position that he adopted. This last was certainly far from bad, but nor was it impregnable. If the ridge certainly offered protection from artillery fire, not to mention complete concealment, in very few places were its slopes a serious obstacle to movement, while Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, and Papelotte-La Haye were of less use than is sometimes suggested. Best of all was probably the often-neglected Papelotte-La Haye as this offered its defenders an excellent field of fire in all directions, but the value of the others were more dubious. Situated in a deep hollow and almost entirely masked by trees, Hougoumont was near useless unless troops could hold the outer perimeter, while the layout of La Haye Sainte was very inconvenient in that troops trying to defend the orchard at its southern end could neither retire nor be reinforced with any ease for want of any gate or door in the southern wall. Still worse, there were few apertures in the walls on either side; the outer door of the main barn had been taken for firewood; and, unlike at Hougoumont (see below), nothing had been done to prepare the buildings for defense. On the bright side, neither position was especially helpful to troops attacking the ridge as they offered no view of the defenders' positions and could easily be pounded by artillery should they be taken; but the keys to victory they most certainly were not, the real importance of both La Haye Sainte and Hougoumont being simply that they denied the French the space they needed for the combined operations that were their best chance of breaking Wellington's line and then only in a sector that was far from uppermost in Napoleon's thoughts.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to Wellington's expectation, in fact, the emperor was not initially planning to attack his right wing at all: believe that the Prussians were out of the fight though he might, he did not wish to do anything that would increase the chances of the British commander linking up with Blücher. As his troops came up, they were arrayed in a convex line stretching from beyond the Nivelles road to the slopes opposite Papelotte, and in this matter placed so as to threaten the whole length of their opponents' position—in brief, the three divisions of Marshal Honoré Charles Reille's II Corps held the sector from the Nivelles Road to La Belle Alliance and the four of Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouet's I Corps that from La Belle Alliance to Papelotte with their respective light cavalry divisions



on their outer flanks, while each one of them was backed by three divisions of cavalry and, farther back still, the three divisions of guard infantry.<sup>11</sup> Due to form a further reserve in the rear of the right wing were Marshal George Mouton's severely understrength VI Corps, one division of which had ended up with Grouchy, and two stray cavalry divisions that had become detached from the latter's forces, though none of these troops were as yet anywhere near the battlefield: badly delayed by the rain, they were not to appear until the early afternoon.<sup>12</sup> In charge of the troops in the first line—those of Drouet and Reille—was Marshal Michel Ney, who appears to have occupied the role of a senior executive officer, but all the rest of the army was kept firmly under the control of the emperor.<sup>13</sup>

At first sight, the sheer symmetry of the French Army of the North's initial disposition might suggest that what was intended was a head-on attack, and the emperor did in fact later claim that this was his aim. If such was the impression that was aimed at, however, in reality it was a trick designed to obscure Napoleon's real intentions. Thus, abjuring the cluttered terrain to the west in favor of the open hillsides to the east, the emperor planned to launch a massive attack on Wellington's left with I Corps—it was no mistake that this was both the largest and the freshest of his formations—while keeping back the guard, VI Corps, and most of his cavalry for the final coup de grâce.<sup>14</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, of course, it can be argued that an attack on Wellington's left was foolhardy indeed, as it effectively meant that a good half of the French Army would in effect be marching into a trap, but it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that on the morning of 18 June, the emperor did not have the slightest reason to believe that Blücher was coming. That there was a force of Prussians at Wavre he knew full well, Grouchy having told him as much the previous evening, but in a note penned at 0600 the latter insisted that, if the whole Prussian army was at Wavre rather than the mere 10,000 he had at first placed them at, there was no need to worry as they were withdrawing on Brussels.<sup>15</sup>

Setting aside a few shots that rang out when some French cavalry chased off a few German infantry who had been sent to garrison Smohain and Frischermont, it was not on the eastern half of the battlefield that the battle began, however. On the contrary, realizing that his great right hook needed to be secured against a spoiling attack, having had two batteries of 12-pounder guns subject Wellington's center to a preliminary barrage, Napoleon sent orders for Reille to dispatch some troops to occupy the extensive wood in his front.<sup>16</sup> This was, of course, the same wood that masked Hougoumont, but the fact that it concealed a strong and well-garrisoned fortified post—unlike at La Haye Sainte, the 1,300-strong garrison, almost all at this point either Hanoverians or Nassauers, had had time to build firing steps, barricade some of the gates, and knock extra loopholes in the walls—was lost on Napoleon, for the buildings were entirely

invisible to him. This should have made no difference for, to carry out their orders, Reille's men needed only to seize the wood and the orchard, but in command of the attackers was Napoleon's younger brother, Jérôme Bonaparte. A headstrong and foolish individual who was ever out for glory, having almost literally bumped into the château, he resolved on its capture at all costs, and the result was a prolonged struggle that negated the position's value as a firebase and pulled in the bulk of a particularly valuable British guards brigade, but at the same time came permanently to absorb fully one-half of Reille's corps.<sup>17</sup>

The struggle for Hougoumont was marked by many famous incidents of which the most well-known is the episode in which a large party of French troops burst in through the north gate, only to be cut down almost to the last man when the gate was forced shut behind them. In the end, however, horrific though it was—many of the buildings caught fire with the loss of many wounded who had been sheltering inside—the fight was but a side issue. Far more crucial were events farther east. Here, Napoleon's aim, as we have seen, was to crush Wellington's left. Available for the assault were the four infantry divisions of Drouet's I Corps, namely those of Joachim-Jerome Quiot, François Xavier Donzelot, Pierre-Louis Binet Marcognet, and Pierre-François-Joseph Durutte, but before they were sent forward a sustained attempt was made to soften up the defenders with the two heavy artillery batteries attached to I and II Corps. Together composed of 12 12-pounder guns and 4 heavy howitzers, these pounded the area around the crossroads from La Belle Alliance for more than an hour, but, unbeknownst to the French, they inflicted little damage: not only did many of the projectiles simply bury themselves in the waterlogged ground but the infantry had been ordered to lie down and the cavalry to dismount. Casualties, then, were limited, but this did not mean that the assault was not a major threat. On their left flank, the assault forces—some 20,000 men—were supported by a brigade of cuirassiers (mounted soldiers with breastplate armor), while the two divisions in the center of the array—those of François Donzelot and Pierre Binet de Marcognet—were drawn up in an unusual formation that saw the eight battalions of which they were each composed drawn up in line one behind the other, the idea being that they could match the firepower of any troops who confronted them while also maintaining the maneuverability of a column (on either side, by contrast, the divisions of Joachim Quiot and Pierre Durutte appear to have been deployed in standard brigade or battalion columns of a much more flexible nature).<sup>18</sup>

Drouet's assault, then, was by no means just a matter of brute force. Nor did the careful thought that went into it go unrewarded. First to feel the weight of the assault were the defenders of La Haye Sainte, the rifle-armed 2d Light Battalion of the King's German Legion commanded by Major Georg Baring. Overwhelmed by the enemy skirmishers, the soldiers whom Baring had placed

to hold the orchard were forced to flee into the open fields to the west where they were succored by a Hanoverian infantry battalion that had been sent down from the ridge above to cover their retreat. This last decision, however, proved a grievous error: to their horror, the riflemen and Hanoverians suddenly found themselves assailed by the cuirassier brigade. Being closer to the farm, most of Baring's men managed to make it back inside, but the Hanoverians were completely routed and effectively ceased to exist as a fighting unit. Still worse, a King's German Legion battalion sent forward to cover their retreat (the 8th Line) was also caught by the French cavalry and driven back with the loss of a color. On the other side of the farm, meanwhile, things were just as bad: if the troops of Quiot's division were unable to break into the buildings, they did overrun the knoll and quarry a little farther up the highroad, the defenders of which—several companies of the first battalion of the famous 95th Rifles—fled in disorder, while the sudden appearance of cuirassiers on the slopes above La Haye Sainte caused a panic that saw the whole battalion fall back to the rear. Only once they had breasted the knoll and reached the sunken Ohain road did Quiot's men experience any check. Setting aside the 95th Rifles, the front line of the defenders was composed of the Dutch brigade of Willem van Bylandt. Having suffered very heavy casualties at Quatre Bras, the troops concerned were in no condition to resist an assault by four French divisions and, after a brief fight, they too turned and fled. Behind them, however, were the two veteran British infantry brigades of Sir James Kempt and Sir Denis Pack and, notwithstanding the terrible losses they too had endured at Quatre Bras, these immediately launched a counterattack. On the right, under the personal direction of their divisional commander, Sir Thomas Picton, Kempt's three remaining battalions (the 95th Rifles appears not yet to have rallied from its earlier disorder) scored an immediate success in that, suddenly leaping up from behind the crest of the ridge, they checked Quiot's division with a single volley followed by a bayonet charge. That said, Picton was shot dead, while, to the left, Pack's brigade had been less fortunate. Thus, advancing to attack Marcognet's division, it was thrown back by a massive volley and completely checked.<sup>19</sup>

For a moment, then, it looked as if the French had broken through, but there now followed one of the most dramatic episodes in the battle. Behind Picton's troops was the heavy cavalry brigade of Sir William Ponsonby while across the Charleroi highway in a similar position was that of Sir Edward Somerset (by chance composed of one English, one Irish, and one Scottish regiment, the former quickly nicknamed itself "the Union Brigade," just as the fact that the latter was largely drawn from the Life Guards and Royal Horseguards gained it the sobriquet of the "Household Brigade"). Apparently at the personal initiative of the commander of the British cavalry, Lord Uxbridge, these two brigades launched a dramatic charge that took them through the crumbling allied front

line and into the oncoming enemy. Initially, success was complete: taken by surprise, the French recoiled in disorder and in many instances turned to flee altogether, the spoils of the victorious cavalry including two eagles and perhaps 3,000 prisoners. However, drunk on glory, the two British brigades now got out of control, galloping down into the low ground below Wellington's position, and in some instances even getting up onto the intermediate ridge where they rode down a number of I Corps' divisional batteries, these last having advanced to occupy the obvious position that it offered.<sup>20</sup> The result was disaster: French cavalry under Charles Jacquinet and Jacques Delort moved against the milling horsemen from east and west alike, and slaughtered them in great numbers, less than half their number eventually making it back to their original positions and many of them only doing so at all thanks to a timely charge on the part of the British light-cavalry brigade of Sir John Vandeleur near Papelotte.<sup>21</sup>

The survivors of the brigades of Ponsonby (himself among the dead) and Somerset were for the time being out of the battle, but through their actions they had thwarted what was probably Napoleon's best chance of victory. Nevertheless, the emperor was far from finished. On the right, Durutte's division had not been much affected by Uxbridge's counterattack, and had therefore continued to press forward, thereby inaugurating what became a long and bitter battle for La Haye and Papelotte. Entirely composed of Dutch and Germans who had lost many men at Quatre Bras, the defenders were pressed ever backward and were eventually driven from La Haye altogether, the French ruler therefore resolving to exploit their success by sending in the VI Corps of Georges Mouton, which had hitherto been sitting out the battle far to the rear in the vicinity of Rossomme, the idea being that this would push down through the valley in which Smohain was situated and swing round the allied left flank. Also given the support of the two cavalry divisions detached from Grouchy's command, such a move seemed to promise every success, but until it could be brought to fruition there was a major problem in that much of Napoleon's front line was in complete disarray: on the left Reille continued to be bogged down at Hougomont, while on the right the three divisions caught by the British cavalry were still badly shaken. It is in this context that what happened next has to be understood. In brief, virtually all the available cavalry were flung into an assault on Wellington's right-center. According to the traditional version, this was the result of a Ney mistakenly convinced that the Anglo-Portuguese forces were retreating, but all the evidence suggests that the author of what happened was rather Napoleon. Given the emperor's determination to shift all the blame for his misfortunes elsewhere, we can only speculate as to why he acted as he did, but the most probable explanation is that he was concerned that, with much of his army shaken and off-balance, there was a serious danger that his opponent might launch a general assault. As massed cavalry charges had proved a very

effective way of staving off disaster in several of his earlier battles, most notably Eylau and Aspern-Essling, the remedy was obvious, and thus it was that, while as many French guns as possible continued to pound the allied line, at about 1600 the first of the 9,000 troops concerned moved forward along the axis of the watershed ridge, some of them also spilling over into the hollow that separated it from Hougomont.<sup>22</sup>

There followed extraordinary scenes. Advancing on Wellington's line at a pace no better than a lumbering trot (the ground was far too waterlogged for anything else), the cuirassiers of Edouard Milhaud and François Kellermann, not to mention the two divisions of cavalry belonging to the Imperial Guard, crowded into the narrow front offered by the gap between La Haye Sainte and Hougomont under a hail of artillery fire. Reaching the crest, they overran most of the batteries that lined it, but then hit an insuperable obstacle. Thus, all the way from Hougomont to the Charleroi highway, the allied infantry had been deployed in two lines of squares. So long as the defenders held their nerve, such formations were impervious to cavalry, and the result was that the horsemen milled about them in confusion while at the same time suffering heavy losses to musketry. Nor was this an end to their travails, for the squares were backed by numerous regiments of British and Dutch cavalry, and these countercharged the discomfited French horse and drove them back over the crest, only immediately to gallop back to their original positions to reform. For the next two hours, the same process was repeated over and over again with the increasingly desperate French cavalry losing heavy casualties each time they returned to the charge and achieving almost nothing in return for their efforts. That said, the defenders did not go unpunished: forced to remain in square and in some cases deprived of the shelter of the ridge (the worst sufferers here were Frederick Adam's brigade, this last having been deployed in the open fields to the east of Hougomont in an effort to safeguard communications with the château), in between the French charges they suffered very badly from artillery fire. Had a mass of infantry been available to follow up the cavalry attacks, then, something more might have been obtained, but when the division and a half of Reille's corps that were the only troops available in the sector for such a task were finally ordered forward, they were flung back with enormous losses (a particularly interesting point to note here is that, despite the presence nearby of thousands of French horsemen, the troops concerned received no support from them whatsoever, this being yet further evidence of the failure of Napoleon to coordinate the activities of his forces).<sup>23</sup>

At this point in the battle, Napoleon still possessed substantial reserves in the form of the three divisions of infantry belonging to the Imperial Guard. That they were not forthcoming brings us to a dramatic development in the narrative. As we have seen, during the night Wellington had received assurances

from Blücher that he would march to his assistance with his entire army at first light. Completely unmolested by Grouchy, who was still many kilometers to the south, the Prussian commander proceeded to do just this, but a variety of issues, including, not least, the terrible state of the only roads available, slowed his rate of march dramatically, and it was therefore well past 1600 before the first Prussian troops reached even the Bois de Paris. However, contrary to all the usual accounts of the battle—completely erroneously, it is almost universally claimed that Napoleon spotted Prussian troops in the far distance as early as 1300 and, further, that a captured Prussian hussar was soon after brought to his command post for interrogation—the French were completely unaware of their presence, the fact that Mouton's corps was on hand to deal with the new arrivals being pure happenstance.<sup>24</sup>

In consequence, when Prussian forces—the advanced guard of Friedrich von Bülow's IV Corps—suddenly emerged from the Bois de Paris at about 1630, it came as a complete shock, so much so, indeed, that Napoleon initially put the firing that suddenly erupted on his extreme right down to an accidental clash between Grouchy's men and those of Mouton. In the circumstances, then, the latter did extremely well in that they managed to form a solid defensive line between the woods flanking the road from Lasne to Braine-l'Alleud, while the various units of light cavalry that had been attached to them launched a series of charges designed to slow down the progress of the enemy. However, tough and determined though Mouton was, he could not hope to prevail against the ever-greater numbers by which he was faced and, with substantial Prussian forces beginning to push through the low ground to his right, he was forced to conduct a fighting retreat that eventually took him to a position running north from Plancenoit. Securing this last place with one of his four infantry brigades, he then turned at bay, but the Prussians soon drove his men from the outskirts of the village, thereby creating a real crisis: were Plancenoit to fall, the whole French position would become untenable. It was this fresh danger that prevented Napoleon from making any use of the sacrifice of so many of his cavalry, for, rather than sending it to attack Wellington, he was forced to use the whole of the Young Guard to drive back the Prussians. This they did with aplomb, but, having once advanced into Plancenoit, they could not be withdrawn, Bülow's men showing not the slightest sign of slackening the pressure.<sup>25</sup>

If help was at last at hand, the army of the Netherlands was barely aware that this was the case: situated in a deep hollow as it was, Plancenoit was all but invisible from Mont-Saint-Jean. Indeed, the situation of Wellington's forces now deteriorated dramatically. Having personally taken part in the cavalry charges, following receipt of fresh instructions from Napoleon, Ney now organized a fresh assault on La Haye Sainte. Unfortunately, successively reinforced though it may have been, the garrison was running short of ammunition, and

in consequence, it was soon overwhelmed. Much encouraged, the troops who had driven them out pressed forward to the crest of the ridge and assailed the defenders with heavy fire, while they also for a second time gained the knoll held by the 95th Rifles and in addition brought up a number of guns, including some that they stationed on the highest point of the watershed in a position in which they could wreak terrible damage on the defenders. Frantic to redeem the situation, the inexperienced Prince of Orange ordered Christian von Ompteda's King's German Legion infantry brigade to retake La Haye Sainte, but only one battalion—the 5th Line—was still in a state to fight, and this was immediately cut down by a force of cuirassiers that had gone unperceived in the thick smoke that now cloaked the whole battlefield, Ompteda being killed by French infantry in the farm's kitchen garden. In short, Wellington's army was in serious difficulties, but the decisive blow that might have settled the issue never came, for, when an exultant Ney sent to Napoleon for fresh troops, the emperor refused point-blank to send him any, and that despite the fact that he still had two divisions of guard infantry within a few yards of his position at La Belle Alliance (for much of the day, he had remained far in the rear at his command post overlooking the farmhouse of Rossomme, but at some point in the afternoon he had come forward to observe the progress of the battle firsthand).<sup>26</sup>

The decision not to send in the guard at this point was fatal, for a concentrated blow might well have broken through and forced Wellington to withdraw. Yet, once again, Napoleon appears to have lost his nerve, backing away from the final gamble that was his only hope of obtaining even a marginal victory (that it would be no more than this was guaranteed by the fact that his cavalry were no longer in any state to pursue Wellington). Instead, he became bogged down in organizing a counterattack by a mere two battalions at Plancenoit, and it was not until another hour had passed that he finally relented and released a part of the guard to follow up Ney's success. By now, however, it was almost certainly too late, for Wellington had rushed in his last reserve—the Dutch division commanded by David Hendrik Chassé previously stationed at Braine-l'Alleud—to shore up his center. Still worse, only 10 battalions of the 15 that might have been employed in the attack actually took part in it, while even they lost their cohesion as they advanced across the muddy and much-encumbered ground, and therefore struck Wellington's line at three different paces and anything but in unison. Supported by the troops who had seized La Haye Sainte and led by Ney, the right-hand-most elements of the attack succeeded in driving back or putting to flight altogether a number of units that had been hard hit in the course of the day, but even they were thrown back by the fresh troops of Chassé, while the rest of the assault force did not even achieve that much in the way of success, but it was routed by a classic British combination of volleys and bayonet charges, the coup de grâce being delivered

by the 52d Foot, which wheeled forward from its position on the ridge and took the last French troops still in the fight in the flank. Seeing his advantage, Wellington immediately ordered the right wing of his army to advance and large numbers of troops therefore swept forward toward La Belle Alliance. Their spirit utterly broken at the sight of the guard fleeing in panic, all the French troops in the area broke and ran, the only resistance of any sort being put up by three battalions of the guard that had unaccountably been left in the rear.<sup>27</sup>

According to British accounts, it was the guard's defeat that broke Napoleon's army. This, however, is only partially true. Due to the configuration of the ground, few of the French troops who were fighting to the east of the Charleroi highway had any view of the western half of the battlefield, and, if they turned and fled at virtually the same moment in time, it was for an entirely different reason. Thus, for hours many more Prussian troops had been pouring onto the battlefield, but the majority of these had been fed into the fight for Plancenoit. At length, however, a further force that had marched from Wavre by a different route, namely the corps commanded by Hans Joachim von Zeithen, reached Smohain, where it had been temporarily delayed by a firefight with some German troops who had managed to creep back into the village and mistook the blue-coated Prussians for fresh enemies. The noise of this fighting greatly cheered the French troops in the vicinity: not surprisingly, they assumed that Grouchy, who in fact had ignored the sound of the guns at Waterloo and continued to follow the orders that he had received to march on Wavre where he became engaged in a bitter battle with a Prussian rear guard, had come (indeed, desperate to spur his troops on to one last effort, Napoleon had spread the idea that Grouchy had come across the entire battlefield). All too soon, however, their delight soon turned to dismay: at almost exactly the same time that the guard was being routed at the other end of the line, Zeithen's men launched a massive attack that immediately broke Durutte's division and soon saw thousands of infantry and cavalry heading for La Belle Alliance.<sup>28</sup>

Given that Plancenoit finally fell at around the same time, all was now lost for Napoleon, who, after a short delay, left the battlefield in his personal carriage. The few units of the Guard that were still intact or had at least managed to maintain their integrity tried to cover the retreat, but the army as a whole streamed southward in a state of complete panic. Meanwhile, despite the myth-making with which the battle has been surrounded, there was no heroic last stand: to purloin a famous phrase supposed to have been uttered by a senior officer of the guard as the rest of the army collapsed, the guard neither died nor surrendered, but rather was swept away in the flood.<sup>29</sup> So ended Waterloo. At a minimum of 18,000 for the allies and 24,000 for the French, casualties had been enormous. Yet, had it all been anything other than a glorious irrelevance? Probably not: even had Napoleon triumphed in the Waterloo campaign, there



would have been no change in the political situation, and it may therefore safely be assumed that the war would have gone on and that the allied superiority in numbers would have prevailed in the end. That said, Waterloo did ensure that the war came to an end with a minimum of bloodshed: there was some minor fighting as the allies closed in on Paris, but Napoleon had been so comprehensively beaten that he was left no choice but to abdicate, the provisional government that had taken over power in his stead thereupon promptly rushing to secure the best terms that it could. With the erstwhile emperor soon on his way to Saint Helena, truly it was the end of an era.

## Simulating Waterloo

So much for the narrative. With this out of the way, we can now move on to the issue of simulation. As far as actions as big as Waterloo are concerned, the most effective way that such a project can be addressed is undoubtedly through the use of historical strategy games. Insofar as 18 June 1815 is concerned, there has always been a ready market for such offerings and, as we have seen, a considerable number have been produced over the years. In this article, however, we shall be concerned with just one game, namely an introductory product entitled *Napoleon at Waterloo* developed in 1970 by Simulations Publications Incorporated, or SPI. At first sight, what we have is a somewhat modest offering, the map measuring just 11 inches by 13, the rulebook extending to just four sides of A4, and the counters—most of them cavalry or infantry divisions—numbering no more than 61 (by contrast, other games on the same subject employ maps four or even six times as big, rulebooks that are four or even six times as long and counters that are four or even six times as many).<sup>30</sup> Yet, appearances are deceptive. Simple to play though it is, *Napoleon at Waterloo* is far from easy to play well. If they are to have a hope of winning, both sides having no option but to employ such sophisticated techniques as encirclement and diversionary attacks. In the words of one enthusiastic reviewer, “This is the triumph of minimalism over excessive detail, the wargame stripped back to its fundamentals.”<sup>31</sup> Unusually, as already noted, the package has been made available as a free download on the internet and can also be played online, making it particularly suitable for use in the classroom or as a tool of analysis.<sup>32</sup>

If the basic mechanisms of the package deserve much praise, it is evident that one issue caused the designers problems that they found difficult to overcome. In brief, setting aside the Napoleon fetish that characterizes many of those who play wargames, and all the more so in the American market at which the products of SPI and other companies were primarily directed, a tendency that results in a desperate hankering to change history, the whole point of a game is that it offers an equal chance for both sides to win. However, in both respects, as it was actually fought, the Battle of Waterloo is difficult to conciliate

with these expectations, the fact being that, so incompetent was French staff work, so numerous the mistakes of Napoleon and, finally, so unfortunate the campaign in respect of the weather, that there was little or no chance of the emperor prevailing when he finally confronted Wellington at Mont-Saint-Jean. To quote one anonymous game designer:

Frankly, I have never liked any games on [the Battle of] Waterloo. . . . In many ways, they seem pointless. All the important decisions have already been made in the campaign. By the time the battle starts, in many ways it is already won or lost. There is really nothing left to do but throw troops at each other and see who gets more lucky. There are not really any strategic options left.<sup>33</sup>

Not only will an accurate representation of the battle deliver a rather one-sided game, then, but there is also the question of hindsight. If there is one battle of the centuries prior to 1900 that all gamers will have a grasp of, it is Waterloo, and from this it follows that every tabletop Napoleon can expect that, at a time and place openly specified in the rules, the Prussian army will appear on the French right flank and engage it in battle. Faced by this threat, there are a number of responses, the two most obvious being either to seek to roll up Wellington's forces from the left in the hope of postponing contact with Blücher until the last possible minute and at the same time avoid being caught in a vice between the two enemy armies, or to hold back part of the army so as to be ready for the Prussian commander when he finally makes his appearance. Had Napoleon known that the Prussians were on the way, these were assuredly moves that the emperor might have made, but there is, alas, a major problem. Thus, as we have seen, contrary to almost every published account of the battle, in reality Napoleon had no knowledge whatsoever of Blücher's march from Wavre until Bülow's corps suddenly burst out of the woods beyond the extreme right wing of the Army of the North at around 1630 and crashed into the flank of Mouton's unsuspecting troops. All this being the case, players taking the part of Napoleon must necessarily be somehow prohibited from responding to the Prussian threat before it makes itself felt on the battlefield: otherwise, what we will have is a game that is very exciting, certainly, but which in no way resembles the events of 18 June 1815.

In other packages, an attempt is made to resolve at least part of the problem by banning the French from stationing any troops east of Papelotte, but this just causes fresh complications as it was precisely the area concerned that Mouton occupied following his belated arrival on the field in the early afternoon. At stake here is a fundamental question. In brief, is the object to produce a game that offers both players a sporting chance of victory and, at the same

time, if such is their desire, the ability to rewrite history in a manner more suited to their tastes, or is it rather to produce a simulation that rather forces them to act as if they were in the same position as Napoleon and Wellington? Both can be satisfactory exercises—a French commander who can triumph in the distinctly adverse circumstances in which Napoleon found himself in the morning of 18 June 1815 can feel pleased with himself indeed, while the same applies to an allied one who successfully holds off the French until the Prussians arrive—even useful exercises, and yet, to reiterate a point already made, they are not one and the same and should not be considered as such. Insofar as this article is concerned, it is the former case that will occupy us. Whether it is by delaying the arrival of the Prussians on the field, allowing Grouchy to march to Napoleon's aid, or starting the battle not at 1100 but rather two hours earlier, there are all sorts of ways in which the events of 18 June can be doctored to allow the French a greater chance of victory—in short, to create a game rather than a simulation—but, helpful as this may be in establishing what would have happened in the event of the introduction of this, that, or the other variable, it is of little use if what we are interested in is the situation that actually transpired.

Before going any further, however, let us first engage with the component parts of *Napoleon at Waterloo*. To begin with the map, this is extremely bland: while the main highways, the villages, and other buildings and the patches of woodland that dotted the battlefield are all shown, no attempt has been made to recreate the succession of ridges over which the battle was fought, the result being that there is no way of representing Wellington's famous use of the reversed slope to the rear of the high ground that marked his front line. That said, it could be argued that this crucial feature of his management of the battle is represented by the fact that for the most part the Anglo-Dutch infantry divisions have a larger number of combat factors than their French counterparts, ensuring that they will have a built-in advantage when subjected to attack (it could be argued, of course, that, should the Anglo-Dutch army leave the protection of Mont-Saint-Jean, they should immediately lose their advantage, but the need for this adjustment is lessened by the fact that, in the vast majority of games, they will not do this until the later stages of the battle and then only at a point when the French are on the brink of defeat). Something that might be seen as surprising is the manner in which the two Dutch-Belgian infantry divisions are shown as being only marginally inferior to their British counterparts—after all, British accounts of the battle generally treat the Dutch, Belgian, and German units under Wellington's command with great scorn—but, in fact, the decision is easy enough to justify, the forces contributed by the Kingdom of the Netherlands having on the whole performed quite creditably, and sometimes very creditably indeed (the performance of Chassé's division is the most obvious example, but a further instance may be found in the defense of Papelotte).<sup>34</sup>

This brings us to the composition of the different armies. As noted, in most cases the counters represent divisions or their equivalent, the chief exceptions being the two representing the two British heavy-cavalry brigades. In a few cases, units have, for the sake of convenience, been amalgamated into composite formations—the artillery counters, for example, represent all the guns of the corps of which they are a part, while the five British light-cavalry brigades are subsumed into two fictitious cavalry divisions, but on the whole the order of battle is accurate enough: to take the example of the two corps of line troops with which Napoleon started the battle, as was the case in 1815, that of Drouet has four infantry divisions and that of Reille three. What requires a little more comment, perhaps, is what the rival combat factors denote. On the day of the battle, Napoleon commanded 73,000 troops, Wellington 68,000, and Blücher 72,000; but in the game, the number of combat factors is not directly related to these figures, in that the first has 89, the second 75, and the third 61, the French therefore getting one combat factor for every 820 men, the British one for every 906, and, finally, the Prussians one for every 1,180.<sup>35</sup> The differences are not very great but, even so, it can be seen that some effort has been made to reflect the fact that Napoleon's troops were generally of higher quality than all those belonging to the opposition and, further, that the Prussian forces were worse again than those of Wellington.<sup>36</sup>

But we now come to a feature of the game that does not meet any expected standard of historical accuracy. In respect of the issues of deployment and chronology, there are four serious problems: first, that Napoleon's VI Corps is shown as being present on the field from the beginning of the battle when, as we have seen, it did not come up until the early afternoon; second, that the Anglo-Dutch garrisons of the very strong advanced posts constituted by the château of Hougoumont and the farms of La Haye Sainte and Papelotte are not adequately represented (indeed, in the last case, not represented at all); third, that, at midday, the battle begins too late; and, finally, that, at 1500, the Prussians appear on the field well before the time that they first made their appearance and, still worse, all at once and in the same place. There is a balance of gain and loss here with the first two factors favoring the French and the third and fourth the allies, but the combination of a late start to the battle and an early Prussian arrival exerts a stronger pull than its rival, thereby giving an unfair advantage to Wellington and Blücher. However, to speak in this fashion is to think of *Napoleon at Waterloo* in terms of gaming only; much more important is the fact that the errors of the game designers in this area render all hope of a historical simulation out of the question.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, there is the issue of the rules. As already noted, these are very short and the cost is necessarily much simplification. No provision is made for skirmishers and differences in formation (infantry, then, cannot form square or

switch from column to line and vice versa); other than usually fairly small differences in combat factors, all infantry and cavalry operate in the same way (though the higher combat factors awarded to British infantry divisions may hint at an implicit belief on the part of the designers that the line—their standard combat formation—was inherently superior to the columns favored by their enemy counterparts); units are fully functional and at full strength until they are destroyed, seemingly instantaneously; and there is no attempt to replicate either the fog of war or issues of command and control (the rival commanders enjoy a godlike view of the proverbial “other side of the hill” and can literally move their armies at the flick of a finger).

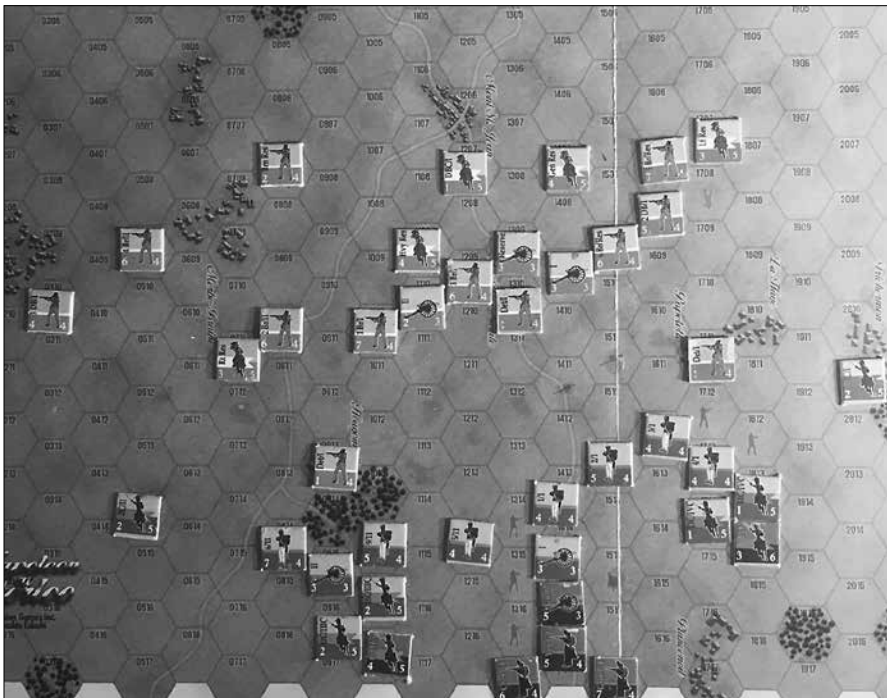
Yet, much of this is either easy to fix (players could, for example, keep all units inverted until they come into contact with the enemy)—or defensible (while problems of communication and, by extension, command and control, caused considerable problems in many Napoleonic battles, Waterloo was fought over such a small area that they had far less impact than normal). Certainly, there is no record of any unit’s orders miscarrying or even being overly delayed in their arrival, while there is also the issue of the level of command: after all, both Wellington and Napoleon fought their battles at the level of grand tactics and did not usually concern themselves with the detail of how formations implemented the orders that they are given.<sup>38</sup> Viewed in this fashion, then, the only issue thrown up by the rules that is unequivocally open to question and impossible to deal with in terms of the latter’s existing structures is the matter in which artillery fire is dealt with—the fact that its effects are determined using exactly the same combat-results table as that used for infantry and cavalry having the unfortunate result of making larger targets more vulnerable than smaller ones. And, finally, if the use of the conventional alternate move system whereby players take turns to move and fight is at first sight unrealistic, most real battles can be characterized as an extended series of actions and reactions.

One can, then, have reservations, but, if what is wanted is an introductory game, insofar as systems are concerned, *Napoleon at Waterloo* fits the bill very well, while the results that it delivers are not out of line with more ambitious attempts to model the battle such as Turning Point Simulations’ recent *The Day of Waterloo, 1815 AD*. At the same time, it has the inestimable merits of being quick to play, many of the alternatives—the most obvious is SPI’s *Wellington’s Victory*—take considerably more time to work through than it took Napoleon and his opponents to fight the whole of the campaign of the Hundred Days from start to finish and, precisely because of the elision of questions of intelligence, particularly suitable for exploration on a solo basis. To demonstrate its value as a tool for the reconstruction of the events of 18 June 1815, we shall now follow the narrative of a particular game move-by-move. Before proceeding with this plan, however, it should be noted that the author has applied a

degree of customization so as to correct the errors in deployment and chronology already noted and at the same time introduce a small amount of extra detail with regard to the manner of representation, full details of which will be found in the accompanying appendix.

To begin, then, the battle is deemed to commence at 1100 rather than the 1200 specified in the rules. For the most part, the units are deployed in the positions stipulated for them by the designers, but here, too, there is a degree of change in that extra 1–4 detachments manufactured by photocopying the single unit of this type supplied with the game are placed in La Haye Sainte and Papelotte, and the incomplete VI Corps of General Mouton, together with the two stray cavalry divisions that had become attached to it, kept off the field pending their arrival in the French right rear in the early afternoon.<sup>39</sup> The forces concerned amounting to no fewer than 10 combat factors, the initial French advantage over the Anglo-Dutch is therefore instantly annulled, while, if the suggestion to the effect that no forces of the Imperial Guard other than the latter's artillery can move until 1500—a reflection of Napoleon's desire is to keep it in reserve as long as possible—is followed, the Army of the North will experience the initial loss of a further 25 combat factors.<sup>40</sup> All that is left for the initial

**Figure 1.** Situation at 1200—the armies of Wellington and Napoleon face up to one another astride the Brussels-Charleroi highway



*Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.*

assault, then, will be the seven infantry and cavalry divisions of I and II Corps and the four cavalry divisions of III and IV Cavalry Corps. It is, of course, possible to leave VI Corps in place and allow immediate use of the Imperial Guard on the assumption, first, that the deluge of 17 June did not occur, and, second, that the emperor set aside all other considerations in favor of securing a decisive victory over any enemy army he managed to catch on its own, but, while this is an interesting exercise that will in all probability change the course of events, the battle thus produced will scarcely be that of Waterloo.

To move to the refight, the battle plan adopted by Napoleon was followed in its last detail. Thus, no sooner had move one began than on the left two divisions of Reille's corps assaulted Hougoumont, while on the right two divisions of Drouet's corps did the same at Papelotte. Supported in both cases by their corps artillery, the French prevailed at both places, killing or otherwise driving out their defenders but, clearly realizing that to move forward could expose the troops concerned to being overwhelmed, Wellington refrained from making any riposte other than to bring up the Brunswick corps—actually really only a small division of mixed infantry and cavalry—to buttress his front line above Hougoumont. Eager to exploit these early successes, in move two, supported on their left by elements of II Corps and on their right by the rest of I Corps and IV Cavalry Corps, the two left-hand divisions of I Corps stormed La Haye Sainte, albeit at the cost of heavy losses that put the first of them out of action, a desperate attempt to regain the farm on the part of Wellington being thrown back without any great effort.

With the French now in control of all three of the outposts shielding the Anglo-Dutch position, move three—deemed to begin at 1400—saw the French make further progress. Thus, on the extreme right, the third and fourth divisions of Drouet's corps pressed forward from Papelotte, supported by his corps cavalry and artillery and the whole of IV Cavalry Corps drove back the Anglo-Dutch left, the offensive also being joined by two divisions of II Corps, of which these last succeeded in making ground west of La Haye Sainte, only to be counterattacked in their turn, not least by the British heavy cavalry, and forced to relinquish some of their gains.

The respite earned by the cavalry charge was short-lived, however, move four seeing I Corps and IV Cavalry Corps, now reinforced by VI Corps, which had arrived on the field during the previous hour and came forward to support the attack on Wellington's left, consolidate their positions above Papelotte, and II Corps resume the positions from which it had just been driven, in the face of all which the Anglo-Dutch could only pull back their cavalry and artillery to keep it safe while at the same time seeking to reinforce those sectors of their line that were coming under pressure. Such passivity, of course, did nothing to wrest the initiative from the French, and the following move therefore saw the latter

**Figure 2.** Situation at 1500—just reinforced by the arrival of VI Corps, the French have taken Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, and Papelotte and driven back Wellington's left



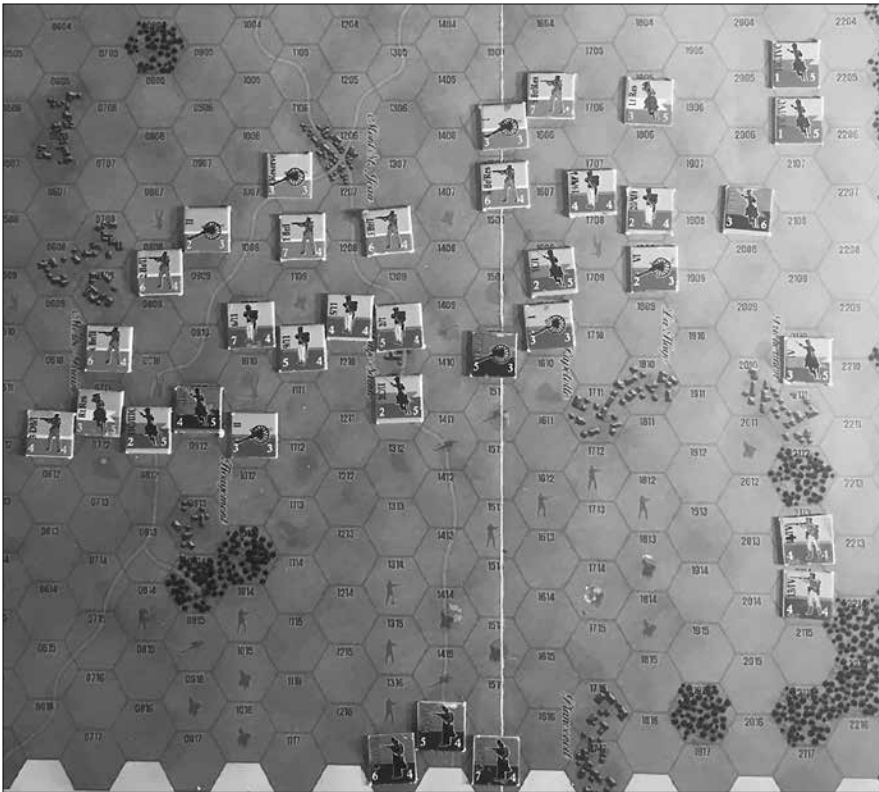
*Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.*

gain still more ground in the center: so far as the allies were concerned, then, it was very much a case of, as Wellington famously put it at about the same time in the real battle, “Either night or the Prussians must come.”<sup>41</sup>

It was now 1700 and, though losses had been heavy on both sides, it was Napoleon who had the upper hand. Sure that the day was his, in move six, the emperor therefore increased the pressure still further, making more gains on the center and right and reinforcing II Corps with the heavy cavalry of the guard, the accompaniment to all this being further heavy losses to the Anglo-Dutch including, most seriously, their only two units of heavy cavalry. Yet, there was at last a flash of hope for Wellington: not only did the first units of Blücher's army appear on the high ground to the southeast but, seemingly at long last disabused of his abiding fear that Napoleon intended to drive in his right, the British commander called up the troops he had been using to safeguard his position from such a threat, making use of them in a highly effective attack that destroyed III Cavalry Corps.<sup>42</sup> As the afternoon drew on toward evening, the situation improved still further. Thus, although the Prussians, now on the field to the extent of a full corps, were contained by the three divisions of Imperial-Guard infantry—until then kept firmly in reserve—improvising a new defensive line east of Plancenoit, I, II, and VI Corps, and not just them but also III and IV Cavalry Corps, suddenly faltered and were checked all along the line.



**Figure 3.** Situation at 1800—Wellington's left wing begins to disintegrate only for the first Prussian troops suddenly to appear in Napoleon's right rear



*Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.*

In the space of a mere two hours, then—it was now 1900—the wheel of fortune had turned full circle. Thus, the sudden collapse of the French attack marked the crisis of the battle, for Napoleon was forced to abandon all hope of breaking the Anglo-Dutch army, and instead adopt a defensive position resting on Hougomont, La Haye Sainte, and Papelotte, while pulling back much of his surviving cavalry to form a reserve in the rear of his center. At Plancenoit, true, the Imperial Guard mounted an impressive counterattack that inflicted heavy casualties on the leading Prussians, but these losses were quickly replaced by fresh arrivals in the form of two more Prussian corps. Caught up in the torrent, the guards' grenadier division was destroyed, while Wellington threw his whole army into an assault on the enemy line, a move that soon had the French withdrawing from the exposed salient beyond Papelotte, attacked as this was from both sides. By dint of heroic efforts, by 2100, Napoleon had fashioned a new defensive line and, in addition, driven back the allies in several places by mounting local counterattacks, but all too clearly his only hope was a retreat to

**Figure 4.** Situation at 2100—although elements of the Imperial Guard succeed in blocking the way to Plancenoit and isolated French troops continued to fight on at Papelotte, the Army of the North faces an ever-growing risk of disintegration as it is driven into a small area around La Belle Alliance



Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

the southwest. This move, however, was to be denied him, with the armies of Wellington and Blücher having now pressed in so closely that it was impossible for the emperor to disengage his forces. Finally brought to bay, the French fought hard and repeatedly forced individual allied units to retreat, but the pressure of numbers was too great even for the best troops to withstand. Amid growing confusion, Papelotte was overwhelmed, La Haye Sainte evacuated, and numerous units destroyed after being left with no means of retreat, only the garrison of Plancenoit continuing to hold out in a vain attempt to stem the Prussian tide. Their courage, however, proved unavailing: as the summer night fell so the Army of the North disintegrated, such troops who could streaming away to the southwest in complete disorder. Exactly as was the case in 1815, then, the *flight of the eagle*—the term often given to Napoleon’s bid to regain power—was at an end, while, at 45 combat factors out of 89, Napoleon’s losses were roughly comparable to the 34,000 men that he is generally reckoned as having lost in the actual battle.

More than 50 years old though it is, suitably modified, *Wellington at Waterloo* can therefore be reckoned an excellent platform on which to base a simulation of the battle: simple and straightforward to work with, it is clearly capable of delivering results that mirror the historical reality (having played through the

version of the game detailed here many times over, the author can report that it has never once delivered a French victory and only very rarely a draw). What, however, can be learned from the reconstruction of the events of 18 June 1815? In brief, while there is much to be said about the use of maneuver as a force multiplier in combat, the importance of combined arms and the need for coup d'oeil, the chief point that comes over is that, given the circumstances that prevailed on the morning of 18 June 1815, Napoleon had little chance of victory. Unable to start the battle until the day was well advanced due to the fact that even those troops who had reached the field were in no state to go into action; temporarily deprived of the services of one of his three infantry corps; and unwilling to commit the Imperial Guard, Napoleon lacked the hitting power necessary to inflict a decisive defeat on Wellington's forces before being hit by the thunderbolt constituted by the arrival of the Prussians. As we have seen, concentration on the Anglo-Dutch left could drive it in and inflict a lot of damage, but the fact that Blücher's men could not but hit the Army of the North in its right rear meant that, the more success was obtained, the more likely the troops involved in the assault were to find themselves in a trap. This would have applied as much on the day as in the reconstruction, but in reality the advance on Wellington's left achieved much less than it did in the latter. We come here to the influence of perhaps the most important event of the battle, namely the famous charge of the Household and Union Brigades. Launched at just the right moment by the commander of Wellington's cavalry, Henry Paget, Lord Uxbridge, this caught Drouet's corps at a serious disadvantage—having just hit the Anglo-Dutch line, it was badly disordered and swept it back in rout. The units representing the heavy cavalry being too weak to have anything like the same effect—it is most unlikely that they would ever be able to mount an attack at odds greater than one to one—nothing of the sort happened in the reconstruction, and so I Corps was able to press on regardless, just as VI Corps was able to march straight across the battlefield and get into action without delay.

## Conclusion

In sum, it can be seen that using an appropriate board wargame to simulate the events of 18 June 1815 is a worthwhile exercise, not least because, properly configured, it immediately confronts anyone who tries it with the very difficult task that Napoleon faced on the morning of Waterloo; namely, having to break an enemy commanded by the best general his many opponents had ever fielded ensconced in excellent defensive positions at the head of an army that had already lost much of its hitting power, and that, unbeknownst to him, of course, in the face of significant time pressures. While the results obtained from *Napoleon at Waterloo* suggest that success was beyond the talents of the emperor and the prowess of his troops alike, in the actual battle the French nonetheless came

very close to securing at least a draw, if not a marginal victory, for throwing in the grenadiers and chasseurs of the Imperial Guard in a far more coherent fashion than was actually the case at 1800 rather than 1900 might just have broken Wellington's army and given the Prussians, at least some of whose commanders were deeply suspicious of the British, sufficient cause for alarm for them to break off their attack and fall back on Wavre. Yet, what such a result would have availed Napoleon is unclear: with much of his cavalry exhausted, the emperor could not have exploited his defeat of the Anglo-Dutch, the outcome being that Wellington could have escaped to the near-impregnable fortress of Antwerp just as Blücher would have retreated to Liège and possibly even beyond the Rhine. Brussels would have fallen, true, but it seems unlikely either that the population of Belgium would have risen in support of Napoleon or that the coalition facing him would have fallen apart (if the one had bitter memories of many years of French occupation, the other was absolutely rock-solid in its determination to bring down a man who had just proved once and for all that he was impossible to contain within the normal parameters of international relations). The war, then, would have continued, but, as a simulation of a wider nature would doubtless show, it was not one that the French would have been able to win. Sadly, however, while perfectly possible—the obvious place to go here is the 1815 scenario of Avalon Hill's game *War and Peace*—such a project must await another day.

### **Appendix<sup>43</sup>**

As will have been noted, the point has repeatedly been made that, as published, *Napoleon at Waterloo* contains numerous errors that enormously reduce its value as a simulation. Herewith, then, the series of amendments that were introduced to remedy the situation.

1. The battle is deemed to begin at 1200 rather than 1300. Consideration might also be given to ending it at 2100 rather than 2200.
2. Infantry (but not cavalry or artillery) are permitted to enter woods hexes at the cost of an extra-movement point per hex.
3. Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, and Papelotte are all designated as fortified hexes, thereby tripling the combat value of any occupants. Troops garrisoning them are never required to attack enemy units that are in contact with them and ignore DR (defender retreat) results.
4. To reflect the importance of the use of combined arms, attacks involving infantry, cavalry, and artillery are resolved on the next highest line of the Combat Results Table (i.e., a 1:1 attack now becomes a 2:1 attack).

5. Cavalry contacted by infantry alone may always withdraw one hex. In such cases, the infantry concerned will halt at the point of contact.
6. Detachment (i.e., 1–4) units should be provided for Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, and Papelotte. Consideration should also be given to placing a 1–4 unit in the wooded hexes adjacent to Hougoumont.
7. The French artillery positions marked at hexes 1411 and 1511 are ignored, and the I Corps artillery placed at hex 1514 and the guard artillery at hex 1415. Meanwhile, note that the I Corps and II Corps artillery pieces have been transposed: it is the latter that should be at hex 0915 rather than the former.
8. The French infantry division stationed at hex 1714 should be moved to hex 1713.
9. The units belonging to VI Corps and the forces attached thereto (note: those marked as being placed in hexes 1315, 1316, 1414, 1415, and 1515) should be kept off the board at the start of the game, entering at 1400 at hex 2065. Note also that the two infantry divisions have been wrongly labeled as belonging to II Corps.
10. The optional rules governing the arrival of Blücher and Grouchy should be ignored: under all circumstances the former's troops will begin to enter the board at 1700 (see below).
11. In the real battle, while they eventually released the troops concerned, both Wellington and Napoleon kept considerable forces in reserve. In consequence, the infantry divisions on Wellington's right flank at hexes 0310 and 0509 cannot be moved until 1500, while, of the Imperial Guard, only the artillery may move at the start of the battle, the cavalry not being available until 1500, the Young Guard not until 1700, and the chasseurs and grenadiers not until 1800.
12. The arrival of the Prussians is put back to 1700, and is then broken down into three tranches, namely 1700: 13/IV, 14/IV, and IVC (hex 2312); 1800: 15/IV, 16/IV, and IV artillery (hex 2312); 1900: 5/II, 6/II, 7/II, IIC, II artillery (2312) and 1/I, 3/I, I artillery, IC, and IIIC (hexes 2307, 2308, or 2309).

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## Endnotes

1. See Charles J. Esdaile, *Napoleon, France and Waterloo: The Eagle Rejected* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2016); and Charles J. Esdaile, *Walking Waterloo: A Guide* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2019).

2. A full analysis is being undertaken in the context of a monograph that is currently under contract with the Marine Corps University Press.
3. Considerations of space mean that it is impossible to discuss the mechanisms by which the sort of games discussed in this article work. In brief, however, they generally feature a detailed scale map overlaid with a hexagonal grid that defines the precise position of each unit at any given time and also governs movement; cardboard counters printed with a variety of information relating to the units they represent (typically, the identity and type of the unit concerned, the number of movement points they were allowed to expend each move, and their value in combat); an odds-based, combat-results table; the use of dice throws to simulate the effect of chance; and, finally, the notion of zones of control, in brief an area of ground contiguous to each unit that the enemy could not enter without attacking the unit concerned and could not exit without first having driven off or, still better, destroyed, said enemy. For a full explanation, see Nicholas Palmer, *The Comprehensive Guide to Board Wargaming* (London: Barker, 1977); Nicholas Palmer, *The Best of Board Wargaming* (London: Barker, 1980); and James F. Dunnigan, *The Complete Wargames Handbook: How to Play, Design, and Find Them* (New York: William Morrow 1992).
4. Jon Freeman, *The Complete Book of Board Wargames* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 23.
5. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the battlefield has become much harder to visit for travelers coming from outside the European community. However, those who wish to tour La Haye Sainte, Hougomont, and the rest could do worse than to access the downloadable application developed by the author in conjunction with the Belgian War Heritage Institute, this being available for free for both Apple and Android. For full details, visit the Google Play site and type “University of Liverpool” in the search box to download the Waterloo app.
6. There are many accounts of the Waterloo campaign. For a recent version that is particularly closely argued, see John Hussey, *Waterloo: The Campaign of 1815*, vol. 1, *From Elba to Ligny and Quatre Bras* (London: Greenhill Books, 2017), 340–584; and John Hussey, *Waterloo: The Campaign of 1815*, vol. 2, *From Waterloo to the Restoration of Peace in Europe* (London: Greenhill Books, 2017), 1–53.
7. For a good example, one might cite David G. Chandler, *Waterloo: The Hundred Days* (Oxford: Osprey, 1980), 112. Thus: “Wellington’s position . . . occupied a low ridge set slightly south of the village of Mont Saint Jean. . . . Behind this line . . . were a number of useful rear slopes. To the fore of it, the ground was broken to the east of the Brussels high road by a number of small rises and depressions, but the western sector was a relatively flat and unbroken area.” Setting aside the fact that this passage appears to confuse the two halves of the battle with one another, it is so vague as to be useless.
8. To the best of the author’s knowledge, the most detailed piece of its sort that has ever been published, the description offered in this article of the battlefield of Waterloo is the fruit of detailed exploration of the whole area in the course of the elaboration of *Walking Waterloo*.
9. One idea that has been much stressed is that Wellington feared for his links with Ostend, a port that had indeed witnessed the disembarkation of many of his troops and their attendant equipment and stores. However, it having been shown that Wellington planned to retreat on Antwerp rather than Ostend, this line of argument can be discounted. See Gareth Glover, *Waterloo: Myth and Reality* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Military, 2014), 105.
10. To write thus in defiance of the insistence of so many authorities that either Hougomont or La Haye Sainte were the key to the Battle of Waterloo may seem foolhardy, but a close study of the ground makes it all but impossible to take such claims at face value.
11. It is customary to refer to Marshal Michel Ney rather than the Duc d’Elchingen. That being the case, logic dictates that Drouet and his counterpart at the head of VI Corps, Gen Mouton, should be referred to by their surnames rather than their titles (i.e., Erlon and Lobau).

12. The disposition of the French army is another matter that is poorly handled by the traditional historiography. Herewith, for example, David Chandler on the position of Mouton's troops and the infantry of the guard: "In central reserve on each side of the Brussels road, Napoleon deployed his reserves. To the east of Maison du Roi [a small hamlet on the main highway] were placed the long cavalry columns of [Gen Jean Siméon] Domon's and [Gen Jacques Gervaise] Subervie's divisions. . . . On the opposite side of the road were the infantry columns of Simmer's and Jeannin's divisions. Last but by no means least stood the serried ranks of the Imperial Guard, flanked by the guns of the artillery reserve on either side of the farm of Rossomme." Chandler, *Waterloo*, 121–22. Setting aside the fact that Chandler is again muddled in his grasp of the detail—Maison du Roi is actually south of Rossomme rather than north—like many other historians he was misled by Napoleon's attempts to rewrite history so as to hide his many errors. For the actual situation, see Bernard Coppens, *Les mensonges de Waterloo: les manipulations de l'histoire enfin révélées* (Brussels: Jourdan Editeur, 2009), 249–54.
13. Much influenced by Napoleon's attempts to blame everybody but himself for his defeat at Waterloo, many historians have laid the responsibility for everything that went wrong on 18 June at Ney's door. However, there is no evidence that the marshal ever did anything other than relay the orders that were conveyed to him by his imperial master. It is possible that the climactic attack of the guard may in part have miscarried by a failure on his part to keep the 10 battalions concerned together, but this is clearly the utmost limit of his fault.
14. Basing his work on the emperor's later claims, Chandler is happy with the traditional version, writing baldly, "No time was to be wasted on manoeuvre: success was to be won by a series of massive frontal assaults." Chandler, *Waterloo*, 126. However, as a number of later historians have pointed out, the original documents and, in particular, an order dictated around 1100, prove beyond all doubt that it was the outflanking maneuver that was the chosen battle plan. See Tim Clayton, *Waterloo: Four Days that Changed Europe's Destiny* (London: Little, Brown, 2014), 365.
15. Few aspects of Waterloo have given rise to more controversy than the actions of Marshal Grouchy. For a full-length discussion of his part in events, see Paul L. Dawson, *Napoleon and Grouchy: The Last Great Waterloo Mystery Unravalled* (Barnsley, UK: Frontline Books, 2020).
16. It is generally agreed that the battle proper began at around 1130. To explain the delay in going into action, apologists for Napoleon have always claimed that he wanted the ground to dry out after the downpours of the previous 18 hours. For example, Chandler, *Waterloo*, 126. However, as anyone who has walked the battlefield in the wake of heavy rain can attest, to imagine that a mere two hours could have made the slightest difference is whimsical in the extreme. What occasioned the delay, then, was rather simply that large parts of Napoleon's army were still on their way to the battlefield.
17. For the defense of Hougomont, see Julian Paget and Derek Saunders, *Hougoumont: The Key to Victory at Waterloo* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 1999).
18. Paul L. Dawson, *Waterloo: The Truth at Last—Why Napoleon Lost the Great Battle* (Barnsley, UK: Frontline Books, 2018), 63–64.
19. Glover, *Waterloo*, 122–29; and Coppens, *Les mensonges de Waterloo*, 199–209.
20. It has been repeatedly claimed that the artillery concerned started the battle emplaced on the ridge attacked by the British cavalry, but this is manifestly untrue: to have deployed the batteries in so exposed a position in the presence of an enemy whose every disposition was almost completely unknown would have been to risk disaster, while the presence of the guns and all their attendant crews, limbers, and caissons would have rendered the advance of Drouet's infantry all but impossible.
21. Glover, *Waterloo*, 133–43.
22. The explanation for the great French cavalry attack is far from clear and will always be a matter for dispute. According to the traditional version, the entire responsibility belonged to a Marshal Ney convinced by movement on the ridge (probably the withdrawal of a number of artillery batteries that had run out of ammunition) that Welling-

- ton was retreating. However, this was the view put about by Napoleon and therefore cannot but be regarded as being open to question. Just as doubtful, meanwhile, is the alternative claim that Ney ordered only a single division—that of Milhaud—to ascend the ridge, the rest of the French cavalry then becoming carried away by excitement and following on of their own volition. That being the case, the consensus is now that, while Ney does indeed seem to have ordered a brigade of cavalry to ascend the ridge, this was rather to support a fresh attack on La Haye Sainte, the general advance rather being the work of the emperor alone, a view for which support can be found in the memoirs of imperial aide-de-camp, Flahaut. See Clayton, *Waterloo*, 456–58; Hussey, *Waterloo*, vol. 2, 142–44; and Alessandro Barbero, *The Battle: A History of the Battle of Waterloo* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 244–45. However, that said, it is but fair to note that other authors, including the normally skeptical Coppens, remain convinced that, while the emperor may have ordered various units to support the initial advance, the initiative came from Ney. See Dawson, *Waterloo*, 182–86; Coppens, *Les Mensonges de Waterloo*, 225–36; and Glover, *Waterloo*, 145.
23. Glover, *Waterloo*, 146–51; Hussey, *Waterloo*, 142–48; and Dawson, *Waterloo*, 185–250, 281–308.
  24. For an analysis of the Prussian advance from Wavre and, more particularly, the reasons for the delay in their arrival, see Hussey, *Waterloo*, vol. 2, 150–59. Meanwhile, a number of French accounts showing that, far from having been sent from an entirely fictitious position in rear of the French center to contain the Prussians, Mouton's men were rather taken by surprise while waiting to be dispatched in support of a second attack on Wellington's left are retailed in Dawson, *Waterloo*, 250–55. Meanwhile, for two demolitions of the claim that Napoleon had forewarning of the Prussian advance, see Glover, *Waterloo*, 172; and Coppens, *Les Mensonges de Waterloo*, 187–97. In brief, the claims clearly rest on nothing more than invention, one issue that is particularly problematic being the fact that at 1300, no Prussians had reached a spot even remotely visible from Napoleon's then command post at Rossomme.
  25. The best account in English of Bulow's advance and the subsequent battle for Planenoit is Glover, *Waterloo*, 168–73.
  26. For the defense of La Haye Sainte, see Brendan Simms, *The Longest Afternoon: The 400 Men Who Decided the Fate of Waterloo* (London: Allen Lane, 2014). Meanwhile, that Napoleon rejected Ney's appeals for reinforcements is accepted even by historians predisposed to give Napoleon the benefit of every possible doubt. For example, Chandler, *Waterloo*, 155–56.
  27. The defeat of the infantry of the Imperial Guard has given rise to an extensive historiography. See, for example, Gareth Glover, *Waterloo: The Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard—Henry Clinton, the Second Division and the End of a Two-Hundred-Year-Old Controversy* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2015); and Nigel Sale, *The Lie at the Heart of Waterloo: The Battle's Last Hidden Half-Hour* (Stroud, UK: History Press, 2014).
  28. The idea that Zeithen's corps broke the right wing of the French Army has been fiercely denied by some British historians. For example, Hussey, *Waterloo*, 205–6. However, the evidence of the topography is incontrovertible. For a good account of Zeithen's attack, see Barbero, *The Battle*, 332–36.
  29. Dawson, *Waterloo*, 394–401. The comment is, perhaps, a little unfair, but the idea of the grenadiers and chasseurs of the Old Guard standing firm in square while being shot to pieces by their victorious opponents is a myth: the units concerned appear not to have collapsed in rout, but nor did they fight to the end, rather withdrawing from the field step-by-step in good order.
  30. There is, in fact, an expansion pack pitched at the level of the brigade rather than the division with more complex rules and a much larger number of playing pieces.
  31. See “The Triumph of Minimalism over Excessive Detail,” Board Game Geek, accessed 14 November 2020. A new edition, *Napoleon at Waterloo*, characterized by far more attractive graphics is currently available from Decision Games. For reviews and discussion, see “Napoleon at Waterloo (1971),” Board Game Geek, accessed 28 August 2014.



32. See “Napoleon at War: Napoleon at Waterloo,” Hexwar.net, accessed 28 August 2014; and “Napoleon at Waterloo Print and Play,” Kobudovenlo.nl, accessed 28 August 2014. For discussions of the use of wargames as a training aid, see Philip Sabin, *Simulating War: Studying War through Simulation Games* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2014).
33. See “Waterloo,” Command Post Games, accessed 4 June 2020.
34. For a detailed assessment that is inclined to support this view, see Veronica Baker-Smith, *Wellington’s Hidden Heroes: The Dutch and the Belgians at Waterloo* (Oxford, UK: Casemate Publishers, 2015).
35. We have exact strengths for the two armies that fought at Waterloo, namely 67,661 for that of Wellington and 71,947 for that of Napoleon. The Prussian figure, by contrast, is an estimate. See Chandler, *Waterloo*, 116–23.
36. The quality of an army obviously rests on a mixture of factors including leadership, organization, training, morale, tactical doctrine, and armament. That being the case, attempting to sum them up in a single numerical value is difficult, but many historians would agree that this ranking is accurate enough. For example, Chandler, *Waterloo*, 52–70.
37. As *Napoleon at Waterloo* is presented, it is the opinion of the author that the French player cannot win without either (a) the Prussians arriving much later or not at all, or (b) Grouchy appearing in the nick of time and bringing succor to Napoleon. In fact, both possibilities are catered for. Grouchy, indeed, gets a full set of counters (note: these are excluded from the figures given above)—but, so far as this article is concerned, the issue will be ignored as being irrelevant from the point of view of the simulation on which it is based.
38. Insofar as command and control are concerned, the issue is further elided by the fact that each turn represents one hour of real time, a period easily long enough for a general to get a formation reasonably close to his headquarters on the move and even into action. It should be remembered here that regiments held in reserve or manning quiet sectors of the line were habitually kept under arms in formations that permitted rapid movement.
39. A small number of other changes are also recommended of which the most important is the one precluding the French from stationing artillery in the no-man’s-land between them and the Anglo-Dutch front line, but these have much less bearing on the course of play and can therefore be left to the sidebar.
40. Why Napoleon kept back the guard is deeply puzzling: after all, even if he was ignorant of the fact that Blücher was marching to join Wellington, he did know that his best chance was at all times to press the two enemy commanders to the utmost and seize every conceivable opportunity to defeat them in detail. In answer, one can but suggest, first, a genuine belief that it would not be needed and, second, the same nagging sense of self-doubt that had caused him to hold back the Imperial Guard at Borodino and thereby cast away his sole chance of a decisive victory.
41. This quote from Wellington is one of a number of remarks he is credited with having uttered in the course of the battle. As such, they are widely quoted—for example, see, in this case, Barbero, *The Battle*, 325—but it is recognized that they may be apocryphal, and all the more so as they exist in several different versions, Clayton, for example, rendering the comment quoted here as “the Lord send night or Blücher!” Clayton, *Waterloo*, 514.
42. One of the few oddities in respect of Wellington’s handling of Waterloo is his fixation with the idea that Napoleon was planning to envelop the western flank of his army despite the fact that, even with the given that the French could be assumed to be uncertain of the precise position of the Prussian forces, such a move could not but have the effect of pushing the Anglo-Dutch in the latter’s direction. This delusion on the part of the British commander has never been satisfactorily explained, but its effects were clear enough: thus, not only were a disproportionate number of his troops deployed on his right wing, but this last was refused so as to present a defensive front to any outflanking move. Eventually freed by the ever-more obvious fact that Napoleon had

no intention of making a serious move on Wellington's right, the units concerned did at least come to play a part in the battle, albeit not until the day was well-advanced. Not so, however, the 17,000 men who had previously been posted to the distant town of Halles so as, in effect, to prolong Wellington's right still further: though no farther away than Blücher was at Wavre, the troops concerned were left without orders all day, waiting for an attack that never came and, still worse, increasingly clearly was never going to materialize.

43. This appendix is based on Rob Gibson, "Improving the Basic Napoleon at Waterloo," *Phoenix*, no. 3 (October 1976).