

## The Aylesbury Club and the Duck Dinner

The Duck Dinner is held in Aylesbury each year by the Aylesbury Club, which was originally formed in 1810. Its objects then were “good cheer, good humour and good neighbourhood”, and its members met each month on the Friday nearest to the full moon during the period from November to April.

The club continued into the 1950’s; the Bucks Herald recording in September 1954 that the author Sir Compton Mackenzie proposed the toast at the Bulls Head in Aylesbury. After this time the club seems to have faded away. However in 1973 Maurice Buckingham, the then Mayor of Aylesbury, reconstituted the club with the same laudable objects, and it is now as strong as ever.

The Club’s only raison d’être apart from the above objects is to continue the tradition of the annual duck dinner, and the Club and its members hope that all its guests will enjoy tonight’s dinner.

## Battle of Waterloo Quotations

**“Napoleon has humbugged me, by God; he has gained  
twenty-four hours’ march on me.”  
Wellington 15th June 1815**

**“His presence on the field made the difference of forty thousand men”  
Wellington on Napoleon**

**“He is a bad general and the English are breakfast!”  
Napoleon on Wellington**

**“No troops but the British could have held Hougoumont and only  
the best of them at that.”  
The Duke of Wellington**

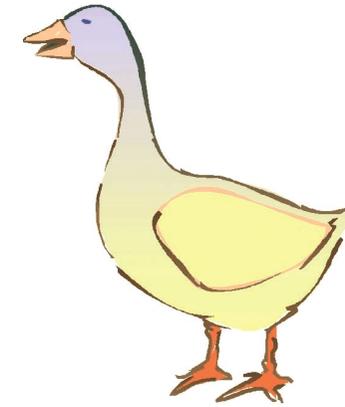
**“We must give air to the English army!”  
General Blucher, during the battle of Waterloo**

**“By God, those fellows deserve Bonaparte. They fight so nobly for him!”  
British soldier, being charged by the French cavalry**

**“Waterloo is not a battle; it is the changing face of the universe.”  
Writer Victor Hugo on the battle**

# *The Aylesbury Club*

*Good Humour, good cheer and good neighbourhood*



*Serving the Duck since 1810*

## **The Annual Duck & Bicentennial Battle of Waterloo Dinner**

*Wednesday 17th June , 2015*

At

The Oculus,  
The Gateway,  
Aylesbury.

President: Mr Ray Ghent

*Members of the Aylesbury Club*  
*Welcome you to The 2015 Duck*  
*And Bicentennial Battle of Waterloo Dinner*

*Dinner Menu*

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*Mini Beef Wellington*  
*Option Mini Vegetable Wellington (v)*

*Roll and Butter*

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*Half a Roast Duck*  
*with The Aylesbury Club Plum and Brandy Sauce*  
*Option Roast Beef or Asparagus en Croute (v)*

*Roast and Anna Potatoes*  
*with Fresh Seasonal Vegetables*

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*Blüchers Black Forest Gateau*  
*and Cream*

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*Selection of Cheese and Biscuits*

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*Coffee and Mints*

**20:30, 18 June**

**Napoleon is defeated**



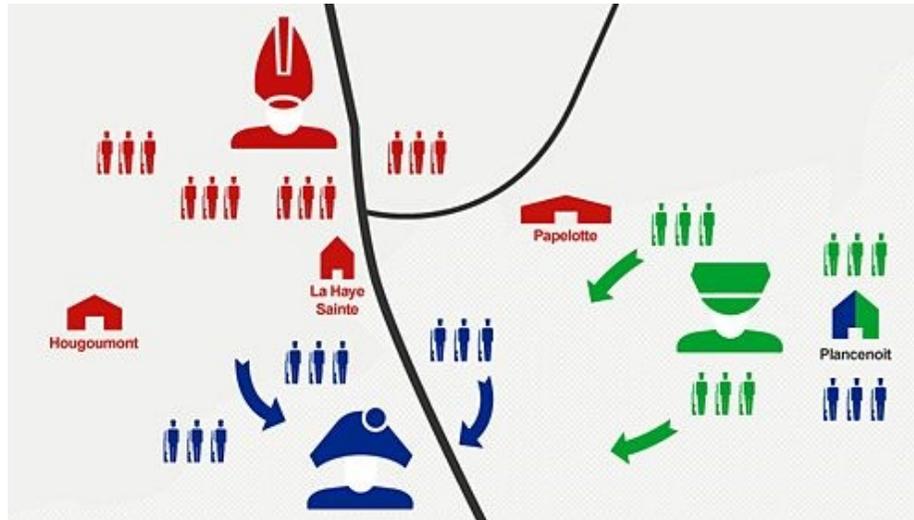
Blucher and Wellington celebrate their victory over Napoleon.

After the last decisive Prussian assault, the field was strewn with tens of thousands of bodies. Many were dead, others badly wounded and left to die.

On a bloody battlefield in Belgium, Wellington had halted Napoleon's relentless march towards European domination and secured Britain's role as a key player in Europe. Napoleon was exiled to St Helena, where he died in 1821. Wellington was a hero: he secured a peace deal with France and became prime minister in 1828. For now, there was peace in Europe. It was another 99 years before Europe was plunged into the next brutal chapter of European conflict – the outbreak of World War One.

19:15, 18 June

## Wellington stands firm



The French retreat as Wellington's troops advance, joined by the Prussians arriving from the east.

As the French Imperial Guard advanced, swords drawn, Wellington's men waited in the long grass behind the ridge.

At last, the French had broken through the Allied front line. When they reached the ridge, Wellington gave the order to stand and fire. His men fired at almost point blank range - muskets tore through the French soldiers, forcing them back. At last, Blucher's forces were now arriving on Wellington's left. The Allied army advanced, pursuing the Imperial Guard. Wellington had a chance to kill Napoleon but ordered his men to hold fire. The Emperor was shielded by his men as they fled.



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## TOASTS

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**“The Queen”**  
by  
Mr Ray Ghent  
President Aylesbury Club

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**“The Aylesbury Duck”**  
by  
Chris Clarke  
Former President of The Aylesbury Club

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**“The Battle of Waterloo”**  
by  
John Stranks  
Andy Bystra

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# The Battle of Waterloo:

## The day that decided Europe's fate

**In 1815 two men faced-off in a muddy field in Belgium. Wellington, with his British and Allied army, and Napoleon with his French Imperial Guard. One decisive battle could end twenty years of bloody conflict on the continent.**

It was a showdown between two of history's military giants. They were the same age, formidable strategists, with a string of victories behind them. By 18 June, the outcome hung in the balance and the victor would determine the fate of Europe.

## Before the battle

### Napoleon versus Europe

Napoleon Bonaparte became Emperor of France in 1804. To understand Waterloo, it's important to know Napoleon had tried to establish a European empire under his military dictatorship since 1804.

The British defeated him at Trafalgar in 1805, but Napoleon went on to invade countries across Europe before being forced to abdicate. He returned to Paris in March 1815, prompting Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria to declare war. In June, Napoleon invaded Belgium, hoping to capture Brussels. He sent troops to fight Wellington, and led a battalion against General Blucher's Prussian troops. Wellington's army wasn't defeated but Blucher retreated. The scene was set for a final, decisive battle.

## 18:15, 18 June

### Wellington loses La Haye Sainte



Wellington on the ridge, with a view over the battlefield.

After hours under attack, La Haye Sainte finally fell. Wellington had lost his prize garrison.

It was a crushing blow. Napoleon was now able to bring the French artillery forward and attack the Allied centre with devastating results. All Wellington could do was defend from behind the ridge and hope for the Prussian's swift arrival with reinforcements.

## 19:00, 18 June

### The final push



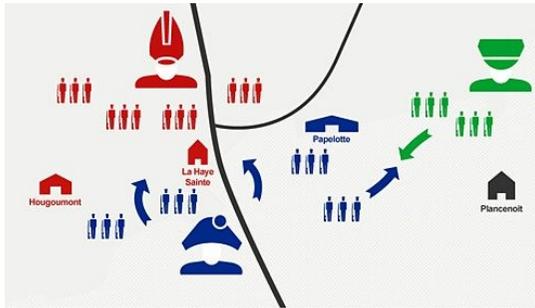
Napoleon makes a final attempt to break Wellington's line

.With the Allied centre weakened, Napoleon knew Wellington desperately needed Prussian support.

He wasted no further time. Napoleon sent 6000 French soldiers across the field up towards Wellington on the ridge, marching between Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. On the left, they suffered fire from the British-held garrison of Hougoumont but those on the right, facing the French-held garrison of La Haye Sainte, made it up over the ridge unhindered.

# 15:30, 18 June

## The Prussians at Plancenoit



Napoleon's troops attacked La Haye Sainte. He sent another battalion to meet the Prussians in the east.

Napoleon's cavalry at last reached Blucher's troops near Plancenoit, a village 5 miles east of the battlefield.

The Prussians soon captured the high ground north east of the village. They attacked the French hard: Napoleon was forced to commit more troops over the course of the afternoon as the territory changed hands several times. Although Blucher was unable to reach Wellington at the main battle, his efforts meant the French were under pressure and had to split their resources. Wellington could hear the cannon fire in the distance – he knew Blucher had formed his own formidable front line, as promised.

# 16:00, 18 June

## The battle for La Haye Sainte



The battle for the crucial garrisoned farm of La Haye Sainte.

Napoleon was increasingly stretched - his men were fighting on both the west and east sides of the battlefield.

He ordered Marshal Ney to capture La Haye Sainte, Wellington's central stronghold. For the next two hours, wave after wave of heavily armoured French soldiers on horseback charged at the Allied line. In response, the Allied line changed formation into squares. They fended off the 4000-strong French cavalry but their new formation made them vulnerable to Napoleon's heavy artillery fire. One British battalion, the 27th Regiment, lost nearly 500 of its 747 men.

# 00:00, June 18

## Taking positions



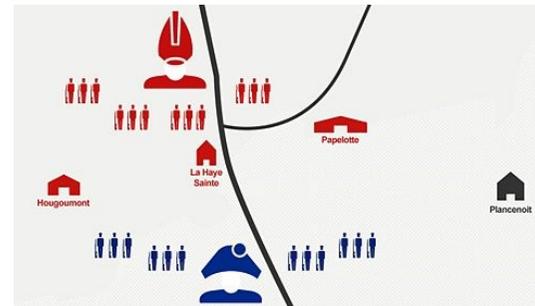
The positions of Wellington, Napoleon and the Prussians the night before the battle.

Before the battle, Wellington stayed at a Waterloo inn while Napoleon was three miles south. Their men slept out as rain fell through out the night.

Wellington knew success the next day rested heavily on the arrival of General Blucher and his Prussian reinforcements, courtesy of his ally General Blucher. They were recuperating in Wavre, 18 miles east of Waterloo. With the Prussians and Allied armies separated, Napoleon was confident he could defeat Wellington and make his way to Brussels.

# 09:00, 18 June

## The first tactical move



The positions of Wellington and Napoleon's troops on the morning of June 18.

Wellington established a strong defensive position, blocking the road to Brussels in order to stop Napoleon's advance towards the capital.

Wellington knew he was outnumbered - approximately 68,000 Allied troops versus Napoleon's 72,000 - so he positioned his men behind a ridge and three garrisoned farms. The farm of Papelotte was on his left, La Haye Sainte in front and Hougoumont to his right. The combination of the incline, fields of high corn and well-placed garrisons meant Wellington had both a good vantage point and cover to shield his troops. From here he could try and hold the ground until the Prussians arrived.

**09:00, 18 June**

## Napoleon devises a plan



Napoleon with the French army at Waterloo.

Napoleon's mind was also on the terrain. It was sodden from the night's rainfall, making it difficult to move his men and guns into position.

Napoleon decided to delay his first major attack until the ground had dried out. It was a dangerous strategy – it could allow time for Blucher's Prussian army to arrive and join Wellington on the ridge. Yet, having the French infantry and cavalry wade through mud risked tiring them out in the early stages of the battle. For now, Napoleon decided to draw out the British and make a dent in their defensive position. He launched a diversionary attack on Hougoumont farm.

**11:30, 18 June**

## The attack on Hougoumont



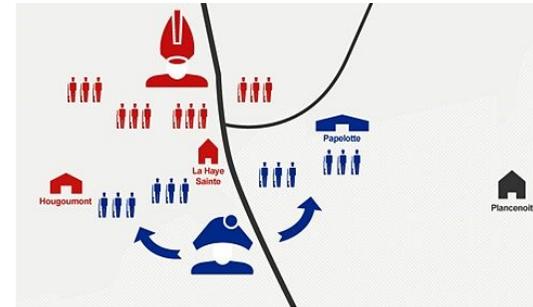
The battle at Hougoumont farm.

Napoleon began the battle with an assault of large-scale cannon fire. Soon after, he launched the attack on Wellington's most well-defended garrison.

Led by Napoleon's brother, 5000 troops advanced on Hougoumont. They far outnumbered the 1500 British holed up inside but its walls made it a strong fortress – Wellington's guards were able to fire at the French through holes in the walls who were sitting targets. Nevertheless, Napoleon launched attacks at Hougoumont all day. At 12.30 they broke open the gates but the British quickly closed them again, trapping 40 French soldiers inside. They slaughtered all but one – an 11 year old drummer boy.

**13:00, 18 June**

## Napoleon advances



Napoleon's troops advanced on Hougoumont and made territorial gains around La Haye Sainte.

With Wellington's right flank busy defending Hougoumont, Napoleon seized the opportunity to do some damage to the centre of the British line.

He sent 18,000 infantry along the road to Brussels to strike a decisive blow. They captured the farm of Papelotte and the area surrounding La Haye Sainte. It looked like victory was now within Napoleon's grasp. If he took La Haye Sainte, he could attack the remaining British troops at close range. But at around 13:00, peering through his telescope, Napoleon spotted movement in fields to the east. He ordered a troop of cavalry to go and investigate.

**14:20, 18 June**

## Wellington on the ropes



The British cavalry charge at the French infantry.

Napoleon had spotted the Prussians but they were still far off. A desperate Wellington sent reinforcements to La Haye Sainte, driving back the French.

Lord Uxbridge, Wellington's cavalry commander, had two brigades of cavalry over the ridge. With Napoleon's men advancing towards the British line, now was their moment – the cavalry charged and hit the French infantry, slicing through the soldiers on the ground. Napoleon's line had been brutally weakened but Wellington's left flank was also damaged – he couldn't afford to launch another attack without reinforcements.