

International Napoleonic Society  
2015 Congress - Brussels, Belgium

## Guided tour of the main 1815 campaign battlefields

Date: Thursday 9 July 2015

Duration: one day - approximately 6-8 hours

Language: English (and some French when necessary)

Guide: Alasdair White FHEA FINS

Transport: coach and 'on foot' (for which sensible walking shoes are recommended)

Notes: (a) each participant is advised to bring a rain coat, (b) bottles (0.5 litres) of water will be available on the coach, (c) there are toilet facilities at the restaurant/visitors' centre, at Hougoumont and, presumably, at La Callou (it has recently been renovated and so I am uncertain about this)

### Itinerary

**09h00: Pick up at Bedford Hotel & Congress Centre**, Zuidstraat §135-137, 1000 Brussel

**09h30: Arrival on the Battlefield of Waterloo** (Memorial Visitors' Centre, Route du Lion 252-254, 1420 Braine-l'Alleud)

There will be an opportunity to visit the new underground Memorial Visitor's Centre with its interactive interpretation and displays and 3D film experience, together with the Panorama and the Butte de Lion (for those fit enough - i.e. no heart conditions, wonky knees/hips - to climb the 226 steps to the top for a great view). This is a 'tourist' experience for those who wish to do it and costs approximately €15 per person. It is not part of the normal guided tour and extra time needs to be allowed.

We will **walk** down the Anglo-Dutch right flank, site of the French cavalry charges and the final attack of the Imperial Guard, to the historically and militarily important *château-ferme* of **Hougoumont**. This is newly restored and we will see inside the courtyard (at a small cost) and will walk around the site as this was, perhaps, the most significant phase (phase 1) of the battle on 18 June 1815. The walk down is 1600 metres and takes about 40 minutes - if there are any participants not able to walk this, then they will be taken down to within 300 metres of the farm by coach.

After the tour at Hougoumont, we will return by coach to the Memorial Visitors' Centre and take lunch at the restaurant there.

After lunch we will drive the 11 kms to **Genappe**, scene of the actions involving the Anglo-Dutch retreat to Waterloo and also the disorderly French retreat after the 'rout' at the battle. There is short walk involved (approximately 500 metres) so that we can see the bridge over the *Dyle*, the scene of the cavalry skirmishes, and the historic centre of the village.

From Genappe, we will take the coach to **Quatre Bras**, this is the scene of the Anglo-Dutch-French battle on 16 June 1815. Again, there is a 500 metre walk involved if so desired. We will visit the memorials to the battle so as to gain an insight into the significance of the Dutch and Dutch-Belgian actions that allowed the Anglo-Dutch to hold this battle to a draw.

If time permits and there is a consensus interest, we can then drive to **Ligny** (Prussian-French battle on 16 June 1815) this is a 12 km drive and I must warn everyone that it is a very spread out battle and not easy to interpret by coach or on foot. There is a nice museum there (small entrance charge).

We will then drive back to the village of **Ways** (Genappe) where the troops crossed the Dyle and at the church there is a fine monument to the French General Duhesme.

Leaving Ways we will return along the main Charleroi-Brussels road to the farm of **La Caillou**, the last HQ of Napoleon, which houses the provincial museum (small entrance charge).

From La Caillou, we will proceed north to **Plancenoit**, the scene of the vicious and bloody battle between the Prussians and the French during the battle at Waterloo.

From Plancenoit we will visit the **French right flank** (d'Erlon's Corp) to interpret the second phase from a French perspective and then we will cross the battlefield (by coach) to the **Anglo-Dutch left flank** to see and interpret the second phase (d'Erlons attack and the Anglo-Dutch cavalry counter-attack) from the Anglo-Dutch perspective.

Experience suggests that this itinerary is likely to use up the entire day and if so, then we will return direct to Brussels and the hotel. However, if we've still got some time in hand we can visit the **Mont-Saint-Jean farm** (Anglo-Dutch field hospital and now an excellent micro-brewery).

**19h00/19h30:** arrival at the Bedford Hotel in Brussels.