

ODE TO WATERLOO 200

It was April 1814, when Napoleon was beat
The armies of Europe forced him to retreat
He kissed his flag and bid farewell to his Guard
Banished to Elba, his reputation marred 1

The end of February, Napoleon escaped to France
It was 1815 and he was out of his trance
With 1,000 of his tall moustachioed men
He set foot on a beach called *Golfe-Juan* 2

He had to be stopped, King Louis had aged
Ney only wanted to bring him back in a cage
Even when ordered, Ney's troops wouldn't budge
Then, Ney joined Napoleon and forgot his past grudge 3

Bony hypnotised France and took back his royal crown
French troops had disbanded, their ordnance run down
He rushed through new laws and re-built his corps
And in 100 days, had evened the score 4

The Congress of Vienna, agreed soon to meet
To give Bonaparte, a kick in the teeth
Wellington was to command the allied resistance
With Blücher and Prince of Orange, giving assistance 5

Wellington's veterans, campaigners of old
Would stand against the French, without being told
Some units were fresh, and may not be steady
They needed the Duke around so he must be ready 6

The KGL, Dutch-Belgians and even the Nassauers, came
With Hanoverians and Brunswickers, to join the game
Wellington gathered his motley men
And then issued his *Order of Battle* in Belgium 7

Napoleon's task was to separate them both
Split Wellington from Blücher, and after that hope
Divide and conquer was Napoleon's chief aim
The French army crossed the Sambre, into Belgium, in the rain 8

The Duke really expected the French elsewhere 'Napoleon has humbugged me!!' he did declare First Saxe-Weimar, then Rebecque saved the day By occupying Quatre Bras, thus, stopping Ney	9
The Dutch-Belgians at Quatre Bras, were thin on the ground Wellington arrived at ten and then took command As redcoat reinforcements arrived at the double d'Erlon's reversed marches, gave Ney so much trouble	10
At Ligny, the Prussians got a terrible fright Wellington couldn't help to Napoleons delight The Duke had his hands full at Quatre Bras So, he couldn't help Blücher, even though Ligny wasn't far	11
While Napoleon and Ney took a short respite Wellington and Blücher, agreed to unite Blücher went to Wavre and Grouchy went too The Duke was to defend at a ridge near Waterloo	12
The British, strategically fell back, the French fell asleep Whinyates fired his rockets, the mud was so deep It rained all, day and the following night It was now 18th June with a classic battle in sight	13
Napoleon fired the opening shot The time was not quite 12 o'clock The French round shot flew right through the air The British lay down as the Duke really cared	14
Muffling asked the Duke, if Hougoumont would hold ? 'Ah, but you don't know Macdonnell!' he was told The Château was besieged by Reille's 2nd Corps The British Guards stayed put and slammed shut the door	15
The Château burnt down, some wounded died It was a horrible scene, even hard men cried Under constant assault from midday to twilight Hougoumont held fast, to Wellington's delight	16

The ridge on the right that would be next
It was defended by Picton and Hanoverian Best
Up went d'Erlon's Corps, 16,000 strong
He never made it, the assault went wrong 17

In went the Heavy Cavalry sent by Uxbridge
Whose brigade chased d'Erlon from the Ohain ridge
The French infantry retreated into a rout
And the Union brigade won two eagles and gave a great shout 18

The cavalry charged on, it was a futile advance
Ponsonby got stuck in the mud and was killed by a lance
The cavalry attacked French guns with sabres and swords
Then limped back up the hill, rubbing their sores 19

The Prussians were to be Wellington's saviour
But they got bogged down somewhere around Wavre
'*Vorward my children*' cried Blücher above the din
While the old marshal stunk of rhubarb and gin 20

Ney sent his cavalry, cuirasses and all
Up against Wellington's red brick wall
The Allies formed squares, bristling with steel
Pinned to the rack, Ney's cavalry had to wheel 21

Into the squares went most of the gunners
With them they took, wheels, tools and portfires
Only one stood alone facing the French
It was Mercer; his guns had dug out a trench 22

Again, cavalry attacked, across the battlefield
Beaten off by squares who just wouldn't yield
The French cavalry was blown, the honour ours
Ney had lost his cavalry and had wasted hours 23

La Haye Sainte had all day, been safe and sound
The KLG now fired their very last round
In went the French who chased out Major Baring
Out of ammunition, it was hardly daring 24

It was so late in the day when the Prussians came
 They took Plancenoit from the French, again and again
 For the Duke, this was a blessed relief
 To rejoin Wellington was Blücher's belief 25

Ziethen now joined the ridge, the battle looked lost
 The Prussian's wouldn't stay, the British were cross
 Müffling was there to stop their flight
 This allowed the Duke, to re-enforce his right 26

The Imperial Guards now marched off, at a slow steady pace
 Napoleon to Ney 'These are my ace'
 They had never been beaten, some had said
 They moved in two columns and were showered with lead 27

The first column met Halkett, whose brigade soon floundered
 He regained his position and the French were pounded
 Chassé's Dutch-Belgian Brigade, supported the Allied side
 And defeated the first Guard column, which then retired 28

The second column of Middle Guards still came on
 They were lead by Ney and not Cambronne
 The Duke said 'Maitland, this is your time!'
 And up stood his First Guards, in a four deep line 29

Napoleon's Middle Guard were shaken and torn
 And hedged down the hill, all weary and worn
 Colborne of the 52nd was very well schooled
 Bayoneting the Guards flank, 'La Garde Reculed' 30

The French were routed, chased by an army in red
 The Imperial Guard, for the first time had fled
 The battle was won, the French had no stance
 The Duke now raised his hat for a general advance 31

It was nearly the last shot, and soon getting dark
 'By God I've lost my leg!' was Uxbridge's remark
 For Wellington and Blücher, victory was theirs
 They shook hands at *La Belle Alliance*, Napoleons heirs 32

