



Le Vrai



'The Truth'
Octobre 1813

Fantastique! Superbe! Magnifique! French fleece feeble Allies at Flussgarten

Once again France can be justifiably proud of the military exploits of her forces facing the barbarian hordes in darkest Saxony. Facing overwhelming odds of at least four to one and without the help of the Emperor or the Imperial Guard the army of Marshal Soult dealt a deadly blow to the allied forces around Leipzig.

With only two corps of infantry plus a reserve division and a corps of cavalry less one division the small army of Marshal Soult had been given the task of keeping open the main bridge over the river Tiefeluss. Unfortunately for the ailing Marshal this meant spreading his forces very thinly over a wide area to cover all available approaches to the bridge.

The reserve division under General Morand took up positions in the town of Kupfernstadt, unfortunately their supporting artillery failed to arrive which meant they only had their muskets and bayonets to hold the town with, which makes their story even more compelling. Marshal Sebastiani with 2nd corps took up position on the Lange Kante with his left flank fixed upon the walled mansion of Sigmundshaus. He was also supported by a reserve battery of artillery deployed in some run-down defences up on the hill. Marshal MacDonald's 3rd corps had the hardest area to defend holding the line of the hill of Der Alte Mann, the town of Alderhafen and with the forest of Grosse Grunewald behind him. His force was dependant on the Cavalry divisions of General Kellerman keeping his retreat route open. Kellerman's divisions were spread southwards covering the area of the Vogelkirscheholz forest and in front of the hill of Kopf des Monchs. His force was backed by two reserve batteries of artillery, one up on the hill and the second deployed in front of Flussgarten. Both these batteries played a prime roll in stopping the enemy breaking through to the bridge.

Thick morning fog allowed the allied forces to close up to the French positions negating a lot of the fire from their artillery. The first clash of the day took place down south when some Prussian dragoons blundered into some light cavalry and promptly routed, but at least the allies now had some warning of what was in front of them. As the fog started to lift around 11 o'clock the French could see multiple col-

lums of allied corps converging on their positions but not a man flinched.

An Austrian infantry corps dashed itself against the isolated defenders of Kupfernstadt who managed to hold them off. An Austrian cavalry corps tried to extricate itself from the tangle of troops trying to avoid defended areas and form up in position facing 2nd corps and all the artillery in the area punished them heavily.

MacDonald's corps faced the might of three allied corps, Russians, Austrians and Prussians advancing on their positions, fortunately there wasn't enough room for them all to attack simultaneously and as each attack came in it was just as quickly beaten back. The Prussian infantry corps unable to assist in the assault on the town was forced further south and came upon one of Kellerman's cavalry divisions and superb shooting by the artillery crews up on the Kopf. South of the Vogelkirscheholz a major assault by Prussian cavalry was developing which was spotted by Marshal Soult up on the Lange Kante and he ordered Kellerman to reinforce that position and also sent out runners to find the heavy cavalry division as their help was going to be needed to stem the tide of troops pouring into the area.

By 2 o'clock fierce fighting was taking place all along the front and miraculously all positions were holding on, in fact the division at Kupfernstadt had launched a counter attack and had thrown back the Austrian infantry corps facing them, but things were about to get worse. A major explosion on the Lange Kante destroyed all the powder for the guns and a lone regiment of Austrian hussars had managed to overrun the guns of 2nd corps, this meant that the Austrian cavalry could now deploy virtually unopposed, it was time for 2nd corps cavalry to do their stuff.

On the far southern flank Kellerman's 9th divi-

sion were starting to struggle under the pressure of troops facing them and eventually two of their regiments gave way and it looked as if the route to the bridge which was the main allied objective was now open. Up stepped the 3rd reserve artillery battery who poured fire into the advancing Prussian cavalry, beat off a number of attacks and forced them to pull back. This glorious defence gave just enough time for the 10th heavy cavalry division to deploy having just arrived in time. Alderhafen was now a sea of flames and the last troops from 3rd corps were finally evicted but at what cost in allied casualties is unknown but it must have ran into many thousands.

Now was the crucial stage of the battle, the defenders of Kupfernstadt were now struggling to hold on with most battalions suffering more than 50% casualties and fresh Austrian troops advancing to attack. The defenders of Sigmundshaus had also been forced out of their defences by the fire of two allied batteries blasting the place to ruins, but still 2nd corps held their ground. 3rd corps were having to re-adjust their position having been thrown off Der Alte Mann and out of Alderhafen but now the fiery ruins helped them as the allies couldn't get troops through the flames and the remains of the corps were starting to reform. The final nail in the coffin was the third reserve battery withstanding another attack by Bavarian cavalry and a flank attack into a tired Prussian division which had just reached the field of battle by French cavalry. The whole lot was swept away in panic and took a Bavarian brigade with it, even the Prussian guard lost their nerve and huddled together in a shaken square. Over the whole battlefield the French stubbornly clung onto their positions, they had only lost the heights of Der Alte Mann and Alderhafen. Unbelievably French infantry still held out Kupfernstadt and with night rapidly falling the allies knew it was all over.

