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Blenheim 1704

The Duke of Marlborough's masterpiece



John Tincey. Illustrated by Graham Turner



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John Tincey • Illustrated by Graham Turner

Series editor Lee Johnson • Consultant editor David G Chandler

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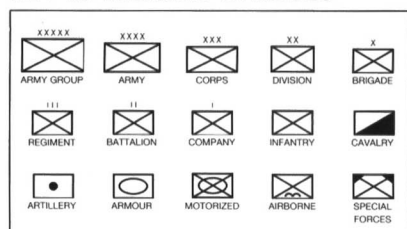
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KEY TO MILITARY SYMBOLS



FRONT COVER 'The Battle of Blenheim' J. Wootton.
(Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
Origins of the campaign	
CHRONOLOGY	10
OPPOSING COMMANDERS	11
The French and Bavarian Allies • The Confederates	
OPPOSING ARMIES	17
ORDERS OF BATTLE	25
Confederate armies • Franco-Bavarians	
OPPOSING PLANS	28
The Franco-Bavarian plans • The Confederate plans	
THE CAMPAIGN	31
The storming of the Schellenberg	
THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM	42
The Franco-Bavarians awake to their danger • The attack on Blenheim Eugene's battle • Crisis in the centre • Marlborough crosses the Nebel Total victory	
AFTERMATH	88
THE BATTLEFIELD TODAY	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY	94
INDEX	95

THE FRENCH CAMPAIGNS OF 1704



INTRODUCTION

John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough is the foremost general in modern British history and Blenheim his greatest victory. Unlike Wellington, Marlborough directed not only Britain's war effort but also that of a Grand Coalition of European states. Unlike Wellington he faced the main military effort of the French nation in the central theatres of war and defeated them at every encounter.

If at Waterloo, Wellington set the seal on Britain as the pre-eminent world power of the time, then the foundation of that greatness was laid by John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, at Blenheim.

ORIGINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

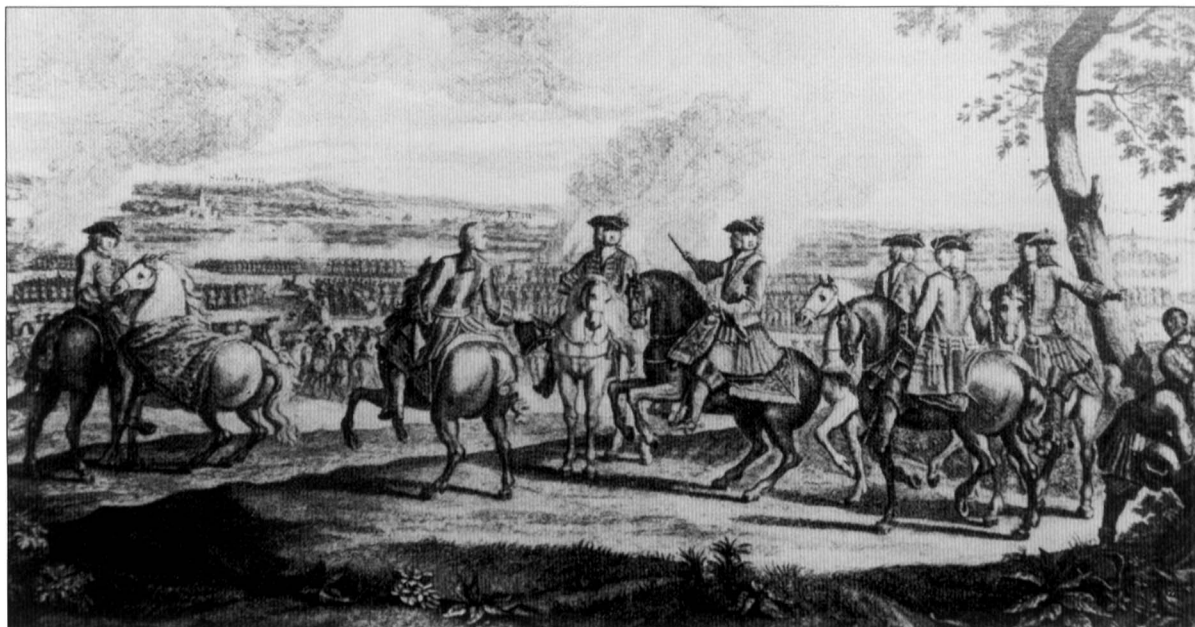
The French King, Louis XIV, had spent his long reign seeking to expand his kingdom to what he believed to be its natural frontiers. The year 1700 saw the throne of Spain fall vacant, presenting Louis with the irresistible temptation of uniting the thrones of France and Spain under a candidate from his own house of Bourbon.

For 40 years Europe had awaited the death of the childless and infirm Charles II of Spain with mounting trepidation. War between France and Austria seemed likely as three possible successors had claims on the Spanish throne: Archduke Charles was brother to the Austrian Emperor Leopold I; Louis, the dauphin of France, was the heir of Louis XIV; Joseph Ferdinand, Elector of Bavaria, a useful compromise candidate, inconsiderately died in February 1699.

The Spanish nobility resented the manner in which the future of their country and its overseas empire had become the diplomatic play-thing of foreign monarchs, but as the time of their king's death drew near the Spanish chose to support a French claimant to the throne. They reasoned that Austria lacked the maritime power needed to protect the Spanish Empire and its trade, while the French possessed a strong fleet and their own overseas territories that would complement those of Spain.

In November 1699 Charles II threw the careful manoeuvrings of Europe's diplomats into confusion by leaving a will that conferred his throne on Philip of Anjou, the sixteen-year-old grandson of Louis XIV.

The immediate reaction of Europe's rulers was muted, but Louis XIV could not resist overplaying the hand that good fortune had dealt him. In February 1701 he terrified the Dutch by marching French troops into the 20 fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands (modern Belgium) that had acted as a defensive buffer for the Dutch frontier. In three fortresses Dutch garrisons were forcibly expelled with the assistance of the Vicar-General of the Spanish Netherlands, Maximilian Emanuel II von Wittelsbach, who also held the title Elector of Bavaria.



Military conflict broke out between France and Austria in northern Italy during the summer of 1701. Prince Eugene of Savoy, in command of an Austrian army, defeated Marshal Catinat in three battles at Carpi, Novara and Peschiera and on 1 September 1701 was able to hold off the reinforced French army under Marshal Villeroi at Chiari.

English hostility towards France increased as merchants found themselves excluded from the profitable trade with Spanish colonies. Soon a Grand Alliance, also known as the Confederate States, was forming with England, the Netherlands and the Austrian Empire as the main partners and Denmark, Prussia and Hanover, plus a host of smaller German states, providing contingents in return for Dutch and English subsidies.

The strength of the Grand Alliance would be gold, but England and the Netherlands also agreed to make large military commitments. England was to provide two soldiers for every five placed in the field by the Dutch, and five warships of every eight provided by the maritime powers.

On 16 September 1701 the Catholic King James II of England, who had been driven from his throne by the Protestant 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, died in exile in France. His son, who became known as the 'Old Pretender', was recognised by Louis XIV as King of England, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the Protestant William III, who had replaced James in 1688. War was now inevitable and the French recalled the Comte de Tallard from their embassy in London. On 19 March 1702 King William III suffered a fall from his horse and died as a result of his injuries. Queen Anne succeeded to the throne and John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, became her closest advisor and was confirmed as commander of all her forces to be sent to the Continent. On 15 May 1702 England declared war on France.

The campaign of 1702 produced little of note other than the frustration of Marlborough's attempts to bring the French to battle by the caution of his Dutch 'advisors'.

At the battle of Blenheim, Marlborough bore the fate of a confederation of the great states of Europe on his shoulders.

The 1703 campaign saw the Grand Alliance achieve considerable success in siege warfare in Flanders, but once again Marlborough was cheated of a decisive battle. Stalemate in Flanders was an agreeable prospect when contrasted to the plight of the Grand Alliance in the Austrian theatres of war. The Emperor of Austria saw his main military contractor bankrupted and the supply of munitions for the Austrian forces began to fail, a revolt in Hungary threatened Vienna, and the Elector of Bavaria chose to desert Austria and to throw in his lot with the French.

Bavaria was isolated from French-controlled territory until Marshal Tallard's victory at Speyerbach on 15 November 1703. This was followed by the French capture of the major fortress of Landau and the towns of Brisach and Kehl, providing secure crossing points on the River Rhine. Communication with Bavaria remained difficult and slow, but a French army under Marshal Villars hastened to support the Elector, creating the prospect of an advance on Vienna itself in the campaigning season of 1704.

In January 1704 the Dutch minister in Vienna wrote to his government in the Hague: 'the monarchy is on its last legs and will go down in a general military collapse unless there is some miraculous intervention of the Almighty ...' On the Danube and the Upper Rhine, the Austrians suffered serious setbacks and their chances of surviving a serious French offensive in 1704 appeared slight.

With French backing, the Elector of Bavaria presented a credible candidate for election as Emperor should Leopold I be overthrown. In that event the German Princes, including Prussia and Württemberg, would have little choice but to desert the Grand Alliance and to join France in waging war on their former allies. Unable to hire the soldiers of the German states, English and Dutch gold would lose much of its military potency and France would dominate the Continent and the world.

CHRONOLOGY

5 September 1638 Birth of Louis XIV.

14 May 1643 Death of Louis XIII, Louis XIV becomes king in name but France continues to be ruled by Cardinal Mazarin.

9 March 1661 Death of Cardinal Mazarin, personal rule of Louis XIV begins.

1667–68 War of Devolution (France against Spain).

1672–78 The Dutch War (France and England against the Dutch).

1683–84 War of Reunions (France against Spain).

1688–97 The Nine Years War (France against England and the Dutch).

1700

1 November Death of Charles II of Spain leaves the Spanish throne vacant.

16 November Louis XIV recognises Philip of Anjou, his own grandson, as King of Spain.

February 1701 French troops forcibly occupy barrier fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands.

1701–14 The War of the Spanish Succession (France and Spain against England, the Dutch and the Austrian Empire).

1702

19 March Death of William III, who is succeeded by Queen Anne.

15 May Grand Alliance declares war on France.

15 November 1703 Battle of Speyerbach. French victory under Marshal Tallard leads to the capture of Landau and the opening up of communications with Bavaria.

1704

19 April Marlborough sails from Harwich.

18 May Tallard completes his first crossing of the Black Forest mountains by delivering reinforcements to Marshal Marsin and the Elector of Bavaria at Villingen.

19 May Marlborough's army marches from Bedburg for the Danube.

29 May Marlborough's columns reach Coblenz.

3 June Marlborough's army crosses the River Main. The French fear for the safety of Landau.

7 June Marlborough crosses the River Neckar, revealing that his destination is in southern Germany.

10 June Marlborough and Prince Eugene meet at Mundelsheim.

22 June Marlborough's army meets with the Imperial Austrian army under Baden at Launsheim.

1 July Tallard begins his second crossing of the Black Forest mountains.

2 July Confederate storming of the Schellenberg.

5 August Tallard joins Marsin and the Elector at Augsburg.

10 August Eugene reports that the French have crossed to the north bank of the Danube.

11 August The armies of Eugene and Marlborough camp at Munster.

12 August The Franco-Bavarian armies camp on the plain of Höchstädt.

13 August BATTLE OF BLENHEIM.

11 September Ulm surrenders.

29 October Marlborough occupies Trèves.

28 November Landau falls to Marlborough.

14 December Marlborough lands at Greenwich.

20 December Fall of Trarbach ends the campaign of 1704.

OPPOSING COMMANDERS

THE FRENCH AND BAVARIAN ALLIES

Louis XIV King of France (1638–1715)

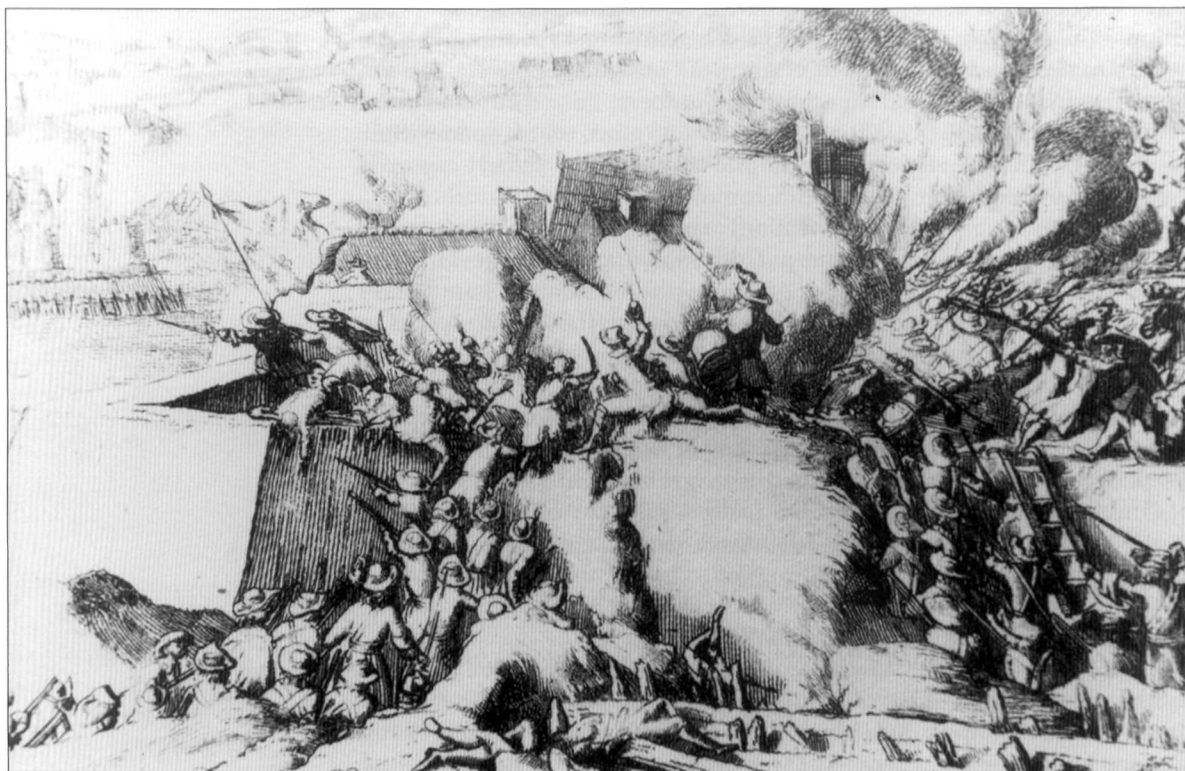
Born on 5 September 1638 in the twenty-third year of the marriage of the estranged King Louis XIII and Queen Anne of Austria, the future 'Sun King' was christened Louis-Dieudonné – Louis the God given.

Louis XIII died on 14 May 1643, leaving Queen Anne as regent and dependent upon the Italian Cardinal Mazarin for advice on how to rule France.

Louis suffered a childhood marred by poverty and confinement, as he became a pawn in the power struggles amongst the nobility known as the Fronde.

Louis was crowned on 7 June 1654 and on the death of Mazarin in 1661 he amazed the court by personally taking on the responsibilities of government. Louis chose men of ability to be his ministers over the heads of the nobility and he succeeded in making France a centralised state, providing the finances to maintain a modern army of 400,000 men.

For half a century before the War of the Spanish Succession, French armies remained invincible as fortresses fell to their unrivalled siegecraft and their courage in the assault.



In 1640 he married Princess Marie-Thérèse of Spain. The marriage settlement included a clause preventing any future claim on the Spanish crown passing to Louis or his heirs. However, failure by the Spanish to pay the required dowry provided an excuse to ignore this restriction.

In 1667–68 Louis fought the War of Devolution to gain territory from the Spanish Netherlands in recompense for the unpaid dowry. From 1672 onwards France would come to be opposed by all the major European powers as they sought to halt the expansionist plans of Louis XIV.

France became exhausted by war and Louis was reluctant to renew hostilities but he could not resist the lure of the vacant Spanish throne, and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14) brought defeat and great hardship to the final years of his reign. He died on 1 September 1715.

Camille d'Hostun, Comte de Tallard (or Tallart) and Duc d'Hostun, Marshal of France (1652–1728)

Tallard was appointed Maréchal de Camp in 1688, at the start of the war of the League of Augsburg, and Lieutenant-General in 1693. He was appointed Ambassador to the London court of William III in 1698 and must have met the Duke of Marlborough on many occasions. Called back to France on the outbreak of war in 1701, Tallard was given military command under Marshal Boufflers and campaigned competently in 1702 at the capture of Trèves and Brisach.

He laid siege to Landau from 24 October to 28 November 1703, but was forced to take part of his army out of its trenches on the approach of two Imperial armies intent on relieving the fortress. Disagreement between their commanders led to the Imperialist armies encamping while separated by a morass. With only 8,000 men against 20,000 Imperial troops, Tallard made a night march and at dawn on 15 November 1703 fell upon the isolated army of the Prince of Hesse-Cassel on the plain of Speyerbach. Using his local superiority in numbers, Tallard inflicted losses of 6,000 men, including 2,000 prisoners, and 23 guns, on his enemy while losing only 4,000 casualties. Returning to his trenches, Tallard captured Landau and received his Marshal's baton as reward.

Of unimposing appearance, Tallard was short-sighted, a fact seized on by unkind critics who suggested this was the reason he failed to notice the advance of Marlborough's army at Blenheim. Saint-Simon said of him: 'Nobody confided in him, though everybody was pleased in his company.' Tallard was noted for his excellent table and love of comfort even when on campaign.

His military career ended when he was taken prisoner at Blenheim and he lived for seven years as a prisoner in England. On his return to France in 1712, Tallard was greeted with great kindness by Louis XIV and accepted back at court. He was made a member of the Council of Regency in 1717, was elected to the Academy of Sciences in 1723 and created Minister of State in 1726.

Ferdinand, Comte de Marsin (1656–1706)

Mérode-Westerloo said of Marsin that he was 'so little interested in riches as to hardly know the value of money'. Marsin was a soldier's general. His great personal bravery led him to become the youngest Lieutenant-General in the French Army and he was appointed Director General of the



Sebastien le Prestre, Seigneur de Vauban, was the architect of the chain of fortresses that protected France and the inventor of the methods by which enemy fortresses could be captured.

Cavalry in 1695. He fought under Tallard at Speyerbach and no doubt received his Marshal's baton on his commander's recommendation in 1703. His post-Blenheim critics pointed out that he had never commanded more than 500 cavalry in his career and the acerbic Saint-Simon recorded that he was 'not always dishonest'. He continued as an active commander after Blenheim, but usually under the eye of a more talented superior. He was killed at the siege of Toulon in 1706.

Maximilian Emanuel II von Wittelsbach, Elector of Bavaria (1662–1726)

The Elector had served against the Ottoman Turks from 1686–88, and considered himself a notable commander, following his defeat of an Imperial army at Sieghardin on 11 March 1703 and his presence at Villars' victory at Höchstädt on 20 September 1703. He married Maria Antonia, the daughter of Emperor Leopold I of Austria but this family relationship did not prevent him from throwing in his lot with the French when war broke out over the issue of the Spanish Succession. His son Joseph Ferdinand had a claim to the Spanish crown, but died before the throne became vacant on the death of Charles II. The Elector also gained the position of Governor of the Spanish Netherlands in 1691 and it was to these territories that he withdrew after Blenheim to continue fighting alongside his French allies.

THE CONFEDERATES

John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough (1650–1722)

Born on 5 June 1650 at Ash House in Devonshire, John was the eldest son of Sir Winston Churchill and Elizabeth Drake, a descendant of the naval hero Sir Francis Drake. Sir Winston had served as a captain in the Royalist cavalry during the Civil War and had been reduced to penury by a fine imposed by the victorious Parliament. Family fortunes improved with the restoration of Charles II and Sir Winston became Member of Parliament for Weymouth and gained a place at court. The family also prospered as a result of John's sister Arabella becoming the mistress of James Duke of York, the future James II.

At 16, John Churchill became a page to the Duke of York and soon obtained a commission in the Foot Guards. In 1668 he volunteered to serve with the Tangier garrison and gained valuable experience of irregular warfare fighting the Moorish tribesmen. He returned to England in 1672 as a captain in the Duke of York's Regiment. He then served with a volunteer contingent led by the Duke of Monmouth that joined the French army engaged in the siege of Maastricht, where he saved the Duke's life during a desperate assault on the fortress. In 1674 Churchill remained in French service and fought under Marshal Turenne at the battles of Sinzheim and Entzheim. In 1678 he obtained the position of Lieutenant-Colonel of the Duke of York's Regiment.

In addition to the political patronage of the Duke of York, Churchill enjoyed the favours of Barbara Villiers, mistress of Charles II. The King indulged the dalliance, which came to an end in 1678 when Churchill married Sarah Jennings, a lady in waiting to Princess Anne. The marriage saw the beginning of a personal friendship between Churchill, Sarah and Anne, which was to play a major role in his advancement.



The frontispiece of *The New Method of Fortification*, an English translation of Vauban's work, shows a zigzag trench providing communication with the artillery batteries firing on a medieval-style fortress. In Vauban's fortresses wide and low earth ramparts were hidden behind broad ditches to deprive enemy guns of a target.

James, Duke of York, was a confirmed Catholic and his elevation to the throne on the death of Charles II in 1685 inspired the Duke of Monmouth to lead a rebellion in the West Country. Churchill enjoyed a brief independent command against the rebels and, despite being supplanted by the Earl of Feversham, distinguished himself at the battle of Sedgemoor that ended the uprising. By 1688, however, Protestant England had become disenchanted with King James and when William of Orange landed in Torbay and advanced on London many, including Churchill, went over to join William. William III ruled jointly with his wife Queen Mary, eldest daughter of King James who fled into exile in France. Princess Anne was the deposed monarch's second daughter and therefore heir to the throne. The close relationship between the Churchills and Princess Anne caused distrust on the part of Queen Mary.

William III and Queen Mary came to the throne of England after a coup overthrew the Catholic James II, who sought exile in France. Mary was James's eldest daughter and a Protestant, but 'Dutch William' had a claim to the throne in his own right via his mother, a daughter of Charles I.



In 1689 Churchill was created Earl of Marlborough and sent to command the English contingent fighting with William's army in Flanders. The English soldiers distinguished themselves at Walcourt in action against the *Gardes Françaises*, but Marlborough was shocked at their general lack of discipline and frequent looting. Independent command in Ireland followed service in Flanders, including the successful sieges of Cork and Kinsale.

In 1692 the growing quarrels between Queen Mary and Princess Anne led to Marlborough's dismissal from all his offices. The year 1694 saw his darkest days when he was accused of treason; specifically giving advanced warning of an attack on Camaret Bay in France to Louis XIV. It is undoubtedly true that, like many men in public life at the time, Marlborough kept a foot in both camps by corresponding with his old patron King James. Such letters may have included references to old news of military operations, but no treasonable intent was proven.

The year 1694 also saw the death of Queen Mary and, with Princess Anne now certain to rule on the demise of William III, she and her friends were permitted to return to court. Marlborough's abilities could not be denied and in the years leading up to the death of William III he regained much of his prominence in the diplomatic dealings of the Crown. The succession of Queen Anne to the throne ensured that England would find its greatest general ready to command its armies and to lead a Confederation of European states against the might of Louis XIV's France.

Prince François Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736)

Born in Paris and educated in France, Eugene was the son of the Count of Soissons, who had married a niece of Cardinal Mazarin. It is said that he entered the service of Austria only after Louis XIV refused him a command in the French army. His early experience was gained in campaigns against the Turks and the reputation he earned there led to command in Italy in 1691. He returned to the east to defeat the Turkish commander Elmas Mohammed at Zenta in 1697. Victories against superior

French armies at Carpi and Chiari in Italy during 1701 reinforced Eugene's reputation as a general. This was in no way diminished by defeat at Cremona and a drawn battle at Luzzara in 1702.

Following Blenheim, Eugene won a major victory at Turin in 1706 and he returned to fight alongside Marlborough in the victories at Oudenarde on 11 July 1708 and at Malplaquet on 11 September 1709. Following Marlborough's removal from command, Eugene suffered a defeat at the hands of Marshal Villars at Denain on 24 July 1712.

Prince Louis-William, the Margrave of Baden (1655–1707)

Baden was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial army in Hungary in 1689. Victory at Szlankamen in 1691, where he was outnumbered 2:1 by the 100,000-strong Ottoman army of Mustapha Koprili, gave Baden the nickname 'Turken-Louis'. He returned to take command of the Imperial armies on the Rhine for the remaining years of the War of the Grand Alliance (1688–97).

At the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession he held the command of the Imperial armies on the Rhine. On 14 October 1702 Marshal Villars defeated him at Friedlingen, but between 19 and 25 April 1703 Baden was able to force the passage of the Lines of Stollhofen in the face of Villars' superior army.

During the campaign in Bavaria in 1704, Baden maintained a friendly correspondence with the Elector and this caused Marlborough and Eugene to doubt his loyalty. Baden appears to have believed that Marlborough went to great lengths to get him out of the way so that Blenheim could be fought in his absence, and he carried a grudge against his fellow commander to the end of his days.

He died while campaigning on the Rhine in 1707, from blood poisoning arising from a wound to his toe received during the campaign of 1704.

William Earl of Cadogan (1675–1726)

A native of Dublin, he joined the army of William III as a Captain in 1694 and had advanced to major by 1698. On appointment as Quartermaster-General in 1701, he joined Marlborough's staff and was considered to be his most valuable subordinate for his flawless organisation of the supply of the Duke's marching armies. Cadogan was wounded during the attack on the Schellenberg but took the field at Blenheim at the Duke's side. He was appointed Brigadier-General on 25 August 1704 and served Marlborough with distinction throughout his campaigns, but suffered along with the Duke when he was dismissed from his command. With the coming of the House of Hanover he rose again as the Duke returned to Royal favour and he became a Member of Parliament and was created Baron in 1716 and Earl in 1718.

Charles Churchill (1656–1714)

Brother to the Duke of Marlborough, Charles Churchill made his own way through the military ranks. Enlisting as an Ensign in the Duke of York's Maritime Regiment he became a Captain in 1679, a Lieutenant-Colonel in 1682, Colonel in 1688, Major-General in 1694 and Lieutenant-General and General of Foot in 1702.



But for his death following a riding accident, Queen Anne's brother-in-law, William III, would have commanded his armies in person during the War of Spanish Succession. Queen Anne could not command and her close personal friendship with Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, made the appointment of the Duke a foregone conclusion.

OPPOSING ARMIES

The Armies

French writers dominated the development of military theory during the second half of the 17th century, while French soldiers dominated Europe by putting theory into effect. The great French commanders, Turenne, Luxembourg and Condé, were unchallenged on the battlefield, but their victories were as much the result of the administrative reforms carried out by government officials as of their own tactical brilliance.

The early years of the reign of Louis XIV were overshadowed by civil war in France and the dominating influence of Cardinal Mazarin at court. The death of Mazarin in 1661 allowed Louis to take the reins of power in his own hands and to reform and centralise the French state. Louis was careful that no single minister gained too much power, and politics as well as ability played a part in appointments. However, the Secretary of State for War, Michel Le Tellier (1603–85), and his son, the Marquis de Louvois (1641–91), were to play significant roles in the creation of the new French army.

In 1661 France held no great place amongst the nations of Europe and ranked below the worldwide empire of Spain, the ancient Holy Roman Empire (which was now centred on Austria), and even behind the mercantile power of the Dutch Republic. However, the population of France in 1661 is estimated to have been some 18 million compared with 8 million in the Austrian possessions and only 6 million in the British Isles. Le Tellier and Louvois set about employing this massive population advantage to support an unprecedented military strength. In 1661 France could field armies totalling only 70,000 men. By 1666 some 125,000 men were under arms, growing to 176,000 in 1672 and 280,000 in 1678.

Political considerations affected the development of the armies. In 1685 the revocation of the Edict of Nantes allowed repressive measures against French Protestants, which drove 600 officers and 12,000 soldiers to flee to join the English and Dutch service, taking with them valuable experience of the latest French military ideas and training. This was made up for in numbers and gallantry by the exile from Britain in 1690 of 12,000 Catholic Irish, including the future Marshal the Duke of Berwick, following William III's victory at the Boyne.

In 1688 Louvois established a provincial militia of 25,000 men selected by ballot. Each year, in every parish, one man would draw the feared black slip of paper and his family would go into mourning as if he were already dead. By these means a force of 450,000 men, including militia, was made available in 1694, but even the new French state found this number difficult to sustain and by 1696 the figure had reduced to 288,000.

The outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1701 saw 55,000 militia called up to serve in an army of 220,000, which was eventually to rise



to 400,000. By comparison Britain maintained an army that, at its largest, amounted to only 75,000 men in 1710. Austria fielded 100,000 men in 1705, while the Dutch supported an army of 120,000 men throughout the war.

The practicalities of supply limited the number of men that could operate together as an army. Marshal Turenne gave an estimate of the desirable number that could form an army: 'An army larger than 50,000 men is awkward to the general who commands it, to the soldiers who compose it and to the munitionnaires who supply it.'

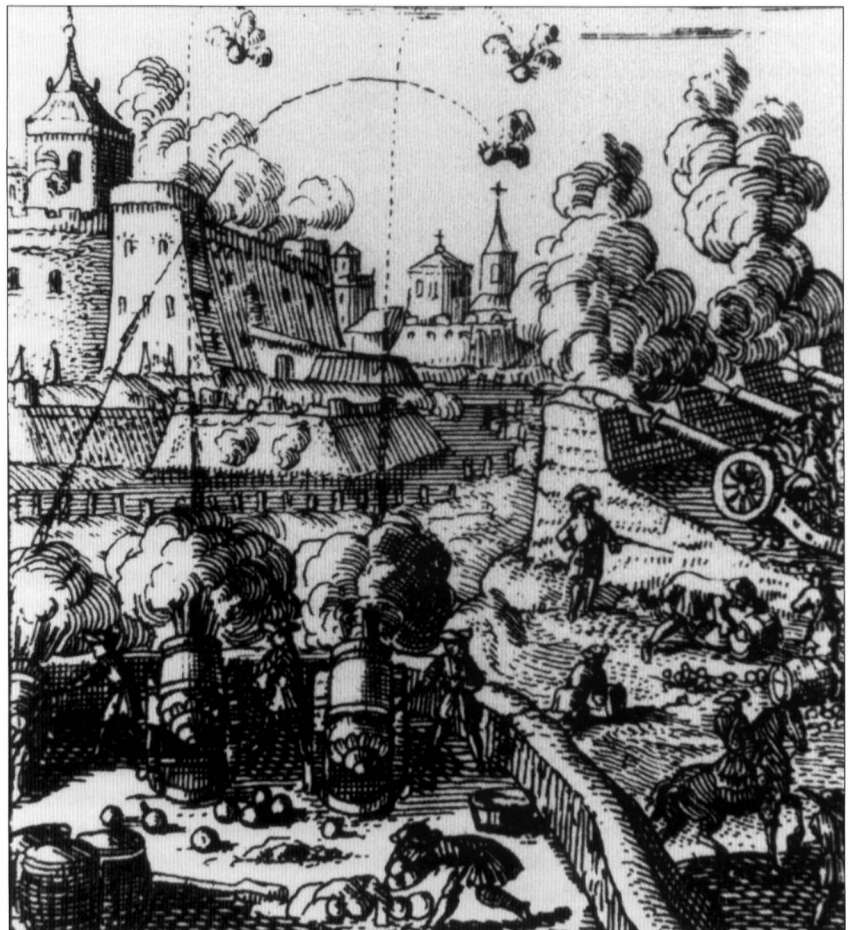
In his book *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough* David Chandler says that 'a force of 60,000 men might require 90,000 rations a day' and goes on to make calculations that provide a clear explanation of Turenne's choice of army strength: 'On the basic assumption that 60,000 men required 900 quintals or hundredweight of bread a day (made from 675 quintals of grain or flour), at least 60 ovens operated by a staff of 240 bakers would be needed to undertake the baking of four days' rations. Armies habitually marched for three days and halted the fourth, which was needed for rest and re-supply.'

This was not the end of the problem for as Chandler points out the horses, which were essential to the supply of an army's soldiers, had needs of their own: 'An army of 60,000 men would have at least 40,000 horses accompanying it. In the campaigning season – the exact length of which was dictated equally by the state of the roads and the availability, or otherwise, of fodder – such an army needed to find 10,000 quintals a day; in time of winter quarters, this dropped to about 5,000 quintals of solid feed – oats and straw. To convey such quantities called for some 1,000 carts in summer, and perhaps 500 in winter.'

Louis XIV might have resisted the lure of the Spanish throne had it been offered to his heir, who would rule France in time, rather than to his grandson, who could take Spain for his own separate kingdom.

Providing supplies on such a scale dictated that logistics was the first concern of every commander, and strategy was often determined by the desire to make an enemy's country support one's army with both food and monetary contributions. Faced with the need to provide fodder for their horses, armies were forced to march to areas offering fresh supplies even when strategic imperatives dictated that they should remain in an area already exhausted of fodder. The process of gathering fodder also posed problems for the commander. A grand forage would see much of his cavalry, and particularly his dragoons, widely dispersed in small parties engaged in the manual labour of cutting and carrying grass back to camp. Armies were vulnerable at such times and a general had to select a location where he would not fall prey to an enemy commander who, having completed his own foraging, could attack with his cavalry under arms and his army united.

The French proved particularly adept at taking advantage of the problems of foraging as, under the direction of Louvois, magazines were established in the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands where dried horse fodder was stored over the winter. This allowed the French armies to take the field in the early spring and often to capture a vital town or fortress before the new crops allowed the Dutch to intervene. By the beginning of the normal campaigning period of May–October when



Marlborough's early campaigns proved frustrating when the Dutch deputies prevented him seeking a decisive battle. However significant victories were obtained by successful sieges such as that of Bonn in 1703. (H. Margary)

fodder was available for cutting, the French had taken up defensive positions needing only to hold what they had gained.

In addition to the movement of whole armies in search of supply, a form of 'petite guerre' took place with parties of cavalry and dragoons acting as raiding forces on what were known as 'courses'. These were expeditions aimed at gathering supplies, including livestock that could be driven off, as well as contributions in the form of forced taxation of local peasants and large donations from the citizens of towns who preferred to pay rather than endure the attentions of hostile dragoons quartered in their homes.

Marlbrough's great achievement in the 1704 campaign was not only to bring his army to the banks of the Danube in good order, but also to maintain it there in hostile territory while forcing the armies of France and Bavaria into the confinement of fortified camps where they struggled to maintain their soldiers and horses.

Infantry

Louis XIV took a personal interest in military drill and in 1663 he formed the Régiment du Roi so that he could carry out experimental drills. In 1667 Jean Martinet was appointed Inspector General of Infantry and his enthusiasm for precision in drill was such that his name has become a byword for strict discipline.

The emphasis on discipline and an unthinking adherence to drill is explained by the views held by Louis and his officers on the nature of infantry combat. Louis recognised that the increasing power of firearms made heavy casualties inevitable when two bodies of formed infantry engaged in a firefight. Since losses could not be avoided, victory would go to the battalions that were able to continue to perform their weapons drill despite seeing their comrades shot down around them. In this theoretical view of infantry fighting, maintaining a brave appearance, and enduring casualties without complaint, was more important than the effectiveness of the fire that the French battalions produced.

In the instructions that he left for the education of his son, *Memoires de Louis XIV pour l'instruction du dauphin*¹, the King explained the value that he put on constant drilling and unthinking obedience amongst his soldiers: 'Good order makes us look assured, and it seems enough to look brave, because most often our enemies do not wait for us to approach near enough for us to have to show if we are in fact brave.'

In garrison, French infantry drilled twice every week and in times of peace summer manoeuvres were held in which thousands of men practised deployment in full battle order in the manner of a small army.

During the War of the Spanish Succession it became clear that it was not sufficient for French soldiers to merely show bravery in order to defeat their enemies. Improved weapons, and Dutch ideas on how they could be used, provided the Dutch infantry battalions with firepower that mere bravery could not withstand.

By the middle of the 17th century the standard infantry formation had come to consist of one-third pikemen and two-thirds musketeers. The development of the bayonet from the 1660s allowed the musketeer to fight off cavalry without the assistance of the pikeman and his days were ended altogether by the introduction of the socket bayonet, which allowed a musket to be loaded and fired while the bayonet was in place. By the



During much of his youth Louis XIV's France was in a state of civil war. When he finally came to rule in his own right he amazed his court by taking the responsibilities of government into his own hands and appointing ministers on the basis of merit rather than noble birth.

[illegible]

A further increase in firepower was achieved by the steady improvement in the technology that went into the manufacture of the flintlocks used to fire muskets. The old matchlock retained several advantages over the early types of flintlock. The matchlock mechanism was simple and robust and *in extremis* simply prodding the burning match cord into the firing pan would suffice to fire a musket. If the mechanism of a flintlock failed, or if the flint broke, it was unusable. Metal-casting technology improved the manufacture and reliability of the flintlock and from the 1680s French flintlocks became known throughout Europe for their quality and reliability.

21

made the precise regulation of loading drill difficult. Paper cartridges containing a measured charge of gunpowder had been in use for many years and these now became standard issue.

The reliability and speed of ignition of the priming powder offered by the French flintlock allowed infantry to develop firing discipline to new levels. However, it was the Dutch who pioneered the new idea of platoon firing, and the English who perfected it. During the course of the Nine Years War, fought from 1688 to 1697, the French gradually reduced their infantry formations from the regulation depth of five ranks to four, and the course of the War of the Spanish Succession would see a further reduction from the new regulation four ranks to three. In 1704 the French army, confident of its superiority, formed infantry battalions in four ranks and commonly fired by successive ranks. Under the five-rank system the first four ranks knelt while the fifth fired over their heads, the fourth rank would then stand and fire and so on. As a soldier needed to be upright to swiftly load the muzzle-loading muskets of the time, such firing methods could only be used once before the entire formation held its fire while all the ranks reloaded. An alternative method was for the first three ranks to fire as a single volley while the rear ranks held their fire as a reserve. As the rate of fire increased with the introduction of flintlock muskets and improved arms drill, the value of such a reserve quickly diminished when compared to the loss of firepower.

The Dutch formed their men in three ranks and divided their battalions into sections or platoons grouped together in firings, each small enough to allow an officer and sergeants to closely supervise the soldiers. A battalion now consisted of a number of independent divisions that could fire successively in groups so that a continuous fire rippled along the line without pause. The fact that the soldiers remained standing on the spot allowed them to reload at full speed while their officers ensured that loading drill was correctly followed and that the volley was delivered as one at the right moment. Captain Robert Parker recorded an incident during the battle of Malplaquet in 1709 when by chance there was 'a fair trial of skill between the two Royal Regiments of Ireland, one in the British, the other in the French service'. The regiments met in a clearing in the woods: 'We continued marching slowly on, till we came to an open in the wood. It was a small plain, on the opposite side of which we perceived a battalion of the enemy drawn up, a skirt of the wood being in the rear of them. Upon this Colonel Kane, who was then at the head of the Regiment, having drawn us up, and formed our platoons, advanced gently towards them, with the six platoons of our first fire made ready. When we had advanced within a hundred paces of them, they gave us a fire of one of their ranks: whereupon we halted, and returned them the fire of our six platoons at once; and immediately made ready the six platoons of our second fire, and advanced upon them again. They gave us the fire of another rank, and we returned them a second fire, which made them shrink; however, they gave us the fire of a third rank after a scattering manner, and then retired into the wood in great disorder: on which we sent our third fire after them, and saw them no more.'

The superiority of platoon firing is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that the surviving Bavarian battalions had adopted it by 1706 and some regiments in the French army had begun its use by 1708.



The Elector of Bavaria may have been persuaded to ally with the King of France as much out of fear for the safety of his territories in Flanders, where the toll of French conquests continued to mount, as by his own ambitions to succeed to the Imperial throne.

The English flintlock fired a lead ball considerably heavier than the French musket ball and Captain Robert Parker suggested that the greater weight of the English musket ball added to the effectiveness of the volley: 'The advantage on our side will be easily accounted for, first from the weight of our ball; for the French arms carry bullets of 24 to the pound; whereas our British flintlocks carry balls of 16 only to the pound, which will make a considerable difference in the execution.'

French regiments of infantry consisted of one or more battalions and were named after a province of France or their colonel. A newly formed regiment might have only a single battalion, but many of the older regiments had four or more battalions. A battalion was formed of 12–16 companies of 45–50 men including one or more grenadier



The Elector of Bavaria considered himself to be a talented general and frustration at his interference drove Marshal Villars from command of the Franco-Bavarian forces. His replacement, Marshal Marsin, was a more compliant, but a much less talented general.

companies. A battalion was intended to have some 800 common soldiers but at the time of Blenheim it was quite usual for French battalions to muster at half that strength.

English regiments of infantry consisted of a single battalion, with rare exceptions such as the First Foot Guards and Orkney's. A battalion was formed of 12 musketeer companies and one grenadier company each of 50–60 men, giving a battalion of some 780 common soldiers.

Cavalry

Soldiers of the 16th and early 17th century had advocated that cavalry faced with infantry protected by formations of pikemen should resort to firearms to shoot their way into the enemy ranks. This gave rise to actions where cavalry fought against cavalry with volleys from pistols and carbines. In the 1630s the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, ordered his cavalry to form only three ranks deep and to charge home sword in hand. This highly successful tactic was widely adopted by commanders such as Prince Rupert and Oliver Cromwell, ensuring that English cavalry never returned to the use of firepower. Brigadier-General Richard Kane, who fought at Blenheim, says in his *The most essential Discipline of the Cavalry*²: 'The Duke of Marlborough would allow the Horse but three Charges of Powder and Ball to each Man for a Campaign, and that only for guarding their Horses when a Grass, and not to be made use of on Action.'

Kane gives a short account of cavalry drill, but it is very much to the point: 'It is sufficient for them to ride well, to have their Horses well managed, and train'd up to stand Fire; that they take particular Notice what Part of the Squadron they are in, their Right and Left-Hand Men, and File-Leaders, that they may, when they happen to break, readily know to form. Breaking their Squadrons ought to be practised in their common Discipline. That they MARCH and WHEEL with Grace, and HANDLE their Swords well, which is the only Weapon our British Horse makes use of when they charge the Enemy; more than this is superfluous.'

In contrast the French relied on the effect of a volley of pistol shot to disrupt the ranks of their enemies before they fell on with the sword. All armies drew up their cavalry in three ranks, although the French General Puysegur recalled of the cavalry that during the War of the Spanish Succession: 'on entering the campaign, they were not all in three ranks, because all were not complete, towards the middle many were in two ranks, and towards the end, few were in three ranks'³.

By the late 1690s French cavalry was organised into regiments of four squadrons. Each squadron consisted of three companies of 50 men giving a regiment of 600 troopers. However, numbers were reduced and companies of some 35 strong are more representative of the army of 1704, giving a regiment of 420 troopers.

In the English service cavalry regiments consisted of nine troops each of 40–60 men formed into three ad hoc squadrons for battle. This gave a regimental strength of between 360 and 540 troopers.

¹ Ed. Charles Dreyss, Paris 1860.

² London, 1747.

³ *L'Art de la guerre par principes et par règles*, Vol I (Paris, 1748).

ORDERS OF BATTLE



The young John Churchill gained his place as a page to the future James II because of his sister's position as a favoured mistress. Churchill was noted as one of the most handsome young men of his time and this was to bring him both military advancement and the favours of the ladies of the court.

Battle of Blenheim, 13 August 1704

The Order of Battle for Blenheim attracted much contemporary comment and has been the subject of a great deal of modern research. Many of the contemporary accounts quoted in the campaign and battle narrative chapters of this book contain estimates of the number of squadrons and battalions that took part in the battle, although few agree. Modern scholars have concluded that the armies were composed as follows:

	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Infantry</i>	<i>Artillery</i>
Confederates	178 squadrons	66 battalions	66 guns
Franco-Bavarians	143 squadrons	70 battalions	90 guns

There remains debate as to which units were present on the day, even about the well-documented British contingent. The information on the Confederate Armies reproduced below is based upon that published by David Mortier as part of 'A most Exact and Accurate PLAN of the several Attacks at the famous BATTLE OF BLEINHEIM'. Less information has survived on the Franco-Bavarian Armies. Tallard's infantry is best documented due to the fact that a large proportion of it was captured at the battle and was detailed by the victorious Confederates. Marsin's army is difficult to reconstruct due to the fact that few French writers chose to dwell on the details of their catastrophic defeat. The list below is based on excellent research by John Koontz ('Tallard's Army at Blindheim' in *Gorget and Sash* Volume I Number 4 and Volume II Number 1 – undated but c.1982) and Andrew Cormack ('Marlborough's Trophies' in *Military Illustrated* No 17 February/March and 18 April/May 1989).

The national origin of a unit is given in parentheses and any alternative name or spelling in brackets.

CONFEDERATE ARMIES

First Line

Stirum Dragoons – 6 squadrons (Austrian?)
Wirtemberg Dragoons – 3 squadrons
Hannover – 6 squadrons
Zenth – 6 squadrons
Fugger – 3 squadrons (Austrian)
Ottingen – 2 squadrons

Leib Regt – 3 battalions (Prussian)
Crassau – 2 battalions
Prince Philipe – 3 battalions
Wartensleben – 3 battalions
Bayreuth – 3 battalions (Prussian)

Danish Guards – 1 battalion (Danish)
Prince Charles – 1 battalion (Danish)
Scholtiens – 1 battalion (Danish)
Prince George – 311 battalion (Danish)

Anhalt – 2 battalions (Prussian)
Margaraff Ludwig – 2 battalions (Prussian)
Crown Prince – 2 battalions (Prussian)

Goor – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Sturler – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Hisel [Hiret] – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Rechteren – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Heidenbrech [Reidenbreg] – 1 battalion (Dutch)

Erb Prince of Prussia – 1 battalion (Dutch?)
Varenne [Zarenne] – 1 battalion (Dutch?)
Swerin [Wulver] – 1 battalion (Dutch?)
Beinheim – 1 battalion (Dutch?)

Garde Hesse – 1 battalion (Hessian)
Prince Guillaume – 1 battalion (Hessian)
Erb Prince de Hesse – 1 battalion (Hessian)
Grenad de Hesse 1 battalion (Hessian)

Luc – 1 battalion (Hannover)
Dubrent [Dubzevil] – 1 battalion (Hannover)
D'Herbeville – 1 battalion (Hannover)
Garde Hannover – 1 battalion (Hannover)

How – 1 battalion (British)
Ingolsby – 1 battalion (British)
Marleborough – 1 battalion (British)
Row – 1 battalion (British)
North – 1 battalion (British)

Darbey – 1 battalion (British)
Fergusson – 1 battalion (British)
Hamilton – 1 battalion (British)
Orkney – 1 battalion (British)
English Guards – 1 battalion (British)

Wirtemberg Oels Dragoons – 3 squadrons (Danish)
Leib Regiment – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Rantzau Brigade – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Schmettau 2 squadrons (Danish)
Rantzau Grosse?? Major – 2 squadrons (Danish)

Leib Regiment [Anoure] – 2 squadrons (Hannover)
Noyelles – 2 squadrons (Hannover)
Voight – 2 squadrons (Hannover)

Leib Regt de Hesse – 2 squadrons
Spiegel – 2 Squadrons
Anspach Dragoons – 4 squadrons
Goeden – 2 squadrons
Baldwin – 1 squadron
Erbach – 2 squadrons
Schuilembourgh – 3 squadrons
Wood – 2 squadrons (British)
Windham – 2 squadrons (British)
Schombergh – 2 squadrons (British)
Cadogan – 1 squadron (British)
Lumley – 3 squadrons (British)

Erb Prince de Hesse Dragoons – 4 squadrons
Royal Irish [Ross] – 2 squadrons (British)
Royal Scotch [Hay] – 1 squadron (British)

Second Line

Ecchenbach [Sechenbagh] – 5 squadrons
Gardes de Wirtemberg – 2 squadrons
Bibra – 4 Squadrons
Darmstatt – 6 squadrons
Ceusay [Ceusani] – 6 squadrons
Erb Prince Wirtemberg – 3 squadrons
Nagel – 2 squadrons
Venninger [Oennigee] – 2 squadrons
Hachenberg – 1 squadron
Sonsfelt – 3 squadrons (Prussian?)
Loitange – 3 squadrons (Prussian?)

Wirtemb [Oels] – 1 battalion (Danish)
Zellant [Zealand] – 1 battalion (Danish)
Funne [Finnen] – 1 battalion (Danish)
Camiz – 2 battalions (Prussian?)
Lottum [Lotton] – 1 battalion (Prussian?)
Marg Phillipie – 2 battalions (Prussian?)

St Paul [Pol] – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Berensdorff – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Teckelbourghb – 1 battalion (Dutch)
Rantzau – 2 battalions (Dutch/Danish)

Grenad de Wirtemberg – 2 battalions (Wirtemberg?)
Herman – 1 battalion (Luneburg?)
Sterfelt [Stennfeld] – 1 battalion (Zell?)
Seckendorff – 1 battalion (Swiss?)

Wartenleben – 1 battalion (Hessian)
Seuckrad [Seuckraet] – 1 battalion (Hessian)
Scheping – 1 battalion (Hessian)

Tossin [Tausin] – 1 battalion (Hanover)
Gauwin [Gauoain] – 1 battalion (Hanover)
Hulsen – 1 battalion (Hanover)
Gardes – 1 battalion (Hanover)

Churchill – 1 battalion (British)
Meridith – 1 battalion (British)
Webb – 1 battalion (British)
Orkney – 1 battalion (British)

Wirtemberg Ols Dragoons – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Utterwick – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Dewitz – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Alefeldt [Ahlefeldt] – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Brockdorff – 2 squadrons (Danish)
Aurox [Averock] Dragoons – 4 squadrons (Dutch?)
Erbach [Erbagh] Hesse – 2 squadrons
Hardenberg Dragoons – 3 squadrons (Dutch/Hanover)

Bassier [Barrier] – 2 squadrons
 Saxen Heilbourg [Saxheilbourg] – 2 squadrons
 Grevendorff – 3 squadrons
 Bottmer Dragoons – 4 squadrons (Hanover)
 Villiers Dragoons – 4 squadrons (Hanover)
 Bulow Dragoons – 4 squadrons (Hanover)

Austsas – 5 squadrons
 Bareuth – 5 squadrons
 Morhein – 2 squadrons
 Leutsch – 2 squadrons
 Osten – 2 squadrons

	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Infantry</i>
First Line	90 squadrons	38 battalions
Second Line	75 squadrons	29 battalions
Reserve	16 squadrons	
Total	181 squadrons	67 battalions

Anglo-Dutch: 44 guns



FRANCO-BAVARIANS

Army of Marshal Tallard

Regiments of Dragoons:

Mestre de Camp General	3 squadrons
La Reine	3 squadrons
Rohan	3 squadrons
Vasse	3 squadrons

Brigade Monroux	2 battalions
Brigades Navarre, Languedoc	10 battalions
Brigades Greder, Artois	8 battalions
Brigades Zurlauben, Royal	7 battalions
Gendarmerie	8 squadrons
Brigade Broglie	5 squadrons
Brigade Grignan	8 squadrons
Brigade La Valliere	7 squadrons
Brigade Silly	11 squadrons
Brigade Robecq	3 battalions
Brigade Auxerrois	3 battalions
Brigade Nice	3 battalions
Brigade La Beaume	4 battalions
Brigade Streiff	5 battalions

Army of Marshall Marsin and the Elector of Bavaria

Brigade Massenbach	7 squadrons
Brigade Prince Charles	4 squadrons
Brigade d'Anlezy	9 squadrons
Brigade Champagne	4 battalions
Brigade Bourbonnais	4 battalions
Brigade Poitou	3 battalions
Brigade Coetgen	3 battalions
Brigade La Reine	4 battalions
Brigade Montmain	6 squadrons
Brigade Vinas	6 squadrons
Brigade Conflans	4 squadrons
Elector's Cavalry and Guards	15 squadrons
Brigade Barentin	7 squadrons
Brigade L'Isle du Vigier	6 squadrons
Brigade Isenghien	3 battalions

Regiments of Dragoons

Listenois	3 squadrons
Lavrilliere	3 squadrons
Fontbeauzard	3 squadrons
Brigade Toulouse	3 battalions
Brigade Vermandois	4 battalions
Brigade Daupin	3 battalions
Brigade Conde	2 battalions
Brigade Bourbon	3 battalions
Bavarian Infantry	8 battalions

	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Infantry</i>
Tallard's Army	51 squadrons	45 battalions
Elector and Marsin's Army	73 squadrons	44 battalions

Total **124 squadrons** **89 battalions**

LEFT Churchill served in an English regiment sent to fight with the French and remained under the command of Marshal Turenne when the regiment returned home. He learned his trade as a soldier at the feet of legendary French generals, but exceeded their accomplishments against the next generation of French commanders.

OPPOSING PLANS

THE FRANCO-BAVARIAN PLANS

Louis XIV was able to look forward to the campaigning season of 1704 with every expectation that it would see the collapse of first Austria and then of the Grand Alliance. Such was the military strength of his kingdom that Louis aimed to campaign simultaneously in nine theatres of war. In northern Italy three French armies would operate in Piedmont, Savoy and Lombardy. A force would act against Huguenot rebels, known as the *Camisards*, in the Cévennes region of France. Armies would campaign against the Dutch in the Low Countries and in Spain, but the main campaigning area would be Bavaria and the Rhine. A small force under the Comte de Coigny would watch the Alsace region while Tallard on the upper Rhine supported the Elector of Bavaria and Marshal Villars by establishing lines of communication through the Black Forest mountains.

French plans for 1704 were disrupted when personal animosity between the Elector and Villars resulted in the latter's replacement by Marshal Marsin. The first part of the French plan was put into effect when in May 1704 Marshal Tallard advanced his army of 36,000 men through the Black Forest to convoy reinforcements to Marsin and the Elector who were camped around Ulm with a similar number of men. Passage through the Black Forest was limited to a few mountain passes guarded by Imperial fortresses and defended by fortifications constructed by 10,000 conscripted peasants.

To meet the challenge, Tallard employed many of the deception techniques for which Marlborough is so justly famous. The Comte de Coigny marched south to invest the town of Freiburg, which guarded Tallard's chosen route, and barges were gathered on the Rhine to allow his rapid return to Alsace should the enemy attack there. Marlborough was to make similar emergency preparations to return his army to the Low Countries during his march to the Danube. Tallard next launched a diversionary force towards Lake Constance on the Swiss frontier, while ordering concentrations of artillery opposite the Lines of Stollhofen and bread to be baked sufficient for a large army far to the north at Landau.

Thoroughly confused, the Austrian Imperialists divided their forces to meet all these threats. At night and along different routes Tallard's army quietly marched out of its billets and slipped passed the guns of Freiburg. The garrison only realised what was happening as the last of Tallard's wagons trundled off into the mountains and the formidable fortress was passed without loss. Tallard's army had still to face the difficulties of



Sarah Jennings captivated Churchill and their marriage saw the end of his carousing and womanising. Sarah's close personal friendship with Princess Anne, the future queen, was to play a major part in Churchill's advancement.

hauling their wagons and guns over the mountain roads, but their march was not impeded by enemy resistance and on 18 May 1704, only a day late, Tallard met with Marsin at Villingen and handed over command of 8,000 recruits and 1,400 experienced soldiers along with 2,400 cavalry and 1,500,000 *Louis* in gold. Tallard then completed his triumph by returning unmolested to his post on the Rhine while Marsin and the Elector returned to Bavaria to plan their advance on Vienna. They considered that this would be no great task as they expected to brush aside the Austrian defenders who would be distracted by a force of 100,000 men under Marshal Vendôme threatening to advance over the Brenner Pass from northern Italy once the floods caused by melting Alpine snows subsided. However, as Tallard descended from the mountain passes on his way back to the Rhine, news reached him that a Confederate army was at Coblenz preparing to undertake a campaign by advancing into the heart of France along the valley of the River Moselle.

THE CONFEDERATE PLANS

To face the French and Bavarians, the Austrians mustered some 36,000 men under the Margrave of Baden to defend the Lines of Stollhofen and observe Tallard's army, while 10,000 men under Count Styrum kept a weak guard against any advance by the Elector and Marsin from Ulm.

Marlborough appears to have first considered plans to march to the aid of the Austrians in the autumn of 1703; by early 1704 he was engaged

in serious discussions with the Austrian minister Count Wratislaw. Marlborough intended one of the most difficult of strategic manoeuvres: leaving a Dutch force to defend their homeland, Marlborough would march in parallel with the River Rhine across the front of the French army, exposing his flank to attack. To guard against this Marlborough intended to keep his enemies off balance by successively threatening to turn and advance into France along one of the valleys formed by the great rivers that flow into the Rhine. As he marched Marlborough would be joined by detachments from the German states. The point would come where his columns would have to leave the Rhine to march directly for their rendezvous with the Austrians and their true destination would become known, but it was hoped that by then the French would have abandoned their pursuit.

Marlborough's march was not unparalleled for the time, but he would need to arrive on the Danube with his troops in good condition and ready to fight immediately and that would take a degree of pre-planning and coordination rarely seen then or since.

Before setting out to join his own marching army, Marlborough visited the Dutch army of General Overkirk, which he described in a letter to

Marlborough was 54 years old at the time of the battle of Blenheim, an advanced age to fight his first major battle.



Godolphin: 'I came to this place yesterday and have this day reviewed the Army which as yet are only 44 battalions and 80 squadrons, but in four or five days time they will be 51 battalions and 92 squadrons, which will be stronger than the French, who have already sent a detachment to the Moselle; and when they shall be sure that the English are marching to Coblenz, which they will know by Friday, which is the day I intend to leave this Army, they will then most certainly send another detachment, which will give these troops here an opportunity of acting offensively.'

The letter makes Marlborough's strategy clear. His march to the east would draw French forces after him, leaving the Dutch with local superiority of numbers on their own frontiers. The French in pursuit of Marlborough would head to defend the line of the River Moselle and by the time they realised that he was marching into Germany they would be far behind his army.

THE CAMPAIGN



Prince Eugene was the victor of battles against the Turks and the French and was by any comparison Marlborough's senior as a general. Nevertheless, Eugene was prepared to fight under Marlborough's direction providing the Confederates with a major advantage over the quarrelling and fractious French.

On 19 April 1704, Marlborough left England in the yacht *Peregrine*, sailing from the port of Harwich in company with his brother General Charles Churchill, his chief of staff Colonel Cadogan, Lieutenant-General Lumley, the Earl of Orkney, and Count Wratislaw the Austrian minister. The army began to assemble on 4 May as the regiments left their winter quarters to join the column of march. On 14 May the army crossed the River Meuse near Ruremond on pontoon bridges laid the previous day and on 17 May were joined by Marlborough.

Marlborough's march to the Danube

On 19 May Marlborough left Bedburg in the Spanish Netherlands at the head of 14 battalions of infantry and 39 cavalry squadrons supported by 1,700 supply wagons pulled by 5,000 draught horses. Careless talk had revealed to the French that Marlborough intended to campaign along the Moselle and Marshal Villeroi, with 21,000 men in 38 battalions and 60 squadrons, hurried to block his route into France.

The army marched by easy stages, being roused at four o'clock in the morning, to assemble in rank and file a quarter of an hour later. The march commenced at five o'clock. Sergeant Millner recalled: 'by beginning every Day's March by Break of Day, or Sun-rising, so that every Day, before it was extreme hot or noon, we were fully encamp'd in our new camp; so that the remaining Part of the Day's Rest was nigh as good as a Day's Halt.'

By 29 May Marlborough's columns had reached Coblenz, where his forces crossed to the right bank of the Rhine and the following day added 5,000 Hanoverians and Prussians to his strength. The attention of the French now turned to the fortress of Philippsburg where pontoon bridges were being constructed over the Rhine. By marching south to these bridges Marlborough threatened to take his army back across the Rhine to launch a campaign in Alsace. Messengers hurried back and forth between the French commanders on the frontiers and King Louis who remained at his palace near Paris. Inevitably by the time an exchange of views on what Marlborough intended had been thoroughly digested, and plans to oppose him formed, the growing Confederate army had moved on to a new startling line of march with an unknown objective and the process had to begin afresh. On 3 June Marlborough crossed the River Main and paused for three days' rest. The French now believed that their fortress of Landau, only 30 miles away, might be his intended target. On 7 June the march resumed with the crossing of the River Neckar taking the small army into Germany and revealing Marlborough's true intentions to the French. Captain Robert Parker related the manner in which the march was conducted: 'We frequently marched three, sometimes four days successively, and halted a day. We generally began our march about three

in the morning, proceeded about four leagues, or four and a half each day and reached our ground about nine. As we marched through the countries of our Allies, commissaries were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for man and horse; these were brought to the ground before we arrived, and the soldiers had nothing to do, but to pitch their tents, boil their kettles, and lie down to rest.'

On 10 June Marlborough and Prince Eugene met for the first time and each recognised a kindred spirit in the other. Marlborough met up with the Austrian army of the Margrave of Baden at Launsheim on 22 June, having marched his army 250 miles in five weeks with only 1,200 of his men fallen sick. Marlborough now commanded some 80,000 men while Prince Eugene, with a further 28,000, guarded the Lines of Stollhofen against an advance by the French armies of Villeroi and Tallard north around the difficult terrain of the Black Forest that separated France and Germany.

Louis XIV had finally resolved on a strategy. Marshal Villeroi with 40 battalions and 68 to 70 squadrons would occupy Eugene's attention while on 1 July Marshal Tallard would march his army of 40 battalions and 50 squadrons back over the mountainous Black Forest to join with Marshal Marsin and the Elector of Bavaria. This would be a difficult march through hostile country, not helped by an outbreak of disease that was to kill many of the horses of Tallard's army.

THE STORMING OF THE SCHELLENBERG

In response to news of the arrival of Marlborough's army, the Elector and Marshal Marsin established themselves in a fortified camp at Dillingen. A smaller force held a fortified hill known as the Schellenberg defending the important crossing over the River Danube at Donauwörth. On 2 July Marlborough and Baden arrived unexpectedly before the Schellenberg and were concerned to see an encampment suitable for a large army being laid out on the south bank of the Danube while efforts to strengthen the fortifications on the hill were clearly under way. The Confederate army was tired after its long march and delaying the attack until the following day would give them time to rest, but Marlborough decided that attacking the completed fortifications would result in higher casualties and an immediate advance was ordered.

The Bavarian commander, Comte d'Arco, was relieved to see the Confederate quartermasters marking out the lines for a formal encampment and he set off for a dinner with his officers, content that the fortifications his men were constructing would be ready before an attack could be launched the next day. However, d'Arco was soon called away from his table as the Confederate army marched past the marker flags of the carefully arranged camp, now exposed as an elaborate bluff, and began a determined assault on his Franco-Bavarian garrison of 10,000 infantry and 3,500 dragoons. Confusion reigned on the Schellenberg as the defenders had been so confident that they would not be attacked that day that ten Bavarian battalions had marched from their tents on the south bank of the Danube without their muskets. Now they hurried back across the pontoon bridges to collect their weapons.

At six o'clock in the evening, with two hours of daylight remaining, an assault force of 6,000, made up of 130 men picked from each battalion,



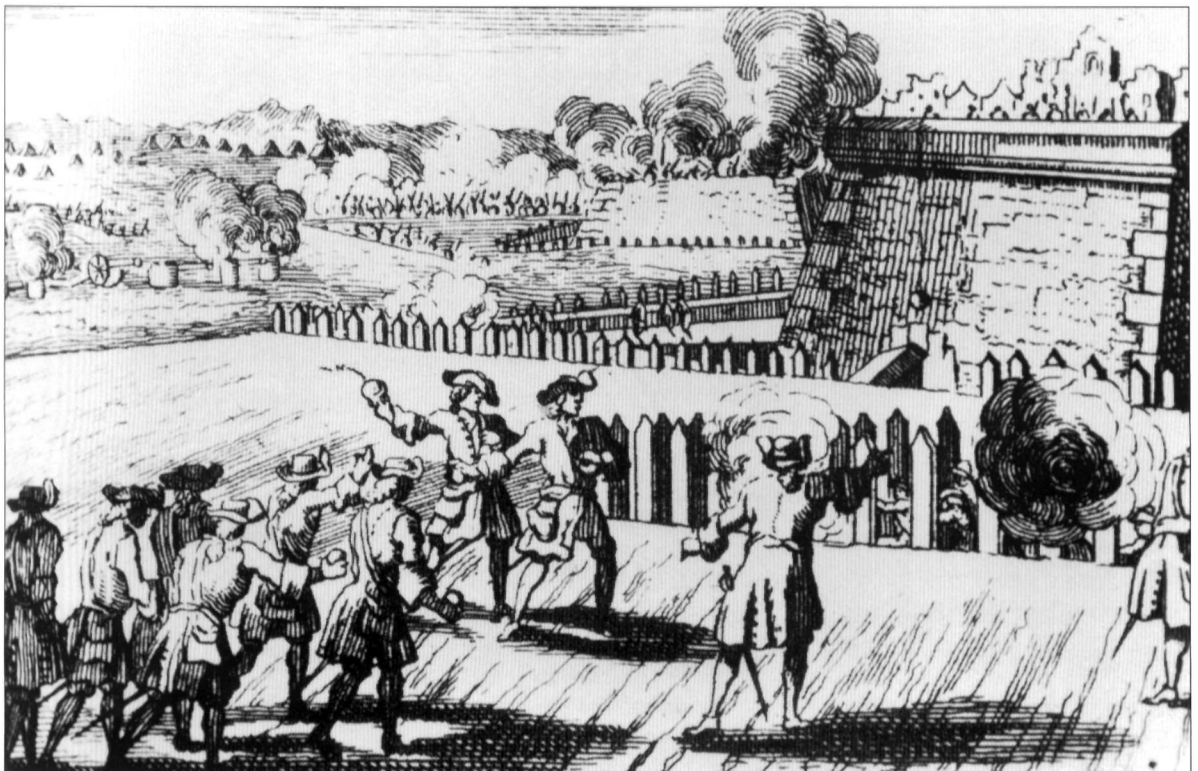
This medal of the Margrave of Baden celebrates his part in the storming of the Schellenberg. The tribute was part of a diplomatic effort to soothe his pride after his exclusion from the battle at Blenheim.

with the support of 37 squadrons of cavalry and three battalions of Imperial Grenadiers, hurled themselves against the defences. Preceded by a Forlorn Hope of 50 men drawn from the Foot Guards under the command of Lord Mordaunt, the attackers drew up in four lines. In the first were the Foot Guards, two battalions of Lord Orkney's Regiment, and the single battalions of Ingoldsby's and Meredith's Regiments. Next came eight battalions under Major-Generals Withers and Benheim, followed by eight more under Lieutenant-General Horn. The fourth line consisted of the cavalry.

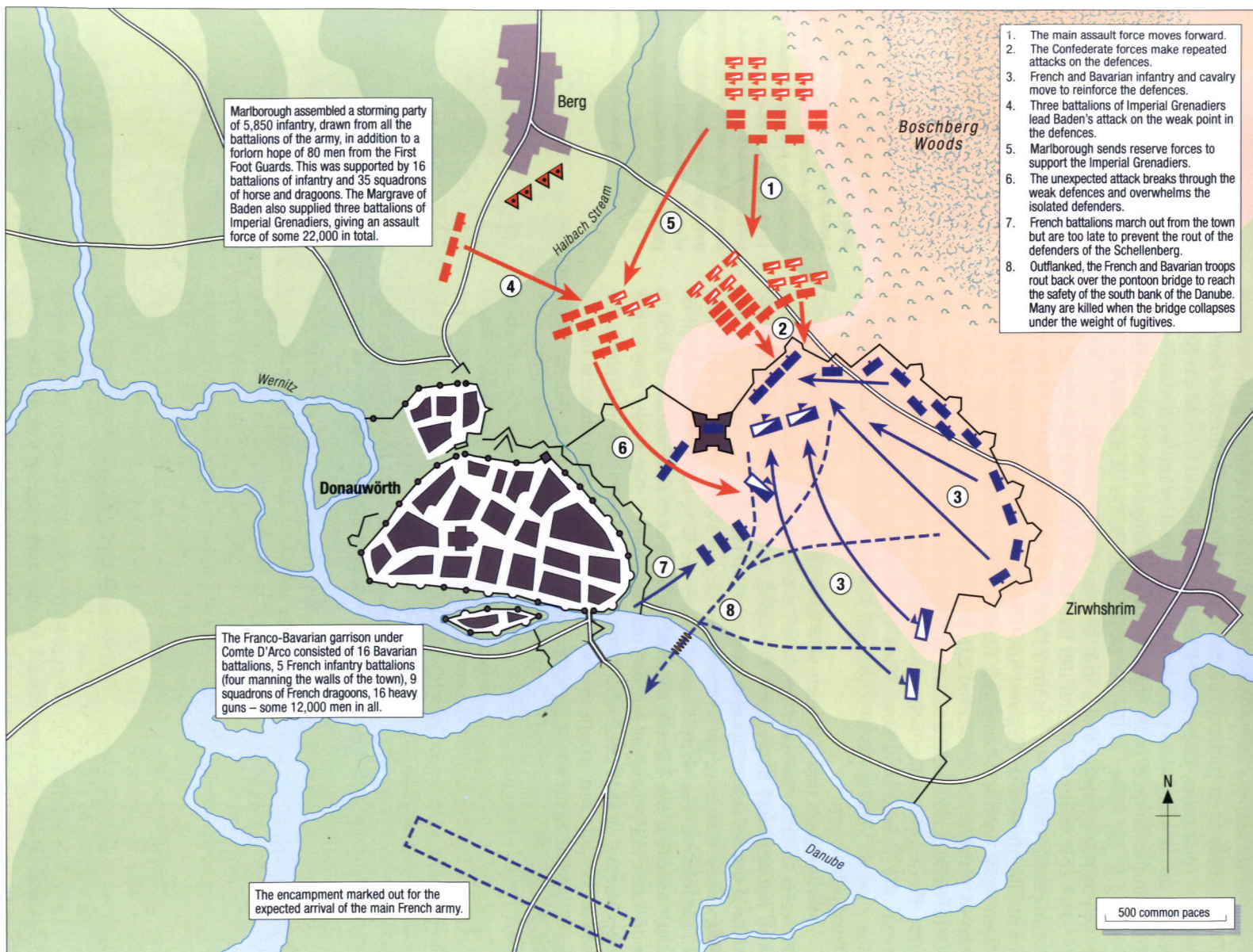
The attackers moved forward against the part of the defences held by the Bavarian Electoral Guards and the Grenadiers Rouges Regiment. The first volley of the defenders was delivered at a range of 80 yards and the Dutch General Goor, leading the attack, fell amongst the heaps of casualties. The attackers marched on but were driven back by the defending fire. Bavarian Guards followed the retiring English troops but were driven back in their turn by the steady fire of the English Guards. A sunken road some 50 yards from the fortifications offered a little cover and here the attackers re-formed before renewing their assault, but with no greater success.

More and more defenders were drawn to meet the assault. A Confederate officer was sent to test the defences that linked the old Fort Augustus with the town and to his great relief he found them to be unoccupied. The Imperial Grenadiers were called forward and with the support of eight other battalions they swept over the unmanned ditches and barricades and turned onto the unguarded flank of the defenders, who were preoccupied with yet another assault by Marlborough's main

Hand grenades were not commonly used in open battle, but were employed by both attackers and defenders during the fighting at the Schellenberg.



MARLBOROUGH'S MARCH TO THE DANUBE



force. The Régiment de Nettancourt found itself alone in the path of the Confederate flanking attack and, along with French dragoons who came to its aid, was swept away. Four battalions defending the town of Donauwörth fired ineffectually from the walls but declined to leave the safety of their posts. The gallant Electoral Guards and Grenadiers Rouges found fire coming from their flanks and soon they too were running for the Danube. In their panic the defenders swamped the pontoon bridges leading to the safety of the far bank. Some 9,000 of the garrison were killed or made captive along with 16 guns and 13 colours.

The cost to the Confederates had been high, as 1,500 of the 6,000-strong assault force had lost their lives. This butcher's bill proved a shock to public opinion in England and Holland but the Bavarian army had been dealt a critical blow and Marsin and the Elector had no choice but to withdraw to a fortified camp at Augsburg to await Tallard. The Confederates now held a secure crossing point over the Danube, a large amount of supplies had been captured and the initiative had been seized from the Franco-Bavarians. With Donauwörth in Confederate hands the road to Vienna was blocked and the towns and rich countryside of Bavaria lay open.

Marlbrough had not been able to bring a siege train with him from Flanders and the Austrians now failed to fulfil their promise to supply him with the necessary heavy guns. The small, fortified town of Rain was able to hold out for seven days and only surrendered on very favourable terms, its garrison marching out to rejoin the Elector's army. Marlborough wrote to Godolphin: 'For want of cannon and the King of France doing all he can to succour the Elector, we shall be obliged to take measures such as our wants will permit us; but you may be assured that if they give us any opportunity, we shall be glad to come to a battle; for that would decide the whole; because our troops are very good. But our misfortune is that we want everything for attacking towns, otherwise this would have been dated from Munich.'

Unable to capture fortified towns and desperate to force a decisive battle, there now began a systematic destruction of Bavarian villages aimed at forcing the Elector to march out of his fortified camp. Some 400 villages were burnt, much to Marlborough's regret. In response the Elector dispersed a large part of his army to protect his own estates leaving only five battalions and 23 squadrons to fight alongside Marsin's army. Tallard reached Augsburg on 5 August and the balance of forces began to swing against Marlborough.

Marlborough's army remained in Bavaria south of the River Danube. Prince Eugene was stationed to the north of the river to guard the Confederate supply lines. While his present position in Bavaria was secure, Marlborough could not remain in the region for the winter. The campaigning season of 1705 would see renewed French pressure on the Dutch frontier and Marlborough and his army would have to return to the Spanish Netherlands at the end of 1704. If he had not succeeded in destroying the Franco-Bavarian Army before he was forced to withdraw, Marlborough would have achieved nothing and Vienna would merely fall to the French in 1705 rather than 1704.

On 8 July Marlborough's forces were at Sandizell, some 20 miles from Augsburg. Baden was positioned nearby and Eugene was on the north bank of the Danube at Höchstädt. Baden expressed a wish to undertake



The grenadier was now an elite infantryman rather than simply a specialist soldier armed with hand grenades. A grenadier cap, like this example made for the Honourable Artillery Company in 1710, made its wearer appear taller and more imposing to an enemy, while its rich decoration gave him a sense of pride in his status. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

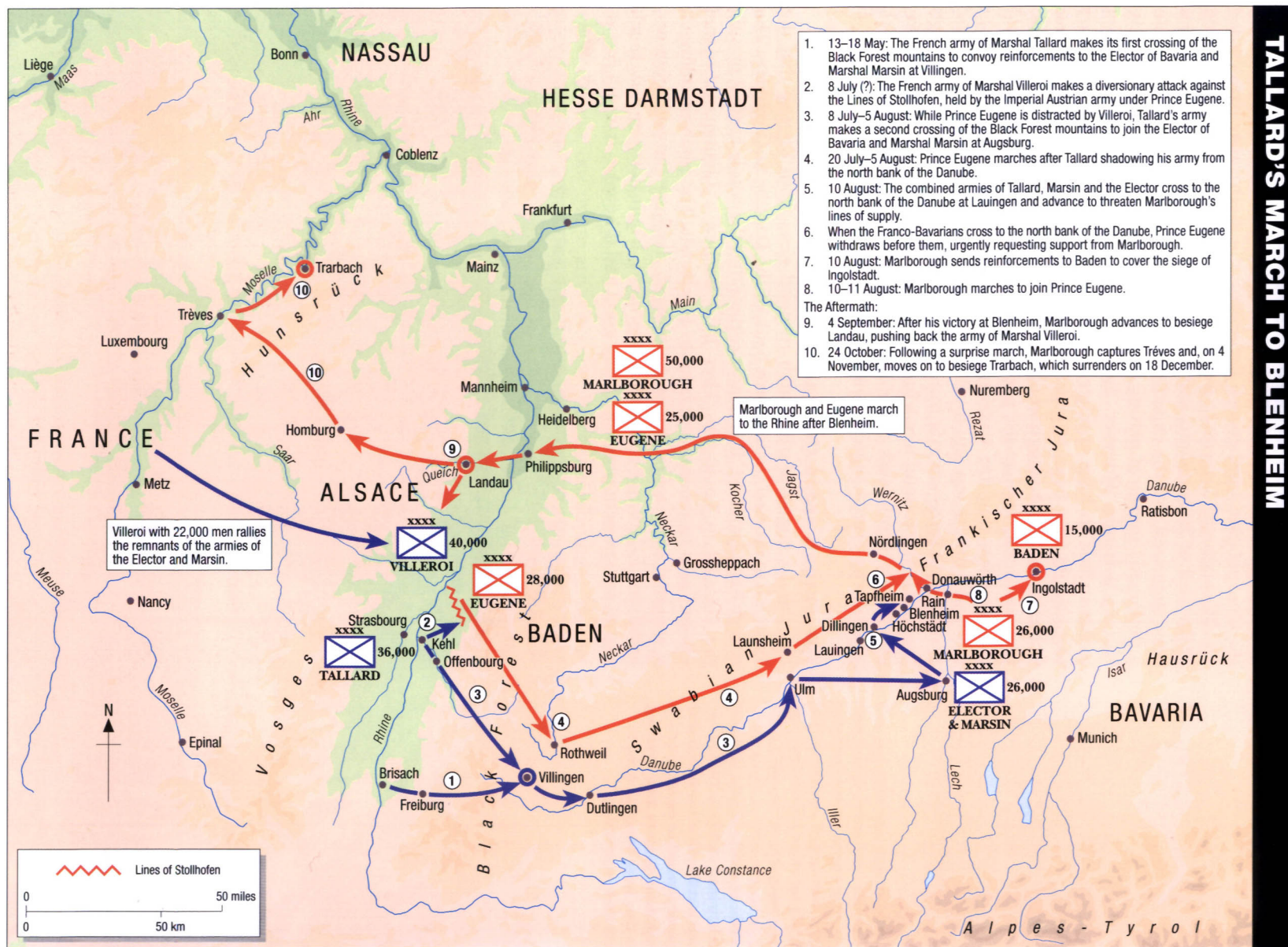
the siege of the town of Ingolstadt that would provide an alternative crossing of the Danube if Donauwörth should be lost. Doubts about the close relationship between Baden and the Elector may have caused Marlborough and Eugene to welcome the departure of the Prince even at the cost of 20 battalions and 15 squadrons, some 15,000 men. It has been suggested that the expedition to Ingolstadt was nothing more than a diplomatic means of getting Baden out of the way while the decisive battle was fought. However, the siege was Baden's idea and it was not without value to have another crossing point of the Danube. Baden's force would have been of great value on the day of battle and it seems unlikely that Marlborough would have made such a sacrifice to deal with one unwanted commander, particularly as Count Wratislaw was on hand to make clear that the Austrian Emperor wished the Prince to defer to the Duke if there was any conflict of opinion. It was necessary to ensure that Baden's force was safe from attack by the French and Marlborough thought it wise to send him a further 10 squadrons when he took his own army to the north bank of the Danube, as he would be unable to block any surprise French advance on Ingolstadt from the south.

The French cross the Danube

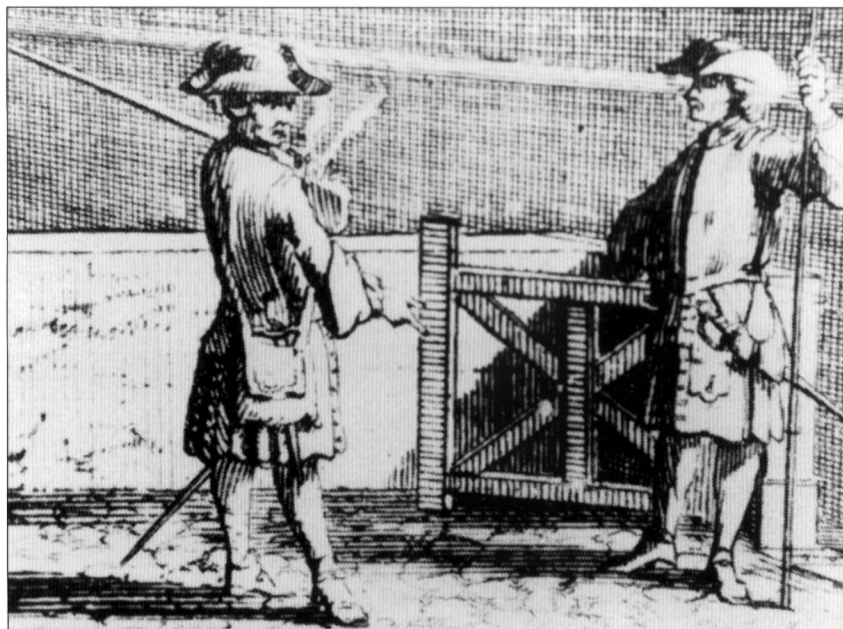
Late on 10 August Marlborough received news from Eugene that the French had crossed to the north bank of the Danube at Lauingen: 'The enemy have marched. It is almost certain that the whole army is passing the Danube at Lauingen. They have pushed a Lieutenant-Colonel whom I sent to reconnoitre back to Höchstädt. The plain of Dillingen is crowded with troops. I have held on all day here but with eighteen battalions I dare not risk staying the night. I quit however with much regret, [my present position] being good and if he takes it, it will cost us

In France militia service was determined by ballot. Those who lost the draw were regarded as condemned to death and their families went into mourning as they were marched away to join their regiments.





The matchlock musketeer and armoured pikeman survived into the early years of the 18th century, but their days were numbered and they were soon replaced by infantry armed with flintlock musket and bayonet.



The replacement of bandoliers of individual boxes, each containing one powder charge, with paper cartridges improved rates of fire. The cartridge box became the norm in all armies. Grenadiers often carried a hatchet slung under their cartridge pouch that they used to hack a breach through fortifications such as abatis constructed of felled trees.

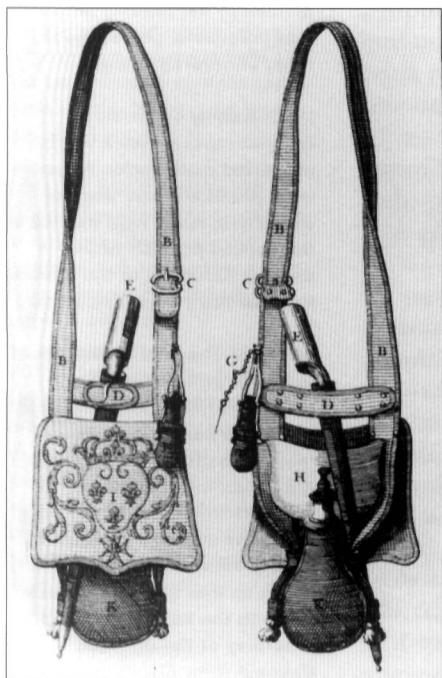
much to get it back ... It is above all important not to be shut in between these mountains and the Danube.'

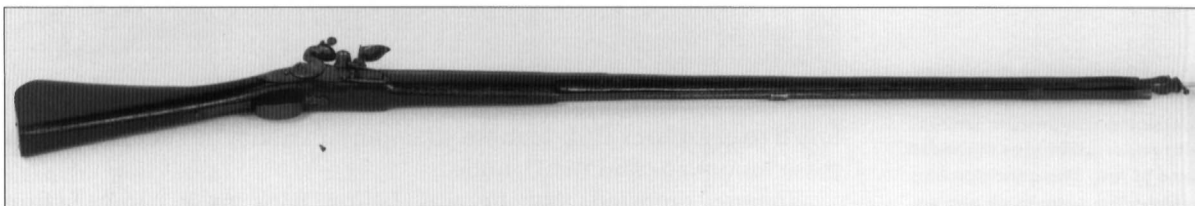
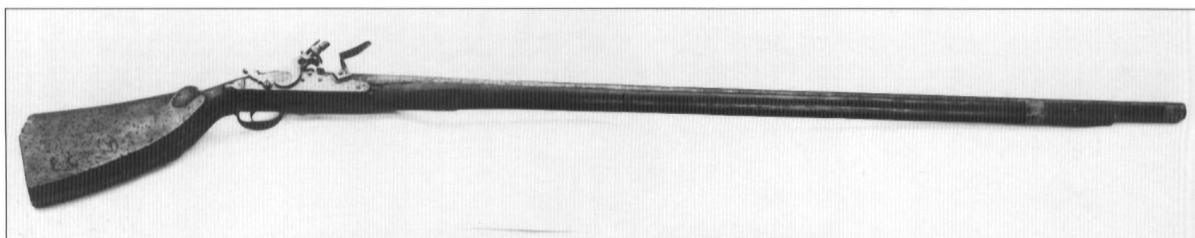
Eugene reported that he was falling back to a camp before Donauwörth. The situation was serious as Marlborough's vital supply lines, running back to Germany through Nördlingen, would soon be threatened by the French. Eugene was also making clear that the plain of Höchstädt was the last open ground where a major battle could be fought before the mountains closed in on the banks of the Danube. However,

Marlborough and Eugene were well placed being both only seven miles from Donauwörth. The armies united on 11 August at Eugene's camp at Munster where its front was covered by the Kessel stream.

Marshals Tallard, Marsin and the Elector were confident that the Confederates would not stand before their united armies, which contained some of the most famous and feared regiments of the French army. On 5 August Tallard had written to Louis XIV to report that they were awaiting the concentration of some Bavarian units drawn back from the Elector's estates, but he reassured his monarch that the Confederates would not be allowed to escape from Bavaria without serious losses being inflicted on them.

Thus when the Franco-Bavarians advanced to the north bank of the Danube they considered themselves to be facing an outmanoeuvred, demoralised and, to all intents, defeated Confederate army. The fortified camp at Dillingen had been levelled so a council of war was held to decide how to proceed. The Elector favoured an immediate advance along the north bank of the Danube, but he was countered by Tallard, who pointed out that the risks would be borne by the King of France as few of the Elector's own troops were present. The Elector fell silent, but Marshal Marsin favoured action and it





was clear than many critical letters from officers of the French army would soon reach the King if no action were taken.

As a compromise, on 12 August the Franco-Bavarian armies drew up their encampment on the plain of Höchstädt along the defensive line of the Nebel stream that flowed some four miles from wooded hills down to join the marshy Danube. With the River Danube and the wooded hills protecting their flanks and the marshy banks of the Nebel stream providing an obstacle to their front the French felt confident in their chosen position. The villages of Blenheim by the Danube, Oberglau and Lutzingen near the hills offered defensible strongpoints and water mills and farms provided outposts to warn of enemy movements. The Elector requested that no field fortifications be constructed that would further damage the standing crops and his French companions saw no reason to disoblige him.

It was observed that some six miles away, in the direction of Donauwörth, a tented encampment could be seen and the Marquis de Sully was dispatched with 40 squadrons to investigate the ground ahead. He encountered a group of pioneers working to level the banks of a watercourse and a sharp encounter ensued with their escort. A number of prisoners or deserters were taken who assured the French that Baden was present in the camp before them and that the following day the Confederates intended to withdraw to Nördlingen to protect their lines of supply. Dr Hare described the events leading up to the battle. Marlborough had joined Prince Eugene at his quarters when: 'Just as they were sitting down to dinner, intelligence was brought that the enemy's squadrons had attempted to fall upon our workmen, but had been repulsed by the guard which covered them; whereupon the

TOP The matchlock musket was fired by the application of a length of burning match to the priming pan. Handling the burning cord was difficult when performing close order drill and ignition of the priming charge was unreliable, preventing the firing of ordered volleys.

MIDDLE Many of the early flintlock muskets were merely converted matchlocks. A number were produced with 'dogs' or safety catches to hold the lock at the cocked position while loading. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

BOTTOM The English flintlock of the 1704 pattern was the ancestor of what became known as 'brown bess'. This example features a plug bayonet, which fits inside the barrel and prevents the musket from being fired. The socket bayonet was fixed around the outside of the barrel so that the musket could fire with the bayonet in place. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)



ABOVE 'The exercise for all the infantry of France' was introduced in 1703 and illustrated standard postures to be followed during weapons drill.

TOP, CENTRE This line infantryman wears a uniform coat with wide cuffs worn over a waistcoat, a pattern copied by all European armies. the cartridge pouch is worn on a waist belt.

TOP, RIGHT This view shows the frog suspending sword and bayonet from the waist belt. The small flask worn on a cord holds priming powder for the pan of the musket.

BOTTOM, LEFT A soldier of a Guards regiment. The positioning of hands and feet was now precisely dictated as close order firing required all soldiers to move as one.

BOTTOM, RIGHT The rear view shows the decorative pigtail of the guardsman's hair and the decoration of his coat. As in all things Louis XIV had centralised and regulated the organisation, uniforms and equipment of his household troops and brought them under his undisputed sole command.



generals immediately ordered their horses, and taking some more squadrons with them, directed that all the rest of the cavalry should be ready when called for. The battalion of English Guards and Rowe's brigade of infantry were commanded to file off to the left of all, while Lord Cutts with twelve battalions more (taken out of the first line of the left wing) was ordered to march in two columns till he came to be on a line with the head of the village of Dapfheim, and there draw up. The Prince of Anhalt was ordered to march in the same manner with the Prussian infantry, close by a wood which was upon the right of the plain already possessed by our squadrons, where they were to halt till further orders. The rest of the army was commanded to be ready, and that in the mean time the soldiers should clean their arms.'

THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

As the troops of the advance guard marched off into the darkness, Marlborough received a blessing from his chaplain, Doctor Hare, who subsequently left a description of the army that set out to confront the French and their Bavarian allies: 'As Brigadier Baldwin and several other parties were not come in, the army now consisted of 66 battalions and 160 squadrons. The right wing, commanded by Prince Eugene, was composed of seven Danish and eleven Prussian battalions, which was all the foot his Highness had under his orders, and of 74 squadrons of cavalry, in part composed of the Imperial and Prussian troops and in part of those of Suabia, Franconia, Wirtemberg, and other troops of the Empire.

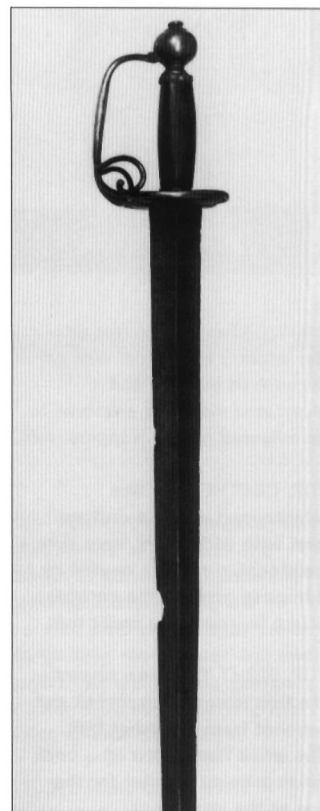
'In the left wing, under the Duke of Marlborough, there were 48 battalions, viz., 14 English, 14 Dutch, 7 Hessian, and 13 of Hanover, Lunenburg, Zell, and Swiss; and there were 86 squadrons, viz., 14 English, 22 Danes, 18 Dutch, 7 Hessian, and 25 of Lunenburg, Hanover, and Zell.'

The Confederate advance

By three o'clock on the morning of 13 August, 40 squadrons of Horse were riding forwards to form an advance guard for the eight columns that marched through the darkness, each following its own predetermined route to ensure that they did not impede one another. The columns tramped through standing crops as the main road had been strictly reserved for the horse teams that dragged forward cannon, ammunition wagons and the pontoon train captured from the Franco-Bavarian army at the Schellenberg.

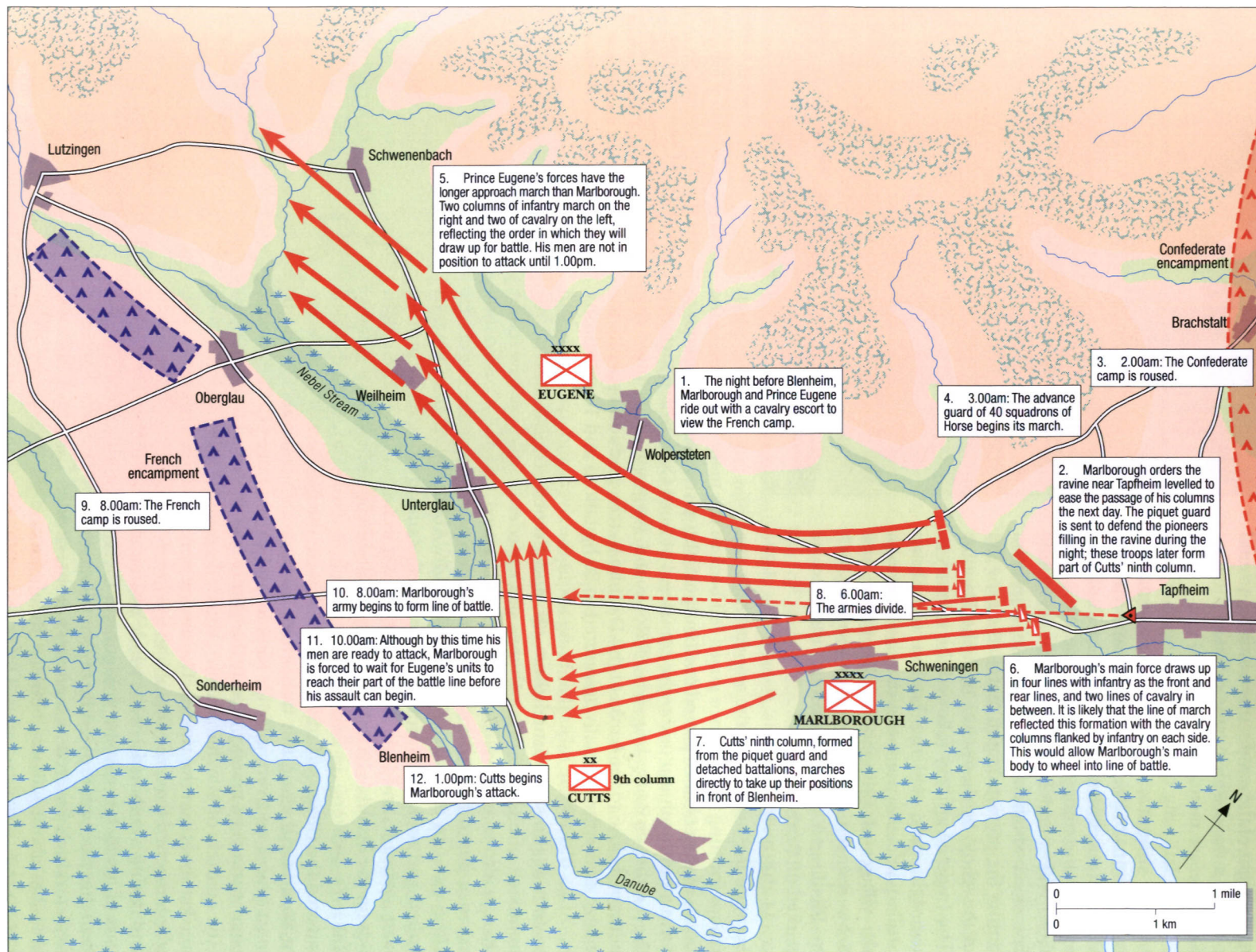
The route of advance of the Confederate army was not without its danger points. The marshy banks of the Kessel were quickly crossed in safety, but a dangerous bottleneck then presented itself. Between the villages of Tapfheim and Schweningen the River Reichen ran in a gully down towards the Danube, but instead of flowing into the great river the waters soaked into waterlogged ground that filled the area between the high ground of the two villages and the River Danube. On the north-western side of this narrow passage, the wooded ridges of the hills ran down towards Tapfheim, leaving level ground perhaps only 1,000 yards wide at its narrowest point.

Had the French moved a holding force across the Nebel stream towards Schweningen to contest the passage of the Confederate advance guard through this defile, the whole of Marlborough's and Eugene's armies would have become jammed into the narrow ribbon of level ground and the battle would have been over before it had begun. To make certain that the French did not forestall his march and seize these vital villages, Marlborough dispatched a strong body of troops to secure his line of advance. Dr Hare details the marching order adopted by the Confederate



Despite the introduction of the highly effective socket bayonet, soldiers still retained their swords and for another century at least the sword was recognised as the mark of a soldier whatever his uniform. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

MARLBOROUGH'S APPROACH MARCH



armies: 'The right wing in four columns, two of infantry and two of cavalry; the infantry being to the right of the cavalry upon a rising ground close by a wood which came down to the river Kessel before mentioned.

'The left wing of the army moved off also in four columns, having to their right the two columns of Prince Eugene's cavalry and to their left successively the villages of Dapfheim and of Schwenningen, and the Danube. Major-Gen. Wilkes and Brig. Rowe, with their nine battalions which had been left in Dapfheim during the previous night, marched on the left of the whole by themselves next the Danube. The Imperial artillery followed the infantry of the right wing, and the English and Dutch artillery and the pontoons marched through the villages of Erlinghoffen, Dapfheim, and Schwenningen. All the baggage was sent back to Riedlingen, near Donawert, there to be parked till further orders.'

As the eight columns cleared the defile between the marsh and the wooded hills, the troops forming the advance guard fell back to the main columns. As the heads of the columns passed each outpost, the garrisons marched out to form a ninth column under the command of Lord Cutts which included the English infantry brigades of Rowe and Ferguson. This force that advanced close to the banks of the Danube to take position opposite the village of Blenheim finally amounted to 20 battalions and 15 squadrons.

At six o'clock the mists that hung about the rivers and marshes began to thin as the sun burned them off, and French scouts observed the approach of eight massive columns of Confederate soldiers covered by 40 squadrons of cavalry. As the French gazed on, the Confederate advance guard formed into a ninth column and joined the march. Dr Hare gave an account of the battlefield: 'About seven our generals halted and took a full view of the enemy's camp from a rising ground over against it, and found the situation of it to be as follows: their right was on the Danube, having the village of Blenheim (where were Marshal Tallard's quarters) in front; and their left extended to a wood which covered the village of Lutzingen, where were the quarters of the Elector of Bavaria. All along this front there ran a rivulet twelve feet broad in most places and very difficult to pass, and in several parts the ground near it was very marshy. About the centre was the village of Oberglau (the quarters of Marshal Marsin), situated upon the side of a hill about musket-shot from the rivulet. The enemy were encamped upon this hill, which reached from the Danube to the wood, being of a very easy ascent and having a command of the whole plain in front all the way. From that part of it which is nearest to Blenheim there runs a little stream in two branches through the middle of that village into the Danube. The other rivulet, which covered the enemy's front, divided itself also into two branches about half-way between Blenheim and another village there was on our side over against Oberglau, continuing from thence to run



The standardisation of uniforms was also seen amongst the cavalry of all western Europe. Armour disappeared from use in the British and French armies for a period and the buff coat became a waistcoat of leather or cloth.

RIGHT Military music played an essential part on the march and in battle to convey orders and to regulate drill movements.



ABOVE The French maintained a number of elite formations in addition to the king's own household troops. The Gendarmes were the elite of the French cavalry and were expected to overcome any Confederate cavalry.



in two branches till within a few paces of where it falls into the Danube; the meadows between the two branches of the rivulet being soft and marshy. One of the branches had two mills upon it, at each of which there was an easy passage over.'

Marlbrough and Prince Eugene enjoyed their first view of their intended battlefield and took the opportunity to benefit from the advice of the Prussian Major-General Natzmer, who had fought over some of the same ground at the first battle of Höchstädt the previous year. His detailed knowledge of the ground and of the perspective of a commander fighting from 'the other side of the hill' must have been invaluable to Marlborough in anticipating how his enemy would react to each feint and attack. The prospect was daunting, for the Franco-Bavarians occupied a strong position and should the Confederates be defeated

Eugene would find his line of retreat blocked by wooded hills and Marlborough's wing would be forced into the bottleneck of the narrow defile between the hills and Schweningen, from which they had just emerged.

On the Confederate left flank the River Danube formed an impassable barrier. A few hundred yards from the riverbank sat the village of Blenheim (known locally as Blindheim). Some 300 houses, many with their own small walled gardens, clustered around a solidly built church and stone-walled graveyard. A small stream, called the Maulweyer, rose among the cornfields and ran though the centre* of the village before emptying into the Danube to the south of Blenheim. Four miles to the west the equally prosperous village of Lutzingen lay close to the arc of wooded hills that formed a barrier to the deployment of the armies on the Confederate right flank. Between these two lay Oberglau, the third village, which the French had turned into a barricaded strongpoint. Oberglau was somewhat closer to Lutzingen than Blenheim, leaving the latter in an isolated position separated from the support of its sister villages by a wide and level plain covered in standing corn.

The Nebel stream ran in front of the French position. Water from the surrounding hills and from the fields drained into the Nebel making its banks marshy along most of its length. A period of dry weather had partly dried out the banks of the stream from the Danube to where it ran close in front of Oberglau. On the far bank the French had

established fortified outposts in a number of water mills and in the small villages of Unterglau, Weilheim and Schwenenbach. As the French withdrew from these positions they fired the buildings and thick smoke rose over the battlefield.

To the north of Oberglau two smaller streams ran into the Nebel, one curving behind Lutzen and the other passing west of Schwenenbach. The area between these streams was soft boggy ground. The Franco-Bavarians drew up their forces to mount a close defence on the edge of the firm ground.

THE FRANCO-BAVARIANS AWAKE TO THEIR DANGER

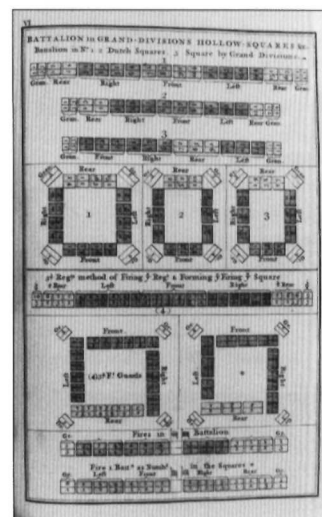
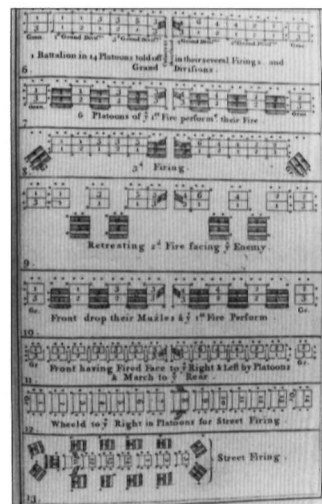
Some in the French army were becoming aware of the true nature of the threat that approached them. The Comte de Mérode-Westerloo recalled: 'Upon my orders, the valet had set up my camp bed in a barn – and there I spent the night, whilst my servants lodged in the main farm building. I slept deeply until six in the morning, when I was abruptly awoken by one of my old retainers – the head groom in fact – who rushed into the barn all out of breath. He had just returned from taking my horses out to grass at four in the morning (as he had been instructed). This fellow, Lefranc, shook me awake and blurted out that the enemy were there. Thinking to mock him, I asked, 'Where? There?' and he at once replied, 'Yes – there – there!' – flinging wide as he spoke the door of the barn and drawing my bed-curtains. The door opened straight on to the fine, sunlit plain beyond – and the whole area appeared to be covered by enemy squadrons. I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, and then coolly remarked that the foe must at least give me time to take my morning cup of chocolate.'

As Mérode-Westerloo took a hasty breakfast the French camp remained quiet. Marlborough had taken care to ensure that his enemies received false reports of his intentions and the French, with unshakable faith in their own superiority and a lack of imagination that fell easy prey to the planted accounts of Confederate prisoners, considered that they literally did not need to get out of bed as the Confederates would soon turn aside towards their intended destination of Nördlingen.

Marshal Tallard was not unduly alarmed, for at seven o'clock he completed a dispatch to Louis XIV by adding a note to the effect that the Confederates were on the march and were falling back toward Nördlingen to cover their supply lines:

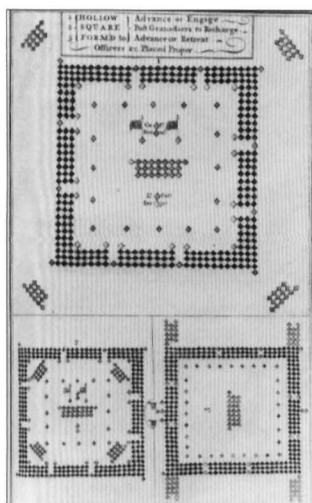
'This morning before daybreak the enemy beat the *général* at 2 o'clock and at three the *assemblée*. They are now drawn up at the head of their camp, and it looks as if they will march this day. Rumour in the countryside expects them in Nördlingen. If that be true, they will leave us between the Danube and themselves and in consequence they will have difficulty in sustaining the posts and depots which they have taken in Bavaria.'

This was the expected response of a contemporary general who had been outmanoeuvred by his enemy, and recognised the need to abandon conquered territory in order to recover from the strategic disadvantage of having his lines of supply threatened. The possibility that his army was about to come under attack was inconceivable to a general, such as



TOP In his 'Memoirs' General Richard Kane set out various forms of platoon firing, including that for retreating in front of the enemy and for street fighting.

ABOVE Kane illustrated how infantry could defend themselves from cavalry by forming square either by the Dutch method or by grand divisions



The marching square was a mobile formation, also illustrated by Kane, for use in the advance or the retreat.

Tallard, who thought only within the confines of established military doctrine. So confident was he that his dispatch was sent off on its long journey to Versailles.

Captain Parker recorded his amazement that the French camp was standing, meaning that they had not struck camp by collapsing their tents so that they might form line of battle unhindered: 'We had upwards of three leagues to march to the enemy; when we came in sight of them their whole camp was standing; but as soon as they perceived us, they fired three cannon to call in their foragers; so little did they expect a visit from us this morning. They soon struck their camp, and sent their tents, baggage, and everything of value to the town of Höchstädt, which was about half an English mile in their rear; and then drew up in order of battle, being 163 squadrons and 83 battalions. They therefore had 16 battalions more than we, and we had 18 squadrons more than they. They had 120 cannon and mortars, and we 64; so near an equality were both armies.'

Meanwhile, Mérode-Westerloo was becoming increasingly alarmed by the hostile approach of the Confederates and the lack of response from his own commander: 'There was not a single soul stirring as I clattered out of the village: nothing at all might have been happening. The same sight met my gaze when I reached the camp – everyone still snug in their tents – although the enemy was already so close that their standards and colours could easily be counted. They were already pushing back our pickets, but nobody seemed at all worried about it. I could see the enemy advancing ever closer in nine great columns of cavalry and deployed battalions, filling the whole plain from the Danube to the woods on the horizon. I could even make out that they were organized in alternate pairs of columns, two of horse and then two of foot.'

By eight o'clock, with the Confederate columns still resolutely approaching, Tallard finally realised the danger he was in and ordered his army to be roused. Mérode-Westerloo recorded his encounter with Tallard: 'I still had received no instructions, but I ordered my cavalry regiments to mount by way of precaution; I went in person to the standards of each squadron to give them this order, making sure that the

When Marlborough's army crossed the Rhine by the bridges at Coblenz the French received their first indication that he intended to campaign outside the theatre of the Low Countries. They had little option but to follow where he led.



trumpeters did not sound 'Boot and saddle' or 'Mount'. Soon everyone was on his horse, and I kept them all drawn up at the head of their tents, and then – and only then – did I notice the first signs of movement in Blenheim village.

'A little later Marshal Tallard galloped past the head of the second line of battle. Pausing to compliment me on my wise precaution in mounting my men, he asked me to sound 'Boot and saddle' and 'To horse' repeatedly, and to send an aide-de-camp to the artillery to order the two signal salvoes fired for the recall of the foragers. He told me he was going over to the left, but that he would soon return. My trumpeters were immediately ordered to sound the two calls time and time again, one after the other, and they were repeated all the way down the line. My aide-de-camp with noteworthy rapidity got him-self recognized and obeyed by the gunners, and we soon heard the 24-pounders fire the two salvoes.'

From the opposite side of the battlefield, John Marshall Deane, a private soldier in the ranks of the English First Regiment of Foot Guards, did not observe any delay on the part of the French artillery in opening fire. He recorded the start of the fighting in a down-to-earth manner: 'August the 2nd the Generall beete at 2 a clock in the morning; and there halted till a little light; and then marched and approached the enemy about 6 and as soon as ever the enemy gett sight of us they fired there great guns upon us, but we played none at them till toward 9 a clock in the morning.'

The full weight of the French artillery opened fire at half past eight and the Confederate gunners replied as soon as they were able to haul their pieces into position. The noise of the cannon fire carried to the Confederate entrenchments before Ingolstadt, some 40 miles away, where the Margrave of Baden declared in a letter to the Austrian Emperor: 'The prince and the Duke are engaged to-day to the west-ward. Heaven bless them.' Captain Parker claimed that his regiment received the first casualty of the day: 'Prince Eugene with the Imperialists stretched away to our right, and drew up opposite the Elector, and the greater part of the forces under Marsin; and the Duke of Marlborough drew up the forces he brought with him, opposite Tallard and the right of Marsin. About eight o'clock we began to form our lines; at which time the enemy set fire to such villages as might be a shelter to us, and the cannon on both sides fired with great fury. The first shot the enemy fired was at our Regiment, and it fell short; the second killed one man, which was the first blood drawn that day.'

Tallard had established his quarters at Blenheim, while Marshal Marsin was ensconced in Oberglau and the Elector of Bavaria held court at Lutzingen.

At nine o'clock Tallard joined Marsin and the Elector in the tower of Blenheim church to discuss their dispositions. There was little to say, for Marlborough's unexpected advance left no alternative but to draw up the Franco-Bavarian forces in their pre-determined positions. Captain Parker gave us his account of the Franco-Bavarian deployment: 'When we began to form our lines, the Elector, Tallard, and Marsin went up into the steeple of Blenheim, from whence they had a fair view of our army. The Elector told Tallard that Marlborough was drawing up the troops he brought with him in order to attack him, and desired he would draw up his troops close to the morass, and not suffer a man to pass, but what



Marlborough's army marched in accordance with a carefully implemented plan that enabled regiments to reach each pre-prepared camp with enough time to spare for the soldiers to rest and recuperate properly before beginning the next day's march.

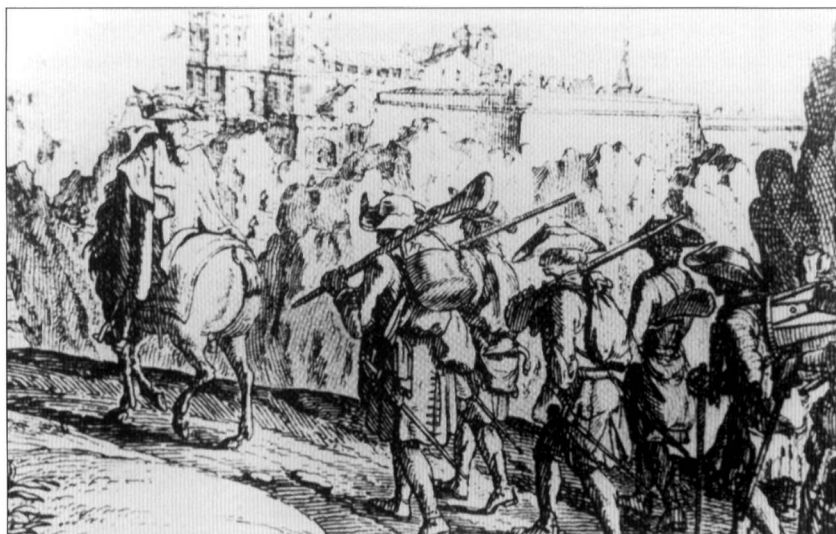
The inefficient harnessing of one horse behind another in long straggling teams made the movement of siege artillery by road a desperately slow process. Marlborough was unable to take heavy guns on his march into Germany and his ability to effectively besiege towns in Bavaria was much reduced as a result.



came on the point of his bayonets. Marsin was of the same opinion: but Tallard, a proud, conceited Frenchman, puffed up with the success of his former campaign ... thought the Elector took upon him to dictate to him; and told him that was not the way to obtain a complete victory, which now offered; and that the utmost that could be made of it in their way, was only a drawn battle: whereas he was for drawing up the army at some distance from the morass; and then the more that came over to them, the more they should kill. The Elector told him, he had often been engaged with these troops, and knew them well; and he insisted on it, that if he once suffered them to come over, he would find it a hard matter to drive them back. But all that he or Marsin could say, could not prevail on him to alter his opinion; so dreading the consequences of his obstinacy, they left him, much dissatisfied. He told them at parting, he saw plainly that that day's victory must be entirely owing to him.'

The army of Tallard was drawn up quite separately from the Franco-Bavarian forces commanded by Marsin and the Elector. This was partly to 'quarantine' Tallard's cavalry horses, which were infected with disease, possibly glanders. At the same time it is evident that some feelings of rivalry and possibly jealousy existed between Marsin and the Elector, whose armies had fought and been beaten by Marlborough, and Tallard who had come to their rescue. In these circumstances it was likely that the Franco-Bavarian armies would fight separate battles and look to their own needs before acting for the common good. Marlborough possessed a sharp eye for any errors in his enemy's dispositions and it is unlikely that the lack of unity that these displayed went unnoticed.

To the north between Oberglau and Lutzingen, the Elector and Marsin had the benefit of boggy terrain on both banks of the Nebel and they determined to occupy the firm ground close to the stream. It fell to Tallard to defend the flat and open plain that stretched between Oberglau and Blenheim and sloped gently to the banks of the Nebel. This was excellent cavalry country and Tallard must have debated the advantages of contesting the passage of the Nebel with infantry positioned close to the stream, or of meeting his enemy disorganised on the near bank with a cavalry charge initiated from some way back from the bank where his



Soldiers on the march were not self-sufficient, and ovens were constructed every few days to bake bread for the army. Here a French soldier carries a camp kettle over his shoulder ready to make use of any wandering farm animal or fowl that crosses his path.



A drummer beats the *assemblée* calling the troops from their civilian billets to resume the march. Wherever possible Marlborough prepared camps for his men knowing that the temptations of billets in towns often encouraged desertion.

horsemen would be safe from Confederate artillery fire. Tallard chose to make best use of terrain that so obviously suited cavalry and he placed all of his Horse, supported by 30 squadrons of Marsin's army, in a position some distance from the Nebel stream, ready to launch a devastating charge should Marlborough be so foolish as to attempt a crossing.

To prevent the flanks of his cavalry from being turned, Tallard sent two battalions of infantry to join Marsin's garrison in Oberglau and nine to hold Blenheim, while 12 squadrons of dismounted dragoons held a barricade of wagons between the village and the banks of the Danube. The remainder of his infantry was held in reserve to the rear of Blenheim.

Captain Robert Parker left us his observations on the French dispositions: 'The situation and disposition of the enemy was as follows: They had the Danube on their right, close to which was the village of Blenheim: they had on their left a large thick wood, with the village of Lutzingen close by it, from whence runs a rivulet, which empties itself into the Danube a little below Blenheim. This rivulet they had in their front, which made the ground in most places about it swampy and



The need to gather forage was a constant preoccupation for all the armies and in Bavaria it was combined with the deliberate destruction of buildings and crops.

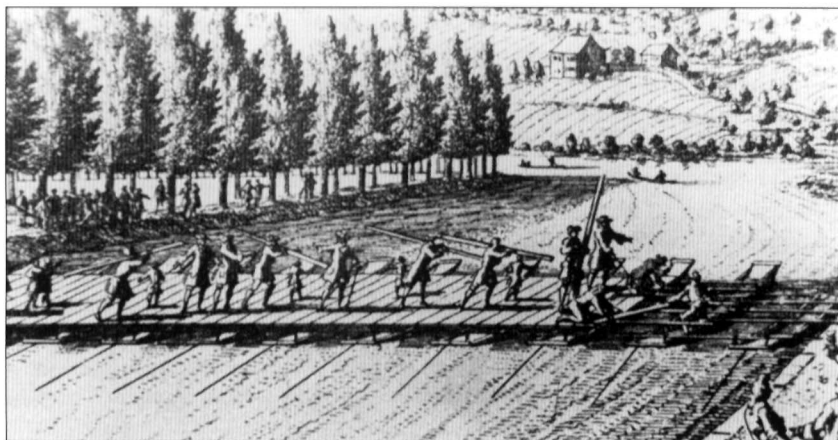
marshy. The Elector and Marsin drew up their part of the army close to the morass, and determined not to suffer a man to pass, but what should come on the points of their bayonets. But Tallard made quite another sort of a disposition of his troops; he posted in the village of Blenheim 28 battalions and 12 squadrons of dragoons. There were two mills on the rivulet a little above Blenheim, in which he posted two battalions; he had therefore but 10 battalions in the field with him; and being joined by 20 squadrons of Marsin's, he had 70 squadrons, on whom was his great dependence. These and his 10 battalions he drew up on the height of the plain, almost half an English mile from the morass. The village of Auberclaw [sic] lay partly on the morass towards our side, and was near their centre; in it Marsin had posted 8 battalions. Now these, with the troops in Blenheim and in the mills, were to march out as soon as they saw the Duke pass the morass, and fall on his rear, by which means Tallard was sure of having him in a trap between two fires.'

Marlborough's plan

The Franco-Bavarians deployed some 56,000 men in 70 battalions of infantry, 143 squadrons of cavalry (12 dismounted) supported by 90 guns. The Confederates faced them with 66 battalions, 178 squadrons and 66 guns. Dr Hare, Marlborough's chaplain, left another description of the Franco-Bavarian deployment: 'In the village of Blenheim were posted twenty-six battalions, commanded by Lieut.-Gen. the Marquis de Clérambault; and twelve squadrons of dragoons were drawn up behind it. The enemy had thrown up intrenchments all round the village, and had lined the palings and hedges with troops; and to give additional strength to their post, they had brought out all the tables, doors, planks, chests, &c. from the houses, and had placed them so as to afford cover from our shot. On that side of Blenheim which was next the Danube, and was the most open, they had made a barricade with waggons and with pieces of timber laid across to cover their retreat, against our horse, in case of their post being forced. From the village of Blenheim to that of Oberglau were posted eighty squadrons in two lines, having two brigades of foot intermixed near their centre. The last of these two villages was also occupied by fourteen of the enemy's battalions, among which were three Irish regiments commanded by the Marquis De Blainville, who had made the famous defence at Kaiserwert. To the left of these were drawn up in two lines the Elector of Bavaria's cavalry and the rest of Marshal Marsin's; and from their left to the wood, the remainder of their infantry, having the village of Lutzingen behind them.'

Marlborough's strategic aim was to bring the French army to battle and to destroy it in a decisive action. Should he fail there would be little chance of maintaining his army in Germany and, left to fight alone, the Austrian Empire would soon be forced to withdraw from the war.

Marlborough was therefore obliged to attack his enemies despite the fact that they outnumbered him and held a strong defensive position. Although the Duke found himself outnumbered in infantry and artillery, he enjoyed a considerable advantage in cavalry and he determined that the decisive action of the battle would be the clash of the two armies' Horse. He quickly identified the area between Blenheim and Oberglau as ideal cavalry country and must have been delighted to see that Marshal Tallard had concentrated his horsemen in that area. Strong attacks against



The construction of pontoon bridges over the Danube was to play a vital part in the Blenheim campaign and the capture of a bridge intact at the Schellenberg was to prove of major advantage to Marlborough.

Blenheim and Oberglau would occupy the defenders and draw Tallard's infantry away from the plain where the cavalry battle would be fought.

Eugene's forces were given the task of attacking an enemy who had the advantage of superior numbers protected by fortified villages, and his men would have to cross marshy ground as they formed up to attack. Throughout the day they launched desperate assaults across the Nebel only to be repeatedly thrown back in confusion. The pressure had precisely the desired effect, however, with both Marsin and the Elector refusing to send any help in response to Tallard's desperate requests for reinforcements.

In all his battles Marlborough sought to create a numerical advantage at a point of his own choosing where he could deliver a blow that would crush his enemy. To achieve this when outnumbered, as he often was, Marlborough sought to fix the attention of the opposing generals on another part of the field by making ferocious but controlled attacks. As the enemy redeployed his forces to meet these attacks, Marlborough would switch the weight of his attack to his chosen point and strike with overwhelming strength. Many generals have tried to adopt such tactics, but few have been able to maintain such complete control over their own soldiers as to be able to mount forceful attacks while restraining their men from all-out assaults. The comparison with Tallard, who could not prevent his subordinates from calling in unnecessary reserves to Blenheim, is all too obvious.

THE ATTACK ON BLENHEIM

By 10 o'clock Marlborough was in position to attack, but his men were forced to wait under galling French artillery fire while Prince Eugene's forces completed their longer march and struggled to get into position over difficult ground. It was not until half past midday that Eugene confirmed that he was ready to attack. Mérode-Westerloo describes the scene: 'This great and magnificent prelude lasted another two hours. We maintained our position at the head of our camping area, where the tents were not yet struck. Trumpet call answered trumpet call; cannon balls inflicted grave disorder on my squadrons. These circumstances made the proceedings even more impressive than any distant view from



This Dutch caricature of the Margrave of Baden unfairly depicts him at his ease and counting his French bribes while he ignores the fighting at Blenheim.

the safety of a church tower. I was riding past Forsac's regiment when a shot carried away the head of my horse and killed two troopers; another of my Spanish mounts was killed behind one of the Orleans squadrons, whilst yet a third received a hit which carried away the butts of my pistols, the pommel of the saddle and a piece of flesh as large as the crown of a hat.'

In front of Blenheim waited the ninth Confederate column, commanded by Lord Cutts of Gowan, consisting of 20 battalions of infantry divided unequally into four brigades. First came Rowe's brigade, followed by Wilkes' brigade of Hessians, Ferguson's brigade and then a Hanoverian brigade. To their rear marched 15 squadrons of Horse under Major-General Wood.

Rowe's brigade made contact with the French at about 10 o'clock when they drove enemy pickets out of the burning water mills along the banks of the Nebel. They spent the morning sheltering from French artillery fire while their pioneers worked to prepare fascines and gathered wood from the debris of the mills to provide a firmer footing across the marshy ground along the banks of the stream.

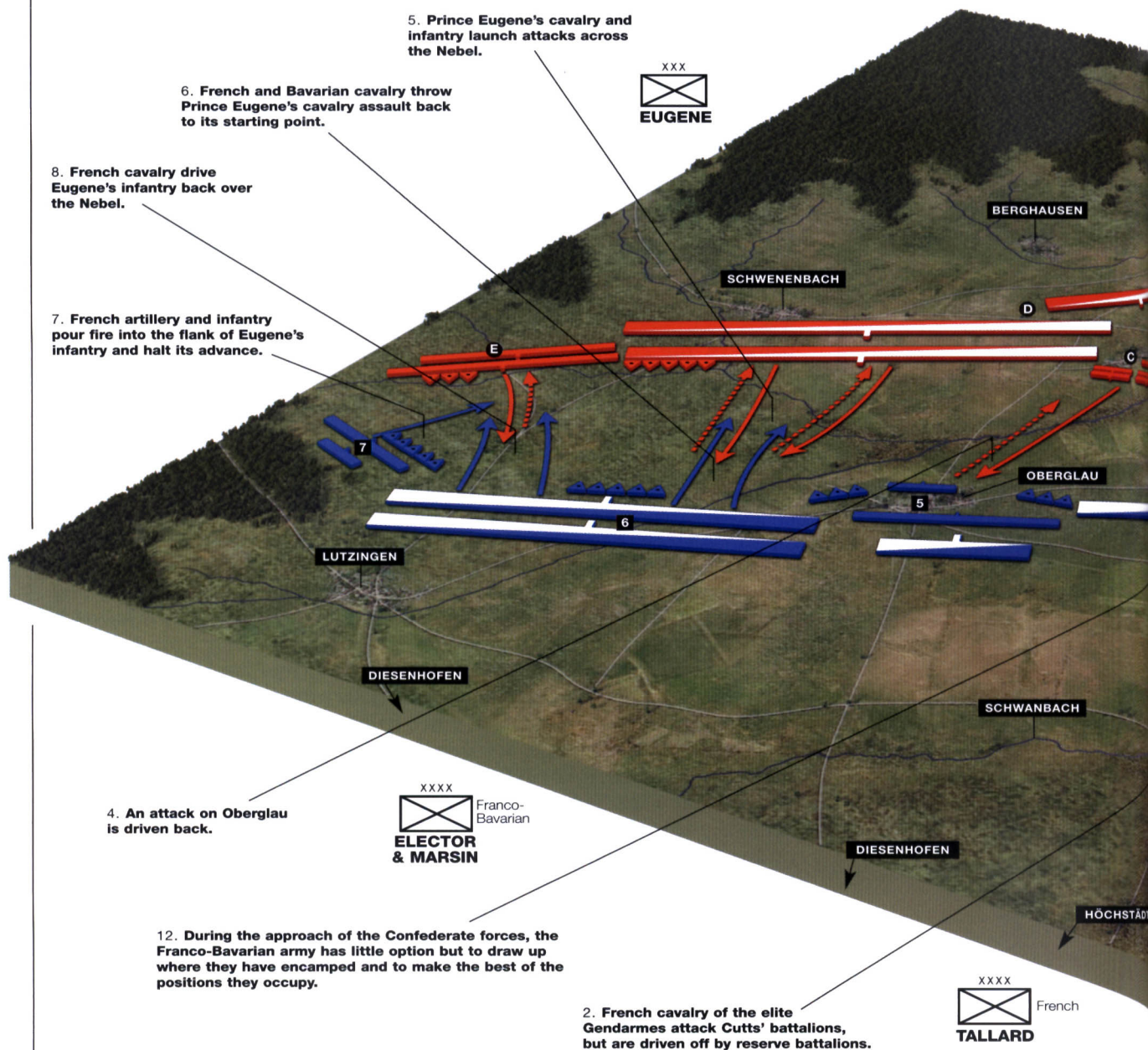
Between one o'clock and half past the hour Rowe's brigade waded across the Nebel and climbed the far bank. They were fortunate that the ground fell slightly from around Blenheim down to the banks of the stream creating an area of dead ground where they were able to re-form before marching on to within 300 yards of the village. Here the soldiers laid down in their ranks and files awaiting the crossing of the supporting Hessians of Wilkes' brigade and a pair of guns, which opened a steady fire at the French sheltering behind their barricades.

Brigadier Rowe had ordered that no man should fire until he himself had struck the enemy barricade with his sword. His brigade obediently marched forward under artillery fire from a French battery positioned by the left of the village. As they neared the outer palisades a well-controlled French volley felled a number of Rowe's men. Dr Hare gave an account of the first attack: 'It was near one o'clock when Lord Cutts made the first attack upon Blenheim. Brigadier-Gen. Rowe, on foot, led up his brigade, which formed the first line, and which was sustained in the second line by a brigade of Hessians.

'Brigadier Rowe had proceeded within thirty paces of the pales about Blenheim before the enemy gave their first fire, by which a great many brave officers and soldiers fell, but that did not discourage their gallant commander from marching directly up to the very pales, on which he struck his sword before he suffered a man to fire. His orders were to enter sword in hand, but the superiority of the enemy and the advantages of their post rendered that mode of attack impracticable.

'This first line was therefore forced to retire, but without its leader, who was left wounded by the side of the pales; and his Lieut.-Col. and Major were both killed upon the spot in endeavouring to bring him off.'

Unable to force their way through the French barricade and under a murderous fire, Rowe's brigade fell back, leaving their commander where he had fallen. They were not allowed to go unmolested. From amongst the French cavalry posted to the left of Blenheim, General Zurlauben led forward three squadrons of the elite Gendarmes of the Royal Household cavalry. They fell on the exposed flank of Rowe's own regiment and, as the infantry struggled to form into a square, the



THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM – THE BATTLE OPENS

12 August 1704, 1.30–4.30pm, viewed from the south, showing the initial dispositions of the armies and the opening Confederate attack.

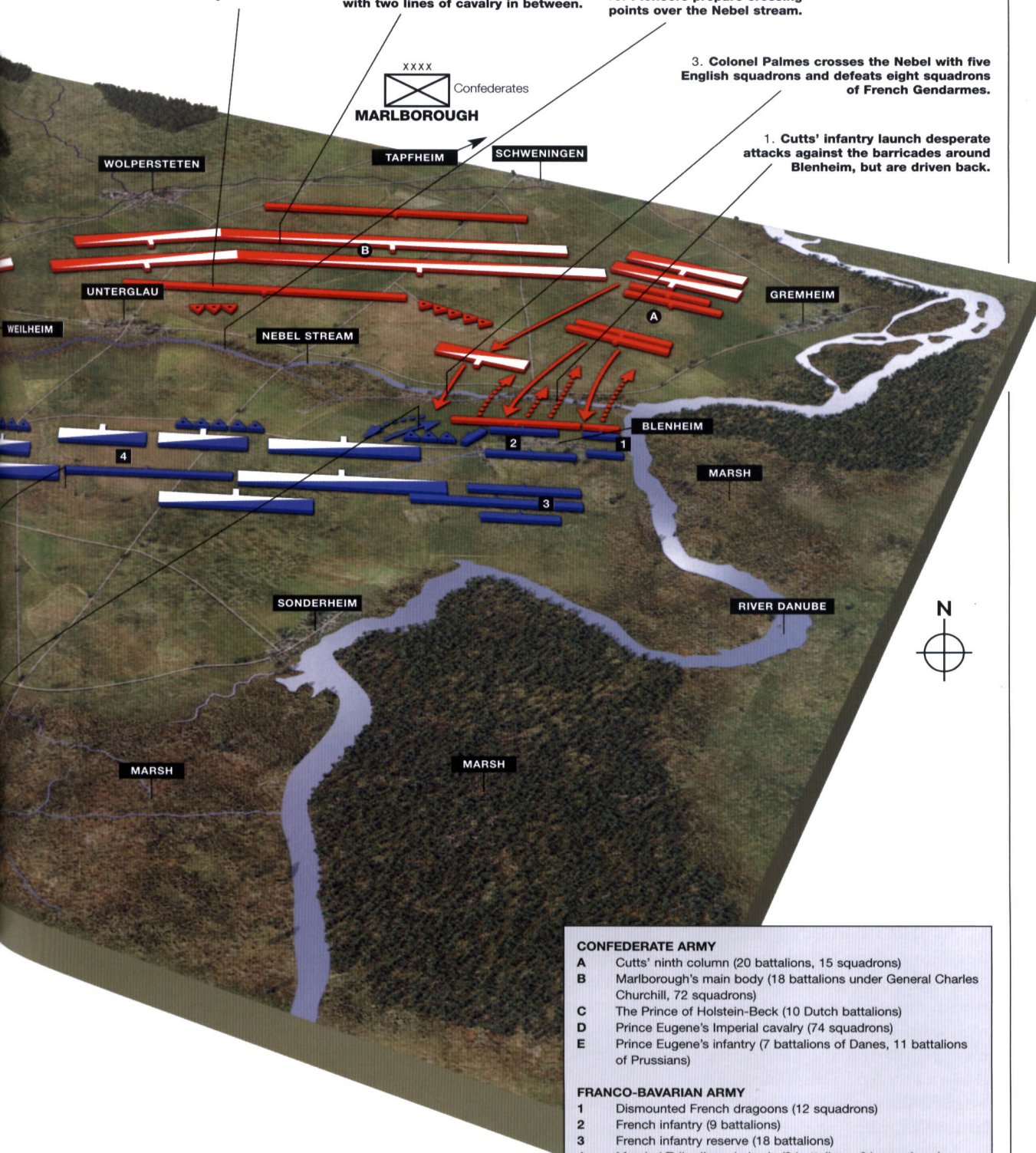
11. Marlborough's Foot is ordered to lie on the ground to lessen the effects of French artillery fire.

9. Marlborough swings his main body into four lines; infantry in the front and rear with two lines of cavalry in between.

10. Pioneers prepare crossing points over the Nebel stream.

3. Colonel Palmes crosses the Nebel with five English squadrons and defeats eight squadrons of French Gendarmes.

1. Cutts' infantry launch desperate attacks against the barricades around Blenheim, but are driven back.



CONFEDERATE ARMY

- A Cutts' ninth column (20 battalions, 15 squadrons)
- B Marlborough's main body (18 battalions under General Charles Churchill, 72 squadrons)
- C The Prince of Holstein-Beck (10 Dutch battalions)
- D Prince Eugene's Imperial cavalry (74 squadrons)
- E Prince Eugene's infantry (7 battalions of Danes, 11 battalions of Prussians)

FRANCO-BAVARIAN ARMY

- 1 Dismounted French dragoons (12 squadrons)
- 2 French infantry (9 battalions)
- 3 French infantry reserve (18 battalions)
- 4 Marshal Tallard's main body (9 battalions, 64 squadrons)
- 5 Garrison of Oberglau (16 battalions)
- 6 Marsin and the Elector's cavalry (67 squadrons)
- 7 French and Bavarian infantry (16 battalions)



The Confederate army marched to battle through the defiles between wooded hills and the marshy banks of the Danube in carefully ordered columns.



Before the battle, Confederate cavalry gathered branches into fascines to be thrown into the Nebel stream to create firm crossing places.

French horsemen cut their way to the regimental colours and carried them off.

As the Gendarmes hacked at the disordered soldiers of Rowe's Regiment, they failed to notice the ordered ranks of Wilkes' Hessians calmly deploying to their flank and rear. Volleys began to crash out from the disciplined ranks of the Hessians and it was now the Gendarmes who found themselves disordered and exposed. The Hessians moved forward driving the Gendarmes before them, in the process recovering Rowe's colours. The situation before Blenheim was stabilized and Rowe's brigade paused in the dead ground to draw breath and to re-form their battered ranks.

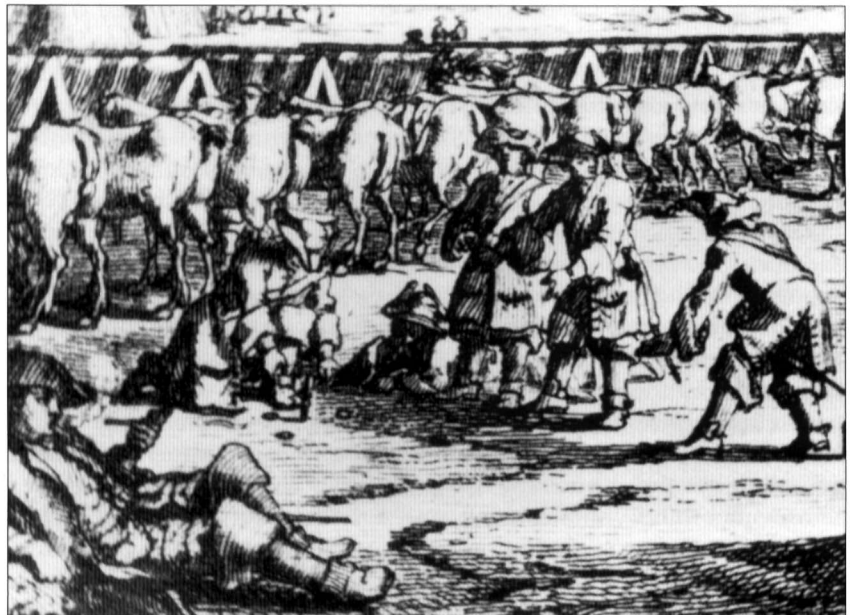
Meanwhile Ferguson's Brigade, to which had been attached the First Regiment of English Foot Guards, had crossed the stream and begun an assault on the barricade running from Blenheim down to the Danube. Here dismounted French dragoons fought at point of bayonet with

English Guardsmen, but the defenders held on and Ferguson was also forced to pull back to the sheltered ground near the banks of the Nebel.

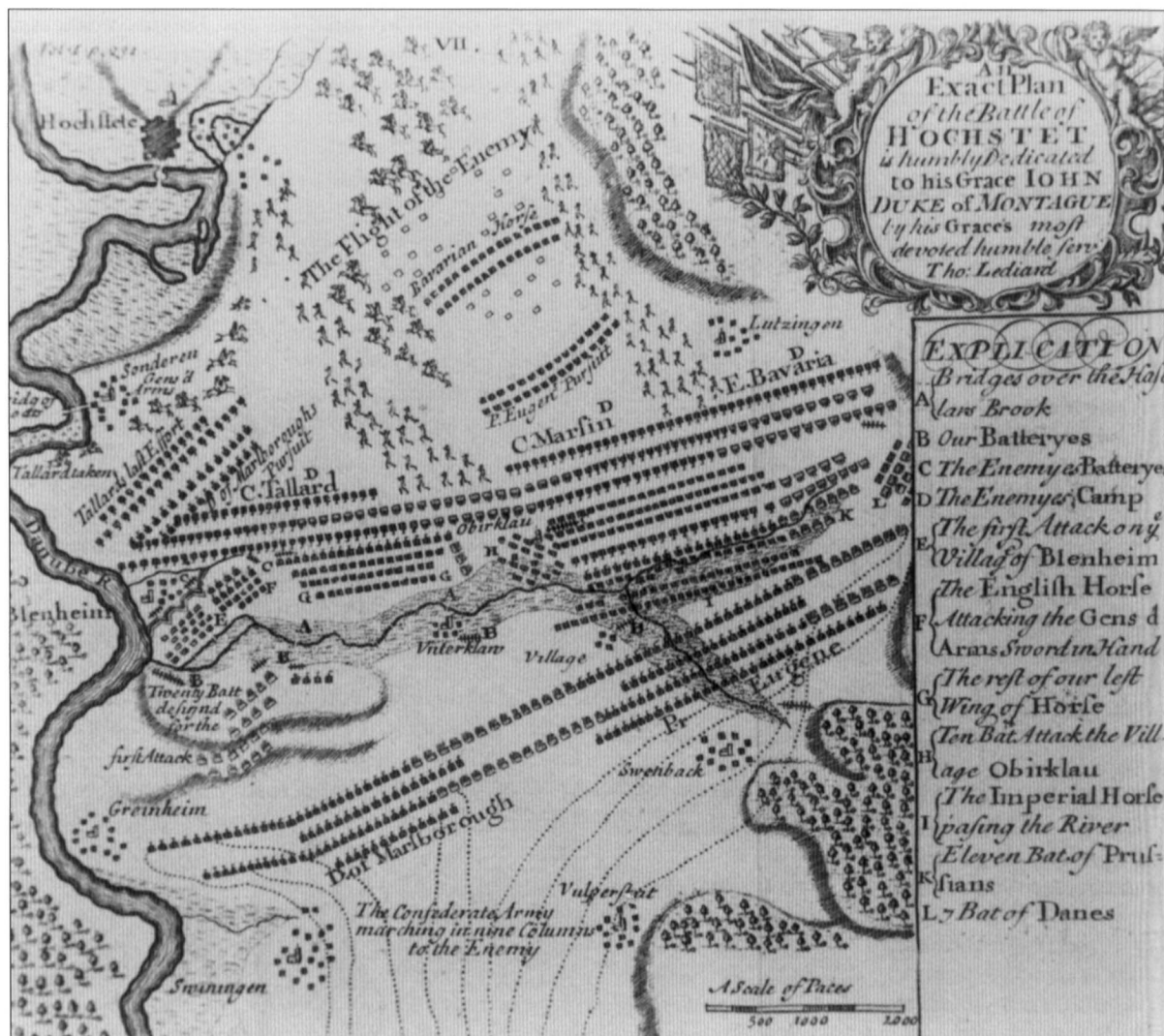
Despite their losses and the mauling suffered by Rowe's Regiment, Cutts' men remained undaunted and on his command they surged forward again, Captain Parker describing the attack: 'At this time the rest of the foot coming up, they renewed the charge; and those that had been repulsed, having soon rallied, returned to the charge, and drove the enemy from the skirts of the village, into the very heart of it. Here they had thrown up an entrenchment, within which they were pent up in so narrow a compass, that they had not room to draw up in any manner of order, or even to make use of their arms. Thereupon we drew up in great order about 80 paces from them, from whence we made several vain attempts to break in upon them, in which many brave men were lost to no purpose; and after all, we were obliged to remain where we first drew up.'

Marlborough was satisfied that the garrison could not impede the progress of his main attack and ordered that future action should be limited to containment. This was no easy task as the French commander at Blenheim had been so alarmed by the ferocity of the attacks upon his position that he had called forward reserve regiments so that 27 battalions now packed the streets of the village, most of them unable to face any enemy.

Mérode-Westerloo was stationed with his cavalry to the left rear of Blenheim village and could only watch as the French reserve infantry was drawn into the fighting: 'Following this lengthy prelude, the English infantry, who had waited for the Imperial forces to join battle on the right, at last attacked the village of Blenheim; shortly after midday, I think it was. The first volleys in this attack had hardly been fired when the two lines of our infantry, some twenty-seven battalions in all, whose orders I believe had been to support the position, entered the village most prematurely and ill-advisedly. What is more, a further twelve regiments of dismounted



The approach of the Confederate armies found the French asleep or taking their ease, their tents still standing and their cavalry dismounted.



dragoons were also sent in. Why! – a mere ten battalions would have been capable of defending the place in far better fashion, and all the remainder of this veritable army could have been far more usefully employed elsewhere. The men were so crowded in upon one another that they could not even fire, let alone receive or carry out any orders. Not a single shot of the enemy missed its mark, whilst only those few of our men at the front could return the fire, and soon many of these were unable to shoot owing to exhaustion or their muskets exploding from constant use. Those drawn up in the rear were mowed down without firing a shot at the enemy; if they wanted to reply they could only fire at their own comrades or indiscriminately without aiming. To make things even worse, the village had been set on fire by the French troops, and our poor fellows were grilled amidst the continually collapsing roofs and beams of the blazing houses, and thus were burnt alive amidst the ashes of this smaller Troy of their own making.’

The piecemeal reinforcement of Blenheim had been carried out at the instigation of the local commander, Clérambault. Marshal Tallard had

This map of the battle, from Lediard's *Life of Marlborough*, gives a clear impression of the scale of the battle of Blenheim and of the critical part played by the marshy Nebel stream that divided the armies.



French dragoons had won an unenviable reputation for their activities in the persecution of French Protestants and of the populations of the territories occupied by Louis XIV.

not expected the Confederate attack to begin for another two hours and he had ridden over to inspect his troops on the left wing. He returned in time to witness events around Blenheim but took no action to halt or countermand Clérambault's orders. As so often, Marlborough had seized the tactical initiative and his enemies were unable to resist the urge to re-deploy their forces in response to his attacks. Slowly, Tallard's army was being drawn away from the point at which Marlborough had chosen to launch his decisive attack, and the French officers and their commander seemed helpless to resist.

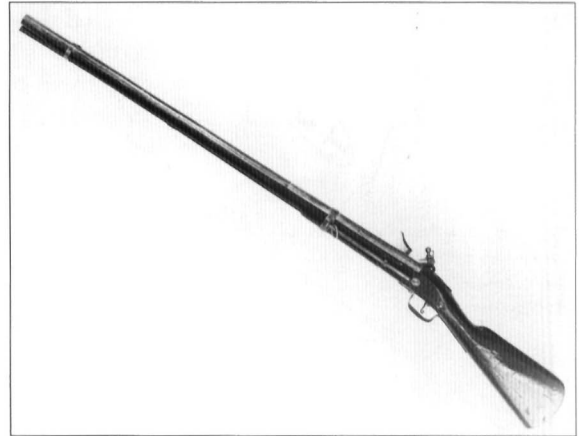
Palmes' charge

The French did not remain entirely on the defensive around Blenheim. French cavalry squadrons from the elite Gendarmes harassed the flanks of the attacking English regiments, but were driven off by the regular volleys of supporting Hessian battalions. Three squadrons of English Horse, drawn from the regiments of Wyndham, Schomberg and Wood, under the command of Colonel Frances Palmes, moved across the stream supported by two more squadrons under the command of Colonel Charles de Sybourg. The English squadrons were able to re-form on solid ground before eight squadrons of Gendarmes advanced to attack them.

Dr Hare provides an account of the ensuing clash: 'While this was doing, some squadrons of the French gens-d'armes fell upon the right flank of Rowe's brigade, put it partially in disorder, and took one of the colours of Rowe's regiment; but the Hessians in the second line, facing to the right, charged those squadrons so briskly that they repulsed them, and retook the colour. Notwithstanding this, Lord Cutts, seeing fresh cavalry of the enemy coming down upon him, sent his aide-de-camp to desire that some of our squadrons should be sent to cover his flank. Lieut.-Gen. Lumley accordingly ordered Col. Palmer [sic] to march over the rivulet with the three squadrons which were nearest the pass, and these were followed by Col. Leybourg [sic] with two more, all which had no sooner drawn up than eight of the enemy's squadrons moved down upon them, and ours advanced to meet them. Those of the enemy gave their fire at a little distance, but the English squadrons charged up to them sword in hand, and broke and put them to flight. But being overpowered by fresh squadrons, and galled by the fire of the enemy's infantry posted about Blenheim, our squadrons were repulsed in their turn and forced to retire.'

French cavalry tactics were to advance at a slow and controlled pace, to halt to fire their pistols at close range, before charging home with the sword into the enemy ranks which had hopefully been disorganised by casualties from the volley of pistol shot. In contrast the English reserved their pistols for pursuit of a defeated enemy and charged home with the sword without any pause or hesitation.

Robert Parker gave another more detailed account of the action, explaining how the superior discipline and tactical manoeuvrability of the English Horse allowed Palmes to attack a larger enemy force in front and on both flanks: 'At length Tallard seeing Palmes advanced with his squadrons some distance from our lines, ordered out five squadrons (some said seven) to march down and cut Palmes's squadrons to pieces, and then retire. When the commanding officer of these squadrons had got clear of their lines, he ordered the squadron on his right, and that

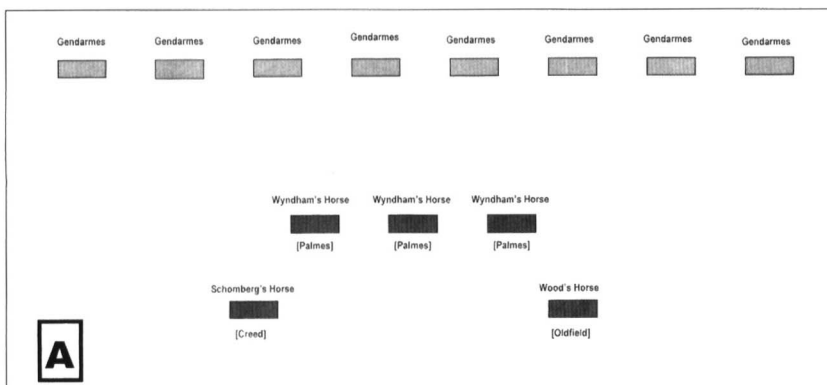


on his left to edge outward, and then march down till they came on a line with Palmes; at which time they were to wheel inward, and fall upon his flanks, while he charged him in front. Palmes perceiving this, ordered Major Oldfield, who commanded the squadron on his right, and Major Creed, who commanded that on his left, to wheel outward, and charge those squadrons, that were coming down on them; and he, not in the least doubting but they would beat them, ordered them when they had done that, to wheel in upon the flanks of the other squadrons that were coming upon him, while he charged them in front; and everything succeeded accordingly. This was a great surprise to Tallard, who had placed such confidence in his troops, that he verily thought there were not any on earth able to stand before them.'

It is debatable whether the eight squadrons of French Gendarmes, each of two companies, actually outnumbered Palmes' five squadrons by eight to five. The French horsemen had already been in action against the Confederate infantry and, as part of Tallard's army, may have incurred losses as a result of the horse disease from which his cavalry was suffering. Nevertheless, Palmes realised that his squadrons were in danger of being enveloped on both flanks by the greater number of French troopers and he may have ordered the squadrons of Majors Creed and Oldfield to be 'refused'. In this formation they would have been held some way back from the front of the central squadrons so that they could take an overlapping enemy in the flank.

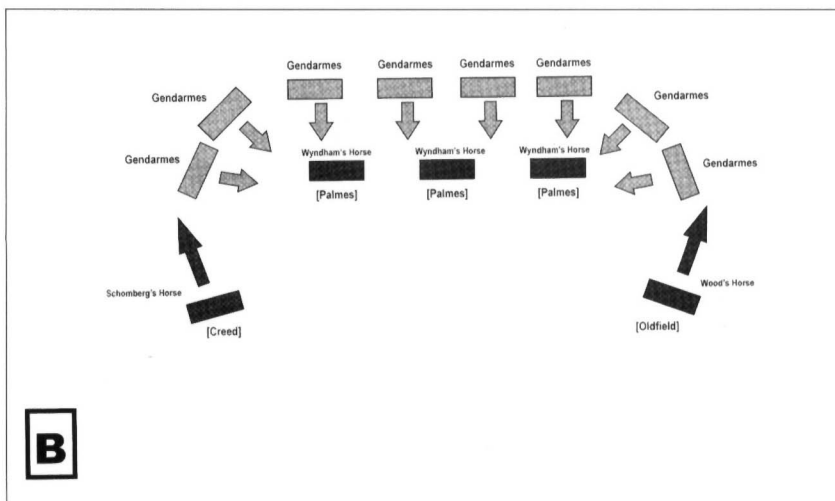
ABOVE, LEFT **Dragoons** carried shortened muskets or carbines, which were held on a belt or in a bucket hanging from the saddle. British dragoons were becoming a part of the cavalry, but French dragoons still dismounted to fight on foot and relied on their carbines to face enemy infantry. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

ABOVE, RIGHT This picture of the left side of the carbine shows the bar and the ring into which it slipped. The ring would be held on a swivel fixed to a cross-belt that went over the soldier's shoulder. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

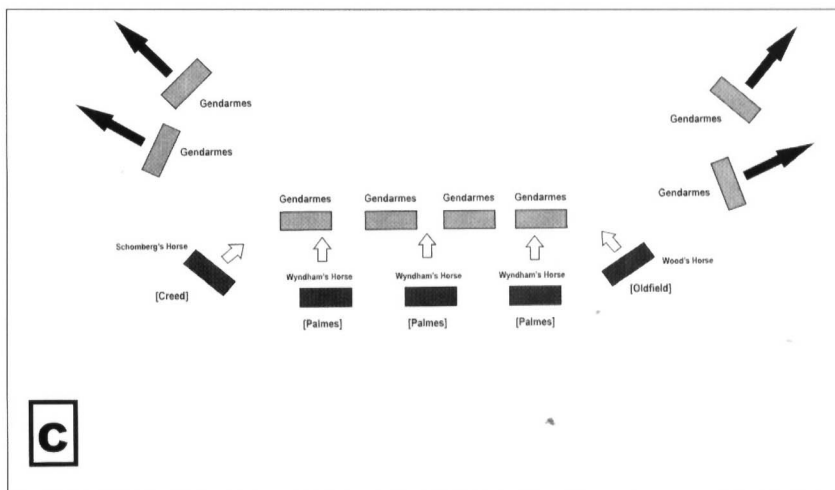


As fighting raged around Blenheim, eight squadrons of elite Gendarmes moved to attack five squadrons of English Horse under the command of Colonel Frances Palmes. A standard tactic for a cavalry officer when outnumbered was to 'refuse' his flanking units, holding them back from his main line to guard against an enveloping move by his enemy.

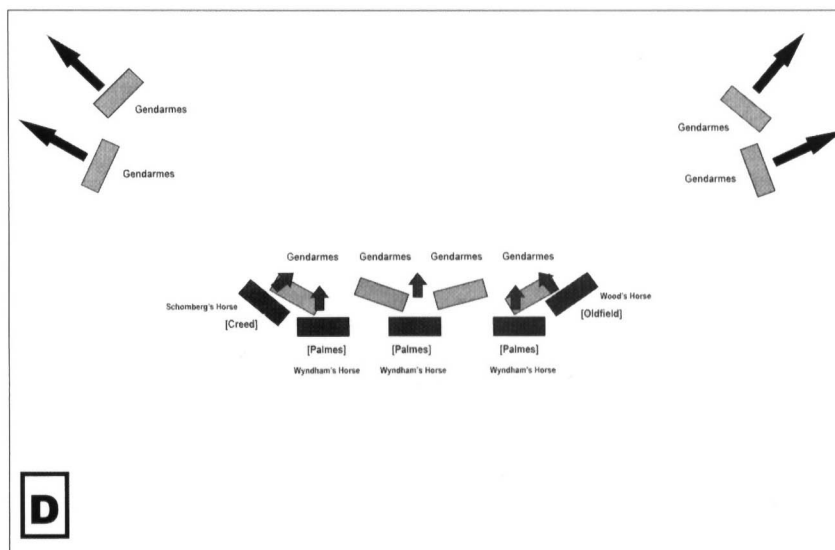
Palmes ordered Major Oldfield, commanding the squadron on the right, to edge outwards so that they could charge the French squadrons before them. As the French moved to outflank Palmes' three central squadrons their own flanks were exposed to a devastating charge by Oldfield and Creed.



Less disciplined troopers would have pursued the routed enemy, but Oldfield and Creed were able to rally their men and following Palmes' orders, wheeled onto the exposed flank of the remaining French cavalry that was engaging his three squadrons.



Disheartened by the defeat of their comrades, and assailed from front and flank, the Gendarmes gave way and the English horsemen harried them all the way to the walls of Blenheim village, where they were driven off by the fire of French infantry.







GRAHAM TURNER '04



MARLBOROUGH'S MEETING WITH PRINCE EUGENE

(pages 62–63)

Thomas Lediard in his *Life of John, Duke of Marlborough* (1736) describes the meeting of Marlborough (1) and Prince Eugene (2): 'The next Day, his Highness marched with the Duke to Great Heppach, where his Grace having ordered his Army to be drawn up in Battalia, before the Prince, his Highness express'd his Surprise, to find them in so excellent a Condition, after so long and speedy a March: Upon which occasion, he is reported to have said; My Lord, I never saw better Horses, better Cloaths, finer Belts and Accoutrements; yet all those may be had for Mony; but there is a Spirit in the Looks of your men, which I never yet saw in any, in my Life.' Prince Eugene had already established his reputation in battle against the French in Northern Italy. Marlborough had no major victories to his name, but such was his charm and skill as a diplomat that the Prince readily agreed to serve under him. The Imperial Cuirassier (3) reflects cavalry equipment of the latter half of the 17th century. The coat was made of buff leather of varied thickness. The arms were of leather, perhaps only two or three millimetres thick, providing sufficient flexibility to wield a sword. The skirts of the buff coat could be ten to 15 millimetres thick as they protected the cuirassier's upper legs above his thick riding boots. Steel back and breastplates and a reinforced 'pot' helmet completed his defensive arms. The English troopers

(4) are characteristic of the dress that dominated European cavalry and would continue to do so for another 100 years. The coat is of woollen cloth, made for warmth and durability rather than for protection against weapons. The waistcoat is also of cloth. Some records indicate that leather waistcoats were worn, but this appears to be for their hardwearing qualities rather than as a defence. At the time of Blenheim, English cavalry had abandoned defensive armour on the basis that it offered no protection to musket and pistol shot. Armour was reintroduced later in the War of the Spanish Succession in emulation of French cavalry on the basis that it offered some protection from sword thrusts. The French cavalry advanced at a slow pace, firing their pistols to disorganise the enemy formation, before charging into contact with the sword. English cavalry carried pistols (5), but Marlborough forbade their use in battle, reserving carbines for use on picket duty and pistols for the pursuit of a defeated enemy. The tricorn (6) had become the standard headgear for European soldiers. It was often worn with a metal skull-cap, known as a 'secret', which could be sown into the crown of the hat, giving protection against a downward cut to the top of the head. Cross belts, (7) supporting a sword and carbine or cartridge pouch, were to become the distinguishing mark of cavalry of the 18th century and Marlborough's troopers were among the first to adopt this distinctive appearance. (Graham Turner)



The French Gendarmes relied on firepower from pistol and carbine to break up enemy formations before they charged home with the sword.

This appears to be what happened. As the flanking French squadrons swung in to make contact with Palmes' three squadrons, Creed and Oldfield charged forwards into the flanks of the French, routing them. With commendable discipline, the troopers of Creed's and Oldfield's squadrons withstood the urge to pursue their beaten foe and held their ranks so as to be able to wheel round to fall on the flanks and rear of the Gendarmes who were engaging Palmes' three squadrons.

The rout of the Gendarmes was complete and Palmes' men chased them back past Blenheim and over the Maulweyer stream before they were halted by the volleys of the French Regiment de Royale. Charged in their turn by fresh French cavalry, Palmes' men scrambled back to the cover of their own infantry in front of Blenheim. Colonel de Sybourg had been unhorsed and ridden over by at least two squadrons, but he survived the day.

In full sight of Tallard's army the English troopers had smashed through the elite of the French cavalry and driven them back in confusion. Mérode-Westerloo offers a different account of the incident, which suggests that the Gendarmerie were initially successful: 'The fire of both attack and defence remained heavy and prolonged. Half an hour after it had started the Gendarmerie, situated directly in front of me in the first line under the command that day* of Lieutenant-General de

Zurlauben (a Swiss-born infantry officer), charged the enemy cavalry stationed on the right of the attacking English infantry. This force was drawn up in five lines, one squadron behind the other. Our charge went well and the Gendarmerie flung their first line on to their second, but since the troops to the Gendarmerie's left did not ride forward with equal dash, if indeed they charged at all, the Gendarmerie found itself unsupported facing fresh enemy squadrons which charged and in their turn flung them back in rude disorder.'

Robert Parker considered that the defeat of the Gendarmerie had seriously undermined the determination and morale of the French commander: 'Tallard seeing his five squadrons so shamefully beaten by three, was confounded to that degree, that he did not recover himself the whole day, for after that, all his orders were given in hurry and confusion.'

Tallard agreed, for after the battle he listed this defeat of a more numerous elite French force as the first of his reasons for the French defeat at Blenheim.

The fighting around Blenheim now became a matter of containing the French garrison as Marlborough's objective of drawing in the French reserve infantry had been achieved to a far greater extent than he could have hoped. Troops could now be quietly moved from in front of Blenheim to join the main attack across the Nebel stream.

EUGENE'S BATTLE

Prince Eugene faced a daunting prospect. His troops marched northwest, with the Nebel stream and the villages of Oberglau and Lutzingen on their left and wooded hills closing in on their right. In addition to the garrison of Oberglau, the French and Bavarians deployed their 67 squadrons of Horse on firm ground amongst the standing corn in the fields between the two villages. To the right of this cavalry formation stood 12 battalions of French infantry, filling the gap between the massed horsemen and Oberglau. Five Bavarian battalions under Count d'Arco covered the front of Lutzingen and a further 11 French battalions formed up on their left, protecting the extreme left flank of the combined Franco-Bavarian armies and edging into the wooded hills in an attempt to outflank Eugene's deploying forces. In addition to other artillery a great battery of 16 guns was positioned to enfilade the flank of any force attacking across the Nebel towards Lutzingen.

Eugene's task was similar to that of Lord Cutts before Blenheim. With 74 squadrons of Imperial Horse, but only 18 battalions of infantry (seven Danish and 11 Prussian), Eugene faced a numerically stronger enemy across difficult terrain. In front of Lutzingen the Nebel was less a stream and more an area of boggy ground where water collected as it ran down from the arc of surrounding hills. Although the French and Bavarian cavalry stood on firm cultivated farmland, the attacking Imperial cavalry would have to pick their way across many rivulets and form up on boggy ground. With a small advantage in cavalry, but heavily outnumbered in infantry, Eugene's task was to occupy the attention of Marshal Marsin and the Elector of Bavaria and to stop them interfering with Marlborough's main attack to the south of Oberglau.

Shortly after the beginning of Lord Cutts' attack on Blenheim, Eugene launched his forces across the Nebel with his cavalry on the left and the Prussian infantry and then the Danish battalions forming on the right.

Infantry, cavalry and artillery worked together as Marlborough's main attack pushed forwards against the crumbling resistance of Tallard's cavalry and his outnumbered infantry. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)





ABOVE A German illustration views the battle from south of the Danube, with Blenheim on the right and Höchstädt on the left. Confederate infantry advance across the Nebel to meet an inaccurately large force of French infantry while the cavalry clash beyond them. In the centre of the picture, routing French horsemen topple down the bank of the Danube and perish in the river. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

RIGHT Tallard and a number of French generals were brought before Marlborough. Tallard is said to have offered to intervene in the fighting around Blenheim to command a ceasefire. Marlborough curtly informed him that he was no longer in a position to issue commands, but then kindly sent him to rest in his own coach. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)



Imperial cavalry under the Duke of Württemberg were able to maintain their discipline as they crossed the Nebel and they crashed through the first line of Franco-Bavarian Horse. Disordered by their success, the Imperial horsemen found themselves confronted by the second line of French cavalry and they were driven back over the Nebel. The French were unable to follow up their advantage and the two cavalry forces sat licking their wounds and reordering their ranks, both unwilling to renew the fighting.

However, the defeat of the Imperial Horse left the Prussian battalions exposed. Eugene's infantry advanced, struggling through stream and morass, under a withering fire from the great battery of 16 heavy guns positioned on their flank. The Bavarian battalions, including two of the Guards, drove the disordered Prussians back with the loss of ten colours. The Danes had little choice but to retreat and Eugene's army was back on the east bank of the Nebel where it had begun.

Eugene's assault on the Confederate right flank was described by Dr Hare: 'The imperial cavalry had also charged through the first line of that of the enemy, but they were repulsed by the second line and

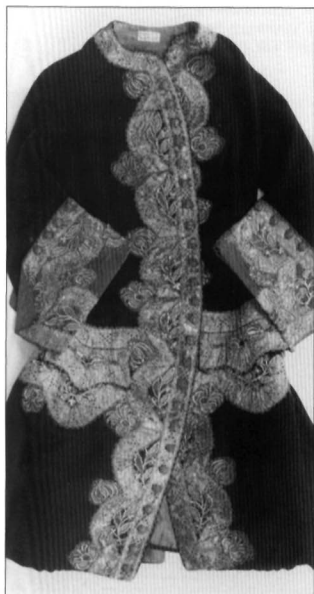
driven back to the wood in rear of the ground where they had first drawn up to make the attack; so that by this means the Prussian and Danish foot, being like to be surrounded by the enemy's squadrons, were forced to quit the advantage they had gained and fall back to the wood likewise.'

Prince Eugene was not a commander who accepted failure and by 3.30pm he had reordered his cavalry and a second attack was launched. Given the losses suffered in the first assault and the fact that their horses were no longer fresh, it is not surprising that this attack also failed and the Imperial cavalry again fell back to their starting positions. Not even threats from Prince Eugene that he would pistol any man who disobeyed would induce them to cross the Nebel again.

Cursing, Eugene joined his infantry and led them forward at around four o'clock. With the support of 14 guns, the only part of the artillery train that had been able to get into action, the Prussians and Danes marched once more into the marsh surrounding the Nebel stream. With unfaltering determination the Prussians fought their way into the houses and gardens on the edge of Lutzingen and the Danes overran the great battery that had caused them so many casualties, capturing six of the guns. Lacking cavalry support, the momentum of the attack could not be maintained as the French cavalry began to threaten the exposed flank of the Prussian battalions. Once again Eugene, fighting alongside his men, was forced to withdraw them to where they had begun the battle.

As his army disintegrated around him Marshal Tallard rode to join a body of formed horsemen, but he had mistaken Bothmar's dragoons for one of his own units and he was quickly recognised and made prisoner.





A French general's surcoat. It was Tallard's fine appearance and the chivalric orders that decorated his coat that marked him as a person of rank worth taking prisoner and saved him from being shot down out of hand as was his son, who rode at his side. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

CRISIS IN THE CENTRE

The French in Blenheim were now contained and the attention of the Elector and Marsin was entirely focused on the attacks that Eugene continued to launch against them. In the centre of the battlefield Marlborough began to move his main body over the Nebel. The obstacle of the village of Oberglau remained, however. The village was held by 14 battalions of French infantry from Marshal Marsin's army, including the battalions of Irish émigrés under de Blainville, reinforced by two battalions from Tallard's army. Ten Dutch battalions of Berensdorf's brigade had been detached from General Charles Churchill's main body, under the command of the Prince of Holstein-Beck, with orders to storm the village. As the first two Dutch battalions struggled across the Nebel they saw nine French battalions deploy from Oberglau and move forward to meet them. Worse still, Holstein-Beck observed a body of French cavalry from Marsin's army forming up to threaten his exposed right flank. The left flank of Eugene's cavalry, which formed the link with Marlborough's forces, was held by a brigade of cuirassiers under the command of Major-General Count Fugger. In response to Holstein-Beck's plea for support, Fugger stated that he could not act without express orders from Eugene himself. Holstein-Beck paid the price for this intransigence, for he was mortally wounded and fell into French hands as the Dutch regiments of Benheim and Goor were cut to pieces and unceremoniously thrown back over the Nebel in confusion. According to the account left by Dr. Hare: 'Nor did the Prince of Holstein-Beck succeed much better in the attack of Oberglau, for he had no sooner passed the rivulet with two battalions than the infantry of the enemy poured down upon him and charged him with great fury. The Irish regiments in the French service attacked those of Goor and Benheim, but they were so warmly received, that after a sharp dispute they were forced to retire. The Prince of Holstein-Beck was however wounded and taken prisoner in this attack.'

A second attack fared no better as French cavalry moved forward to threaten the exposed flank of the Confederate Horse as they struggled over the Nebel. For a moment it seemed that the French might have an opportunity to take control of the battle and split the Confederate forces apart with a decisive thrust from Oberglau. It might be expected that Marlborough's complete attention would have been occupied in supervising the main focus of his intended attack where his forces were crossing the Nebel stream, but Marlborough's staff officers acted as his eyes and ears all over the battlefield. As the crisis developed the Duke appeared amongst the disordered Dutch battalions before Oberglau, as Dr Hare's narrative relates: 'the Duke of Marlborough seeing things in some confusion, galloped up, and ordered forward three battalions, commanded by Brigadier Berensdorf, which had not yet been engaged, and having posted them himself, and ordered some squadrons under Major-Gen. Averocks to sustain them, and caused a battery of cannon to be brought forward.'

Following a personal request from Marlborough and ignoring the intense pressure on his own force, Eugene ordered Count Fugger's Imperial Cuirassiers to counter an advance by Marsin's cavalry. Catching the French horsemen in the flank Fugger drove them back and order

4. At Marlborough's request Imperial Cuirassiers charge into the flank of Marsin's cavalry, maintaining the link between the Confederate armies and keeping the garrison of Oberglau confined.

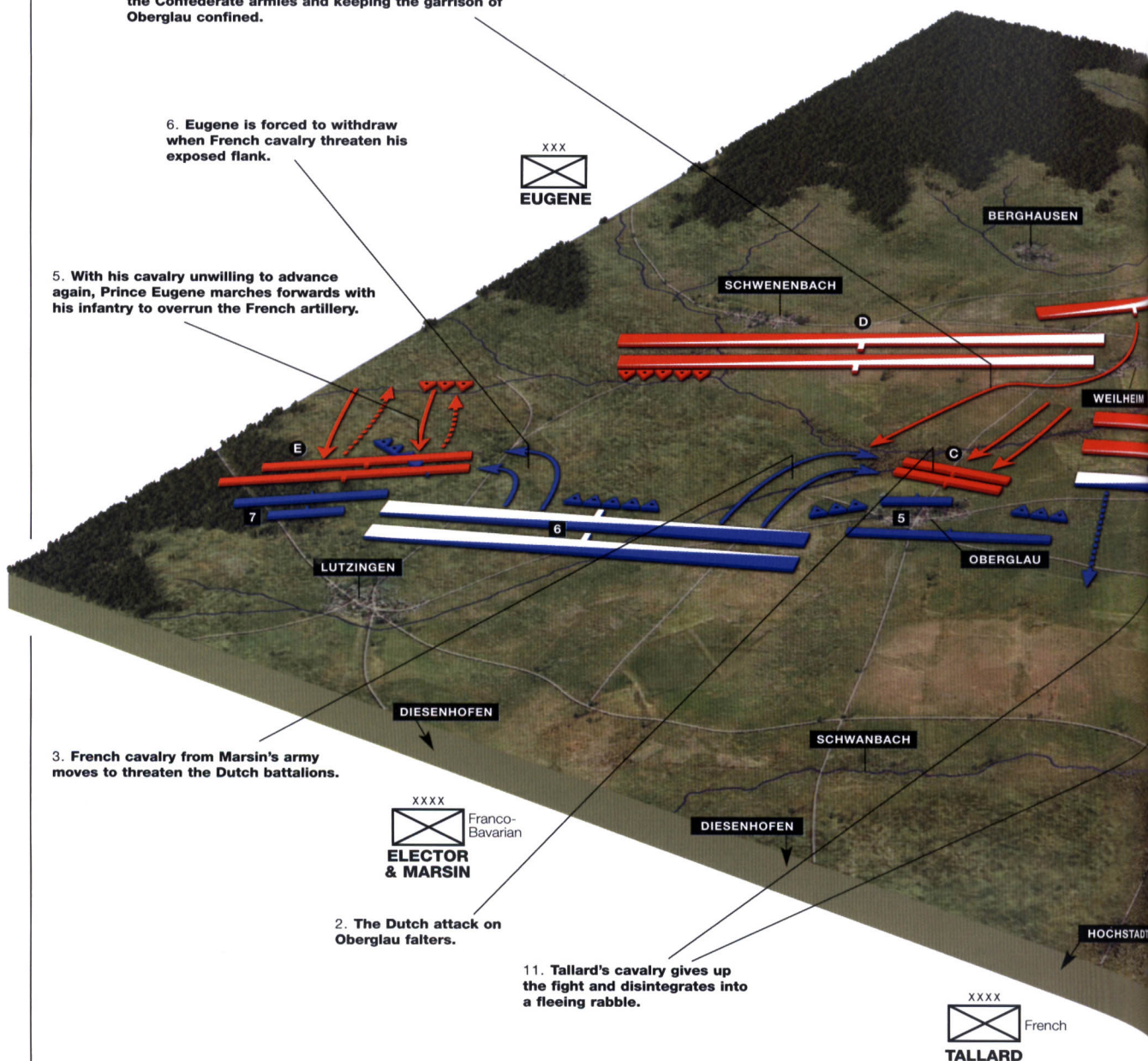
6. Eugene is forced to withdraw when French cavalry threaten his exposed flank.

5. With his cavalry unwilling to advance again, Prince Eugene marches forwards with his infantry to overrun the French artillery.

3. French cavalry from Marsin's army moves to threaten the Dutch battalions.

2. The Dutch attack on Oberglau falters.

11. Tallard's cavalry gives up the fight and disintegrates into a fleeing rabble.



THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM – MARLBOROUGH'S ATTACK

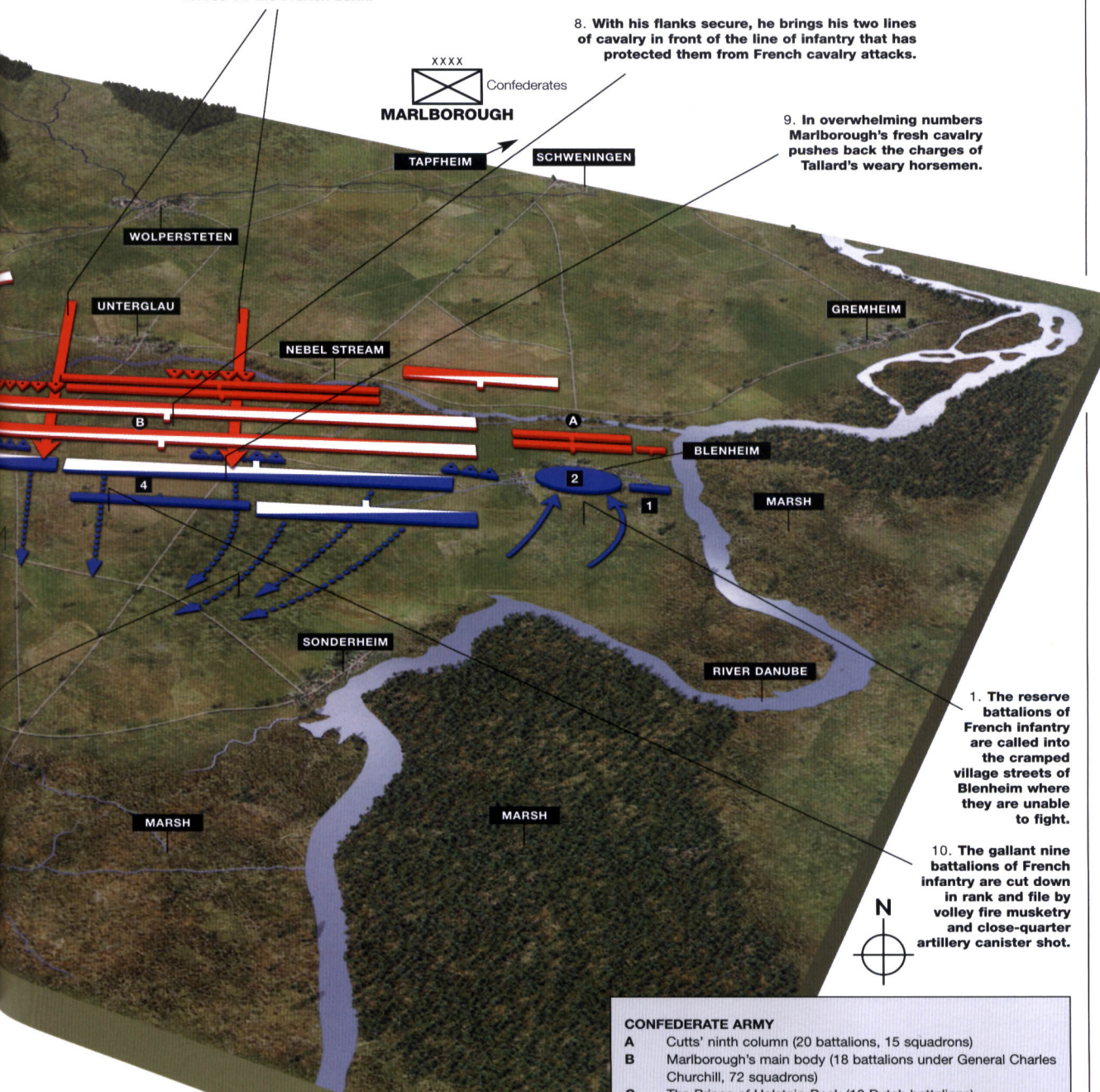
7. Marlborough moves across the Nebel, carefully establishing his forces on the French bank.

8. With his flanks secure, he brings his two lines of cavalry in front of the line of infantry that has protected them from French cavalry attacks.

9. In overwhelming numbers Marlborough's fresh cavalry pushes back the charges of Tallard's weary horsemen.

1. The reserve battalions of French infantry are called into the cramped village streets of Blenheim where they are unable to fight.

10. The gallant nine battalions of French infantry are cut down in rank and file by volley fire musketry and close-quarter artillery canister shot.



CONFEDERATE ARMY

- A Cutts' ninth column (20 battalions, 15 squadrons)
- B Marlborough's main body (18 battalions under General Charles Churchill, 72 squadrons)
- C The Prince of Holstein-Beck (10 Dutch battalions)
- D Prince Eugene's Imperial cavalry (74 squadrons)
- E Prince Eugene's infantry (7 battalions of Danes, 11 battalions of Prussians)

FRANCO-BAVARIAN ARMY

- 1 Dismounted French dragoons (12 squadrons)
- 2 French infantry (27 battalions, now including the reserve)
- 4 Marshal Tallard's main body (9 battalions, 64 squadrons)
- 5 Garrison of Oberglaue (16 battalions)
- 6 Marsin and the Elector's cavalry (67 squadrons)
- 7 French and Bavarian infantry (16 battalions)

was restored to the Confederate line. By 3 o'clock the garrison of Oberglau was bottled up by fresh Confederate forces and Marlborough was free to return to the forces making their way over the Nebel.

MARLBOROUGH CROSSES THE NEBEL

Throughout the morning the main body of Marlborough's wing had been preparing to cross the Nebel stream. Pioneers worked to level the banks, to build causeways out of fascines, to erect five bridges made of tin pontoons and to repair the old stone bridge that had been thrown down by the retreating French.

The infantry, under the command of Charles Churchill, Marlborough's brother, lay down in rank and file to escape the bombardment of the French artillery. As this was Sunday the regimental chaplains conducted services at the head of each regiment.

When news came at 12.30pm that Prince Eugene was ready to attack, the soldiers rose to their feet and dressed their ranks and files. As Hare describes: 'The Duke now sent for all the generals to give them his final instructions as to the disposition to be made for passing the rivulet. His Grace ordered General Churchill to draw up the two lines of foot so that their right should be near the village of Unterglau, which was then burning; and he directed the Prince of Hesse to place the two lines of horse between the two lines of infantry. Thus the first line of foot was in front, the first line of horse behind that, then the second line of horse, and then the second line of foot in the rear of all. The reason for drawing up the first line of foot in front of the horse was because it was to pass the rivulet first, and to march as far in advance on the other side as could be conveniently done, and then to form and cover the passage of the horse, leaving intervals in the line of infantry large enough for the horse to pass through and take their post in front.'

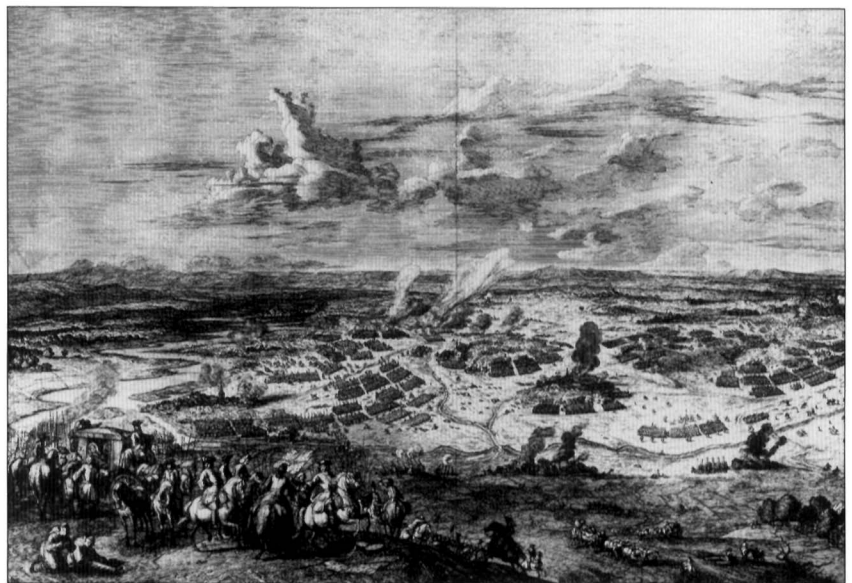
The crossing of the Nebel began with the first line of infantry, who drew up undisturbed by the French horsemen positioned on higher ground and well back from the banks of the stream. Tallard, who had told his fellow commanders that the more of the enemy who crossed the stream, the more would be killed, seems to have missed his moment, for soon the second line, formed of cavalry, was established across the stream. Dr Hare describes the difficulties faced by the Confederate Horse in crossing the Nebel: 'The Duke of Marlborough ... resolved to pass the rivulet immediately with all the cavalry; and accordingly they began to pass as fast as the badness of the ground would permit them. The passage proved more difficult to the English squadrons than to any of the others, especially to those of Lieut.-Gen. Lumley's regiment, for they being opposite to where the rivulet was divided, the regiment had to cross both branches and the meadow between, which was very soft and marshy. However they surmounted these difficulties and got over, but they met with so warm a reception, the artillery and the infantry posted in Blenheim firing upon their flank, whilst the cavalry charged them in front, that they were obliged to retire: but Bothmer's, Villars', and one squadron of Bulow's dragoons advanced from the second line into the first, which gave time to our squadrons to recover and to form again.'

The French now began a number of un-coordinated attacks. General Zurlauben again charged with the remaining Gendarmes only to be driven off and pursued by Von Bulow's Prussian Horse, who in their turn came under fire from the French infantry of the Régiment du Roi, which was stationed on the outskirts of Blenheim. Mérode-Westerloo took part in one of these attacks: 'The enemy began to cross the marsh which we had considered impassable, leading their horses by the bridles. So they were allowed to get over and remount right in front of our positions, and then calmly charge and attack us as if we were babes in arms.

'Our senior generals had been pleased to leave too great an interval between our first and second lines ... Notwithstanding, I charged with all the men I could rally, and I had the good luck to defeat my adversaries and push them back to the brink of the stream – but I had no wish to recross it, for I could see they still had five lines of cavalry. However, I failed to notice that they had brought their infantry well forward and they killed and wounded many of our horses at thirty paces. This was promptly followed by an unauthorized but definite movement to the rear by my men – and I, too, would have been obliged to accompany them had not two musket-balls killed my horse beneath me, so that he subsided gently to the ground and I with him.'

As the afternoon wore on, Marlborough's forces steadily strengthened their position on the west bank of the Nebel. As time passed some 8,000 cavalry and 14,000 infantry were drawn up in four lines, the first line consisting of seven battalions of infantry, the second and third of 72 squadrons of cavalry, and the last of 11 battalions of infantry. The first line of infantry protected the cavalry lines until they had re-formed their ranks on the firm ground on the French side of the Nebel. As soon as the cavalry was prepared, the first line of infantry battalions withdrew and the Confederate horsemen faced Tallard's 64 squadrons and nine battalions of infantry. The progress of the crossing of the Nebel was not entirely unopposed as Dr Hare relates: 'The Duke of Marlborough, seeing that the enemy were resolute in maintaining the ground occupied by their

This panoramic view of the battle of Blenheim gives some idea of the scale of the fighting in which over 100,000 men joined, and which raged all across the battlefield. In the foreground Marshal Tallard rests in Marlborough's coach while French infantry colours are presented to Marlborough. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)









THE FOOT GUARDS CROSSING THE NEBEL STREAM

(pages 74–75)

Grenadiers and musketeers of the First Foot Guards struggle to clamber up the marshy banks of the Nebel stream as they move forward to launch the first attack on the village of Blenheim and its surrounding defences. The Guards launched their assault against the barricades that linked the village to the banks of the Danube. The defences were held by dismounted French dragoons and bitter fighting continued until the end of the day. By the time of Blenheim the Grenadier (1) was seen as an elite soldier rather than as a specialist armed with explosive bombs. Grenades still had an important part to play in siege warfare but they were not used in open battle. The Grenadier cap (2) is often said to have been adopted to allow the Grenadier to throw his grenade without knocking his tri-corn hat off his head. Unfortunately for the veracity of this story, contemporary Grenadiers threw their grenades underarm. Both hands were needed to light the fuse of the grenade with a length of burning match cord and the Grenadier's fusil was carried across his back on a broad strap while he carried out this dangerous task. The earliest French Grenadiers wore broad-brimmed hats, but these made slinging the fusil over the head difficult. Caps with hanging cloth bags gave way to versions with small decorated raised peaks and in time the peak grew to the decorated front of

the Grenadier cap and the hanging bag was drawn up to form the cloth rear of the cap. Grenadiers had been among the first soldiers to be armed with the fusil (3), which ignited its main gunpowder charge by the spark produced by a flint striking on a steel plate. The alternative matchlock depended on a length of burning matchcord to fire. The Grenadier carried his three ready primed grenades in a leather pouch, but stray strands of burning match cord from a matchlock musket would have been a constant risk of accidentally igniting a grenade. The sergeant (4) wears clothing like that of the rank and file, but of a superior quality. Uniforms supplied by civilian contractors came in two sizes: too small and much too small. Regimental tailors unpicked the stitching of the coats and remade them to fit the owners. The sergeant's waistcoat can be seen at his neck. The old coat was taken apart, the cloth turned worn side inward and sown up as a waistcoat. The Ensign (5) struggles up the bank under the weight of his colour, which could be up to 6ft square. Infantry colours were made of a single thickness of taffeta with any decoration painted on. The musketeer (6) had come to dominate the infantry regiment and in 1704 pikemen were a rarity in European armies. The combination of the flintlock musket and improved close order drill movements enabled musketeers deployed in mass to dominate the battlefield. (Graham Turner)



Prince Eugene met with Marlborough as their armies pursued the forces of Marsin and the Elector. Marlborough held the majority of the trophies and prisoners, but shared the spoils of war with his friend.

cavalry, ordered the squadrons of dragoons that had advanced into the first line to continue there, and sent for five more squadrons from Major-Gen. Wood to strengthen them. These being come up with Brigadier Ross, passed the rivulet, and the Prince of Hesse posted them; and meanwhile the rest of the cavalry was getting over in several places. There was very great difficulty and danger in defiling over the rivulet in the face of an enemy already formed and supported by several batteries of cannon, yet by the brave examples given and great diligence used by the commanding officers, and by the eagerness of the men, all passed over by degrees and kept their ground. Lieut.-Gen. Lumley got over the English cavalry upon the left; Lieut.-Gen. Hompesch and Count Erbach that of the States in the centre; and the Duke of Wirtemberg, the Danish cavalry on the right. Lieut.-Gen. Bulow followed these with the second line, and stretched it out towards Oberglau, but near that village some Danish and Hanoverian squadrons were so resolutely attacked by the enemy, that they were beat back. They rallied however, and charged again, but with no better success, for they were outnumbered, and were also taken in flank by the enemy's infantry, whose fire they were unable to withstand till the Duke of Marlborough brought up some foot to sustain them.'

At 4.30pm the Marquis d'Humières, who had taken over command of the French cavalry from the injured Zurlauben, launched his first line Horse into the attack and pushed back Marlborough's first line cavalry, only to be driven off by the steady volleys of the Confederate infantry. Robert Parker relates Tallard's response: 'The front line of the enemy was composed mostly of the Gendarmery, on whose bravery Tallard had the greatest dependence. These therefore were pitched upon to begin the battle; and they indeed made so bold and resolute a charge, that they broke through our first line: but our second meeting them, obliged them to retire. This check allayed that fire, which the French have always been so remarkable for in their first onsets: and it was observable, that they did not make such another push that day; for when once they are repulsed, their fire immediately abates. And now our squadrons charged in their turn, and thus for some hours they charged each other with various

2. Marlborough now divides his cavalry, with part continuing the pursuit of Tallard's cavalry while 30 squadrons under General Hompesch advance to attack the flanks of Marsin's cavalry.

3. Prince Eugene advances with his cavalry in pursuit of Marsin.



10. Prince Eugene's cavalry halt when they see fresh Horse advancing on their left flank.

7. Abandoning their cannon, the French and Bavarian infantry from the wooded hills on the left flank withdraw in good order.

8. Franco-Bavarian cavalry cover the withdrawal of the infantry of the Elector's and Marsin's army.



6. The French garrison of Oberglau withdraws in good order.

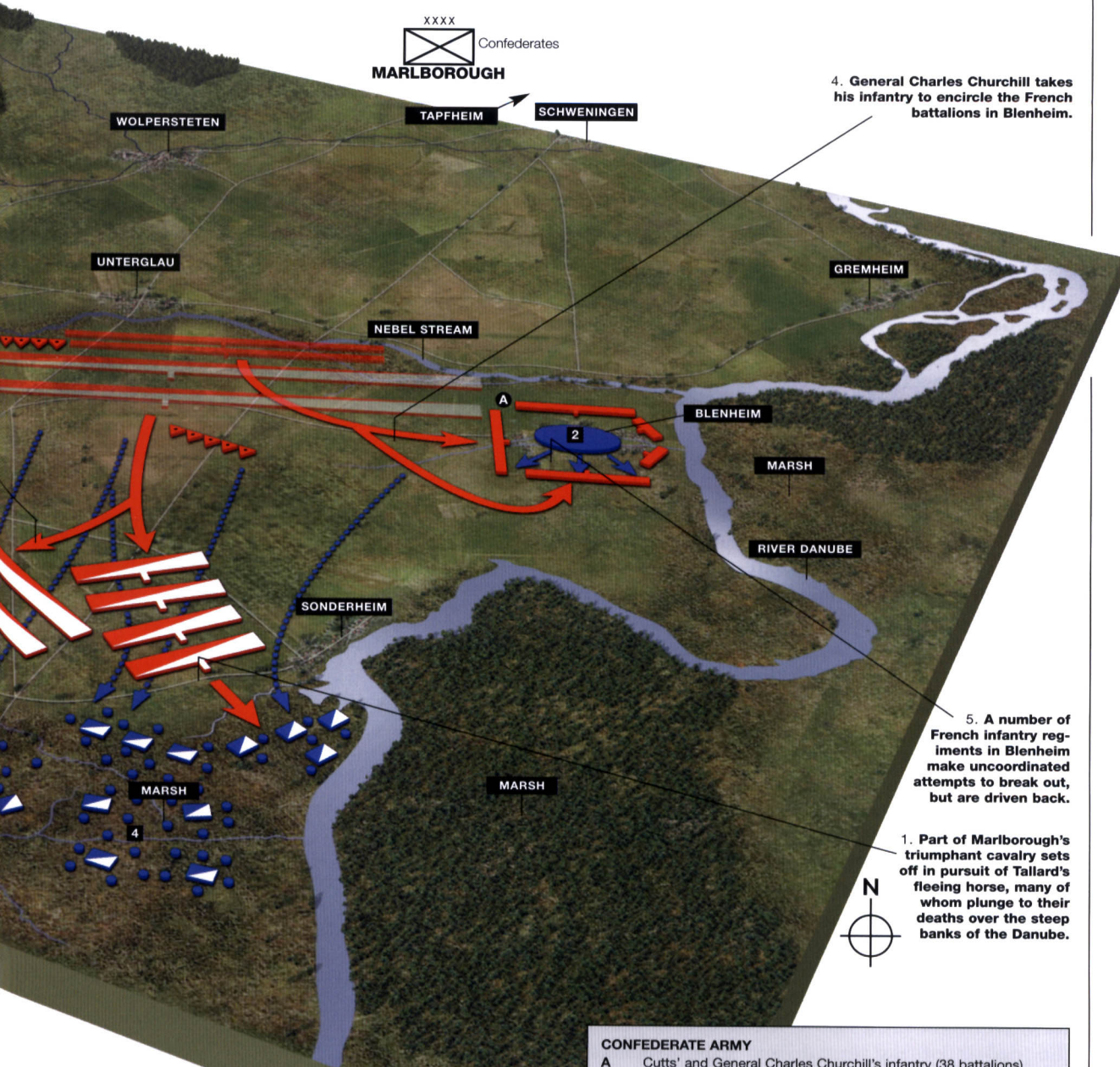


11. Marlborough's cavalry halt when they see Horse appear on their right flank, but this proves to be Eugene's horsemen.

9. Tallard's infantry have been destroyed or captured. His cavalry has been dispersed or driven into the marshes.

THE BATTLE OF BLenheim – FRANCO-BAVARIAN COLLAPSE

12 August 1704, 7.00–11.00pm, viewed from the south, showing the destruction and pursuit of Marshal Tallard's army and the retreat of Marshal Marsin's and the Elector's army.



CONFEDERATE ARMY

- A Cutts' and General Charles Churchill's infantry (38 battalions)
- B Marlborough's cavalry (72 squadrons)
- C The Prince of Holstein-Beck (10 Dutch battalions)
- D Prince Eugene's Imperial cavalry (74 squadrons)
- E Prince Eugene's infantry (7 battalions of Danes, 11 battalions of Prussians)

FRANCO-BAVARIAN ARMY

- 2 French infantry (27 battalions)
- 4 Marshal Tallard's broken and routed cavalry
- 5 French garrison of Oberglau (16 battalions)
- 6 Marsin and the Elector's cavalry (67 squadrons)
- 7 French and Bavarian infantry (16 battalions)

success, all sword in hand. At length the French courage began to abate, and our squadrons gained ground upon them, until they forced them back to the height on which they were first drawn up. Here their foot, which had not fired a shot, interposed, whereupon the Duke ordered his squadrons to halt. At the same time our foot came up, and Colonel Blood with nine field-pieces loaded with partridge-shot, fired on their foot, which obliged them to quit the horse, and stand on their own defence.'

Marlborough now began a steady advance, his cavalry retiring behind the supporting infantry when they came under pressure from the French cavalry, and working with the batteries of artillery brought forward by Colonel Holcroft Blood to drive off any French squadrons that stood against them. Only nine battalions of inexperienced French infantry of the Regiments de Robecq, de Beuil and de Belleisle were left to support the French cavalry, but they stood their ground and three battalions of de Robecq were able to advance to drive back the Confederates before them. However, the French lacked the co-ordination of the Confederates who re-formed and advanced once more. The gallant French battalions withdrew to form a defensive formation of mixed battalions in line and square, but without effective support from their cavalry they were cut down by disciplined volley fire from the Confederate infantry and grapeshot fired at close range from a battery of nine guns.

Marshal Tallard had planned for the garrison of Blenheim to march out to attack the flank of Marlborough's main body as it advanced from the Nebel towards the French cavalry. Tallard made some effort to order such a movement but given the account of Mérode-Westerloo it is unlikely that any but the Marshal in person would have been obeyed: 'I rode over to Blenheim, wanting to bring out a dozen battalions (which they certainly did not need there) to form a line on the edge of the stream supported by the cannons and the debris of my squadrons. The brigades of Saint-Segond and Monfort were setting out to follow me, when M. de Clerembault in person countermanded the move, and shouting and swearing drove them back into the village.'

Now Marlborough brought forward his second line cavalry that he had carefully husbanded for the critical moment. On fresh horses and flushed with the taste of victory the Confederate horsemen were eager to come to grips with the enemy. Dr Hare relates the climax of the battle: 'The Duke of Marlborough, having ridden along the front, gave orders to sound the charge, when all at once our two lines of horse



This view is unusual in that it depicts the close of the battle from a vantage point behind the French army. Blenheim is shown surrounded and Marlborough and his staff look on as Tallard's routed cavalry is pushed towards the Danube. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

moved on, sword in hand, to the attack. Those of the enemy presented their fusils at some small distance and fired, but they had no sooner done so than they immediately wheeled about, broke one another, and betook themselves to flight. The gens-d'armes fled towards Hochstet (which was about two miles in the rear), and the other squadrons towards the village of Sondersheim, which was nearer, and upon the bank of the Danube. The Duke of Marlborough ordered Lieut.-Gen. Hompesch, with thirty squadrons, to pursue those which had taken the direction of Hochstet, whilst he himself, with the Prince of Hesse and the rest of the cavalry, drove thirty of the enemy's squadrons down the banks of the Danube, which being very steep, occasioned the destruction of great numbers. But the greatest loss in this quarter was of those who were drowned in attempting to swim the river.'

The French troopers were exhausted by the numerous isolated charges that had been made during the afternoon, their horses were blown and the fire of the Confederate infantry had thinned their ranks. Outnumbered by fresh opponents and in spite of the urgings of Marshal Tallard, the French cavalry troopers began to slink away from their squadrons and soon the French cavalry were reduced to a struggling mass of horses and men carried along by their common desire to save themselves. This undirected rout carried some 3,000

French cavalry over a high bank and down into the swampy waters of the banks of the Danube. Mérode-Westerloo was a survivor of this disaster: 'However, in the meantime hordes of the enemy were pushing round our flanks, and we soon found ourselves faced by numerous enemy squadrons on no less than three sides – and we were borne back on top of one another. So tight was the press that my horse was carried along some three hundred paces without putting hoof to ground, right to the edge of a deep ravine: down we plunged a good twenty feet into a swampy meadow; my horse stumbled and fell. A moment later several men and horses fell on top of me, as the remains of my cavalry swept by, all intermingled with the hotly pursuing foe. I spent several minutes trapped beneath my horse.'

Mérode-Westerloo was more fortunate than some of his fellows, however, as Robert Parker relates: 'About 30 of their squadrons made toward a bridge of boats they had over the Danube: but the bridge (as it frequently happens in such cases) broke under the crowd that rushed upon it, and down they went. At the same time our squadrons pursued close at their heels, cutting down all before them; for in all such close pursuits, 'tis very rare that any quarter is given. In short, they were almost all of them killed or drowned; and the few that reached the far side of the river, were killed by the boors of the villages they had burnt.'

Marlborough's victory was celebrated in many forms including a set of playing cards depicting his campaigns in which he never lost a battle and never failed in a siege. (H. Margary)









THE FRENCH INFANTRY IN BLENHEIM SURRENDER

(pages 82–83)

The French army of Marshal Tallard was defeated in the open cornfields between Blenheim and Oberglaue. The French garrison in Blenheim faced a grim choice. The houses of the village (1), constructed of wood and timber, had begun to burn. Carrying their wounded, the French regiments were forced to withdraw towards the stone built church (2). An anonymous French general wrote on 30 August 1704: 'Our Men were soon alarmed, and the Colonel of the Royal Regiment bethought himself of saving his Life, and those of his Soldiers, whom he caused to lay down their Arms, and himself surrendered the Colours.' In fact the Royal Regiment had been reduced from 40 officers and 400 men to eight officers and 60 soldiers. Their commander, Mons. Desonville, gave way when Lord Orkney sent his aide-de-camp, Captain James Abercrombie, to parley. Abercrombie records how he attempted to pre-empt the surrender of the Royal Regiment's colours (3): 'I rode up to the Royal Regiment and Pulld the Colours out of the Ensign's Hands, and was slightly Wounded over the Arm by Him. I ask'd them if they did not Hear what the General offer'd. In a very little time hee submitted to become prisoners att discretion (being the only condition his Lordship would allow) provided they might nott be plundered, which was very punctually performed.' The French infantry regiments (4) in Blenheim were the cream of Louis XIV's army. They had known only victory throughout

their long history and they were determined to fight on. The French general continues: 'Mons de Siviére, being informed of this Disorder, called the regiments of Provence and Artois, and all that were resolute, to him, and, with Sword in Hand, drove the Enemy to the very Head of their Cavalry, and returned to the Village leisurely.' All attempts by the French to break out of the village were forced back by withering fire. Lord Orkney realised that his force of seven battalions and three or four squadrons was attempting to surround 20 battalions and 12 dismounted squadrons. Orkney sent Mons. Desonville with Abercrombie to seek a surrender. Mons. de Blanzac, the senior officer in Blenheim, insisted on being allowed to march with all his forces to join Tallard. Orkney informed Blanzac that Tallard was a prisoner and his army destroyed. In an outrageous bluff, Orkney stated that Marlborough himself had despatched 20 battalions to deal with Blenheim and the Frenchman gave way in despair. The French general relates: 'Mons. De Blanzac signed the Articles; but Siviére and Jourry refused to set their Hands to them. They were all disarmed, and had their Colours taken from them. Grief will not suffer me to carry this Recital any farther.' Colonel Seignier ordered the Regiment of Navarre to tear its colours into 'a thousand pieces' and the officers of the regiment succeeded in burning or burying several flags, (5) although others fell into the hands of the Confederates, to be displayed in triumph on Marlborough's return to London. (Graham Turner)

TOTAL VICTORY

The ruin of Tallard's army was now almost complete and the forces of the Elector and Marsin found their flank exposed and their line of retreat threatened as they once again came under determined attack from the forces of Prince Eugene. By 7 o'clock the defeat of Tallard's army was evident to Marsin and the Elector and they began to withdraw their forces in good order as Prince Eugene's squadrons proved too exhausted to pursue them. Parker relates that: 'The Duke ... ordered Lieutenant-General Hompesch to draw together what troops he could, and fall on their flank ... Prince Eugene by this time had got a good part of his troops over the morass, and was just ready to fall on their rear: but perceiving the squadrons under Hompesch coming down that way, he took them to be some of Tallard's squadrons drawing down to join the Elector; whereupon he halted, lest they should fall on his flank. The Duke also seeing Prince Eugene's troops so near the rear of the Elector's, took them to be a body of Bavarians, making good the Elector's retreat; and thereupon ordered Hompesch to halt. Here they both remained until they were informed of their mistakes by their Aides de Camp; and it was by this means that the Elector and Marsin had time to get over the Pass of Nördlingen which was just before them.'

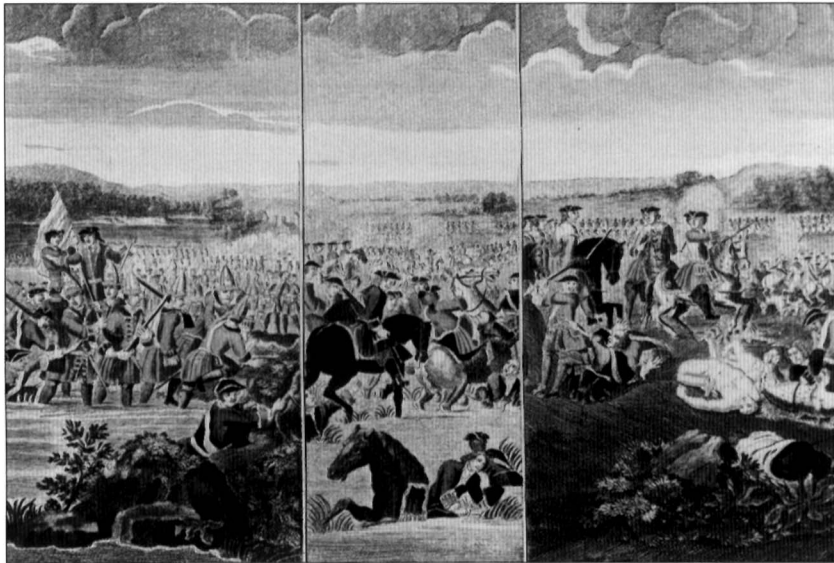
Tallard was not to be spared the ignominy of falling into the hands of his enemy, along with most of his army: 'Marshal Tallard was amongst those who endeavoured to escape by the village of Sondersheim, but finding no way to effect a retreat, he surrendered himself to M. Beinenbourg, aide-de-camp to the Prince of Hesse; and along with the marshal were taken some of his aides-de-camp and several other officers of note. They were brought immediately to the Duke of Marlborough, who desired that Marshal Tallard would make use of his coach; and his Grace immediately sent off Colonel Parke with a pencil note to the Duchess of Marlborough, containing the announcement of the victory.'

Blenheim surrenders

Marlborough now halted his advance and directed his attention to the 27 battalions still holding out in Blenheim, but his order to keep the French contained overnight was not needed. Confederate infantry had surrounded the village but could make little headway against the garrison. French attempts to break out were frustrated as any soldiers trying to clamber through their barricades were shot down before they could form up in open ground. An attack drove the French back into the village but the defenders still outnumbered the attackers. Captain Parker describes the stalemate at Blenheim: 'The enemy also made several attempts to come out upon us: but as they were necessarily thrown into confusion in getting over their trenches, so before they could form into any order for attacking us, we mowed them down with our platoons in such numbers, that they were always obliged to retire with great loss; and it was not possible for them to rush out upon us in

With the French armies in Germany and on the Rhine destroyed or disheartened, the aftermath of Blenheim was a series of successful siege operations as Marlborough advanced into French territory.



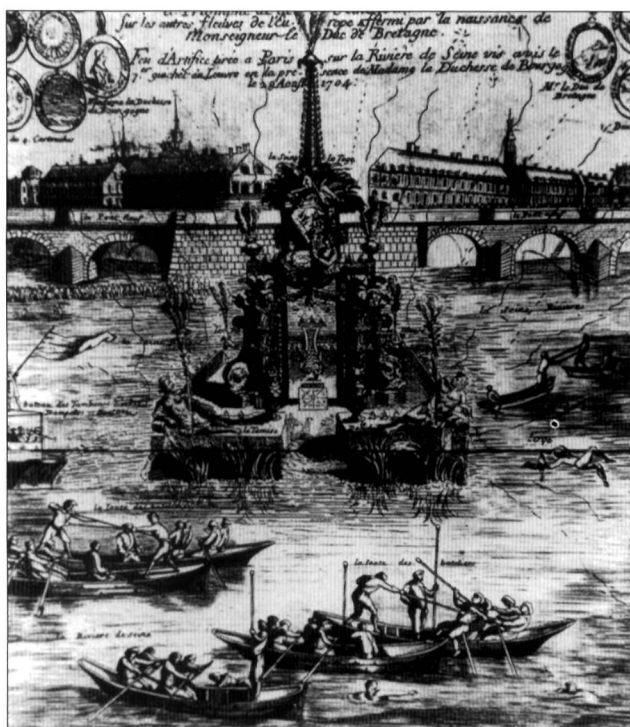


Three episodes from the battle of Blenheim. On the left the Foot Guards clamber up the bank of the Nebel during the first stage of the attack on Blenheim. Centre: Confederate cavalry struggle across the Nebel during Marlborough's main advance. In the distance French infantry make a heroic, but unsuccessful attempt to hold them back. Right: Prince Eugene attempts to rally his cavalry for another assault on the French and Bavarian forces around Lutzingen. Copy of a painting by Louis Laguerre. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

a disorderly manner, without running upon the very points of our bayonets. This great body of troops therefore was of no further use to Tallard, being obliged to keep on the defensive, in expectation that he might come to relieve them.'

Following the victory of Marlborough's forces and the destruction of Tallard's cavalry, fears remained that the large numbers of French infantry in Blenheim might sally out to attack the Confederate main body in the rear. In response the infantry under General Charles Churchill with supporting artillery, including howitzers, marched to surround the village in the expectation that the struggle to prevent a French breakout might continue all night and into the next day.

In the event the end for the garrison of Blenheim came quietly, for it was bravado rather than force of arms that caused the French to give up the fight. English officers called for a parley and boldly informed the French of the hopelessness of their position and demanded immediate unconditional surrender. After much argument, and against the wishes of a number of junior officers, the French surrendered and their soldiers marched out to pile up their muskets. Some of the officers of the infantry Régiment de Navarre were so incensed at the turn of events that they burnt the colours of their companies before marching out. Dr Hare continues the story: 'The repeated attacks which the enemy had already sustained however during several hours, the losses they had suffered by our cannon, and the great disorder they were put into by a battery of howitzers, the shells from which had set fire to the barns and houses, added to the circumstance of their commander, M. Clérambault, having fled, and been, as they were told, drowned in the Danube; and there being now no hope of relief – all these considerations together induced them to propose a cessation of hostilities, which being granted, Gen. Churchill gave orders to Lord Cutts to cease attacking, and Lord Orkney immediately sent in Captain Abercrombie, his aide-de-camp, on one side, as Lieut.-Gen. Ingoldesby did Lieut.-Col. Belville, of the Zell regiment, on the other. And Lord Orkney having met with the Marquis Desnonville, who had commanded the French regiment Royal, but who



News of the disaster at Blenheim was kept from Louis XIV, a dispatch finally reaching him during the performance of a waterborne pageant on the theme of the triumph of the Seine over the rivers of Europe.

was already prisoner, he was suffered to go into the town upon his parole to return immediately. This he did, bringing with him to Lord Orkney several French generals; but as they were discussing the terms of capitulation, Gen. Churchill arrived, and telling them that he had no time to lose (it being now past seven in the evening), and that if they did not lay down their arms immediately, he must renew the attack, they submitted, and they were with all the troops in Blenheim made prisoners at discretion.'

The surrender of Blenheim ended organised French resistance, but the armies of the Elector and Marsin remained a threat and as Dr Hare related, Marlborough remained alert through the night for any offensive action on their part: 'The field being now entirely cleared of the enemy, and night coming on, his Grace ordered the army to be drawn up, with the left to Sondersheim, and the right towards Morselingen, and that the soldiers should lie all night upon their arms on the field of battle. The several regiments

quickly possessed themselves of the enemy's tents, which were left standing, and which were found to contain great quantities of herbs and vegetables; and nearer to the Danube there lay about one hundred fat oxen ready skinned, which were to have been delivered out this day to the French troops, but which proved a welcome booty to the soldiers of the allied army after such long and hard service.'

The final word on the victory should go to Marlborough's own letter recording his triumph: 'We have cut off great numbers of them, as well in the action as in the retreat, besides upwards of twenty squadrons of the French, which I pushed into the Danube, where we saw the greater part of them perish. Monsieur Tallard, with several of his general officers being taken prisoners at the same time, and in the village of Blenheim, which the enemy had entrenched and fortified, and where they made the greatest opposition, I obliged twenty-six entire battalions, and twelve squadrons of dragoons, to surrender themselves prisoners at discretion. We took likewise all their tents standing, with their cannon and ammunition, as also a great number of standards, kettle-drums, and colours in the action, so that I reckon the greatest part of Monsieur Tallard's army is taken or destroyed.

'The bravery of all our troops on this occasion cannot be expressed, the Generals, as well as the officers and soldiers, behaving themselves with the greatest courage and resolution.'

AFTERMATH

Marshal Tallard, 40 generals, 1,150 officers and 13,000 common soldiers were captured, most of them from Blenheim. In material terms 60 cannon and 300 colours fell into Marlborough's hands together with the entire contents of the French camp. Robert Parker gave his own reckoning of the spoils of victory and the cost: 'The loss of the enemy was computed to be at least 40,000 killed, drowned and taken. The prisoners of note were, the Marshal Tallard, and 27 officers of the first rank, with 1,500 of inferior rank. The booty also was very great, 103 cannon and 14 mortars, 129 colours, 110 standards, 17 pair of kettle-drums, 3,600 tents, 15 pontoons, 34 coaches, 24 barrels of silver, and 30 laden mules, with all the plate and baggage of the officers.

'The loss on our side also was great, we had near 6,000 killed, and above 8,000 wounded. The troops under Prince Eugene were the greatest sufferers, and in all probability he would not have been able to force the Elector and Marsin from their ground, had not the Duke managed Tallard as he did; and indeed, had that conceited man been advised by the other two, it were hard to say how the day would have ended.'

Tallard was taken to Nottingham (in England) with his officers, but unlike them he was not ran-somed or exchanged as no Confederate officer of similar standing was captured during the long years of war. In 1711, at Queen Anne's command, he was allowed to return to France where he was received with commendable kindness by his old friend Louis XIV.

Marsin's remaining forces and the remnants of Tallard's army struggled back towards the Rhine carrying their wounded, claimed to amount to 7,000 men, including 1,000 officers. The Elector of Bavaria was offered the chance to continue as ruler of Bavaria but under the strict terms of an alliance with Austria. He responded that he considered the condition of a French Dragoon to be preferable to the dignity of a General of the Imperial Forces, but this apparent defiance was little more than pomposity as he still held his position of Vicar General of the Spanish Netherlands and lost no time in taking up residence there along with the remnants of his army.

Munich, Augsburg, Ingolstadt and the remaining territory of Bavaria quickly fell to the Confederates. The departing Elector left a garrison of 4,000 Bavarians to hold Ulm, but with no prospect of relief their surrender was only a matter of time.

On 3 January 1705, the 128 infantry ensigns and 34 cavalry standards captured at Blenheim were carried in triumph to be set up in Westminster Hall. Tragically none has survived. (H. Margary)



This victory medal justly acknowledges the part played in the victory by the cooperation between Eugene and Marlborough.



On 25 August Marlborough met with Eugene and Baden to plan their next moves. Marlborough proposed a campaign for 1705 that would carry the war deep into France by advancing along the valley of the River Moselle. This required the capture of the major fortress of Landau, which guarded the Rhine, and the towns of Trèves and Trarbach on the Moselle itself.

On 4 September the Confederate army gathered at Philippsburg on the Rhine. Marshal Villeroi positioned his forces, reinforced by the survivors of Marsin's army, to cover the line of the River Quiéch to the east of Landau. However, the fighting spirit of the French had been broken and at Marlborough's advance Villeroi withdrew first 20 and then 40 miles in a retreat which Mérode-Westerloo describes as resembling a full-scale rout. Landau was left exposed to the Confederate siege preparations.

The siege of Ulm ended with its surrender on 11 September and a vast amount of stores fell into Confederate hands, along with a number of siege guns that were soon at work battering the walls of Landau. Marlborough was not content to rest while the great siege continued its course and on 24 October he set out on a surprise march over difficult country and captured the town of Trèves before the French could reinforce its defences. Marlborough then moved on to besiege Trarbach on 4 November.

Landau surrendered at the end of November and with the fall of Trarbach on 18 December the campaign of 1704 finally came to a close. The route had now been opened for an advance along the Moselle, but Marlborough had not waited for the final act of the drama as on 14 December he had landed at Greenwich to the acclamation of Queen Anne and the country.

The effects of the victory at Blenheim were felt throughout Europe. With Vienna now safe the Austrians were able to send troops to Italy to strengthen their resistance to the French. The Hungarian rebels became more accommodating and moved towards a settlement with the Austrian Emperor. The effect on the German princes was demonstrated by their enthusiasm to promise increased contingents of troops for Marlborough's next campaign, and in the Spanish Netherlands the citizens of

Knaves are fools – for making the wrong alliance. The Duke of Savoy, who deserted France for the Confederates, mocks the Elector of Bavaria, who abandoned his Austrian allies for Louis XIV. (H. Margary)

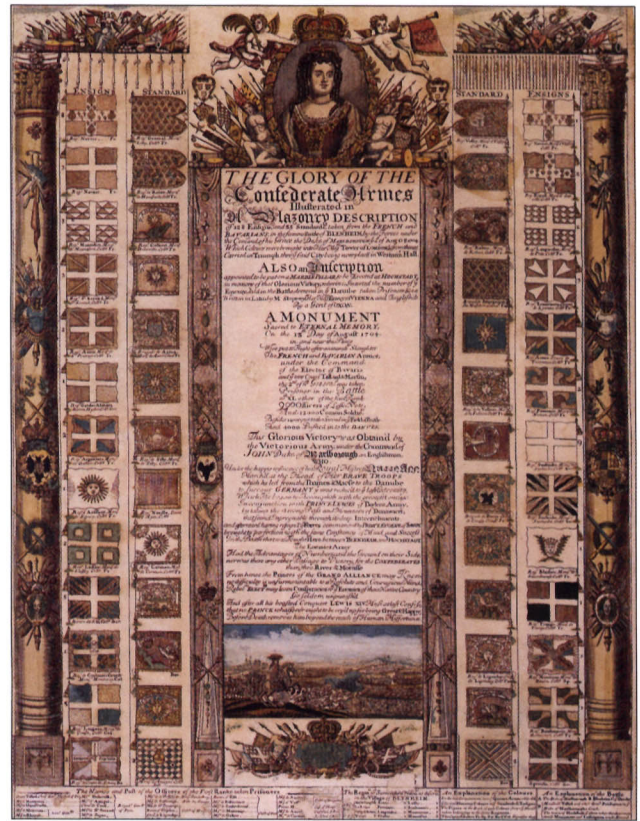


Ghent and Antwerp began to stir against the authority of occupying French troops.

Chamillart, minister to Louis XIV, wrote to Marsin: 'I should never have believed that the consequences of the day of Höchstädt would be so disastrous as they now show themselves to be; so much so that now, only a month later, the enemy terrify Alsace and have it in their own choice to besiege this place or that, as they judge proper.'

Robert Parker summed up the blow to French self-confidence occasioned by defeat at Blenheim: 'The true account of this battle was concealed from old Lewis for some time, but when he came to know the truth of it, he was much cast down; it being the first blow of any fatal consequence, his arms had received during his long reign. And he said in a passion, he had often heard of armies been beaten, but never of one taken before.'

Blenheim shattered the myth of French invincibility that had developed over the previous 50 years. At a stroke the Austrian Empire and the Grand Alliance were saved from collapse, and the French were thrown onto the defensive, never again to recapture the initiative. For the remainder of the war the French fought only to defend their territory. In one day the expansionist plans of Louis XIV were halted just as they appeared on the point of total victory. A story related by Robert Parker demonstrates that Marlborough was well aware of the change in the European balance of power that had come about: 'The Sunday following was appointed for a day of Thanksgiving; and after Divine Service, the army drew out to fire for the victory. On this occasion, Tallard, and the officers with him, were desired to ride out to see the army fire, which they did with much persuasion. As they rode along the lines, our Generals paid Tallard the compliment of riding next the army, and ordered all the officers to salute him. When the firing was over, the Duke asked Tallard, how he liked the army? He answered, with a shrug, "Very well, but they have had the honour of beating the best troops in the world." The Duke replied readily, "What will the world think of the troops that beat them?"'



An illustrated record of the flags captured at Blenheim was kept, providing valuable information about the structure of Tallard's army. (Courtesy of the Director, National Army Museum, London)

THE BATTLEFIELD TODAY



The pillar raised in Germany to mark the victory at Blenheim has long since disappeared, but a greater column stands at Blenheim Palace. (H. Margary)

Blenheim

As in 1704 Munich remains the capital of Bavaria and its international airport has services from and to all major destinations. It is possible to reach Donauwörth and Höchstädt by rail, but exploration of the battlefield requires self-drive transportation, as there is no single viewpoint that allows the visitor to take in the whole.

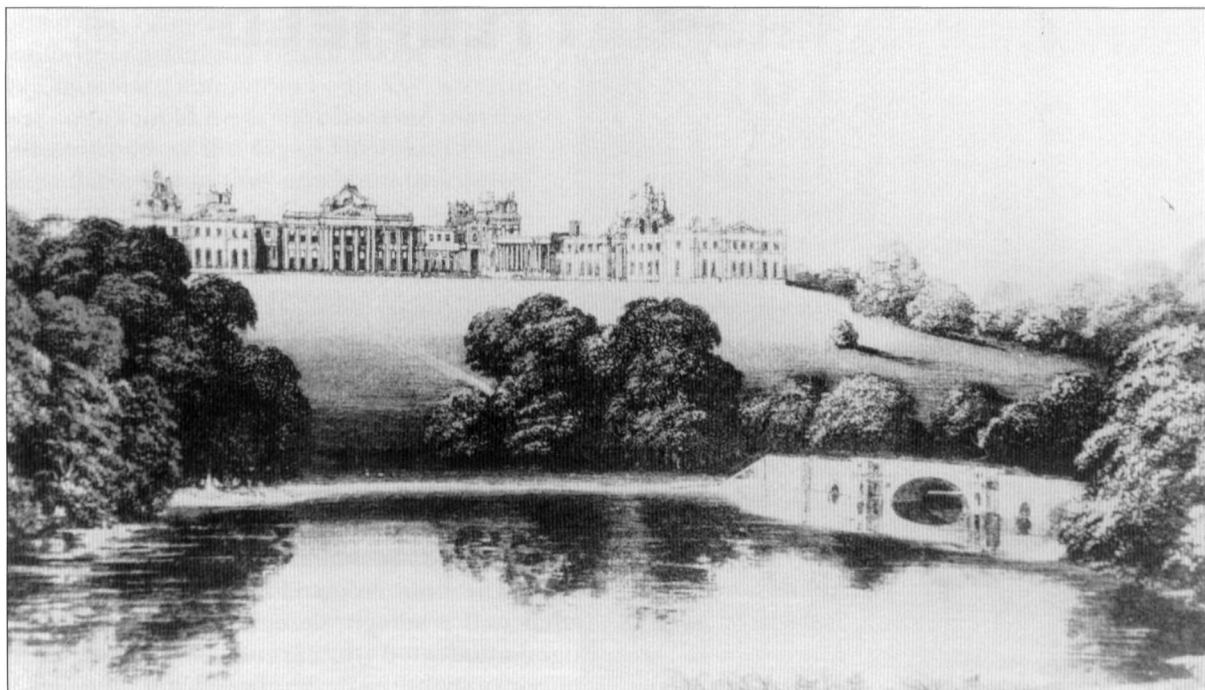
The walls of Blenheim church were rebuilt on their previous foundations in the late 1960s or early 1970s, but the wall surrounding the churchyard and some of the nearby buildings were probably extant at the time of the battle. The only recognition of the battle is an inscription on the church wall reading: 'Here, on August 13, 1704, Marlborough and Eugene defeated the French and Bavarians.' Although Blenheim stands on a slight rise in the ground and the English and Hessian battalions were able to shelter on lower ground by the banks of the Nebel stream, the village has expanded in that direction and it is difficult to visualise the approach up from the stream as seen by Lord Cutts' men.

Both the River Danube and the Nebel have been tidied-up over the years. The course of the Danube has been straightened to aid navigation by boats and barges and it is now a good deal further away from the village of Blenheim than were its twisting banks of 1704. Modern drainage has also removed the morass along the old banks where so many of the routing French horsemen came to grief. The old line of the once mighty river can still be traced, but it offers a very poor idea of the obstacle presented to the fleeing French in August 1704. From Blenheim (Blindheim on most German maps) Muhlstrasse runs off towards Gremheim where the banks of the Danube, old and new, can be explored along with the Apfelworthsee Lake, which follows the previous course of the river.

Turning northwest from Blenheim, Hauptstrasse follows the line of the Nebelbach. Drainage has also deprived the Nebel of its marshy banks and its route to the Danube is now more direct and regular.

A modern road and a railway line cut the plain on which the decisive cavalry action between the armies of Marlborough and Tallard were fought. The land remains under agricultural use and the impressive size and regularity of the plain of Höchstädt still demonstrates why Tallard considered it necessary to form up his cavalry on this ground rather than on the wings of his infantry as normal tactics dictated.

North of the road and railway line is the village of Unterglauheim, which offers more views over the Plain of Höchstädt, the picturesque spires of the village churches offering landmarks. Continuing out of the village a side road leads to what was once the farm of Weilheim, giving a view across to the next destination of Oberglauheim, where the Dutch



fought their action against the defending French and Irish battalions. The Oberglauheimerstrasse then leads on to Lutzingen. The area of marsh that gave Prince Eugene so much trouble is no longer in evidence but the rising of the ground as it moves towards the low wooded hills offers some view over the battlefield. The flat and open nature of the battlefield makes it clear how the limited visibility allowed commanders of regiments and brigades to become so involved in their own localised action that they forgot the greater battle.

Schellenberg

Donauwörth suffered greatly from allied bombing during the Second World War and little remains of its pre-war buildings. Fortunately the town has been rebuilt to preserve the medieval streets so that the character of the old town has not been entirely lost.

The Schellenberg, the hill of the bell, has also suffered, but more at the hands of post-war developers than by military action. The hill now features housing and a swimming pool occupies the site of the fort built by Gustavus Adolphus. The German army occupies part of the hill in an area closed to the public. A bypass, the curse of so many battlefields, runs through the area over which Marlborough's attacks were made but a number of indentations remain that may be the vestiges of defensive ditches.

The modern inhabitants of Donauwörth are not solely responsible for the damage to the battlefield as the defences were levelled as early as 1740. The townspeople expressed their gratitude that they had been largely spared the death and destruction that had raged around them by erecting a chapel and Calvary on the hillside. A notice at the foot of the steps reads: 'Over this place, where thousands of soldiers who at the battle of the Schellenberg in July 1704 met a hero's death take their rest, a Calvary was in 1721 erected by the Corporation Of Donauwörth.'

It was intended that Blenheim Palace should be built at public expense as an expression of the nation's gratitude to Marlborough. Loss of the Queen's favour was followed by a loss of funding and the Duke was forced to fund the completion of the building himself.

Blenheim Palace

In 1705 Queen Anne gave the Royal Manor of Woodstock to Marlborough in recognition of his victory at Blenheim and promised the huge sum of £240,000 with which to build a house. In 1705 work began, under the direction of Sir John Vanbrugh, on what would be known as Blenheim Palace in recognition of the Duke's status as Prince of Mindelsheim, a title and estate granted to him by the Austrian Emperor. However, quarrels with the architect and the fading support of the Queen meant that construction was suspended in 1712 as the promised funds did not appear. The palace was completed in 1722 after the Duke's return to favour and high office under King George I.

Blenheim Palace holds many treasures relating to the First Duke of Marlborough. Of particular interest are the preserved 'tavern bill' upon which the Duke wrote his hurried report of the battle, and the series of tapestries which commemorate some of his victories. The assault on the Schellenberg features in a tapestry entitled 'Dunawert' that hangs in the First State Room, and the battle of Blenheim is depicted in a double-length tapestry 'Hooghet' which hangs in the Green Writing Room. In the grounds of the palace stands a triumphal column that carries an account of the victory at Blenheim. There is also a very fine collection of model soldiers.

Blenheim Palace is located eight miles northwest of Oxford at the village of Woodstock. Details of opening periods and admission prices are available on the website www.blenheimpalace.com.

Marlborough House

Situated in Pall Mall and overlooking The Mall and St James's Park, Marlborough House was the London home of the Duke and Duchess from 1709 to 1711. In 1965 Marlborough House became the headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat and it is not open to visitors except by special appointment for small groups, and without appointment on a single day each year as part of London Open House weekend. Details are available from the website:

www.thecommonwealth.org.

The salon features three paintings of the battle of Blenheim by Louis Laguerre while the Ramillies and Malplaquet staircases feature paintings depicting scenes from Marlborough's victories of 1706 and 1709 respectively.

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INDEX

Figures in **bold** refer to illustrations

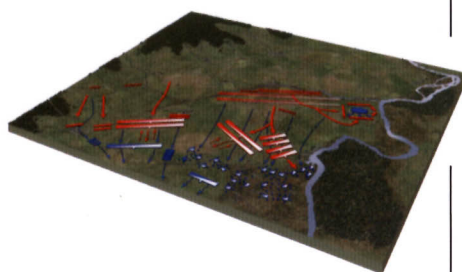
- Abercrombie, Captain 86
- Alsace 28, 31
- Anhalt, Prince of 41
- Anne, Queen of England 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 88, 93
- Augsburg 36, 88
- Averocks, Major-General 69
- Baden, Prince Louis-William, the
 - Margrave of **53**
 - career 16
 - at Ingoldstadt 37
 - at Lines of Stollhofen 29
 - medal **32**
- Bavaria
 - burning of villages 36
 - campaigns in 28
- bayonets, socket 20
- Belville, Lieutenant-Colonel 86
- Benheim, Major-General 33, 69
- Berensdorf, Brigadier 69
- Berwick, Duke of 17
- Black Forest 28, 32
- Blainville, Marquis de 51, 69
- Blenheim (village) 40, 44, 45, 48, 50–1, **67**, 85–7, **88**
- Blenheim, battle of (13 August 1704) **8**, **66**, **67**, **73**, **80**, **81**
 - aftermath 88–90
 - battlefield today 91–2
 - casualties 88
 - Confederate advance 42, **43**, 44
 - Confederate attack on Blenheim 52–3, 56–9
 - deployment of forces 44–6, 49–51
 - Eugene's attack across the Nebel 66–8
 - flags captured at **90**
 - Franco-Bavarians, collapse of **78–9**
 - Franco-Bavarians, deployment 49–51
 - Franco-Bavarians, plans 48–9
 - Franco-Bavarians, unpreparedness of 46–7, **57**
 - French infantry surrender **82–3**, 84
 - Holstein-Beck's attack on Oberglau 69
 - maps **58**
 - Marlborough's crossing of the Nebel **70–1**, 72–3, **74–5**, 76, 77, 80–1
 - Marlborough's plans 51–2
 - opening of 48, **54–5**
 - orders of battle 25–7, 42
 - Palmes' attack 59–60, **60**, **61**, 65
 - surrender of Blenheim 85–7
 - victory medals **89**
 - victory pillar **91**
- Blenheim Palace **92**, 93
- Blood, Colonel Holcroft 80
- Bonn, siege of (1703) **19**
- Boufflers, Marshal 12
- Brenner Pass 29
- Brisach, siege of (1702) 9, 12
- Bulow, Lieutenant-General 72, 73, 77
- Cadogan, William, Earl of 31
 - career 16
- Camisards* 28
- carbines **60**
- Catinat, Marshal 8
- Chandler, David 18
- Charles, Archduke 7
- Charles II of Spain 7
- Churchill, Arabella 13
- Churchill, Charles 31
 - at Blenheim 69, 72, 86, 87
 - career 16
- Churchill, Sir Winston 13
- Clérambault, Marquis de 51, 58, 59, 86
- Coblenz 29, 30, 31, **47**
- Coigny, Comte de 28
- Confederate army
 - Berensdorf's Brigade 69
 - cavalry **56**
 - commanders 13–16
 - Ferguson's Brigade 53, 56
 - Foot Guards 33, 41, 56, **74–5**, 76, **86**
 - Imperial Grenadiers 33
 - Imperial Horse 67
 - Ingoldsby's Regiment 33
 - march to battle **56**
 - Meredith's Regiment 33
 - order of battle 26–7, 42
 - Orkney's Regiment 33
 - plans 29–30
 - Rowe's Brigade 41, 53, 56, 59
 - Wilkes' Brigade 53, 56
- Cormack, Andrew 25
- Creed, Major 60, 65
- Cutts of Gowan, Lord 41, 44, 53, 57, 59, 66, 86
- Danish army 67–8
- Dapfheim 41, 44
- d'Arco, Comte 32, 66
- Deane, John Marshall 48
- Desnonville, Marquis 86
- d'Humières, Marquis 77
- Dillingen 32, 37, 39
- Donauwörth 32, 36, 37, 39, 40, 44, 91, 92
- Dutch army, infantry formations 22
- Edict of Nantes, revocation of (1685) 17
- Elmas Mohammed 15
- English army
 - cavalry 24
 - infantry regiments 24
 - musket balls 23
 - see also* Confederate army
- Erbach, Count 77
- Erlinghoffen 44
- Eugene of Savoy, Prince François **31**
 - attack across the Nebel 66–8
 - career 15–16
 - Italy, battles in 8, 15, 16
 - and Marlborough 32, **62–3**, 64, **77**
- Feversham, Earl of 14
- fodder 19–20
- foraging **51**
- Fort Augustus 33
- Franco-Bavarian army
 - Bavarian Electoral Guards 33, 36
 - commanders 11–13
 - Danube, crossing of the 37
 - Grenadiers Rouges Regiment 33, 36
 - order of battle 27
 - plans 28–9
- Freiburg 28
- French army
 - on campaign **50**
 - cavalry 24
 - dragoons **59**
 - drill 20, **41**
 - Gendarmes **45**, 53, 56, 59, 60, 65, **65**, 73
 - general's surcoat **69**
 - infantry formations 20–1, 22
 - infantry regiments 23–4
 - Régiment de Belleisle 80
 - Régiment de Beuil 80
 - Régiment de Navarre 86
 - Régiment de Nettancourt 36
 - Régiment de Robecq 80
 - Régiment du Rois 20, 65, 73
 - strength of 17–18
 - supply 18–20
 - weapons 21–2
 - see also* Franco-Bavarian army
- Friedlingen, battle of (14 October 1702) 16
- Fugger, Major-General Count 69, 72
- Godolphin, Sidney 30, 36
- Goor, General 33, 69
- Grand Alliance (the Confederate States)
 - early successes 9
 - formation 8
 - see also* Confederate army
- Grand Alliance, War of the (1688–97) 16, 22

- grenadier caps **36**
 Gustavus Adolphus 24, 92
- hand grenades **33**
- Harc, Dr 40–1, 42, 44, 51, 53, 59, 67–8, 69, 72, 73, 77, 80–1, 86, 87
- Hesse-Cassel, Prince of 12, 72, 77, 81, 85
- Höchstädt 36, 37, 39, 47, **67**, 81, 91
 battle of (20 September 1703) 13, 45
- Holstein-Beck, Prince of 69
- Hompesch, Lieutenant-General 77, 81, 85
- Horn, Lieutenant-General 33
- infantry squares **46**, **47**
- Ingoldsby, Lieutenant-General 86
- Ingoldstadt 37, 48, 88
- Italy, campaigns in 28
- James II, King of England
 death (1701) 8
 and Glorious Revolution (1688) 14
 'James III' (the Old Pretender) 8
- Joseph Ferdinand, Elector of Bavaria 7, 13
- Kane, Brigadier-General Richard 24
- Kehl 9
- Koontz, John 25
- Koprili, Mustapha 16
- Lake Constance 28
- Landau 28, 31, 89
 siege of (1703) 9, 12
- Lauingen 37
- Launsheim 32
- Le Tellier, Michel 17
- Leopold I, Emperor 7, 9
- Lines of Stollhofen 28, 29, 32
- Louis XIV, King of France **18**, **20**
 and French army 17, 20
 plans 28, 32
 reign 11–12
 and the Spanish succession 7–8, 12
- Louis, dauphin of France 7
- Louvois, Marquis de 17, 19
- Low Countries, campaigns in 28
- Lumley, Lieutenant-General 31, 59, 72, 77
- Lutzingen 40, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 66, 92
- Main River 31
- Malplaquet, battle of (11 September 1709) 16, 22
- Marie-Thérèse of Spain 12
- Marlborough, John Churchill, Duke of **25**, **27**, **29**
 career 13–15
 crossing of the Nebel **70**–1, 72–3, 74–5, 76, 77, 80–1
 march to the Danube 31–2, **34**
 meeting with Eugene **62**–3, 64, **77**
 plans 29–30, 51–2
 reputation 7
 on his victory 87
- Marlborough, Sarah, Duchess of 13, **28**, 85
- Marlborough House, London 93
- Marsin, Ferdinand, Comte de
 army 25
 career 12–13
 plans 39–40
 at Ulm 28
- Martinet, Jean 20
- Mary II, Queen of England 14, 15, **15**
- Maulweyer stream 45, 65
- Maximilian Emanuel II von Wittelsbach, Elector of Bavaria **22**, **23**, **89**
 alliance with France 9
 career 13
 quarrel with Villars 28
 in Spanish Netherlands 7, 13
- Mazarin, Cardinal 11, 17
- Mérode-Westerloo, Comte de 46, 47, 47–8, 52–3, 57–8, 65, 73, 80, 81, 89
- Meuse River 31
- military music **45**
- Millner, Sergeant 31
- Monmouth, Duke of 13, 14
- Mordaunt, Lord 33
- Morselingen 87
- Moselle River 29, 30, 31, 89
- Munich 88
- Munster 39
- muskets
 balls 23
 cartridge boxes 21, **39**
 flintlock 21, 22, 23, **40**
 matchlock 21, **39**, **40**
- Natzmer, Major-General 45
- Nebel stream 40, 42, 45, 49, 53, 66–8, 69, 72–3, 77
- Neckar River 31
- Nördlingen 39, 40, 46
- Oberglau 40, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 66, 69, 72, 77, 91
- Oldfield, Major 60, 65
- Orkney, Earl of 31, 33, 86–7
- Oudenarde, battle of (11 July 1708) 16
- Overkirk, General 29
- Palmes, Colonel Frances 59–60, 65
- Parke, Colonel 85
- Parker, Captain Robert 22, 23, 31–2, 47, 48, 50–1, 57, 59, 65, 77, 80, 81, 85–6, 88, 90
- Philip of Anjou (grandson of Louis XIV) 7
- Philippsburg 31, 89
- pikemen 20, **39**
- platoon firing 22, **46**
- pontoon bridges **52**
- Puységur, General 24
- Quiech River 89
- Rain 36
- Reichen River 42
- Rhine, campaigns in 28
- Riedlingen 44
- Ross, Brigadier 77
- Rowe, Brigadier 44, 53
- Sandizell 36
- Schellenberg, the
 storming of 32–3, **35**, 36–7
 today 92
- Schwenenbach 46
- Schwenningen 42, 44
- Sedgemoor, battle of (6 July 1685) 14
- sieges **11**, **19**, **85**
 artillery **49**
- Sieghardin, battle of (11 March 1703) 13
- Silly, Marquis de 40
- Sondersheim 81, 85, 87
- Spanish Netherlands
 Louis XIV's march into (1701) 7
 and War of Devolution (1667–68) 12
- Spanish Succession, War of the (1701–14), causes of 7–8
- Speyerbach, battle of (15 November 1703) 9, 12, 13
- Styrum, Count 29
- swords **42**
- Sybourg, Colonel Charles de 59, 65
- Szlanakamen, battle of (1691) 16
- Tallard, Camille d'Hostun, Comte de **21**, **68**
 army, disease in 32
 career 12
 infantry 25
 march to Blenheim **38**
 march to Villingen 28–9
 plans 39
 at Speyerbach (1703) 9, 12
 surrender and imprisonment 85, 88
- Tangier 13
- Tapfheim 42
- Toulon, siege of (1706) 13
- Trarbach 89
- Trèves 89
 siege of (1702) 12
- Turenne, Marshal 13, 17, 18
- Ulm 28, 29, 88, 89
- uniforms **44**
- Unterglau 46, 72
- Vanbrugh, Sir John 93
- Vauban, Sebastien le Prestre, Seigneur de **12**
The New Method of Fortification 14
- Vendôme, Marshal 29
- Villars, Marshal 9, 13, 16, 28
- Villeroi, Marshal 8, 31, 32, 89
- Villiers, Barbara 13
- Villingen 29
- Weilheim 46
- Wellington, Duke of 7
- Wilkes, Major-General 44, 53
- William II, King of England 8, 14, 15, **15**
- Withers, Major-General 33
- Wood, Major-General 53, 77
- Wratislaw, Count 29, 31, 37
- Württemberg, Duke of 67, 77
- Zenta, battle of (1697) 15
- Zurlauben, General 53, 65, 73, 77

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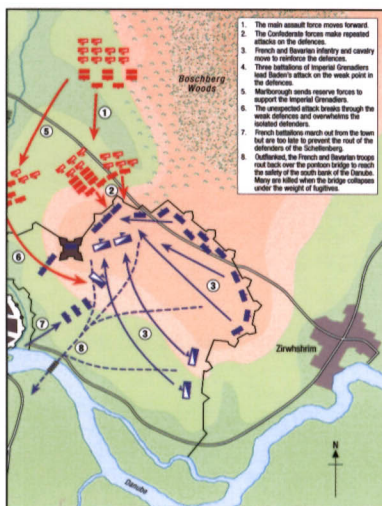
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