Manuscript plan with original hand-colour, dissected and mounted on linen.

SMALL SKETCH PLAN OF THE POSITION OF THE ARMIES BEFORE THE BATTLE OF LAUFFELD

Plan qui represente la position des Armees du Roy après la Bataille de Laveldt.

Author
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Publication date
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Publication place

Physical description
Manuscript plan with original hand-colour, dissected and mounted on linen.

Dimensions
310 by 300mm. (12.25 by 11.75 inches).

Notes
Small sketch plan of the position of the armies before the battle of Lauffeld.

The battle took place upon the 2nd July 1747, and was one of the largest confrontations of the Austrian Succession War, at least in the Western European theatre of the war.

The build up to the battle had been relatively slow. The allies had concentrated their forces around

Maastricht, but had been relatively idle in advance and were genuinely surprised to find the French were already nearby with their entire army. The French sought to take the city and therefore had to take the initiative and defeat the allies. This Maurice de Saxe did on 2 July. Awkwardly enough, allied high command expected no attack to be forthcoming and enjoyed a comfortable breakfast at Alden Biesen. Meanwhile, the French had reinforced their own left flank – opposite the best allied positions, and near Louis XIV's observation post at Herderen, and sent hussars out for reconnaissance. Early morning mist obscured the battlefield for a while, but at 9:30 the French batteries opened fire and allied command hurried back to their posts. The battle had begun.

The opening assault came by the infantry regiment d'Estrées, which took the village of Montenaken, clearing the way to Lafelt. A very weak defence convinced the French only light resistance would be offered, but the first two attacks on Lafelt were bloodily repulsed. More regiments were now sent, including marines and the Irish brigade, in addition to the troops who had already been repulsed. Ten artillery pieces were given to them as well. This time, the attack crossed the slope, broke past the hedges and penetrated deep into the village. But a counter attack led by Cumberland in person drove the regiments out of the village, where they maintained their position near the hedge. By now the additional artillery had arrived and started pounding the allied artillery supporting the village. At the fourth charge, the village was finally captured in full, although no breakthrough to the north was achieved. Because the French had mostly run out of ammunition, they were once again thrown out.

Maurice de Saxe realised that every moment the British and Hanoverians clung on to the village would strengthen their position, so he hurriedly sent three extra regiments to the village. Their commander, general Guerchy, sent some of his men to instead attack a battery that had been supporting the village's defence. With no backup, the artillerists quickly ran and the French obtained a beneficial height advantage, which they used to drive back allied reinforcements on the lower terrain. Hessian infantry and Dutch cavalry were also repulsed and French cavalry chased them down, in the process pushing back British and Austrian troops as well, before returning to their own lines. The allied army was in serious disarray, with parts of it already withdrawing. This withdrawal was prevented from turning into a rout by general Ligonier, commander of the British cavalry, who charged directly at the French lines in the first serious allied attack on the already established French position. This caused confusion in their ranks and won the allied army time to withdraw in reasonably good order. Ligonier's charge was, however, defeated, and the man himself was captured.

The French victory – although at a high cost – paved the way to the successful siege of the Dutch fortress of Bergen-op-Zoom.

Bibliography

Provenance

From the Library of the Dukes of Luynes.

Charles Louis d'Albert de Luynes (1717-1771) was a French nobleman and member of the House of Albert. He was the fifth Duke of Luynes as well as Duke of Chevreuse.

He took part in the war in 1733 in the War of the Polish Succession. He also took part in campaigns in 1735 and 1745, the latter in the War of the Austrian Succession, and was injured in combat at Sahay at the head of the Dragoons. He participated in the attack of Prague in 1742, and also assisted in various sieges and battles of the era.

In 1754, he was created a Colonel General of the Dragoons. From 1757 to 1771, he was the Gouverneur de Paris (Military governor of Paris), an ancient and prestigious rank representing the

king in the capital. He also was created a Knight of the Order of the Holy Spirit at Versailles on 2 February 1759.

He died in Paris in his Hôtel. He was buried at the Chapelle de Saint Jean l'Évangeliste at the Église Saint-Sulpice, Paris.

Price:

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