

Marengo and the Journal of General Jean Boudet

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Best Archival Paper

Following my translation of General Guénand's notes on the battle of Marengo, I present the 1800 campaign journal of General of Division Boudet, translated into English and published fully for the first time.

This journal is a daily summary of the movements and operations of Boudet's division during the 1800 Marengo campaign. It commences on 23 May when the division passes into the Italian side of the Alps, and ends on 16 June following the Convention of Alessandria between the two rival armies. The journal's account of the famous battle of Marengo on 14 June 1800 is one of the key primary sources of the battle, describing Desaix's arrival on the field, and the fierce fighting in the evening.

The battle of Marengo and the feats of the 9th Light infantry during the battle have long been an area of particular interest for me. This journal was one of my first research targets in the late 1990s when I first began to research Marengo and the regimental history of the 'Incomparable' 9th Light Infantry.

Boudet's journal is one of a number of handwritten manuscripts bound into a single volume at the Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), at Vincennes. The manuscript (MR 1610) bears all the hallmarks of being written daily, or at least very soon after the campaign, perhaps from notes taken on the way.

Having collected a great many documents relative to the campaign in the early twentieth century, Captain Gaspar de Cugnac held Boudet's journal in high regard, and in his opinion, credited Boudet with great sincerity. Boudet's untimely demise in 1809 from gout (some have suggested suicide), prevented him from enjoying the same opportunities as Savary, Kellermann and Marmont who published their accounts of the great battle in later years, albeit with political bias and self-aggrandisement influencing their memory of events. Instead Boudet's Journal remains raw; poorly punctuated, almost an unedited first draft, or dictation of the facts as he then perceived them, more than two centuries ago. Although sometimes difficult to read, they are all the more authentic and valuable in their unedited state.

Several remarks on the translation should be noted. The translation attempts to follow the French original in form as closely as possible. For ease of reference, place names to their modern in form, and the original French republican calendar dates are given alongside their Gregorian equivalent. Several additional reports from Boudet and his chief of staff have also been appended to provide further information about the division's feats on campaign.

Boudet's account of the battle of Marengo is critical for understanding the second half of the battle. He allowed himself one piece of artistic license, in his relation of Desaix's last words (very different from those Bonaparte attributed to him). Boudet would not have witnessed this event and his wound was such, death was very likely instantaneous. Boudet would have spoken to senior officers who were in close proximity, and it is likely they attributed Desaix with such selfless last words to make his passing appear more glorious than was the case. In fact, the oral history of the 9th Light indicates Desaix received his fatal wound while riding

up to the skirmish line to view the Austrian troops he was about to come up against. His death passed without ceremony and his body was quickly stripped by French troops.

One significant omission in Boudet's account is the battle casualty figure. Throughout the campaign Boudet scrupulously recorded his losses, yet no mention is made after Marengo. Boudet probably lost at least a third of his strength during the evening battle. Although he might not have had an accurate breakdown of losses by the time of completing his journal, he would have known how many, or how few, of his men were present for duty the morning after the battle when his division reformed. He admitted heavy losses at Piacenza earlier in the campaign, but not at Marengo. Were they too terrible to admit?

Crucially the account describes, in detail, the movements of Desaix on the morning of 14 June, and it dispels, irrevocably, the myth Desaix marched toward the sound of guns without receiving orders. This myth has been perpetuated for too long, and has as an accusation against Grouchy for not countermanding his orders and doing the same at Waterloo fifteen years and four days later. If nothing else, this document is important for sweeping away this popular misconception.

Jean Boudet was 31 years old at the time of the campaign. A native of Bordeaux he had served in the military since 1785 and seen action in the Pyrennes, Toulon, the Vendée and in Guadeloupe, where he made his reputation recapturing the island from the British. Serving under Brune in Holland, Boudet distinguished himself leading an assault at the battle of Castricum (6 October 1799) and found himself in Paris at the time of Bonaparte's coup d'état.

Boudet was given a division in the Army of the Reserve which initially gathered around Dijon then the banks of Lake Lemman in Switzerland. The situation report below lists the strength of the division at the outset of the campaign. The 9th Light Infantry was a strong half-brigade, with an experienced cadre of veterans. It had missed the disastrous campaigns of 1799 while forming part of the Paris garrison. The 30th and 59th Half-brigades were mostly formed from conscripts. The 30th Line was composed of two battalions only, the third forming part of the Army of Italy. This half-brigade suffered heavily from desertion on the march from Paris to the Alps; however it acquitted itself well in battle.

Situation of the Reserve Army on 19 Floréal Year 8 [9 May 1800]

BOUDET General of Division <i>Aides de camp.</i> MOREAU BAGUET Louis MUSNIER	DALTON Adjutant General.	MUSNIER General of Brigade.	Light	9th	2,542	6,421
		GUENAND General of Brigade.	Line	30th	1,500	
				59th	2,379	

Report of the marches and operations of the division Boudet, from its departure from Aosta up to the surrender of the enemy army, called the convention of Alessandria or armistice of Marengo on 27 Prairial [16 June].

Army of the Reserve

29 Floréal [23 May], my division was ordered to Aosta to get closer to Arnard, a village situated a league below the fort of Bard.

The 30th [20 May], my division was charged with encircling the fort of Bard, which is in a narrow gorge, which it masters on all sides. It replaced Watrin's division which went forward. During the night, I placed two howitzers to fire at the fort.

1 Prairial [21 May], my division received the order to go to a quarter of league beyond Bard, to Donnas; it avoided the fire of the fort by passing the mountain over which Watrin's division had already crossed, the passage of which was excessively painful and which we had had, until then, considered impracticable.

The 2nd [22 May], several detached corps were used to trouble the enemy by musket fire. On the night of the 2nd to the 3rd, my division facilitated an entry into the town of Bard and opened communications with the army which was on the other side.

The 3rd [23 May], Lieutenant General Lannes, having reached Ivrea with his advanced-guard, composed of Watrin's division, wrote to me, inviting me to follow his movement, to assist his attack if necessary; but his advanced-guard had been entirely successful by when I arrived, and my division remained on the road to Verceilli, where it remained the 4th and 5th [24-25 May].

The 6th [26 May], the advanced-guard of Lieutenant General Lannes had an order to attack the enemy on the road of Turin, and I received one to march and serve as reserve. The advanced-guard delivered combat and I supported it in this affair which is known under the name of the battle of Chiusella.

A squadron of the 11th Hussars, from my division, 80 men strong, commanded by Citizen Ismert, Chief of Squadron, charged the enemy and received several charges from them while showing much valour. He had 14 men more killed than wounded. I had served as a reserve with my infantry at the village of Romano and, placed in front of this position, I received the order to pursue the enemy. I did this until on the summit of the mountains which border Foglizzo. The haste of their retreat, and the order which came to me arresting my march, prevented me from striking them with advantage; they lost some men and horses and I had only a chasseur of the 9th wounded.

The 7th [27 May], my division, under the orders of Lieutenant General Duhesme, arrived at Santhia.

The 8th [28 May], my division went to Verceilli, where had returned the advanced-guard commanded by Lieutenant General Murat, who also had under his orders Monnier's division.

The 9th [29 May], Lieutenant General Murat before proceeding with the passage of the Sesia, decided to go to and take the ford almost in front of Palestro, in order to turn the enemy,

whereas I would pass on the left of Verceilli and would go to Borgo Verceilli. Monnier's division was insufficient for Lieutenant General Murat's movement, [so] I loaned him my first brigade, formed by the 9th Light Half-brigade and commanded by General Musnier; I reserved for myself my second brigade made up of the 30th and 59th Half-brigade and commanded by General Guénand. The 9th Light opened the ford for the column of Lieutenant General Murat. It had a lot to do and struggled to overcome the strength of the current; four carabiniers of the first file were carried away and drowned. This did not intimidate the rest of the troops. They were then helped across by the cavalry and by several servicemen, officers and soldiers, who, knowing how to swim, were of very great help. The passage of Lieutenant General Murat forced the enemy to abandon the bank completely, and this was prudent because, following our dispositions, he could not have failed to be taken, if he had wanted to hold. The passage which I executed on the left of Verceilli experienced no less difficulty than that of the right, by the rapidity of the current. A platoon of six hussars, at the head of which was my officer of correspondence Dierx, was swept away and fell; a man and a horse disappeared and the others escaped by chance. The aide-de-camp of General Guénand and a soldier passing with the column, also died; we owed our safety to several servicemen in the cavalry and to the efforts of the swimmers, officers and the soldiers, notably in those of my aide-de-camp Bagnet. The reconnaissance by some enemy vedettes placed on the other bank, hurried the execution of the passage. I saw my troops in danger and I crossed the Sesia four times to speed up their movement and inspire them with the confidence that the circumstances made necessary.

The 10th [30 May], the division entered Novara, and camped on the glacis of the town.

The 11th [31 May], the advanced-guard of the Lieutenant General Murat went to Galliate to make the passage of the Ticino. The first half-brigade of my division went to the bridge in front of Porto-di-Buffalora, and my second half-brigade followed, under my orders, the movement of the advanced-guard of Lieutenant General Murat. The enemy, placed on the opposite bank of the Ticino in front of Galliate, was very well entrenched and had several artillery pieces. Musket fire was engaged and the enemy supported his with a strong cannonade. The light artillery, consisting only of two 4 pounders served by the gunners of the Guard of the Consuls, came and took position in front of their battery, and, supported then by two pieces from my division, they obliged the enemy to leave. This movement, in addition to some corps of infantry placed in small boats, forced him to precipitate his retreat. The advanced-guard then had an infinity of obstacles to overcome to bring and carry in their arms the boats; after which, it crossed the river little by little. Meanwhile, the enemy who had just evacuated the bank of the Ticino, received a reinforcement where was found General Loudon in person, and became established at Turbigo. But his position, although formidable, was soon taken by Monnier's division, which formed the advanced-guard, and in which were united the grenadiers of my second half-brigade which had crossed the river with my Aide-de-Camp Moreau. The enemy lost in this action 700 men, among whom 400 were taken prisoner. General Guénand, with his brigade, made a stand in front of Turbigo. Having contributed with my second half-brigade to assure the passage of the Ticino, in front of Galliate, I left my troop and transported myself in front of Porto-di-Buffalora, where was my first half-brigade under the orders of Lieutenant General Duhesme, to execute the passage on this side. But the enemy had broken all the bridges which are on both branches of the river at this part; they had also sunk all the boats and we were obliged to go back and get some from a great distance. We still used for this operation the swimmers of the 9th Light, who executed it with a lot of zeal and courage in spite of the speed of the current and the loss of one of their companions

who drowned. We were able to cross in the evening only a detachment of 15 men which went to Buffalora and chased away a small enemy party.

The 12th [1 June], the remainder of the 9th Light crossed the Ticino and met up at Buffalora, as well as my second half-brigade which came from Turbigo. In the evening, having had the order to return to Lieutenant General Murat, my division followed his advanced-guard and came to take a position in front of Corbetta, on the road of Milan.

The 13th [2 June], both divisions under the orders of General Murat, at the head of which was the First Consul, entered in Milan. The division forming the advanced-guard encircled the citadel of Milan and I camped mine in front of the city, on the road to Lodi.

The 14th [3 June], the division of general Loison and mine, combined under the orders of Lieutenant General Duhesme, were ordered to march on the road to Lodi.¹ The 9th Light formed the advanced-guard. I went at the head of its first battalion to reconnoitre the position of the enemy and I found its outposts in front of Melegnano. There, they engaged in an action which became rather hot by the obstinacy with which they defended the bridge built on the river Lambro, which cuts the village. The enemy was chased away and pursued until Tavazano, where I had the order from Lieutenant General Duhesme to stop. The strength of the enemy in this affair was 1,200 infantrymen and 800 cavalry. His loss was 20 men, as many killed as wounded, and 11 from the first battalion of the 9th Light.

The 15th [4 June], my division marched on Lodi; the enemy had evacuated it and recrossed the Adda. I appeared, with some detachments of infantry, in front of the bridge an arch of which was cut. There was engaged a light fire of musketry, under the protection of which we worked on the restoring the bridge and the enemy, not waiting for this to be finished, abandoned the other bank. The squadron of the 11th Hussars' was charged with its pursuit and returned with about fifteen prisoners. I then took a position with a part of my division in front of the bridgehead of Lodi and the other part remaining on this bank.

The 16th [5 June], having received the order to bring my division under the orders of the Lieutenant General Murat, I formed his army corps to which were joined two brigades of cavalry. We carried ourselves on the road to Piacenza. The squadron of the 11th Regiment of Hussars, having had the order to scout our march, expecting the position of the enemy at Pizzighettone, met the first vedettes in front of Fombio and chased them up to the enemy forward post, placed in the village which precedes the bridgehead. There was engaged a small action in which ours made four prisoners and pursued the rest up to bridgehead, from where they were obliged to return, the enemy having appeared in force and having fired several shots of canister. My division, which had forced its march, arrived in front of the bridgehead of Piacenza, defended by 12 pieces of artillery and 5 to 600 infantrymen. There was, besides, on the other side of the bank, the same quantity of artillery which took in the flank all the points on which we could present ourselves. Following the dispositions taken in cooperation with general Murat, I formed three columns of attack. Those of right and left consisted of the 9th Light and that of the centre of three companies of grenadiers and of the 1st battalion of the 59th Half-brigade. The first two columns had to follow the river and carry themselves on the flank of the bridgehead, whereas that of the centre had to only show himself and act on the

¹ Boudet omits to mention he left General of Brigade Guenand with the 30th Line at Milan to assist with the blockade of the citadel. They would not be reunited until 12 June.

enemy position at the moment he would have been shaken. The formidable artillery which was set against us had made a frontal attack too murderous. The left and right columns operated their movements, but they met on the flanks of the bridgehead an extremely lively artillery fire to which they were obliged to present their front for one quarter of an hour before approaching; they suffered, besides, the fire from the other bank which took them in the flank. Such a defence made put back the attack to give it fully at a moment less favourable to the enemy; it had to be at night. It did not prevent a party of the troops led by me, General Musnier and Adjutant General Dalton, on the various points of attack, gaining with impetuosity, until right up to the bridgehead, at pistol short range. From there, covered by some ditches and retaining walls formed by nature, they made a fire of musketry so lively, so fortunately served against those who were in the bridgehead, that the enemy admitted himself that, by this fusillade, he had lost 330 men. Nightfall was waited for and measures were taken to take out the bridgehead, when the enemy, after a steady and obstinate fire from all his artillery, evacuated his pieces with an extreme precision, always protected by his artillery on the other bank. When the artillery left in the bridgehead stopped firing, the moment was seized by an officer and five soldiers who, being very near, anticipating the dispositions we had made for the attack, entered the bridgehead where they found another 80 men whom they took prisoner. These, seeing themselves at first surrounded only by six men, wanted to resist, but the boldness and the firmness of the officer and five soldiers who had gone forward so valiantly, imposed on them long enough for a reinforcement to arrive. The enemy, who was doubtless afraid that while waiting for the arrival of the corps which defended the bridgehead, the Frenchmen might arrive with them, preferred to sacrifice them; they opened the bridge and let to go a part of the boats which supported it. I cannot give enough praise to all the servicemen and the officers and the soldiers who took part in this affair. The perseverance with which the troop bore canister fire such as it did has not been seen, and the fearlessness with which it faced it, gave our enemies a high opinion of their valour. The division lost 500 men, more killed than wounded, the largest part by cannon fire.

The 17th [6 June], the enemy continued all day long a fire of artillery which he directed on the positions he presumed were occupied by us. Two pieces of artillery of my division, with two howitzers served by the gunners of the Guard of the Consuls, responded and had several fortunate hits. Meanwhile, General Murat who, in agreement with me, had decided on crossing the Po, sent Adjutant Generals Dalton and Berthier, one on the left and the other on the right of the river, to try to gather boats for making a crossing. Adjutant General Dalton travelled the river at a distance of approximately 10 miles, and, by a particular activity and intelligence, he brought back a dozen small boats to the village of Nocetto, a league distant from the bridgehead of Piacenza.

At night, having presumed the enemy would try to evacuate, we wanted to make sure of taking every advantage to harass his march and discover all his movements. So, we feigned a passage in the environs of the bridgehead. The enemy responded with a lively and maintained artillery fire which put out of action several men from the 59th. At about 11 o'clock, he sent a parleyer to ask that we fired no more shells because they had already set on fire a house in the city of Piacenza, the neutrality of which must be respected. He was answered that the point at which we fired was that of our attack, and one from where the enemy directed his fire; that being so, the proposal was singular and could not be listened to, that beforehand they not consented to not fire any more themselves.

The 18th [7 June], the division started out at 2 o'clock in the morning for Nocetto. Immediately on arrival, the 9th began crossing on the boats which had been gathered. Some

enemy vedettes withdrew at the approach of the troops which passed successively without meeting any obstacle. General Musnier, commanding the first half-brigade, had been ordered to gather his troops on the other side and to wait for the whole division to cross; but, having learnt that the enemy had just received a considerable reinforcement and still expected more from one coming by the Parma road, he carried himself hastily forward to Piacenza. He met the enemy cavalry there which wanted to charge his troops, but he formed in close columns, and the carabiniers, while shouting that they wanted to avenge the day before yesterday, marched, bayonets forward, on this cavalry, drove it in and scattered it. Then, a single operation was to be made, and the moment was urgent: it was to penetrate the city at the same time as the enemies themselves. General Musnier judged this movement and executed with such a speed, that the enemy, who had the plan and the means of opposing this entrance, was not able to recognize himself. In an instant our troops ran through the streets, charging and taking all who appeared. In this interval, I had executed my passage with the grenadiers of the 59th and I gathered the corps to assist the attack of general Musnier. I went to the entrance of the gate of Piacenza and found myself there at the moment the action was engaged.

Immediately, I sent my Aide-de-Camp to General Musnier to warn him to hold his troops together, so that the enemy could not take advantage of the inevitable scattering which is caused by a pursuit in a large city; but this measure became invalid, because the enemy, in perfect disorder, had withdrawn from everywhere into the citadel, where from he made for a very long time a very active fire. The result of this operation was 1,200 prisoners and 150 dead or wounded; the 9th Light lost about twenty men, more killed than wounded. We owe particular praise to General Musnier, who knew how to take advantage of the only favourable moment to win Piacenza, the taking of which without this action would have been very costly. The 9th Light Half-brigade particularly distinguished itself there; it is difficult to show more boldness and fearlessness.

I had left at the bridgehead of Piacenza the 3rd Battalion of the 59th, commanded by Major Pastre. This leader, having noticed that the enemy was retiring the guns which he had on the river bank, resolved to prevent them from saving them. The bridge was cut; he had no means to cross; so, he put himself at the head of a dozen swimmers, officers and soldiers, and plunged into the water. Unfortunately, they reach a part of the river where the water spiralled, and almost all were pulled into the depths; an officer and six soldiers were drowned. Citizen Pastre was removed from the water unconscious; he owes his life to this. This action deserves to be honourably reported for the dedication of its authors and the goal that they proposed. The division, reunited at Piacenza, was positioned, one part in the blockade of the citadel and the other one on the glacis of the Saint-Lazare Gate, Parma road, from where had to arrive the reinforcement for which the enemy waited. We occupied ourselves at the same time with restoring the bridge. The flood waters rendered the repairs very difficult. The engineer officer put particular activity there; but his efforts became useless by a continuously rising waters, which eventually made the work too difficult. So, we establish two flying bridges very quickly, and the passage of the cavalry was made.

We were also obliged to connect several boats at Nocetto, where the division had crossed, to make a flying bridge which could be of use for the passage of the artillery, which took place by overcoming all sorts of obstacles.

The squadron of 11th Hussars, commanded by its chief Ismert, who had operated his passage over by 4 o'clock, had orders to place itself in front of Piacenza, on the Parma road, to scout everything which presented itself on this path. At 5 o'clock in the evening, the vedettes of this squadron perceived an enemy corps which repelled them. The enemy had with him two artillery pieces, which he used constantly against our hussars, who reunited and made their retreat, always within reach of the canister, and executed it in perfect order. Hardly

were we warned, Lieutenant General Murat and I, of the approach of the enemy, than I gathered the troops to march out to meet him. Three companies of grenadiers of the 59th were established in columns on the main road. Adjutant General Dalton was in charge of leading them, whereas a battalion of the 59th, divided on the right and the left of the path, advanced to take enemy in the flank, having thrown its skirmishers forward. The grenadiers, impatient, directed by Adjutant General Dalton, did not wait for the flankers to overtake their line; they rushed on the enemy at the charge, the bayonet in front. They fired at their column several cannon shots which put about twenty men out of action, but they were not able to support the terrible shock of our grenadiers. They beat a retreat before of them, although they were 1,000 men strong and with artillery. We pursued them with the same ardour with which they had been attacked. The night fell; I gave the order to the 11th Hussars to go and charge the enemy. I put myself at the head having gathered all that there was of the available cavalry, staff officers and gendarmes, and I charged the enemy who, in full, laid down their arms. The result was the destruction, more taken than killed, of the corps which had come to attack us, the taking of two artillery pieces and two flags.

Two howitzers, served by the gunners of the Guard of the Consuls, fired with a lot of success at the enemy column.

I owe particular praise to the conduct of Adjutant General Dalton and to that of the grenadiers which he directed. It is rare to have seen a courage more striking than the one displayed in this action. The troop also very much distinguished itself there. The result of the advantages gained over the enemy in the various affairs, of the 16th to the 18th, was: 2,000 prisoners, 50 killed or wounded and the taking of 13 cannon, 2 flags, considerable stores and 30 large boats loaded with foodstuffs which were intended for the supply of the enemy army and which were of the greatest help to ours.

I must pay to the lieutenant general Murat the legitimate reward of glory he deserves in what my division has gained at the various actions it has been engaged in under his orders.

The 20th [9 June], at 4 o'clock in the evening I began to put my division on the march, directing myself on Castel San-Giovanni. The citadel of Piacenza, occupied by the enemy, did not allow the passage by the Saint Antoine Gate; we were obliged to take a roundabout track which followed the banks of the Po. The enemy, although further away, always remained in firing range of the troops which passed and he made a continual fire, but night fell and covered our march from the view of the citadel, and there were in this passage only three men and two horses which were hit.

The 21st [10 June], my division was here on the banks of the Trebbia. The swelling of the river prevented us from fording it and we were only able to use a boat, the only one which could be found. This prolonged our crossing until daybreak. As soon as it was executed, my division followed the road until Stradella. On the way we came to know of the battle of Broni, fought and won the day before by Generals Watrin and Chambarlhac, and we had at the same time the order to force the march. My division went to the rear of Casteggio.

The 22nd [11 June], my division stayed in the positions taken the day before.

With preparations for the decisive battle of the campaign now beginning to take shape, we break off from Boudet's journal to view a letter from Adjutant General Dalton to General of Division Dupont, Chief of Staff of the Reserve Army, at Stradella. The letter is dated San Giuletta, 22 Prairial Year 8 [11 June].

The General of Division has charged me, my General, with alerting you that his artillery, which the aide-de-camp of General Marmont announced was joining the division this evening, has not arrived yet.² He asks you to give orders so that it reaches us in the night, so that the commander-in-chief and the First Consul, who believe it has arrived, are not deceived in their expectations.

I send you a report of those present under arms, the existing cartridges and of those the division lacks. It was supplied that with about 20,000 today, which does not put us to more than in full of thirty by man instead of fifty; we still lack thus, to be the complete, sixty something thousand.

Salute and respect.
W. Dalton

State of present under arms in the half-brigades of Boudet's division, and the existing cartridges.

Number of the corps.	Present under arms.	Cartridges existing.	Cartridges lacking to complete to 50 per man.	Observations
9th Light	1,745	39,578	47,672	At the rate of 50.
59th Line	1,670	50,830	32,670	At the rate of 50.
11th Hussars	145	1,070	3,280	At the rate of 30 shots per man.
Artillery	26	-	-	There is an 8-pounder and a 6-inch howitzer, for which there are 21 cartridges of 8-pound calibre, 4 charges of canister, 103 cartridges of Austrian 7-pound calibre, 6 charges of canister of the same, 36 shells and 3 charges of canister.
Present	3,586			
Total cartridges lacking			83,622	

The journal continues ...

The 23rd [12 June], Monnier's division and mine left under the orders of Lieutenant General Desaix and were intended as the reserve of the army which marched the same day at the enemy, obliging it to shut itself in the fort of Tortona and to establish his army corps on this line. My division, passing by Voghera, took position at Ponte-Curone.

The journal entry of 12 June is expanded by Dalton's report of the same day, made at Ponte-Curone.

Boudet's division. Report of 23 Prairial

The division put itself in motion at 7 o'clock in the morning. It left the positions of San-Giuletta and went in front of Ponte-Curone.

The bread presented to the division, being mouldy and of very bad quality, was not acceptable; we hope however to provide for its subsistence. The meat is supplied for the 23rd and 24th [12 and 13 June].

² Boudet's artillery had been unable to pass Fort Bard, which did not capitulate until 2 June.

Of the 83,622 cartridges which the division was lacking to complete it to 50 shots per man, only 30,000 have been supplied; it would thus have the need for 53,622.

The 30th Half-brigade has been reunited with in the division. Two howitzers and four 8-pounders, served by the light artillery, were given to the division. The howitzer and the 8-pounder which the division held have been passed to that of General Monnier.

W. Dalton.

This report was followed early next morning by an urgent letter from Dalton to the army's chief of staff, General Dupont. It was dated Ponte-Curone, 24 Prairial Year 8 [13 June].

I inform you, my General, that we were unable to obtain at Voghera, other than 20,000 cartridges which, joined to the 30,000 we received during the course of yesterday, and to 13,000 that we have in reserve, make 63,000 out of 83,622 which we need to complete the division to 50 shots per man. You see that we lack another 20,000 still, not including that which would be necessary for us to have in reserve.

The division leaves at this instant to direct itself on Serravalle.

I beg you, my General, to send me as soon as possible, as much as you can.

Salute and consideration

W. Dalton

Boudet's journal continues ...

The 24th [13 June], my division, separated from that of General Monnier and remaining with Lieutenant General Desaix, had orders to go to Rivalta and to extend as far as Serravalle. To make the journey from Ponte-Curone to the banks of the Scrivia, I was obliged to pass by the left of Tortona, a difficult, mountainous passage and all the more difficult as it rained abundantly. Another difficulty was the swelling of waters of the Scrivia. The fall of night permitted us to get across only a company of carabinieri among which some people, taken by the current, lost their weapons and owed their salvation only to luck. At night, those who had passed took position at Rivalta where General Desaix also went. During this time we took charge with providing a means of crossing the Scrivia the following day at a very early hour, in case the river was not more fordable.

At this point we add a report by Dalton made on the morning of 14 June, at Rivalta.

Boudet's division. Report of the 24th [13 June]

Lieutenant General Desaix gave orders for the division to leave Ponte-Curone to go by Sarezano to Rivalta and to direct itself then on Serravalle. It was already noon when the division received this order; it put itself on the march at once, but there came very heavy rain which rendered the route very defective. The 9th Light with the 1st Hussars, which marched at the head, arrived on the edges of Scrivia after 5 o'clock. We attempted the passage of this river which was very swollen at the moment and we were only able to succeed in crossing some infantrymen by making them hold onto the tail of the horses. Twelve men were swept away in an instant; we saved them with

difficulty, but they lost their weapons. The general was forced to make camp on the right bank. The 30th and 59th Line had stayed on the mountain of Sarrezano, under the orders of General of Brigade Guénand, to protect the artillery which we were had great difficulty in making pass, and it was only by means of twenty pairs of oxen which we manage to make it arrive on the banks of the Scrivia at 9 o'clock in the morning.

During the night we had occupied ourselves with restoring a boat and with crossing the 9th Light. We used this means for all of the infantry; explorations were sent since the evening and during the night to Serravalle, along both banks of the Scrivia; we recognized that the enemy occupied this post; the explorations also taught us that some republican troops occupied Novi.

W. Dalton

The strength of Boudet's division was given as follows in a return dated 14 June.

Light	9th	2,014
	30th	1,430
Line	59th	1,872
	Total	5,316

Boudet's journal continues ...

The 25 [14 June], at 2 o'clock in the morning, Lieutenant General Desaix sent me the order to make a strong reconnaissance with infantry as far as Serravalle, and to support this with a brigade, if I thought it necessary. That evening I had sent a detachment of 30 troopers of the 3rd [Cavalry] Regiment, led by a captain of the divisional staff (l'Hertilier), and I remarked to Lieutenant General Desaix that I considered it necessary to wait beforehand for the report of this detachment. He approved and changed the order he had given me. At daybreak, the water did not yet permit us to ford, but a boat had been secured with the help of some boatmen that a detachment had taken from Tortona during the night. The troops crossed speedily, and took up position at Rivalta.

Towards ten o'clock in the morning, the waters had fallen, and the artillery was able to ford the river. In this interval, General Desaix had sent to general headquarters to find out what measures to take following the action of the day before. He received an order (fortunately very late) to go to Pozzolo-Formigaro, an intermediate position, from where we could carry ourselves, it is true, but with too much time, on Alessandria or to the outlets of Genoa, in case the enemy tried to make its retreat that way. My division had not got more than 1 mile beyond Rivalta when one of the commander-in-chief's aide-de-camps, sent by the Premier Consul, came in haste to bring me the order to march on San Giuliano and, from there, Marengo, where the two hostile armies had been fighting since daybreak.

My division, accelerating its march, was soon arrived at San Giuliano. It witnessed there the disorder that was starting to reign within the army, the disorder was caused, in part by the movement of a great number of wounded and their comrades who assisted them, blocking the road and, on the other, the encumbrance of wagons and a crowd of domestics, sutlers, and of bad soldiers who had joined in with them.

On the left of the main road, I placed my first brigade, a portion of which was deployed, the other in closed column. I also ordered my second brigade to assume the same dispositions on the right of the road. Lieutenant General Desaix and I, considering the

position of the army, decided to send forward my first brigade, composed of the 9th Light. The order was thus given for this movement, the execution of which would at least remind the retreating troops of their courage, and by result, make them return.

I thus went forward to within musket range of the enemy's front, which nearing appreciably, obliged me to throw skirmishers forwards, so as to delay their march. This brigade, commanded by General Musnier, executed several movements in sight of the enemy, and these manoeuvres were made with such steadiness and security, that one can attribute to them the confidence which appeared to be reborn among the scattered, retreating troops. The vigorous countenance that the brigade held under the enemy artillery fire and musketry, gave time for my second brigade, composed of the 30th and 59th Half-brigade, commanded by General of Brigade Guénand, to become established on the right, and to the other corps of the army which had fought in the morning and were now retreating, to come and take position behind it

While I contained, with the 9th Light, the enemy on its front, and while I protected the rallying of the army, the First Consul held his council, where was found the commander-in-chief, Lieutenant General Desaix and other generals gathered under the strongest enemy artillery fire. They occupied themselves with preparing a great movement, capable of ensuring victory.

Bonaparte harangued the troops, and in this interval, General Desaix gathered all the artillery of his division forwards of the front of my second brigade. It then engaged itself in a cannonade in which the enemy had too strong a superiority by the number of its guns for it to be an equal contest.

Every instant saw files of our troops cut down, which increased the impatience to get to close quarters.

I was far more advanced than the rest of my line with my first brigade, and I would not have been delayed long before the 9th Light became engaged along its entire front, when General Desaix sent me the order to retire my troops by echelons. This manoeuvre would have become, in truth, essential, if the general attack was delayed; but it also compromised the skirmishers that I had out in front; I ordered the movement however, executing it at a very slow pace, and I went very quickly to Lieutenant General Desaix to present my observations to him. The attack was going to begin, and General Desaix, knowing the dispositions that I had made on the enemy's front, asked me then to stop the retrograde march, which I did on reporting back to the front of my first brigade, which had retired 200 paces at the most.

I could observe here that this retrograde movement became favourable to us, for in perceiving it, the enemy redoubled their hopes, carried forwards with more audacity, and the surprise they experienced in seeing themselves being charged, was advantageous to us.

Lieutenant General Desaix came to my first brigade, forming the left of the army, and told me to go to my second, which occupied the centre, ordering me to pierce that of the enemy and to drive it in with enough rapidity to separate it entirely and to thereby disrupt their plan of operations.

The whole line put itself in motion at the charge, and my division formed the first front. My brigade on the left, composed of the 9th Light, had to fight in front of them the Hungarian grenadiers that had been united by General Melas, in order that this elite corps could successfully pursue the victory that he regarded as already assured to him. This corps of grenadiers was supported by a very strong cavalry which extended beyond the wings of my first brigade; their resistance was very stubborn; but the valour of the 9th Light rendered it null, and a fortunate charge by our cavalry crowned this attack.

The skilful and valorous Desaix had directed it, and he did not have the happiness of enjoying our success. Death had just taken away this great captain from his brothers in arms.

He recommended, with his last words, concealing his fate, in the fear that this news would produce some alarm and be harmful to the victory.

On several occasions, the enemy cavalry attempted to turn and to surround the 9th Light; but it was received so as to be discouraged.

It is absolutely to the bearing and to the acts of valour of this corps that we owe the remarkable advantages which were achieved on the left, and above all the capture of the artillery and the prisoners. The cavalry has equally contributed with much timeliness and courage.

My second brigade, composed of the 30th and 59th Half-brigade and directed by myself, drove in with an audacity, a strength and stunning rapidity, the centre of the enemy army and cut it in two. This brigade had continually to defend at the same time its front, and its flanks, and its rear against artillery, musketry and against various corps of cavalry. The latter particularly came to the charge several times to attack our rear; but the perfect order of the closed columns in which our battalions had remained, although crossing vineyards and other obstacles, not only rendered the attempts of the cavalry useless, but also caused it a considerable loss.

The enemy resistance was, in certain positions, terrible. One would have amused oneself needlessly trying to chase them off with musketry. Bayonet charges alone could dislodge them, and these were executed with unexampled swiftness and intrepidity. Undoubtedly, one cannot give enough praise to this brigade, partly composed of conscripts, who have rivalled in courage and firmness the oldest servicemen.

In the bayonet charge, two flags have been taken, one by Citizen Coqueret, captain of grenadiers of the 59th, and the other by the Citizen Georges Amptil, fusilier and conscript of the 30th Half-brigade, who pursued and killed the bearer and removed it in view of a platoon that sought to recover it.

So, I may and I must speak of the glory of my division that, by its extreme courage, had the happiness to counterbalance the advantages obtained by our enemies until its arrival, and of contributing in a most effective manner to fix on our side the illustrious victory of Marengo, the victory that must hold first place in our annals, so much by the valour and the heroism with which it was snatched, than by the great interests which were attached to it.

The journal appears to have been completed on 16 June after the signing of the Convention of Alessandria the evening before. The day after the battle, Boudet had made up part of General Berthier's entourage which went into Alessandria to negotiate directly with Melas. The division's movements on 15 June were reported by Adjutant General Dalton in the following missive:

In camp in front of Marengo, 27 Prairial Year 8 [16 June].

The division which, on the night of the 25th [14 June], had not been able to take a regular position, became established in the line in front of the bridgehead, the 30th Half-brigade was ranged, supporting the left towards the Bormida, in a line parallel to the Alessandria road, straddling a road used by the enemy to reach the bridgehead, towards Castel-Ceriolo, by where we supposed that the cut off enemy column could come back. General Victor had committed General Boudet to place one of his half-brigades in this position.

The half-brigades are complete in cartridges, from the cartridge pouches abandoned by the enemy. Some flints were supplied to them.

The division received, for the 25th, two thirds of the bread ration which had not been able to arrive in time at Rivalta; it had none for the 26th [15 June]. Meat was supplied for the 26th and 27th and brandy for 26th.

The division finds itself camped on the battlefield, and among the dead: it has neither pickaxes nor shovels to be able to bury them. Soon the place will not be bearable any more. The air already smells of mephitic.

According to superior orders, both 12-pounders attached to the division, as well as a howitzer and an 8-pounder, were given to the divisions which had lost their artillery in the affair; we have no more than three 8-pounders and a howitzer. The 8-pounder which was dismounted, as well as the howitzer, which also had some fractures in its train, have been repaired.

W. Dalton

The final entry of Boudet's Journal was recorded on 16 June. It said very simply:

27 Prairial VIII [16 June], armistice of Marengo and Convention of Alessandria.

However, we should not conclude just yet. Two days later Dalton made another report on the state of the division:

At the camp of Marengo, 29 Prairial Year 8 [18 June]

The division which occupied the position next to Spinetta, was placed behind the Monnier's division, near the villages of Castel-Ceriolo and Lobbi; it finds itself in its battle order.

Subsistence has been provided to the troops, but nothing is assured for the 29th [18 June].

The squadron of the 1st Regiment of Hussars attached to the division was removed from us by order of General Kellermann; the squadron of the 3rd Cavalry was also removed from us. We have not a man on horseback.

W. Dalton

While Dalton was completing this report, Boudet was producing his final surviving document of the campaign. In addition to his journal entry on the events of 14 June, Boudet wrote a formal battle report to Berthier, the army commander. Although many of the details mirror what was recorded in the journal, there are some significant additions, particularly mentions of soldiers who had merited a mention to the commander-in-chief.³

Boudet to Berthier. Lobbi, 18 June 1800

The collection of the facts of the various acts which honour the division I command, made me delay my report until today. I am counting on your love of glory and on that

³ This report is cited in *Extraits de mémoires inédits du feu Claude-Victor Perrin, Duc De Bellune*. [Paris: J. Dumaine, 1846.]; and *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France sous le règne de Napoléon*. (Vol. 6) [Paris : Bossange, 1830]. The report was not included in De Cugnac.

which can inspire the recognition of the acts of valour by granting them publicity, in the hope that my division, which snatched victory from the enemy and fixed the fate of Italy, will have for first satisfaction to learn that it was well deserved at the battle of Marengo. I am going to analyze for you the conduct as a whole, and those in particular who have stood out.

The 25th [14 June], my division, under the orders of General Desaix, had an order to go to San Giuliano and Marengo. Upon its arrival, in the first place, a party which had supported the first shock of the battle and was conducting the wounded, was withdrawing in disorder, being blocked by an immense quantity of carts of the female sutlers and domestics who always join the bad soldiers.

I placed my 1st brigade on the left of the main road, partly deployed and the other in closed column, to oppose the shock of the enemy, and ordered the same movement on the right for the 2nd brigade.

Lieutenant General Desaix gave the order to go forward. This was executed by the 1st brigade composed of the 9th Light, and we arrived within musket range of the front of the enemy which, having got much closer, obliged me to throw forward skirmishers, to slow its march. This brigade, commanded by General Musnier, under fire from enemy artillery and musketry, remained with such security as to inspire confidence, and gave the time for the 2nd brigade, composed of the 30th and 59th, commanded by General Guénand, to become established on the right of the road, and the other corps of the army which came to rally on them. Lieutenant General Desaix sent me the order to retire by echelons my 1st brigade, much more forward than the rest of the line. I ran to point out that supposing the army was to go forward, I still had my skirmishers [deployed], and he came then to be decided that the attack would be made, and beforehand all the artillery had been placed on the right, face-to-face with the front of 30th and 59th half-brigades.

General Desaix, having gone to my 1st brigade, forming the left of our army, of which he was in charge, told me to go to my 2nd. The movement was executed along all of the line at the charge. The brigade on the left, 9th Light, had to fight on its front the corps of the Hungarian grenadiers supported by a very strong artillery; the resistance was very obstinate, but the valour of this brigade swept them away, and a fortunate charge of cavalry crowned this attack which was directed by the brave Desaix, [who] did not have the happiness of witnessing its success: death had just deprived him from his brothers-in-arms, and his last words were to hide his death which might have prejudiced the victory. Several times, the cavalry tried to turn and to cut into the 9th Light; but it was received in a manner to be discouraged.

The 2nd brigade, commanded by General Guénand, whom I directed, drove in with a surprising speed the centre of the enemy, and, by this fearless operation, cut his army in two; this brigade constantly had to fight, on the front and its flanks, artillery and musketry, and, on its rear, several corps of cavalry also presented itself; but the order of closed columns in which the battalions had remained, although crossing vineyards, rendered useless the attempts of the cavalry, and caused it a considerable loss.

I can only render the greatest eulogies to this brigade which, partially consisted of new soldiers, rivalled in valour and in composure with the oldest servicemen.

Two flags were taken, one by Citizen George Amptil, fusilier of the 30th Half-brigade who, running after the one who carried it, killed him, and, in view of a platoon which tried to get it back, removed it; and the other one, by Citizen Gollot, Captain of Grenadiers of the 59th.

The Generals of Brigade Guénand et Musnier directed the troops with a particular dedication. General Guénand received a ball in the right groin, the effect of which was weakened by the money which he had in the pocket of his watch.

Adjutant General Dalton deserves particularly to be cited for the composure and the knowledge with which he directed various points of attack.

Chief of Brigade Labassée, of the 9th light, Valterre, of the 30th, Magnier, of the 59th, marked a fearlessness deserving of the greatest eulogies: the latter received two light wounds.

My aides-de-camp and staff officers also perfectly assisted us by their activity. One of them, Citizen Bagnet, had his horse killed by a cannonball.

Finally, general, I believe to have to assure you that the greatest eulogies must be given to all the officers and soldiers of the division. All showed true courage.

I would particularly like to ask of you a reward of promotion for Chief of Battalion Pastre; for my Aide-de -Camp Bagnet, and for Officer of Correspondence Dierx: the first is a lieutenant, the second is a sub-lieutenant.

Salute and respect,
Boudet

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