

# Waterloo, the Beer of Bravery: at the Core of Major Historical Celebrations in Belgium

by DOMINIQUE HURET

On the outskirts south of Brussels, excitement is in the air. The bicentenary of the victory against Napoleon by Brits, Germans and Dutch will shortly be celebrated with great pomp. Thirty thousands visitors, forty VIP and heads of states, are expected to watch these massive battle reconstitutions, on the original fields.

Six thousands soldiers, hundreds horses, with various guns and harnesses will perform for three days all in grant army uniforms. Dominique Huret from Cape Decision in Brussels reports on the beverage that will water performers at this event like it did in 1815...

The story of the battle and the Waterloo beer are closely linked. It was this beer that gave the soldiers strength, courage and vigor, and this beer too that cheered and comforted them after their endeavors, hence deserving its name of beer of bravery.

But this craft beer dated from the Middle Age, around 1456. It originated within one of the oldest breweries in Belgium the "Market Brewery" in the neighboring town of Braine-l'alleud. At the time, about two hundred local breweries often family owned, produced beers in this territory, creating severe competition.

For centuries after, water remains unsafe for drinking while local quality of malt, hops and brewing skills were all improving rapidly. The stout Waterloo was soon recognized as a rejuvenating remedy, restoring health and bravery to soldiers. Therefore it is not surprising that the Duke of Wellington, the day before the famous battle, establish his quarters near the brewery and allow his men to tap into this double Brune, strength and courage to the harsh day that awaited them. With the victory in June 18, 1815, the legend of Waterloo was born.

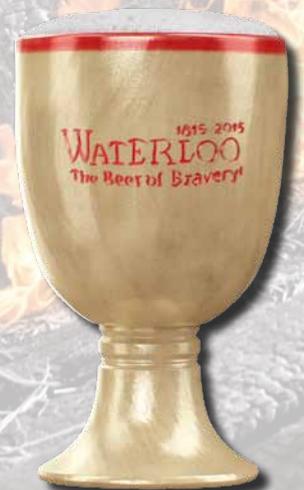
The historic brewery closed in 1971 but was revived seven years ago by enthusiastic investors republishing the old traditional recipes for a Strong Dark brown and a Triple blonde. In 2014, the Waterloo beers joined the John Martin brewery group, adding their range of iconic beers to the prestigious selection of the group Finest Beers (Martin's IPA, Real Ale and Pale Ale). The oldest importer world-wide of the famous Irish Guinness, John Martin also brews the beers of Gordon as well as Timmermans, which is the world's oldest still-active lambic brewery, founded about 300 years ago! Today, the company is headed by Anthony Martin, the founder's grandson

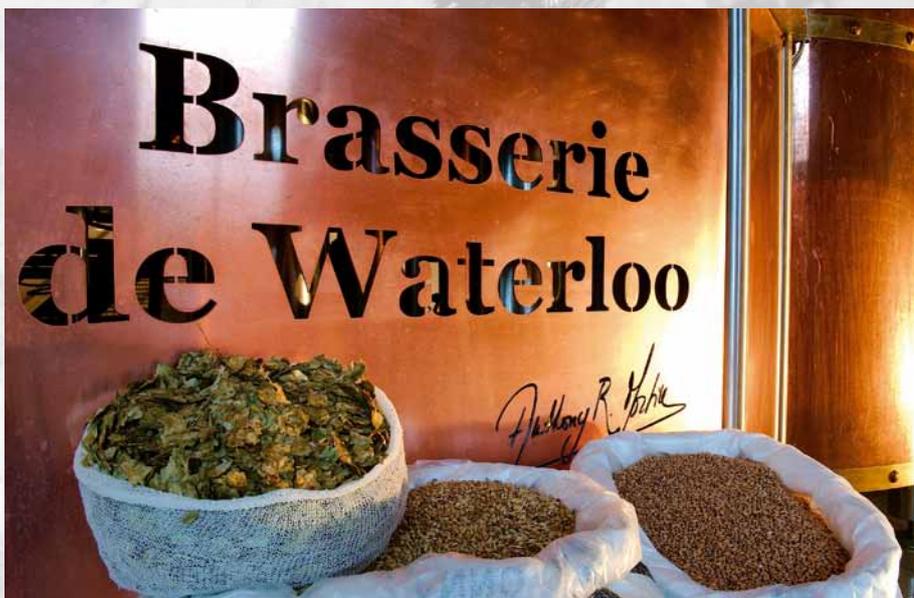


On the production side, the Waterloo micro brewery brews about 6.500 hectoliters a year. All of the beers products are top-fermented, done with locally grown ingredients.

Two new products have lately gained the shelves: the Cuvée Impériale and the Waterloo Récolte. The Cuvée Impériale bears a dark ruby color as its intensity and noble elegant character. It is mellow at the same time, thanks to real cane sugars.

The Waterloo Récolte has a pale golden hue and combines the flavors of malts and wheat from the fertile plains





Anthony Martin, Head of Waterloo Brewery, Grandson of founder

of the region. As its name indicates, the Strong Dark is strong with plenty of character and coffee aromas with a liqueur-like finish.

But the Triple Blond is the best seller: with the bitterness of the hops and the smoothness of the malts, it is not surprising that it has just won the ITQI Superior taste awards in May 2015.

For the moment, 80 % of the production is still consumed in Belgium, with Italy and France as main exporter's countries. But the dynamic brewers behind the Waterloo's beers are well aware of the coming opportunity. A large numbers of tourists from all over will flock around the Waterloo celebra-

tions fields, while their micro-brewery is located just at a stone's throw. They are also finishing additional attractive facilities with a museum, a shop and a restaurant in the large adjacent farm.

Actually the farm is where the Duke of Wellington backing 1815 set up his field hospital, where more than 6,000 injured soldiers pass through. Thanks to its glorious past, the farm is name the "English Hospital" or "British Ambulance". According to witnesses from the time, that battle was exceptionally violent. As well as their injuries, the soldiers had to fight against the numerous bacteria around them. To avoid all those present in the water, it was therefore wiser to drink beer. This

was where local breweries came in. Unsurprisingly, Waterloo beer bears the same title as the Prince of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington's other name.

Aren't you now convinced to look for a Waterloo beer on your next craft beer hunt?

Key No. 86275



The Author  
Dominique Huret from Cape Decision, the expert consulting practice, is based in Belgium.

