



PROJECT

THE GARDENS OF
HOUGOUMONT



HISTORY

On the eve of 18 June 1815, Hougoumont was an elegant country retreat and farm on the gently undulating plains of Waterloo and Braine l'Alleud. It consisted of a manor house with a chapel attached, a great barn, cowsheds, stables, a farm house, formal garden and three enclosed orchards. The elevated formal garden, set apart by a balustrade across its width, was laid-out in the intricate patterns of French design; vegetables were planted in contrasting colours for visual effect and the trees in the orchard symmetrically spaced.



In the ferocious battle that erupted the next day, the seismic Battle of Waterloo, Hougoumont was all but destroyed. For all its bucolic charm, it proved to be critical to the protection of the right flank of Wellington's allied army.

It was an obstacle to an out-flanking attack by the French on the allied line and Napoleon had to neutralise it at all cost. Neither side could give way and more than 15.000 soldiers of several nationalities were committed to the fight. Dramatic accounts tell how both sides gave their utmost. At the end of the day an estimated 5.000 lay dead or wounded after what would be remembered as the bloodiest episode of the whole battle.

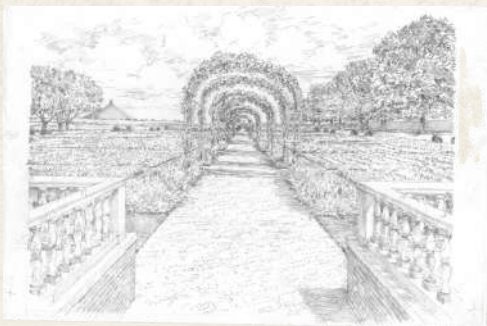


Not much remained of Hougoumont. The manor house and most of the farm buildings went up in flames, the encircling walls were largely destroyed, the woods, gardens and orchards devastated. In recognition of its singular importance to the allied victory and to honour the brave men who had fought and died there, Hougoumont was thereafter preserved as a place of memory. In 1816 King William I of The Netherlands took a special interest in its sale to Count François de Robiano to ensure its preservation. Over the course of the next two centuries Hougoumont continued as a working farm, but the stables and farm house were never reconstructed and the little château remained - and remains - a poignant ruin. In 2003 Robiano's descendant and the last private owner, Count Guibert d'Oultremont, passed Hougoumont on to the Walloon Regional Government.

As the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo in 2015 approached, a group of private individuals in Belgium and United Kingdom launched Project Hougoumont, a hugely ambitious plan to repair and stabilise the remaining buildings. A remarkable collective effort, with support from the British government, the Walloon Region, the Dutch Army, Breguet and many generous private individuals, the project was completed in time for a glorious opening on 17 June 2015 – the eve of the bicentennial commemoration – in the presence of the Prince of Wales, Princess Astrid of Belgium and descendants of the principal military commanders, Wellington, Bonaparte, Blücher and of Crown Prince William of Orange-Nassau.



The gardens of Hougoumont were never restored and in time the great orchard, over which so much of the fighting had taken place, deteriorated into featureless arable land. About five years ago a private initiative was launched to complete the restoration of Hougoumont by re-creating the gardens and orchard, thus bringing about the apotheosis of the whole site as a place of remembrance of conflict and sacrifice and, ultimately, a beacon of understanding, reconciliation, peace and hope. The Walloon Region and Kléber Rossillon, the company managing the museum and historic battlefield site, have agreed to dedicate considerable resources to the recreation of the formal garden, the vegetable garden and the orchard.

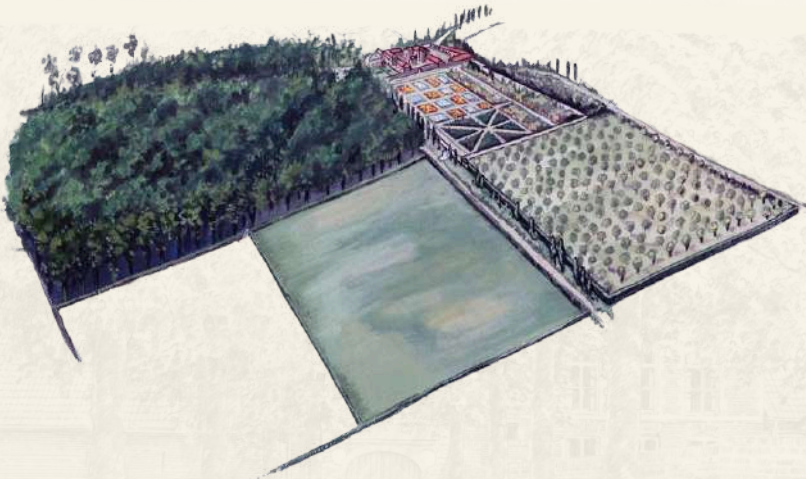


We, the Friends of the Gardens of Hougoumont, who initiated the project, have from the outset insisted on the importance of including an educational and ecological purpose. This will make Hougoumont a magnet for families, schools and the wider public interested in the intricacies and wonders of the natural world. Charities, social organisations, schools of horticulture and universities will be involved in the development and maintenance of the gardens and orchards. Pioneering plant-breeders will be invited to showcase new varieties of plants adapted to the changing climate.

The inclusion of an ecological educational element has been embraced by the Walloon Region and Kléber Rossillon, but will require additional private funding. Design and planning will be overseen by the renowned garden architect François Goffinet, whose approach will also enhance the visitors' understanding of the historical significance of the site.

The total budget of the project is €1,4m, of which €1,1m is funded. This covers the cost of recreating the formal and vegetable garden and the orchard. This leaves the educational and ecological aspect of the project to be funded privately to the amount of €300.000. There will be two fundraising drives in the United Kingdom and in Belgium. British funding will be collected by Project Hougoumont, a UK-registered charity, and donated to Les Amis des Jardins d'Hougoumont. This is a Belgian association administered by the Fondation Roi Baudouin, the royal Belgian institution responsible for the integrity of the financial support to the project.

We are delighted to announce that the first donation has been received with gratitude from the Duke of Wellington. We hope that others may follow his generous lead.



THE GARDENS OF HOUGOMONT

THE RESTORATION OF THE FORMAL FRENCH GARDENS, VEGETABLE GARDENS, ORCHARDS AND THE
CREATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL ECOSPHERE.

AN INITIATIVE BY THE FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS OF HOUGOMONT