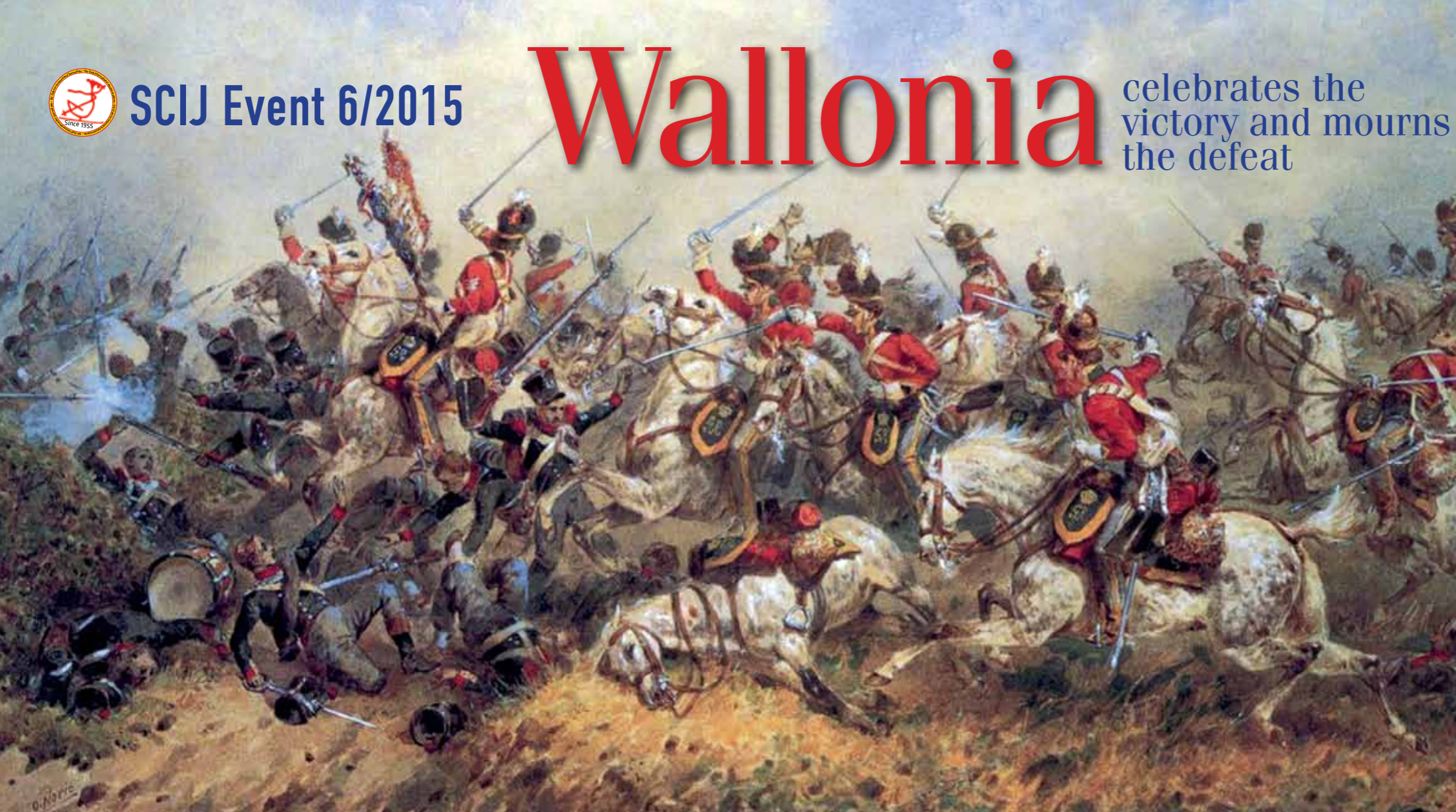




SCIJ Event 6/2015

# Wallonia celebrates the victory and mourns the defeat



## Flames from muskets and cannons illuminate the darkening evening and clouds of gunpowder smoke cover the Waterloo cornfields.

Cries of pain and war cries are mixed with cracks and bangs on muskets and canons when 191,000 young men rush at each other with murder on their minds.

### Napo napo Napo Napo NAPO NAPO NAPOOLEON!

A strengthening rhythmic shout is getting nearer and nearer from on our right.

I take off my binoculars, the time machine breaks, the magic evaporates and a little fat man on a white horse passes us peacefully and greets our yell by waving in a friendly but not so emporial manner.

However, his five generals on similar horses seem to pay more attention to the battle, where thousands of men and riders shoot, slash and blast each other.No computer animations now or then

I am not sitting in the movies watching young soldiers killing and dying in the fields of Waterloo, but at a stadium with 130.000 spectators. In front of our eyes 6.000 Watertloo enthusiasts shoot and impale, 130 cavalymen cut each other and 30 cannons blast flames to the cornfields. Everything is blood, flesh,

iron and gun power. No computer animations.

All this a big show, a confusing spectacle, but exactly 200 years ago 65.000 young men from France, Great Britain, Prussia, Netherlands, Nassau and Braunschweig died here. Tens of thousands of men disappeared or got wounded.

### Attaaac!!

Suddenly hundreds of men rush shouting bloodcurdling at another group of men, who retreat for their lives. The mens's uniforms are fabulous, but it's hard to distinguish the bad ones from the good ones.

The speakers in English, French and Dutch try to keep us informed of what's happening, but their tongues are not fast enough like that of an Argentinian soccer reporter on radio. So they rather tend to repeat historical facts, which are difficult to join with what's happening in the field.Whom should I bet on?With binoculars I can distinguish men in kilts. Of course they a Scots, belong to the group of Duke Wellington. As his group outruns the number of survivors of the opposite side at the end, they are considered the winners and thus the good ones.The French may have a different opinion and even for other nations he may be considered at least a working class hero. For the aristocracy Napoleon was and will be a war criminal.

► Paris lawyer Frank Samson, who has played Napoleon for more than a decade and is quite a celebrity at Waterloo





slalom race by climbing the belfry. Not only did we profit from it by muscles bulging with new power, but a great view all around the centre of Tournai. Especially interesting was the market place, its sides full of cafes and restaurants. The cathedral, with its five bell towers are twenty meters from the belfry. When the five bells of the cathedral toll, what chance does the belfry have to compete

**An army marches on its stomach and so does the Fourth Estate**

At 19.30 we were more than ready for the dinner at restaurant "l'Ancienne Poste" (Former Post Office) <http://www.restaurantlancieneposte.com>.



SIX DAYS EARLIER

**Discovering the History and Today of Wallonia** July 14.-20.2015

The second happy SCIJ reunion of the year at the Brussels airport and Hotel Pullman. After a standing luncheon Betty Cleeren's team rushed us to a bus that took us Hotel Cathedral in Tournai. The name comes after a huge building a block away. Tournai, bullied by everyone and his brother, is a more than 2000 years old town, which has been destroyed and ruled by most nations in the Western Europe, even by the English for five years. The incendiaries in the World War II did the greatest damage.

Tournai was a "free city" 1187-1521 under protection of the kings of France. However, England took the town in 1513, fortified it, and gave it back in the London Treaty. The fortification held for 6 weeks in 1521, when the army on Spanish Netherlands invaded. After that the Protestants went on exile and the economy of the city declined.

The blow of the central hole of the Bridge of holes, not the whole bridge. Pont des Tous was too low for modern riverboats and could finally be raised by 2,4 metres. The Germans are to be thanked for that.

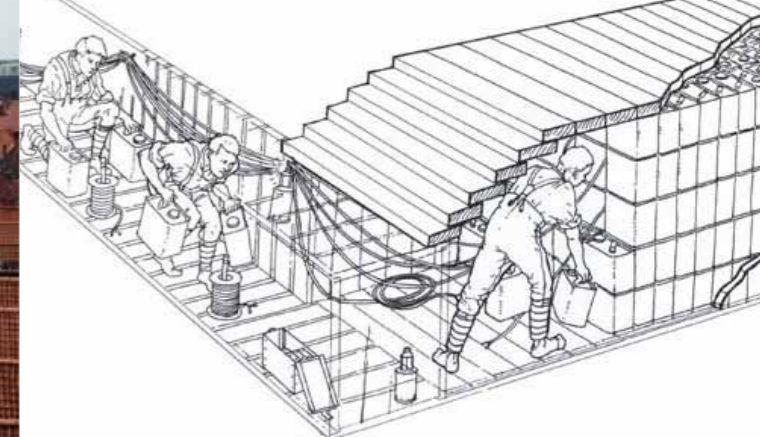
The towers of the bridge built at the turn of 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century are flat on the southeast side but round on the other side. It's supposed to better prevent bullets from northwest. From whom, left a question mark in my mind. After all, the enemies have come from any direction. Well, maybe not from below, but in WW2 from above. 90 % of the city was destroyed **An odd piece of architecture**



▲ Tourists' dogs go crazy the clockworks of six towers toll.

◀ Stairway to the balcony of Belfry

▼ Saint Luke drawing the Virgin, a statue by Marcel Wolfers in 1935 after a painting from 1435 by Roger van der Weyden.



▲ Explosives being loaded under the German troops: World's biggest explosion before Hiroshima killed 10,000.

**Cathedral Notre-Dame de Tournai**

originally built the 12<sup>th</sup> century in rather sturdy Romanesque style, with not one, not two, not three, not four, but with 5 bell towers. In mid-13<sup>th</sup> century the choir was replaced by a new one in Gothic style. However, that was not enough, the new choir was separated from the bell towers with three long aisles and some side spaces as long as the original Romanesque aisles. Naturally the new part is also much higher than the old one as is typical for Gothic churches. The rest of the church was supposed to be rebuilt in the same style, but luckily was not. Only a western porch was added.

According to the style the inside of the Romanesque part is rather ascetic, but the other end is richly decorated with sculpture. Also a beautiful rood screen in Renaissance style was added in 1573.

**The dogs of the city must go crazy at noon.** Then we got a chance to train our thighs for the

**Shockwaves were felt in London**

After a very fast but quiet drive we arrived at the Plugstreet 14-18 Experience with a cinema showing the background to the Great War, a three-dimensional map of the western front and a special presentation on the battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917, which was won by the Allies when thousands of tonnes of high explosive were detonated beneath the German line. It's said that the shockwaves carried across the Channel and were felt in London.

The exhibition dedicated to the history of the area in the run up too and including both world wars. It is not just a military museum but shows the effect of warfare on the residents of Mons.

The displays are clear and easy to understand with a great mixture of film, hardware, uniforms and posters.





▲ About here the British and German troops climbed out of their trenches to play football in Christmas 1917.

**Legendary Christmas truce and the aftermath**

After Plougstreet we visited some of the more than a hundred military graveyards and the legendary site of Christmas truce of 1914, where German and British troops sang carols and plays soccer together. Short truces occurred even elsewhere. In other places killing continued through Christmas.

The British High Command got furious. They feared that men would now question the war, and even mutiny, as a result of fraternising with the enemy that they were meant to defeat. The London Rifle Brigade's War Diary for 2 January 1915 recorded that "informal truces with the enemy were to cease and any officer or found to having initiated one would be tried by Court Martial."

**The day at the races as funny as that of the Marx Brothers**

After lunch we were ready for a nap, but, instead headed for the Dwarf Slalom race at the biggest, ► greatest and grandest inside alpine resort in not only Wallonia, but the whole kingdom of Belgium. As was predictable, Gisella Motta figuratively washed the faces of all others with snow. I didn't do so well, having, by mistake taken two left-hand gloves along. What can a right-hander do in a situation like this?! For MONS, European Capital of Culture 2015 we headed, the bus being filled with a lively discussion on the slalom race.

**A night in a true cathedral**

So we checked-in at Hotel DREAM that could ► have been named The Cathedral. After all, it is an unsanctified (is that a word?) church finely refurbished. Huge columns gave a sturdy backbone to the very modern bar and restaurant.

Most of the 57 rooms in this renovated 19th- ► century chapel have their quota of Belgian weirdness, from the bowler hat lampshades in the Magritte room to the giant Smurf mural in the Comics Room.

After a quick freshening-up we were ready for the Grand Gala dinner at restaurant « La Petite Provence » to relax of the pressures of the slalom race.

Well, Ingemar Stenmark always went to practice in the evening of a race day, but, you know the Swedes. Always so serious about racing. However, I don't understand why we missed them at this meeting.



◀ **The European Capital on Culture in 2015**

Next morning a charming and funny expatriation guided us to a spin in Mons. Church, belfry, town hall, market place, artistic park, overflowing university library... Countess Waudru, mother of four became a nun after her husband had retired to an abbey in 656. She started a convent (Sainte-Waudru) and the city of Mons grew around it. It took 800 years for the collegiate to be ready to demolish the old building on the hill and start building Collegiale Sainte Waudru in 1450.



► Rub the monkey at the Mons City Hall and make a wish ▲

The best parts of it is Gothic, but maybe because it's building lasted almost 2,5 centuries, there are some very different ideas on it's outside. The part looking downhill is rather pompous and is showing the power of church. Understandable if it was built during the Renaissance era. The inside is not too overwhelming but rather peaceful. Somewhat overwhelming is the partly gilded carriage in which the shrine of Sainte Waudru is drawn through the city once a year. ◀

The construction idea of a Gothic church works fine. The walls with fine glasswork look very light. However, because of their height they are heavy, but the "crutches" outside every column keep them from collapsing.

The treasury of the church is worth visiting as is the François Duesberg museum close by, if one likes beautiful objects of gold, class and porcelain.

◀ **Need for book bonfires?**

Approaching the University Library, a waterfall of books from the second floor stopped us. To me it symbolized three things.

- 1. The overflow of books having been published.
- 2. As the development of sciences is getting faster, academic publications are getting outdated. This causes the need to destroy old books and also floppy disks vide tapes...
- 3. Books losing their meaning as media.

A poem longer than the National Anthem of Greece A poetry installation on buildings called The Phrase stretches for 10 kilometres. We only read some short pieces of it. I don't believe anybody ever sings or reads all the 158 verses of the National Anthem of Greece.



**These I would have liked to see**

1. **The Passenger**, the most impressive new work of modern art was a sprawling wooden structure in rue de Nimy, installed on 6 December by Arne Quinze. It was demolished after two months, because some boards fell off it. It was rebuilt though.



2. **The Mundaneum**, the weirdest museum in Mons. It contains the remains of a vast collection of newspapers, posters, catalogues and curiosities gathered in the early 20th century by the Belgian philanthropist Paul Otlet. For years it lay forgotten in a Brussels car park until it was snapped up by Mons.



3. **Opening ceremony of the Capitol of Culture** on 24 January. There were dancing robots, eight Finnish hot tubs, a re-enactment of the Woodstock festival and 18,000 people dressed in aluminium.

4. **The Museum of Fine Arts**. The museum itself, designed by renowned Victor Horta is worth a visit. The collection is remarkable for a smallish town like Mons.



**The Lakes of the Water of Time???????**

After lunch we headed for les Lacs de l'Eau d'Heure, whatever such a poetic name may mean. A great view, some snack and some beers welcomed us at the top of a lookout tower. Check-in at Golden Lake Village where we did not have to re-pack out baggages the next morning.

No time for a nap. A barbecue dinner at "Crocodile Café" was waiting. The feeling got relaxed after the busy hunt for culture. However, after the BBQ, the peace loving me was swindled to a laser war game in a dark multi-storey labyrinth. I didn't tell anyone about the skill to kill by bare hands as result of military training. Had I used all my ammunition... I would have abandoned my gun ran.

Didn't do so bad, though. Was the third meanest. Even shot one of our own. Sorry, Adelstein.

**Sports activities for us sporty journalists**

Wednesday morning the choises for activities were numerous at AQUACENTER + sailing, kayak, paddle, at NATURA PARC (tyrolean traverse, accrobranch) + bicycling, and SPIN (wire water-skiing) and at SEGWAY RELAXATION (Red Crocodile + Aquacenter).

Correct me if I'm wrong, Troy Hawks, but I believe you were the only one to go spinning.

Some of us went on naval warfare on kayaks. Prety fierce it had been judged by the soked look of theirs. Anothetr bunch circled the lake on bike.

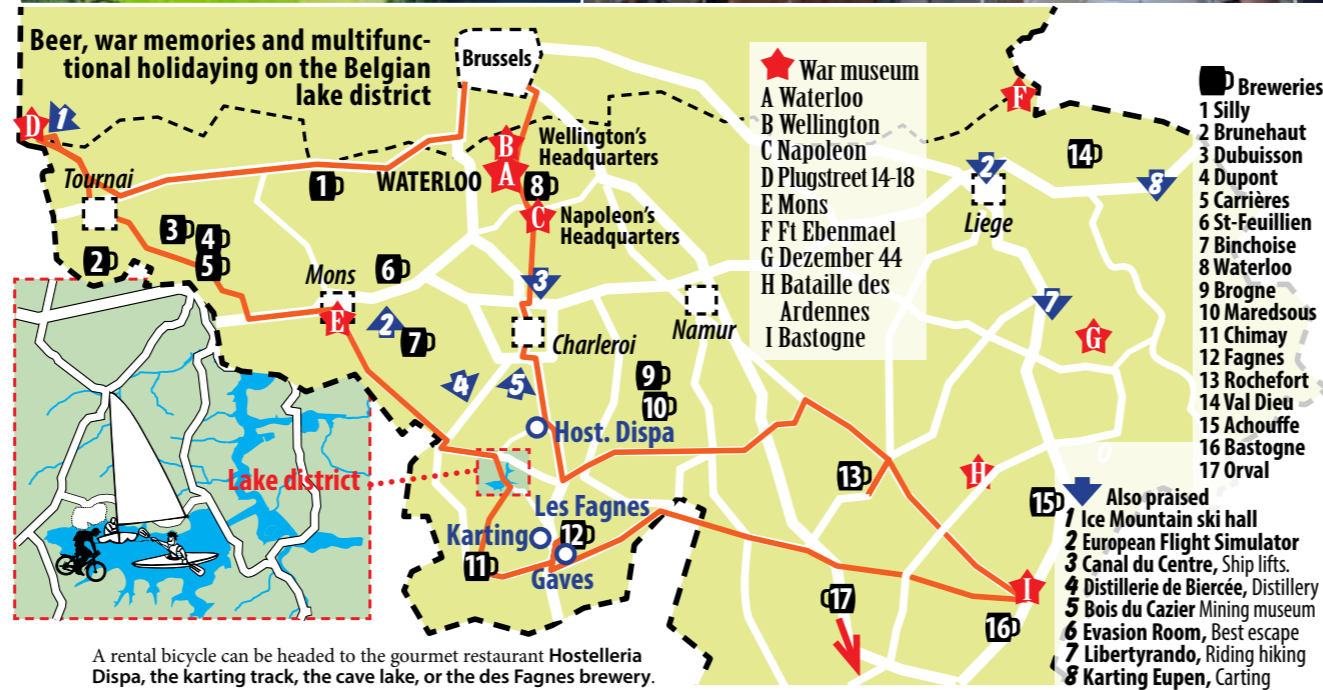
Probably the best beer in the worldIt wasn't Carlsberg even though they've advertised so. Some 20 km south-west from the lakes, at Brasserie des Fagnes we swallowed info of making beer, tasty lunch and the best beer I've ever tasted. They even gave each of us a 7,5 l bottle for the road.

**Back to the lakes and extraordinary GA at Auditorium**

SCIJ is not an enterprise and the assemblies tend to last long. Barry Moore kept the minutes. Shower, dress-up and make-up done in half hour.



The ladies looked gorgeous and the gents O.K. when we entered the garden of l'hostellerie Dispa. After a relaxed aperitif in the garden we entered the charming and cosy restaurant. The indescribable food (we couldn't guess what it was) was simply delicious. It doesn't happen often that we spoiled journalists applause the chef out of his kitchen.As a tradition we all tried to make fools of ourselves on the disco dance floor like there was a prize for it. They shoot horses, don't they (Jane Fonda).



**Taking in the atmosphere of war, almost smelling gun-powder**

We probably woke the rossignols up, when our alarm clocks made their noise at a unholy time the next morning. At 7.30 we were already on the bus munching paper bag breakfast.

At Bastogne War Museum one can feel the war. When watching a certain exhibit, a boy, a young teacher or a German or an American soldier tell in turns the situation and his/her feelings.



Feeling personally how it feels to sit in a cafe, when gunfire begins outside. To crouch in a dimly lit, overcrowded air raid shelter listening and feeling the tremble of bombs blasting outside. To hide in a trench when hell suddenly breaks loose all around.



The ladies downloaded in their heart every word that came from the mouth of that too George Clooney look-alike guy who owns a midsized distillery. Well, maybe he looked like Richard Gere. Anyway, we had an aperitif, a lunch, a baggage of information in a tastefully decorated restaurant.

I Finland the owners of private distilleries don't smell of expensive after-shave. Their premises are usually deep in a forest, where they just lay there by the juniper. While the moon is bright. Watch them jugs a-filling. In the pale moonlight. (Bob Dylan)



**Interesting museum of the industrial revolution and the cost of it.**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wallonia became the most industrialised area in the world. This was based on its coal mines. Between 1822 and 1829 the Borinage area, west of Mons produces more coal than France and Germany together.

The grim downsides of coal mining became familiar to us in « le Bois du Cazier », a former mining site turned into an interactive museum.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1956, as a result of human error, a fire rapidly spread to the whole mine. A total of 262 men, of 12 different nationalities (including 136 Italians and 95 Belgians) lost their lives, leaving hundreds of widows and orphans. This resulted in an end to Italian immigration into Belgium and stricter regulations on safety at work.



**From victory to victory**

We advance in the footsteps of Napoleon's troops. A victory is 20 km ahead. On the way we stopped at "General Gérard", a centre dedicated to the last victory of Napoleon, when the defeated Prussians retreated in some disorder.

**Also Wellington's troops had to retreat.**

In "Château de la Paix" we admired the bed and the room, where Napoleon spent his last night after his latest victory.

There's been much debate on the reasons why Napoleon delayed the start of fighting at the Battle of Waterloo on the morning of 18 June for several hours. Was it a flu, a headache after celebrating the victory, haemorrhoids making riding painful? Official reason is that he waited for the ground to dry after the previous night's rain.

Anyway, I was almost late for the show. First buying more clothes in the village, then queuing to the show area, then queuing for tickets to buy food and drink and then queuing for food and drink.

