

## = Battle of Blenheim =

The Battle of Blenheim ( also the Battle of Blindheim and referred to in some countries as the Second Battle of Höchstädt ) , fought on 13 August 1704 , was a major battle of the War of the Spanish Succession . The overwhelming Allied victory ensured the safety of Vienna from the Franco @-@ Bavarian army , thus preventing the collapse of the Grand Alliance .

Louis XIV of France sought to knock Emperor Leopold out of the war by seizing Vienna , the Habsburg capital , and gain a favourable peace settlement . The dangers to Vienna were considerable : the Elector of Bavaria and Marshal Marsin 's forces in Bavaria threatened from the west , and Marshal Vendôme 's large army in northern Italy posed a serious danger with a potential offensive through the Brenner Pass . Vienna was also under pressure from Rákóczi 's Hungarian revolt from its eastern approaches . Realising the danger , the Duke of Marlborough resolved to alleviate the peril to Vienna by marching his forces south from Bedburg and help maintain Emperor Leopold within the Grand Alliance .

A combination of deception and brilliant administration ? designed to conceal his true destination from friend and foe alike ? enabled Marlborough to march 250 miles ( 400 kilometres ) unhindered from the Low Countries to the River Danube in five weeks . After securing Donauwörth on the Danube , Marlborough sought to engage the Elector 's and Marsin 's army before Marshal Tallard could bring reinforcements through the Black Forest . However , with the Franco @-@ Bavarian commanders reluctant to fight until their numbers were deemed sufficient , the Duke enacted a policy of plundering in Bavaria designed to force the issue . The tactic proved unsuccessful , but when Tallard arrived to bolster the Elector 's army , and Prince Eugene arrived with reinforcements for the Allies , the two armies finally met on the banks of the Danube in and around the small village of Blindheim .

Blenheim has gone down in history as one of the turning points of the War of the Spanish Succession . Bavaria was knocked out of the war , and Louis 's hopes for a quick victory came to an end . France suffered over 30 @,@ 000 casualties including the commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Marshal Tallard , who was taken captive to England . Before the 1704 campaign ended , the Allies had taken Landau , and the towns of Trier and Trarbach on the Moselle in preparation for the following year 's campaign into France itself .

## = = Background = =

By 1704 , the War of the Spanish Succession was in its fourth year . The previous year had been one of success for France and her allies , most particularly on the Danube , where Marshal Villars and the Elector of Bavaria had created a direct threat to Vienna , the Habsburg capital . Vienna had been saved by dissension between the two commanders , leading to the brilliant Villars being replaced by the less dynamic Marshal Marsin . Nevertheless , by 1704 , the threat was still real : Rákóczi 's Hungarian revolt was already threatening the Empire 's eastern approaches , and Marshal Vendôme 's forces threatened an invasion from northern Italy . In the courts of Versailles and Madrid , Vienna 's fall was confidently anticipated , an event which would almost certainly have led to the collapse of the Grand Alliance .

To isolate the Danube from any Allied intervention , Marshal Villeroi 's 46 @,@ 000 troops were expected to pin the 70 @,@ 000 Dutch and English troops around Maastricht in the Low Countries , while General de Coigny protected Alsace against surprise with a further corps . The only forces immediately available for Vienna 's defence were Prince Louis of Baden 's force of 36 @,@ 000 stationed in the Lines of Stollhofen to watch Marshal Tallard at Strasbourg ; there was also a weak force of 10 @,@ 000 men under Field Marshal Count Limburg Styrum observing Ulm .

Both the Imperial Austrian Ambassador in London , Count Wratislaw , and the Duke of Marlborough realised the implications of the situation on the Danube . The Dutch , however , who clung to their troops for their country 's protection , were against any adventurous military operation as far south as the Danube and would never willingly permit any major weakening of the forces in the Spanish Netherlands . Marlborough , realising the only way to ignore Dutch wishes was by the use of secrecy

and guile , set out to deceive his Dutch allies by pretending to simply move his troops to the Moselle ? a plan approved of by The Hague ? but once there , he would slip the Dutch leash and link up with Austrian forces in southern Germany . " My intentions " , wrote the Duke from The Hague on 29 April to his governmental confidant , Sidney Godolphin , " are to march with the English to Coblenz and declare that I intend to campaign on the Moselle . But when I come there , to write to the Dutch States that I think it absolutely necessary for the saving of the Empire to march with the troops under my command and to join with those that are in Germany ... in order to make measures with Prince Lewis of Baden for the speedy reduction of the Elector of Bavaria . "

= = Prelude = =

= = = Protagonists march to the Danube = = =

A scarlet caterpillar , upon which all eyes were at once fixed , began to crawl steadfastly day by day across the map of Europe , dragging the whole war with it . ? Winston Churchill .

Marlborough 's march started on 19 May from Bedburg , 20 miles ( 32 km ) north @-@ west of Cologne . The army ( assembled by the Duke 's brother , General Charles Churchill ) consisted of 66 squadrons , 31 battalions and 38 guns and mortars totalling 21 @,@ 000 men ( 16 @,@ 000 of whom were English troops ) . This force was to be augmented en route such that by the time Marlborough reached the Danube , it would number 40 @,@ 000 ( 47 battalions , 88 squadrons ) . Whilst Marlborough led his army , General Overkirk would maintain a defensive position in the Dutch Republic in case Villeroi mounted an attack . The Duke had assured the Dutch that if the French were to launch an offensive he would return in good time , but Marlborough calculated that as he marched south , the French commander would be drawn after him . In this assumption Marlborough proved correct : Villeroi shadowed the Duke with 30 @,@ 000 men in 60 squadrons and 42 battalions .

The military dangers in such an enterprise were numerous : Marlborough 's lines of communication along the Rhine would be hopelessly exposed to French interference , for Louis ' generals controlled the left bank of the river and its central reaches . Such a long march would almost certainly involve a high wastage of men and horses through exhaustion and disease . However , Marlborough was convinced of the urgency ? " I am very sensible that I take a great deal upon me " , he had earlier written to Godolphin , " but should I act otherwise , the Empire would be undone ... "

Whilst Allied preparations had progressed , the French were striving to maintain and re @-@ supply Marshal Marsin . Marsin had been operating with the Elector of Bavaria against the Imperial commander , Prince Louis of Baden , and was somewhat isolated from France : his only lines of communication lay through the rocky passes of the Black Forest . However , on 14 May , with considerable skill Marshal Tallard managed to bring 10 @,@ 000 reinforcements and vast supplies and munitions through the difficult terrain , whilst outmanoeuvring Baron Thüngen , the Imperial general who sought to block his path . Tallard then returned with his own force to the Rhine , once again side @-@ stepping Thüngen 's efforts to intercept him . The whole operation was an outstanding military achievement .

On 26 May , Marlborough reached Coblenz , where the Moselle meets the Rhine . If he intended an attack along the Moselle the Duke must now turn west , but , instead , the following day the army crossed to the right bank of the Rhine , ( pausing to add 5 @,@ 000 waiting Hanoverians and Prussians ) . " There will be no campaign on the Moselle " , wrote Villeroi who had taken up a defensive position on the river , " the English have all gone up into Germany . " A second possible objective now occurred to the French ? an Allied incursion into Alsace and an attack on the city of Strasbourg . Marlborough skillfully encouraged this apprehension by constructing bridges across the Rhine at Philippsburg , a ruse that not only encouraged Villeroi to come to Tallard 's aid in the defence of Alsace , but one that ensured the French plan to march on Vienna remained paralysed by uncertainty .

With Villeroi shadowing Marlborough 's every move , Marlborough 's gamble that the French would

not move against the weakened Dutch position in the Netherlands paid off . In any case , Marlborough had promised to return to the Netherlands if a French attack developed there , transferring his troops down the Rhine on barges at a rate of 80 miles ( 130 kilometres ) a day . Encouraged by this promise ( whatever it was worth ) the States General agreed to release the Danish contingent of seven battalions and 22 squadrons as a reinforcement . Marlborough reached Ladenburg , in the plain of the Neckar and the Rhine , and there halted for three days to rest his cavalry and allow the guns and infantry to close up . On 6 June he arrived at Wiesloch , south of Heidelberg . The following day , the Allied army swung away from the Rhine towards the hills of the Swabian Jura and the Danube beyond . At last Marlborough 's destination was established without doubt .

= = = Strategy = = =

On 10 June , the Duke met for the first time the President of the Imperial War Council , Prince Eugene ? accompanied by Count Wratislaw ? at the village of Mundelsheim , half @-@ way between the Danube and the Rhine . By 13 June , the Imperial Field Commander , Prince Louis of Baden , had joined them in Großheppach . The three generals commanded a force of nearly 110 @,@ 000 men . At conference it was decided that Eugene would return with 28 @,@ 000 men to the Lines of Stollhofen on the Rhine to keep an eye on Villeroi and Tallard , and prevent them going to the aid of the Franco @-@ Bavarian army on the Danube . Meanwhile , Marlborough 's and Baden 's forces would combine , totalling 80 @,@ 000 men , for the march on the Danube to seek out the Elector and Marsin before they could be reinforced .

Knowing Marlborough 's destination , Tallard and Villeroi met at Landau in the Palatinate on 13 June to rapidly construct an action plan to save Bavaria , but the rigidity of the French command system was such that any variations from the original plan had to be sanctioned by Versailles . The Count of Mérode @-@ Westerloo , commander of the Flemish troops in Tallard 's army wrote ? " One thing is certain : we delayed our march from Alsace for far too long and quite inexplicably . " Approval from Louis arrived on 27 June : Tallard was to reinforce Marsin and the Elector on the Danube via the Black Forest , with 40 battalions and 50 squadrons ; Villeroi was to pin down the Allies defending the Lines of Stollhofen , or , if the Allies should move all their forces to the Danube , he was to join with Marshal Tallard ; and General de Coignies with 8 @,@ 000 men , would protect Alsace . On 1 July Tallard 's army of 35 @,@ 000 re @-@ crossed the Rhine at Kehl and began its march .

Meanwhile , on 22 June , Marlborough 's forces linked up with Baden 's Imperial forces at Launsheim . A distance of 250 miles ( 400 kilometres ) had been covered in five weeks . Thanks to a carefully planned time @-@ table , the effects of wear and tear had been kept to a minimum . Captain Parker described the march discipline ? " As we marched through the country of our Allies , commissars were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for man and horse ... the soldiers had nothing to do but pitch their tents , boil kettles and lie down to rest . " In response to Marlborough 's manoeuvres , the Elector and Marsin , conscious of their numerical disadvantage with only 40 @,@ 000 men , moved their forces to the entrenched camp at Dillingen on the north bank of the Danube . Marlborough could not attack Dillingen because of a lack of siege guns ? he was unable to bring any from the Low Countries , and Baden had failed to supply any despite assurances to the contrary .

The Allies , nevertheless , needed a base for provisions and a good river crossing . On 2 July , therefore , Marlborough stormed the key fortress of Schellenberg on the heights above the town of Donauwörth . Count Jean d 'Arco had been sent with 12 @,@ 000 men from the Franco @-@ Bavarian camp to hold the town and grassy hill , but after a ferocious and bloody battle , inflicting enormous casualties on both sides , Schellenberg finally succumbed , forcing Donauwörth to surrender shortly afterwards . The Elector , knowing his position at Dillingen was now not tenable , took up a position behind the strong fortifications of Augsburg .

Tallard 's march , meanwhile , presented a dilemma for Eugene . If the Allies were not to be outnumbered on the Danube , Eugene realised he must either try to cut Tallard off before he could

get there , or , he must hasten to reinforce Marlborough . However , if he withdrew from the Rhine to the Danube , Villeroi might also make a move south to link up with the Elector and Marsin . Eugene compromised : leaving 12 @, @ 000 troops behind guarding the Lines of Stollhofen , he marched off with the rest of his army to forestall Tallard .

Lacking in numbers , Eugene could not seriously disrupt Tallard 's march ; nevertheless , the French Marshal 's progress was proving pitifully slow . Tallard 's force had suffered considerably more than Marlborough 's troops on their march ? many of his cavalry horses were suffering from glanders , and the mountain passes were proving tough for the 2 @, @ 000 wagons of provisions . Local German peasants , angry at French plundering , compounded Tallard 's problems , leading Mérode @-@ Westerloo to bemoan ? " the enraged peasantry killed several thousand of our men before the army was clear of the Black Forest . " Additionally , Tallard had insisted on besieging the little town of Villingen for six days ( 16 ? 22 July ) , but abandoned the enterprise on discovering the approach of Eugene .

The Elector in Augsburg was informed on 14 July that Tallard was on his way through the Black Forest . This good news bolstered the Elector 's policy of inaction , further encouraging him to wait for the reinforcements . But this reticence to fight induced Marlborough to undertake a controversial policy of spoliation in Bavaria , burning buildings and crops throughout the rich lands south of the Danube . This had two aims : firstly to put pressure on the Elector to fight or come to terms before Tallard arrived with reinforcements ; and secondly , to ruin Bavaria as a base from which the French and Bavarian armies could attack Vienna , or pursue the Duke into Franconia if , at some stage , he had to withdraw northwards . But this destruction , coupled with a protracted siege of Rain ( 9 ? 16 July ) , caused Prince Eugene to lament " ... since the Donauwörth action I cannot admire their performances " , and later to conclude " If he has to go home without having achieved his objective , he will certainly be ruined . " Nevertheless , strategically the Duke had been able to place his numerically stronger forces between the Franco @-@ Bavarian army and Vienna .

= = = Final positioning = = =

Marshal Tallard , with 34 @, @ 000 men , reached Ulm , joining with the Elector and Marsin in Augsburg on 5 August ( although Tallard was not impressed to find that the Elector had dispersed his army in response to Marlborough 's campaign of ravaging the region ) . Also on 5 August , Eugene reached Höchstädt , riding that same night to meet with Marlborough at Schrobenhausen . Marlborough knew it was necessary that another crossing point over the Danube would be required in case Donauwörth fell to the enemy . On 7 August , therefore , the first of Baden 's 15 @, @ 000 Imperial troops ( the remainder following two days later ) left Marlborough 's main force to besiege the heavily defended city of Ingolstadt , 20 miles ( 32 kilometres ) farther down the Danube .

With Eugene 's forces at Höchstädt on the north bank of the Danube , and Marlborough 's at Rain on the south bank , Tallard and the Elector debated their next move . Tallard preferred to bide his time , replenish supplies and allow Marlborough 's Danube campaign to flounder in the colder weeks of Autumn ; the Elector and Marsin , however , newly reinforced , were keen to push ahead . The French and Bavarian commanders eventually agreed on a plan and decided to attack Eugene 's smaller force . On 9 August , the Franco @-@ Bavarian forces began to cross to the north bank of the Danube .

On 10 August , Eugene sent an urgent dispatch reporting that he was falling back to Donauwörth ? " The enemy have marched . It is almost certain that the whole army is crossing the Danube at Lauingen ... The plain of Dillingen is crowded with troops ... Everything , milord , consists in speed and that you put yourself forthwith in movement to join me tomorrow , without which I fear it will be too late . " By a series of brilliant marches Marlborough concentrated his forces on Donauwörth and , by noon 11 August , the link @-@ up was complete .

During 11 August , Tallard pushed forward from the river crossings at Dillingen ; by 12 August , the Franco @-@ Bavarian forces were encamped behind the small river Nebel near the village of Blenheim on the plain of Höchstädt . That same day Marlborough and Eugene carried out their own reconnaissance of the French position from the church spire at Tapfheim , and moved their

combined forces to Münster ? five miles ( 8 km ) from the French camp . A French reconnaissance under the Marquis de Silly went forward to probe the enemy , but were driven off by Allied troops who had deployed to cover the pioneers of the advancing army , labouring to bridge the numerous streams in the area and improve the passage leading westwards to Höchstädt . Marlborough quickly moved forward two brigades under the command of General Wilkes and Brigadier Rowe to secure the narrow strip of land between the Danube and the wooded Fuchsberg hill , at the Schwenningen defile .

Tallard 's army numbered 56 @, @ 000 men and 90 guns ; the army of the Grand Alliance , 52 @, @ 000 men and 66 guns . Some Allied officers who were acquainted with the superior numbers of the enemy , and aware of their strong defensive position , ventured to remonstrate with Marlborough about the hazards of attacking ; but the Duke was resolute ? " I know the danger , yet a battle is absolutely necessary , and I rely on the bravery and discipline of the troops , which will make amends for our disadvantages " . Marlborough and Eugene decided to risk everything , and agreed to attack on the following day .

= = Battle = =

= = = The battlefield = = =

The battlefield stretched for nearly 4 miles ( 6 @. @ 4 km ) . The extreme right flank of the Franco @- @ Bavarian army was covered by the Danube ; to the extreme left flank lay the undulating pine @- @ covered hills of the Swabian Jura . A small stream , the Nebel , ( the ground either side of which was soft and marshy and only fordable intermittently ) , fronted the French line . The French right rested on the village of Blenheim near where the Nebel flows into the Danube ; the village itself was surrounded by hedges , fences , enclosed gardens , and meadows . Between Blenheim and the next village of Oberglauheim the fields of wheat had been cut to stubble and were now ideal to deploy troops . From Oberglauheim to the next hamlet of Lutzingen the terrain of ditches , thickets and brambles was potentially difficult ground for the attackers .

= = = Initial manoeuvres = = =

At 02 : 00 on 13 August , 40 squadrons were sent forward towards the enemy , followed at 03 : 00 , in eight columns , by the main Allied force pushing over the Kessel . At about 06 : 00 they reached Schwenningen , two miles ( 3 km ) from Blenheim . The English and German troops who had held Schwenningen through the night joined the march , making a ninth column on the left of the army . Marlborough and Eugene made their final plans . The Allied commanders agreed that Marlborough would command 36 @, @ 000 troops and attack Tallard 's force of 33 @, @ 000 on the left ( including capturing the village of Blenheim ) , whilst Eugene , commanding 16 @, @ 000 men would attack the Elector and Marsin 's combined forces of 23 @, @ 000 troops on the right wing ; if this attack was pressed hard the Elector and Marsin would have no troops to send to aid Tallard on their right . Lieutenant @- @ General John Cutts would attack Blenheim in concert with Eugene 's attack . With the French flanks busy , Marlborough could cross the Nebel and deliver the fatal blow to the French at their centre . However , Marlborough would have to wait until Eugene was in position before the general engagement could begin .

The last thing Tallard expected that morning was to be attacked by the Allies ? deceived by intelligence gathered from prisoners taken by de Silly the previous day , and assured in their strong natural position , Tallard and his colleagues were convinced that Marlborough and Eugene were about to retreat north @- @ eastwards towards Nördlingen . Tallard wrote a report to this effect to King Louis that morning , but hardly had he sent the messenger when the Allied army began to appear opposite his camp . " I could see the enemy advancing ever closer in nine great columns " , wrote Mérode @- @ Westerloo , " ... filling the whole plain from the Danube to the woods on the horizon . " Signal guns were fired to bring in the foraging parties and picquets as the French and

Bavarian troops tried to draw into battle @-@ order to face the unexpected threat .

At about 08 : 00 the French artillery on their right wing opened fire , answered by Colonel Blood 's batteries . The guns were heard by Baden in his camp before Ingolstadt , " The Prince and the Duke are engaged today to the westward " , he wrote to the Emperor . " Heaven bless them . " An hour later Tallard , the Elector , and Marsin climbed Blenheim 's church tower to finalise their plans . It was settled that the Elector and Marsin would hold the front from the hills to Oberglauheim , whilst Tallard would defend the ground between Oberglauheim and the Danube . The French commanders were , however , divided as to how to utilise the Nebel : Tallard 's tactic ? opposed by Marsin and the Elector who felt it better to close their infantry right up to the stream itself ? was to lure the allies across before unleashing their cavalry upon them , causing panic and confusion ; whilst the enemy was struggling in the marshes , they would be caught in crossfire from Blenheim and Oberglauheim . The plan was sound if all its parts were implemented , but it allowed Marlborough to cross the Nebel without serious interference and fight the battle he had in mind .

= = = Deployment = = =

The Franco @-@ Bavarian commanders deployed their forces . In the village of Lutzingen , Count Maffei positioned five Bavarian battalions with a great battery of 16 guns at the village 's edge . In the woods to the left of Lutzingen , seven French battalions under the Marquis de Rozel moved into place . Between Lutzingen and Oberglauheim the Elector placed 27 squadrons of cavalry ? Count d 'Arco commanded 14 Bavarian squadrons and Count Wolframsdorf had 13 more in support nearby . To their right stood Marsin 's 40 French squadrons and 12 battalions . The village of Oberglauheim was packed with 14 battalions commanded by the Marquis de Blainville ( including the effective Irish Brigade known as the ' Wild Geese ' ) . Six batteries of guns were ranged alongside the village . On the right of these French and Bavarian positions , between Oberglauheim and Blenheim , Tallard deployed 64 French and Walloon squadrons ( 16 drawn from Marsin ) supported by nine French battalions standing near the Höchstädt road . In the cornfield next to Blenheim stood three battalions from the Regiment de Roi . Nine battalions occupied the village itself , commanded by the Marquis de Clérambault . Four battalions stood to the rear and a further 11 were in reserve . These battalions were supported by Hautefeuille 's 12 squadrons of dismounted dragoons . By 11 : 00 Tallard , the Elector , and Marsin were in place . Many of the Allied generals were hesitant to attack such a relatively strong position . The Earl of Orkney later confessed that , " had I been asked to give my opinion , I had been against it . "

Prince Eugene was expected to be in position by 11 : 00 , but due to the difficult terrain and enemy fire , progress was slow . Lord Cutts ' column ? who by 10 : 00 had expelled the enemy from two water mills upon the Nebel ? had already deployed by the river against Blenheim , enduring over the next three hours severe fire from a heavy six @-@ gun battery posted near the village . The rest of Marlborough 's army , waiting in their ranks on the forward slope , were also forced to bear the cannonade from the French artillery , suffering 2 @, @ 000 casualties before the attack could even start . Meanwhile , engineers repaired a stone bridge across the Nebel , and constructed five additional bridges or causeways across the marsh between Blenheim and Oberglauheim . Marlborough 's anxiety was finally allayed when , just past noon , Colonel Cadogan reported that Eugene 's Prussian and Danish infantry were in place ? the order for the general advance was given . At 13 : 00 , Cutts was ordered to attack the village of Blenheim whilst Prince Eugene was requested to assault Lutzingen on the Allied right flank .

= = = Blenheim = = =

Cutts ordered Brigadier @-@ General Archibald Rowe 's brigade to attack . The English infantry rose from the edge of the Nebel , and silently marched towards Blenheim , a distance of some 150 yards ( 140 m ) . John Ferguson 's English brigade supported Rowe 's left , and moved in perfect order towards the barricades between the village and the river , defended by Hautefeuille 's dragoons . As the range closed to within 30 yards ( 27 m ) , the French fired a deadly volley . Rowe

had ordered that there should be no firing from his men until he struck his sword upon the palisades , but as he stepped forward to give the signal , he fell mortally wounded . The survivors of the leading companies closed up the gaps in their torn ranks and rushed forward . Small parties penetrated the defences , but repeated French volleys forced the English back towards the Nebel , sustaining heavy casualties . As the attack faltered , eight squadrons of elite Gens d 'Armes , commanded by the veteran Swiss officer , Beat @-@ Jacques von Zurlauben , fell upon the English troops , cutting at the exposed flank of Rowe 's own regiment . However , Wilkes ' Hessian brigade , lying nearby in the marshy grass at the water 's edge , stood firm and repulsed the Gens d 'Armes with steady fire , enabling the English and Hessians to re @-@ order and launch another attack .

Although the Allies were again repulsed , these persistent attacks on Blenheim eventually bore fruit , panicking Clérambault into making the worst French error of the day . Without consulting Tallard , Clérambault ordered his reserve battalions into the village , upsetting the balance of the French position and nullifying the French numerical superiority . " The men were so crowded in upon one another " , wrote Mérode @-@ Westerloo , " that they couldn 't even fire ? let alone receive or carry out any orders . " Marlborough , spotting this error , now countermanded Cutts ' intention to launch a third attack , and ordered him simply to contain the enemy within Blenheim ; no more than 5 @,@ 000 Allied soldiers were able to pen in twice the number of French infantry and dragoons .

= = = Lutzingen = = =

... Prince Eugene and the Imperial troops had been repulsed three times ? driven right back to the woods ? and had taken a real drubbing . ? Mérode @-@ Westerloo .

On the Allied right , Eugene 's Prussian and Danish forces were desperately fighting the numerically superior forces of the Elector and Marsin . The Prince of Anhalt @-@ Dessau led forward four brigades across the Nebel to assault the well @-@ fortified position of Lutzingen . Here , the Nebel was less of an obstacle , but the great battery positioned on the edge of the village enjoyed a good field of fire across the open ground stretching to the hamlet of Schwennenbach . As soon as the infantry crossed the stream , they were struck by Maffei 's infantry , and salvoes from the Bavarian guns positioned both in front of the village and in enfilade on the wood @-@ line to the right . Despite heavy casualties the Prussians attempted to storm the great battery , whilst the Danes , under Count Scholten , attempted to drive the French infantry out of the copses beyond the village .

With the infantry heavily engaged , Eugene 's cavalry picked its way across the Nebel . After an initial success , his first line of cavalry , under the Imperial General of Horse , Prince Maximilian of Hanover , were pressed by the second line of Marsin 's cavalry , and were forced back across the Nebel in confusion . Nevertheless , the exhausted French were unable to follow up their advantage , and the two cavalry forces tried to regroup and reorder their ranks . However , without cavalry support , and threatened with envelopment , the Prussian and Danish infantry were in turn forced to pull back across the Nebel . Panic gripped some of Eugene 's troops as they crossed the stream . Ten infantry colours were lost to the Bavarians , and hundreds of prisoners taken ; it was only through the leadership of Eugene and the Prussian Prince that the imperial infantry were prevented from abandoning the field .

After rallying his troops near Schwennenbach ? well beyond their starting point ? Eugene prepared to launch a second attack , led by the second @-@ line squadrons under the Duke of Württemberg @-@ Teck . Yet again they were caught in the murderous cross @-@ fire from the artillery in Lutzingen and Oberglauheim , and were once again thrown back in disarray . The French and Bavarians , however , were almost as disordered as their opponents , and they too were in need of inspiration from their commander , the Elector , who was seen ? " ... riding up and down , and inspiring his men with fresh courage . " Anhalt @-@ Dessau 's Danish and Prussian infantry attacked a second time but could not sustain the advance without proper support . Once again they fell back across the stream .

= = = Centre and Oberglauheim = = =

... they began to pass [ the marshes and the Nebel ] as fast as the badness of the ground would permit them . ? Churchill 's chaplain .

Whilst these events around Blenheim and Lutzingen were taking place , Marlborough was preparing to cross the Nebel . The centre , commanded by the Duke 's brother , General Charles Churchill , consisted of 18 battalions of infantry arranged in two lines : seven battalions in the front line to secure a foothold across the Nebel , and 11 battalions in the rear providing cover from the Allied side of the stream . Between the infantry were placed two lines , 72 squadrons of cavalry . The first line of foot was to pass the stream first and march as far to the other side as could be conveniently done . This line would then form and cover the passage of the horse , leaving gaps in the line of infantry large enough for the cavalry to pass through and take their position in front .

Marlborough ordered the formation forward . Once again Zurlauben 's Gens d 'Armes charged , looking to rout Lumley 's English cavalry who linked Cutts ' column facing Blenheim with Churchill 's infantry . As these elite French cavalry attacked , they were faced by five English squadrons under Colonel Francis Palmes . To the consternation of the French , the Gens d 'Armes were pushed back in terrible confusion , pursued well beyond the Maulweyer stream that flows through Blenheim . " What ? Is it possible ? " exclaimed the Elector , " the gentlemen of France fleeing ? " Palmes , however , attempted to follow up his success but was repulsed in some confusion by other French cavalry , and musketry fire from the edge of Blenheim .

Nevertheless , Tallard was alarmed by the repulse of the elite Gens d 'Armes and urgently rode across the field to ask Marsin for reinforcements ; but on the basis of being hard pressed by Eugene ? whose second attack was in full flood ? Marsin refused . As Tallard consulted with Marsin , more of his infantry was being taken into Blenheim by Clérambault . Fatally , Tallard , aware of the situation , did nothing to rectify this grave mistake , leaving him with just the nine battalions of infantry near the Höchstädt road to oppose the massed enemy ranks in the centre . Zurlauben tried several more times to disrupt the Allies forming on Tallard 's side of the stream ; his front @-@ line cavalry darting forward down the gentle slope towards the Nebel . But the attacks lacked co @-@ ordination , and the Allied infantry 's steady volleys disconcerted the French horsemen . During these skirmishes Zurlauben fell mortally wounded , and died two days later . The time was just after 15 : 00 .

The Danish cavalry , under the Duke of Württemberg @-@ Neuenstadt ( not to be confused with the Duke of Württemberg who fought with Eugene ) , had made slow work of crossing the Nebel near Oberglau ; harassed by Marsin 's infantry near the village , the Danes were driven back across the stream . Count Horn 's Dutch infantry managed to push the French back from the water 's edge , but it was apparent that before Marlborough could launch his main effort against Tallard , Oberglauheim would have to be secured .

Count Horn directed the Prince of Holstein @-@ Beck to take the village , but his two Dutch brigades were cut down by the French and Irish troops , capturing and badly wounding the Prince during the action . The battle was now in the balance . If Holstein @-@ Beck 's Dutch column were destroyed , the Allied army would be split in two : Eugene 's wing would be isolated from Marlborough 's , passing the initiative to the Franco @-@ Bavarian forces now engaged across the whole plain . Seeing the opportunity , Marsin ordered his cavalry to change from facing Eugene , and turn towards their right and the open flank of Churchill 's infantry drawn up in front of Unterglau . Marlborough ( who had crossed the Nebel on a makeshift bridge to take personal control ) , ordered Hulsén 's Hanoverian battalions to support the Dutch infantry . A Dutch cavalry brigade under Averock was also called forward but soon came under pressure from Marsin 's more numerous squadrons .

Marlborough now requested Eugene to release Count Hendrick Fugger and his Imperial Cuirassier brigade to help repel the French cavalry thrust . Despite his own desperate struggle , the Imperial Prince at once complied , demonstrating the high degree of confidence and mutual co @-@ operation between the two generals . Although the Nebel stream lay between Fugger 's and Marsin 's squadrons , the French were forced to change front to meet this new threat , thus forestalling the chance for Marsin to strike at Marlborough 's infantry . Fugger 's cuirassiers charged and , striking at a favourable angle , threw back Marsin 's squadrons in disorder . With support from Colonel Blood 's



batteries , the Hessian , Hanoverian and Dutch infantry ? now commanded by Count Berensdorf ? succeeded in pushing the French and Irish infantry back into Oberglauheim so that they could not again threaten Churchill 's flank as he moved against Tallard . The French commander in the village , the Marquis de Blainville , numbered amongst the heavy casualties .

= = = Breakthrough = = =

The [ French ] foot remained in the best order I ever saw , till they were cut to pieces almost in rank and file . ? Lord Orkney .

By 16 : 00 , with the enemy troops besieged in Blenheim and Oberglau , the Allied centre of 81 squadrons ( nine squadrons had been transferred from Cutts ' column ) , supported by 18 battalions was firmly planted amidst the French line of 64 squadrons and nine battalions of raw recruits . There was now a pause in the battle : Marlborough wanted to concert the attack upon the whole front , and Eugene , after his second repulse , needed time to reorganize .

Just after 17 : 00 all was ready along the Allied front . Marlborough 's two lines of cavalry had now moved to the front of the Duke 's line of battle , with the two supporting lines of infantry behind them . Mérode @-@ Westerloo attempted to extricate some French infantry crowded in Blenheim , but Clérambault ordered the troops back into the village . The French cavalry exerted themselves once more against the first line ? Lumley 's English and Scots on the Allied left , and Hompesch 's Dutch and German squadrons on the Allied right . Tallard 's squadrons , lacking infantry support , were tired and ragged but managed to push the Allied first line back to their infantry support . With the battle still not won , Marlborough had to rebuke one of his cavalry officers who was attempting to leave the field ? " Sir , you are under a mistake , the enemy lies that way ... " Now , at the Duke 's command , the second Allied line under Cuno Josua von Bülow and Bothmer was ordered forward , and , driving through the centre , the Allies finally put Tallard 's tired horse to rout , not without cost . The Prussian Life Dragoons ' Colonel , Ludwig von Blumenthal , and his 2nd in command , Lt. Col. von Hacke , fell next to each other . But the charge succeeded and with their cavalry in headlong flight , the remaining nine French infantry battalions fought with desperate valour , trying to form square . But it was futile . The French battalions were overwhelmed by Colonel Blood 's close @-@ range artillery and platoon fire . Mérode @-@ Westerloo later wrote ? " [ They ] died to a man where they stood , stationed right out in the open plain ? supported by nobody . "

The majority of Tallard 's retreating troops headed for Höchstädt but most did not make the safety of the town , plunging instead into the Danube where upwards of 3 @, @ 000 French horsemen drowned ; others were cut down by the pursuing cavalry . The Marquis de Gruignan attempted a counter @-@ attack , but he was easily brushed aside by the triumphant Allies . After a final rally behind his camp 's tents , shouting entreaties to stand and fight , Marshal Tallard was caught up in the rout and pushed towards Sonderheim . Surrounded by a squadron of Hessian troops , Tallard surrendered to Lieutenant @-@ Colonel de Boinenburg , the Prince of Hesse @-@ Kassel 's aide @-@ de @-@ camp , and was sent under escort to Marlborough . The Duke welcomed the French commander ? " I am very sorry that such a cruel misfortune should have fallen upon a soldier for whom I have the highest regard . " With salutes and courtesies , the Marshal was escorted to Marlborough 's coach .

= = = Fall of Blenheim = = =

... our men fought in and through the fire ... until many on both sides were burned to death . ? Private Deane , 1st Regiment Foot Guards .

Meanwhile , the Allies had once again attacked the Bavarian stronghold at Lutzingen . Eugene , however , became exasperated with the performance of his Imperial cavalry whose third attack had failed : he had already shot two of his troopers to prevent a general flight . Then , declaring in disgust that he wished to " fight among brave men and not among cowards " , Eugene went into the attack with the Prussian and Danish infantry , as did the Dessauer , waving a regimental colour to inspire his troops . This time the Prussians were able to storm the great Bavarian battery , and

overwhelm the guns ' crews . Beyond the village , Scholten 's Danes defeated the French infantry in a desperate hand @-@ to @-@ hand bayonet struggle . When they saw that the centre had broken , the Elector and Marsin decided the battle was lost and , like the remnants of Tallard 's army , fled the battlefield ( albeit in better order than Tallard 's men ) . Attempts to organise an Allied force to prevent Marsin 's withdrawal failed owing to the exhaustion of the cavalry , and the growing confusion in the field .

Marlborough now had to turn his attention from the fleeing enemy to direct Churchill to detach more infantry to storm Blenheim . Orkney 's infantry , Hamilton 's English brigade and St Paul 's Hanoverians moved across the trampled wheat to the cottages . Fierce hand @-@ to @-@ hand fighting gradually forced the French towards the village centre , in and around the walled churchyard which had been prepared for defence . Hay and Ross 's dismounted dragoons were also sent , but suffered under a counter @-@ charge delivered by the regiments of Artois and Provence under command of Colonel de la Silvière . Colonel Belville 's Hanoverians were fed into the battle to steady the resolve of the dragoons , and once more went to the attack . The Allied progress was slow and hard , and like the defenders , they suffered many casualties .

Many of the cottages were now burning , obscuring the field of fire and driving the defenders out of their positions . Hearing the din of battle in Blenheim , Tallard sent a message to Marlborough offering to order the garrison to withdraw from the field . " Inform Monsieur Tallard " , replied the Duke , " that , in the position in which he is now , he has no command . " Nevertheless , as dusk came the Allied commander was anxious for a quick conclusion . The French infantry fought tenaciously to hold on to their position in Blenheim , but their commander was nowhere to be found . Clérambault 's insistence on confining his huge force in the village was to seal his fate that day . Realising his tactical mistake had contributed to Tallard 's defeat in the centre , Clérambault deserted Blenheim and the 27 battalions defending the village , and reportedly drowned in the Danube while attempting to make his escape .

By now Blenheim was under assault from every side by three British generals : Cutts , Churchill , and Orkney . The French had repulsed every attack with heavy slaughter , but many had seen what had happened on the plain and what its consequences to them would be ; their army was routed and they were cut off . Orkney , attacking from the rear , now tried a different tactic ? " ... it came into my head to beat parley " , he later wrote , " which they accepted of and immediately their Brigadier de Nouville capitulated with me to be prisoner at discretion and lay down their arms . " Threatened by Allied guns , other units followed their example . However , it was not until 21 : 00 that the Marquis de Blanzac , who had taken charge in Clérambault 's absence , reluctantly accepted the inevitability of defeat , and some 10 @,@ 000 of France 's best infantry had laid down their arms .

During these events Marlborough was still in the saddle conducting the pursuit of the broken enemy . Pausing for a moment he scribbled on the back of an old tavern bill a note addressed to his wife , Sarah : " I have no time to say more but to beg you will give my duty to the Queen , and let her know her army has had a glorious victory . "

= = Aftermath = =

French losses were immense : over 30 @,@ 000 killed , wounded and missing . Moreover , the myth of French invincibility had been destroyed and Louis 's hopes of an early and victorious peace had been wrenched from his grasp . Mérode @-@ Westerloo summarised the case against Tallard 's army : " The French lost this battle for a wide variety of reasons . For one thing they had too good an opinion of their own ability ... Another point was their faulty field dispositions , and in addition there was rampant indiscipline and inexperience displayed ... It took all these faults to lose so celebrated a battle . " It was a hard @-@ fought contest , leading Prince Eugene to observe ? " I have not a squadron or battalion which did not charge four times at least . " Nevertheless , although the war dragged on for years , the Battle of Blenheim was probably its most decisive victory ; Marlborough and Eugene , working indivisibly together , had saved the Habsburg Empire and thereby preserved the Grand Alliance from collapse . Munich , Augsburg , Ingolstadt , Ulm and all remaining territory of Bavaria soon fell to the Allies . By the Treaty of Ilbersheim , signed 7

November 1704 , Bavaria was placed under Austrian military rule , allowing the Habsburgs to utilise its resources for the rest of the conflict .

The remnants of the Elector of Bavaria 's and Marshal Marsin 's wing limped back to Strasbourg , losing another 7 @, @ 000 men through desertion . Despite being offered the chance to remain as ruler of Bavaria ( under strict terms of an alliance with Austria ) , the Elector left his country and family in order to continue the war against the Allies from the Spanish Netherlands where he still held the post of governor @-@ general . Their commander @-@ in @-@ chief that day , Marshal Tallard ? who , unlike his subordinates , had not been ransomed or exchanged ? was taken to England and imprisoned in Nottingham until his release in 1711 .

The 1704 campaign lasted considerably longer than usual as the Allies sought to wring out maximum advantage . Realising that France was too powerful to be forced to make peace by a single victory , however , Eugene , Marlborough and Baden met to plan their next moves . For the following year the Duke proposed a campaign along the valley of the River Moselle to carry the war deep into France . This required the capture of the major fortress of Landau which guarded the Rhine , and the towns of Trier and Trarbach on the Moselle itself . Trier was taken on 26 October and Landau fell on 23 November to the Margrave of Baden and Prince Eugene ; with the fall of Trarbach on 20 December , the campaign season for 1704 came to an end .

Marlborough returned to England on 14 December ( O.S ) to the acclamation of Queen Anne and the country . In the first days of January the 110 cavalry standards and the 128 infantry colours that were taken during the battle were borne in procession to Westminster Hall . In February 1705 , Queen Anne , who had made Marlborough a Duke in 1702 , granted him the Park of Woodstock and promised a sum of £ 240 @, @ 000 to build a suitable house as a gift from a grateful crown in recognition of his victory ? a victory which British historian Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy considered one of the pivotal battles in history , writing ? " Had it not been for Blenheim , all Europe might at this day suffer under the effect of French conquests resembling those of Alexander in extent and those of the Romans in durability . "

= = Cultural references = =

Joseph Addison 's poem The Campaign

John Philips 's poem Blenheim , a counter to Addison 's poem

Robert Southey 's anti @-@ war poem After Blenheim

Iain Gale 's novel Man of Honour

Bristol Blenheim , named after the battle