
THE DEATH OF PATRICK SARSFIELD AND THE SEARCH FOR THE REMAINS OF THE EARL OF LUCAN

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In 1668, James, the younger brother of King Charles II of England, secretly converted to Catholicism. When Charles II died without legitimate children in 1685, James became King of England and Ireland as James II and King of Scotland as James VII.¹ His Catholic faith as well as his taste for absolutism (perhaps inspired by his cousin Louis XIV) led James II increasingly to oppose the Parliament in London, so much so that in 1688 he was removed from power and forced to flee to France, leaving his Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange, to take the throne as William III. With the help of Louis XIV, James II tried to regain his throne, starting with Ireland. In 1689, he landed at Kinsale and assembled an army, one of whose officers was a certain Patrick Sarsfield.² The following year, in 1690, James II suffered a heavy defeat against William III at the Battle of the Boyne, north of Dublin. He returned to France, leaving behind

¹ This article is an extended and updated version of an article in French entitled *La Mort de Patrick Sarsfield : À la recherche des restes du comte de Lucan* published in vol. LXII of the *Annales du Centre Hutois des Sciences et Beaux-Arts (CHSBA)* in July 2022. I wish to thank the editors of the *CHSBA* for allowing me to republish in English this extended version of the article. I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Carelon Global Solutions, and in particular to Mr. John Patrick Shaw, Country Head of the company in Ireland, for accepting to sponsor the Sarsfield Homecoming Project and fund the translation work. Finally, I wish to thank most sincerely my colleague Mr. Darach Sanfey, Lecturer in French Studies at Mary Immaculate College, who took on the arduous task of translating my work.

² Born in around 1650, the youngest son of a wealthy Catholic family based in Lucan, near Dublin (the family included a former mayor of Dublin among its ancestors), Patrick Sarsfield was a soldier who in the course of his career served both the English and French crowns. According to the descriptions of his contemporaries, he was a fearless, charismatic man, much admired by his brothers in arms, always ready for combat (he fought many duels at the risk of his life), impetuous and fiery; he often threw himself first into battle, sometimes without awaiting orders. Neither was he above occasional acts of roguery, especially in his younger days when he did not hesitate, together with a friend, to kidnap two rich young heiresses in the firm expectation that they would want to marry him, only to discover that the beauties were not interested. In 1689 he married Honora Burke, the daughter of the influential 7th Earl of Clanricarde. This information on Sarsfield's life is taken from Liam Irwin's entry in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2009, accessible online at <https://www.dib.ie/biography/sarsfield-patrick-a7924>. On the abduction of the girls, see James Kelly, 'The abduction of women of fortune in eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, vol. 9 (1994), p. 10.

his army, which eventually retreated to the city of Limerick in the west of Ireland. It was at this point that Patrick Sarsfield truly became a legendary figure. Knowing William III's plan to lay siege to Limerick, the Franco-Irish officers thought the city undefendable and had chosen to withdraw to Galway, further north. Sarsfield instead, aided by the Marquis de Boisseleau, a French officer, marshalled the defence of the city and, in the course of an intrepid night attack on horseback, succeeded in destroying William of Orange's munitions train in the townland of Ballyneety, some ten kilometres to the south-east. As a result of this exploit (which became known as Sarsfield's Ride) and of the heroic defence of Limerick mounted by de Boisseleau and the Jacobite army, with the support of the galvanised citizens, William III and his army were forced to lift the siege and withdraw. A year later, however, in 1691, William III's army returned under general Ginkel's command and this time succeeded in forcing the Jacobite army to surrender following a second siege of Limerick. Sarsfield played a central role in this new episode, however, as he negotiated with Ginkel the terms of the famous Treaty of Limerick, which among other things allowed the Jacobite troops to keep their arms on condition that they quit Ireland. As a result of the Treaty of Limerick, approximately 12,000 Jacobite soldiers and their families went into exile on the continent. Most of these soldiers, later to be dubbed the 'Wild Geese', eventually joined the French army, many with the secret hope of one day defeating William III's forces and returning home. This historical episode is referred to in Ireland as The Flight of the Wild Geese. After overseeing the departure of his soldiers, Patrick Sarsfield himself left Ireland for France on 22 December 1691. Once there, he continued to fight in the service of King James II (who, as a reward for his feats of arms, had made him Earl of Lucan), then Louis XIV, and took part in the many battles of the War of the Grand Alliance. He was made *Maréchal de camp* in March 1693, and fought bravely at the battle of Neerwinden (also known as the battle of Landen) in July of the same year, a battle that proved to be his last.

What is known about the exact circumstances of Patrick Sarsfield's death? Where was he buried? How might his remains be identified? This article seeks to answer these questions by examining the work of historians and drawing upon a number of contemporary sources.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SARSFIELD'S DEATH?

As John Gibney pointed out in a 2011 article on the construction of the 'Sarsfield myth', very little is actually known about the life of the Irish hero:

Patrick Sarsfield was born: we know that much. As for where he was born, and when, such details remain obscure, along with most other things about his life. Despite his surname being attached to innumerable baptismal names and GAA clubs, Sarsfield's posthumous fame stands in stark contrast to the paucity of information about his life. The little we know about him comes mainly from external sources, and even the picture that emerges from these is disconcertingly incomplete.³

Liam Irwin said as much in 'Sarsfield: The Man and the Myth', an article in which he sought to distinguish legend from reality: 'Patrick Sarsfield is one of the most enigmatic figures in Irish history. We lack much of the basic information about his life'.⁴ What is true of his life is also true of the circumstances of his death. Let us turn to consider what historiography, starting with the most recent publications, can tell us about how Sarsfield met his end.

The only reference to Patrick Sarsfield's death in Gerard Fitzgibbon's *Kingdom Overthrown*, a 2015 study which re-examines Ireland's Williamite–Jacobite wars in the European context of the time, is the following few lines: 'He was shot in the chest holding the line at Landen in August 1693, and died a few days later. Lord Lucan's last words, it is said, were of home and sorrow. "Oh, that this were for Ireland"'.⁵ Fitzgibbon's only source for this information is "'The Triumph of Patrick Sarsfield" in MacErlean (ed.)'. Apart from the fact that the date of August 1693 is wrong (the Battle of Landen/Neerwinden took place on 29 July 1693), the bibliographical reference is to a poem from a collection of the works of Dáibhí Ó Bruadair, a seventeenth-century Irish poet, which was published in 1917 by the Reverend John Mac Erlean.⁶ However, Sarsfield's supposed last words do not appear in these poems, and with good reason, since they are actually the work of Thomas Davis, a nineteenth-century Irish writer and activist in the 'Young Ireland' movement. In a note by Davis accompanying his own collection of poems, we find:

His last thoughts were for his country. As he lay on the field unhelmed and dying, he put his hand to his breast. When he took it away, it was full of his best blood. Looking at it sadly with an eye in which victory shone a moment before, he said faintly: "Oh! That this were for Ireland."⁷

³ John Gibney, "'Sarsfield Is the Word": The Heroic Afterlife of an Irish Jacobite', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, EARRACH / SPRING 2011, vol. 15, No. 1, p. 66.

⁴ Liam Irwin, 'Sarsfield: The Man and the Myth', in Bernadette Whelan (ed.), *The Last of the Great Wars. Essays of the War of the Three Kings in Ireland, 1688-91*, Limerick, University of Limerick Press, 1995, p. 108.

⁵ Gerard Fitzgibbon, *Kingdom Overthrown. Ireland and the Battle of Europe, 1688-1691*, Stillorgan, New Island, 2015, p. 388.

⁶ John C. Mac Erlean (ed.), *The Poems of David Ó Bruadair*, 3 vols., London, The Irish Texts Society, 1917.

⁷ Thomas Davis, *The Poems of Thomas Davis, now first collected*, Dublin, James Duffy, 1857, p. 223.

It should be noted here that, before Fitzgibbon, many other historians had referenced Davis' version of Sarsfield's death, without always revealing its source or its totally fictitious character. In 1895, in his *Life of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan*, John Todhunter gave the following variant of Davis' vision:

It was in the last charge that Sarsfield, at the head of the flower of the French cavalry (no Irish regiment being engaged), as he drove the enemy down to the river, was struck by a musket ball in the breast and fell. As he lay on the ground he is said to have put his hand to his wound, and seeing it covered with blood, exclaimed: "Would to God this were shed for Ireland!"⁸

Alice Curtayne follows suit, in 1934:

It was in this battle of Landen that Sarsfield lost his life. Leading a charge of the French cavalry, he was struck over the heart by a ball [...]. The story is told that, as he was being borne from the battlefield, he pressed his hand against his wound to staunch the flow of blood, sorrowfully exclaiming: "Oh, that this were for Ireland!"⁹

As early as 1873, however, in *The Life of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan*, John Hand had hinted at the non-historicity of the line attributed to Sarsfield: "History," says Thomas Davis, "records no nobler saying" – *nor does it.*¹⁰ However, it seems that the appeal of this poetic vision of the hero's death has been so powerful that few historians have resisted the urge to evoke it.¹¹ This kind of detail is important, however, and contributes greatly to the blurring of lines between reality and fiction. It is on foot of Davis's poem that many historians, for example Todhunter or Curtayne, have based the assumption that Sarsfield was wounded in the chest by a musket ball. The poem contained the following lines:

Sarsfield is dying on Landen's plain!
His corslet had met the ball in vain?
As his life-blood gushes into his hand,
He says, "Oh! That this was for fatherland!"¹²

Although it is plausible and even probable that the Earl of Lucan was indeed wounded by musket fire during the cavalry charge, there is no historical evidence to support this.

⁸ John Todhunter, *Life of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan: With a Short Narrative of the Principal Events of the Jacobite War in Ireland*, London/Dublin, T.F. Unwin/Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1895, p. 202.

⁹ Alice Curtayne, *Patrick Sarsfield*, Dublin/Cork, The Talbot Press Limited, 1934, p. 175.

¹⁰ John Hand, *The Life of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan*, Liverpool, John Denvir, 1873, p. 22 (our emphasis).

¹¹ In a 2003 biography of Sarsfield, Kevin Haddick-Flynn asserts: 'The last words of Sarsfield cannot be authenticated and are derived from the *Berwick* who was present at the Battle of Landen. The words are sometimes considered to be a concoction from the romantic period of Irish nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century, but this is incorrect' (*Sarsfield and the Jacobites*, Cork, Mercier, 2003, endnote no 9 of the chapter 'The Last of the Brave', p. 231). Haddick-Flynn's assertion is however itself incorrect since no such mention can be found in the Duke of Berwick's memoirs. Furthermore, Berwick was captured during the battle and could therefore not have witnessed Sarsfield's death.

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

Moreover, this is not the only example of such contamination of history by fiction, as we shall now see.

In 2007, in *Le grand exil. Les Jacobites en France, 1688-1715*, Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac described Sarsfield's last hours in these terms:

On 29 July, at the Battle of Neerwinden, he accomplished his last feat by holding out for two hours under enemy fire before charging in at the head of the King's Household and Irish horsemen, who routed the English cavalry. Mortally wounded, he died in the arms of his companion O'Connor.¹³

It transpires that Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac has drawn these details from a single source, *The Memoirs of G. O'Connor*, from which she then quotes the following extract:

I am dying the most glorious of deaths. We have seen the backs of the Tyrants of our race. May you, Gerald, live to behold other such days; but let Ireland be always uppermost in your thoughts.¹⁴

The author adds, still relying on O'Connor's so-called memoirs: 'He was buried with military honours on the battlefield of Landau [*sic*]'.¹⁵ While the quotation from the *Memoirs of G. O'Connor* is accurate, nowhere is it stated that he was 'in command of the King's Household', or even that he 'died in the arms of his companion'. More precisely, these famous *Memoirs* state the following:

Meanwhile he [Luxemburg] made a large part of our cavalry advance to close the interval between his right and his centre, which had already suffered terrible loss. I was, with Sarsfield, in the line of these brave horsemen; they remained under the fire of the breastwork for at least two hours, unable to strike a single blow, but steadily closing up their shattered ranks [...]. The French and Swiss Guards were sent forward to make a supreme effort; after a fierce conflict they broke into Neerwinden and drove their enemies, fighting to the last, out of this point of vantage, they then levelled a part of the adjoining breastwork, this gave room for our cavalry to advance. The Maison du Roi, led by Princes of the Blood, and followed by a torrent of exulting horsemen, rushed furiously through the gap that had been opened for them; they were checked for a moment by a body of English cavalry, but nothing could stand against that irresistible onset [...]. Before five in the afternoon victory had been declared for our army along the whole enemy's line [...]. As I was walking over the field a message from Sarsfield reached me, he had been wounded to death in one of our last charges; he sent an aide-de-camp to call me to his side. The noble form of the hero lay on a pallet in a hut; he feebly lifted up his nerveless hand and gave me a letter, which he had dictated, in my behalf, to Villars. "I am dying," he said, "the most glorious of deaths; we have seen the backs of the tyrants of our race. May you, Gerald, live to behold other such days; but let Ireland be always uppermost in your thoughts." In a few hours the warrior was no more. He was buried with military pomp where he fell; Luxemburg and the Princes of the Blood were present; the survivors of his troop shed many a manly tear.¹⁶

¹³ Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac, *Le grand exil. Les Jacobites en France, 1688-1715*, Paris, Service historique de la Défense, 2007, p. 165 (our translation).

¹⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁶ William O'Connor Morris, *Memoirs of Gerald O'Connor of the princely house of the O'Connors of Offaly in the kingdom of Ireland*, London, Digby, Long & Co., 1903, pp. 100-101.

What credit can be accorded to this account attributed to Gerald O'Connor, whom Kevin Haddick-Flynn described in 2003 as 'an eye-witness' of the battle of Landen?¹⁷ None at all, unfortunately, because it has to be said that these 'memoirs' are nothing of the sort! They were in fact published in 1903 by William O'Connor Morris, who presents himself as a distant descendant of Gerald O'Connor. In the preface to the book, William O'Connor Morris reveals both the hypothetical nature of some of the exploits attributed to his ancestor and the unreliable nature of the sources used, and emphasises the totally artificial nature of the form adopted for the composition of his work:

This volume describes the life and career of a distant kinsman of my own [...]. Gerald O'Connor, *according to family tradition*, served with some distinction in the great Irish war of 1689-91, emigrated to France with Sarsfield and with part of the army that had defended Limerick in a memorable siege, and afterwards became attached to the staff of Marshal Villars. *It is believed that he was an aide-de-camp of that great commander at Malplaquet and Denain; but he appears to have been an officer of Tallard at Blenheim, of Villeroy at Ramillies, and of Vendôme at Oudenarde.*

The records of the ancient Irish families which have had the fate of the O'Connors of Offaly are very meagre and imperfect. I do not pretend that this account of my kinsman's fortunes is, in all respects, accurate. But it has been compiled partly from old documents and papers in my possession, partly from reminiscences handed down from father to son during five generations, and partly from my own researches [...]. A considerable part of the work, however, is my own [...]. Though I have thrown what I have written into the shape of Memoirs, and have told my tale as in the first person, I venture to express a hope that I have in these pages added something to our store of real historical knowledge.¹⁸

These pseudo-memoirs of Gerald O'Connor, stitched together by his distant descendant, have indeed fooled many a historian. As far back as 1973, in *The Wild Geese. The Irish Soldier in Exile*, Maurice Hennessy had relied entirely on this source to describe Sarsfield's death.¹⁹

In fact, for the first account by a historian of an alternative version of the circumstances of Sarsfield's death, we must go back to 1870. In his *History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France*, John Cornelius O'Callaghan describes the last hours of the Earl of Lucan as follows:

As for Lord Lucan, in that attack upon the village of Neerwinden, (which the French took twice, and were driven from as often, ere they could master it,) his Lordship, behaving gallantly, was severely wounded, and, being removed to Huy, shortly after died there, of a fever.²⁰

¹⁷ *Sarsfield and the Jacobites*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. V-VI (our emphasis). I wish to stress that this error by Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac concerns only a very minor point of detail in a vast and remarkable work covering the entire history of Jacobite soldiers in France from 1688 to 1715. Our comments here are in no sense intended to detract from the enormous value of her work, which has been a seminal reference on the subject ever since its publication.

¹⁹ Maurice N. Hennessy, *The Wild Geese. The Irish Soldier in Exile*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973. See pp. 34-35 for a description of Sarsfield's death based on O'Connor's pseudo-memoirs.

²⁰ John Cornelius O'Callaghan, *History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France from the Revolution in Great Britain and Ireland under James II to the Revolution in France under Louis XVI*, New York, P. O'Shea, 1870), p. 175.

O’Callaghan cites two sources to support this version of events (the spelling and punctuation of the English and French quotes are as transcribed by the historian):

Those particulars respecting Lord Lucan’s death are derived from the *Lettres Historiques* for September 1693, and from his Lordship’s countryman and contemporary, Plunkett. The editor of the Continental periodical writes — “Le Lord Lucan, Sarsfield, célèbre par la dernière guerre d’Irlande, et que je mis au nombre des morts, n’étoit alors que blessé; mais on a appris depuis, qu’il est mort de ses blessures à Huy, où il avoit été transporté” Plunkett states — “The Earl of Lucan, after doing actions worthy of himself, was desperately wounded, and thereby fell into a fever, of which he dyed soon after.” Such is what we know from History, as contrasted with Romance, on the subject.²¹

The *Lettres historiques* mentioned by O’Callaghan refer to an epistolary journal published monthly between 1692 and 1728, whose full title in its early days was *Lettres historiques contenant ce qui se passe de plus important en Europe, et les réflexions nécessaires sur ce sujet*. According to Philip Stewart’s entry on this journal in the *Dictionnaire des journaux*, the original author of these letters, published in Holland, could never be identified with certainty.²² In the monthly issue of September 1693, the anonymous author of the *Lettres historiques* published a correction (accurately quoted by O’Callaghan) to a notice published in the previous issue of August 1693, which had included in the list of French officers lost at the battle of Landen ‘Le Chevalier de Gallion, M. de Beaupré, & le Lord Lucan Sarsfield, tous trois Marêchaux de Camp’.²³ As for the quote attributed by O’Callaghan to Plunkett, it is an extract from a contemporary manuscript diary entitled *A Light to the Blind*, which describes the various military achievements of James II’s supporters. In a partial edition of the manuscript published in 1971, the editor John T. Gilbert noted that the attribution of this manuscript to Nicholas Plunkett (or Plunket) was in fact not proven:

The work is anonymous, and little information has been obtained as to its authorship. According to a late earl of Fingall, family tradition ascribed the production to Nicholas Plunket. He is said to have been an eminent lawyer, member of a branch of the house of Fingall, but of his career no precise details are accessible.²⁴

²¹ *Idem*. ‘The Lord Lucan, Sarsfield, famous by the last war of Ireland, and whom I counted among the dead, was only wounded; but we have learnt since that he died from his wounds in Huy, where he had been transported’ (our translation).

²² Notice n° 0822, in Jean Sgard (éd.), *Dictionnaire des journaux, 1600-1789*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1991 (online).

²³ *Op. cit.*, « Août 1693 », Chez Adrian Moetjens, Marchand Libraire près la Cour, à la Librairie Française, 1693, p. 207.

²⁴ *A Jacobite narrative of the war in Ireland. A Light to the Blind*, John T. Gilbert (ed.), Shannon, Shannon University Press, 1971, Preface (accessible on the website of the CELT Project at University College Cork: celt.ucc.ie).

I was able to obtain a copy of the manuscript quoted by O’Callaghan: the quotation is entirely accurate.²⁵ The author of *A Light to the Blind* reveals an important detail: Sarsfield died of a fever that developed as a result of his injury. O’Callaghan’s version of the circumstances surrounding Sarsfield’s death is therefore based on two contemporary but anonymous sources. This is the version that will be partially or fully taken up by many other historians – from John Hand, three years later in 1873,²⁶ to Liam Irwin in 2009,²⁷ via John Todhunter in 1895,²⁸ Alice Curtayne in 1934²⁹ or Piers Wauchope in 1992.³⁰

My research as part of the ‘Sarsfield Homecoming Project’, launched in November 2020, has enabled me to corroborate the claims of the two anonymous contemporaries quoted by O’Callaghan. Another contemporary source, this time clearly identified, indeed confirms that Sarsfield was only wounded (and not killed) at the Battle of Neerwinden on 29 July 1693. It is the diary of the French courtier Marquis de Dangeau. His entry for 1st August summarises the report on the battle given to the king by Comte d’Artagnan and notes:

Wounded: M. le prince de Conty, from a sabre blow to the head [...]; the marquis de Villequier, wounded in the breast; the prince d’Henrichemont, dangerously wounded; the marquis de Rebé, dangerously; milord Lucan, dangerously [...].³¹

An examination of the archives of the Service historique de la Défense containing the ‘états des principaux officiers français tués ou blessés à la bataille de Neerwinde [*sic*] le 29 juillet 1693’ confirms Dangeau’s statements: Patrick Sarsfield appears in three different lists, among the wounded, under the name ‘Milord Lucan’. One of the lists is included in the ‘Relation de la bataille de Neerwinde par M. D’Artaignan [*sic*]’.³² This mention of Sarsfield being wounded also later appears in the *Relation de la victoire remportée sur les alliez [*sic*] à Nerwinde [*sic*] en Brabant* published in the *Gazette* of 12 August 1693.³³

²⁵ This manuscript is held in the National Library of Ireland, catalogue no. MS476. The quotation is on page 841. I am most grateful to Mr. Pádraig Lenihan for kindly sending us his own copy of the manuscript.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*

²⁷ *Dictionary of Irish Biography, art. cit.*

²⁸ *Op. cit.*

²⁹ *Op. cit.*

³⁰ Piers Wauchope, *Patrick Sarsfield and the Williamite War*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1992.

³¹ Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, *Journal du Marquis Dangeau avec les additions du Duc de Saint-Simon*, Paris, Didot, 1855, vol. 4, p. 333. ‘Blessés : M. le prince de Conty, d’un coup de sabre à la tête [...] ; le marquis de Villequier, blessé à la mamelle ; le prince d’Henrichemont, dangereusement blessé ; le marquis de Rebé, dangereusement ; milord Lucan, dangereusement [...].’ (our translation)

³² See the documents listed under SHD GR A1 1206. I take this opportunity to express my warmest appreciation to the Service historique de la Défense, and in particular to Mr. Bertrand Fonck, Chief Curator of Heritage, for his valuable assistance.

³³ *Relation de la victoire remportée sur les alliez [*sic*] à Nerwinde [*sic*] en Brabant, par l’armée du Roy, Commandée par le Maréchal Duc de Luxembourg*, dans *Gazette du 12 août 1693*, N°31, Paris, p. 399.

With regard to Sarsfield's transfer to Huy and his subsequent death, it is once again Dangeau who corroborates the two anonymous sources cited by O'Callaghan. In the entry for 13 August 1693, from Versailles, he notes:

Milord Lucan died of his wounds at Huy, where he had been carried. He was captain of the king of England's guards and marshal of camp in our troops; it was he who had taken the thirteen thousand Irish to France. His name at that time was Sarsfield.³⁴

In his *Mémoires*, the Marquis de Souches also reports the news of the death of the Earl of Lucan and cites the Duc de Chevreuse as the source of this information. Souches, however, records the news of Sarsfield's death as having been reported on 14 August rather than 13 August. Admittedly, his account is less precise than Dangeau's, as it does not mention the place of death:

On that day the Duc de Chevreuse was seen to arrive at the Court; he had just come from Namur, where he had gone to take care of his son, the Duc de Montfort, and knew precise details of all the wounded; he said that milord Lucan was dead, that the Duc d'Ormont was much better, and that the Prince de Bournonville was out of danger.³⁵

I have been unable to find any other identified contemporary source other than the diary of the Marquis de Dangeau to support the assertion that Sarsfield died in Huy. Although we have no reason to doubt that Dangeau, as was his wont, recorded faithfully what he had heard at the Court of Versailles, the question nevertheless arises as to whether it is plausible to imagine that the Earl of Lucan was transported to this town situated, let us not forget, some 35 kilometres south of the Neerwinden battlefield, on the banks of the Meuse. To shed further light on this question, we must turn once again to the archives of the Service historique de la Défense.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 341. 'Milord Lucan est mort de ses blessures à Huy, où il s'étoit fait porter. Il étoit capitaine des gardes du roi d'Angleterre, et étoit maréchal de camp dans nos troupes ; c'est lui qui avoit emmené les treize mille Irlandois en France. Il s'appeloit en ce temps-là Sarsfield.' (our translation).

³⁵ *Mémoires du Marquis de Souches sur le règne de Louis XIV, publiés d'après le manuscrit authentique appartenant à M. le Duc des Cars par le comte de Cosnac et Edouard Pontal*, Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1885, vol. 4, p. 244. 'On vit, ce jour-là, le duc de Chevreuse arriver à la Cour; il venoit de Namur, où il étoit allé pour avoir soin de son fils, le duc de Montfort, et il savoit des nouvelles précises de tous les blessés; il dit donc que milord Lucan étoit mort, que le duc d'Ormont se portoit beaucoup mieux, et que le prince de Bournonville étoit hors de danger.' (our translation)

WHY HUY?

First of all, it should be noted that the town of Huy had been taken by Marshal de Villerooy on 26 July, three days before the battle of Neerwinden. It was therefore occupied by Louis XIV's army at that time. Several letters sent from the front attest to the fact that many of the battle's wounded were indeed transported to Huy. On 1 August, the Marshal de Luxembourg wrote to the King from the Landen camp, which he was preparing to leave because of 'the stench that infected them': 'After tomorrow [3 August] I will send all the wagons we have to take some of our wounded to Huy'.³⁶ On 2 August, M. Dugué de Bagnols wrote (to an addressee whom we have not been able to identify) from the new camp set up at Corswarem by the Marshal de Luxembourg:

Of the 4,000 wounded from the battle of Neerwinden, I sent 2,000 to Huy, and from there to Namur, there are still at least 2,000 who remained at St. Gertrude's near Landenfermé.³⁷

But a few days later, on 8 August, the same Dugué de Bagnols made the following correction to his letter of 2 August:

I told you the day after the battle of Neerwinden that it had left us 4,000 wounded [...], I was mistaken [...] and you can be sure that there are at least 5,000 all told. I know this because a count was made of those who passed through Huy, the number of which is as I have just told you. It is true that there were only 3,000 in the army hospital, but the wounded who had remained in their regiments made up the surplus [...]. There are at present 5,000 in the hospitals of Huy, Namur and the other towns of the Meuse.³⁸

These contemporary documents thus provide evidence that thousands of wounded from the battle of Neerwinden were indeed transported to Huy, from where some were later sent to Namur. It is therefore quite plausible that Sarsfield himself was transferred to Huy and that he died there of his wounds some time later, as reported by Dangeau and, later, by the anonymous author of the *Lettres historiques* (remembering that Dangeau specified that Sarsfield had been

³⁶ SHD GR A1 1207.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 'Des 4000 blessés de la bataille de Neerwinden, j'en ai fait passer 2000 à Huy, et de là à Namur, il y en a encore 2000 au moins qui sont restés à Ste Gertrude près de Landenfermé.' (our translation)

³⁸ *Ibid.* 'Je vous ai mandé le lendemain de la bataille de Neerwinden qu'elle nous avait donné 4000 blessés [...], je me suis trompé [...] et vous pouvez vous assurer qu'il y en a au moins 5000 bien comptés. Je le sais parce qu'on a fait un état de ceux qui sont passés par Huy, dont le nombre est tel que je viens de vous le dire. Il est vrai qu'il n'y en a eu que 3000 dans l'hôpital de l'armée mais les blessés qui étaient restés dans leurs régiments ont fourni le surplus [...]. Il y en a présentement 5000 dans les hôpitaux de Huy, de Namur et des autres places de la Meuse.' (our translation). It should be noted here that I have systematically reviewed all of the archives available online for the parishes of Namur (a great many of which were burnt) as well as for the parishes of the other towns in the Meuse region.

wounded ‘dangerously’, and that it therefore seems logical that he should have been transported to the nearest military hospital, based in Huy).

WHERE WAS SARFIELD BURIED?

If we assume that Sarsfield died in Huy, where might he be buried? The first port of call, naturally, is the death registers of the various parishes in the town of Huy from the end of July to mid-August 1693. In the surviving registers for the period in question, we find mention of ten French soldiers: five in the register of the church of Saint-Martin d’Outre-Meuse, one in the register of the church of Saint-Pierre d’Outre-Meuse, one in that of the church of Saint-Denis, and three in the register of the parish of Saint-Georges and Saint-Adalbert. Of these ten soldiers, most of them officers, eight are identified by name, and none is Patrick Sarsfield. Here is what is known of the two remaining officers, who therefore remain anonymous, buried in the church of Saint-Martin d’Outre-Meuse:

On 8 August 1693 was buried a French officer of the regiment of Mr Greiner [*sic*] who died administered at the Hôtel d’Alne [*sic*]

On 12 August 1693 was buried another officer of the same regiment who also died at the Hôtel d’Alne [*sic*], both buried beneath the middle degree of the church, drawing towards the door.³⁹

An examination of the death registers prompts a number of observations: firstly, the register of the church of Saint-Martin d’Outre-Meuse contains the most references to French soldiers (five out of ten). Secondly, we note (and this probably explains the above fact) the mention of the ‘Hôtel d’Alne’ [*sic*] as the place of death and the administration of the last rites: indeed, according to the local authorities of the town of Huy, the refuge of Aulne housed one of the main military hospitals of the French army after the battle. Finally, let us note the confusion and chaos that must have reigned in the parish of Saint-Martin d’Outre-Meuse at the time, as witnessed by the fact that the person who kept the register of deaths in the parish was unable to identify the officers buried on 8 and 12 August other than by their membership of a regiment whose name he misspelled.

Among the regiments listed as being engaged in the battle of Neerwinden, the regiment designated by ‘Mr Greiner’ could be either the regiment of the ‘Swiss Greder’ or that of the

³⁹ Archives de l’Etat à Liège - 9999/996 - 1003_000_00356_000_0_0025, p. 15. ‘Le 8 août 1693 a été enterré un officier français mort à l’hôtel d’Alne administré, du régiment Mr Greiner [*sic*] / Le 12 août 1693 a été enterré un autre officier du même régiment mort aussi à l’hôtel d’Alne [*sic*] administré, enterré tous deux en bas du degré du milieu de l’église tirant vers la porte’ (our translation).

‘German Greder’, both under the command of Brigadier Franz Lorenz (or François Laurent) Greder (1658-1716).⁴⁰ These two regiments were respectively under the high command of Lieutenant-Generals Montchevreuil and Rubantel. According to the Prince de Conti, Patrick Sarsfield served as *maréchal de camp* (Major General) under Rubantel and took part in at least the first capture of the village of Neerwinden at the same time as the German Greder regiment.⁴¹ We cannot therefore rule out the possibility that one of the two unidentified French officers named as belonging to a regiment commanded by Brigadier ‘Greder’ may have been Patrick Sarsfield. The question then arises: when did Sarsfield die, and could the probable date of his death coincide with the respective death dates of these two officers?

WHEN DID SARFIELD DIE?

We have seen from the Marquis de Dangeau and Sourches that the Court learned of Sarsfield’s death on the 13 or 14 August, but how long had he been dead when the news reached Versailles? In order to determine the probable date of the Earl of Lucan’s death, we must carefully study the chronology of the various reports made to the King in the days and weeks following the battle of Neerwinden.

As indicated by Dangeau, the very first report was made by Comte d’Artagnan on 1st August and stated that Sarsfield had been wounded in the battle (there seems to have been a misunderstanding at this point, as both the Marquis de Sourches and the author of the *Lettres historiques* originally thought Sarsfield had been killed). On 3 August the Prince de Conti wrote to the Prince de Condé indicating that ‘milord Lucan’ was among the wounded.⁴² According to the Marquis de Sourches, on 4 August the infantry brigadier Albergotti provided new information, including important corrections to the list of killed and wounded. Sarsfield is confirmed as wounded and not dead:

The count de Ligneris was not found to be dead, but badly wounded by a cannon shot to the thigh and some other lighter blows; so it was still hoped that he could recover. Milord Lucan, likewise, was only wounded.⁴³

⁴⁰ See ‘Ordre de bataille de la seconde armée de Flandre’, in Marquis Charles Sevin de Quincy, *Histoire militaire du règne de Louis-le-Grand, roi de France*, Paris, D. Mariette, 1726, vol. 2, p. 614.

⁴¹ Letter from the Prince de Conti to the Prince de Condé dated 3 August 1693 from the camp of Cowarem [*sic*], transcribed in the *Mémoires du Marquis de Sourches*, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

⁴² *Idem.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240. ‘Le comte de Ligneris ne se trouva pas être mort, mais fort blessé d’un coup de canon à la cuisse et de quelques autres coups plus légers; ainsi on espéroit encore qu’il pouvoit guérir. Milord Lucan, tout de même, ne se trouva que blessé.’ (our translation)

Again, according to Souches, the Court was informed on 5 August of the death of the Comte de Ligneris (no mention of Sarsfield) and, on 8 and 9 August, of the death of the Marquis de Rébé, as well as the deteriorating health of the Prince de Bournonville and the Marquis de Tracy (again, no mention of Sarsfield).

Clearly, Sarsfield was one of the officers whose fate was of interest to the King and the Court, and it is reasonable to assume that if his condition had deteriorated, or if he had died, the news would have appeared in the reports made between 5 and 9 August. However, we must also consider the time interval between the occurrence of an event and the time the information reached the Court. We know, for example, that the Marshal de Luxembourg sent Comte d'Artagnan to bring news of the battle to the King the day after it took place, on 30 July. However, d'Artagnan did not reach the Court, then at Marly, until 1 August. It therefore took about two days. Thus, the news of Sarsfield's condition relayed by Albergotti on 4 August actually dates, at best, from 2 August. The latest confirmation that Sarsfield is still alive comes from the Prince de Conti who, in a letter written on 3 August at the camp of Corswarem, only 20 kilometres from Huy, asserted that Sarsfield was only wounded at that time.⁴⁴ When the Court learns of the death of the Earl of Lucan on 13 or 14 August, the information dates from 11 or 12 August at best. It is therefore safe to say that Sarsfield died at some point between 3 and 11 August, and more likely between 7 and 11 August, since he is not mentioned in the reports of 8 or 9 August.

Returning to the two anonymous officers listed in the death register of the church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse – the dates given for their burial, 8 and 12 August, suggest that they died between the day before their burial (the dead were traditionally not buried on the day of death, but only after an administrative delay of at least a day⁴⁵) and two to three days earlier. Indeed, we have seen that three days after the battle the Marshal of Luxembourg was forced to decamp quickly because of the unbearable smell emanating from the corpses on the battlefield. This was a particularly warm period, conducive to rapid decomposition of the bodies. A good example of what can be considered the maximum time between death and burial of the Neerwinden combatants is provided by the 'états des principaux officiers français tués ou

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

⁴⁵ See in particular Michel Signoli, 'Contextes administratifs et enjeux scientifiques: fouiller les sépultures liées à des conflits', *Corps*, 2017/1 (N° 15), pp. 262-263: 'a period of at least 24 hours between the moment of death and the moment of burial of the body is clearly mentioned. This practice, which may be modified in the event of risks involved in preserving the body, i.e. danger of contagion, is due to the risk of premature burial, and thus to the fear of being buried alive [...]' (our translation).

blessés à la bataille de Neerwinden' (Records of the principal French officers killed or wounded at the Battle of Neerwinden) held by the Ministry of Defence and already cited above. In this document, a certain Sessaine is listed among the officers killed in action. This Sessaine appears in the death register of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse. On the date of 1 August, the following entry can be found:

On the 1st day of August was buried in front of the altar of Saint Agrapa, Mr Sesaine [*sic*], Captain in the regiment of Piedmont for the service of his Most Christian Majesty, who died at the refuge of Alne after having been administered.⁴⁶

If we consider that, according to contemporary sources, the battle of Neerwinden caused the death of between two and six thousand French soldiers⁴⁷, it is easy to imagine the difficulties faced by those responsible for burying them in the days that followed. Moreover, special priority was given to the burial of officers. The three days elapsed between the death of Captain Sessaine and his burial is undoubtedly the maximum time frame, given the prevailing heat and the rapid decomposition of the bodies.

On the basis of this maximum period, we can thus estimate that the soldiers who died of their wounds at Huy were buried within a time interval ranging from the day after their death to three days later. The first of the two anonymous officers must therefore have died between 5 and 7 August, and the second between 9 and 11 August, dates which correspond perfectly, as noted above, to the most likely dates of Patrick Sarsfield's death. This, and the fact that his name appears nowhere in the parish registers of Huy, can only reinforce the hypothesis according to which Sarsfield was indeed one of the two anonymous French officers buried in Saint-Martin's church.

⁴⁶ Archives de l'Etat à Liège – 9999/996 - 1003_000_00356_000_0_0025, p. 14. 'Le 1er jour d'août a été enterré devant l'autel de Saint Agrapa, M. Sesaine [*sic*], Capitaine au régiment de Piedmont pour le service de sa Majesté Très Chrétienne, décédé au refuge d'Alne après avoir été administré' (our translation).

⁴⁷ The *Relation de la victoire [...]* published in the Gazette of 12 August 1693 states that 2,000 people were killed on the French side (*op. cit.*, p. 399), while Sourches' *Mémoires* put the figure at 4,000 (*op. cit.*, p. 239). The Marquis de Quincy, in his *Histoire militaire du règne de Louis-le-Grand*, estimates the number of French killed at 6,000 (*op. cit.*, p. 635). The reality is probably closer to 2,000 killed, as this is the figure used in a report on the battle of Neerwinden kept by the Ministry of Defence: 'A few days later [on 31 July 1693], more accurate reports were received of the losses suffered by the king's troops, according to which they amounted to 2,000 men killed and 5,000 wounded' (SHD GR1 M26; our translation). In any case, the losses were enormous and the management of all these dead and wounded must have been difficult. In his *Mémoires*, Armand de Mormès de Saint-Hilaire finally quotes a figure of 500 French officers killed (*Mémoires de Saint-Hilaire publiés pour la Société de l'Histoire de France par Léon Lecestre*, vol. 2, Paris, Librairie Renouard, 1906, p. 295).

LOCATING SARFIELD'S BURIAL SITE

Assuming, therefore, that Sarsfield was indeed one of those two anonymous officers, how are we to determine the precise location of his grave? In order to do this, we must return to the entries in the parish register concerning the five French soldiers who were buried there. For four of the five, the register indicates that they were buried in the church itself. The only soldier to be buried in the churchyard on 4 August was an 18-year-old lieutenant of the Navarre Regiment. It is not surprising that the majority of officers were buried in the church rather than in its cemetery, for it was traditional not only to bury officers separately from other soldiers, in consecrated ground, but also, depending on their rank and seniority, to show them greater respect by burying them in the most sacred part of the church, in front of the chancel, closest to the altar.⁴⁸ Of the four officers buried in the church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse, all were buried before one of the altars. Given Sarsfield's particularly elevated rank in the French army, having been made *maréchal de camp* in March 1693 (the third highest rank in the order of battle of the Second Army of Flanders⁴⁹), there can be absolutely no doubt that a place of honour would have been assigned to his burial. If we look again at the description of the location of the grave of the two anonymous officers buried on 8 and 12 August 1693 in the church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse, it is clear that, despite their anonymity, they were buried not far from the main altar. Indeed, it is stated that they were both buried 'at the bottom of the middle degree, drawing towards the door'. The term 'degree' here refers to a step, an elevation. The 'middle degree' therefore refers to the platform which, in a Romanesque church such as that of St-Martin d'Outre-Meuse, is traditionally located in the centre of the choir, and upon which the main altar is situated. As for the indication 'drawing towards the door', it means in the direction of the door, and the expression 'at the bottom of the middle degree, drawing towards the door' taken as a whole suggests a tangent starting from the foot of the platform on which the central altar is situated and going in the direction of the door. But which door? Is it the main entrance door to the church, or another door? To understand this, we need to look briefly at the history of the church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse.

⁴⁸ On this subject, see in particular Solignat, Anne-Valérie, 'Funérailles nobiliaires et pouvoir seigneurial à la Renaissance', *Revue historique*, 2012/1 (n° 661), p. 116: 'However, the simple fact of not being buried in the parish cemetery, like ordinary mortals, and of benefiting from a burial *infra ecclesia* was a sought-after honour which was often sufficient to differentiate the noble from the vulgar' (our translation).

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 614.

In an article in the *Bulletin Monumental* of 1980, summarising the findings of a study published by Alain Orban a year earlier, the medieval art historian Jacques Thiébaud described the development of the building as follows:

Saint-Martin, erected as a parish church in the 13th century, must have occupied the site of a much older place of worship. Probably rebuilt at that time, it was later damaged by the Dutch in 1595; it was then restored by the neighbouring White Ladies, but they apparently wanted to have it destroyed in 1648. Disused after the Concordat, the church gradually disappeared over the course of the 19th century. According to cadastral plans and recent discoveries, it was a trapezoidal building with a single side aisle and a polygonal choir; above the two large arches were three oculi; the irregularity of this plan is explained by topographical factors. In 1648, the suppression of the aisle led to the walling-up of the arcades and the construction of a rectangular door with bosses which still remains. This church must have been built at the beginning of the 13th century, in the Romanesque tradition: its oculi are one of the earliest manifestations of Gothic art in the region.⁵⁰

This brief history and the architectural details it contains are essential for a proper understanding of the indications given in the death register concerning the location of the graves of the two anonymous officers. It provides three important pieces of information: firstly, that the church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse was far from intact in 1693. 45 years earlier, in 1648, part of the building, the aisle, had been destroyed, the arcades filled in and a door added.

Alain Orban's comprehensive study, on which Thiébaud relied, also included photographs (including one from the late nineteenth century showing the remains of the church of Saint-Martin transformed into a dwelling) and a most helpful representation of the plan estimated on the basis of old cadastral surveys. Orban also gave the following details:

In fact, a few significant remains have come down to us, embedded in a section of wall. They allow, if not a reconstruction, at least an approximation of the original aspect of the building, as well as a means of dating its evolution [...]. These remains are undoubtedly the remains of the arcades and the south gutter wall of the central nave. The cordon marks the level of the roof of the south aisle, the framework of which rested on the corbels. Above this, the three oculi form the high windows. Even higher up, a cornice extended, supported by hollowed-out corbels. The obstruction of the arcades, the opening of a door and a large window were contemporary with the removal of the south side. The appearance of the window makes it possible to place these transformations in 1648, when the White Ladies wanted to demolish the church. It was probably around the same time, or perhaps a little earlier, that the embossed doorway which now opens onto the courtyard was built. The location of this entrance may correspond to an earlier state, as side entrances were not uncommon in the Meuse valley in Romanesque times.⁵¹

It is therefore clear that in 1693 the door referred to in the death register was none other than this side door, which was added or at least rehabilitated in 1648. The section of wall mentioned by Orban still remains today. The filled-in arcades and oculi as well as the frame of

⁵⁰ Jacques Thiébaud, 'Deux églises disparues de Huy', *Bulletin monumental*, t. 138, n° 4, 1980, p. 441.

⁵¹ Alain Orban, 'Vestiges d'architecture hutoise : les églises Saint-Martin outremeuse [*sic*] et Saint-Germain', *Bulletin de la commission royale des monuments et des sites*, t. 8, 1979, pp. 80-82 (our translation).

the side door are clearly visible (see Figure 1). Thanks to this wall section and the plan provided by Orban, we were able to determine the location of the church choir and thus the location of the famous ‘middle step’ mentioned in the register. The location of the door provides the direction in which to look for the graves of the two anonymous officers. All this defines an area which, in principle, must be the location of the graves of these two officers, one of whom being most certainly Patrick Sarsfield (see Figure 2).



Figure 1: The only remaining wall of Église Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse.

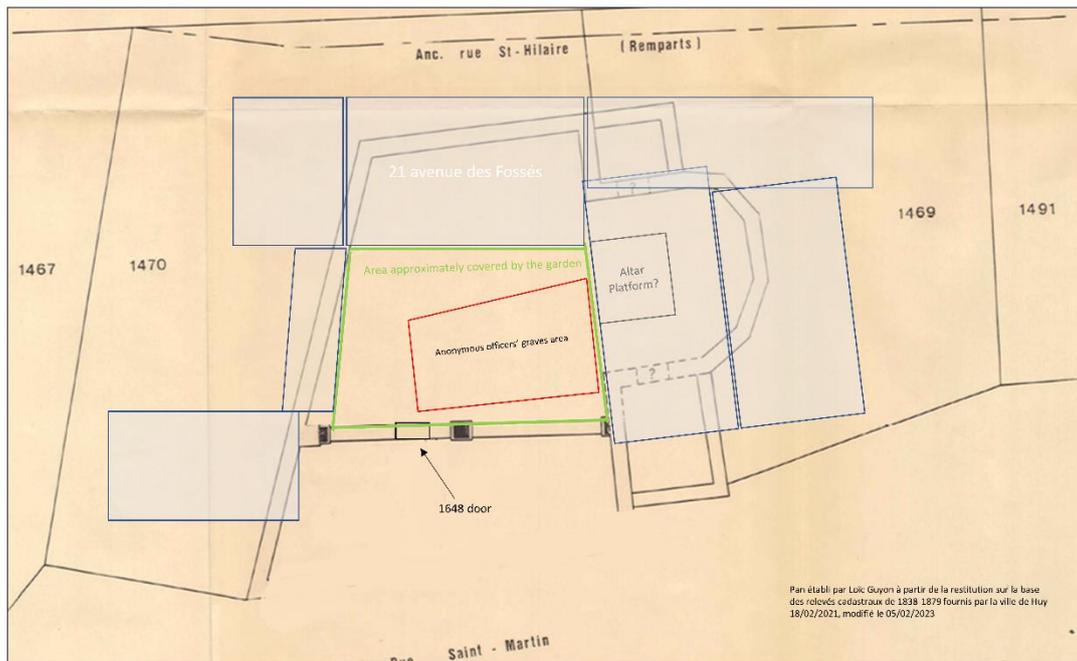


Figure 2: Église Saint-Martin – location of the anonymous French officers’ graves.

On the basis of this plan, and with the help of satellite imagery available on Google Earth, we were able to determine that the search area in question is now located in the rear garden of number 21, Avenue des Fossés. By a happy coincidence, it turns out that the municipality of Huy has recently acquired this land to build new administrative offices and social housing and they have assured us of their full support in seeking the authorisation from the Walloon government to conduct an archaeological excavation. This will provide a wonderful opportunity to verify the hypotheses presented in this article as to the location of the graves of the two anonymous officers and confirm whether one of them was indeed Patrick Sarsfield. Limerick-based Aegis Archaeology Ltd. have accepted to partner with us to conduct the excavation as soon as the authorisation is obtained and the necessary funding raised.

An important question which remained to be answered was how many individuals were buried inside the church of Saint-Martin d’Outre-Meuse over the entire history of the church and, hence, how many remains could an archaeological excavation potentially unearth. In order to answer that question, I carried out a full review of the parish register of the church from their beginning, in 1689, to their end, in 1795 (date when the church fell into disuse before being turned into a dwelling). The results of that study (presented here in Figure 3) reveal that a total of 24 individuals were buried inside the church over that 106-year-long period. Out of those

24 individuals, only 10 are men potentially falling within the age category of Patrick Sarsfield (he was about 38 years old at the time of his death). The fact that a relatively small number of people were buried inside the church and that an even smaller number of individuals could potentially be Sarsfield will facilitate the work of the archaeologists.

Recorded burials at the church of St Martin-en-Outre-Meuse, Huy (within the church or in the cemetery) from 1689 to 1795							
Year	Date	WITHIN THE CHURCH				Further information	
		Infant/child	Young man	Man of unspecified age	Old man		Woman
1693	1 August			1			Captain Sessaine (or Sissime), age unknown, buried in front of the altar of St Agrapa
1693	5 August			1			Lieutenant du Quener, age unknown, buried in front of the altar of Notre-Dame
1693	8 August			1			Anonymous French officer, age unknown, buried below the middle degree of the church towards the door
1693	12 August			1			Anonymous French officer, age unknown, buried below the middle degree of the church towards the door
1694	17 June		1				18 y.o., buried in front of the altar of Notre-Dame close to the predicator's pulpit
1705	4 January			1			Priest, age unknown, in the presbytery, near the gospel
1708	25 August					1	Buried between the balusters of the door and the confessional, below the degree, two feet from the wall on the street side
1709	8 July					1	Buried in the presbytery, beside the "letter", a few feet from the door to the sacristy
1710	18 May			1			Age unknown, buried towards the middle of the church, between the large stones forming the degree, towards the predicator's pulpit where there are small tiles
1712	23 June			1			Priest, age unknown, buried two feet from the degrees of the presbytery towards the altar of St Erasmus
1714	21 January	1					10 y.o. boy, buried beside the altar of the Holy Virgin going towards the middle of the church
1716	19 February					1	Buried in front of the predicator's pulpit
1719	7 May					1	In the church
1722	22 January	1					3 month-old baby girl, in the church
1724	25 March				1		80 y.o. man, buried in the church, beside the altars of St Joseph and St Agrapa
1742	17 March			1			Age unknown, buried in the church
1745	8 April					1	Age unknown, buried in the church
1746	23 September					1	Young woman, buried in the heart of the church
1746	28 September			1			Age unknown, buried in the church
1756	8 March	1					Baby boy baptised the previous day, buried in the church
1759	2 January					1	65 y.o. woman, buried in front of the altar of St Joseph
1770	7 August					1	Age unknown, buried in front of the altar of the Virgin
1784	22 October			1			Age unknown, buried in front of the altar of St Joseph, against the wall
1785	20 June					1	Age unknown, buried in front of the altar of Notre-Dame, against the wall
TOTAL BURIED WITHIN THE CHURCH							
		3					
		1					
			10				
			1				
				9			
						24	

Figure 3: Number of people buried inside the church of Saint-Martin between 1689 and 1795.

HOW TO IDENTIFY SARSFIELD'S REMAINS?

This raises the question of the identification of the remains of the Earl of Lucan. An important first clue to guide our analysis of the bones that excavations in the area indicated will inevitably uncover is the physical stature of Patrick Sarsfield. According to the Duke of Berwick's memoirs, he was indeed 'of prodigious size'.⁵² This comment by Berwick, who was generally reluctant to praise his brother-in-arms, is all the more significant given that, as Alice Curtayne points out, Sarsfield served in a cavalry regiment whose men were generally large of build:

Many contemporary references allude to his remarkable height. He was Colonel of a picked company of dragoons, or cavalymen, whom a French observer praises highly for their physique, none of them - he says - being under six feet. If Sarsfield's stature, then, excited notice even among his own men, he must have been an unusually fine figure.⁵³

⁵² *Mémoires du Maréchal de Berwick, écrits par lui-même*, Paris, chez Moutard, 1778, vol. 1, p. 104.

⁵³ Curtayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34. It should be noted, however, that Curtayne does not reveal her sources and it has not been possible to identify any contemporary accounts other than Berwick's describing Sarsfield as being of

Clearly, however, Sarsfield's exceptional size cannot be the only element on the basis of which to identify his remains.

Another possible clue could be a mark on Sarsfield's skeleton left by some of the many injuries he suffered during his career. According to Piers Wauchope, he had a shoulder injury from his first duel, was stabbed through the abdomen in his second duel, got a hand injury (probably a flesh wound) before the battle of Sedgemoor and was knocked off his horse unconscious and wounded in several places during that same battle.⁵⁴ As pointed out to me by Frank Coyne, the Director of Aegis Archaeology Ltd, the shoulder injury received in his first duel is the most likely to have left a mark, although the stab wound through the abdomen could also possibly have left some trauma on the ribs.

As much as the above clues could be useful, ultimately only a DNA analysis could confirm that the bones found are indeed those of the Earl of Lucan. To do this, the DNA of a person genetically linked to Sarsfield would have to be available. Did the Irish hero leave any descendants?

According to Todhunter, Sarsfield had a son and a daughter:

He left one son and one daughter. His son, James Francis Edward, was brought up by the Duke of Berwick (who married Lady Lucan in 1695), and served under him in Spain [...]. The daughter married Baron de Neuburg [*sic*], styled King of Corsica.⁵⁵

While it is true that Sarsfield and Honora Burke had a son named James Francis Edward, born on 30 March 1693 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and who died without issue in Saint-Omer on 12 May 1719, Todhunter is mistaken about the relationship between the wife of Baron de Neuhoff (not 'Neuburg') and the Earl of Lucan. Catalina Sarsfield, often called the Queen of Corsica because of her marriage to Neuhoff, was not Patrick Sarsfield's daughter but the niece by marriage of Frances Sarsfield, Patrick's sister. Frances Sarsfield (one of the Earl of Lucan's two sisters) had married Dominick Sarsfield, a member of another branch of the Sarsfield family and 4th Viscount of Kilmallock, in 1689. She thus became the sister-in-law of David Sarsfield, Dominick's brother and Catalina's father. It seems that Catalina Sarsfield herself

exceptional size. Some historians, such as Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac, refer to Sarsfield as an 'Irish giant', but the expression comes from John Todhunter, who was simply translating Berwick's comment: 'he was no general but merely a dashing cavalry officer ; a handsome fellow if you like, a fine, good-natured, generous, irascible Irish giant, exceeding even his own dragoons, so much admired by the French, in strength and stature' (Todhunter, *op. cit.*, p. 2).

⁵⁴ Wauchope, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 26, 30 and 32.

⁵⁵ Todhunter, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

maintained a certain ambiguity about her relationship with the Earl of Lucan, probably out of self-interest. This myth of Catalina (sometimes also called Mary) being Patrick Sarsfield's daughter is found in many works (besides Todhunter, the Marquis de Ruvigny et Raineval also replicates the error in his *Jacobite Peerage*⁵⁶) and is still perpetuated today by several websites.⁵⁷

In the absence of direct descendants beyond his son James Francis Edward, it is to the brother and the two sisters that we initially turned our attention.

As we have seen, Frances, one of Patrick Sarsfield's two sisters, married Dominick Sarsfield, the 4th Viscount of Kilmallock. However, this branch seems to have died out quickly, as the title of Viscount of Kilmallock passed to David Sarsfield, Dominick's brother, on his death in 1701. Anne Sarsfield, Patrick's other sister, married Edward Cheevers, who was made Viscount of Mount Leinster by James II in 1689. According to the Marquis de Ruvigny's *Jacobite Peerage*, the couple had no descendants.⁵⁸

Patrick Sarsfield's brother William married Mary Crofts, believed to be an illegitimate daughter of King Charles II. The couple had a daughter, Charlotte, who married Agmondisham Vesey. Their daughter, Anne, married John Bingham and their marriage led to the birth in 1735 of Charles Bingham, to whom the title of Earl of Lucan was reassigned in 1795.⁵⁹ However, as the Crown of England did not recognise titles that had been bestowed by the exiled James II, Charles Bingham was then designated as the first Earl of Lucan (and not the third, if it was taken into account that Patrick Sarsfield and his son had been the first and second respectively to bear the title). The Bingham family passed the title on to the present day and George Bingham, born in 1967 and living in England, is now the 8th Earl of Lucan. We contacted him in the hope that he would agree to provide us with a sample of his DNA, which would have allowed us to establish a genetic link, however tenuous, with any remains which might be discovered on the site of the former church of Saint-Martin d'Outre-Meuse, but unfortunately, he refused, thus closing off any possibility of verification by this means.

⁵⁶ Massue, Melville Henry de, marquis de Ruvigny et Raineval, *The Jacobite Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage and Grants of Honour*, London, T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1904, p. 82.

⁵⁷ For more on Catalina and her eccentric husband, see Julia Gasper, *Theodore Von Neuhoff, King of Corsica: The Man Behind the Legend*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2013.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁵⁹ *A biographical peerage of Ireland: In which are memoirs and characters of the most celebrated persons of each family*, London, J. Nichols and Co., 1817, p. 152.

With no direct descendants of Patrick Sarsfield, no descendants of his two sisters, and no DNA sample from the 8th Earl of Lucan, a distant descendant of William, we were left with only three options: find the graves of Sarsfield's parents, brother, niece or of one of his sisters, find the burial place of his son, or go back in time to find another branch of the Sarsfield family that had a common ancestor with the Sarsfields of Lucan and from whom descendants still survive today.

William Sarsfield and his daughter Charlotte were buried at Lucan, near Dublin, on their ancestors' land, which was confiscated following the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland but which the family gradually managed to recover.⁶⁰ While there are still remains of the chapel and graveyard of the Manor of Lucan, extensive research by the Society for Old Lucan has unfortunately not been able to determine the location of the graves of the Sarsfield family of Lucan, as the headstones have been obliterated by the passage of time, and no map has been found to date.

As for Patrick Sarsfield's two sisters and mother, it is known that they died at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where James II held court. This can be verified at least for Anne O'Moore, Patrick's mother, and for Frances, the elder sister, as the parish register of Saint-Germain notes, on 31 January 1701, the burial of 'Madame Anne Moore, Widow of the late Patrice Sarsfield de Lucan [the father], aged 80'⁶¹, and on 24 March 1716 records the burial of 'Françoise [*sic*] Sarsfield, Widow of milord Kilmallock, infantry colonel, 70 years old'.⁶² We have found no record of the death of Anne, the younger sister, but we know that she lived in Saint-Germain alongside her mother and Frances, thanks to the account given by Captain Drake in his diary of 1694: 'From Paris I went to Saint Germain's [*sic*], where I found Mrs. Sarsfield, Mother to Lord Lucan, and her two Daughters, the Ladies Kilmallock and Mount-Leinster; the eldest of whom (Lady Kilmallock) was my Godmother'.⁶³ As none of the entries in the parish register give any indication as to where exactly the Earl of Lucan's mother and eldest sister were buried inside the church of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and as the church was demolished and entirely rebuilt between 1765 and 1827, any further investigations would be fruitless.

⁶⁰ See Lawrence J. Arnold, 'The Manor of Lucan and the Restoration Land Settlement, 1660-1688', *Dublin Historical Record*, Sept. 1967, vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 139-143.

⁶¹ Lart, Charles Edmund (ed.), *The parochial registers of Saint Germain-en-Laye. Jacobite extracts of Births, Marriages and Deaths, with notes and appendices*, London, [s. n.], 1910, vol. 1 (1689-1702), p. 104.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 124 (our translation in both cases).

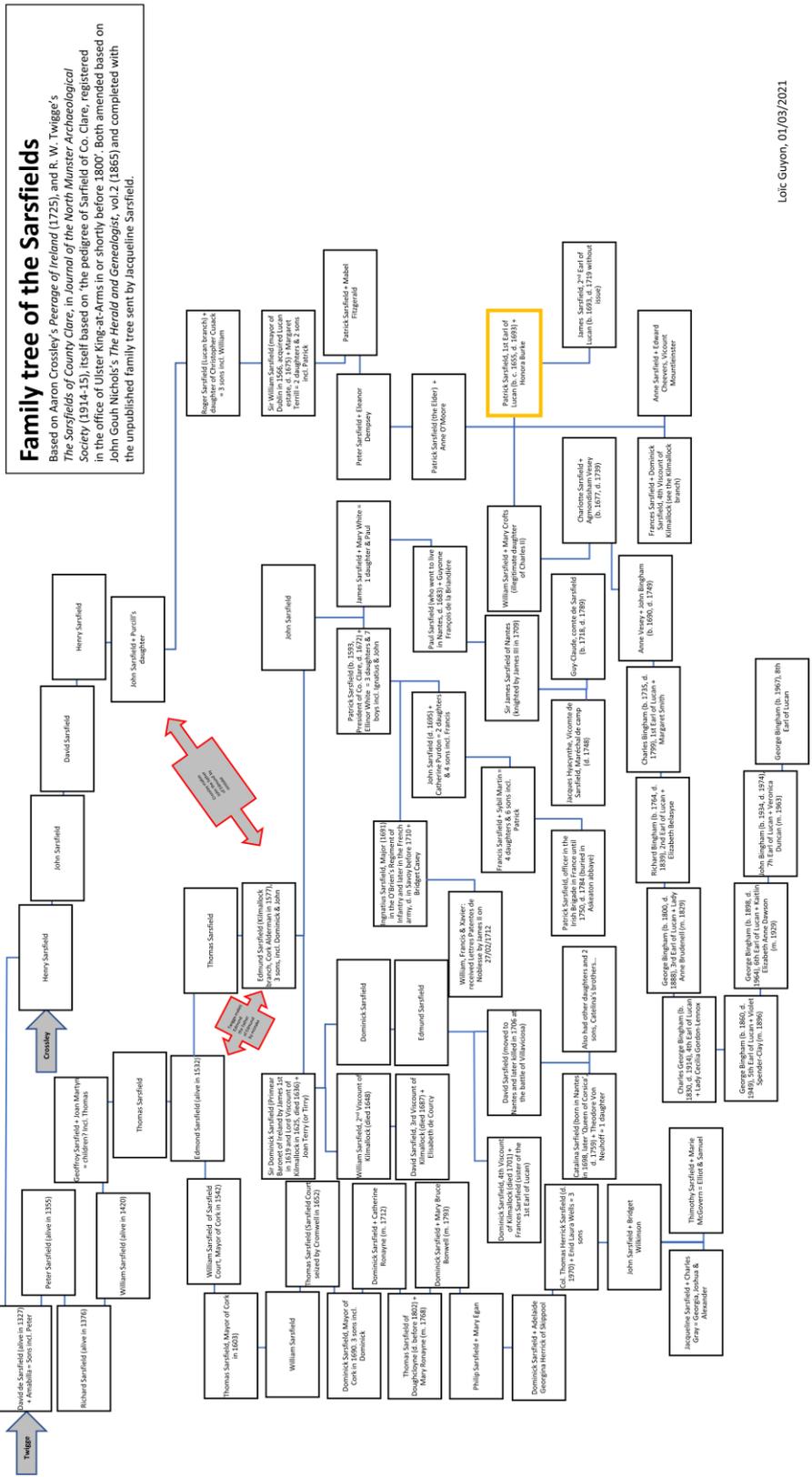
⁶³ Drake, Peter, *The Memoirs of Capt. Peter Drake*, Dublin, S. Powell, 1755, p. 5.

This left us with the two last options. First, we tried to identify a descendant from another branch of the Sarsfield family who could nevertheless be genetically related to the Earl of Lucan. We therefore had to start by reconstructing the family tree of all the branches of the Sarsfield family and, in order to do this, go back to their common ancestor. We relied in particular on the following genealogical works: Aaron Crossley's *Peerage of Ireland* (1725)⁶⁴, John Gouh Nichols' study published in *The Herald and Genealogist* (1865)⁶⁵ and R. W. Twigge's article 'The Sarsfields of County Clare' (1914)⁶⁶. The media interest in the Sarsfield Homecoming Project also led me to the discovery of an important unpublished document: a first draft of a complete family tree written by John Sarsfield (1929-2017), a descendant of the Sarsfields of Cork. His children, Jacqueline and Timothy Sarsfield, contacted me after learning of the project and were indeed kind enough to give me access to all the research their father did during his lifetime. John Sarsfield's genealogy has some gaps and errors, but by cross-referencing it with the genealogical works cited I have been able to reconstruct the complete family tree, published here for the first time (Figure 4).

⁶⁴ Dublin, Thomas Hume.

⁶⁵ London, J.G. Nichols & R.C. Nichols, vol. 2.

⁶⁶ *Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society*, vol. 2 (1914-15).



Loic Guyon, 01/03/2021

Figure 4. Genealogical tree of the Sarsfield family

As our family tree shows, the Sarsfield family has two main branches, the Sarsfields of Lucan (from whom Patrick Sarsfield is descended) and the Sarsfields of Cork (from whom Jacqueline and Timothy Sarsfield are descended), and two secondary branches (both linked to the Cork branch), the Sarsfields of Kilmallock and the Sarsfields of Clare. The common ancestor of all these branches is a certain David de Sarsfield who arrived in Ireland in the early 14th century. Now, in addition to their surname, all the male descendants of the different branches necessarily share the same chromosome, the Y chromosome of David Sarsfield, which has been passed on from father to son generation after generation. Despite the fact that they are so far apart on the family tree, Patrick Sarsfield and Timothy Sarsfield must therefore logically share this same chromosome.

Fortunately – and we are most grateful to him for this – Timothy Sarsfield agreed to give us a sample of his DNA. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Gerard Corcoran, a member of the Irish branch of the International Society of Genetic Genealogy, we were able to have this sample analysed by the American company FTDNA. Two types of analysis were carried out, Y-chromosome DNA (Y-DNA) analysis and autosomal DNA analysis. Firstly, the autosomal DNA analysis confirmed that the Kilmallock branch of the Sarsfields is indeed derived from the Cork branch, as a link was found in the FTDNA database between a Kilmallock descendant and Timothy Sarsfield. The other discovery, yielded by the Y-DNA analysis, was that the Sarsfield line belongs to a genetic group that is extremely rare in Ireland and very rare in Europe: haplogroup E. This fact is highly significant, as it alone would be sufficient to allow us to distinguish the remains of Patrick Sarsfield from those of other individuals buried on the site of St Martin's Church, which are bound to be uncovered by excavations. Indeed, fewer than 2% of the Irish population and only approximately 7% of the French population belong to this genetic group. The probability that any bones identified as belonging to haplogroup E are those of Patrick Sarsfield would therefore be extremely high. Ultimately, it would be through comparison of Timothy Sarsfield's Y-DNA with the Y-DNA of the human remains found in these excavations that we would be able to establish whether they indeed include those of the Earl of Lucan.

On the side of Patrick Sarsfield's mother, we are currently in the process of trying to determine whether Anne O'Moore's mitochondrial DNA (the type of DNA passed on generation after generation from mother to daughter) could have survived to this day *via* female descendants. This work will require the help of genealogists and is still in progress.

The last option for identifying the remains of Patrick Sarsfield would be to find the grave of Patrick Sarsfield's only child, his son James, and obtain a sample of his DNA. As previously mentioned, it is known to historians that James Francis Edward Sarsfield died from illness on 12 May 1719 at the age of 26 in the French town of Saint-Omer as he was returning from a trip to Ireland in support of the Jacobite cause. However, no indication was ever published as to the exact location of James' grave. After combing through the records of the many parishes of Saint-Omer, I finally managed to pinpoint the one in which his funeral took place and to uncover key information about the site of his burial. My research revealed that James Sarsfield was indeed buried in the parish of the church of the Holy-Sepulchre (*église du Saint-Sépulchre*) and I publish here (figure 4) for the first time the fairly detailed entry made in the death register of this church on the date of 14 May 1719, which reads as follows:

The 14th of May 1719, was buried in the church of the Holy Sepulchre during a solemn service at the sound of 4 bells sung by the clergy of the same place, Sir Patrice Sarsfield, earl of Lucan, viscount of Tully, baron of Rasbery [Rosberry], colonel of cavalry in the service of Her Very Christian Majesty [Louis XIV].

Deceased on the 12th, administered with the sacraments of our Holy Mother Church, aged 26 [.] [W]ere present at the said burial Sir Henry O'Neill – Captain in the O'Brien regiment, knight of the military order of Saint Louis, his relative, and Sir Adam Colclo [Colclough] – gentleman, who have signed with us.⁶⁷

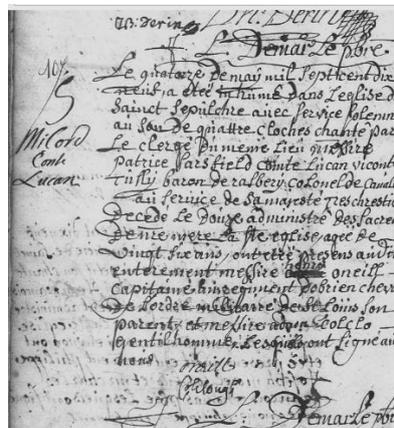


Figure 5: Entry about James Sarsfield's burial in the register of *église du Saint-Sépulchre*.

⁶⁷ Archives départementales du Pas-de-Calais, 5 MIR 765/27 Saint-Omer. 'Le quatorze de may mil sept cent dix neuf, a été inhumé dans l'église du Saint Sepulchre avec service solennel au son de quatre cloches chanté par le clergé du meme lieu messire Patrice Sarsfield comte Lucan viconte Tully baron de rasbery [Rosberry] colonel de cavalerie au service de sa majesté Très chrestienne.

Decedé le douze administré des Sacremens de notre mere la Ste eglise, ageé de vingt six ans, ont etee presens audit enterement messire henry oneill – Capitaine au regiment obrien chevalier de l'ordre militaire de St Louis son parent et messire Adam Colclo [Colclough] – gentilhomme, lesquels ont signé avec nous.' (we have kept the spelling of the original text. Our translation).

Let us note first that James Sarsfield is here referred to as ‘Patrice Sarsfield’, the gallicized name of his father. This could be a simple misunderstanding by the person who wrote the entry, but it could also well be the case that James had opted to use the forename of his illustrious father. Let us note also that one of the witnesses, Sir Henry O’Neill, is presented as being a ‘parent’ of James. Was this Henry O’Neill connected to Gordon O’Neill from Tyrone? Could he be Henry O’Neill of the Fewes who, as was pointed out to me by Stephen Griffin, is mentioned in O’Callaghan’s *History of the Irish Brigade* as having died in 1745, at the battle of Fontenoy, after over 40 years of service to the Stuarts in exile? How was this Henry O’Neill related to James Sarsfield? Only extensive genealogical research could answer these questions... However, the most important piece of information provided by the church’s death register is that James was buried *inside* the church (and not in the churchyard). Had he been buried in the cemetery, we would have had absolutely no chance of finding his grave, but the fact that he was buried inside the church means that it could potentially be located, since the church is still extant. Finding James’ remains would allow us to collect a DNA sample and this would certainly provide the best possible means of identifying his father’s remains, when the archaeological excavation in Huy is carried out. However, I contacted the local authorities of Saint-Omer on 7 November 2022 asking whether James’ grave could still be located and, after a number of exchanges with them, it turns out that James was buried in a collective grave within the church. Finding his remains among the layers of skeletons buried in that grave would technically not be impossible but this would require major excavation works and the Mayor of Saint-Omer indicated that there was currently no plan to conduct any restoration work in the church of the Holy-Sepulchre for the foreseeable future. We will therefore have to rely for now on Timothy Sarsfield’s distant yet significant genetic connection to Patrick Sarsfield in order to identify the first Earl of Lucan’s remains.

In 1993, on the occasion of the tercentenary of the capture of Huy by Louis XIV’s army, the town of Huy decided to affix a plaque (since replaced by an explanatory noticeboard) on the site of the Saint-Martin’s church, which read: ‘This is where Patrick Sarsfield is believed to have been buried, next to French officers deceased in the Refuge of Aulne Abbaye in Huy, as a consequence of the wounds they received at the battle of Neerwinden’.⁶⁸ I believe that I have demonstrated here that this assumption, which seems to have been based mostly on local

⁶⁸ ‘C’est ici que Patrick Sarsfield aurait été enseveli aux côtés d’officiers français décédés au refuge hutois de l’abbaye d’Aulne des suites de leurs blessures à la bataille de Neerwinden’ (our translation).

tradition, was correct and that it can now be said with a very high degree of certainty that Patrick Sarsfield was indeed one of the two anonymous French officers buried inside Saint-Martin's church and, more precisely, in the area currently covered by the backgarden of no 21 Avenue des Fossés.

The Sarsfield Homecoming Project was officially launched on 5 November 2020. A few days later, Denis O'Shaughnessy, a Limerick resident with a passion for history, contacted me to inform me that he himself had attempted, some months earlier, to open discussions with the Irish Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and to contact the authorities in the town of Huy with a view to initiating a search for the remains of Patrick Sarsfield.⁶⁹ However, his approaches had not been successful. In October 2020, *History Ireland* had published a letter he had sent to them in which he drew a parallel between a possible search for Sarsfield's remains and the efforts to find those of Red Hugh O'Donnell in Valladolid, Spain.⁷⁰ To be effective and serious, any such search must first be based on careful scrutiny of the available facts and evidence, and the identification and verification of sources in the light of existing historical documents. This is what I have tried to do here, by not taking any information at face value and by systematically looking for any pieces of evidence that would allow us to validate or, conversely, invalidate the different versions given over the centuries of the circumstances surrounding Patrick Sarsfield's death.

This work must now serve as the basis for a formal request for authorisation of archaeological excavations on the site of the former Saint-Martin church, a request that will be made to the Walloon minister in charge of Heritage by Ms Stéphanie Ratz, Head of the Department of Living Environment of the city of Huy, to whom I am particularly indebted for her decisive support for this project. It is hoped that we will be able to conduct an archaeological excavation by the end of the summer of 2024 at the latest.

⁶⁹ The local *Limerick Leader* newspaper reported on Denis O'Shaughnessy's approach in an article by Donal O'Regan on 20 June 2020.

⁷⁰ Denis O'Shaughnessy, 'Repatriating the remains of Patrick Sarsfield', *History Ireland*, September/October 2020, vol. 28, no. 5, p. 13.