

# Wellington

The Road to the Lion's Mound  
1769–1815

Daniel Res

## PROLOGUE



### ‘Our Atty’

When Sir Thomas Lawrence, court painter of the Prince-Regent, the future King George IV, painted Arthur Wellesley, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington shortly after his victory over Napoleon at Waterloo, he left us with the most famous of Wellington’s portraits. In the portrait, Wellington is portrayed in full strength and at the height of his military career. He is of slim build, depicted from the waist up with arms crossed, and dressed in a red British field marshal’s uniform with golden epaulettes and a white cravat. The Duke, with his angular aristocratic face, which is lined with short brown hair and dominated by his famous Roman-like aquiline nose, stares out of the painting with a serious, pensive look in his blue-grey eyes. It is a gaze of determination and experience – the look of a soldier and commander, and of a forty-seven-year-old man who had already experienced countless battles in which he had seen many a friend and enemy perish (See Image XIV).

During his long and eventful life of eighty-three years, Wellington earned a series of characteristic nicknames. Due to his prominently bent nose, ordinary soldiers often called him ‘Old Hookey’ or ‘Nosey’ for amusement as is typical of the British sense of humour, but also referred to him with deep respect and devotion as ‘Our Atty’, which was short for Arthur.<sup>7</sup>

Due to his elegant style of dress and thorough care for his outward appearance, he was known most often among the officers as ‘Beau’, a nickname that was synonymous with that fellow Old Etonian, dandy and arbiter of men’s fashion in Regency England – George Bryan ‘Beau’ Brummell. The Duke was a fastidious man, who was accustomed to shaving twice a day, which was rather unusual for the time, and always appeared in public meticulously kempt. Such a *soigné* individual possibly provides clues to a person whose attention to detail was not just a matter of personal appearance, but of an approach to life and its many and varied challenges.

The second nickname officers used to describe him was *Peer*. This “compliment” was given to him after he was promoted in rank to the Viscount of Wellington after his victory over the French in the Battle of Talavera in 1809. The Portuguese most often called him ‘Douro, Douro!’, a somewhat odd nickname that he received after his unforgettable crossing of the Portuguese River Douro, which took French Marshal Masséna wholly by surprise and was crucial in liberating Portugal from the French Army. The Spanish, who were also the Duke’s allies alongside the Portuguese against Napoleonic France in the Peninsular War, commonly called him ‘Águila’ (Spanish for Eagle). In addition to the prominence of the Duke’s nose, this nickname came about thanks to his strenuous efforts to oversee everything (including the actions of his allies) personally and attentively with his “eagle eye”.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to characterize Wellington as faithfully as possible as a commander, one soldier (who was unfortunately not identified) wrote the following about him after the Battle of Waterloo:

What has especially gained him the love of his men is, that he is in the highest degree just, that he exercises the most assiduous care for the supply of the army, and that he personally examines whether the soldier has any grounds for complaints which admit of remedy: and he has gained the confidence of the soldiers because he acts without passion, because he spares the men when the result would not be answerable to the sacrifice required to obtain it, and never does out of vanity any thing\* which the soldier must pay for with his blood, because he chooses his position with the greatest care, so that victory may be certain when he gives the signal for battle.<sup>9</sup>

\* The direct quotations in this book have been cited verbatim and may thus contain spelling errors and language variations of the time.

In the meantime, on the opposite side of Europe the anticipated war between Austria and France broke out in the spring of 1809. The Austrians, encouraged by Wellesley's achievements on the Iberian Peninsula and British finances, thus entered into the Fifth Anti-French Coalition alongside Britain. The Austrians managed relatively quickly to build a new army, which was primarily thanks to the Imperial patent on the creation of a militia from the common folk who, thanks to the plundering they suffered after Austerlitz, held strongly hostile sentiments toward the French. By mobilizing its masses, Austria partially replicated France's sudden creation of a massive army based on a conscription system in the years of the French Revolution. In addition, the Commander-in-Chief of Austrian troops, Archduke Charles, Duke of Teschen had been the first one to defeat the "undefeatable" Napoleon on a field battle at Aspern-Essling, which took place from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1809, causing a great sensation for a time in Europe. Fighting took place mainly on the northern bank of the Danube River near the villages of Aspern and Essling, where Napoleon gradually attempted to transport his army from the southern bank of the powerful river with the help of pontoon bridges. However, Archduke Charles ultimately defended the northern bank. This was largely due to the fact that he managed in the afternoon hours of the next day to break through Napoleon's pontoon bridge with the help of burning rafts which his men sent down the Danube.<sup>342</sup>

In regard to Wellington's opinion of Archduke Charles' commanding capabilities, the following and extremely interesting discussion that Wellington enthusiastically led with his friend John Croker in the 1820s is very telling:

[Croker]: He [Wellington] quoted the Archduke Charles's book, and I asked whether the Archduke was really a great officer? [Wellington]: "A great officer? Why, he knows more about it than all of us put together." [Croker]: "What than Buonaparte... or yourself? [Wellington]: "Aye! Than Buonaparte or any of us. We are none of us worthy to fasten the latches of his shoes, if I am to judge from his book and his plans of campaign. But his mind or his health has, they tell me, a very peculiar defect. He is admirable for five or six hours, and whatever can be done in that time will be done perfectly, but after that he falls into a kind of epileptic stupor, does not know what he is about, has no opinion of his own, and does whatever the man at his elbow tells him."<sup>343</sup>

It is my assertion that this discussion is especially interesting for two reasons: firstly because Wellington puts the rather widely accepted claim that he considered Napoleon to be the best commander of his time into a slightly different light (although at the same time he admits that Charles' state of health significantly reduced his overall qualities as a commander), and secondly in terms of the analysis of Wellington's reading habits. Croker does not unfortunately tell us specifically what book Wellington was so fondly quoting. In my opinion, it must have been one of the two of the following publication's by the Archduke which had been translated from German (which Wellington did not speak) to French at the time of Wellington's discussion with Croker: *Campagne de 1799 en Allemagne et en Suisse* (*Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1799 in Deutschland und in der Schweiz*) and *Principes de la stratégie, développés par la relation de la campagne de 1796 en Allemagne* (*Grundsätze der Strategie erläutert durch die Darstellung des Feldzugs 1796*).

In addition, both of these works were evidently the most popular of all that the Archduke had written, as nearly thirty editions of each book had been produced by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The former publication deals with the description of the Archduke's military campaigns in the War of the Second Coalition against Revolutionary France. Personally, and based on Croker's record, however, I believe that Wellington was most probably referring to the latter-mentioned publication by the Archduke, as it is of a much more theoretical character and deals with the principles of war in a general context. Charles partially illustrates these principles in his campaign in 1796, which took place during the War of the First Coalition on the territory of today's Germany, where Charles achieved several important victories over the French. The Archduke begins the first chapter of the book with a simple but succinct claim:

Strategy is a military science. It is the origin of a specific plan according to which subsequent and specific military measures are realized. It is the fundamental, characteristic skill of a High Commander. Tactics are then a military art. They tell us exactly how to proceed in an individual situation according to a given strategic concept and are an essential skill of each commanding officer.<sup>344</sup>

Nonetheless, Napoleon managed to defeat Archduke Charles just a few weeks later in another exceptionally bloody two-day battle, which took place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> July 1809 at Wagram, where Napoleon this time managed successfully to cross the Danube. Despite his failing health, Archduke Charles was not only an excellent military theoretician, but also a brave man who, similarly to Wellington, often set a personal example to his soldiers. For example, on the first day of the Battle of Wagram he personally led Vincent's Dragoons in a counterattack against Napoleon's forces with great success. In the Austrian Army, regiments were traditionally named after their owner, who was usually a specific general or a prominent nobleman. Vincent's Dragoons were formerly named Latour's and had distinguished themselves in previous Coalition Wars with France.

Nonetheless, General Latour had died not long before and the regiment was placed in the ownership of General Vincent. For this reason, together with its general the regiment lost its name, with which it had won renown throughout all of Europe, a fact which naturally took a toll on the morale of all the troops. After Vincent's Dragoons were forced to retreat several times in the attempt to support Charles' failing centre during the first day of the Battle of Wagram, the Archduke decided personally to take command and skilfully play on the chord of their former glory, as French soldier Marcelin Marbot, who served under Napoleon at Wagram, wrote in his memoirs:

Vincent's Dragoons, it is clear that you are no longer Latour's Dragoons! [Archduke Charles yelled in the direction of the retreating Vincent's Dragoons] Humiliated by the warrantable rebuke, the regiment replied: "Yes, yes we still are!" – "Good, then!" called the Archduke and drew his sword proudly. "If you want to prove that you deserve your former glory, follow me!" And despite the bullet injury, he charged at the French! Vincent's regiment set off just behind him with indescribable enthusiasm. His attack was fearful and Oudinot's [the French general leading the attack on Charles' centre] grenadiers retreated with great losses. The Archduke's brief speech so roused the Dragoons that they first stopped Oudinot's grenadiers and then charged Lamarque's division and gained back two thousand captured troops and five colours of the regiment that this division had so recently captured from the Austrians! The Archduke Charles congratulated the Dragoons with

the words: “From now on you will take pride in the name Vincent, which you have made just as famous as that of Latour!”<sup>345</sup>

The next day, however, Archduke Charles was forced to retreat from Wagram, upon which he decided to move to Znaim (Znojmo) in the southeast of today’s Czech Republic, where he rose once again to face Napoleon. Nonetheless, after another two days of heavy fighting, an armistice was signed at Znaim, which for Austria culminated in the signing of another humiliating treaty in the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna in October 1809. As a result, the glory of the victory at Aspern-Essling was wholly overshadowed and Austria was once again eliminated from the conflict.<sup>346</sup> Ultimately, the humbled Austrians lost almost 40,000 square miles of their territory (Galicia, Carinthia, Carniola, Salzburg, and part of today’s Croatia) together with three and a half million citizens. To top off this humiliation, Emperor Francis’ Austrian Army was not allowed according to the Treaty of Schönbrunn to exceed 150,000 men. The only thing that may have at least partially consoled the Austrians (in addition to the first ever defeat of Napoleon in a field in the annals of history) was the fact that the French had lost approximately 10,000 more men than their opponent in their recent battles with the Austrian Empire, much thanks to the commanding prowess of Archduke Charles.\*

Minister for War, Lord Castlereagh was aware of the fact that Britain would be alone in the war with France after Austria’s defeat, and the whole brunt of the conflict would thus likely shift to Spain and Portugal; he did however put his unwavering trust in Arthur Wellesley’s abilities:

We have a devil of a task before us in the Peninsula now that Austria is disposed of – If any man alive can carry us through it Wellesley will, and whatever may be the issue – I am Confident he will personally rise with its difficulties.<sup>347</sup>

Lord Canning, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also expressed himself in a similar manner on the recent victory at Talavera in the following words (which were perhaps even more flattering than those of

\* The Austrians had lost roughly 46,000 men and the French 56,000 men in all the battles of 1809. See: Zdeněk Šašínska, *Bitva u Znojma: k otázce péče o raněné a pohřbívání v období napoleonských válek* in: *Historický obzor*, 2010, 21(1/2), pp. 27–35.

Lord Castlereagh) in his written instructions to the newly nominated British Ambassador to Portugal:

In Wellesley... you will find everything that you can wish – frankness – temper – honesty – quickness – comprehensiveness – and military Ability – not only eminent beyond any other military commander that could be chosen – but perhaps possessed by him alone, of all our Commanders, in a degree that qualifies for great undertakings [i.e. leading the war in Portugal].<sup>348</sup>

However, Arthur Wellesley himself felt rather uneasy to say the least from the recent reports of Austria's absolute defeat as he mentions in a letter addressed at the time to George Berkeley, Vice-Admiral of the Royal Navy: 'I hope that the defeat of the Austrians has not been so decisive as the French accounts would make it.'<sup>349</sup> Unfortunately for him and Britain, Wellington would soon learn that the French were not overly exaggerating when it came to their crushing victory over the Austrians.

A dramatic situation took place soon later on the British political scene as Lord Portland's government fell over the course of September. Coincidentally, Minister for War Lord Castlereagh and Foreign Minister Lord Canning, who so highly praised Arthur Wellesley after Talavera and were his greatest supporters in government were the same men who took the lion's share of responsibility for the fall of the government. In addition to the failure of Austria, to which Britain paid out over one million pounds in subsidies, an unfortunate military expedition planned by the two aforementioned ministers that targeted the island of Walcheren and aimed to conquer the port of Antwerp also significantly contributed to the fall of the government. Poor organization and inept command resulted in a shambolic and extremely costly failure (in terms of both finances and troops) by British forces, who were surrounded by French forces and subsequently forced to retreat, resulting in over 4,000 British dead, the majority of whom fell to illness\* without ever firing their muskets. The whole Walcheren Campaign thus strongly reminded the British of the bitter campaign in Flanders in 1793–1795, of which Wellington and others were highly critical.

\* Malaria was the most common affliction among British troops. See: Richard Aldington, *Wellington* (London, Toronto 1946), p. 136, p. 142.



activity focused on military theory and the administration of his county, where he founded one of the first military academies on the territory of the Holy Roman Empire (roughly in today's Germany). Soon after its foundation, his academy gained substantial popularity, as the count himself taught there in person. William of Schaumburg-Lippe became an enlightened figure in the proper sense of the term and his ideas were in many ways revolutionary. He promoted the idea that the cause of the majority of wars was recklessness and greed and waging war was intrinsically immoral. According to William, the only justifiable war was a defensive one. He believed that if defensive technologies could be improved in warfare (primarily fortifications and artillery), the enemy would be put at such a disadvantage that even smaller states would be capable of effectively defending themselves against insatiable superpowers. In turn, this would ultimately result in general stability and peace (in my opinion, La Lippe's reputation in the field of waging defensive warfare could have been an additional reason for Wellington to pay special attention to William's memoirs in planning his own defence of Portugal). Count William of Schaumburg-Lippe died in 1777,<sup>435</sup> a time when Arthur Wellesley – who was to “walk in William's footsteps” and with a great degree of likelihood study his military memoirs – was a boy of eight.

The fact that Arthur Wellesley was in possession of Schaumburg Lippe's memoirs over the course of the Peninsular War is briefly mentioned by historian Phillip Guadalla in his biography of Wellington published in the 1930s. In his publication, Guadalla refers to a dispatch containing a list of literature that was sent to Wellington over the course of 1810. This preserved dispatch note proves that the *Memoirs of William of Schaumburg-Lippe* were delivered to Arthur Wellesley on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1810.<sup>436</sup> Nonetheless, it is my personal assumption that Wellesley may have already studied La Lippe's memoirs in 1809 during his preparations to return to the Iberian Peninsula and relied on them to a considerable degree in writing his famous *Memorandum for the Defence of Portugal*. La Lippe's memoirs may thus have “travelled” to Wellington over the course of the Peninsular War as an already verified and useful source of information to be reviewed from time to time. Let us now take a look at Wellesley's *Memorandum for the Defence of Portugal* in greater detail.

In this memorandum, which was crucial in terms of his military career and led him to be charged with the chief command over British forces

in Portugal, Arthur Wellesley stated: ‘I have always been of opinion that Portugal might be defended, whatever might be the result of the contest in Spain...’<sup>437</sup> He continues in the memorandum to write that, in his opinion, it would be sufficient in the future to deploy a British army of 20,000 men in Portugal while taking into consideration that it would surely take some time before the combat capability of the regular Portuguese Army was renewed. Therefore, Wellesley continues on in the memorandum with the statement that it seems essential in the meantime to deploy at least 30,000 British troops in Portugal: ‘The British force employed in Portugal should, in this view of the question, not be less than 30 000 men, of which number 4000 or 5000 should be cavalry.’<sup>438</sup> In terms of the enemy’s numbers that would be needed to conquer Portugal, he goes on to claim: ‘My opinion was, that even if Spain should have been conquered, the French would not have been able to overrun Portugal with a smaller force than 100 000 men.’<sup>439</sup> Arthur Wellesley is *de facto* claiming that the British would certainly be capable of withstanding roughly three times the number of enemy troops in Portugal.

If we recall William’s campaign, the Count of Schaumburg-Lippe stood with an army of 15,000 men against 42,000 hostile soldiers, meaning he was forced to face an enemy roughly three times greater than his own in number. This striking similarity in the proportions of these numbers (among other facts) during the Count of Schaumburg-Lippe’s campaign with those of Wellington’s campaign may, in my opinion, be proof of the fact that La Lippe’s memoirs served as an important basis for his memorandum. Proof of the fact that some individuals in British society in the times of the Napoleonic Wars were well aware of the link between the Count of Schaumburg-Lippe’s campaign during the Seven Years’ War and Wellington’s campaign in 1810 and the fact that Wellington may have read Count La Lippe’s memoirs earlier than 5<sup>th</sup> April 1810 can be found in two letters that are described below.

The author of the first letter, Lord Francis Rawdon, Earl of Moira (1754–1826), who happened to be Arthur Wellesley’s commander in the years of his first military campaign in Flanders (1794–5), wrote the following lines in a letter sent on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1810 (i.e. a month and a half before the date on the dispatch confirming that Schaumburg-Lippe’s memoirs cited by Guedalla had been delivered to Wellington) addressed to Colonel John McMahon:

Ld. Wellington is acting upon the plans of Comte la Lippe [William, Count of Schaumburg-Lippe]... Demonstration will be made along the Douro. Ld. Wellington's attention will be drawn to prevent the passage of the enemy there.<sup>440</sup>

These "plans" of the Count of Lippe may have pointed to William's memoirs. The author of the second contemporaneous letter, which puts Wellington's campaign into the context of William of Schaumburg-Lippe's actions, was Lord Hugh Percy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Northumberland (1742–1817). In a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 1810 (i.e. exactly a month before proof that La Lippe's memoirs were delivered), also addressed to John McMahon, he wrote the following:

I find that Ld. Wellington has totally disregarded the plan which the Count La Lippe gave in and left for the defence of Portugal, and has struck out an entire new plan of his own. Those parts which La Lippe looked upon as the tenderest parts of the frontiers, and to be more particularly attendet to, his Lordship [Wellington] has left totally open, without so much as a single British soldier... The old Roman adage of *Finis Coronat opus* [the end crowns the work], is a very true one. Count La Lippe saved Portugal and frustrated all the joint attempts of the French and Spanish armies that attacked him... I wish with all my heart Lord Wellington may show himself as good General and save Portugal this second time.<sup>441</sup>

The Duke of Northumberland is pointing to the fact that Wellington had deviated from the Count of Lippe's plan, which on the other hand is perhaps proof of the fact that Wellington had until then drawn inspiration from it and the connection between both campaigns to a certain degree resonated with some among British military and political circles. Wellington was naturally not copying Count William La Lippe's plan to the letter, as the period and military tactics had moved on considerably over the course of 50 years; nonetheless, it is my opinion that Wellington drew upon much of La Lippe's strategy as he – exactly like William of Schaumburg-Lippe – transformed Portugal into an impregnable fortress.

In terms of this sudden "disregard" for Lippe's plan and "striking out" one of his own, Wellington truly did leave the Portuguese fortresses

abandoned and in ill repair, as his construction and military engineers had begun to build the massive series of wholly new fortresses to create the defensive Lines of Torres Vedras in November 1809. This was where Wellington's genius and innovation showed. Northumberland, however, could not have known this, as Arthur Wellesley, as was mentioned several times before, kept this massive structure a total secret. As regards William's second primary weapon used in the defence of Portugal, i.e. scorched earth policy, Wellington proceeded in a wholly identical manner and, as we know now, 'saved Portugal this second time' in line with Northumberland's wish. If we are to return only to the indisputable facts in order to provide a general summary while fully taking into consideration the narrative value of the letters mentioned above by Lords Moira and Northumberland dated 16<sup>th</sup> February and 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1810, we should hold firm to the fact that there is proof that Schaumburg-Lippe's memoirs were delivered into Wellington's hands on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1810, i.e. roughly six months after he issued the order to build the Lines of Torres Vedras. Even this fact, however, does not absolutely guarantee that Wellington truly read the memoirs. I am, however, personally convinced to a considerable degree that, thanks to so many striking similarities between the two campaigns, Wellington's personal traits, and the aforementioned written evidence (i.e. letters by Rawdon and Northumberland), Wellington studied William of La Lippe's memoirs with the greatest probability in the winter of 1808, just after proceedings were completed on the justification of the Convention of Cintra, or at least before the construction of the defensive Lines of Torres Vedras (October 1809). Count La Lippe's memoirs served as a seminal work that Wellington employed in his plans to defend Portugal and may have inspired him to build the fortification system of Torres Vedras.

The next strong impulse that in my opinion may have led Wellington to the idea of building the Lines of Torres Vedras and which therefore should not be overlooked may have been the network of Portuguese mills built centuries before in close proximity to the area north of Lisbon and elsewhere due to the favourable wind conditions on the ridges of the hills. When I first closed in on the Lines of Torres Vedras by car, I mistakenly took the ruins of these various mills to be the remainders of Wellington's redoubts that made up the Lines of Torres Vedras. In addition to being a careful strategist, Arthur Wellesley was mainly a man of action who

placed an emphasis on common sense both in war and his private life. If we recall his first great triumph in the Battle of Assaye, which he won thanks to the discovery of a new crossing over the Kaitna River, Wellington told his friend J. W. Croker that he detected the ford using common sense:

I fought and won the battle of Assaye, the bloodiest, for the numbers, that I ever saw, and this was all from having the common sense, to guess that men did not build villages on opposite sides of a stream without some means of communication between them.<sup>442</sup>

Therefore, it is my assertion that these old windmills located in significant number on the ridges of the hills close to Lisbon may have given the impression in the eyes of an experienced soldier of strategically placed potential redoubts, which may have attracted Wellington's attention and given rise to the idea of building a complex defence system on the ridges for an emergency situation\* and to permanently ensure the presence of British troops in Portugal. On the pages of Wellington's dispatches, we can immediately find several examples proving these old windmills played a truly significant role as fortification elements in the construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras. We find the specific role of the old mills for example in Wellington's memorandum from 13<sup>th</sup> October 1810, in which he issued the following order instructing his troops on how to act if Masséna's men were to attack the first defensive line in the area between Zibreira and Sobral:

When the army shall be ordered to occupy the position of Zibreira... Lieut. General Sir Brent Spencer's division, with its right at the two windmills between Zibreira, and the redoubts of Sobral [a small town located in the centre of the first line of fortresses], will occupy a line extending to an old mill on the right of Zibreira, and thence to another old mill on the left of the church of Zibreira, bringing their left to the ravine. This line extends about 1000 yards.<sup>443</sup>

In the event that another area of the Lines of Torres Vedras (near S. Jago dos Velhos) was attacked, Wellington wrote the following lines to General Craufurd in the beginning of October, in which the windmills also play a defensive role:

\* The Count of Schaumburg-Lippe also fortified small redoubts from which he led a partisan war.

My intention in bringing up a brigade to S. Jago dos Velhos was, not to limit the space which I wished you to attend to, but to have a body of troops in readiness to throw in upon the ground about Trancoso, and extending from No. 8 [a redoubt] to the mills (marked A in your plan), in case the enemy should make a push at the valley of Calhandriz.<sup>444</sup>

Finally, in the event of attack of another segment of the Lines, Wellington instructed General ‘Daddy’ Hill on the following:

Major Gen... W. Lumley will examine all the roads leading from his cantonments to the redoubt No.8, and to the windmill about 800 yards on the right of that redoubt, in the rear of the Quinta de Belhaco, to the Quinta de Belhaco by those windmills, as well as by Transoco, to the redoubt No. 9., and the ground extending from the right of No. 9, to the point on which Brig. Gen. Craufurd will have the battery constructed...<sup>445</sup>

Whatever it was that brought Wellington to the idea and subsequent realization of the construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras, I agree with the former president of Portugal, Mr Aníbal Cavaco Silva, who declared the following in a speech given in 2009 in honour of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Lines:

Here [at the Lines of Torres Vedras] the tide of the Peninsular War was turned. It was the beginning of the end of the Napoleonic adventure that had put Europe at the mercy of sword and shot. The retreat would come to a final halt at Waterloo five years later.<sup>446</sup>

Construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras cost the British Government a total of 100,000 pounds.<sup>447</sup> This fact is described in the following anecdote, which points out the often underestimated position of the Lines in the history of the Napoleonic Wars: it is said that the sum paid for the construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras was indisputably one of the most profitable investments in military history, and the creator of this investment “bull’s eye” was naturally none other than Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington.

exploring officers and their intermediaries from the ranks of Spanish civilians to heighten their operations across all of Spain during Wellesley's campaign and engage the other French forces as much as possible. These units, or "*los guerrilleros*", who several years previously had begun merely as poorly organized bands of farmers, gradually began to gain a better reputation in their struggle against the French. During the on-going war, more and more men and women of all social classes continued to join them; thus the ranks of these "irregular units" not only included educated clergymen and former soldiers of the regular Spanish Army, but also noblemen who had often lost their properties during the war. Thanks to this fact, an amazing total of 38,520 "*guerrilleros*" operated in Spain in 1812 and were divided into 22 groups with their own chiefs and territories in which the given troops were deployed.<sup>514</sup> Thus, in terms of the sheer number of fighters and the quality of troop organization from the onset of war, the Spanish guerrilla movement had now evidently reached its peak. Although scattered throughout the kingdom, these roughly 40,000 soldiers were now certainly able to "light a fire" under the French, which was to play a key role in the success of Wellington's subsequent campaign.

Two diversionary actions aimed at preventing Marmont from receiving reinforcements from the other French troops were then carried out directly on the initiative of the Royal Navy. First, several battalions of British marines landing in the north of Spain, establishing contact with the local guerrilla forces there and subsequently carrying out regular attacks on French supply divisions. The second landing of British troops soon followed on the eastern coast of Spain and, although it was less successful than the one to the north, as the British were crushed there at the town of Alicante, it met its purpose in managing to capture the full attention of Marshal Suchet's troops.<sup>515</sup>

After these preparations, Wellington withdrew on 13<sup>th</sup> July in the command of 50,000 men against Marmont. The French Marshal, who had roughly the same amount of men at his command, retreated from the advancing British toward the famous Spanish university town of Salamanca. Only four days later, Wellington entered the town virtually unchallenged and was welcomed by the jubilant citizens, who like the Portuguese, welcomed the British as liberators. In the streets of the city, Wellington also met in person with the head of his network of spies from the ranks of civilians on the Iberian Peninsula, an old Irishman named

Dr Patrick Curtis, who worked as a professor at the Irish College of the local and renowned university. Reverend Curtis had long been providing Wellington with crucial information on the French with the help of his agents among the peasants and priests scattered throughout the country. Within his Intelligence Department, Wellington had suffered a considerable loss several months earlier. In mid-April 1812, Marmont's patrol had captured Major Colquhoun Grant, an ace among Wellington's exploring officers who had been collecting information for him before his campaign against Marmont. Grant even managed to infiltrate Marmont's camp and carefully note all information on the army there. He subsequently set off with lightning speed back to Wellington and managed to give him a report before the Siege of Badajoz, which stated that he still had some time before Marmont would be able to attack Ciudad de Rodrigo and could therefore continue in his siege of Badajoz. He was to do so with haste, however, as Marmont was on the advance. As soon as Grant passed this report on to his commander, he immediately set off again into action and continued to monitor the movements of Marmont's troops. However, this was a mission from which 'Granto Bueno' would not return. Marmont's dragoons managed to capture him nearby the Portuguese-Spanish border, where he attempted to hide in a tree top with his Spanish guide Leon. When the French caught the two, they found on them detailed and carefully processed notes on the numbers of Marmont's soldiers and cannons, and the movements of his army. The poor Leon was executed mercilessly on the spot as a spy, while Grant escaped certain death for espionage thanks to his British Army officer's uniform, after which he was escorted to Salamanca and thrown into jail.<sup>516</sup> Marmont then invited Grant to dinner in the city, during which he perhaps rather naively attempted to extort information from him on Wellington's plans. Not surprisingly, however, the French Marshal left dinner rather disappointed, as not a single bit of information that could have been of some value to Marmont had slipped from Grant's lips. The following day, Grant – who was closely guarded and had not been treated very kindly hitherto – gave to Marmont his parole, which in his case was a promise according to his deal with Marmont that he would not escape until he was traded for another captured French officer of the same rank. Why did 'Granto Bueno' decide to do so? He most likely did so because he saw his escape as unrealistic at the given moment; at the same time, however, he knew



that if he gave his parole, he would not be guarded so unforgivingly and, with a bit of luck, would perhaps be able to continue to send Wellington messages from captivity. Wellington was well aware of the fact that the capture of his best exploring officer and his word of honour not to escape spelled disaster. Despite all odds and with the help of Patrick Curtis, who managed to reach the prisoner under the pretext of providing religious services, he managed to continue to provide information on the enemy during his imprisonment in Salamanca. After Wellington learned of Grant's capture, he told the head of his medical department Dr. James McGrigor, who was related to Grant, that this "James Bond of the Peninsular War" was still sending him valuable information on the French:<sup>517</sup> "I wish he had not given his parole, for I had promised large rewards to the Guerrilla chiefs if they could bring him back [...] what think you of him, at this moment, when a prisoner, sending me information?" McGrigor, who was clearly worried about his brother-in-law, answered with the question: "But I thought, sir, that you had arranged for his exchange?" to which Wellington replied: "So I had, and here is Marmont's answer,"<sup>518</sup> he said and let McGrigor read Marmont's letter, which overflowed with words of politeness, in which the French Marshal solemnly swore that he would naturally exchange Grant immediately for a French officer as was custom. As soon as McGrigor finished reading, however, Wellington handed him a second document, a copy of the French newspaper *Moniteur*. Marmont's dispatch had been printed in the newspaper, in which the Marshal quite clearly bragged of Grant's capture, stating that he 'is a most dangerous fellow of whom I shall not lose sight till he is safe in France'<sup>519</sup>. Curiously enough and certainly only by "remarkable coincidence", Marmont's dispatch in the *Moniteur* carried the same date as the letter in which the French Marshal boldly promised Grant's exchange. In reality, however, it was clear that the French would never voluntarily release this feared exploring officer. Long before Wellington arrived at Salamanca with his army, 'Granto Bueno' was thus handed over to a heavy escort that took him to the city of Bayonne in southeast France where he would be handled by the police agents of Joseph Fouché (the head of Napoleon's police department), where there was no threat that he would be freed by Wellington's feared allies, the hated "*los guerrilleros*".<sup>520</sup> Therefore, Wellington was forced at least for the time being to come to terms with losing Grant and focus completely on dealing with

Marmont's troops in Salamanca. In order to liberate the city completely, the British still needed to capture three convents in the old section of the town, where Marmont had placed French garrisons, turning them into *de facto* small fortresses. Nonetheless, Wellington's men managed to take the convents, thanks to which the whole town came under British control at the end of June. Wellington and his army subsequently continued south from Salamanca toward Marmont's troops.

Over the course of the coming days, Wellington and Marmont manoeuvred their respective armies, which were led in close proximity of several kilometres to one another. With the exception of isolated clashes, however, neither side dared to attack their opponent with full force in regard to their given positions. Both commanders thus bided their time like two boxers, one waiting for the other to make a false move that would allow for a knockout blow. This was a highly trying time for Wellesley and his men, as the summer temperatures soared, while at night they dropped so low that soldiers were forced to dig up graves in cemeteries in order to try and find enough wood for fires. During this tense situation, when a single mistake could spell complete disaster for either army, Wellington complained of overall exhaustion for perhaps the first time in his life. He slept roughly four hours a day for a whole fortnight and was otherwise constantly on his feet or, to be more exact, in the saddle.<sup>521</sup> Once again, he did his best to personally supervise all operations, and his officer corps, who were well aware of the gravity of the situation, now also requested that he be present along the whole line of the British position.

Wellington described all of this in a letter to his brother William: 'I was never so fagged. My Gallant Officers will kill me... If I detach one of them, he is not satisfied unless I go to him, or send the whole Army, and I am obliged to superintend every operation of the troops.'<sup>522</sup> Later, he also spoke of the officer corps in a similar manner: 'They are really heroes when I am on the spot to direct them, but when I am obliged to quit them they are children.'<sup>523</sup> Thus Wellington caught up on his sleep only at moments when he believed nothing could go wrong, with occasional naps wherever and whenever possible. For instance, during the tiresome manoeuvring around Salamanca, he decided to lie down under a nearby tree. Before he did so, however, he gave the following order to his aide-de-camp, a young FitzRoy Somerset (whom Wellesley did not consider to be an especially talented soldier but appreciated the honesty

and carefulness with which he carried out his duties): “Watch the French through your glass, FitzRoy...When they reach that copse near the gap in the hill, wake me.”<sup>524</sup>

The two opposing armies often found themselves so close to one another in the hilly terrain south of Salamanca that small skirmishes were inevitable – these mostly took place between light infantry units and dragoons. Wellington himself also became caught up in one of these skirmishes similarly to the Battle of Talavera, when he and his staff clashed with French dragoons close to the Guarena stream. Wellington, for whom riding was not merely a necessity but also a form of entertainment and relaxation, was equipped with the best horses possible and intended to use this to his advantage in the skirmish. He drew his sabre and is quite likely to have exchanged several blows with the enemy himself in this unexpected clash before riding off at full speed toward his lines with a smile upon his face.<sup>525</sup> He was surely aware of the fact that his capture would likely spell catastrophe for the allies but, thanks to the qualities of his horse and his horsemanship, he knew no one was likely to catch up with him. He ultimately rode off quicker than even his own staff could, as Lieutenant James Cooke from the 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, who was evidently captivated by the whole event, noted in his memoirs:

The Earl of Wellington was in the thick of it, and escaped with difficulty. His straight sword drawn, he also crossed the ford [i.e. across the Guarena] at full speed, smiling. I did not see his lordship when the charge first took place. When he passed us, he had none of his staff near him, he was quite alone, with a ravine in his rear.<sup>526</sup>

Wellington recalled in retrospect that situations such as these during the Peninsular War were by no means unique in regard to his frequent manoeuvres in the saddle to visit his allies and officers or to analyse enemy positions, during which he often spotted the French light-infantry reconnaissance divisions only “at the eleventh hour”: ‘Although I had the family eye of a hawk, I have frequently been within an ace of being taken, and have more than once been obliged to take to my ‘scrapers’...’<sup>527</sup>

Several days after this small-scale skirmish, both opponents continued on in their seemingly endless manoeuvring. The landscape south of Salamanca where both armies were now situated was dominated by two

hills – Arapil Chico and Arapil Grande (i.e. Lesser and Greater Arapil), which situated opposite one another and formed the two strategic points in the given area. During the early hours of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1812 both armies formed an almost right-angle position. British forces were spread out toward the north and east of Arapil Chico, which formed the corner point of their position, while Marmont's troops, who faced Wellington's, basically mirrored the British right-angle position; in the French case, however, the corner point of the shift in their line was formed by Arapil Grande. Around noon, Wellington was positioned at a farm in the small village of Los Arapiles situated east of Arapil Chico. It seemed that nothing out of the ordinary would happen that day, and both competing armies and their commanders would continue to try to find a gap in their enemy's position.<sup>528</sup>

At that moment Wellington, who had paused for lunch but could not sit still to eat his meal, walked into the farmyard and directed his telescope at the French in order to survey Marmont's position. Suddenly, he espied the fault in the French position that he had so earnestly hoped for. General Thomières had advanced on the left wing of the French Army too far east, creating a huge gap between his division and the neighbouring division of General Maucune. In addition, Maucune's division, which was made up of the rest of the French left wing, was quite dangerously distant from the French centre. At this moment, Wellington had the unique chance to attempt to destroy Thomières' division and subsequently crush the remainder of the French left wing and finally Marmont's whole army.<sup>529</sup> In retrospect, he recalled the whole event, which preceded the Battle of Salamanca, in the following:

I got up... and was looking over a wall round the farm-yard...and I saw the movement of the French left through my glass. By God said I, that will do, and I'll attack them directly.<sup>530</sup>

As soon as Wellington saw his chance, he immediately jumped into the saddle and tore off toward the 3<sup>rd</sup> British Division that was situated on his direct orders far to the east where it was ready to attempt an outflanking manoeuvre on Marmont's left wing, which was now finally possible. A new commander had been put in charge of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division – Edward Pakenham, a brother of Wellington's wife Kitty. Contrary to Kitty's oldest brother Thomas, who years before had refused and humiliated Arthur,

Wellington was good friends with Edward Pakenham, whom he frequently addressed as “Ned”. Pakenham had replaced Thomas Picton, who suffered a seemingly minor injury at Badajoz that had since worsened to such a degree that he decided to sail back to England in order to recuperate. According to Wellington’s plan, Pakenham’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was to advance from the east directly against Thomières and attack his flank. Concurrently to Pakenham’s attack, Wellington planned to send Lowry Cole’s 4<sup>th</sup> Division and General Leith’s 5<sup>th</sup> Division, which would lead a frontal attack on the French from the north. Wellington left the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Divisions as reserves near the village of Los Arapiles.<sup>531</sup> Thus roughly two thirds of Wellington’s whole army prepared to attack the French’s excessively outstretched left wing, which was to be attacked from two cardinal directions thanks to Pakenham’s outflanking manoeuvre.

Arthur galloped off toward the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and issued Edward Pakenham the order to attack: “Ned, d’ye see those fellows on the hill?” he said, pointing to Thomières’ division. After receiving an affirmative from Pakenham, he continued: “Throw your division into column, at them! and drive them to the devil.”, to which Pakenham replied: “I will my Lord...”<sup>532</sup> Wellington then wished his brother-in-law much luck in battle and both men rather ceremoniously shook hands.<sup>533</sup>

When Pakenham’s division suddenly appeared east of Thomières’ men, the French were taken utterly by surprise. Thanks to the hilly terrain, they finally spotted the attacking British when they were only roughly five hundred metres away. In addition, Thomières’ division was now being attacked by the Portuguese cavalry, with another two British infantry Divisions (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) close behind them also advancing toward the French. At the head of Pakenham’s troops was the commander of the whole brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace from the Connaught Rangers Regiment. Wallace’s men fired a salvo and, followed by the whole division, immediately rushed the French with fixed bayonets. After suffering heavy losses, the French began to retreat toward their centre, which was located in Arapil Grande.

Perhaps for the first time, Wellington at Salamanca now possessed a sufficiently large cavalry, as over the course of 1811 he was joined by

\* Le Marchant was instrumental in founding the first British military college, one of the forerunners of the world-renowned Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

a brigade of heavy dragoons led by Major-General John Le Marchant\* and a brigade of heavy cavalry of the King's German Legion, who were predominantly from Hanover. At this moment, Le Marchant's carried out the most effective attack of the whole Peninsular War. The one thousand bare and shining sabres of Le Marchant's dragoons reflected the rays of the afternoon sun, which was fortunately behind the British and blinded their enemy during the attack. In light of the extremely dry summer weather, their horses' hooves drove massive clouds of dust into the air, which also made accurate fire more difficult for the French. Le Marchant could not have asked for better conditions for his cavalry attack, and his heavy dragoons quickly charged at full speed into the already heavily strained and partially disrupted French ranks on the left wing, upon which they quite literally hacked Thomières' retreating divisions to pieces and subsequently split up the majority of Maucune's men who had hurried to aid the desperate Thomières. The destructive power of Le Marchant's dragoons is best evidenced by the fact that, from one of Maucune's brigades, only forty-seven men survived (out of roughly one thousand).<sup>534</sup> Le Marchant's determination and consummate professionalism played a pivotal role in contributing to the allied triumph at Salamanca, yet this battle was to be his last, for as he and his dragoons pressed home their advantage against the French infantry he was shot and killed.

The French left wing was thus completely crushed. The whole slaughter lasted less than forty minutes. Marshal Marmont also happened to be struck by British shrapnel while checking on his men's positions at Arapil Grande. His injuries were serious and thus command had to be passed on to his second-in-command, General Bonnet, who intended to resolve the precarious situation in which the French had found themselves. Wellington's triumphant forces had begun to put pressure on Bonnet's centre from the area of the French left wing. In the ensuing battle, General Bonnet himself also suffered a serious injury, due to which he was forced to pass on command of the French Army several hours later to the third in command: General Clauzel. It was clear to Clauzel that the French left wing had been completely crushed and therefore attempted to attack Wellington's position at Arapil Chico with the last of his reserves, in a desperate attempt to divert Wellesley's attention away from his own beleaguered centre. The British found themselves in grave danger at Arapil Chico, and therefore Wellington ordered his 6<sup>th</sup> Division,

which was prepared and waiting in reserve, to attack Clauzel. Thanks to their attack, Clauzel's attempt at a counterattack at Arapil Chico was quickly repelled, definitively bringing the battle to an end as the men at Clauzel's centre soon began to flee.

The French under Clauzel's command subsequently fled west. Clauzel attempted to rescue the remainder of his army by fleeing across the bridge over the River Tormes, upon which he ordered General Ferey's division, which was now one of the last battle-capable French units on the French right wing, to cover the retreat of the remainder of the French Army toward the said bridge. Ferey was killed while carrying out his task, but his bravely fighting divisions persevered until darkness gradually enveloped the battlefield. Despite the remarkable bravery of Ferey's men, Wellington's triumph could have been even more devastating to the French had Spanish General Carlos d'Espagne not retreated "to safety" with his troops in fear that Wellington had been defeated, as he and his troops had been tasked with guarding the crucial bridge located in the village of Alba de Tormes. Somewhat similarly to the debacle of Masséna's retreat at Almeida, the bridge was thus left unguarded, allowing Clauzel successfully to retreat from battle with his surviving troops.<sup>535</sup>

According to General Edward Pakenham's testimony, Wellington was once again ever-present in directing the battle, but often took dangerous risks while doing so: 'Our Chief was everywhere and sadly exposed himself – in his preservation our little prayers were heard most surely.'<sup>536</sup> These prayers were surely in order, as Wellesley was struck by a bullet in the side while organising the pursuit of the fleeing French Army. Fortunately, just as several times in the past, it was "only" a ricochet and Wellington was again miraculously unharmed.

Lieutenant William recalled Wellington's fearless behaviour at the battle of Salamanca in a manner to similar to that of Ned Pakenham: 'The Duke of Wellington was within fifty yards of the front, when the enemy's lines commenced firing. I thought he was exposing himself unnecessarily, the more so, as I heard he had put every division into action that day.'<sup>537</sup>

However, in response to claims that he was taking excessively high risks, Wellington in his defence told the officer corps the following: 'I assure you, it is not the case, but there are situations you know, and Salamanca is one, where a commander in chief must show himself and act

in person.<sup>538</sup> Several months after the Battle of Salamanca, he also told the following to Judge-Advocate Frances Larpent:

When I come myself, the soldiers think what they have to do the most important, since I am there, and that all will depend on their exertions. Of course, these are increased in proportion, and they will do for me what perhaps no one else can make them do.<sup>539</sup>

Despite Wellington's desire to have everything under control, he was not able to prevent Clauzel's retreat, a fact which disappointed him despite the great success he had just achieved, as he wrote in a letter addressed to General Graham, his newly appointed second-in-command: "If I had known there was no garrison at Alba [Alba de Tormes], I should have marched there, and probably had the whole."<sup>540</sup> Despite his slight disappointment, he wrote of Marmont's defeat in a letter: "I never saw an Army get such a beating in so short a time."<sup>541</sup> Although the remaining French had managed to escape for their lives during the night, Wellington's victory was a phenomenal one and was his greatest triumph in a field battle to date. Marmont had lost roughly 14,000 men, which meant roughly a fourth of his army, while the allied losses were roughly 5,000 fallen and injured. In the present situation, in which the Portuguese Army was fully trained and scores of reinforcements had arrived from the British Isles, this number of fallen men was a far less serious problem for Wellington than three years ago at Talavera.<sup>542</sup> His brilliantly prepared attack at Salamanca, which brought him fame throughout Europe, also best refutes the myth that Wellesley was a defensive general. Among those who paid tribute to his victory at Salamanca was Wellington's rival and direct participant in the battle, French General Maximilien Sébastien Foy:

The battle of Salamanca is the most masterly in its management, the most considerable in the number of troops engaged, and the most important in results of all the victories that the English have gained in these latter days. It raises Lord Wellington almost to the level of Marlborough. Hitherto we had been aware of his prudence, his eye for choosing a position, and his skill in utilizing it. At Salamanca he has shown himself a great and able master of manoeuvres. He kept his dispositions concealed for almost the whole day: he waited till we were committed to our movement before he developed his



own: he played a safe game: he fought in the oblique order [i.e. the aforementioned, almost right-angle positioning of both armies] – it was a battle in the style of Frederic the Great.\*

It is perhaps no surprise that Britain was overcome with enthusiasm after the glorious triumph at Salamanca. All of London arose to cheer for Wellington. The Prince Regent rewarded Arthur Wellesley with the title of Marquess of Wellington together with a reward of 100,000 pounds given to him from state coffers. Contrary to Wellington's previous victories, no one now questioned the sum awarded to him. There were even suggestions in Westminster that the reward was not high enough in the light of the benefits that his victory had for the whole of Europe. One of the best examples of the celebratory statements made in Britain about Wellington's triumph at Salamanca was made by the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool:

the most decided as well as brilliant victory which has for centuries crowned the British arms, and which, whilst it reflects the highest lustre upon every individual who was engaged in it, redounds so peculiarly to the credit of the Commander, by whose foresight, decision and science those operations were conducted which have led to a result of such incalculable importance.<sup>543</sup>

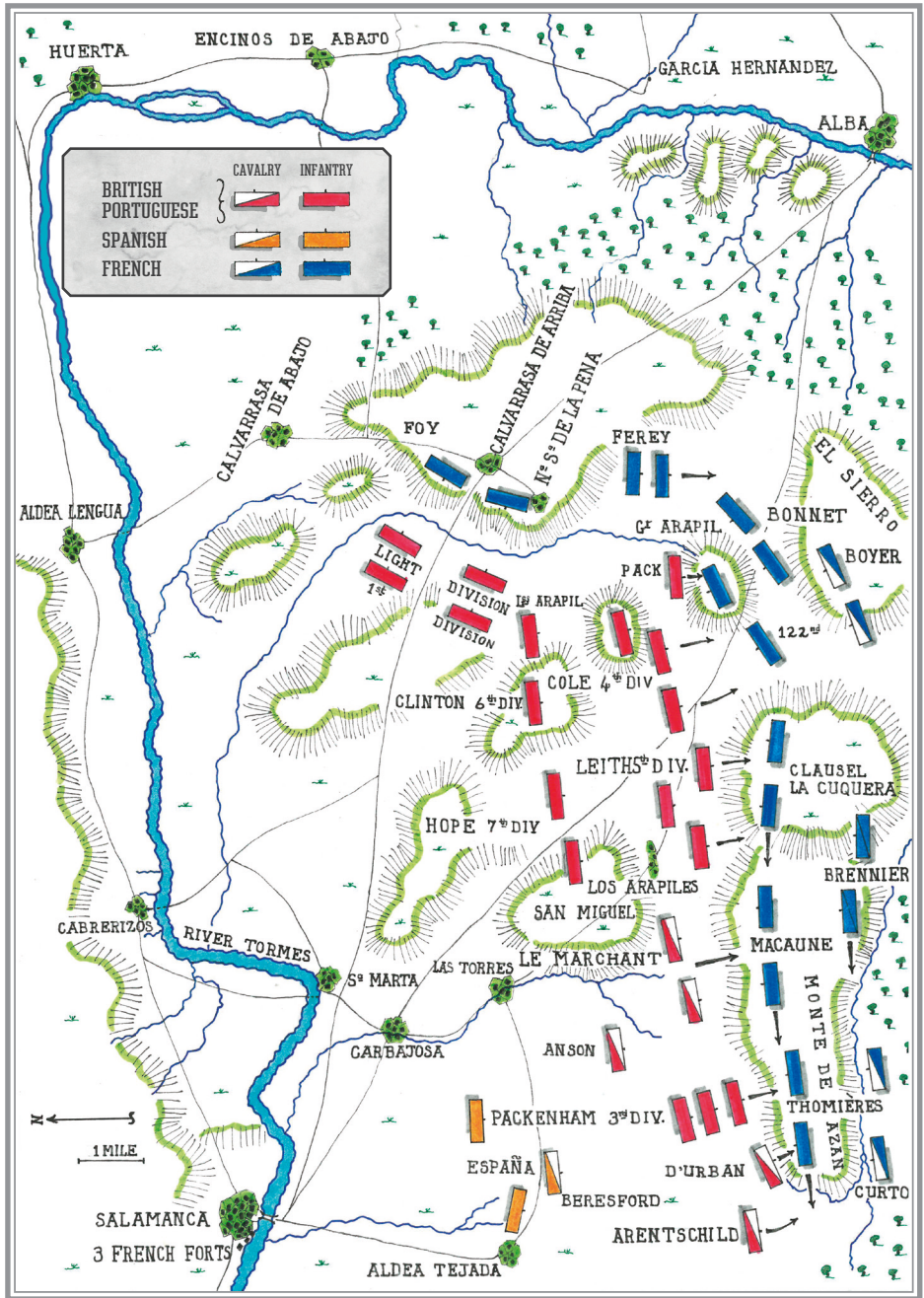
The citizens of the picturesque university town of Salamanca also expressed a similar euphoria when they made the following declaration, of which the clearly amused Arthur Wellesley did not hesitate to inform his brother William in a letter:

The people of Salamanca swear my Mother is a Saint, & the daughter of a Saint, to which circumstance I owe all my good fortune!! Pray tell her this The Marhattas discovered that she was a Marhatta!<sup>544</sup>

\* Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War, vol. V*, pp., pp. 472–473. By Frederic the Great, Foy meant Prussian King Frederick II, who was renowned for his military artistry and the fact that he often led his divisions personally into battle. He distinguished himself in the War of the Austrian Succession (also known as the Silesian Wars) from 1740 to 1748 against the Habsburg Monarchy under the rule of Maria Theresa, during which he stripped the Empress of most of Silesia. He then further distinguished himself in the Seven Years' War in which his greatest achievements included victory over the French at Rossbach in 1759. In the Battle of Kolin in 1757, in which Frederick II was defeated by Austrian Marshal Leopold Daun, by which Daun *de facto* prevented Prague from falling into Prussian hands, the Prussian King spoke the famous sentence to his grenadiers, who continually failed to break through Daun's positions: "*Dogs, do you want to live forever?!*" According to eye witnesses, Frederick II went personally into battle, whereupon the soldiers standing around him were forced to hold him back.

# BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

22<sup>nd</sup> July 1812



— Map by John Fawkes —

## EPILOGUE



# The Road to the Lion's Mound

When painter Benjamin Haydon\* finished the painting *Wellington at the Fields of Waterloo* in 1839, he left behind him an absolutely unique work of art much similar to that of Sir Thomas Lawrence.\*\* In Haydon's painting, Arthur Wellesley is depicted as an older man standing pensively on the battlefield of Waterloo. Wellington's only company is his beloved stallion Copenhagen, on whose back he rode that long, fateful June day of 1815, during which the Battle of Waterloo took place. As an evident reference to the battle, which had already taken place many years before, a sabre swings at Wellington's hip while in his left hand, instead of a top hat, he grips his bicorne, which he always wore into battle. Wellington and Copenhagen look on nostalgically at the famous battlefield from roughly the centre of the position

\* Haydon was plagued by constant debts, which landed him several times in debtor's prison, and his career was not helped by his impertinent behaviour towards his patrons from within the ranks of the aristocracy and colleagues from the Royal Academy of Arts. He was seen as somewhat of a troublemaker and an infant terrible among prominent British artists of the first half of the 19th century.

\*\* Charles Wellesley, 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington, *Wellington Portrayed*, London 2014, pp. 161–162. Haydon also said the following about Wellington: "I studied his fine head intensely... [he found] his conversation powerful, humorous, witty, argumentative, sound, moral." Quoted in: Charles Wellesley, *Wellington Portrayed*, p. 162.

of Napoleon's Army. At his feet in the lower part of the painting, which is subtle at first glance but at the same time wholly evident, are the outlines of a monument symbolizing this final Allied victory over Napoleon, dubbed the Lion's Mound\* (See Image XVIII).

This massive monument still represents the main and unmistakably dominant element of the former battlefield to this day. It is an honour to all those who fell at Waterloo. The Lion's Mound is a permanent reminder of the goal of preventing the events surrounding the battle from falling out of memory and disappearing forever in the depths of time. The order to build the Lion's Mound was issued on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Battle in 1820 by the king of the newly-founded Kingdom of the Netherlands, William I – father of the Prince of Orange, also known as 'Slender Billy'. The mound was meant to be built roughly on the site where the Prince of Orange was injured by a French bullet, thus approximately between Wellington's centre and right wing. Specific plans for construction were then created by William's royal architect Charles Van der Straeten, and works began in 1823. In regard to the demanding nature of the construction, however, the Lion's Mound was finished later, in 1826, despite great efforts on the part of the builder. This comes as no surprise, as it is a simple yet remarkable work. This breath-taking monument was ultimately made from a 201-foot (62m) high stone pillar, at the peak of which is a massive iron statue of a lion bearing its teeth in the direction of France. Around the stone construction, a 141-foot (43m) high mound of earth was built, measuring 1,706 ft (520m) in diameter. We can thus see roughly the last 60 feet (20m) of the massive pillar, which rises from the top of the mound. The overall weight of the earth that created the mound is an unbelievable 13.7 million cubic feet of soil (390,000 m<sup>3</sup>).<sup>727</sup> As this massive amount of earth necessary for construction was taken from the surrounding areas, the landscape of Wellington's former battlefield logically underwent a dramatic transformation. The largest amount of soil was transported from the ridge on which Wellington's allied forces took their positions, causing it for the most part to disappear.\*\*

\* Also known as Butte du Lion.

\*\* Roughly 2,000 labourers and hundreds of horses worked on the project; land was primarily taken from the area stretching from the site of Wellington's centre during the Battle of Waterloo over the La Haye Sainte farm towards his right wing, which stretched west to Hougoumont. See David Buttery, *Waterloo Battlefield Guide*, Kellington 2018, p. 63.

In this context, the famous French author Victor Hugo wrote in his timeless novel *Les Misérables* that when Wellington allegedly visited Waterloo after the construction of the Lion's Mound, he angrily blurted out the following words: 'They have altered my field of battle!'<sup>728</sup>

In regard to the fact that this quote has no other source than Victor Hugo himself, it is in all probability a purely fictitious creation, which has nonetheless written itself into the general consciousness and quite precisely summarized what had become of the battlefield. Today the peak of the Lion's Mound can be climbed using the flight of 226 steps; the peak offers a perfect view of the whole battlefield, as the Lion's Mound was built roughly in the centre of the position that Wellington's Army held at Waterloo (although it is slightly closer to where Wellington's right wing was located). The lion, which is placed on the peak of the stone pillar, is also surely worthy of further attention. The figure of a lion was selected because it embodied the fearsome symbol of both Britain and the House of Orange-Nassau that the new ruler William I hailed from. According to a legend, the sculpture was said to have been created from melted-down French cannons gained by the Allies in battle. In reality (which is always an enemy of myth), however, it was created from nine pieces of iron cast in a factory in Liège. The sculpture is exactly 4.5m high, has the same width, and weighs in at a remarkable 28 tonnes. In its front right paw, the lion clutches a globe, which is meant to symbolize the global significance of the Allied victory at Waterloo, which finally brought long-awaited peace to Europe after decades of unending battle.<sup>729</sup>

When I set off in person to visit the battlefield at Waterloo while completing this book, climbing the 226 steps to the peak of the Lion's Mound during the visit to take in the beautiful view that the site offers, I had to admire Wellington's immense appreciation and understanding of the terrain despite the aforementioned changes to the character of the battlefield caused by the Lion's Mound's construction. As I stood in the wind on the peak of this artificial hill, I couldn't help but recall one of the most famous of all Wellington's quotes, which he spoke in his old age to his friend John Wilson Croker:

All the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour, to find out what you don't know by what you do, that's what I call guessing what was on the other side of the hill.<sup>730</sup>