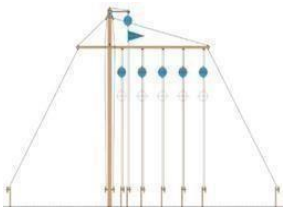


The Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras
June 2026 Newsletter

The aims of the Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras:
To support Portuguese institutions and local authorities in maintaining, enhancing and explaining the physical infrastructure of the Lines
To encourage British interest in the Lines and awareness of the contemporary development
To raise funds in support of these objectives
To collaborate with Portuguese and British-based organisations ,civil and military ,in achieving these objectives

Talks Programme

Mark Thompson's programme for 2025/2026 has only two talks left. All the talks to date have been of a high standard, so please attend if you can. Please register your interest with i_brewer_@msn.com.

Please note there is a change to the last talk of the programme. We are fortunate to have Sue Law talking on **The Light Division: Wellington's Advanced Guard in the Peninsula** at 7pm on 21st July.

In 1809 Wellington returned to the Peninsula, he was beset by difficulties and wished to avoid having to abandon the cause like Sir John Moore had, earlier in the year. Joined by Robert Craufurd and the Light Brigade after Talavera, who were then raised to the Light Division in 1810, who were a central part of his plan to remain in the Peninsula. In early 1810 Wellington could only run a defensive campaign, and the role of the Light Division enabled him, not only to remain in the Peninsula but to then mount an offensive campaign, that would eventually see the French being forced back into France.

If you are willing and able or know someone who is able and prepared to provide us with a relevant talk for 2026/2027, please contact Mark Thompson - mark.s.thompson@me.com

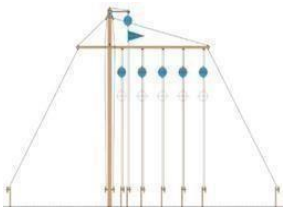
You may also find some other interesting material on our website Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras - News

Portugal Trip 2026 (16th/21st October 2026)

In addition to joining the Rota for their celebratory events for the Lines of Torres Vedras, we have again planned two battlefield tours, this time to Badajoz and Albuera, based in Elvas, itself an interesting border fortification. We will then stay a further three nights in Carcavelos, near Lisbon, from where we will visit Forts 41 and 42 on the 2 nd Line and the new interpretation centre at Vila Franca de Xira, as well as travel to Torres Vedras for the celebrations. We also hope to visit Forte São Julião on the 3 rd Line and other sites depending on the popular vote. The cost is £675 p.p. for the five nights, inclusive of two dinners. Insurance, flights and other dinners are the responsibility of individuals. The Itinerary is attached. Please note £the full balance must be paid by 17 th July. Payment Details Sort Code: 20-03-84 No: 83004392 Name: The Friends of Torres Vedras

All participants are required to book their incoming flights to Lisbon on Friday 16 October, arriving in time for a 16.00 airport pick-up. Return flights should be booked on (or after) Wednesday 21 October. There are currently hotel rooms and space on the coach available should any additional Members wish to join.

British Officers Project - Thank you to Rui Moura for the final report from Rastergen, which he only received on 25th June.



The Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras
June 2026 Newsletter

Major Milestone Reached in the British Officers Project

One of the Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras' principal research initiatives has reached an important milestone with the successful completion of the first phase of the project **British Officers in the Portuguese Army during the Peninsular War**.

The project, undertaken in partnership with the **Arquivo Histórico Militar (AHM)** and **RasterGen – Gestão Documental**, has been financially supported by four organisations with a common interest in preserving the shared military heritage of Britain and Portugal: the Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras, the British Historical Society of Portugal, the Friends of the British Cemetery, Elvas, and the Waterloo Association.

The original objective was to locate, identify and make publicly accessible the Individual Service Files of British officers who served in the Portuguese Army during the Peninsular War. As work progressed, however, the scale and richness of the surviving documentation proved far greater than anyone had anticipated.

The results have exceeded every expectation. Instead of the 153 files initially estimated, the project successfully identified **320 British officers** represented by **733 Individual Service Files**, comprising **more than 11,000 pages of original manuscripts**. Every file has now been professionally described to international archival standards, digitally preserved and made available online through the Arquivo Histórico Militar, opening an extraordinary new resource for historians, genealogists and descendants of those officers.

The collection provides an unparalleled insight into the careers of British officers serving in Portugal. Besides commissions and promotions, many files include campaign records, decorations, pension claims, medical reports, correspondence and other official documents that illustrate both their wartime service and their subsequent careers within the Portuguese Army.

One of the greatest challenges faced by the project team was the identification of officers whose names had been extensively "Portugueseised" in nineteenth-century records. Through systematic comparison of archival sources in Portugal and Britain, together with extensive historical research, the team succeeded in resolving hundreds of complex cases and significantly expanding our knowledge of Britain's contribution to the Portuguese Army.

The success of this first phase has attracted the attention of the Portuguese Army itself. Recognising both the historical importance of the project and the exceptional results already achieved, the Army has approved **funding of €10,000** for a second phase, scheduled for the final four months of **2026**. This next stage will focus on reconciling the Individual Service Files with the Army's Master Books, examining more than **6,000 additional records**, identifying officers whose files remain undiscovered and producing the first fully verified database of British officers who served in the Portuguese Army during and immediately after the Peninsular War.

For the Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras, this represents much more than the successful completion of a research project. It demonstrates how cooperation between voluntary associations, professional archivists and the Portuguese Army can preserve and make accessible an important chapter of our shared Anglo-Portuguese military heritage.

By supporting this initiative, the Association has helped ensure that a unique documentary legacy—largely inaccessible until now—will be available to researchers throughout the world for generations to come

Sue Law has sent me this for inclusion which may be of interest to FLTV members from a newspaper of the time, it is an interesting period after the investment of Almeida to its fall July 1808. Printed in "The Taunton Courier 20 September 1810".

DISPATCHES FROM LORD WELLINGTON. SURRENDER OF ALMEIDA.
Dispatches were received Monday from Wellington, which appeared that the enemy opened his fire upon Almeida on the night the 25th Ult, and obtained possession of the place on the night of the 27th.

Some prisoners taken on the 29th report, that the magazines of the Fort blew on the night of the 25th; that on the 27th the Governor proposed to surrender the place on condition that the garrison and inhabitants might join Lord Wellington's army, but this was refused, and the fire was renewed. The Governor held out while his ammunition lasted and surrendered at two A.M. on the 28th. Offers had been made the garrison take them into the French service, but they all rejected the offer with indignation, and preferred being sent prisoners to France.
The weather had interrupted Lord Wellington's telegraphic communication with Almeida on the 26th and great part of the 27th, so that had no opportunity of knowing its situation after the explosion of the magazine.

Lord Wellington has again moved his infantry to the Valley of Mondego, keeping a division on Guarda. His cavalry out-post at Alverca, Headquarters at Celorico. On the 28th some skirmishes took place between the piquet's Captain Lygon of the 16th was wounded. A piquet of the Royal Dragoons made a gallant and successful charge upon the body of the enemy and made some prisoners.

Regnier has made no material movement. Sixty of his cavalry had been cut off by corps of the Light Dragoons and a troop of the Portuguese Dragons under Captain White, and the whole were made prisoners, except the Commanding Officer and one man who were killed. This has been very creditable affair to the allied cavalry.
In the North, a French corps advanced the 20th to Alcanezas, but on the approach of General Silveira, from Braganza, they immediately retreated. Lord, Wellington's dispatch is dated Celorico, the 29th ult. We lament to add, that 100 men were blown up when the magazine of Almeida exploded. The Governor, Cox, is among the wounded.

Waterloo Dead
Marcus Cribb has found this interesting article on researching the Waterloo Dead.
https://www.journalbelgianhistory.be/en/system/files/article_pdf/02%20Wilkin%20v2.pdf

The Battle of Arapiles – Chris and I visited Arapiles
The Battle of Arapiles, also called the Battle of Salamanca, was a major engagement of the Peninsular War fought on 22 July 1812.
It ended in a decisive victory for the Anglo-Portuguese army under the Earl of Wellington against French forces led by Marshal Auguste Marmont. Fought near Arapiles in Spain, the battle featured flanking attacks by British heavy cavalry that broke the French left wing. This victory helped secure the recapture of Madrid and contributed to ending French intervention in Spain.
As your Membership Secretary and Treasurer were recently driving back from Portugal via Castelo Branco, Salamanca and Burgos (ferry from Bilbao) we thought that we should at least have a look at the battlefield. It was hot, the end of a long drive and with a tender knee we confined ourselves to strolling around the sleepy village of Arapiles and driving across the battlefield.

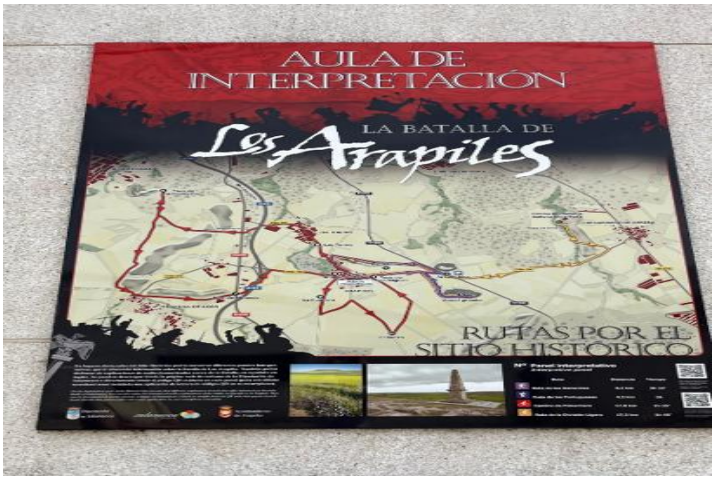
The interpretation centre was unfortunately closed so late on a Saturday afternoon, but we were treated to a series of splendid frescoes on the walls of the sport stadium that overlooks "Plaza Wellington". (Mrs Roberts included for scale)

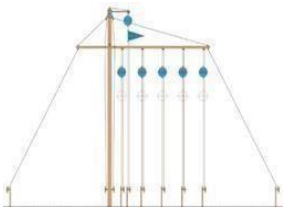
One of the panels even depicts Marmont's injury. We found a good bronze bust of Wellington and the local playgroup walls were adorned with more frescoes depicting what appear to be "Playmobil" soldiers of the period (the highlander's kilt looked a little neat but then it was the end of a long campaign) Interestingly the figure in grey was identified as being a Portuguese soldier.

The Arapiles themselves have a formidable slope and despite a network of well signed walks we declined the climb to the monument. The QR code on the information board failed to link to any useful information. Our drive back to Salamanca took us along the ridge that Wellington used and it was easy to appreciate the amount of dead ground that he used so effectively.

For more information on the battle see **Battle of Salamanca - Wikipedia** .

Marcus Cribb and Gareth Glover have also created short videos about the battle on the excellent Redcoat History channel to complement Christian Parkinson's 1hr 24 podcasts.





Background to battle

In April 1812, after the successful Siege of Badajoz during the Allied campaign in Spain, Wellington led most of the Anglo-Portuguese army north to drive Marmont's French forces out of Portugal. After Marmont withdrew to Salamanca, Wellington positioned his army behind the Agueda and Coa rivers.[9] In May, under Wellington's orders, General Hill led 7,000 men to destroy the bridge at Almaraz, cutting the only direct link between the armies of Soult and Marmont.[10]

On 13 June, Wellington crossed the Agueda and advanced east to Salamanca, a major French supply depot. The French had fortified three convents to defend both the town and the bridge over the river Tormes. The first battery opened fire on 19 June, and on 27 June, with two convents battered and burning and no relief in sight, the French asked for surrender terms.

For several weeks, Marmont's reinforced army blocked Wellington's advance north of Salamanca. The two armies often marched close together on opposite sides of the river, while Marmont repeatedly threatened Wellington's supply line. The French then crossed to the south bank of the Tormes at Huerta and marched south, then west, in an attempt to turn Wellington's flank.[

Before the battle, a letter from Wellington to Castanos was intercepted, revealing that Wellington did not believe he could hold his position. This encouraged Marmont to force an engagement and overextend his flanking move.

By the day of the battle, Wellington had decided to retreat to Portugal. However, he saw that as the two armies marched parallel to each other, the British held the inside line and the French had become dangerously stretched out. Marmont had also made the tactical mistake of separating his left flank from the main body of his army. Wellington immediately ordered most of his forces to attack the exposed French left wing.

Force Strength

Strength	
42,000[1]–49,647[2]	46,000[1]–51,949[3]
Casualties and losses	
Up to 6,000[4]–10,000[1] killed or wounded and 7,000 captured[4][1] Total casualties: 12,000[5]–17,000 killed, wounded or captured	**United Kingdom:** 3,129 killed or wounded **Portugal:** 2,038 killed or wounded **Spain:** 6 killed or wounded
	Total casualties: 4,800[4]–5,200[1] killed or wounded

Wellington Statue Manchester 1856
With Thanks to Andy Grainger

In April I found myself walking down Manchester Piccadilly to a hotel in Piccadilly Gardens in order to attend a Conference on the Falklands War at the University. This is a photo of Piccadilly Gardens taken in 1979 by one David Dixon. The gardens were laid out in 1930:

Suffice to say, it does not look like this now – it is a chaotic s***hole filled with building works and muddy patches of grass. At night it is a major drug-dealing venue. The company at my hotel matched the building – 'd----d mixed' as Flashman would have said and this view was borne out by Tripadvisor. Fortunately I seemed to have been accommodated in the refurbished part of it. Having checked in I visited an historic pub that I spotted behind the hotel called the Rat & Pigeon. Until recently however it was known as Old Mother Macs and became famous – or infamous in 1976 when the landlord, Arthur Bradbury went on an impulsive killing spree after being given notice to quit. Bradbury murdered his wife, daughter, two stepsons and then the cleaner, who happened to walk in during the event.

All these disappointments were entirely my own fault, however. I had not consulted my usual travel agent, Ian Brewer of Brewer Tours and well-known to all of you for his organisational abilities on numerous Friends' visits and tours. But I trusted to luck – a bad idea. If any of you are going to Manchester, you might be interested in this historic pub-crawl that I found on the net https://ilovemanchester.com/historic-pub-crawl-walk-oldest-boozers-manchester. The Rat & Pigeon does not feature.

Piccadilly Gardens may be right in the centre of Manchester, but Mr Burnham seems not yet to have got around to making it a nice place to be. Anyway, enough of this waffle. Of greater interest to readers of this Newsletter may be the statue of the Duke of Wellington erected in 1856.

This Photo by Gene Hunt from the Listing entry is much better than mine. It was sculpted by Matthew Noble (c.1817-1876) and the figure stands thirteen feet high. The Duke is depicted in later life “dressed in a frockcoat with military decorations.” speaking in the House of Lords. The two large figures below him are Mars (for Valour) and Minerva (for Wisdom).

Below them are four bronze panels depicting key points in Wellington’s life. They are not captioned and I spent some time trying to work out which events were depicted. Two are military and two civilian / diplomatic. I felt that one of these was likely to be the Congress of Vienna and I was right – but I selected the wrong image. I was also wrong with both military images. The one with all the charging cavalry I thought was Salamanca… I have left the captions to the end so that you can have a go yourself. Again, the images are from the net – by Gerald England as they are far better than mine.

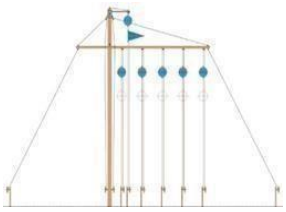
All very thought-provoking. After all, Manchester was at the centre of the Industrial Revolution, and you would not have thought that the Iron Duke's political views would have commanded universal support. Yet clearly the City Fathers – and the public - felt that he should be commemorated. Apparently public opinion favoured an equestrian statue, but this one was well-received at the unveiling. I wonder if any of the Council debates were recorded!
More information about the statue can be found at - https://victorianweb.org/sculpture/noble/21.html

The four panels depict Assaye, Waterloo, the Congress of Vienna and the House of Lords.

Waterloo Podcast
Contributed by Andy Grainger
Towards the end of May I came across the Waterloo Podcast. This is by Martin Aaron who is a lecturer at University College London. Since about 2001 he has been building a database of every British Regiment that fought at Waterloo. By compiling original records from the Public Record office and regimental archives, he has gathered information about each of the 33,000 British combatants in 1815. This podcast series examines that data. I think there are about 150 episodes!

Each 30–40-minute programme looks at one Regiment or Battery. It covers what the unit did at Quatre Bras and / or Waterloo but a big part of the interest is where the men came from, their ages and previous experience etc. This will include, where relevant, coverage of their actions in the Peninsular. He has also incorporated personal accounts and then he looks at what happened to some of the men in later life.
You can listen to the programmes just as a podcast, but it is better to watch on YouTube for the maps, graphs and illustrations.

This is the link to the series: https://www.youtube.com/@TheWaterlooPodcast-ks4ox
and is the link to the 33 rd Foot https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y32TInHuwqU which I haven't yet watched.



FLTV Website and Facebook

Website: Mark Thompson maintains the website and updates the Facebook pages regularly.
Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras.
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/293029624070745/ *For more details, or to join, please contact us through our website or Facebook page, or email:* *membershipfltv@gmail.com*