

THE DIARY OF LIEUTENANT WILLIAM BATES INGILBY, RA
IN THE PENINSULAR WAR

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PENINSULAR DIARY OF LIEUTENANT WILLIAM BATES INGILBY, RA

The original manuscript of Lieutenant W.B. Ingilby's Diary of his service in the Peninsular War was recently discovered in the possession of Sir Thomas Ingilby, Bart., the present head of the Ingilby family. With his permission, Generals Sir James Marshall-Cornwall and Geoffrey Collin have transcribed the diary—a difficult task since this old manuscript is difficult to read and many of the place names are so inaccurate, that recourse was necessary of the Royal Geographical Society.

The resultant transcript is a fascinating description of the Peninsular War, as seen by a young Gunner officer, from September 1810 until his return to England in January 1813, covering most of the major battles of that campaign.

As a matter of interest, Ingilby's Peninsular Diary was published 88 years ago in the 'Proceedings of the RA Institution' (the forerunner to the RA journal) in Volume XX 1893, albeit with several inaccuracies. We feel that it bears repeating not withstanding!

Editor

IN JULY 1810 Lieutenant Ingilby, aged 19, exchanged into Captain R. Lawson's Company, then serving with Wellington's army in Portugal. He embarked at Woolwich on 23rd July with a draft of reinforcements and, after being delayed for some weeks by contrary winds, landed at Lisbon on 15th September. Four days later his draft proceeded by boat up the Tagus to Vila Franca, and marched northwards to Coimbra, near the mouth of the Mondego river, which they reached on the 24th.

Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese Army was then holding a strong defensive position on the prominent Busaco ridge, ten miles north of Coimbra, with the object of delaying Marshal Massena's invading army in its advance on Lisbon. On 25th September Ingilby joined Captain Lawson's Company at the village of Mealhada. Companies RA, when serving in the field, were known as 'brigades', equivalent to our field batteries. Lawson's Brigade formed part of Major-General Sir Brent Spencer's First Division, holding a sector of the position just south of the Viseu-Coimbra road, where it crossed the ridge close to the Convent of Busaco, Wellington's command post.

Wellington only intended to fight a delaying action at Busaco, before withdrawing into the fortified zone which he had constructed during the past year to secure his base at Lisbon, the impregnable Lines of Torres Vedras. We now quote from Ingilby's Diary, beginning

with his experiences in the Battle of Busaco.

25 September 1810

Hearing from some wounded soldiers we met early in the morning, that the armies were in presence of each other and that a battle was expected, leaving one officer to conduct the detachment, we pushed on that day and camped at Mealhada, where I found my Company. It was attached to a brigade of six 9-pdrs, the largest of British artillery in the army, the other brigades and the troops of the Horse Artillery having but 6-pdrs. I was introduced to Sir B. Spencer who commanded the First Division of the army. Heard musketry as we approached the bivouac of the army and presently after met three wounded Hussars.

26th September

The brigade marched before daylight. It was a continuous ascent until we reached the top of a very high ridge, and here we found the army already formed in line. Our guns were placed at the most commanding point of the position, near the walls of the Convent of Busaco, and gave us a most extensive view of the country, which appeared as an immense plain before us, for many leagues. Columns of the French were opposite, upon the edge of the plain but much lower, and the valley which ran between their columns and the foot of the ridge of Busaco, on which Lord Wellington had taken up his position, was deep and rugged, and difficult to pass from the steepness of both its sides. At a considerable distance we could perceive other corps of the French advancing, and as they successively arrived in the evening the advance posts engaged. We fired a few rounds with good effect. A sergeant of the Company was wounded in the head by a musket ball but not dangerously. The routes by which the French marched as far as the eye could discern by the villages on fire and still smoking. A finer situation could not be imagined to behold the first armies I had ever see.

27th September

The French advanced in three columns to force our position but were defeated. We commanded their whole attack with the artillery and caused them an immense loss in killed and wounded. Three hundred prisoners were taken and amongst them was a General Officer (General de Brigade Edouard-Francois Simon, commanding a brigade of Loison's Division of Ney's VI Corps). Firing was kept up until night and recommenced next day from the artillery and advanced posts of both armies, but the French did not renew their attack seriously. In the evening their columns seemed to be moving off to their right and at 10 o'clock at night we quitted our positions and began to descend the hill of Busaco, our left being threatened

to be turned. The road was bad, and passing through a wood, the excessive darkness of the night obliged us to use torches, and the heads of the columns of infantry were provided in the same manner. We had not proceeded far when suddenly the drag chains of a gun gave way and the descent being very steep, the two wheel horses were not a match to keep the gun back, and the force of its weight was rapidly hurrying the whole down the hill. They had already nearly rushed upon the gun preceding it, for as a precaution, a considerable distance was allowed between each, when it swerved out of the track of the road and a limber wheel caught the stem of a small tree. The sudden jerk threw all the leading horses down the declivity that was to the left, but contrary to apprehensions, neither the drivers or horses in this instance suffered any serious injury whatever. We had eight horses in each gun-9-pdrs. Two others were a little while afterwards at a difficult turn on coming out of the Convent garden, upset, and one rolling over, the wheel driver was so much hurt he died in the hospital from his bruises. Soon after daylight on the 29th we halted and bivouacked near Aos Fornos.

30th September

We halted after a march in the morning near Coimbra, where the rear guard with Captain Bull's troop came up, and the proceeded again in the evening, and bivouacked near Coimbra for the night.

3rd October

Passed through Leiria and bivouacked near Cavaleiro. Here a soldier of the 50th Regiment, which then joined the army newly from England, who had been detected more than once in plundering the inhabitants and on one occasion had actually presented his musket and threatened to shoot an officer of his regiment who discovered him (there being neither witness or assistance near at the time to form further evidence), was executed by the Provost Marshal by order of the Commander-in-Chief, being again taken in the act of robbing. It was not deemed necessary in the hurry of the operations and retreat of the army to await the forms of trial by general court-martial. An immediate example was necessary to maintain discipline. The inhabitants of every town and village quitted their homes and preceded or accompanied the march of the troops, and through leaving much valuable property in many houses the soldiers were tempted to quit their ranks in search of plunder. He was the first human being I had ever seen hanged. The inhabitants deserted their homes by order of their government, though terror at the approach of the French army might probably have been as effectual in causing their universal flight without the proclamation which was issued for this purpose.

8th October

Passed through Sobral and the Brigade cantoned in a small village, between that place and a large permanent field redoubt (made on the top of a considerable height) afterwards called the Sobral Fort. The army had now reached the first line of field works and redoubts constructed in defence of a position to cover Lisbon.

11th October

The Brigade moved to Zibreira. Sir B. Spencer had the headquarters of his Division in the village. We bivouacked on our posts in the line and masked the guns with field works. The whole of the French army arrived and took up a position in bivouac, occupying Sobral in great strength. A rough deep valley separated the outposts in our front. The extreme right of our line retired upon the Tagus and the left was at Torres Vedras. Every height was crowned with a permanent redoubt well mounted with guns, and the intermediate spaces between them, along the whole front of the line was strengthened with entrenchments. Two other lines of redoubts and entrenchments in succession rendered the position of the army most formidable, and not to weaken the numbers of the regular troops of the allied army (which occupied the first line only) the two last were guarded and garrisoned by the militia and armed volunteers of the country. The French general frequently reconnoitred our position but hesitated and at length seemed unwilling to hazard an attack upon an army thus strongly posted. The troops were under arms ever morning one hour before dawn, and remained so until it was ascertained there was no appearance of an intention to attack, or any formation whatever amongst the troops of the enemy. At the end of the month I was directed to march and canton the reserve carriages of ammunition at Povos de Galega somewhat in rear, for the better foraging of the horses. In the night of the 14th November, the French retreated.

15th November

At night joined the Brigade at Sobral and occupied the huts of the French. They had collected a number of wine vats and placed them in a line touching one another and in each their was sufficient for two officers to accommodate themselves.

19th November

Alenquer. Cantoned with the 6th Division of Infantry. French had taken a strong entrenched position in front of Santarem. Lord Wellington had his headquarters at Cartaxo

about midway between those two towns (which are three leagues asunder and upon high ground) intervened a flat or bottom on a beach with the Tagus. At this season of the year its whole extent was laid under water and rendered the position of the French accessible only by a straight and narrow raised causeway which crossed it and was the great road from Lisbon. During our entire occupation of Alenquer, I suffered from severe dysentery.

24th January 1811

The Brigade moved to Otta and cantoned in the Quinta, with some artillery of the Portuguese under Major Arentschildt.

5th March

In the night preceding the French army evacuated Santarem and abandoned their entrenched position. The Brigade marched with the 6th Division and bivouacked at Azambuja.

9th March

The Brigade received orders to follow a detached corps consisting of a regiment of cavalry and one brigade of infantry. We advanced by road to the right of the main body. Was directed to proceed in advance with the cavalry to establish the practicability of the road for the guns. On this day overtook and skirmished with the rearguard of the French left column in their retreat. The road further in advance proved impracticable and the guns halted at Cabacos.

10th March

It turned out as we expected, we had been directed to accompany the march of the right column by mistake and returned to Tomar in order to get upon the route of the main body of the army.

14th March

We came up with the army which engaged the French in front of Miranda do Carvo. In these affairs we made many prisoners and the Commander-in -Chief praised the conduct of the troops in orders, especially the Light Division, and called upon Commanding Officers to select a non-commissioned officer from each of its regiments to be recommended for commissions.

18th March

The French were bivouacked on the right bank of the Alva with a rearguard advantageously posted to oppose the passage of the ford at the bridge Ponte da Murcela, which was entirely broken up and unfit to pass. Lord Wellington ordered the corps to march in a direction to threaten the left of their bivouac, and the other divisions supported by the fire of the artillery, in which our guns shared, then advanced to the ford. A few shots were exchanged when the Division appearing on their left flank, the French army beat to arms, got into order of march, and making a precipitate retreat, abandoned their half-cooked dinners to those who had passed the river. The brigade bivouacked.

19th March

The Staff Corps having made a bridge in the night capable of bearing infantry, the remainder of the army passed the Alva, the guns fording, and bivouacked at Moita.

23rd March

Cantoned in the village of Maceira. Before the French abandoned positions of Sobral and Santarem, they had suffered great privations, and their numbers had become much reduced. They now retraced their march, repulsed in their invasion through a country exhausted of provisions and forage. The sick and dead were scattered on the roads and in their bivouacs, and the house and hospitals in the villages and towns through which we pursued their columns were nearly all occupied and some filled with the dead and dying, the greatest part perishing from hunger and want. The horses in like manner died or became inefficient and were abandoned in great numbers, so that many of the tumbrils with much other material of their army was obliged to be burnt or destroyed on the spot or fell into our hands. Since the affair at Redinha, some guns had been discovered and dug up. The French set fire to the towns and villages and put to death numbers of the inhabitants, without regard to age or sex, and in return the peasants, watching every opportunity, fell upon their stragglers and sick and massacred them instantly, if no British or regular troops were at hand to protect them.

31st March

Crossed the Mondego at a ford, having passed through Celerico, and marched upon Guarda, where we expected to have found the enemy, but they had hastily retreated.

3rd April

The French took a good position on the right bank of the Coa at Sabugal. A division of the army was given time to march and ford the river high up and attack their left. The remainder of the army under cover of the fire of the artillery advanced to force the bridge at Sabugal, and the fords in front of their position. We were engaged. The French position was forced and they lost a great many in killed, wounded and prisoners and some guns were also captured. We continued the pursuit until dark and then returned to bivouac upon the Coa close to Sabugal. Our loss was also very severe.

9th April

Nave de Haver. During the advance of the army I had partially recovered from a bowel complaint but it here, while stationary, returned for several days very severely. A part of the army now blockaded and invested the fortress of Almeida on every side. The French were retired beyond the Agueda and had gone into cantonments. However, there was a rumour of their preparation to advance to the relief of the garrison of Almeida, and on the evening of the 2nd of May, we had bivouacked with the infantry at Poco Velho, some of the French having already appeared on this side of the Agueda.

3rd May

In the afternoon the village of Fuentes de Onoro, which is on the road from Rodrigo to Almeida, which was briskly attacked by the French and defended by the Brigade of Highlanders supported by our guns. A small riverlet divided the village: after a very sharp contest, each retained possession at night of that portion of it on their own side.

4th May

Everything remained quiet, nevertheless the shallow stream which separated the advance posts was only a few paces across. The troops of both armies by a silent consent drank and filled their water containers at opposite sides, but with their muskets loaded and leaning against the walls ready to be seized and fired at a moment. The French failed in their attempt to carry the village of Fuentes de Onoro, were observed in the evening to be moving troops to their left and to indicate an intention to advance by the road coming from Nave de Haver.

5th May

In the night we heard distinctly the moving of artillery in the camp of the French and Lord Wellington likewise brought a body of cavalry and the 7th Division of Infantry from its left which occupied the strong ground on the bank of the riverlet from Fuentes de Onoro as far as Fort la Concepcion, (having Almeida a league in its rear, and facing the Agueda, at nearly the same distance), with these he strengthened and extended his right. At break of day the French appeared on the Nave de Haver road, advanced a numerous cavalry, drove in the pickets and attacked our right with great impetuosity. The guns of Major Ramsay's Horse Artillery were taken, but the cavalry charged and they were recovered. The 7th Division, composed of Hanoverian Light Infantry, Brunswickers and the Chasseurs Britanniques from the Mediterranean and two British regiments, the 88th and 51st, received a furious charge in squares of the French cavalry and caused them great loss.

Protected by the light infantry companies of the Guards and of the Highland Brigade, we had advanced our guns by a fire of grape and round shot and supported the right, which gradually retired in admirable order. The French dragoons fell upon the light infantry while dispersed and before the companies of the Guards could reform, sabred the greater number of them and made many of the rest prisoners. The right wing of the army now became thrown back with its extreme right resting upon the Coa. This caused an angle in the position of our line at the point where it was intersected by the road from Nave de Haver. The Guards and German Legion had this part of the line allotted to them and one brigade of 6-prs and our own formed a battery about 200 yards in their front, precisely at this angle, of twelve guns and was supported on each side by the cavalry. The left seemed little disturbed. At the centre the Highland Brigade obstinately maintained themselves in the village of Fuentes de Onoro, which was now considerably in front of the line.

The French pushed forward a large Battery of guns by the Nave de Haver road to within six or seven hundred yards of us, protected and supported by their numerous cavalry. A furious cannonade then began, which was long maintained on both sides with the same spirit and vigour. Under cover of the fire of their battery the French in vain repeatedly attempted to debouch from the wood which masked their infantry. To wherever the head of a column appeared, we turned our attention, and directed the whole fire of the guns, and aided by the cavalry, succeeded in preventing their advance. The Highlanders though more than once driven for a few moments from their advantages by the accession of new troops, brought forward by the French, finally prevailed and obtained possession of the village of Fuentes de Onoro on both sides of the riverlet, and as the efforts of the French to deploy their columns to attack our line at the angle, by the Nave de Haver road, proved equally fruitless; they at length ceased the battle which had lasted from the commencement seven or eight hours. Of 54 gunners and 48 horses

exposed in the field, the Brigade had in killed—5 gunners, drivers and non commissioned officers; wounded—11 gunners and two drivers, 5 amputations; horses 25 killed plus hors de combat; (entered from my letter dated the 8th of May, 1811; ‘from the guns I had, out of 12 men and 8 horses we lost 6 men and 3 horses; we have killed 1 sergeant, 1 corporal, 1 gunner, 2 drivers and 9 horses; wounded 11 gunners and 2 drivers amongst whom 5 amputations, and 13 horses, two of which later died’.)

In the evening we withdrew the guns and bivouacked in rear of the infantry.

6th May

In the night the line threw up a breastwork and entrenched their position and the French, having threatened to capture or approach the guns in the charges yesterday of cavalry, we dug rows of trous de loup in front of the site of our battery. The Videttes and sentinels were posted and doubled at night within pistol shot of each other, and the artillery had exchanged grape shot on the 5th from the same batteries, where they continued to take their positions every morning before daybreak, and under these circumstances the armies remained in presence of each other for several days.

9th May

In the afternoon the French seemed preparing to retire, by withdrawing some of their troops from their front and other movements in their bivouac. The remainder were paraded in clean white trousers, as if being reviewed.

10th May

A Spanish Officer of Don Julian’s corps of guerrillas was killed from his own imprudence. An uncommonly thick fog obscured the morning, and as the sun dissipated it, this officer made his appearance between the lines of Videttes, brandishing his sabre and making most extravagant gestures. He was as near the French Videttes as ours, and it was inconceivable what he meant, who, or what he could be. Lord Wellington mistook him for a French dragoon, and instantly ordered a soldier of the Guards to fire, who, resting his musket on one of our gun wheels, fired and the ball passing through the person’s head, he fell dead to the ground. I witnessed myself the singular shot. The distance was afterwards measured and found 80 yards. It was soon discovered he belonged to Don Julian’s corps of guerrillas, who presently arrived to bewail the fate of his officer. As the morning cleared, the French Videttes gradually fell back upon the wood in their rear, and it was then discovered that, excepting this small rear guard, their whole army had effected its retreat in the

night and passed the Agueda.

The cavalry pursued their rear guard towards the Agueda. We were now enabled to satisfy ourselves of the effect of the fire from our guns on the 5th. Where the French cavalry and artillery had been formed, 650 yards from our battery, their horses' carcasses laid in whole ranks, and the weather having been for several days extremely hot, the stench in the French bivouac was intolerable. They had taken off the hides from most of their dead horses.

11th May

Late yesterday evening several rockets were seen sent up from the neighbourhood of the Agueda, and at midnight a loud explosion awoke the whole camp. It turned out that the garrison in Almeida had employed themselves of late in mining the principal facings of the works, the rockets being signals from the French general of his inability to raise the blockade, they charged the mines and having matches to fire the trains, they suddenly sallied from the fortress, to the amount of about 1,200 men, and instantly began their endeavours to escape through the investing force and effect a junction with the French army which had advanced to the Agueda at Puente de Ladron, near Barba del Puerco to favour their purpose. One half succeeded in getting across the river, the remainder were either killed or wounded and taken prisoner by our troops. Marshal Marmont succeeded Massena in the command of the French army and was now directing all its operations. We took cantonments in the little village of Quinta de Bruta.

7th June

Marched with a corps under the orders of Sir B. Spencer. We passed the Coa at the bridge of Sabugal and immediately took up a position on the left bank.

8th June

The whole proceeded in the direction of the Alentejo, and the brigade bivouacked near Mairos.

13th June

Vila Velha on the right bank of the Tagus; bivouac.

14th June

Occupied in passing the troops across the river in boats. Two guns only passed this evening. Lieutenant William C. Johnson of Captain G. Thompson's brigade drowned in trying to ford.

15th June

The remainder of the troops having passed, the brigade marched and bivouacked at Nisa.

16th June

Portalegre. Here we found a good town and very beautifully situated. The French had not advanced much beyond Badajoz, or at least penetrated far into the Alentejo, so that this province had escaped the ruin and desolation which fell upon the towns and villages they occupied and passed through during their invasion and retreat, on the north of the Tagus. We found excellent quarters and supplied ourselves with abundance of whatever we were in need.

2nd August

A bridge of boats had been laid across the Tagus at Vila Velha, where the army recrossed the Tagus and bivouacked (with the exception of Sir Rowland Hill's Corps which remained in the Alentejo). In attempting to find a ford had nigh suffered Johnson's fate.

31st August

Nave de Haver. In September the French had collected a large force and prepared to approach with a convoy to provision Ciudad Rodrigo.

27th September

The French crossed the Agueda, and finding a part of our army at Fuente de Guinaldo, which had been Lord Wellington's headquarters, a severe affair took place; the advanced guard of the French repulsed. A British regiment, the 5th, advanced and charged a superior force of cavalry and defeated them. The attention of the army was called to this gallant action by Wellington. In the afternoon the brigade marched with a division of infantry to Bes Muta, and continuing our retreat entirely throughout the night, bivouacked on the 28th, on the right bank of the Coa, near the village of Rendo.

29th September

Crossed the Coa at a ford near the bivouac and halted at Gata.

30th September

Cantoned in the village of Barracao. While here was again attacked with severe bowel complaint and became so extremely ill and reduced in strength, that I frequently doubted of my chance of ever recovering, and was still suffering when at night, on 23rd October, we marched and halted in the morning of the 24th at Guarda. The horses had been ill foraged of late and were weak. Guarda stands higher than any city in Portugal, which made the march both tedious and very laborious. It happened to be a severe frost in the night, and from mere exhaustion in consequence of illness I had great difficulty of sitting upon my horse and undergoing the fatigues of superintending the passing of the guns up the mountain, but whether the extreme cold in my state, or the activity imposed upon me, or both, enjoined to have a good effect upon my health, I recovered as it were at once and next morning my bowel complaint had ceased.

4th January 1812

Vila Turpim.

5th January

Alameda, in Spain.

8th January

San Pedro, in Portugal, Ciudad Rodrigo was invested and ground being broken the siege commenced.

9th January

Cantoned in Casteliço de Dos Casas.

10th January

Passed the Agueda by a temporary bridge made by the engineers, and the brigade cooperated in covering the operations against Ciudad Rodrigo, leaving our guns and horses at Castelijó.

19th January

I marched with the howitzers to a point in the batteries before Ciudad Rodrigo. After the necessary preparations, and two breaches being practicable, at a quarter before eight o'clock in the evening the assault was begun. There was a severe contest for about three quarters of an hour at the breaches, but the troops succeeding in forcing them, and the 3rd Division having scaled the walls at other points, the place fell and the garrison were made prisoners of war. General Craufurd and McKinnon were both killed. The repeated marches to and fro between Castelijó de Dos Casas and Ciudad Rodrigo, a distance of four leagues, rather fatigued the gunners, but did not prove injurious to them; and though the snow partially whitened the ground, and every night while the siege lasted it was a keen frost, yet the army acted with the greatest spirit and the troops were never more healthy than during these frosty bivouacs.

12th February

The brigade was ordered to take the route to the Alentejo. Having had no adequate remounts since the great loss of our best horses at the battle of Fuentes de Onoro, and other casualties had likewise diminished our numbers, we were constrained to put into store at Almeida three of the spare ammunition wagons, a forage wagon, and wheel carriage attached to the brigade. Bivouacked at Aldea de Ponte.

14th March

Bivouacked near Elvas under Fort La Lippe. The brigade was included in a corps composed of the 1st, 6th and 7th Divisions of infantry and two regiments of cavalry, under the orders of Sir Thomas Graham, destined to cover the siege of Badajoz.

16th March

The corps crossed the Guadiana at a ford two leagues below Badajoz and bivouacked at Valverde.

17th March

Santa Martha. (The investment of Badajoz was completed, ground broken, and the siege began.)

18th March

The corps bivouacked at Feria.

21st March

Fuente del Maestre. Obtained a small escort of the 5th Dragoon Guards, and was directed to proceed to and reconnoitre the castle of Segura de Leon, in which a little garrison of French were enclosed and blockaded by a band of guerrillas. As it was conjectured the French had a depot of arms and other stores here, the guerrillas were extremely anxious for the capture of the garrison and had requested of the General to assist them with some artillery for the purpose of compelling a surrender. Slept at Valencia.

25th March

Breakfasted with the guerrilla Chiefs, who received me very courteously, and accompanied me in my reconnaissance, and as we approached very near the citadel, and drew a smart fire upon the party, there was sufficient proof of the personal bravery of the leaders and convinced me they only wanted means to enable them to cope with the French. The place was contemptible enough and had not a single gun mounted, but was sufficiently unassailable for these irregularly armed guerrillas. The band had a grotesque appearance and consisted of both cavalry and infantry, and amounted to about 300 men. Many of the cavalry wore caps, and the infantry helmets, others had neither and were bareheaded. All had different arms, that is hardly any two were armed alike. Some were deficient in fire-arms and had but a pike, another was gallantly equipped with a brace of pistols in his girdle, a sabre at his side, a musket at his shoulder, and a pike attached to his saddle. Some had no saddles, others used ropes for bridles, but at least all were animated with a like spirit for plunder, hatred of the French, and unanimous cheers and vivas on our appearance in their camp.

The garrison of the citadel used the town of Segura de Leon, but a messenger was instantly despatched summoning the Alcalde to provide for our breakfast, which was promptly and liberally complied with. Uniforms they had none, with the exception of three or four, and in ascertaining if they had any plans to attempt an escalade or take the place by a coup de main, I found the band, upon an average, had not more than three round each of cartridges. I returned to Fuente del Maestre the same night, and found the corps

had quitted their quarters suddenly and had marched in the direction of Llerena.

26th March

Joined the brigade at Llerena. Sir Thomas Graham had endeavoured to surprise a corps of the French at this place. They had, however, obtained timely information of his march, and gained the mountains without the loss of a man. Intelligence arrived from Segura de Leon at the moment I proceeded to report to the General; as expected, at the appearance of a British Officer to reconnoitre, the garrison apprehended being besieged and abandoned the citadel the same night.

6th April

By order of the Quarter-Master General, I rode over and reconnoitred the field of battle of Albuera, on which Marshal Beresford had repulsed Soult's army last year. It was expected the French would again endeavour to raise the siege of Badajoz, and that another conflict might take place on the same ground. There were several trenches nearly filled with white and bleached bones of the dead in that battle. The bodies had been thrown in and then left to decay without being covered up with the earth.

13th April

Bivouacked near Badajoz. The place was taken by assault on the night of the 7th. The Light Division had been repulsed in repeated endeavours to force the breaches and suffered severely. The French engineers had opposed such obstacles in the breaches and the garrison defended them so obstinately, it was found impossible to carry them except by a useless sacrifice of men. The Third Division, under Sir Thomas Picton, fortunately scaled the high walls of the citadel, but not without a terrible slaughter, and made the garrison prisoner; then, bursting the gates, they descended into the town and upon the main position. An assault on the side of the Guadiana succeeding also, by the gallantry of the Fourth Division, the garrison at length surrendered prisoners of war. The siege and capture cost the army 6,000 men killed and wounded, but impressed our own army, the French army and all Spain with a consciousness that the English troops, when properly commanded are irresistible.

1st May

Recrossed the Tagus and halted at Nisa.

2nd May

Cantoned in Alpalhao. Captain Gardiner and his company were appointed to receive over the guns and horses and drivers of the brigade and Captain Lawson and his company to be transferred to the Fourth Division of infantry. The drivers remained, and having been promoted in April from Captain Lawson's company, I obtained leave to remain attached to Captain Gardiner's brigade.

20th May

Portalegre.

21st May

Cantoned at La Codosera in Spain. Delay arose in the transfer of the companies and Captain Gardiner did not assume command of the brigade until this day. I was permitted to join Captain Gardiner's company and Captain Lawson proceeded to join the Fifth Division with his officers and company.

10th June

Puebla de Azaba in Spain. The brigade became permanently attached to the first Division of infantry, which consisted of the Guards, German Legion, two Highland regiments and the 24th Regiment.

11th June

The army advanced in two corps and crossed the Agueda.

17th June

In the night of the 17th June the French army quitted Salamanca and on the 18th we crossed the Tormes above the town at the ford of St Martha and bivouacked on the right bank. The French had fortified a large convent and another smaller thatched building and left a garrison in each. The latter commanded the approach by the old Roman bridge over the Tormes leading into the town. They had also levelled all the houses and buildings near both forts and made a clear space of between 200 and 300 yards towards the town for the range of their cannon. Towards the other side the forts were defended by the Tormes which ran pretty close under the walls of both buildings. The forts were

immediately invested, and in the night of the 18th we used the greatest exertions to construct two batteries, one to be directed against each fort. There was a great scarcity of tools and the ground surprisingly hard, but notwithstanding at sunrise we commenced the fire, but the shots from the forts shattered our incomplete and flimsy batteries, constructed out of the rubbish and ruins of the wooden houses; and the materials made use of, such as flock mattresses etc. in order to face the works and keep up the dry crumbling of the embrasures, caught fire from the muzzles of the howitzers and proved very inconvenient and which, eventually contributing to aid the enemy's fire, and render our battery, at least for the howitzers, nearly untenable. Notwithstanding, after a few hours we succeeded in battering down the side wall of the convent which fell accompanied by the cheers of the gunners, but it was useless and failed to fill up the ditch or offer any appearance of facilitating an assault. Captain Elige was killed on the spot and the gunners suffered severely. Kneeling and placing myself at an embrasure to watch the effects of a shot in order to ascertain how far we were correct in our fire, I gave the order, without turning, "Fire" for the howitzer on my left hand, by mistake the non commissioned officer fired the piece which was exactly behind and close to my head, while looking through the embrasure. Completely stunned by the violence of the concussion I fell of course as if shot, but soon recovered. No other mischief seemed done by the fire singeing my hair and tarnishing the epaulette on my right shoulder, excepting that both ears gushed out with blood instantly. Presently, after the Commander in Chief came into the battery and addressing some questions to me, I found myself too completely deafened to hear a syllable.

20th June

The French army advanced with the intention to raise the siege. We moved forward and took up a position upon the heights of St Cristobal and Mourisca, a league in front of Salamancas, and left sufficient troops to continue the blockade of the forts. The French made a feint upon our right and a few shots were fired and exchanged between the artillery, but they declined the offer of battle and eventually retired.

23rd June

The army re-occupied our bivouac in the neighbourhood of Salamanca and operations were recommenced against the two forts.

24th June

In the morning the French appeared on the Alba de Tormes road and threatened our right

rear. A corps recrossed the ford of La Martha to the left bank of the river and took up a position on the heights in a direction to oppose them. The French retired in the afternoon and at night we passed to the right bank and bivouacked as before.

The forts were surrendered and the garrison became prisoners of war. By a quick fire of red-hot shot the buildings were set on fire and the magazines, being full and not well secured, the garrisons were compelled to submit. Inflammation caused by the violent compression upon the drums of both my ears by the accident in the battery on the 19th, had for several days given me considerable pain, but was becoming very excruciating and deprived me entirely of rest.

1st July

Medina del Campo. Suppuration took place in my ears, and the discharge relieved the pain. My hearing was a little impaired and may perhaps always continue so slightly.

16th July

The army marched throughout the night and halted this morning at Nave del Rey. In the evening we returned to Villa Verde, remained under arms and bivouacked on the morning of the 17th at Cannical.

18th July

The French manoeuvred to gain some advantages and fell upon one of our divisions, the Fourth, but were repulsed though not without loss. In the latter part of the afternoon the army marched to Villaescusa, but continuing our movements in the night came again to Cannical.

19th July

Lord Wellington occupied a position near Villiessa with the French army in our front.

20th July

The army was formed into order of battle, which was declined by the French, who manoeuvred upon our right.

21st July

The French continued the movement which caused the armies to march in two parallel lines. Lord Wellington gradually refused or fell back by his right, in order to preserve his communications with his rear from whence we drew all our supplies, and which was threatened by this movement of the French General. We recrossed the Tormes and occupied a position at night upon the heights on the left bank, under arms. The night was remarkably dark, with heavy rain accompanying with tremendous thunder and lightning, and one loud explosion of thunder so frightened the horses of the cavalry that, from Colonel Ponsonby's regiment, 50 broke away from the men as they lay bivouacked with reins in their hands, and caused considerable confusion. Our bridles were off for the horses to feed and they made a violent rush, but being yoked in the guns were easily stopped.

22nd July

The French still continued to threaten our right, and in consequence we made a lateral movement to the right and took a position, moving in front of two hills called the Arapiles, one of which we occupied, and the other was seized by the French. The Light Division was on the left of our line, the Sixth in the centre with the Arapiles immediately before it, and that in our possession was occupied General Pack's Brigade of Portuguese. The First Division was not yet in line, but was on the right of the Sixth and rather in reserve. The remainder of the army made movements corresponding to the French, who by extending their left continued to threaten our right. The Hussars and light troops skirmished with the enemy's left and the cannonade had begun down the whole front of the line. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the First Division at a brisk pace made a movement in close columns to attack, but that being suddenly counter-ordered, the division directly occupied the position of the Sixth Division, which quitted its ground rapidly in open column, wheeled into line on the spot we had just left and advanced to attack the centre of the French line, which was weakened by the overextending of its left.

General Pack at the same moment descended from his post, and with his Portuguese, ascended to attack the other Arapile that was immediately in his front, and on which the French had got some artillery that swept our whole line. The Portuguese advanced within musket shot of the crest of the hill, but were suddenly driven back and overwhelmed by the fire of the French who had screened their force on the slope of the opposite side of the hill. These two Arapiles stood on the plain distinct from each other, quite isolated and without connection with any other heights whatsoever. I was advanced to sustain the defeated Portuguese with two pieces, a gun and howitzer. The Sixth Division carried all before them and the division on the right making a simultaneous advance, the whole left wing and centre of

the French army then giving way, were thrown into confusion which soon turned into a complete flight. The Light and First Divisions advanced to attack their right, but the retreat had become general and night put a stop to the pursuit. We bivouacked on the ground.

23rd July

At daylight in the morning we began our march, but having received no orders in the night and without intelligence of the route the French had taken, the General was at first uncertain which way to pursue with his division. About 10 o'clock in the morning we came up with our most advanced troops, the brigade of German heavy cavalry, that had just executed a bold charge and obliged 150 infantry of the rear-guard of the French to lay down their arms. The cavalry had several officers and many of the dragoons killed but acquired a great reputation. A squadron of light dragoons followed by the infantry continued the pursuit. We kept pace with the dragoons mounting the gunners on the gun carriages, and outstripping the infantry came up with their rearguard again. The French squadrons threatened to charge. The Commander-in-Chief dismounted, threw himself amongst our guns and directed our fire personally. Had the French known the circumstances, it was not difficult to have captured him, but they stopped short at grape-shot distance, and in the meanwhile our infantry and more squadrons arrived. The French retired then with great rapidity and the Light Division and cavalry followed them. In the battle yesterday and the affair this morning at Al Lurda with the cavalry of the Foreign Legion the French army was computed to have lost more than 20,000 men, prisoners, killed and hors de combat, and above 20 cannon. We bivouacked on the ground.

9th August

Forded the Eresma and bivouacked at El Palacio de Rio Frio, within a few miles of Segovia which lay to our right and full in view.

11th August

Passed the mountains of the Guadarrama and bivouacked at the village of Guadarrama. Rode to the Escorial. It was stripped and divested of every description of furniture and ornament. The bare walls alone of this immense palace remained and exhibited a melancholy appearance. Not a volume remained of an extensive and very valuable library which the French had disposed of by public auction.

12th August

The Portuguese cavalry of the advance guard gave way and, retreating suddenly upon the squadrons of the German Brigade of heavy cavalry at Las Rosas, the French took them unawares, a great number were sabred and taken prisoner, together with three guns of Major Macdonald's troop of Horse Artillery under Captain Dyneley. Captain Dyneley subsequently escaped from the French camp and rejoined his corps.

13th August

The division passed the river Guadarrama at the Puente de Retamar, and bivouacked at Las Rosas.

14th August

Madrid. Lord Wellington and the advance troops entered on the 12th. The divisions of infantry were bivouacked on the skirts of the suburbs, but many of the officers had billets in the capital. We were quartered, the officers, in the house of a Juramentado, or one who had taken the oath of allegiance to Joseph Bonaparte; he was a general besides and had entered into the service of the French. The garrison in El Buen Retiro surrendered at noon. The troops were already drawn up and the ladders prepared for a general assault, that would have taken place in the eyes of all Madrid. The garrison marched out as prisoners of war. There were 2,000 men. The Portuguese troops on duty received them on the Glacis as they marched out of the gate. A French soldier, who was drunk, as he came out of the gate turned suddenly upon the sentinel, who was a Portuguese, and accompanying his explanation with the motion of both his hands, which he held up, said aloud 'Jamais se rendent Francais a telles sortes?' with a comic expression in his countenance of contempt. His language not being understood by the soldier, and the officers paid no attention to it, he escaped any ill consequences from his remarks.

18th August

The infantry bivouacked at Puente de Retamar.

19th August

El Escorial. We found sufficient room in the apartments and corridors to accommodate a corps of 16,000 men.

6th September

Passed the Erema and crossing the Duero at the ford of Asterniga bivouacked on the right bank of the river.

7th September

The French having evacuated Valladolid the troops advanced and bivouacked near the town.

17th September

Bivouacked near Burgos.

18th September

The troops destined to commence operations against the place, forded the Alarcon and bivouacked near Villa Tozo, a small village in which Lord Wellington had his headquarters. The citadel was an old castle and a garrison of more than 2,000 men. It was enclosed within three distinct circumferences of works and being situated upon a hill elevated above, the commanding within half a cannon shot the whole town and the heights to the west of it, it was exceedingly strong; and mores especially so compared with our means of attack, which consisted of a train of three battering guns and the use that might be made of the field artillery attached to the divisions. An unfinished horn work was assaulted and carried and a lieutenant and forty men were made prisoners in it, but the troops were repulsed in an attack upon an outward line of works of the citadel with considerable loss.

Approaches were commenced from the gorge of the horn work and batteries being opened, the fire was kept up from the howitzers and guns of the field train and the three 18-pounder battering guns. Two breaches were made in the outward works of the place. The troops assaulted and carried the line, and pushing on to the second were repulsed. The two breaches, however, were immediately connected by a work and we became completely established on this part of the outward line. The French had many guns on the top of the old castle, and the fort was besides in every respect well armed with heavy guns at the foot of its walls within the third line, and their artillery was well served. A new battery was made and the three 24-prs put into it to break the second line. As soon as it was discovered by the French the whole artillery of the fort fired and it became a heap of ruins even before it was opened; two of the guns were destroyed by having their trunnions knocked off. The Engineers boldly carried the sap commenced at that part of the third line in our possession, to within two feet of the second line. Mines were made and charged. The field guns were

placed in battery at different ports, on the opposite side of the citadel to that attacked, and by their fire annoyed and distracted the attention of the fort from the troops in the trenches; and things being finally arranged a signal was given and the mines being sprung, the troops rushed forward to possess themselves of the breaches and to assault the works. For a while they were successful, but eventually were repulsed leaving some of their dead on the parapet of the third line, a proof of the courage of the troops who advanced across a space swept by the grape and musketry of the garrison from behind their walls and entrenchments. This was the last serious effort made to possess ourselves of the fort by assault, and as from the first, the troops had seen the inadequacy of our means in artillery, operations were not begun, or carried on, with the same spirit as at Rodrigo or Badajoz, which seemed to cause some discontent at the troops in the mind of the Commander-in-Chief. Also the weather became unfavourable, which added to weaken the strength and dispirited the soldiers, and brought with it great sickness amongst them. More than 2,000 men were killed and put hors de combat before this place.

19th October

In the evening the troops advanced, leaving a blockading force before the fort, and at night on the 20th met with and repulsed the advanced guard of the French at Rio Beno, or Quinta Napalia.

21st October

In the evening we began to retire, passed through Rio Beno and Villa Toro, and leaving Burgos to the left continued to march the whole night and halted on the morning of the 22nd a short distance beyond Buniel. The same evening we continued our retreat and bivouacked at midnight near Celada del Camino.

23rd October

Passed the Alarcon and bivouacked near Torquemada. The effects of privations during the siege, the wet weather and these forced marches, caused some relaxation in the discipline of the army. The soldiers in many instances broke into the wine cellars, and, many drinking to excess, became incapable of proceeding and fell into the hands of the advanced guard of the French.

24th October

Passed the Carrion, destroyed the bridge, and bivouacked near Duenas. A picket of Portuguese

posted at the bridge sent to the Commanding Officer to obtain ropes to aid a deserter from the French pass to our side of the river, the chasm in the bridge being complete. The deserter perhaps got scared at the difficulties he saw there might prove in crossing either the chasm, or river, which was filled to the banks with the heavy rains, or on the other hand, he might have been put upon the affair in order to gain an opportunity of ascertaining the state of the bridge. At all events, several of the pickets who were on the edge of the chasm directing the man to take the rope, and putting it round his body, allowed himself to be pulled across the river. The bridge might be 40 paces in length, and he retired from the opposite edge of the chasm seemingly with the intention to follow the directions we gave him, but when at the end of the bridge he suddenly lifted his piece and fired upon the party, and it was done so instantly no soldier of the picket had time to return the fire before he had sheltered himself from harm. The road went off in an oblique direction to the right from the end of the bridge, and was raised above the plain in order to be on a tolerable level with the arch of the bridge, and so, to lead the road over a gentle ascent, the pretended deserter jumped off the road to the side, which preserved him from being seen and the fire of the picket and he continued in safety. Mounted on a grey horse and amidst the soldiers on the bridge it might be the man conceived I was an officer of rank, for the ball passed me very close, but happened to miss everyone. If he had repented his first intention to desert perhaps he expected this vile attempt would recommend him to the mercy of his general.

25th October

We occupied the left bank of the Pisuerga and covered the bridge of the village of Calecon, which was already mined and charged to be destroyed. In the night the French attempted to force the passage of the bridge, but were repulsed and left several dead within a few paces of the picket which was stationed on the middle of it.

27th October

The French army was encamped on the plain before us. They advanced a numerous battery of guns which began to play upon the bridge and village. The village of Calecon stands on the left bank of the Carrion, which rises with a height perpendicularly from the bridge, the road turned at right angles from the bridge being the only space between the river and the height. All our guns of the several divisions were distributed to the different advantageous posts in the village. We commenced a furious and destructive fire upon the artillery of the French and forced them quickly to retire.

29th October

The river becoming fordable and the enemy threatening our left by marching upon Valladolid, the bridge of Calecon was destroyed and, continuing our retreat, we passed the Puente del Duero and bivouacked on the left bank of the river.

30th October

We marched along the left bank of the Duero and bivouacked in front of Tordesillas which was in possession of the French and the bridge also in their occupation. The nights became excessively cold and the ground was covered every morning with a severe hoar frost. The position was an extensive plain gently rising from the Duero, without shelter or a single tree, and fuel scarce even for the purpose of cooking, and obtained only by the commissariat purchasing some old houses, of which the beams and wood were served out in the usual regular proportions, to regiments and companies.

9th November

Four guns of the brigade remained at Villares, and I returned with two guns to St. Cristobal. The corps under Sir R. Hill from Estramadura and reinforced by the garrison of Cadiz effected its junction with the army of Lord Wellington. Marshal Soult who had been forced to abandon the siege of Cadiz by our occupation of Madrid, and operations in the north, likewise effected his junction with the French army of the north, which under General Souham followed our route from Burgos.

13th November

The army passed the Tormes at Salamanca and on the morning of the 14th Lord Wellington offered battle in the neighbourhood of the two hills (Arapiles) where we had fought and gained the battle in July. The French General declined the offer, and fording the Tormes higher up threatened our right, and right rear.

15th November

We quitted our position near Zejado and bivouacked at Frudes. The weather was cold and the rain fell very heavy, accompanied with strong winds.

16th November

Bivouacked at Alduena de Bolida. It now rained in torrents, the roads became excessively heavy and there being a scarcity in the supply of provisions, sickness and fatigue produced disorder amongst the troops and they committed a few excesses which incurred the censure of the Commander-in-Chief.

18th November

The army retired through a wood by parallel roads in three columns. The right column happened to retire rather quicker, perhaps having the best road, and a patrol of the enemy's cavalry, which followed it quickly, perceiving a noise to its flank wheeled to the right and traversing a part of the wood, intercepted itself between two divisions of the centre column, and swept off General Sir Edward Paget and some baggage. The army passed the ford of San Munos, but it happened the road farther on was choked up with baggage and the rest of the transport of the army, so that the divisions became crowded together (without the possibility of filing off) on the left bank of the small river (which runs by San Munos) exactly where we had just forded; consequently the French came up in considerable force during the delay and commenced a destructive cannonade from the heights above the ford, and it was not till now that Sir Edward Paget was missed and his fate known; there was some confusion, but at length Lord Wellington appeared, deploying the Light Division, advanced to the ford and drove back the enemy who had endeavoured to pass some troops across. This restored order and the army immediately recommenced its march, but not without having suffered a loss of 300 men by the cannonade. The army bivouacked and the French discontinued further pursuit.

19th November

Bivouacked at Ciudad Rodrigo.

20th November

Under cover in the village of Alameda. The bad weather, privations, fatigue and other casualties lost the army from the beginning of its operations before Burgos upwards of 5,000 men.

28th November

Junca in Portugal.

7th December

Cantoned at Pena Verde. Sick, and much reduced, having been amidst all the unfavourable weather and since we quitted Madrid under a course of mercury. I obeyed a general order (by advice of the surgeon and my friends) given out by the Commander-in -Chief and proceeded to join my company in England.

23rd December

Lisbon.

3rd January 1813

Embarked at Lisbon on board the Leda Transport No 313, and sailed on the 3rd.

16th January

Landed at Portsmouth very ill. We had nothing but a gale of wind the whole way, which increased my illness and the pains in my body were insupportable. In London I consulted Dr Pearson of Golden Square, who decided I had taken mercury, and in a dangerous manner, without any cause whatever, and prescribed only good food with port wine.

23rd January

Ripley in Yorkshire: Weight: 11st.3lbs
Weight in 1810: 14st. 2 lbs

12th April 1813

Joined Captain Truscott's company at Battle in Sussex.

30th March 1814

Joined 'G' Troop of Horse Artillery at Woodbridge in Suffolk. Appointed—19th January.