# Francis Newport and the Peninsula War

*By Mark Wareham, updated 2nd August 2013*

*An officer (left) and private in the uniform of the 40th Regiment as it was in 1812. Francis would have looked exactly like the private pictured here, with his British redcoat, grey trousers and carrying the 'brown bess' flintlock musket. From Wikipedia.*

# ***Introduction***

In mid-2011 I discovered online a list of soldiers of the 40th Regiment of Foot who were not Chelsea pensioners but who were awarded medals for having served in the Peninsula War of 1808 to 1814. On that list I found the name of my great x 4 grandfather Francis Newport (abbreviated to Fra's Newport). Francis is my ancestor through my maternal grandmother's mother Emma Jane (or Emily) Newport.

Although there is little detail surrounding this name on the list, it is very likely that the person shown on the regimental list as 'Fra's Newport' is Francis who was born in 1783 at Baltonsborough (shown as 'Baltonsbury' on the map below) in Somerset, to Daniel and Mary Newport. It is not a common name (although there was another Francis Newport who was born in about 1781 in Ireland who is living in Bristol by 1841) and a period of service from 1808 to 1814 fits perfectly because he would have been about 25 years old when this campaign started, a good age to become someone to go 'over the hills and far away'. Francis Newport of Baltonsborough did not marry until 1816, when he was 33, rather late in life for a marriage at the time, and there is no evidence of him being in England or Somerset between his baptism and his marriage. He is not listed on the poor law records for his home parish of Baltonsborough, unlike his father, from when he was 18 in 1801 until he suddenly appears in the poor law records of West Pennard in January 1817, a gap which precisely coincides with the conflict in Europe. Francis' late marriage would be explained by his presence in these foreign wars immediately previous to starting a family and the young Francis fits the profile for being a soldier at the time perfectly; he was young man of the rural labouring class and who was single at the time of the war. It is also a fact that Francis' younger brother Stephen definitely was a soldier because in 1815 he is listed as a soldier serving with the 2nd Batallion of the 67th Foot Regiment (South Hampshire) and he gives his age as 28 and birthplace of 'Balsbury' in Somerset. The 67th Foot was not as involved in wars as was the 40th but it did see some action in Spain and was stationed in Gibraltar from 1814. There may be some clue as to Francis' appearance if he was anything like his brother - 5' 5 3/4", fresh complexion and grey eyes.

Francis would have been precisely the sort of man that would have enlisted and who may have been compelled to take the 'King's shilling'. The recruiting sergeant may have used many methods to get him to sign up – the promise of glory and fighting for King and country, but signing up to serve as a soldier was not due to patriotism alone. The British Army was often looked upon as 'the last refuge for misfits and rowdy ruffians' (H L Wickes 1974) and Rudyard Kipling summed this view by the wider populace of their fighting soldier in the poem 'Tommy' –

> 'For it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, an' chuck him out the brute
> But it's 'saviour of 'is country' when the guns begin to shoot'.

Even army commanders like the Duke of Wellington did not have the highest opinion of his soldiers or where they originated from, saying that they came from 'the scum of the earth' and that they 'mostly joined for drink'. Certainly a recruiting sergeant of the time may well have enticed young men with drink and talk of valour and regular pay before marching them off to face the harsh realities of what they had let themselves in for.


Another link between Francis of

Baltonsborough and the 40th Regiment of Foot is that there was a connection between this regiment and his home county. In 1782 the regiment became called the 2nd Somersetshire and Francis may have been attached to his county regiment to serve and to help fight the menace of Napoleon's forces that had threatened invasion since 1803. It was certainly better to fight for English freedom abroad, than to wait until French soldiers set foot on our own shores!

More research needs to be done to absolutely confirm this assumed link and to try to see if such evidence about 'Fra's Newport' exists in other army records. But what has so far been discovered does suggest that my ancestor Francis Newport of Baltonsborough served with the 2nd Somersetshire, 40th Regiment of Foot, for a few years during the Peninsula campaign. This would not be at all surprising because by 1809, 786,000 men were under arms in Britain, one sixth of the adult population. Almost a half of these lost their lives in service, although only a small proportion of those casualties were due to wounds from conflict.

Looking at records from another Somerset parish, South Petherton, of soldiers who did later become pensioners, unlike Francis, and who would have probable been Francis' comrades in Spain and Portugal this also confirms that there was a link between the 40th and Somerset and shows the sort of enlistment and discharge details that Francis may have shared (*from* *http://www.southpethertoninformation.org.uk/south_petherton_soldiers.htm* ) -

- Burford, Charles – served 40th Foot Regiment, discharged 26th May 1816 at Dover Castle after 11 years 222 days service (Sergeant 4 years, Corporal 3 years, Private 4 years) aged 34, having lost one finger & the use of another finger & the thumb of the right hand by a wound at the Battle of Waterloo. 5' 7" black hair, hazel eyes, fresh complexion. Enlisted age 22. Labourer. Served South America, wounded in the leg at Montevideo; served during the whole Peninsula War & received wounds in the body at the Battle of the Pyrenees, and in the hand at the Battle of Nivelle; served in Flanders including Battle of Waterloo. Very excellent character. Brave soldier.

- Clarke, Phillip – served in 40th Foot Regiment, discharged 26th November 1816 being infirm after 17 years 125 days of service (including 2 years for Waterloo) aged 36. 5' 6", grey hair, grey eyes, dark complexion. Private. Enlisted 25th Feb 1799. Labourer.

- Gentle, Thomas – served 40th Foot Regiment, discharged 19th June 1819 after 15 years 321 service (including 2 years for Waterloo service) aged 30. Conduct very good. Served South America, Peninsula War and North America & at Waterloo & was wounded in left hand at Vancouver. 5' 5 1/4" brown hair, grey eyes, sallow complexion. Private.

- Gully, Samuel – served in 40th Foot Regiment, discharged 19th January 1819 after 21 years 186 days (with 2 years for service at Waterloo) aged 44 because of diseased lung from frequent attacks of pneumonia occasioned by long foreign service. Unfit for service. Private. Very good conduct. Served in Holland, South America, Peninsula, North America and at Waterloo. 5' 6 3/4" black hair, black eyes, brown complexion. Enlisted Bristol 18th July 1799 aged 24. Labourer.

- Lettey, James – served in 40th Foot Regiment; 2nd Royal Veteran Battalion. Discharged 1814 after 10 years of service, aged 27.

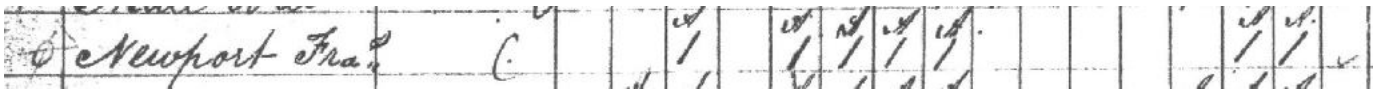
- Vile, William – served in 40th Foot Regiment and discharged 18th August 1826 after 23 years 202 days (including 2 years for Waterloo service – 9 as Sergeant, 3 as Corporal & 9 as Private) aged 39. 5' 11" brown hair, grey eyes, fair complexion.

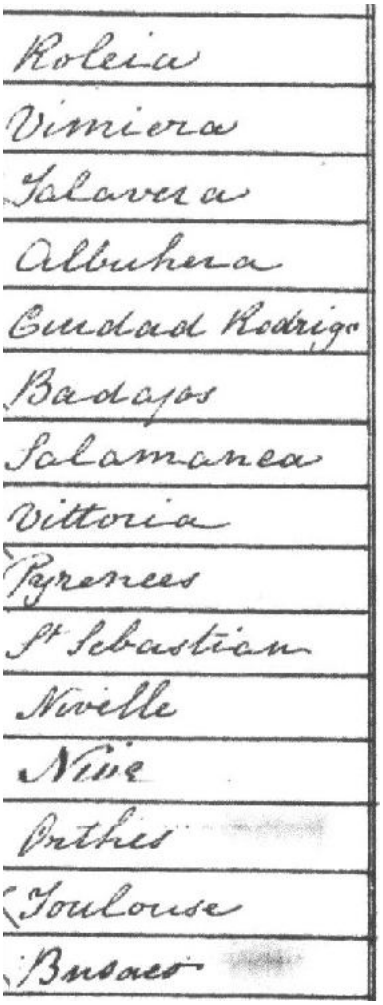
Francis was probably not a very long serving 'professional' soldier and possibly as a result he did not later receive a military pension. He may have initially signed up for seven years minimum service and if he joined in 1808 and left in 1815, as appears likely, he would not have got a

pension. However he did later come to have to rely on parish poor relief in the harsh economic situation that existed after the war. Indeed it may be as a result of the war, and maybe wounds received similar to those listed above that happened to his comrades, that he had to rely on relief so much if he was not as employable as other labourers. From the one piece of clear documentary evidence that I have discovered so far and on which his name is listed, I know that he saw action at seven engagements in the campaign. However his name is not included amongst those on the medal list of those of the 40th Regiment who served at the subsequent Battle of Waterloo. By the time of this famous battle it is probable that Francis had either already been discharged after Napoleon's initial defeat and imprisonment on Elba in 1814, or he was with the 2nd Battalion back home at Dover Castle waiting for discharge (see later). Francis was almost certainly not with the 1st Battalion when they were in mainland Europe after Napoleon escaped, returned to France, recruited a new army and marched to face the allies in Belgium in late 1815.

# ***Francis at War***

The evidence that I have discovered about Francis' activity in the war of 1808-14 is the record of his seven actions (from *ancestry.co.uk* listed of Peninsula War medals returns, infantry of the line, non-pensioners) –




It is not completely clear what the circle with the cross with it means in the left hand column or what the big 'C' in the third column is for. The 'C' may mean that he was in Company C as that column is headed 'troop of company', however no other names on this list denote a company C or any other letter but instead some list the Captains that the private soldier served under. Francis is not listed as a 'Captain' and he was almost certainly not a commissioned officer if he did achieve that status. It could denote 'Corporal' as that is a non-commissioned rank between Sergeant and Lance-Corporal. The other columns then list the engagements in the war in which each listed soldier saw action and marked with a tick headed by the letter 'A', which I assume means 'action' rather than 'absent'. I think this is confirmed by one soldier on the list having a cross on one of the boxes next to his name and it says 'not present'.

The columns are headed with all of the engagements that the 40th Regiment was present at in war of the Peninsula. From this record we know that Francis saw action at –

- 28th July 1809 – the Battle of Talavera
- 26th April – 9th July 1810 – the Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo
- 27th September 1810 – the Battle of Busaco
- 16th March – 6th April 1812 – the Siege of Badajoz
- 22nd July 1812 – the Battle of Salamanca
- 21st June 1813 – the Battle of Vitoria
- 10th April 1814 – the Battle of Toulouse

The full story of these battles is told at length in other sources. In this brief essay I shall borrow on that universal source '*Wikipedia*' alongside the website *http://www.britishbattles.com* and the book '*Historical Records of the 40th (2nd Somersetshire) Regiment 1717-1893 by Captain Raymond Smithies, 1894*' and give an brief description of Francis' experiences in fighting the French.

Before he went to fight Francis would have probably learnt the harsh realities of the life of a soldier with the strict and sometimes brutish discipline of a training camp. The British army of the day did not have some of the more enlightened attitudes to the common soldier that we may see today, and even today we know that training is tough and the discipline hard. In the 19th century Francis Newport and his colleagues would have been drilled and even beaten into line facing harsh punishments and reprimands for mistakes and any disobedience. What he learnt in terms of discipline was probably to serve him and his comrades fairly well with the struggles to come.

# ***The Start of the Peninsula War***

Since 1793, Britain and its allies had been at war against the French who from 1804 had been under the strong charismatic rule of former General, Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1807 Napoleon, with the support of Spain, invaded Portugal. Then, under the pretext of of a reinforcement of the Franco-Spanish army occupying Portugal, Napoleon invaded Spain as well and replaced their King with a French ruler, his brother Joseph. This led to a popular Spanish uprising and eventually to the Peninsula war, a conflict which was to be costly and brutal, particularly for the civilian populations.

*Sir Arthur Wellesley (old nosey), later Duke of Wellington, the British commander under who Francis served in the Peninsula War. From Wikipedia.*

Exactly how Francis came to be engaged with the 40th Foot, which led him to Portugal and Spain, is most probably explained by this extract from the regimental history –

> "On 1st July 1803 – a few weeks after the renewal of the war – [when Francis was 20 years old] an Act of Parliament described in the preamble as 'An Act for the Establishment and Maintaining a Permanent Force for the Defence of the Realm; for augmenting his Majesties forces, and gradually reducing the militia', came into force [in response to the threat of a French invasion]. The 'Royal Army of Reserve' as the new permanent force was called, was to be raised by ballot in the various parishes throughout the Kingdom. The men thus raised were to be formed into home battalions for line regiments; partly into line battalions; partly into local battalions only to be employed in case of emergency. The Act was not a success, but a good many men thus enrolled were formed into second battalions of short service soldiers for existing line regiments, and others into garrison battalions. In this way, a Second Battalion, said the War Office historian Cannon, to have been originally intended for the 52nd was formed for the 40th Regiment out of men enrolled under the Additional Forces Act in the West of England. It served as a home or depot battalion for the regiment from its formation in August 1804 until its disbandment at the end of 1815."

Francis, being initially enrolled in the Reserve 2nd Battalion under this Act, may also explain his absence from the later Battle of Waterloo as it was only the 1st Battalion of the 40th Foot that fought there. However Francis must have been with the 1st Battalion for much of the Peninsula War to be recorded as seeing action in so many engagements when we know that the 2nd were not so involved. Indeed at Toulouse the 2nd Battalion only arrived after the end of the fighting but Francis is clearly listed as having seen action at this battle. So at some stage Francis probably moved from the 2nd to the 1st only to be returned again to the 2nd Battalion after the war.

Before the Peninsular War, British military operations on mainland Europe had been limited to raids after several early attempts to land and keep an army in action led to failure and ultimate withdrawal. The British could not mass a large enough force to operate on its own against the huge and experienced French army. On 18th June 1808, the Portuguese uprising against the French broke out followed by the one in Spain and this encouraged the British to commit substantial forces and British propaganda was quick to capture the novelty of the situation; for the first time, peoples, not princes, were in rebellion against the "Great Disturber". It was at this

time that the 40th Regiment had to draw upon its reserve elements, with Francis probably being one of those enlisted as a short service soldier to bolster its numbers as it headed to Portugal.

> "… the regiment proceeded to Bandon [County Cork, Ireland], where they were joined by a detachment of about two hundred and fifty men from the 2nd Battallion. Thence they moved to … Limerick and afterwards to the Cove of Cork, from which place they embarked on active service – this time in Portugal."

By the time it left the British Isles, the 40th was composed of a great many Irishmen alongside others from the counties of south west England. Nine hundred and fity eight men of the regiment embarked for Portugal and this included about one hundred men of the reserve force of the 2nd battallion. The rest of the 2nd battallion remained at home and as Francis gained a medal for being present in the foreign wars we can certainly assume that he was not amongst those left behind and must have sailed from Ireland in late 1808.

> "The troops embarked from Ireland remained for a short time in Cork harbour, and awaited the ships from England. The whole force of about ten thousand men, under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley [who later became Duke of Wellington, pictured above] sailed on 12th July 1808 for Portugal."

The 40th (being one of only three regiments to serve throughout the Peninsula campaign) and 82nd regiments landed at Mondego Bay on 1st August 1808. Four days later Wellesley had all his troops ashore and my ancestor Francis was probably one of those standing on foreign shores for what would have been the first time in his life.

It is alleged that at about this time Wellington is supposed to have said of his soldiers –

> "I don't know what effect these men will have on the enemy, but by God, they terrify me."

This quotation is often disputed and may be misattributed, but it may either reflect a confidence that Wellington had in his men or a concern about their martial qualities, or both.


The map to the left shows the theatre of the Peninsula War with the major conflicts shown (from *Wikipedia*).

The 40th regiment quickly engaged in conflict and on 17th August and 21st August they fought at the Battles of Roleia and Vimiera. These were relatively small affairs and from Francis' war record we know that he did not see action in them.

Over the next few months the regiment moved to quarters at –

- 24th September 1808 - Monte Santo camp
- 24th October – Benedictine convent (Vimiera ?)
- November – Elvas, Portugal (just inside the Portugese border from Badajoz)

The 40th Foot were not with the British Army under Sir John Moore in January 1809 that was forced into humiliating retreat across northern Spain in the face of troops under Marshall Soult. The 40th had been originally tasked with joining Moore's army but was unable to reach them as the country that they had to traverse was held by the enemy. As a result they turned south towards Seville.

Under Moore the British army fought the Battle of Corunna on 16th January and this led to a successful evacuation but a strategic French victory as most British troops had been forced out of the Peninsula only a short time after arriving to help the Spanish Patriots. When this army arrived back in England they were suffering from illness and were in a pathetic condition. Moore himself was killed in the battle.

Only about 16,000 British troops now remained on the Peninsula and Francis and the 40th Foot were still amongst them and they were spared the inglorious trip back to England. But in preparing to reconquer Portugal the French had to face more British troops than they initially knew were still present.

As mentioned earlier the 40th Regiment was one of only a few that was to serve throughout this war and remain on the Peninsula throughout. I am not able to give a full background to the experiences of the Regiment through the period and the politics of the situation. That is more comprehensively covered elsewhere such as in Charles Esdaile's work '*The Peninsula War*'. It is however worth noting that the situation that Francis found himself in was complex and that whilst the British were allied to the Spaniards, the relationship between British troops and the locals was not always particularly easy. It is fair to say for example that many British looked down upon the Spanish and Portugese as being rather backward as a civilisation and with a form of superiority. There was always a divide in terms of religion with most troops being firm Protestants in an overwhelmingly Catholic country. Finally the action of the Spanish 'guerilla' fighters later in the war did not always just affect the French, there were some reports for example of British troops also suffering from attacks and looting from these bands of fighters who sometimes were more criminal than military in outlook. However it is also fair to say that in general the British were seen as allies by the Spanish, and the French suffered more from fighting in hostile territory than did the British who were seen as helping in the fight for freedom, even if suspiciously in some parts.

In February 1809 the 40th, with 871 men, arrived at Seville in southern Spain and progressed over the next few months as follows -

- February 1809 – Seville, Spain (just north of Cadiz)
- May 1809 – Cadiz, Spain
- Early June – Lisbon, Portugal
- 15th June – Santarem to Santos
- July – Abrantes, Portugal

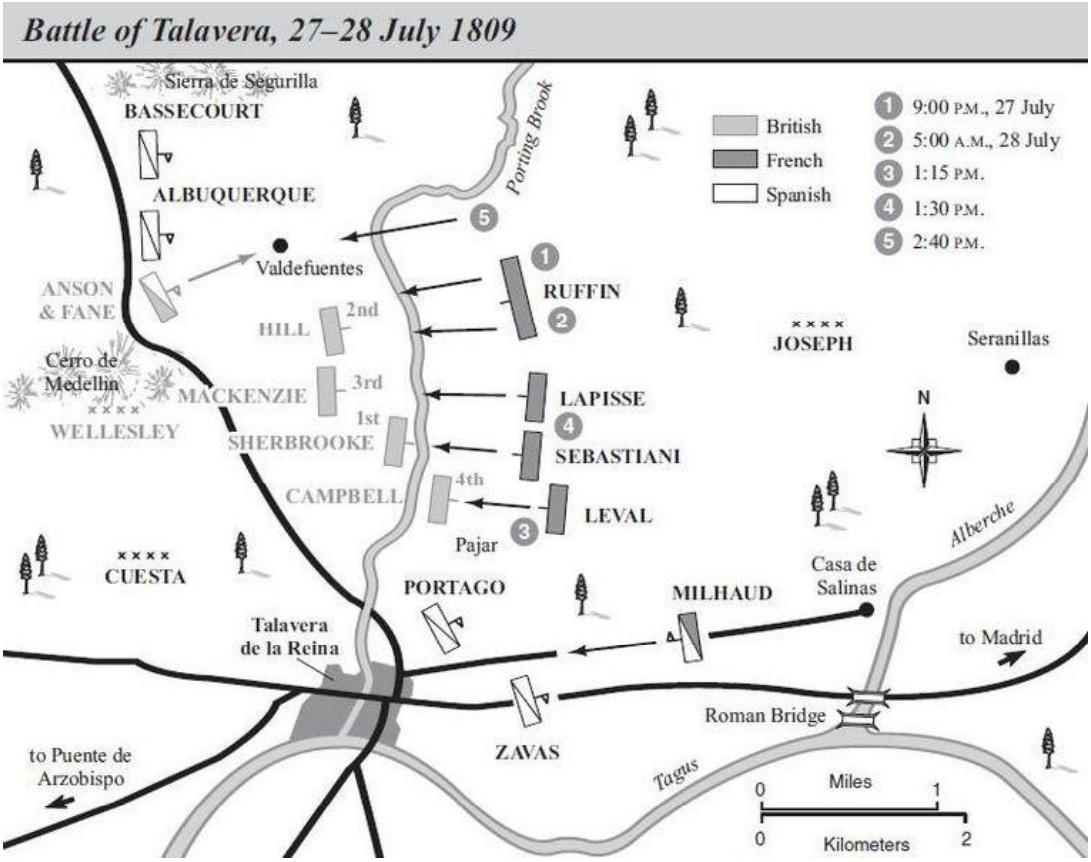
From Abrantes the regiment joined the rest of the army en-route to the first engagement that Francis is recorded being in action - the Battle of Talavera. This was a most impressive action to be part of and one that gained the regiment laurels of victory which my ancestor would have been proud to have shared.

# ***The Battle of Talavera***

The great Battle of Talavera, says Jomini, "recovered the glory of the successes of Marlborough, which for a century had declined." Afterwards it was felt that the British infantry could again contend with the best in Europe.

The 40th Foot were in the 2nd brigade, under Colonel James Kemmis, of the 4th division of the army, under Brigadier General Alexander Campbell, under the overall command of Lieutenant General Wellesley. They were positioned on the right of the British formation and flanked by Spanish allies on their right.

On the evening of 28th July, Marshal Victor's corps led the French advance and had surprised the British brigade in the evening. Victor decided to assault the Cerro de Medellin, the dominating feature of the British line, without delay, although it was now night. The division of General Ruffin made the attack. The French reached the summit before the



British troops, including the 40th foot, realised they were there and there was considerable confusion. General Hill brought up a reserve brigade and drove Ruffin's men from the Cerro. The rest of the night was spent by the British waiting for a further French assault. Sergeant Williams of the 40th Foot quoted in the regimental history describes this fight –

> "… the French made another unexpected attack on us at night, and at one time had almost won the heights; but we repulsed them at last, though after that we had to lay on our arms, expecting every moment to be attacked."

Next morning there was an altercation between the 40th and some of their Spanish allies but that had settled down when at 5am the French attacked and Marshal Victor sent Ruffin's division back up the Cerro, a battery of fifty guns supporting the attack. This time the British were ready. Wellesley's troops were lying down behind the crest of the hill out of the line of artillery fire. As Ruffin's infantry reached the top of the hill the British 29th and 48th Foot stood up and charged with the bayonet, driving the French back down the hill and across the Portina brook. Williams describes the 40th's involvement –

> "… about five or six o'clock in the morning the French columns were seen in motion towards our left, and very soon afterwards they ascended the height to attack us, and were only driven back by the heavy fire of our musketry, leaving the ground strewn with their dead."

There was a pause in the battle for two hours while the French commander, Joseph Bonaparte (Napoleon's brother), consulted with his chiefs of staff, Jourdan, Victor and Sebastiani. At this point a truce occurred during which time both sides could collect their casualties and Williams describes a remarkable scene between the enemy troops collecting the wounded –

> "… as they lay [the casualties] intermixed a friendly intercourse sprang up between them, the Allies and the French often going so far as to shake hand with each other."

After the pause, French columns attacked at the point where the hills were lowest, their left column, after bitter fighting, was driven back by the 4th division which included the 40th Foot. The French right column attacked the British Foot Guards and the 83rd Foot and they were driven back by the Guards, but during the course of the pursuit the Guards were taken in enfilade by a French battery and driven back in confusion, while Sebastiani's French columns returned to the attack. Wellesley brought up the 48th Foot, behind which the Guards were able to reform, and the dangerous French counter-attack was held and repelled. In the meantime Ruffin's division had been ordered to make its third assault on the Cerro, which it did with little enthusiasm and no success. In the valley to the North of the Cerro, Victor's right hand division attempted to outflank the British line. Wellesley launched Anson's cavalry brigade in a charge on the French infantry. A hidden defile brought disaster to the cavalry. The 1st Light Dragoons, King's German Legion plunged into the defile. The 23rd Light Dragoons charged on to be met by the French Infantry in square and suffered significant casualties. The French assault petered out and Joseph's army retreated during the night, leaving several guns in British and Spanish possession.

Williams describes an appalling event after the fighting –

> "a very dreadful occurrence happened after the battle, for the long grass in which many of the wounded were lying caught fire, and many were scorched to death before assistance could be brought to convey them to the hospital at Talavera. We lay that night in much the

> same state as the previous, expecting to see our noble enemy again, but we were mistaken, for most took themselves off during the night, and in the morning only their read guard could be seen. “

The 40th Regiment suffered over one hundred casualties – sixteen killed and about ninety wounded.

The battle was immortalised in a poem by Lord Byron’s poem - *http://www.lindahines.net/blog/?cat=243* .

After the famous victory at Talavera the 40th then progressed to Oropesa on 3rd August and Williams describes their experiences –

> “… from Oropesa we advanced through a country abounding in difficulties, the army suffering much during this march from the heat of the weather, the long exposure, insufficient food, bad road and illness being very prevalent. Our provisions rarely exceeded two pounds of meat a day, and sometimes a pint of wheat took the place of meat, with occasionally, but very rarely, a little flour. Our way of cooking the wheat was to boil it like rice, or sometimes, if convenient, we would crack the kernel between two flat stones and then boil it making a thick paste out of it. This, having so little bread or other vegetable substance to eat with our meat was one of the great causes of illness.”

Between September and November 1809 the 40th was at Badajoz in Spain, the British being forced to retreat towards Portugal as they were not strong enough to maintain a sustained advance into Spain. The regiment then progressed –

- November 1809 to Olivenca, in Spain on the Portugese border
- December to Ponte de Sor in Portgugal
- January 1810 to Guarda near Almeida, in Portugal on the Spanish border, where they remained for most of the rest of the year until the next conflict in Portugal in the autumn.

# ***The Battle of Busaco***

*British infantry deployed in line on the ridge at Busaco. Successive campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula led to a continuous drain on French manpower. By Major Thomas St. Clair. From Wikipedia under public domain.*

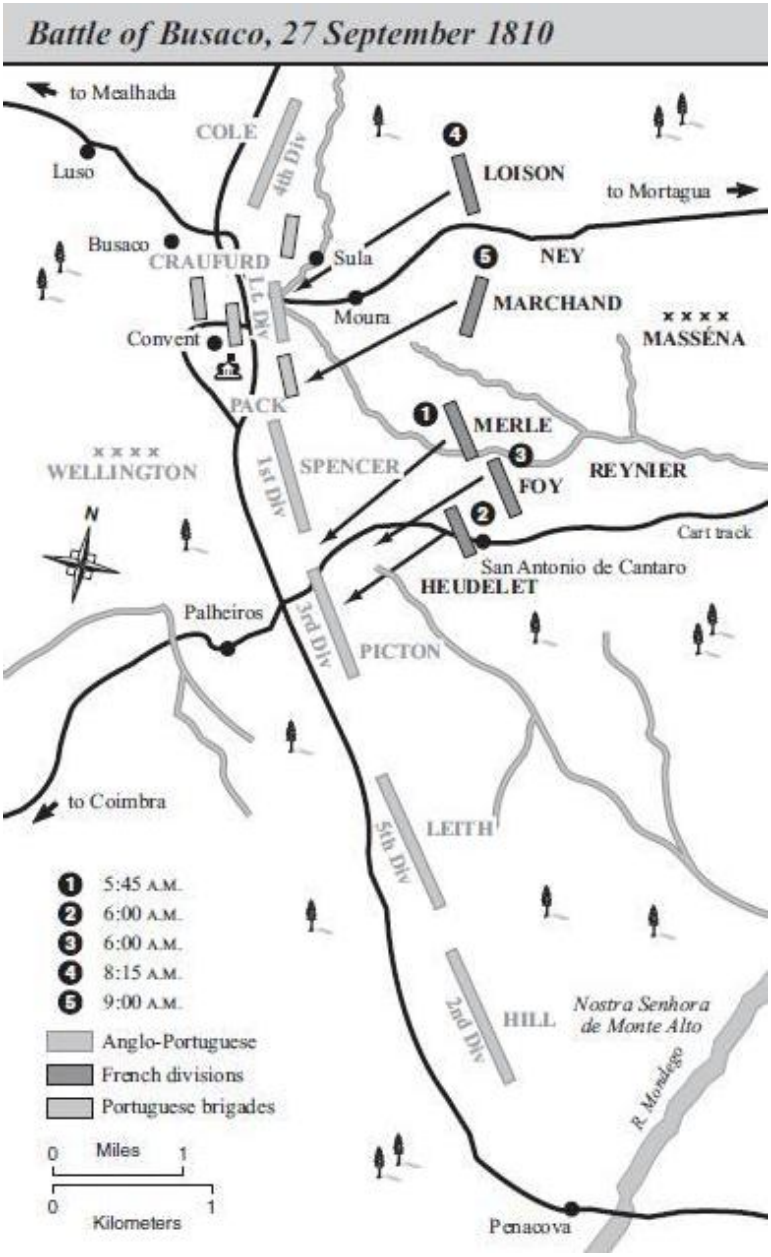
The 40th Foot was still part of the 4th Division of the army and was now under the command of Major General Cole. Wellesley had now become Viscount Wellington and was still Lieutenant General. At Bussaco Wellington, intending to fight a delaying battle, positioned his army at the convent. This lay on a long high ridge that stretched from the Mondego River for some ten miles to the North. The road to Coimbra and Lisbon climbed up the ridge and passed the convent, while a second lesser road crossed the ridge further south. The ridge rose steeply to 300 metres from the valley in places. A rough track meandered along the top.

The British and Portuguese regiments were positioned along the ridge with the main concentration at the northern end and the reserves further south.

Marshal Ney led the French advanced guard towards Busaco on the evening of 25th September 1810. His assessment was that only a British rearguard held the ridge and that it could be easily driven off by a frontal assault. Massena came forward and agreed with him, ordering the assault for the next morning.

The first attack was carried out by Reynier's corps, advancing up the lesser southern road, Massena's assumption being that this would take the French behind the British right flank. Once Reynier was established on the crest Ney's corps would advance up the main road to the Busaco convent at the northern end of the ridge. Far from being held by a rearguard, on the ridge were all 50,000 British and Portuguese infantry supported by 60 guns.

Early morning mist hampered the first movements and observations. Heudelet's division, setting off at 6am, followed the southern road up to the crest of the ridge where they were engaged by the 74th Foot, two Portuguese battalions and 12 guns. The firefight continued for the whole of the battle, Heudelet's division refusing to give ground. Merle's division reached the crest to the north of Heudelet's. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Wallace of the 88th Connaught Rangers had seen the French column climbing the hill and hurried his regiment to the threatened point with several companies of the 45th Foot. Wallace led his men in a fierce attack on the French and drove them back down the hill. The final element of Reynier's attack was carried out by Brigadier Foy who took his brigade to the top of the ridge and remained there until he was driven out by Leith's British Brigade of the 5th Division, the counter attack being headed by the 9th Foot.




Reynier's corps suffered 2,000 casualties in its abortive assault. Ney, from his position further north, thought that Reynier had taken the crest and ordered his corps to begin the assault up the main road to the convent. Loison's division advanced up the hill with its left on the road. As it reached the crest, the 43rd and 52nd Foot of Craufurd's Light Division rose from their positions in the sunken section of the road and poured a volley into the French column at 25 yards. The two light infantry regiments then attacked with the bayonet driving the French back down the hillside. A watching artillery officer described the fight as "carnage".Mermet's division attacking alongside was halted by a Portuguese brigade. Seeing the failure of all the attacks Massena called off the assault and began a reconnaissance to the North, discovering a road that circumvented the ridge. As the French marched away to the flank, Wellington's army withdrew south towards Lisbon, having inflicted a serious reverse on Massena's Army of Portugal.

In the battle the 40th had slight brushes with the enemy but, as can be seen from the map above, was not heavily engaged. During the allied retreat the 40th was involved in following Wellington's order to destroy any articles that they could not carry which could be of use to the enemy. As a result the army was accompanied during its march by crowds of miserable men, women and children who were also eager to reach the capital. Whilst this retreat was a sorry spectacle it was in affect a masterpiece of strategy because with the lines of Torres Vedras prepared by the Portugese peasantry on orders from

Wellington and the base of Lisbon, the British and their allies were not driven into the sea but were able to bid defiance to the French who were more exposed to the inclemency of weather, cut off from supplies and surrounded by a hostile population.

A Sergeant Lawrence of the 40th tells of their billeting at a village called Patamara in front of the lines –

> "we lay as comfortably as if we had been living in peaceful times; though we were so near the enemy that we sometimes wandered into the same vineyards, and exchanged complements by shaking hands."

After a month the French had to retire and the English, including the 40th followed. The 40th came to a place called Yambuza and remained there from November 1810 until 6th March 1811 when they followed the French who were retreating again. On 12th March they came into contact with the French rearguard and took many prisoners. Again on 14th the 40th were engaged with the enemy at Casal Nova and the French were driven back to Miranda de Corvo. Sergeant Lawrence said about this fight –

> "Part of our division was in this engagement, and I never saw cannon play with better or more deadly effect on any body of men than ours did on the enemy, situated as they were on the heights of Casal Nova. The thing I noticed most particularly in this fight was the singular death of a man in our regiment who was named William Halfhead, but considering the size of his head, which must have gone a very great way towards filling half a bushel measure, it was wrongly so, and he was the sport of the whole regiment, who named him Bushelhead. His head was indeed so large that he had to have two caps to make him one. This poor fellow was standing within five yards of me when a shot from the enemy cannon took the same head clean off. I heard one of the men exclaim "hullo, there goes poor Bushelhead" and that was all the sympathy he got."

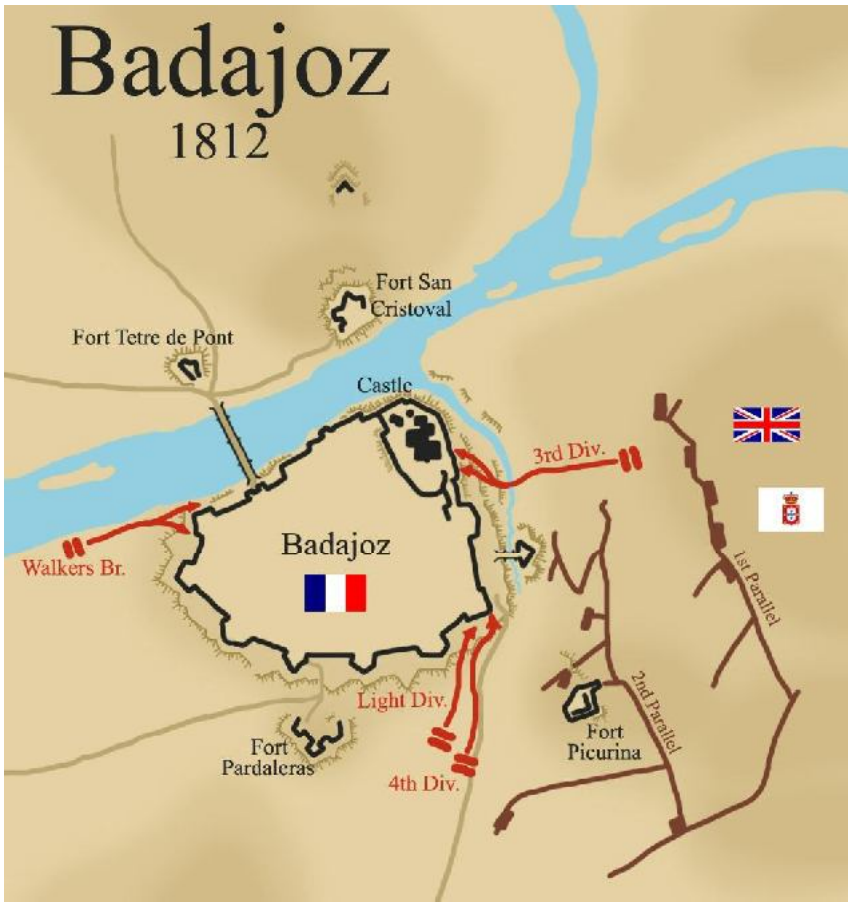
The division continued to follow the French and Lawrence tells of several acts of plundering committed by his colleagues and himself as they were famished after such long marching.

Francis does not appear to have been with his regiment for a period as he did not see action in their next two major regimental engagements at Albuhera in May 1811 or Ciudad Rodrigo in January 1812. Maybe he was injured or taken sick during this time? This is most probable as he would not have been on leave and the only alternative is that he was left with a garrison force. But I am not aware that the 40th was split at this time but formed one force as part of the 4th division.

So we skip to the assault on Badajoz 16th March to 6th April 1812 at which Francis next saw action with the 2nd Somersetshire.

# ***The Siege of Badajoz***

*British infantry attempt to scale the walls of Badajoz, the site of one of several horrific sieges conducted during the Peninsular War. From Wikipedia, original - British Battles on Land and Sea by James Grant. London, Paris & New York: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, n.d.*




Badajoz was a frontier fortress in Spain on the road to Madrid. It was garrisoned by about 5,000 French troops and had to be taken to secure lines of communication to the capital Lisbon. The castle represented a Badajoz would however prove a major obstacle and it had already been subject to two unsuccessful sieges earlier in the war. The besiegers outnumbered the French by over five to one. The siege began as earthworks were prepared and attempts by the French to disrupt this were seen off by the 95th rifles supported by line infantry. Heavy howitzers then arrived and began bombardment. By 5th April two breaches in the wall had been made and the assault could begin which it did at 10pm on 6th as the troops marched forward with

scaling ladders and the 4th division, with 40th regiment still part of its number, led the main attack behind the 'Forlorn Hope' which was a group of men formed from various regiments including the 40th. The British infantry surged forward but the alarm had been raised and they faced a lethal hail of musket fire from the defenders accompanied by grenades and stones. The furious barrage devastated the British soldiers at the wall and the breach soon began to fill with dead and wounded, whom the storming troops had to struggle over. Despite the carnage the redcoats bravely continued to surge forward in great numbers, only to be mown down by endless volleys and shrapnel from grenades and bombs. In just under two hours, some 2,000 men had been killed or badly wounded at the main breach. Everywhere they attacked, the allied soldiers were being halted and the carnage was so immense that Wellington was just about to call a halt to the assault when the soldiers finally gained a foothold on the curtain wall. With the foothold the allies had an advantage and seeing that he could no longer hold out, the French General Philippon withdrew from Badajoz to the neighbouring outwork of San Cristobal; however, he surrendered shortly after the town had fallen.

With success came mass looting and disorder as the redcoats turned to drink and it was some 72 hours before order was completely restored. The wanton sacking of Badajoz has been noted by many historians as a particularly atrocious conduct committed by the British Army: many homes were broken into, property vandalised or stolen, Spanish civilians of all ages and backgrounds killed or raped, and many officers were also shot by the men they were trying to bring to order.

When dawn finally came on April 7, it revealed the horror of the slaughter all around the curtain wall. Bodies were piled high and blood flowed like rivers in the ditches and trenches. When he saw the destruction and slaughter, Wellington cried at the sight of British dead in the breaches and bitterly cursed the British Parliament for granting him so few resources and soldiers. The assault and the earlier skirmishes had left the allies with some 4,800 casualties.

Private James Dilley of the 1st battalion, 40th foot wrote to his parents at Southill (Beds.) about his experiences at Badajoz:

*Storming of Badajoz by the 88th Regiment of Foot. Picture by Chris Collingwood.*

"I suppose that you wonder at my long silence in not sending to you before but I received a very severe wound at the siege of Barajoz. A shot went in at my belly and it was cut out of my side but by the blessing of God I am quite recovered..... I was wounded on the 5th of May after a severe action which took place on that day the French sallied out of the town in order to take our batteries but was repulsed by our pickets which I was on, the shots flew like hail on every side which every man that was on the same duty with me was ether killed or wounded....I lay in hospital four months

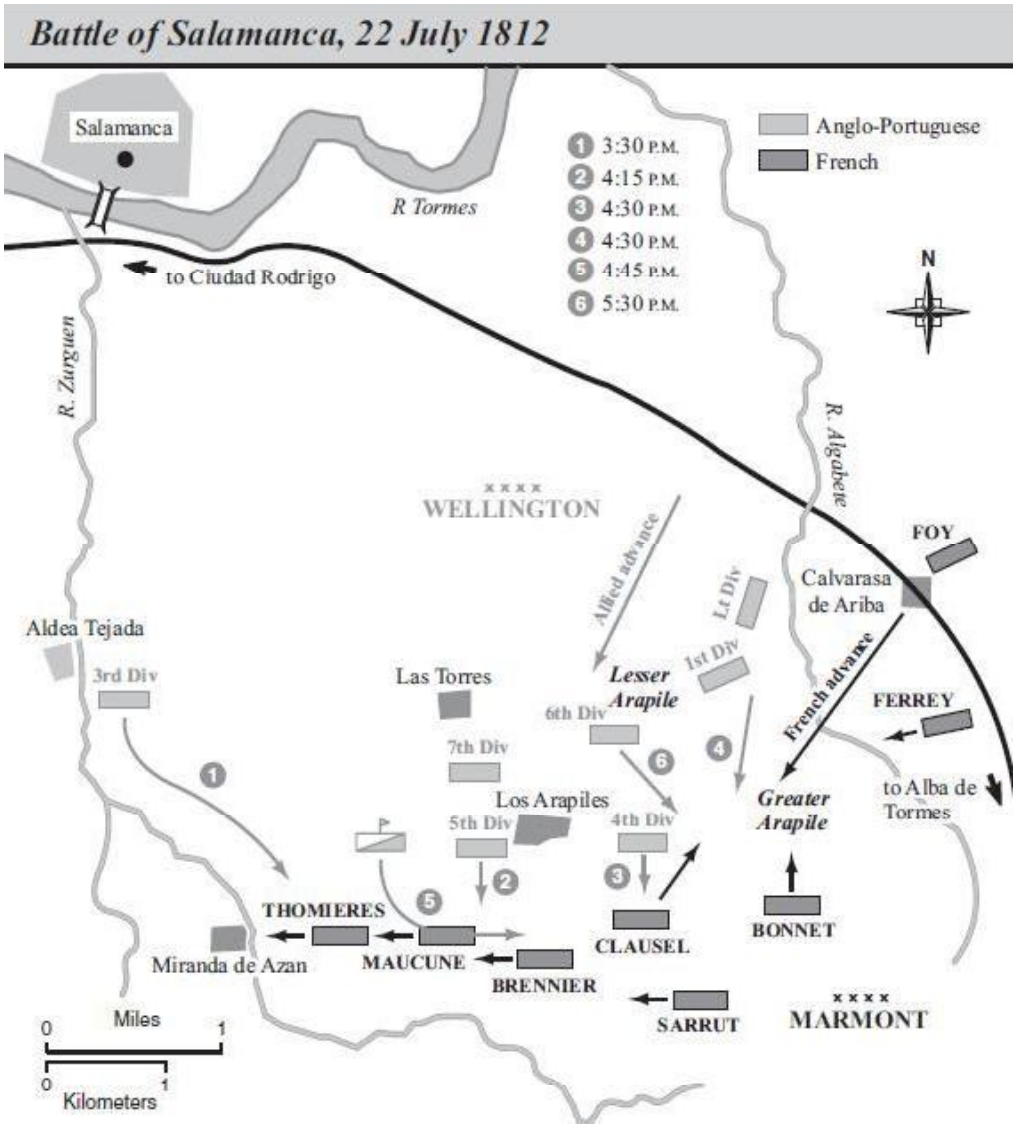
and had no opportunity of sending [a letter] we was first to leave Badajoz to the French and march to the Plains of Alverder where the severest action took place that ever was fought the dead covered the ground for a long way round.... I hope to God that my brother will never think of going for a soldier for I cannot express the sufferings in the compass of a letter that we under go in this distressed country. "

The 40th, as it had formed a part of the main assault force, suffered particularly badly at Badajoz and two thirds of their number were wounded or killed. Many of the officers of the regiment received medals for leading a force at the assault. My ancestor Francis survived, thankfully as otherwise my relatives and I may not be here today, but there is no record as to whether he was wounded. If he was not wounded, sadly one therefore cannot rule him out of having been part of the scenes of 'riot and debauchery'. If Francis was not wounded then it was probably not severe because he saw action at the next engagement at Salamanca three months later. This was not however before the regiment became involved in a rearguard action in the Vale of Canizal in Spain.

At Canizal on the 15th July a British rearguard, of which the 40th formed a part, took up a position which commanded the vale. The French perceived that the enemy facing them was small and advanced to dislodge it. Wellington ordered the right of the 4th division, the 3rd battallion of the 27th and the 40th, to attack to ensure a brigade of cavalry in the low ground was not surrounded and the enemy advance was checked. The British then charged with fixed bayonet and routed the French with much slaughter. The 40th Regiment as a result of their gallantry captured a handsome silver-mounted drum-major's staff belonging to the 65th French infantry and in 1893 the regimental history says that this was still in their possession and used in parades. The staff is shown in the picture below on the left next to two other captured momentoes of victories of the 40th Foot from later battles of the 19th century. In this action thirteen of the 40th Regiment were killed and about sixty others were wounded.

In June 1812 Napoleon invaded Russia. This was a grand venture that was ultimately to lead to disastrous defeat and the long retreat where less than 40,000 French troops were to return home from the 400,000 that launched the invasion. The impact on the war in the Peninsula was that it would help to draw some French troops away from this conflict and would eventually help in the defeat of the Emperor. But for the time being the allies had substantial and strong forces pitted against them, even if they were not under the immediate command of Napoleon, and in July 1812 the next major battle took place at Salamanca.

# ***The Battle of Salamanca***




The two opposing armies marched on Salamanca, crossing the River Tormes on 21st July. Wellington was resolved to avoid action other than under the most advantageous of circumstances. French General Marmont was anxious not to engage in full battle but felt constrained to fight some sort of engagement. On 22nd July Marmont thought he had the right opportunity. Dust clouds beyond the hills to the South of Salamanca suggested that Wellington was retreating. British troops could be seen in the hills opposite the French positions, but Marmont assumed this was a rearguard. His ideal opportunity had

arisen whereby he could engage a small force and achieve success, thereby satisfying the demands of his army and his commander, King Joseph.

Although Wellington had sent his heavy baggage on the road to Ciudad Rodrigo, not a rear guard but his whole army still lay concealed in the hills before the French. French troops advanced and fighting took place around the chapel of Nostra Señora de la Peña. Assuming that two divisions was all he faced, Marmont resolved to engage these troops while his army marched off to the left and came in behind the British, cutting them off from the rest of Wellington's army which he took to be retreating in the distant dust cloud.

During the day Wellington moved his hidden divisions into positions facing to the South. At about 2pm Wellington saw the nature of Marmont's move around his flank. The French divisions were marching along the British and Portuguese front, dangerously strung out and exposing their flanks.

Wellington galloped to his extreme right, where Pakenham's 3rd Division was arriving from Salamanca with D'Urban's Portuguese Cavalry. He ordered an immediate attack on the head of the French column. Wellington then crossed the hills to his centre and directed the 5th and 4th Divisions (with the 40th Regiment still part of their number as part of its 1st brigade under Major General William Anson) to attack the French column, supported by the 6th and 7th Divisions and two Portuguese infantry brigades. D'Urban's cavalry and the infantry of the 3rd Division began the battle, charging Thomières' Division at the head of the French column. The 40th as part of this advance left the hill that they had occupied in the morning and in its advance the division inclined rather to the right creating a space between them and the town of Arapiles which the enemy attempted to exploit. Seeing this Major Archdall commanding the 40th ordered the right of the Regiment to deploy into line, described by historian Napier as 'a wing of the 40th wheeling about with a rough charge". Two French columns were attacked with bayonet which forced them to retire in confusion. After further heavy fighting involving Lieutenant Colonel Wallace's 1st Brigade, the French gave way.

Further to the left the British 5th Division advanced down the hillside towards Maucune's Division, isolated by the extended French column. Maucune formed his battalions in square under the threat of the advancing British cavalry and were attacked by the infantry of the 5th Division. The British and Portuguese charged the squares and the French were driven back.

The next phase of the battle was the attack by Le Marchant's brigade of heavy cavalry between the 3rd and 5th Divisions. The cavalry struck Maucune's retreating infantry and overran them. The charge was continued until the cavalry encountered a steady French brigade of infantry in squares and the dragoons were brought to a halt, loosing casualties including General Le Marchant who was killed.

The French divisions of Thomières and Maucune had been forced out of the battle and the division of Brennier had suffered heavy casualties. At the beginning of the fighting Marshal Marmont was wounded as was his deputy, General

Bonnet. Taking command, General Clausel launched a counter attack on the open flank of the 4th Division with considerable effect, until Beresford brought up a Portuguese Brigade from the second line of the 5th Division and halted the French assault. The arrival of the Sixth Division, advancing in support of the 4th Division, drove back the French. By this time night was well advanced and the French Army of Portugal was streaming back to the Tormes River to escape the British and Portuguese assault. The battle had ended with a complete victory for Wellington.

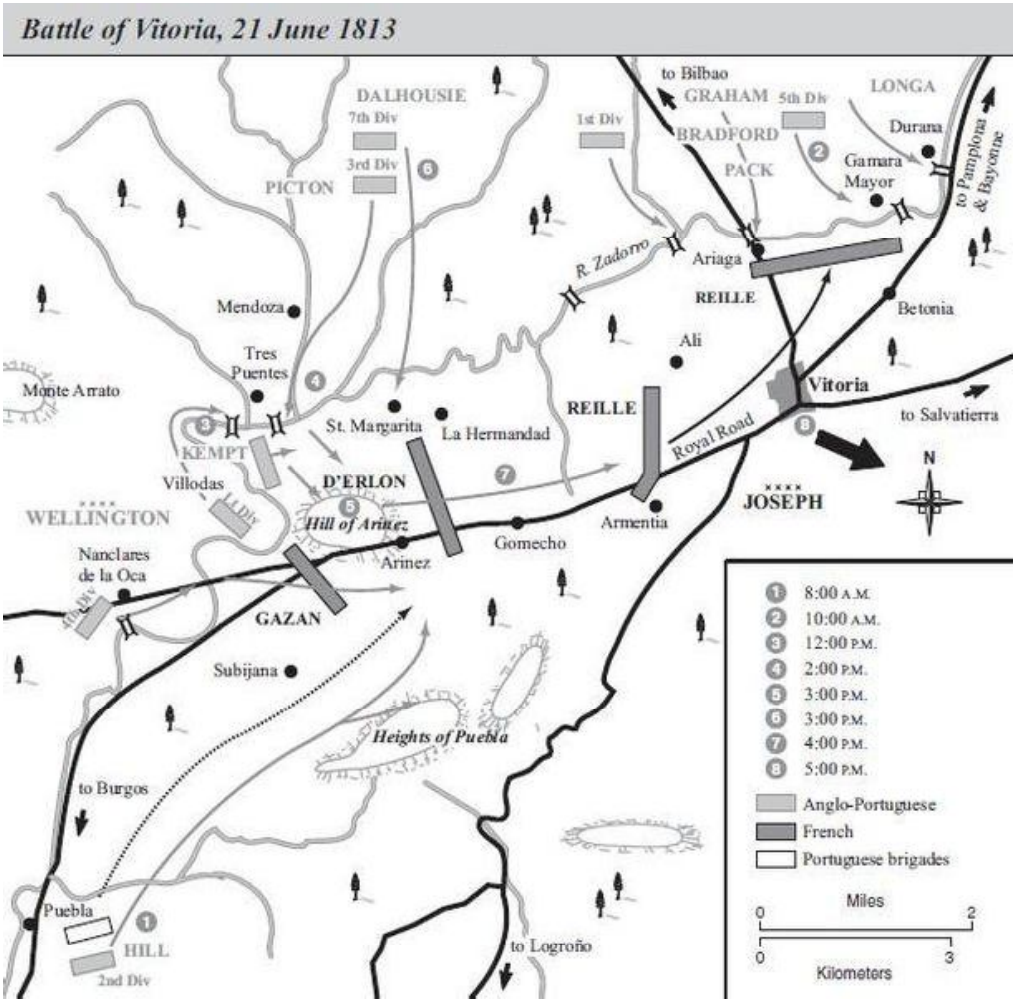
The 40th became attached to a German brigade of the 1st Division and joined the rout of the French and pursued them for three days. Subsequently the remainder of the 4th Division came up and the 40th was able to rejoin it. The 40th then marched to Escurial where it remained until the middle of October when it then proceeded to Ciempozuelos south of Madrid in Spain. But the army suffered a lot from lack of provisions along with the inclemency of weather. By 24th December they had mustered at Villa de Ciervo.

In January 1813 the 40th marched to Cedavim and in March it proceeded to Matta de Lobos. In May 1813 Wellington reviewed the 4th Division at Castel Rodrigo and the brigades were formed into one long line over a mile and a half long. The commander would have been pleased to see the 40th in good condition as it was not long before they were again in a major action.

# ***The Battle of Vitoria***

*Battle of Vitoria by W Heath, published 1814.*

The British army pushed the French forces back as Wellington made a determined push out of Portugal again. Eventually the two armies faced each other in front of Vitoria in northern Spain on 19th June1813. On 20th June 1813 the French heard sounds of firing from the north of the town, along the road to Bilbao. They knew that Wellington was closing in on them.




The 40th had to endure shortages in the immediate run up to the battle and afterwards as described by Major Mill –

> "The privations and fatigues previous to and after the action were extreme. One pound and a half of

bread was the whole that was issued in the seven days previous to the battle. Bread was not to be purchased. Had it not been for a supply of horse-beans which we gathered in the fields we could not have gone through the protracted fatigue…"

The first sign of attack on 21st June 1813 was the arrival of Major General Hill's corps through the La Puebla defile. The Spanish Division and Cadogan's brigade moved onto the southern hills where they were fiercely counter-attacked by the divisions of Villatte and Maransin. Meanwhile Lord Wellington brought his main force through the La Puebla defile and up the north bank of the Zadorra to the village of Nanclares where, he intended to launch his attack on the French flank. Further along the river it was found that the bridges at the main bend in the river were intact. Kempt's brigade crossed the Zadorra supported by the 15th Hussars.

*Monument to the battle in Vitoria, photo by Zarateman.*

Wellington's plan envisaged an attack by four forces. On his extreme left Major General Graham's column was to attack down the Bilbao road, force the bridge over the Zadorra at Gamara Mayor and cut the road leading north-east to France. The fourth column, commanded by Lord Dalhousie, was to cross the mountains and cross the river to the left of Wellington's column.

After the initial fighting at the western end of the plain Lord Wellington called a pause to enable Graham's column to come up and begin its assault. Graham began his attack, but fierce resistance by the Army of Portugal kept him on the north bank. Further to his left Longa's Spanish Division managed to cross the river and block the road to France.

Dalhousie's 3rd Division crossed the Zadorra east of Tres Puentes, Wellington's 4th Division, with the 40th in their number, crossed at Nanclares and Hill's corps pressed forward. Gazan's Army of the South fell back from ridge to ridge. The Army of the Centre found itself heavily attacked on its left flank.


*Bringing in the prisoners after Vitoria, by W Heath. Pub 1814.*

As the French line broke up Alten's Hussar Brigade stormed into Vitoria. The town was in chaos. The French took the horses and hurried down the southerly road towards Salvatierra leaving a complete siege train, many guns and the valuables they had accumulated during the years of occupation. Many of the British, Portuguese and Spanish troops gave

themselves up to looting.

Later that night Joseph, Jourdan and the senior French officers gathered in Salvatierra to contemplate the end of their dominance of Spain. The battle established Wellington as an offensive general. It was said that Wellington "defeated an army of 40,000 men in 40 minutes".

Ten of the 40th regiment were killed at Vitoria and about thirty six others were wounded. We may assume that Francis was amongst the wounded because for the next five regimental engagements he is missing and for a space of almost a year he is not recorded as seeing action in the Peninsula War. The next time that Francis saw action was at Toulouse in southern France in April 1814

# ***The Battle of Toulouse***

*British infantry exchanges fire with the French across the Languedoc Canal during the Battle of Toulouse. Print after Henri Dupray (1841-1909). From Wikipedia, public domain.*

This battle was the last battle of the Peninsula War and one of the final battles of the Napoleonic wars and it happened four days after Napoleon's surrender. It followed the invasion of southern France earlier in 1814, after the final victories in Portugal and Spain, by forces under the supreme command of Field Marshall Wellington.

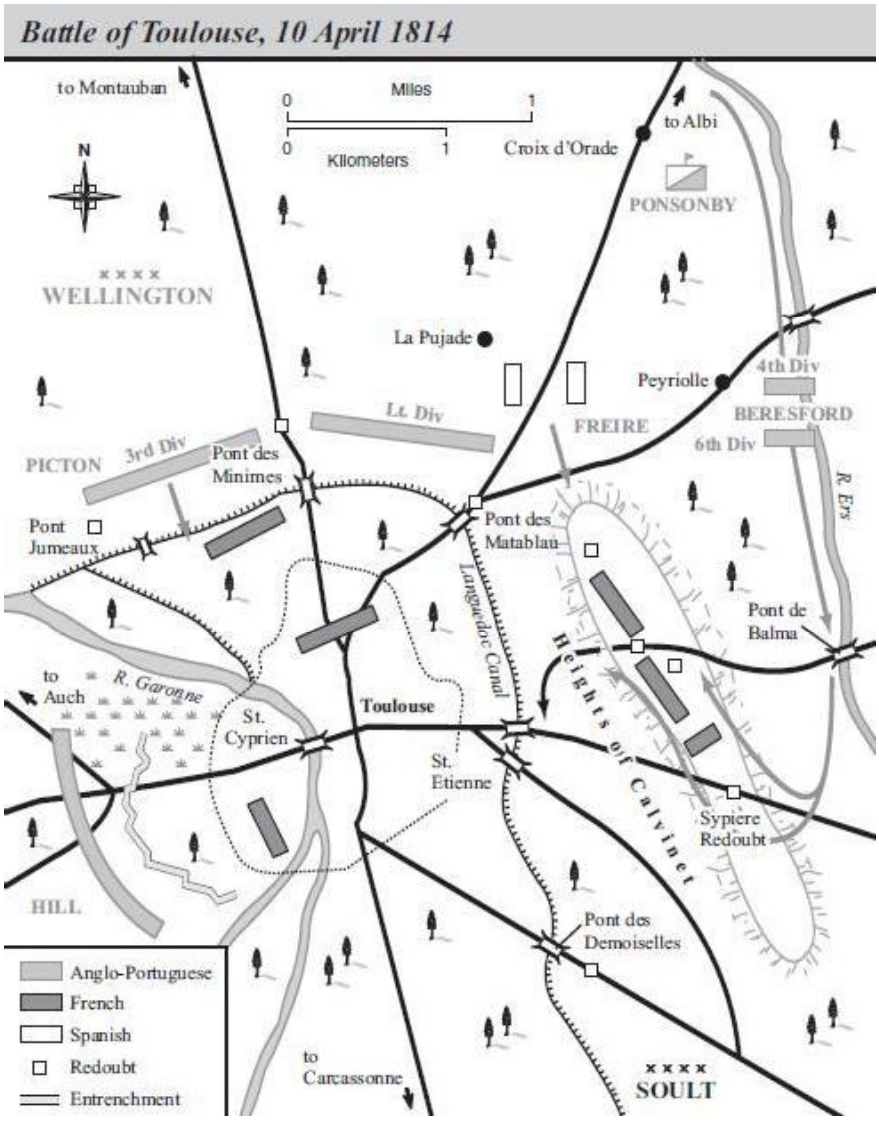
The city of Toulouse was garrisoned by about 42,000 French troops and it was one of the last urban centres of France still loyal to Napoleon.

The 40th Regiment were commanded as follows –

Field Marshall Arthur Wellesley, Marques of Wellington
|
General William Beresford, 1st Viscount Beresford
|
General Lowry Cole commanding the army 4th Division
|
General William Anson commanding the 1st Brigade
|
40th Regiment of Foot (2nd Somersetshire)

Wellington began his attack on Easter Sunday, April 10. Hoping to divert some of Soult's forces, the British general sent Hill with the 12,600 men of the 2nd Division and Portuguese Division to attack St-Cyprien. The rest of the Anglo-Allied army (36,000) operated east of the Garonne and north of the city. The 3rd Division faced the northwest canal line with the Light Division to the east. Wellington planned to make his major effort against the Heights of Calvinet. Beresford would take the 4th and 6th Divisions and the Hussar brigades down the west bank of the Hers.

Once he reached a point east of the city, Beresford would veer west and attack the Heights with the Hussars protecting his south flank. At the same time, Manuel Freire would assault the northern end of the Heights with his two Spanish divisions. Two heavy dragoon brigades waited in reserve.




To the west, Hill drove in the French outposts but the fighting was not serious. His forces suffered about 80 casualties. Exceeding his orders, Picton mounted a full scale attack on the Pont Jumeaux with his 3rd Division and was repulsed with 400 casualties. Meanwhile, Beresford's men, with the 40th Foot, encountered muddy fields and fell behind schedule. Unable to move his artillery, he ordered the cannons to take a position near the northern end of the Heights and open fire. Freire, thinking this was the signal for the combined attack, sent his men to assault the Heights. The Spanish infantry forged uphill and gained a momentary foothold in a road cut, but they were counterattacked by a cloud of French skirmishers and soon sent fleeing. Covered by the Light Division, the Spanish foot soldiers rallied, then attacked and were defeated a second time.

At last, Beresford's two Anglo-Portuguese divisions reached their jumping off positions, with the 6th Division leading. A French division counterattacked, but was easily driven uphill, and the Allied divisions began to advance up the slope. They fought their way to the top of the Heights despite bitter resistance, then paused to drag up some cannon. Swinging to the north, they began rolling up the French defenses. Beresford's men captured two redoubts, lost them to a counterattack and finally seized them again after bringing the 4th Division forward. The heights being lost, Soult withdrew his soldiers behind the city's fortifications.

Major Mill describes some of the hard attacks that the 40th faced in the attack, firsly in their attack on the heights –

> "The way was long, and narrow for the numbers, and the difficutlies of the defile were greatly enhanced of the deep miry nature of the ground. You can easily conceieve how we suffered, and in what manner their shot devastated our ranks. To this fire there was no reply, no rejoinder of a similar kind from our side, except in the way of a shout of menace and defiance from the regiment when one or men were together were striken down by this severe fire."

And then when facing the French counterattack to gain the heights from their starting point –

"… we moved forward to enmcounter the advancing French, against whom we pressed forward up the aclivity, and crowning it with loud cries, bore down every show of oppoisition in our course. It almost seemed that the mere sight of a bayonet and a few volleys sufficed to inspire a salutory awe and dread; for the enemy wavered, became mixed, and then turned, thus surrendering the most advanced redoubts and taking flight to the stronger works in the rear, close by the town walls. We then formed three lines … and in this form remained exposde to their cannonade for the rest of the day.

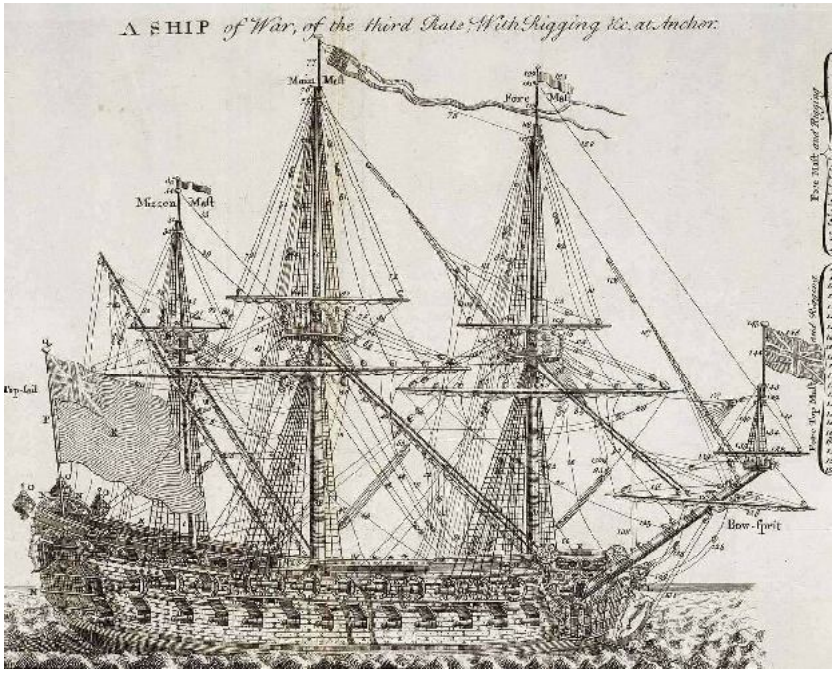
The oldest man in the 40th … declares never of any former occasion was he ever exposed to such tremendous cannonading, which was maintained without any intermission for the space of four hours and playing on our brigade chiefly. The bracey of the British was never exceeded … the loss in the 40th was compartively small if it be considered that we were exposed from 9o'clock until dark during most of the part of the time we were either exposed to cannon or small arms. The loss with us nonetheless was nine officers and one hundred men either killed or wounded."

On the morning of April 12 a delegation of city officials handed over the city to the Allied army. That afternoon, Wellington got news via Bordeaux from Ponsonby of Napoleon's abdication. A few hours later, this was confirmed when the official couriers arrived from Paris.

On 24th April 1814 the 40th mustered at Valance and in May the regiment was ordered to proceed to Bordeaux with a view to embarkation for North America. However after a regimental review, and with the 40th having served for the whole of the Peninsula War, it was spared immediate further action in foreign war. The regiment arrived at Bordeaux in early May and in the town they were billeted with the local inhabitants. Sergeant Lawrence says in his memoirs –

".. they could not have behaved better to us had they been our own countrymen … "

and he speaks of the hospitality of their hosts including warm feather beds, tobaco, wines and decent meals.

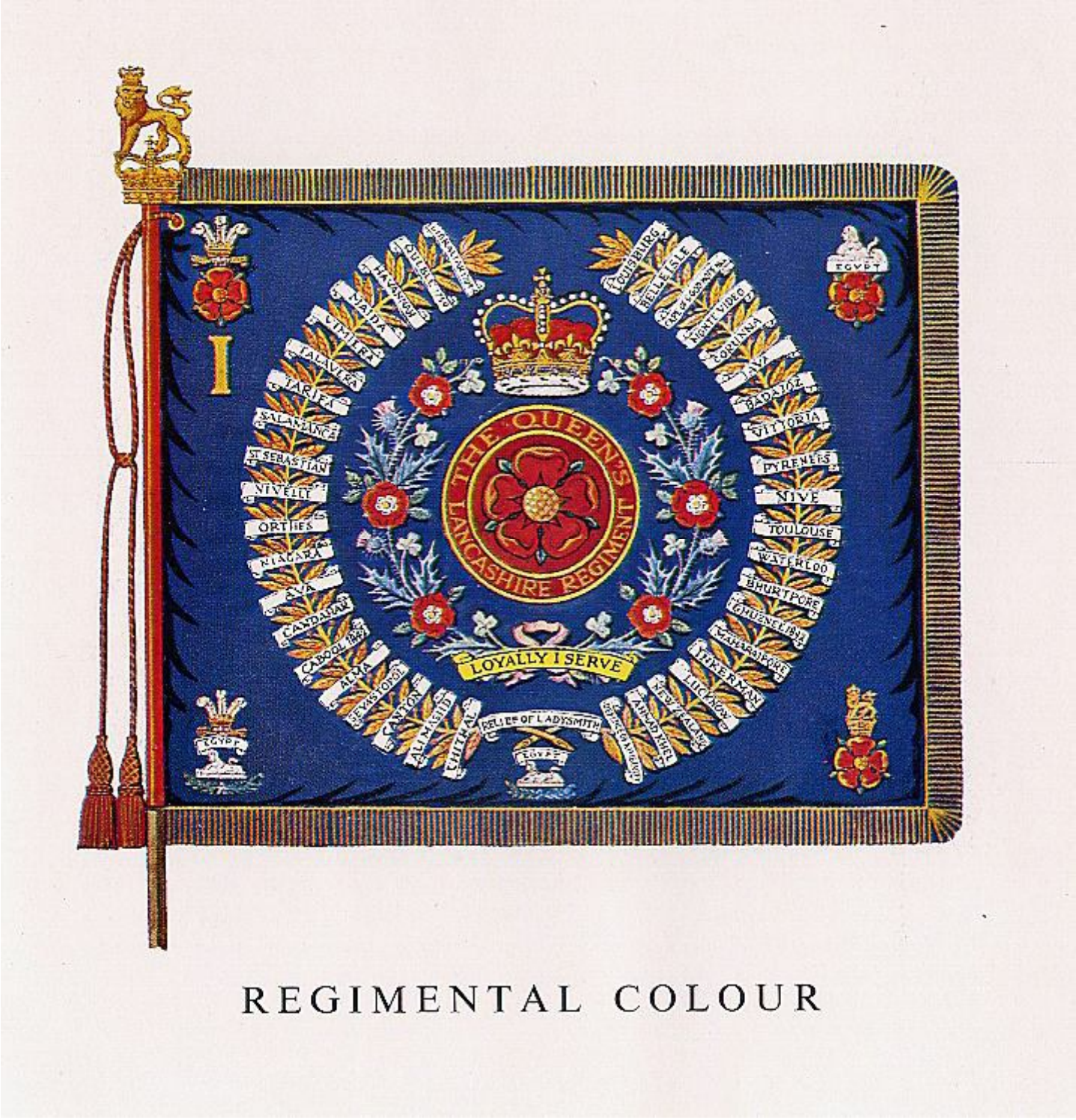



On 9th June the 40th camped at Blancquefort and then at Pauillae on 11th. Here the regiment was shipped in transports and conveyed down the river to the anchorage of HMS Sultan (a 'fame' class ship like that pictured to the right). In this man of war the regiment embarked on 12th June 1814 and left the shores of France.

Wellington is known to have said that the force that Francis served in was the best army that Britain ever had.

# ***The 40th Foot Regiment***

In 1881 the 40th changed its name to the South Lancashire Regiment, thus ending its association with Somerset. Then in 1958 the East Lancashire Regiment and South Lancashire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Volunteers) were amalgamated and the new Queen's Lancashire Regiment was inaugurated at Connaught Barracks, Dover in 1970. The Regimental colour of the regiment below (from *http://british-cemetery-elvas.org*) has several Battle Honours listed from the Peninsula war inherited from the old 40th Foot including those in which Francis saw action such as – Talavera, Salamanca, Badajoz, Vitoria and Toulouse.




REGIMENTAL COLOUR

Today the old 40th is part of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

The war memorial below (from the website ***http://www.warmemorials.org*** ) at the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre in Chicksands, Bedfordshire, commemorates the role of the 40th Regiment of Foot in the Napoleonic Wars, as well as marking the end of both the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Crimean War, at which time the memorial was restored and moved to its present site.

The inscription on the west face of the plinth reads:

For Peace Restored To Europe
And Freedom to the Nations
Oppressed, insulted
By the Ambition of one Man
Who in the End might have defied Resistance, extinguished Hope
But for their Heroic Efforts.
Aided by the Counsels and Valour of this Country
Which claims so proud a share in the Glory of their Deliverance
For these Blessings
Long and arduously contended for
Let gratitude be felt
To those whether of this or foreign lands,
Who nobly contributed to procure them.
But above all
To the power invisible supreme

On the east reads:

The Officers Non Commissioned Officers & Private Soldiers
of the Fortieth Regiment of foot
who gloriously fell in Contest
maintained by Great Britain against revolutionary France
commencing in the year 1793
and terminating in the year 1815
by the Battle of Waterloo and the Capture of Paris
This Pillar is erected
by General Sir George Osbourn *Bart.* their Colonel
In humble Gratitude to Divine Providence
for the Success of His Majesty's Arms
and for the Restoration of the Blessings
Of Peace

# ***Francis Newport returns home***

*"… the very scum of the earth. … and it really is wonderful that we should have made them the fine fellows they are."*
The Duke of Wellington talking about his soldiers in 1831.

After eighteen days at sea, the 40th arrived at Cove in Ireland on 30th June 1814 but remained on board HMS Sultan until 2nd July when they then disembarked at Martinstown and proceeded to Cork. The 1st battalion was soon readied for further action and became part of a force under the command of Sir Edward Pakenham to reinforce an expedition to New Orleans in the new conflict against the USA. The 2nd Battalion of the 40th Foot was by now reduced to almost a skeleton and remained at Mallow in Ireland. There is then no reference to the remnant of the 2nd Battalion joining the 1st when they landed back in Europe and Ostend in May 1815 and when they went to join forces gathering to face the new army that Napoleon Bonaparte had assembled. One can almost certainly assume that Francis remained at Mallow with the 2nd Battalion, having by now done plenty of years in active service for an enrolled soldier. Francis almost certainly did not go to New Orleans.

It isn't clear exactly when Francis was discharged from service and I do not know whether records exist for his service because he was not later pensioned. We know that the remnant of the 2nd Battalion moved to England and to Plymouth soon after the 1st Battalion had left for New Orleans. It then moved to Dover Castle in the spring of 1815 and in the latter quarter of that year it was disbanded and it may well be at this time that Francis finally completed his service with the regular army. Francis must have been back in Somerset by the middle of the following year as on 15th October 1816 he married Susannah Perry at North Cadbury. Susannah was a native of Cadbury and it was a custom at that time to marry in the parish of the bride.

Francis found himself in a tougher England after that war, a country that had been profoundly affected socially and economically by the wars. 100,000 soldiers and sailors were no longer needed to fight the French and returned to England looking for work. The land was full of laid off workers and corn flooded onto the market at a cheap price after the wars. Agriculture and work on the land was therefore severely affected. The Poor Law authorities were stretched to have to provide for the growing number of unemployed and families. Francis was to become heavily reliant on help from the overseers and from January 1817 onwards he is recorded as making many claims for relief. He had to make claims for employment, clothing (for himself and his children), blankets, food (including seed potatoes), firewood and tinder, a doctor to attend his wife, rent and housing. Some of these claims were refused and one can only imagine at the distress this would have caused. Evidently being an old soldier did not necessarily guarantee success with such claims.

*The church at West Pennard in which graveyard Francis Newport lies buried.*

The period from 1820 saw unrest in the cities, towns and villages as the working class found their voice and started to form collective organisations like early trade unions or rioted in protest against falling wages and reduced work. Some even took to campaigning for an extension of the right to vote as a means to get a say in the way that the country was run. In a spirit similar to the aftermath of the 20th century wars, many of those returning from wars who had put their lives on the lines for King and country and those who supported their efforts from home demanded more and not just a return to subservience and poverty. Needless to say that it was people like the Duke of Wellington, later serving as a politician, who did more than most to suppress these protests and attempted to put the working

class back in their place. He did not believe that the blood that they spilt for their country meant that they should necessarily have any more say in the way the country was run and believed that poverty and subservience was their lot. Unfortunately Wellington was never able to repay his former soldiers for their service in terms of granting them a greater hold of the wealth and government of the country that they had fought for with him in the wars. It is however also fair to say though that many of his former soldiers, who did not know more than there lot in life, would not have criticised Wellington despite such policies and they probably remained proud of their association with their former victorious commander.

Francis and Susannah Newport settled in neither of their home parishes but not far from Francis' home of Baltonsborough, at West Pennard. They may also have lived for some time at Bristol, where their second child was born in 1819, or they may have just been visiting. They baptised their first child, my great x 2 grandfather, James Newport at West Pennard on 25th December 1817. They proceeded to have five other children, all girls – Abigail (named after Susannah's mother), Elizabeth, Margaret (named after Susannah's grandmother), Mary (named after Francis' mother) and Anna – between 1819 and 1830 by which latter date Francis was 47 years old. Francis is recorded as being a 'labourer' on the baptism of his children in 1817, and 1826 to 1830 but as a 'mason' when his second child was baptised in 1823. Later in life he is also recorded as being a 'mason'.

Throughout his life back in England Francis was reliant on parish poor relief and made numerous claims including –

- in 1817 for employment
- in 1818 for rent
- in 1819 for a house
- in 1821 for a blanket and doctor to attend his wife
- in 1823 for work, shoes, rent and relief
- in 1827 for seed potato's and shirts
- and 1830 for shoes for his son.

In 1841 Francis and his family are shown on the census, James was living separately by 1841 and he married in the parish in 1848 –

*Church Lane, West Pennard, Somerset*
Francis **Newport**, 58, mason
Susana, 55
Abigail, 22
Mary, 12
Anna, 10

and in 1851 –

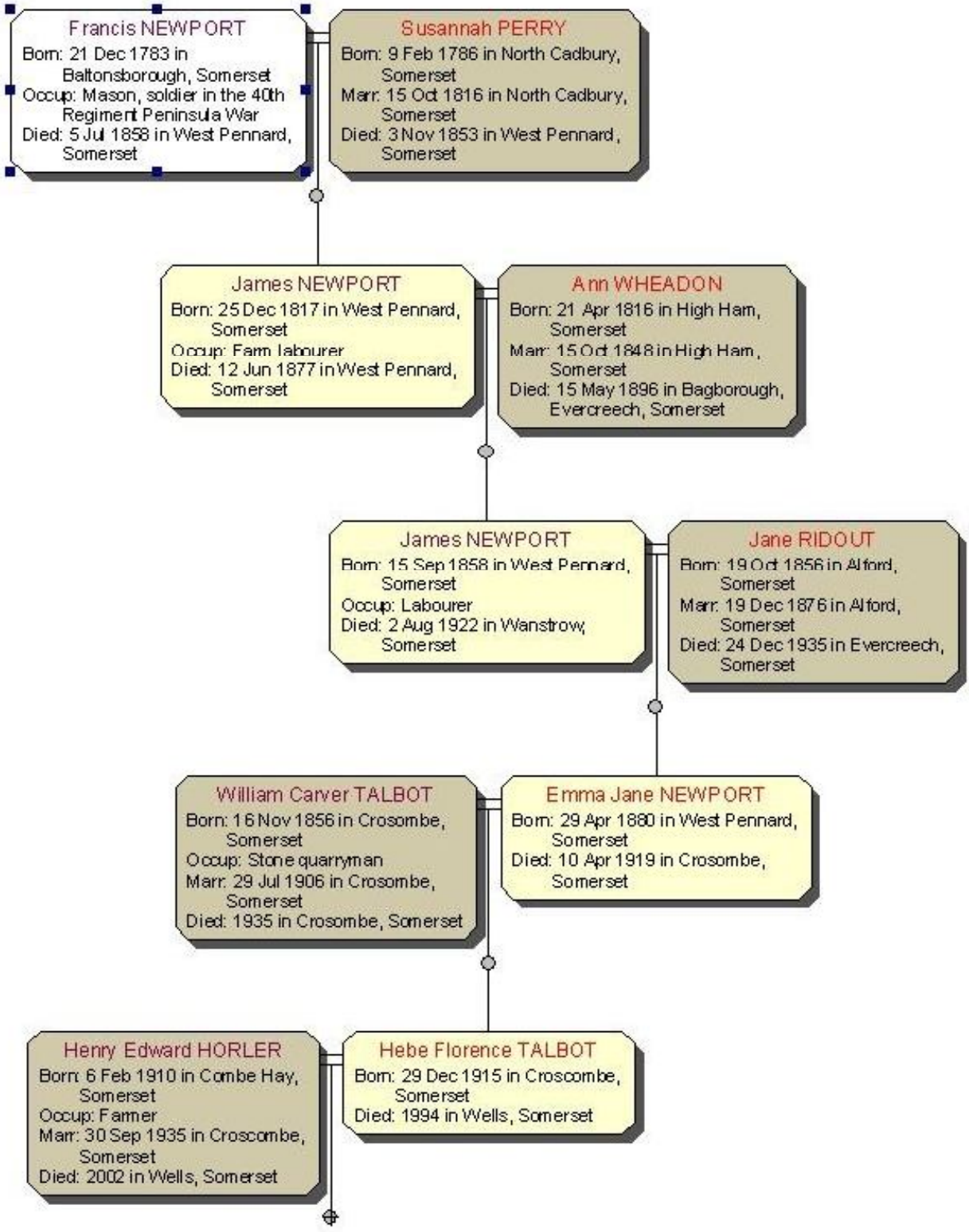
*West Pennard, Somerset*
Francis **Newport,** Head, 70, mason, Baltonsborough, Somerset
Susan, wife, 65, born North Cadbury
Elizabeth, daughter, 26, born West Pennard
Abigail, daughter, 32, born Bristol Solish?

Susannah Newport was buried at West Pennard in Somerset on 3rd November 1853 aged 77. Francis survived her and was buried 5th July 1858 at West Pennard aged 77.

The Newports lived at West Pennard for about 70 years between James' baptism and when his son had their last child baptised there in 1888. They then moved to Pilton, then Evercreech and

finally Shepton Mallet. Any memories of Francis wartime exploits under Wellington and against Bonaparte were lost down the generations. My ancestor's army service does not appear to have been passed to my grandmother. It is therefore a wonderful discovery to be able to tell this story of Francis' part in Napoleon's downfall and in freeing Spain from the French Empire. I hope it is of interest to my immediate relatives, and other ancestors of Francis Newport, as it has been to me in compiling it.

My nan, christened Hebe Florence Talbot, is pictured below in her pre-marriage days. She was the daughter of William Talbot and Emily Newport and she was the great x 2 granddaughter of Francis Newport of Baltonsborough and later West Pennard. The line from Francis to my grandmother is shown in page 30.


Francis NEWPORT
Born: 21 Dec 1783 in Baltonsborough, Somerset
Occup: Mason, soldier in the 40th Regiment Peninsula War
Died: 5 Jul 1858 in West Pennard, Somerset
Susannah PERRY
Born: 9 Feb 1786 in North Cadbury, Somerset
Marr: 15 Oct 1816 in North Cadbury, Somerset
Died: 3 Nov 1853 in West Pennard, Somerset
James NEWPORT
Born: 25 Dec 1817 in West Pennard, Somerset
Occup: Farm labourer
Died: 12 Jun 1877 in West Pennard, Somerset
Ann WHEADON
Born: 21 Apr 1816 in High Ham, Somerset
Marr: 15 Oct 1848 in High Ham, Somerset
Died: 15 May 1896 in Bagborough, Evercreech, Somerset
James NEWPORT
Born: 15 Sep 1858 in West Pennard, Somerset
Occup: Labourer
Died: 2 Aug 1922 in Wanstrow, Somerset
Jane RIDOUT
Born: 19 Oct 1856 in Alford, Somerset
Marr: 19 Dec 1876 in Alford, Somerset
Died: 24 Dec 1935 in Evercreech, Somerset
William Carver TALBOT
Born: 16 Nov 1856 in Crosombe, Somerset
Occup: Stone quarryman
Marr: 29 Jul 1906 in Crosombe, Somerset
Died: 1935 in Crosombe, Somerset
Emma Jane NEWPORT
Born: 29 Apr 1880 in West Pennard, Somerset
Died: 10 Apr 1919 in Crosombe, Somerset
Henry Edward HORLER
Born: 6 Feb 1910 in Combe Hay, Somerset
Occup: Farmer
Marr: 30 Sep 1935 in Croscombe, Somerset
Died: 2002 in Wells, Somerset
Hebe Florence TALBOT
Born: 29 Dec 1915 in Croscombe, Somerset
Died: 1994 in Wells, Somerset