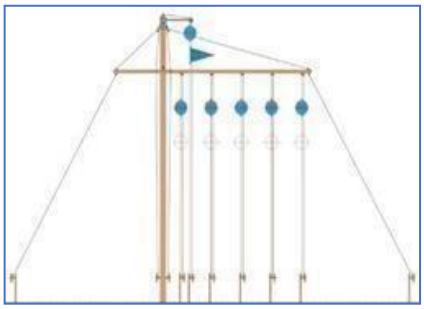


The aims of the Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras are:

1. *To support Portuguese institutions and local authorities in maintaining, enhancing, and explaining the physical infrastructure of the Lines.*
2. *To encourage British interest in the Lines of Torres Vedras and awareness of the contemporary developments.*
3. *To raise Resources in support of these objectives.*
4. *To collaborate with Portuguese and British based organisations, civil and military, in achieving these objectives.*

December Newsletter 2025
The Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras

Xmas and New Year

The committee wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and an excellent 2026. Thank you all for your support.

New Talks Programme

Mark Thompson has produced a brilliant new programme for 2025/2026.

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

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

Marcus de Poer Beresford Grant Request

The committee of the FLTV were asked by Marcus de la Poer Beresford, a member, to support a proposal for which he seeks a 500-euro grant towards the overall cost. The committee have overwhelmingly supported the proposal. Basically it is indexing the records of British officers in the Portuguese army. A brief is included below.

Robert ('Bob') Burnham, Rui Moura and I have been working to achieve the indexing of the files of the British officers in the Portuguese service. As you know there were some 375 of these. The Portuguese army kept good records in Portuguese) which have now been digitised but not indexed as the project ran out of money. Having obtained two quotations we have ascertained that the work could be done for €4305 including VAT by a company approved by the Arquivo Historico Militar (AHM). The completed project would enable online access to these important documents.

We have asked the Waterloo Association to assist with the project and are hopeful that it will do so. However , it is unlikely to cover the full cost. Bob and I are prepared to put our hands in our pockets to assist. and we are approaching several others to see if they would help.

We would like some help. We appreciate it is a big ask, but even €500 would go a long way to getting this project over the line. Below I set out the proposal already put to the Waterloo Association.

Folders to be indexed: 153: Number of documents to be indexed: 5900+:Number of officers personal records that will be indexed: 153+ Some folders have more than one officer in it.

Among other things, these folders contain letters written by the officer; semi-annual performance evaluations; and other correspondence. This information will be invaluable for anyone researching an officer who is looking for the officer's personality, ability, and command style, which is so often lacking in other correspondence. In addition to those folders, the index will include all other documents pertaining to these officers that are online. There are thousands of files. Here is a link to the reports already indexed for Richard Blunt. There are at least 2000 reports.

https://ahm-exercito.defesa.gov.pt/details?id=200407&detailsType=Description

Estimated amount of time to do the work: 4 weeks : Cost: €4305

Note: there may be future project to translate these documents.

2026 Event Programme

Spring 2026 event (25th/26th April 2026)

We thank Ian Brewer who has been working on the plan for the Spring Visit.
We are pleased to announce that the Friends spring trip next year will be to God's Own County also known as Yorkshire. It will commence on Friday 24 April and finish at lunchtime on Sunday 26 April. We will be staying at one of Leeds's landmark hotels the Met for two nights on a bed and breakfast basis. The weekend will commence with a Group dinner on the Friday night in the hotel.

On the Saturday we have hired a minibus, and our first stop will be a brief look at the exterior of the Duke of Wellington's (or the 33rd Foot as Wellington himself would have known it) old regimental headquarters in Halifax. This will be followed for the rest of the morning by a visit to the Regimental museum of the Wellingtons also in Halifax.

From there we head to York stopping enroute for a pub lunch at the Rockingham Arms, which is located on the battlefield of Towton reputedly the bloodiest single day of a battle in England. During lunch we will hear a presentation on the battle by Chris Berendt, a Towton battlefield guide. From there we head to the York Army museum, which holds the collections of the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire and the Royal Dragoon Guards and their antecedents - https://yorkarmymuseum.co.uk/collections/.

We then return to our hotel in Leeds and in the evening will dine at Ambiente a Spanish Tapas restaurant.

On the Sunday we will stroll to the Royal Armouries in Leeds, which is a must for anyone interested in Military History - https://royalarmouries.org/leeds. The weekend ends after this visit to allow people time to travel home in the afternoon.

The cost of the weekend will be £400 per person to include 2 nights Bed & Breakfast at the Met Hotel, 2 dinners on the Friday and Saturday night, pub lunch on the Saturday and hire of the minibus.

There are two optional items that are not included in the cost. For those arriving early on the Friday our Secretary Ian Brewer will be holding a mini tour of the historic pubs of Leeds and on Sunday a traditional Yorkshire Sunday Lunch will be held at Whitelocks reputedly the oldest pub in Leeds.

If you wish to attend the weekend please confirm with Ian Brewer at I_J_Brewer@msn.com stating whether you would be interested in either or both of the optional items. Details of deposits etc. Will follow in due course.

Portugal 2026 (16th/21st October 2026)

In addition to joining the Rota for their celebratory events for the Lines of Torres Vedras we are also again planning two Battlefield visits. We will be based in Elvas, itself an interesting border fortification and from there visit Badajoz and Albuera. For the visit to Torres Vedras we plan to travel from a hotel in Lisbon. Numbers will be limited by the size of the bus. Costings and a detailed schedule to follow. Many thanks to Mark Crathorne for his efforts so far.

See attached Itinerary provided by Mark Crathorne.

Final arrangements depend upon the scheduling of the celebrations by the local authority. If you are interested in joining this member's trip, please let Ian Brewer know asap. If oversubscribed, we will use a wait list.

FLTV Associate - Waterloo Association

The Waterloo Association is another historical society for those interested in the Battle of Waterloo, the Peninsular and other campaigns of the Duke of Wellington and the British Army during the Napoleonic Wars.

Aims

1. To promote public education and appreciation of the history of the wars between Great Britain, her allies and France known as the Napoleonic Wars.
2. To preserve and safeguard the site of the Battle of Waterloo.
3. To encourage a better understanding of events which preceded the Napoleonic Wars and the course of military operations in the campaign of 1815 and its consequences.
4. To encourage research on all matters pertaining to the Napoleonic Wars and to assist in the publication of such research.
5. Production of 3 learned journals, provided free to Association Members
6. Hold at least one meeting per year in the 5 regional groups and two in London

7. Run the Napoleon Series website with a valuable resources of over 20000 articles on the period and free access to original source material with our archive project.

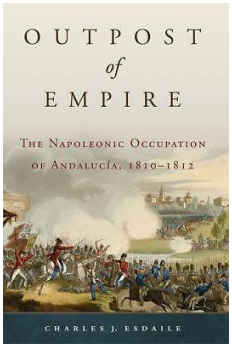
To these ends, the Association conducts historical research and, in association with the Waterloo Committee in Belgium, continues to help improve and preserve the battlefield.
In recent years the Association was actively involved in promoting the erection of a monument to the British Army at Quatre Bras, which now takes its rightful place alongside the other national memorials.

Waterloo Association Zoom lecture series January-March 2026
During the winter months of January-March, the Waterloo Association runs a series of Zoom lectures. The talks start at 7.30pm and last usually for about 45 mins plus 15 mins for Qand As. If you are a WA member the cost is free, if not there is a charge of £5 per talk. Bookings are available through Eventbrite via the WA website:
https://www.waterlooassociation.org.uk/events-and-news/events/

This season's talks are:
7 January: Gareth Glover: A Family at War, the Unett and Fraser families during the Napoleonic Wars
21 January: John Morewood: The 7 th Division's 1812 journey to Salamanca, Madrid, Burgos and back again. Battles and sieges. Triumphs and disappointments?
4 February: Chris Brett: Nelson and the Slave Trade
25 th February. Andrew Field: The Enigma of the Grand Battery at Waterloo
11 March John Morewood - The Royal Navy and the Peninsular War
25 March Paul Brunyee- Was he really at Waterloo and did he meet Napoleon?
Researching your Waterloo ancestors

The Battle of Waterloo 1913 Film – 22 minutes only
We were recently invited to a talk about the making of the film in Irthlingborough where it was originally filmed. Roy York, Chairman of the Irthlingborough Historical Society provided a talk and showing of the footage from 1913, all 22 minutes of it!
The Battle of Waterloo is a 1913 feature film created by British and Colonial Films to dramatize the eponymous battle ahead of its centenary. *The Battle of Waterloo* was much longer and more costly than contemporary films but went on to great commercial and critical success. Though the film was shown in theatres around the world, all copies were thought lost until 2002, when about 22 minutes of the hour-and-a-half production were rediscovered at the British Film Institute archives. Since then, two reels and a fragment have been compiled, representing about half the completed film. More information is available on Wikipedia.

Books of Interest to members of the Friends



Charles Esdaile *Outpost of Empire, the Napoleonic Occupation of Andalucía1810-1812*, Oklahoma University Press, 2012. 492pp. Approx £25
This review is was written by Andy Grainger for Mars & Clio 37, the Newsletter of the British Commission for Military History (BCMH) published in Summer 2013.

In his previous works Charles Esdaile has led us away from traditional Anglo-centric perspectives on the Peninsular War and more recently has taken it upon himself to challenge the Spanish national myth that the population hurled itself into a guerrilla war that made a French occupation ultimately unsustainable. Now, in *Outpost of Empire* he dissects French

occupation policy and operations in Andalucía and traces their impact on the society, economy and even the landscape there.

As such the book might therefore be seen as offering a contribution to the new field of 'occupation studies' as well as the Peninsular War *per se*. What were the French hoping to achieve in Andalucía? What was the role of King Joseph and why did he receive such a rapturous welcome in Seville in January 1810? What was the nature and extent of the Spanish resistance to, and collaboration with, the invaders? How did the French military commanders interact with their civilian counterparts?

By the end of 1809 the French had recovered from their unexpected setbacks in the form of the revolts of the *Dos do Mayo* and the defeat at Bailen. Though they had been ejected from Portugal and Asturias early in 1809 they had subsequently blocked the Anglo-Spanish offensive at the Battle of Talavera in July and then obliged Wellington to withdraw his army into Portugal. Wherever Spanish armies appeared they were smashed with trifling loss to the French. The Central Junta had fled to Seville, capital of Andalucía and one of the last major arms centres in Spain just as Cadiz was Spain's major Atlantic port. In the absence of support from the English, Soult and King Joseph must have had hopes that occupation of the fertile province of Andalucía would shatter Spanish political resistance just as it would divide the remnants of their armies in Murcia and New Castile from those in Extremadura and the west.

The author devotes just a single chapter to the invasion and conquest of Andalucía which was accomplished in only three or four weeks. We are accustomed to reading of the scattering of the Spanish armies by the veterans of Jena and Wagram – and Esdaile compares the results of this campaign with those of 1806, but he also demonstrates that, as in Prussia, the vaunted popular resistance was almost entirely absent. Alleged hatred of the French did not translate into the formation of military units – unless it was to strut in gaudy uniforms within impregnable Cadiz – whether regular or militia or home guard. The Central Junta fled precipitously to Cadiz – itself saved from capture only by the slightest of chances - as did most of the local notables whenever the French columns hove into view. This was despite the knowledge of the French tendency to rape, murder and pillage as witnessed only two years before when Dupont's men marched towards Bailen. Soult's men did not disappoint at Cordoba, Malaga and elsewhere. Yet, despite all this, the cities welcomed King Joseph with rapturous displays of joy.

The author's conclusion is that contrary to the national myth, the great bulk of the Andalucían population were not particularly interested in the complexion or even nationality of their government as long as it could bring a measure of security and prosperity. Initially, the French were seen as offering a better bet than the shambolic Patriot juntas.

The French at the time felt and historians have since noted that the occupation of Andalucía was one of the more successful occupations in Spain and yet Esdaile concludes that, in fact, the Napoleonic project had no chance of taking root there. Using national and local archival sources in Spain (particularly), France and Britain, he explains why this was so.

King Joseph seems to have possessed a genuine desire to bring a measure of enlightened and liberal government to his new kingdom, and he certainly had his supporters, particularly in the big cities. He sponsored public works to give employment to the hordes of landless labourers, generally financed by the proceeds of sale of ecclesiastical lands and the dissolution of monasteries and convents. On the other hand, he supported the church hierarchy and confirmed in post not only those clerics who swore loyalty but also notables and officials who did so. Pardons were offered to those who had taken up arms against the French and prisoners of war released. His attempts to form a *josefino* Army were by no means entirely unsuccessful. Possibly more popular were his creations of civic guards and light forces stationed in every town and many villages to defend the population from the bandits that infested the countryside.

All things being equal, therefore, Joseph might have garnered a good deal of success but there were too many other factors operating against him. Though he had confirmed the local elites in their positions, when they chose, Joseph was himself undermined both by his brother and the army. Despite having established brother Joseph as King of Spain, Napoleon gave him no control over the Marshals in Spain who reported directly to him. They and their soldiers did not see the empire as a forum for the practice of enlightened government but rather as a cash cow to be milked for personal profit or military exigency. In a kingdom that was in a state of economic collapse but also the seat of a war which it was obliged to support, Joseph's liberal policies had little chance of success.

Andalucía was never at peace during the French occupation. The author describes it as a No Man's Land since, despite the political fissures and general incompetence of the Patriot Government, now based in Cadiz, Spanish resistance did not collapse. The armies in Extremadura and Murcia did not disperse but rather conducted operations into Andalucía. These were supported by the English who made landings along the coast either with their own forces or with Spanish troops. The author also devotes a fascinating chapter to the operations further north in 1811 around Albuera and Badajoz demonstrating how these directly affected Soult's garrisons in Andalucía, obliging them to march and counter-march to meet threats arising from around the compass. The Spanish regular armies might be regularly defeated; they always return within a few months – recruited from the growing numbers of men just seeking a measure of subsistence. Their military capability also grows and whilst it never reaches that of the French or British, by 1812 the French cannot simply dismiss them. All these threats divert the French from their pacification operations in the countryside which served largely to boost the numbers of Spaniards under arms whether as regulars or partisans.

The large French forces in Andalucía lived off the countryside and levied massive contributions from the towns. The effect of their depredations was to bring about the collapse of the rural and urban economies whilst the English blockade left the ports idle and largely closed off imports of wheat from Morocco. Despite all this the author reveals that the French sought to levy contributions running at up to 400% of the already extortionate pre-war exactions. Refugees either poured into the cities or turned bandit in the countryside. The author leaves us in little doubt that the motives of the so-called *guerrillas* were largely based around simple physical survival and that they would seize food and other supplies from whatever source they could.

By 1812 the French forces had no possibility of solving the military difficulties with which they were faced. There were too few forces to deal with the multiplicity of threats. Troops were withdrawn to join the Grande Armée's invasion of Russia. Whilst support for, or at least a tacit acceptance of the French was always present in the towns, they never had any significant support in the countryside. The author shows how the *pueblos* or villages became increasingly the domain of wretched farmers whose crops were pillaged not just by the French but by hordes of bandits, stragglers, deserters and refugees simply seeking the means of survival. As the economy declined the numbers of the bandits / guerrillas grew.

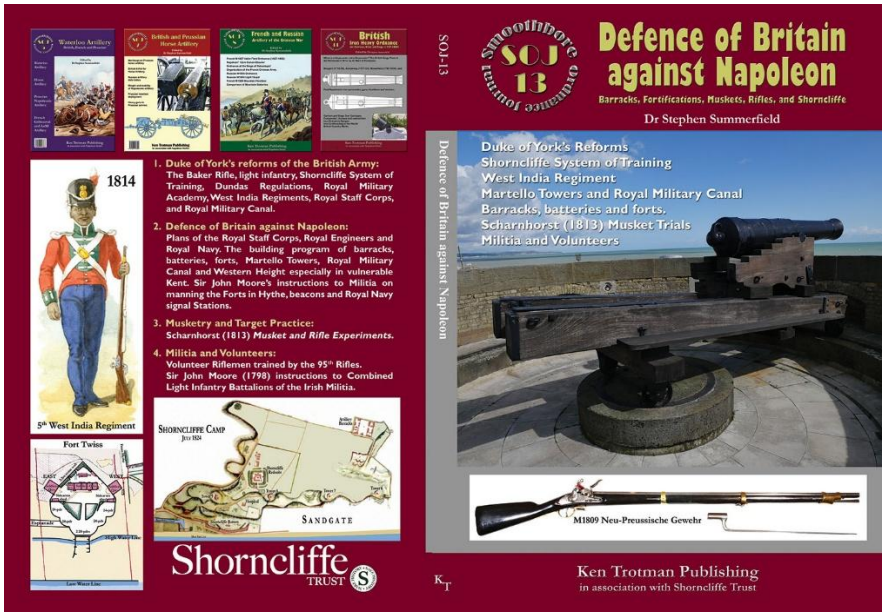
The French evacuated Andalucía not because of the depth of popular resistance there but because their forces were required to meet the very conventional threat of Wellington's offensive in 1812 which culminated in the battle of Salamanca and was followed by his unsuccessful siege of Burgos. Wellington was also supported by regular Spanish forces such as that commanded by Ballesteros in Andalucía which sought to pin down the French there and ultimately made their position untenable.

Two good maps of Andalucía and Cadiz are provided but a general map of Spain would have been helpful to aid comprehension of the author's discussion of the wider war.

Charles Esdaile's work on the Peninsular is always original and stimulating and this one, by putting operational meat onto the bones of his earlier strategic, grand strategic and thematic studies is particularly recommended to FLTV members.

Defence of Britain against Napoleon: Barracks, Fortifications, Muskets, Rifles, and Shorncliffe:
SERIES: Smoothbore Ordnance Journal SOJ-13:
AUTHOR: Dr Stephen Summerfield.
PRICE: £20.00
PAGES: 150 black and white.
PUBLISHER: Ken Trotman Publishing in association with the Shorncliffe Trust.

Smoothbore Ordnance Journal SOJ-13 is a collection of papers that focusses upon the swiftly disappearing evidence of the defence of Britain against Napoleon. There are four themes
THEME 1: Duke of York's reforms of the British Army: The Baker Rifle, permanent light infantry battalions, Shorncliffe System of Training, Dundas Regulations, Royal Military Academy, West India Regiments, Royal Staff Corps, and Royal Military Canal.
THEME 2: Defence of Britain against Napoleon: Plans of the Royal Staff Corps, the Royal Engineers and the Royal Navy. The building program of barracks, batteries, forts, Martello Towers, Royal Military Canal and Western Heights focussing upon vulnerable Kent and Sussex. Sir John Moore's instructions to Militia on manning the Forts in Hythe, beacons and Royal Navy signal Stations.
THEME 3: Musketry and Target Practice in Britain by the 95th Rifles and line infantry, France by Piobert (1852) and Prussia (Scharnhorst (1813) Musket and Rifle Experiments).
THEME 4.Militia and Volunteers were essential for the defence of Britain due to the small size of the regular army and the training of the Volunteer Riflemen by the 95th Rifles. Sir John Moore (1798) instructions to Combined Light Infantry Battalions of the Irish Militia are a fascinating insight into their use.



Podcast Links

Christian Parkinson has kindly supplied a Video about wives of the British army (including the Peninsular)
Link - https://youtu.be/mOeyJDZk97g?si=0T0i_aErWFgX8PKl

There are further Podcast links on our website. ***Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras***

Invade Publication

Please look at the latest Invade Magazine, produced by the Portuguese Rota Histórica das Linhas de Torres in English and Portuguese.

CILT News - Tales Invasion and Horror Stories

The Torres Lines Interpretation Centre (CILT) marked its 14th anniversary, on the evening of December 6th to welcome the "littlest invaders" in a special and mysterious session. "High on the mountain peaks stands a fort where the wind blows most strongly and the vegetation dances, projecting shadows of beings from the past onto the ground…"

In the shelter of Fort Saint Vincent, by candlelight, stories of fright and chills were read, where laughter and fear go hand in hand!

Carla Santos and Tânia Clímaco promised fun and chills! It is good to see the next generation encouraged to take an interest in the Lines.

FLTV Website and Facebook

Website: Mark Thompson maintains the website and Facebook pages regularly.

Friends of the Lines of Torres Vedras

Mark needs help to edit the online video presentations before uploading them to the website**.** If anyone has the ability and time to assist Mark, we would greatly appreciate it.

Please contact Mark on mark.s.thompson@me.com to discuss what is required.

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/293029624070745/

For more details, or to join, please contact us through our website or Facebook page, or email: membershipfltv@gmail.com