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Publisher: Routledge
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UK

Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors
and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

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Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: A. Bewicke-Copley Brig.-General (1909) Correspondence,
Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 53:380, 1382-1388, DOI:

[10.1080/03071840909423020](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840909423020)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840909423020>

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CORRESPONDENCE.

HOW TO VISIT THE PENINSULAR BATTLE-FIELDS OF 1809 TO 1812.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION.

SIR,

Having just returned from a visit to the Peninsular battle-fields of 1809 to 1812, of which the coming centenaries will be regarded with interest by soldiers at any rate, and probably by many others, it occurred to me that a few notes as to how best to see them might be of help to others who, like myself, do not know either Spanish or Portuguese, and who might be deterred by their want of knowledge of these languages from visiting out-of-the-way parts of Spain and Portugal.

It will be remembered that in consequence of the Convention of Cintra in 1808, Sir Arthur Wellesley returned to England, but that after Sir John Moore's retreat to Coruña he was sent out again in April, 1809 to command the British forces in Portugal, in hopes of driving out the French. In May, 1809 the passage of the Douro was forced at Oporto, and Soult was driven out of Portugal. Joseph and Victor were defeated at Talavera in July.

Massena entered Portugal in September, 1810, with 70,000 men, but suffered a sharp reverse at Busaco, and the reoccupation of the Portuguese capital by the French was prevented by the lines of Torres Vedras.

Retreating from his position facing the lines in March, 1811, covered by Ney in a series of brilliant rear guard actions, Massena made a last effort at Fuentes d'Oñoro in May, but was driven out of Portugal, re-passing the frontier with only 45,000 men. Almeida was cleverly evacuated by Brennier. In the south, Elvas passed into our hands, and the battle of Albuera was fought to cover the investment of Badajoz by Beresford.

Massena was superseded by Marmont, whose advance to relieve Ciudad Rodrigo, invested by Wellesley, in September, was checked at El Bodon.

In 1812 Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, the great frontier fortresses guarding the two main roads from Portugal into Spain, were captured by assault in January and March respectively, and in July Marmont's 40,000 men were badly beaten at Salamanca in forty minutes.

There are many lessons to be learnt on the ground which no study even of Napier can bring home, and it is interesting to note how Wellington's confidence in his own judgment seems to increase after each success in any particular branch of the military art, the culminating point, as far as the period 1809 to 1812 is concerned, being the confidence with which he manœuvred against Marmont in the Salamanca campaign, hoping his adversary might make some mistake, and the consummate skill with which he moved his troops the instant the opportunity came.

In turn each of Napoleon's successful war-tried marshals pitted against him fell before the great Englishman, at whose hands Napoleon himself suffered defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

The best time to select for the trip is after Christmas, and for choice the month of February. Military training has hardly begun, the shooting season is over, and of late years frost and fog have interfered with hunting, and it is early for fishing. The climate of England in February and March is not at its best, whereas the weather in Portugal is lovely, and the climate is most beneficial to anyone who has suffered in throat or lungs during the winter in England. Should time be no object, the Booth Line, starting from Liverpool, is perhaps the best, as it gives more time for seeing the ports, including Coruña. The address of the company is 30, James Street, Liverpool, and the steamers leave Liverpool about three times each month. If, however, the holiday cannot be extended over a month in the Peninsula, the best plan is to go by a boat of the Royal Mail Steamship Company (address 32, Cockspur Street, S.W.) direct to Lisbon, the best centre from which to start on your tours.

A special train takes passengers down from Waterloo, and the boats leave Southampton alternate Fridays, reaching Lisbon the following Monday, and returning from Lisbon alternate Wednesdays. At Lisbon the best hotel at which to put up is the Avenida Palace, as it has the advantage of adjoining the railway station (Rocio). It is as good as, and only slightly more expensive than, the Bragança on the high ground, or the Central on the Tagus. Cabs in Lisbon are very expensive, especially with luggage.

The coinage in Spain is in pesetas—about 28 to the sovereign. In Portugal it is in milreis—about 5,400 reis to the sovereign. A peseta is, therefore, worth rather less than a franc, and a 500 reis coin equals in value about two shillings of English money. Sovereigns are a convenient form of carrying money; but Messrs. T. Cook & Son (50, Rue Aûrea, Lisbon) will accept a cheque for tickets. Expenses come to about £1 a day, including carriages, the charge for which is about sixpence a mile in the country; but an arrangement must always be come to before starting. In Lisbon itself trams convey you everywhere, as well as to the environs.

As regards books, though nothing comes up to Napier's "Peninsular War" and the sixth volume of the "Cambridge History," by Professor Oman, for all practical purposes Vol. I. of Sir Herbert Maxwell's "Life of Wellington" gives all the information necessary, except that there is no sketch of Albuera. The sketch of Busaco is apt to be misleading, as it does not show the three miles of ground on the right of the position, where Leith and Hill were at daybreak. The scale is omitted from the sketch of El Bodon, and there are a few places named in the text which do not appear in the maps. I would suggest taking all the books on the Peninsular War you can lay your hands on. They are always welcome in the train or in the evenings. Personally I carried in my pocket the small edition of Napier's "English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula," extracted from the larger work, and published by John Murray, Albemarle Street, S.W. For use on the ground, I unpasted day by day the maps and sketches from Maxwell's "Life of Wellington," and put them in my pocket for reference; as the small edition of Napier has no maps.

For luggage, when travelling in Spain or Portugal, only take what will go in the railway or other carriage with you. In addition to a small bag or portmanteau and a dressing bag, take a small basket such as ladies carry their wool or work in, a rug, and umbrella, and of course field glasses

or telescope. Shooting boots are an essential, and either breeches or knickerbockers. Anything more required should be taken out and left in a separate trunk at the Avenida Hotel during tours. Clothes should be such as would be worn in England in February, but of rather lighter texture.

The wine of the country—collares—is cheap and good, and unless a flask is carried it is advisable always to have some of this, as well as some cold food in the above-named basket. The basket is easily carried, and when empty can be slung on the field glass straps.

Foreign "Bradshaw," pp. 298-301, gives all the trains necessary.

The Spaniards are more "stand-off" than the Portuguese, but the natives of both countries are most willing to make things easy for an "Inglese." A few words of Spanish go a long way, and French is often helpful in Portugal. Almost the only two words of everyday occurrence to which French or Latin would give no clue are "jantar" (Portuguese for dinner), and "mantechilla" (butter in Spanish).

The peasants have very good manners, and the lifting of the cap and "N'Dios," the equivalent of our "Good morning," should be returned. When taking off one's hat, the addition of the word "Señorita" seems to establish friendly relations at once, whatever may be the age or appearance of the recipient of the courtesy.

When visiting a fortress, it is politic to call on the Commandant to ask permission to see the place, but it is not necessary as there are no guards or guns or modern works.

Some of the sanitary arrangements are very primitive, especially in the fortresses, where there are no drains; but everywhere there are clean sheets and electric light and bells. The Palace Hotel at Luso-Bussaco is charmingly situated, close to the scene of Crawford's charge at the head of the Light Division, and is most comfortable and up-to-date. Breakfast everywhere is 12 to 1, and dinner in Portugal at 7 p.m., and in Spain at 8 p.m. Everyone seems to expect tips, but that peculiarity is not confined to Spain and Portugal.

Allowing four days for the sea journey to and from Lisbon, the best way to spend the remaining time by tours would be as follows:—

First tour—Lisbon, depart 7.30 a.m.; Torres Vedras, arrive 9.17 a.m.

The Hotel Natividade is close to the station. The old lines are quite easy to distinguish, with forts on the commanding heights and the ground scarped in front. All lines are traced so as to bring flanking fire across the front of works on their right or left.

A carriage can be procured here to drive to Vimeiro (8 miles). The course of the fight of 21st August, 1808, can readily be followed once Vimeiro, in the defence of which the 50th Regiment earned such a high encomium for steadiness, is located. The ravine in front of the left of the British position, where Brennier was taken prisoner whilst trying to turn the British left, serves as an object lesson as to what effect even small obstacles may have on the course of an action.

Second day.—Return to Lisbon after staying one night.

Torres Vedras, depart 3.37 p.m.; Lisbon arrive, 6.53 p.m.

Third day.—Lisbon, depart 10.25 a.m.; Alhandra, arrive 11.21 a.m.

On walking up to the monument on the nearest spur, the right flank of the 1st and 2nd lines, which met at Alhandra, can be plainly made out,

and the day is spent in inspecting the various works: Alhandra depart 6.16 p.m.; Lisbon arriving 7.18 p.m.

The 3rd lines were round Fort S. Julian, to which trains go every half hour from another station, the Caez de Sodre, close to the fish market, which is well worth a visit. The station for Fort St. Julian is St. Amaro. There are frequent trains to Cintra from Rocio Station, which adjoins the Avenida Palace Hotel.

The Cathedral and the church of S. Vicente, where the bodies of the Sovereigns of Portugal are embalmed, including those of the late King and Crown Prince, which can be seen through glass, can both be visited by the Graço tram, and the tower and cloisters of Belem can be reached by the Belem tram. Both trams pass close in front of the hotel.

Second tour.—Ask the hotel porter to write to "El Proprietario, Hotel del Comercio, Salamanca, España," to reserve rooms and send to meet train first evening; and the same to "Señor A. Salgado, Fondo Salgado, Ciudad Rodrigo, España," for the third afternoon.

First day—Lisbon, depart 9.45 a.m.; Salamanca, arrive 10.50 p.m.

The train passes along the route of Massena's retreat, covered by Ney's rear guard, in 1811: Pombal on 10th March; Redinha, 12th; Condeixa, 13th; Celorico, 21st; and Guarda, 28th. They can all be seen in daylight.

Second day.—*Salamanca.* Hire a conveyance and drive across the bridge over the Tormes, and take the left-hand road to the Arapiles. This road passes behind the British first position on 22nd July, 1812, the right of which ended just short of the Arapiles. From the top of the British Arapiles the whole course of the battle can be seen, except the line of the French retreat towards Alba de Tormes, which is best seen from the French Arapiles. Drive back through the village of Arapiles and over the line of Pakenham's attack on the head of Thomiere's Brigade. What a splendid effort Clausel must have made to retrieve the situation after Marmont was wounded.

On arrival at the bridge on the return journey, get out and look at the ruins of the fortifications of the convents which barred the British advance in May, 1812, and then walk out and see the positions taken up to defend Salamanca from the north.

Third day.—Salamanca, depart 11.25 a.m.; Ciudad Rodrigo, arrive 1.22 p.m.

Ciudad Rodrigo.—The main breach is still bare, as the masonry was never replaced. It is in the north-west corner, where stands the Cathedral, still bearing marks of the battering received in January, 1812. There is also in this corner a monument to General Herrasti, the brave defender against the French in June and July, 1810.

There is no difficulty in recognising the Great and Little Teson from the retrenchment on the rampart behind the main breach; but the Convent of Santa Cruz no longer exists, and that of S. Francisco, whence the Light Division started for the assault of the Salamanca gate and the lesser breach, in which Crawford was killed, is in ruins.

Marmont had left too small a garrison, and made no real effort to relieve the place, little thinking the ordinary rules of war would be disregarded. The result was that all his battering train, 150 guns and 1,700 good troops were lost to him for the remainder of the campaign. A Spanish

engineer officer, by name Captain Unciti, told me he had been to considerable pains to try and make out the exact positions of the parallels and approaches, and that, considering the fact that there was no corps of engineers then, and the tools supplied were indifferent, the work done appears to have been up to a high standard of merit.

The old gentleman who owns the inn at Ciudad Rodrigo, Señor Salgado, is a typical courteous Spaniard, but he doesn't know a word of any language but his own. Captain Ricardo Unciti, however, who is writing a history of the siege, lives in Ciudad Rodrigo, and knows French fairly well. He told me it would always be a pleasure to assist any British officers who wished to see Ciudad and its neighbourhood, and he is a friend of Señor Salgado.

Fourth day.—Ciudad Rodrigo, depart 8.10 a.m.; Fuentes d'Oñoro, arrive 9.24 a.m.

Fuentes d'Oñoro.—A good view of the lie of the ground between the Duas Casas and Tormes streams can be obtained from the hill Nava d'Aver, occupied by Julian Sanchez and his guerillas at the beginning of the battle of 5th May, 1811. The danger to which Wellington was exposed when the hill was abandoned must have been great. The hill overlooks the scene of Norman Ramsay's dash for freedom with his Horse Artillery Battery when the 7th Division was so hardly pressed by Montbrun in the low, swampy ground near the source of the Duas Casas. Then walk back to Fuentes Station by Poço Velho and Villar Formoso. Villar Formoso is the Portuguese frontier station, Fuentes the Spanish, and they are half a mile apart. The international agent at Fuentes Station is very helpful.

Fuentes d'Oñoro, depart 5.20 p.m.; Ciudad Rodrigo, arrive 6.25 p.m.

Fifth day.—Ciudad Rodrigo, depart 8.10 a.m.; Villar Formoso, arrive 9.27 a.m.

Hire a carriage to drive to Almeida (9 miles), see the fortress (a model of what a fortress should have been 100 years ago), and Crawford's position on the Coa, when he was supposed to have imperilled the existence of the Light Division by refusing to retire when Massena advanced to invest Almeida after capturing Ciudad Rodrigo on the 11th July, 1811. Crawford's left rested on a rocky height about 800 yards from Almeida. Drive back and walk from Villar Formoso to

Fuentes d'Oñoro, depart 5.20 p.m.; Ciudad Rodrigo, arrive 6.25 p.m.

Sixth day.—Hire a carriage so as to leave at 8.30 a.m., and drive to El Bodon, and see the ground over which the 11th (The Cherubims) repeatedly charged about 4,000 of Montbrun's cavalry as they reached the top of the slope with blown horses, also the line of retreat of the square composed of the 5th and 77th, after they had charged the French cavalry with the bayonet.

Seventh day.—Ciudad Rodrigo, depart 1.22 p.m.; Luso-Bussaco, arrive 6.31 p.m.

Write to the Palaco Hotel, Luso-Bussaco, a day or two before, and ask the manager to send the motor for you to the railway station.

Eighth day.—Start from the hotel at 8 a.m. and walk to the chapel, just outside the park wall, and see the plan of the battle-field; then climb up the hill, leaving the Anglo-Lusitanian monument on your right, and follow the Bussaco Park wall to the top of the hill—a climb of 500

feet — General Spencer's position. Walk southwards along the top of the Sierra, and return as far as the lowest part of the range, where Reyniers' attack was made on the north side of the trail from S. Antonio, when first the 89th and 45th, and then the 9th, made such gallant charges against the heroes of Austerlitz.

From the spot where Wellington placed Thompson's guns to rake Merle's Brigade, which was afterwards reached by Foy's Brigade, there is a good path almost on the level all the way back to the Lusitanian monument, which saves a stiff climb and brings you out close to Crawford's right, where Marchand's Division attacked; and a little further on, round the spur, is the crest from which the 43rd and 82nd launched their famous charge on Ney's right division under Lersin.

The gradient of the road up the spur has been altered, and it takes some little time to fix on the exact spot, but the deep ravine which separated the attacks of Ney's two divisions serves as a guide.

This is rather a long day if you go far enough in the morning to overlook the Mondego and the Murcella position on the left bank of the Mondego; but the hotel is on the spur defended by the Light Division, so once back there your day is ended.

Ninth day.—Leave the *Palaco Hotel* in a motor at 9 a.m. and motor to Pampilhosa, depart 9.53 a.m.; Oporto, arrive 1.51 p.m. Write on to the *Hotel d'Oporto* as usual.

Cross the footbridge and go up to the Convent on the height of Serra, where Wellington stood on the 12th May, 1809; you can see everything from there.

Tenth day.—Oporto, depart 5 p.m.; Lisbon, arrive 10.50 p.m.

Third tour.—Lisbon, depart 10.25 a.m. (change at Torre Das Vargens 4.2 p.m.); Badajos, arrive 7.25 p.m.

Get the hall porter at the Avenida to write to Señor A. Vallejo de Mayado, *Hotel de Paris*, Badajos, as usual. There is an intelligent waiter there who understands a few words of French.

Badajos.—Second day.—First cross the Agueda by the bridge and climb up to Fort Christoval, as from there you command a good general view. Then return and walk round the ramparts and castle, and finally go out to the Picurina by the Trinidad Gate and St. Roque, and work your way to the great breach in the Trinidad bastion. There is an inscription on the spot where the great breach was, cut into the stone (1812), with cannon balls let in round it.

According to Napier and Maxwell, the Santa Maria and Trinidad bastions are next to one another, and this makes the narrative rather hard to follow, as according to the Spanish plans of 1811 and 1812, the St. Roque bastion is between the Santa Maria and Trinidad bastions, which appears to show there was some mistake in the orders which led to the confusion in the assault of the Light Division under General Barnard on the 6th January, 1812. Whether there was any misunderstanding or not, a view of the position of the breach gives one food for thought as to whether European soldiers of to-day have the magnificent fighting qualities displayed by both sides on that memorable occasion.

Albuera.—Third day.—Drive to Albuera (14 miles) and put up there. After seeing the bridge where Godinot's Brigade made the false attack, take the new road to Valverde, which follows the valley of the Fera stream,

having on your left (and on the other side of the stream) the wooded height, behind which Soult massed his troops to turn Beresford's right. In about two miles you reach the undulations in the ground whence the Fusilier Brigade (7th and 23rd) drove the victorious French of Gerard's Corps and Werle's Brigade at the point of the bayonet on the 15th May, 1811. Next cross the valley of the Arroya val de Seville, and see where Lumley drove off the disorganised French cavalry.

Return to Albuera by the old Valverde road, which is the one shown in Napier's sketch of the field of battle.

Badajos, depart 6.5 p.m.; Elvas, arrive 7 p.m. Write to the Central Hotel, Elvas, as usual.

Elvas.—Fourth day.—See Elvas and the fortress. Elvas, depart 7 p.m.

Lisbon.—Fifth day.—Arrive 6.25 a.m.

Fourth tour.—Lisbon, depart (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays only), 7.25 p.m.; second day, Talavera, arrive 8.26 a.m.

En route you pass Abrantes, Alcantara, and Almaraz, the scene of General Hill's great exploit in May, 1812, in order to destroy the one remaining bridge by which the French armies could communicate.

The Spanish right (at Talavera) rested on the town, 28th July, 1809, and to the British left, where the fighting took place, is a short, easy walk. Return same evening to Lisbon, 11.56 p.m.

Should time be available, Talavera, depart 4.38 p.m.; Madrid, arrive 8.37 p.m., visiting the scenes of the battles of 1813 and 1814, Burgos, Vittoria, St. Sebastian, Pyrenees, Nive, Nivelles, Bayonne, and Bordeaux, on the way home by rail.

Thus, if a month can be spared in the Peninsula, almost the whole of the battle-fields can be visited. If, however, only a month altogether is available, the Talavera and northern ground must be omitted, as between arriving at Lisbon on the Monday morning and leaving on the Wednesday fortnight about 2 p.m., only fifteen clear days can be counted on. In order to put in those fifteen days to the best advantage, I would suggest:—

1. Seeing Vimeiro the same day as Torres Vedras.
2. Leaving out Elvas from the Badajos tour.
3. Driving to Almeida the same day as Fuentes d'Oñoro.

The expenses would come to under £40:—

	£	s.
Journey, London and Southampton and back ...	1	3
Return ticket to Lisbon and back	12	0
Hotel and carriage expenses, at £1 per day	16	0
Tips and sundries (about)	8	0

Total 37 3

Should any officer wish for further information it will be a very great pleasure to give it if he will write to me at any time to Sprotborough Hall, Doncaster.

A. BEWICKE-COPLEY,

Brig.-General.