

Commemorations at La Albuera – 16 May 2011



The Mayor of La Albuera opens the commemorations



The 'local' Middlesex Regiment, 57th Foot.

The bicentenary commemorations at the small Estremadura village of La Albuera commenced at 1130 on Monday 16th May and followed a familiar pattern to those they magnanimously host on an annual basis. Albuera holds particular significance for so many, losses on both sides were significant – forty per cent of the British soldiers on the field of battle that fateful day were to die or suffer wounds, many of which were to prove fatal. Such was the scale of the horror that it moved Lord Byron to pen the words to the 'glorious fields of grief' in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Those 'glorious fields' had been visited by the many thousands over the days leading up to the bicentenary commemorative event. Staring south across fields of barley and newly planted vines it is difficult to envisage the scenes of carnage and bloodshed that these few square metres had witnessed two hundred years ago.



British Ambassador to Spain, Giles Paxman, LVO at the Town Memorial

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Spain, Giles Paxman addressed the assembly and welcomed the large numbers of representatives from the British regiments, with historic links to the battle, whilst emphasising the importance of collective remembrance at these bicentenary events across Iberia and into southern France. Following the speeches by the Mayor, the British Ambassador, the President of Estremadura and BGen Fernando Guitierrez Diaz de Otazu, the local military commander, national flags were raised and this was followed by a most poignant 'service to the fallen'.



Remembrance Service in Wellington Park

The 'Die Hards' in collective remembrance

Following a march through the village and a visit to the local museum the group moved to Wellington Park and encircled the British Memorial. Wreaths were laid by Gen Sir Nick Parker, Brig Richard Dennis, BGen Fernando Guitierrez Diaz de Otazu and Lt Col Henning Larsen (the representative of Queen Margrethe II of Denmark – the Colonel –in Chief of the PWRR); this was followed by the laying of the regimental wreaths – the Buffs, the East Surreys, the Middlesex and collective wreaths on behalf of all those regiments in the PWRR and the RRF. Two buglers from the 2nd Battalion PWRR played the last post. It was a most moving and poignant affair and a fitting tribute to the many thousands of men who fought, and died hard, on the rolling hills in and around the small village of Albuera two hundred years ago. It was terribly sad that Brig/Prof Richard Holmes could not have been there to witness the spirit of reconciliation, remembrance and recollection demonstrated by all members, and all nations, who participated. He had contributed so much, to so many in his full life and this tiny village, in south west Spain had also been genially touched by his kindness and attention.



Lady Jane Wellesley with the soldiers from the PWRR

The PW200 President, Lady Parker and the Chairman (left).



Peninsular War 200

The official UK organisation for the commemoration of the Peninsular War.

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