

Commemorations at La Coruña – 16th/17th January 2009



The Ceremony at the Tomb of John Moore



The British Ambassador talking to Capt Oliver.

The bicentenary commemoration at La Coruña over the period 13th – 18th January 2009 was the first major event in Spain to mark the 200th anniversary of the battles and sieges of the Peninsular War. The Battle at La Coruña has particular significance to the British armed forces: it was the only battle of the war fought in Spain purely between the French and British armies, both sides claiming victory; it followed a harrowing retreat and subsequent evacuation by the Royal Navy, akin to Dunkirk in May 1940; and it resulted in the loss of a much admired Commander in Chief, Lt Gen Sir John Moore KB.



3/29 Corunna Battery Royal Artillery



Infantry, Royal Navy & Royal Artillery – key components to the Battle at La Coruña

The main event was on Friday 16th January at the garden of San Carlos, which exclusively houses the tomb of Sir John Moore and is commendably well maintained by the local council. Following an office call on the Mayor, Sr. Francisco Javier Losada Azpiazu, by HMA Denise Holt CMG and M. Gerard Guillonnet, the French consul, the proceedings commenced at San Carlos at midday with the unveiling of a plaque and the main ceremony. Despite a rehearsal having taken place the day prior (at which the entire British contingent was present) there were many last minute changes – a fact of life in, *inter alia*, Spain and Portugal. HMA, Col Lipscombe and Col Montagu (RIFLES) laid wreaths. An official reception and lunch followed, hosted by the Mayor at the Town Hall, during which HMA read out a personal message from the Prince of Wales, which was

very warmly received. The soldiers, and more junior officers, were invited to a separate function and were hosted most generously in the centre of the old town.





The tomb of Sir John Moore – San Carlos gardens The Mayor, British Ambassador & French Consul

The following day, proceedings opened at the village of Elviña, where most of the fighting took place and another plaque was unveiled by HMA. Wreaths were laid by both HMA and the French Defence Attaché, beneath this new plaque and an existing plaque; dedicated to Brig Gen Gaulois who had died leading the 31e Léger against Bentinck's Brigade who were holding the village. It was another moving affair. HMA then visited the memorial stones laid by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) and his brother George (later George VI) on the 19th January 1931, before moving to a stone unveiled during the Centenary commemorations in 1909, marking the spot where Sir John Moore fell, where she made a floral offering.



The Rifles at La Elviña ceremony

The French crew of FS STERNE at Elviña

	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Peninsular War 200</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The official UK organisation for the commemoration of the Peninsular War.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">http://peninsularwar200.org Email: pw200@hotmail.co.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>President: Lieutenant General Nick Parker CBE</i></p>	
---	---	---