

## Commemorations at Talavera – 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009



Col Lipscombe briefing on events at the Casa Salinas



Prof Esdaile & CSgt Bailey thank the owner.

The bicentenary of the Battle at Talavera de la Reina took place over the period 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009. Fifty soldiers from four of the regiments (or battalions) that were present at that most epic of battles attended the commemorations; namely the RDG, KRH, SCOTS GUARDS and the Duke of Lancaster's. The group assembled at Talavera on the 26<sup>th</sup> July and were accommodated (and fed) throughout at the town's University campus halls of residence. The following day they received a brief on the Peninsular War in general and then conducted a comprehensive tour of the battlefield led by Colonel Lipscombe and Professor Esdaile. The group were fortunate enough to gain access to the Casa Salinas and to climb to the very tower where, on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> July, Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington) was conducting reconnaissance when he was so nearly captured.



Wellington's view of the Battle – the Medellin Hill



The Tour Group

After a visit to the Cerro de Cascajal, to view the battlefield from the main French position, the group were welcomed by the son of the owner of the Medellin Hill, Antonio Martínez de Medinilla Moro and were able to enjoy the panoramic views of the field of battle and to be briefed on the three major attacks that took place in and around the Medellin. The British part of the line sustained the brunt of the French attacks with 16,000 British infantry repelling 26,000 French infantry. The valley where the ill-fated charge by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Light Dragoons ended in ruin is now a reservoir that serves the town. Following a quick lunch, and with the July heat beginning to take its toll, the group moved to the Pagar de Vegara; a small mound about half way between the Medellin and the Tagus River, on which Lawson's Company of light guns and Ucles's heavier Spanish guns marked the union of the allied line.



Commemoration Service at the Battle Monument



The British Ambassador meets the troops.

The following day, proceedings opened at the Talavera Monument located beside the Medellin Hill, where a short memorial service was held and Professor Esdaile made a poignant and moving speech. After two days of fighting, Wellesley's army had lost nearly a quarter of its officers and men, killed, wounded or missing; 4,600 men, a colossal number, surpassed only by the battle at La Albuera two years later in percentage/ratio terms. The group then moved to the Jardins del Prado where the official commemorations took place. The officers and soldiers were greeted by Her Majesty's Ambassador, Denise Holt CMG and then took their place for the ceremonies that lasted nearly an hour and half. During the unveiling of the bicentenary memorial a time capsule was buried which contained, *inter alia*, the buttons of all the (modern) British regiments/battalions that fought so resolutely alongside their Spanish allies two hundred years ago.



The Ambassador is shown the Time Capsule



The Old and New Guard



***Peninsular War 200***  
 The official UK organisation for the commemoration of the Peninsular War.

www.peninsularwar200.org  
 Email: pw200@hotmail.co.uk

*President: Lieutenant General Sir Nick Parker KCB CBE*

