WELLINGTON AND SIEGE WARFARE IN SPAIN:

CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ IN 1812.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the British sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz from the Peninsula Campaign of the Napoleonic Wars. Following an introduction on siege warfare, the principal British characters and organizations are introduced. Subsequent chapters cover earlier sieges at the two Spanish fortresses. When looking at the 1812 sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz in detail, attention is given to the decisions made by the British commander, Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington). While the execution of his siege operations resulted in high casualty rates, Wellington lacked the means necessary to carry out siege warfare in the most efficient manner.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather, Alfred John Pugh. He was a proud Royal Marine, and I hope he would be equally proud of my work. *Per Mare, Per Terram.*

Andrew Thomas Swift

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INTRODUCTION

During the early part of the nineteenth century, Napoleon and his French armies controlled much of Europe as he and his vaunted marshals conquered an Empire greater in size than that of Charlemagne.[1] Great Britain avoided the fate of other European powers by virtue of geography and a powerful navy. In 1808, a Spanish rebellion against Napoleon saw the British welcome a much needed ally against the French. Consequently, British forces landed in Portugal to secure that kingdom and provide support in Spain. If the Iberian Peninsula fell under French control, Great Britain would face almost complete isolation.

At the Battle of Coruña in 1809, the British commander Sir John Moore was killed and replaced in Portugal by Arthur Wellesley. Wellesley commanded British forces throughout the remainder of the Peninsular War. The French forces greatly outnumbered those of Wellesley, but he invaded Spain in 1809. Despite victories such as at Talavera, the British were forced to retreat west from Spanish soil, back into Portugal.

In 1810, *Maréchal* André Masséna led his French army into Portugal, but his pursuit of the Allied army halted at the lines of Torres Vedras, outside of Lisbon. Colonel Richard Fletcher had been charged by Wellesley with constructing the lines to protect the city. The result of Fletcher's work was over fifty miles of defensive structures, built using the latest scientific principles.[2] To the frustration of the French

[1]Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1999), 117.
[2] David Chandler, *A guide to the Battlefields of Europe* (Herts: Wordsworth, 1998), 317.

army, thirty thousand British and Portuguese allied soldiers prevented Masséna's sixty thousand men of the Army of Portugal from penetration of their defensive positions. Masséna was forced to retreat to Spain the following spring. *Maréchal* Auguste Marmont replaced Masséna, but the French offensives of 1811 were stalled. British commander Arthur Wellesley, by that time Viscount Wellington, consolidated his hold on Portugal, and moved east to the Spanish border in preparation for another invasion of Spain.[3]

With Wellington's forces poised to move into French held territory in Spain, the tables had turned on the French. In 1811, several key fortresses guarded the border. To the north, Ciudad Rodrigo controlled one of the few roads connecting Spain and Portugal capable of handling military traffic. Further south, Badajoz lay several miles east of the Spanish border, to the east of Elvas. Both garrisoned by French forces, these two fortresses would have to be neutralized in order to facilitate the British advance into Spain.[4] Wellington would have to utilize siege warfare to accomplish his goals. Accordingly, Fletcher's engineering skills were now set to work on the offensive.

Wellington has often faced criticism from historians as primarily a "defensive general."[5] At the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, he captured the fortress from the French but his forces sustained heavy casualties including two Major Generals killed in the assault. Badajoz in particular was somewhat of a Pyrrhic victory. Wellington's letter to the war minister following the battle clearly indicated his thoughts. "The capture of Badajoz affords as strong an instance of the gallantry of our troops as has ever been displayed. But I greatly hope that I shall never again be the instrument of putting them to such a

[3] Connelly, *Blundering to Glory*, 129.
[4] Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington – The Years of the Sword* (Suffolk : The Chaucer Press, 1974), 294.
[5] Philip J Haythornthwaite, *Wellington: the Iron Duke* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2008), 51.

test."[6] After seeing his British soldiers dead on the glacis outside the fortress, Wellington reportedly broke down and wept.[7] He would not display a similar show of emotion again until Waterloo.

Wellington's poorly executed sieges in the Peninsular War have contributed in part to his reputation as a defensive general. In the early sieges of 1812, he was successful but his methodology and high casualty rates were cause for question. This paper will investigate whether the British commander's sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz in 1812 were carried out effectively and in the most efficient manner given the strategic and tactical situations.

[6] Wellington to Liverpool, 6 April 1812. Sir Charles Oman. *A History of the Peninsular War Vol. V, Oct 1811-Aug 31, 1812* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 255. This letter was omitted from Wellington's Dispatches, and was later found in Liverpool's correspondence.
[7] Longford, *The Years of the Sword,* 322.

OVERVIEW OF SIEGE WARFARE

Fortresses are no new concept. As British historian Christopher Duffy notes, it is a "fundamental instinct of living creatures to interpose some barrier between themselves and an unwelcome intruder."[8] Homer's *Iliad* is one of the best known examples of the conflict between besieging forces and defenders, and the concept has changed little over the ages. Fortress systems have divided opinion since antiquity. Plato supported the Spartan philosophy of taking the offensive, believing artificial defenses would make men "effeminate, slothful and cowardly." Aristotle countered by suggesting "you must always settle in the open plain, based on that logic."[9]

The fundamental principle involved in fortification is that it enables a smaller force to hold its own against a larger one. Various secondary benefits exist: a fortress offers refuge for a beaten army; it can reinforce physical obstacles (such as rivers, valleys etc.); and it can serve to guarantee lines of communication (and supply).[10] A series of fortresses, such as those on the Portuguese-Spanish border, acted as a strategic barrier to thwart or delay an invader.

For a fortress to offer the aforementioned benefits, it must be able to resist attacking forces. Pre-gunpowder fortresses typically consisted of large, crenellated walls.[11] Height was the main requirement for any fortified place.[12] Battering rams

[8] Christopher Duffy, *Fire and Stone: The Science of Fortress Warfare, 1660-1860* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2006), 9.
[9] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 19.
[10] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 20.
[11] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 9.
[12] Frederick Myatt, *British Sieges of the Peninsular War* (Kent: Spellmount Ltd, 1987), 9.

struggled to break down solid walls, and mining was a laborious and slow process, so the remaining option was to go over the wall; therefore, the higher the better from a defensive standpoint. In addition, higher walls increased range for defending archers and other missile troops.

The introduction of gunpowder in the 1300s did not provide an immediate advantage to attacking forces. Early artillery pieces were judged more by "their intended malice" than their utility as weapons.[13] It was not until the latter stages of the Hundred Years War that Frenchmen Jean and Gaspard Bureau were able to take advantage of recent innovations (such as the powder mill in 1429) to provide King Charles VII with artillery that would be used to expel the English from their castles on French soil.[14] By the end of the 15th century the use of more mobile siege artillery necessitated defensive changes. In his Romagna campaign as part the invasion of Italy in 1494, King Charles VIII brought a horse-drawn siege train of at least forty guns.[15] The train largely consisted of bronze cannon, no more than eight feet long. This allowed the attackers to move their artillery with relative ease,[16] and bring them to bear on enemy fortifications.[17] In one case, the fortress of Mordano was besieged, and a breach was achieved in three hours, whereby the French-Milanese force entered the fort.[18] Those high walls which had provided adequate defense for centuries now became a liability. For medieval era forts, the higher the wall, the larger the target for artillery fire to hit.

Changes in fortress design first appeared in what is now Italy, unsurprising given the ongoing conflict in those states. New fortresses were constructed in the 1530s of a

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[13] Christopher Duffy, *Siege Warfare* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 1.
[14] Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337-1453* (New York: Atheneum, 1978), 258.
[15] Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the rise of the West 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2011), 11.
[16] In comparison to the earlier medieval bombards, which could often only be transported by water.
[17] Duffy, *Siege Warfare, 8.*
[18] Sandra Alvarez, *The Romagna Campaign of 1494: a significant military encounter* accessed March 20, 2014 http://deremilitari.org/2014/02/1547/ .

design later known as the *trace italienne.* As walls became lower and wider, they offered stable platforms to site defensive artillery guns. Medieval towers became bastions, four-sided angular works that eliminated the dead ground which attackers could exploit.[19]

A further development was the concept of defense in depth, proposed by Italian engineer Niccolò Tartaglia in 1556. He had a ledge cut into the counterscarp (outer wall of the ditch). This compelled besieging forces to set up further from the walls, to avoid exposure to fire from defending troops who could retreat back into the fortress if pressed.[20] Ravelins also began to appear; these were large triangular works between bastions. They served two purposes. First, they offered additional protection to the enceinte, or wall of the fortress. Second, they divided attacking forces and exposed them to raking crossfire from the bastions.[21]

Thus, the pendulum once more swung back in favor of the defending forces. Besieging forces were forced to construct trenches to dig their way towards a fortress, but the attackers became dangerously exposed to fire from the defenders. Siege artillery offered "little effective support", as nobody was sure where the batteries should best be sited.[22]

By the late 1600s, the luminary figure of siege warfare emerged. Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban was an engineer and advisor to the French "Sun King", Louis XIV. An expert in both mathematics and physics, Vauban influenced both sides of siege warfare. Offensively, he devised "mathematically based methods" for the conduct of siege operations.[23] In 1669, Vauban wrote *Mémoire pour servir a l'instruction dans la conduite des sieges,* essentially an instructional manual for offensive siege warfare. This

[19] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 9.
[20] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 10.
[21] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 63.
[22] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 11.
[23] C. Shrader, *History of Operations Research in the US Army,* accessed March 22 2014, http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/hist_op_research/CMH_70-102-1.4, 4.

was revised in 1703, and released as *Traité de l'attaque des places.* The Vauban style attack focused on the use of parallel trenches, ricochet fire, and attacking defending troops with vertical fire.[24] The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) saw his services greatly valued by the French monarch.

Defensively, Vauban developed new methods of fortification to withstand the ever growing power of siege weapons. A newly created Vauban fortification was made with mathematical precision. The salient points of two bastions would be identified, approximately 360 yards apart. Once plotted, geometry was used to determine the exact alignment of the faces of the bastions, in order to eliminate any dead ground, so the bastions would be able to provide covering fire. This process was repeated for the next bastion in the fortification, and so on.[25]

Military historian Ian Fletcher offers an overview of further defensive elements of Vauban type fortresses. As bastions and the adjoining curtain wall were still vulnerable to artillery fire, they required further protection. The aforementioned ravelins offered protection to the wall and were in existence pre-Vauban. A large ditch surrounded the walls, in addition to a sloping ground, called a glacis, designed to shield the wall from direct artillery fire.[26]

More complicated outworks developed to provide further defense in depth. Features such as *lunettes*, hornworks, crownworks,[27] and even individual forts (like San Christobal, across the river from Badajoz) were utilized to control the surrounding area and provide the fortress with the maximum possible protection. Rather than detail each of the many outworks that existed, the features relevant to the fortresses of Ciudad

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[24] Hugh Chisholm, *"Vauban, Sébastien le Prestre de". Encyclopaedia Britannica* 27 (11th ed.). (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 952.
[25] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 33.
[26] Ian Fletcher, *Fortresses of the Peninsular War 1808-14* (Oxford: Osprey, 2003), 12.
[27] *Lunettes* were detached triangular works outside and independent of the fortress walls. Hornworks and crownworks were more complex outworks, featuring one or more bastions in the design.

Rodrigo and Badajoz are covered in the relevant sections. However, Appendix B, taken from Chambers' 1728 *cyclopedia,* shows the array of options available in the 18th century.

It should be noted that none of the fortresses besieged by the British in the Peninsular War were built from scratch, using Vauban's techniques. They had all existed as medieval structures. By 1811, they had all undergone modernization, but to varying degrees.[28]

Through the 1700s, sieges became systematic and regulated. Using Vauban's principles, Wellington's offensive siege work in the Peninsular War required expertise. Sir William Napier, British officer turned historian, stated in his *History of the War in the Peninsula,* "There is no operation in war more certain than a modern siege if the rules of art are strictly followed." Napier pointed out the importance of trained specialists since, "unlike the ancient sieges it is also different in this, that no operation is now open to irregular daring because the course of the engineer can neither be hurried nor delayed without danger."[29] Historian Ian Fletcher expands on this last point. If a siege was rushed, heavy casualties and potentially catastrophic defeat were likely. However, it was unlikely that a garrison would be abandoned to its fate. Therefore, the longer a siege was delayed, the more likely that relief would arrive.[30]

Military historian Frederick Myatt provides a comprehensive overview of the steps involved in a successful siege. Initially, a stronghold should be isolated by a close blockade. The commander, along with artillery and engineering officers, should then reconnoiter the fortress and decide on a point of attack. Diversionary attacks were used at this point to keep the enemy guessing. A trench was then dug parallel to the area

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[28] Myatt, *British Sieges*,11.
[29] Sir William Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France from the Year 1807 to the Year 1814* (Oxford: David Christy, 1836), 395.
[30] Ian Fletcher and Bill Younghusband, *Badajoz 1812: Wellington's Bloodiest Siege* (Oxford: Osprey, 1999), 29.

targeted, as close as was safely possible. The trench was constructed at night to protect the workers from artillery fire from the bastions. Trenches were then constructed forward from the 1st parallel, in a zig-zag manner to avoid enfilading fire. A second parallel was then constructed and siege guns brought to bear on the fortress, after the establishment of a battery. If needed, the process was repeated to construct a third parallel. Artillery was focused on a specific section of wall, in order to create a breach, or hole in the wall. By creating the breach, the rubble from the wall created a slope which the attackers could ascend. If possible, the engineers would sap forward (dig trenches) from the final parallel into the counterscarp of the ditch, allowing easier access to the breach. Once a breach was created and practicable, attacking forces would enter the fortress through the breach, if the defenders had not already asked for terms of surrender.[31]

Of course, a theoretical siege relies on a passive defense that accepts its fate calmly. In reality, the defenders had a number of options to counter the attackers. They could send troops out to attack the trench works and disrupt operations. Duffy quotes French engineer Antione de Ville on this matter. "The defender will quickly lose his fortress if he allows the besieger to work at leisure in the country… History is full of examples of the severe losses in time and material which sorties have inflicted upon besiegers."[32]

In addition, there was counter-battery fire from the fortress. Guns could target siege guns and potentially do damage, although offensive artillery were usually well protected behind gabions or parapets.[33] Defenders could repair damage and clear debris away to prevent the creation of a practicable breach. Finally, the breach itself could be turned into hell on earth, with all manner of devices. A favorite device of defending troops was the *Chevaux-de-frise.* This was a long piece of timber with sharp sword

[31] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 15.
[32] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 127.
[33] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 123.

blades, spikes and other sharp objects protruding from it. These would be chained to the ground, and could prove impassible to the attacking troops."[34] Other options were caltrops (iron tetrahedrons which would always rest with a sharp point facing upwards), wooden stakes placed together to form an abatis,[35] flooding ditches, or mines.

In expectation of such devises, an attacking force called for a group of volunteers to go first into the breach. These courageous men were known as the "forlorn hope" in the British army. Casualty rates were astronomical, but if they succeeded and survived, members of the "hope" would receive promotions and glory.[36]

Given the nature of combat in a breach, the ethics of the attacking troops often became questionable if they succeeded in entering a fortress. Duffy points out that heroic, last ditch stands went "out of fashion" between the War of Spanish Succession and the Wars of the French Revolution. Governors would typically yield their fortress once the enemy made it to the glacis or covered way (on the counterscarp).[37] However, if the attackers were forced to go through the breach itself, the results were often ugly. A successful "forlorn hope" could release its hatred and hostility on the defenders. Captain John Kincaid in his memoirs following the Peninsular War described such a scene. "The moment which is most dangerous to the honor and safety of a British army is that in which they have the place they have assaulted. While outside the walls… linked together by the magic wand of discipline, they are heroes – but once they have forced themselves inside they become demons or lunatics."[38]

Once breached, Vauban's geometry and mathematics offered no relief for the garrison of a fortress that had not requested terms of surrender. Sacks were brutal, but fortunately somewhat scarce. By the end of the 18th century, siege warfare in the western

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[34] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 29.
[35] Duffy, *Fire and Stone,* 71.
[36] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812,* 29.
[37] Duffy, *Fire and Stone,* 151.
[38] John Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman.2nd ed.* (London: T&W Boone, 1847), 261.

world nearly always "assumed the form of a ritual,"[39] and reached a dignified end. Many sieges in the Peninsula War proved the exception to this rule.

[39] Duffy, *Fire and Stone*, 153.

SIEGE ARTILLERY

New technology emerged by the beginning of the 19th century that improved on earlier brass and bronze guns, such as those used in the 18th century. Iron siege guns came into production, which were less susceptible to wear, and cooled more rapidly than other types of metal.[40] In a 24 hour period, an iron 24lb gun could fire four to five hundred rounds, while a brass gun was limited to 100-120 rounds, and incurred greater damage to the barrel due to the softer metal.[41] These factors allowed iron guns a greater volume of fire on target, speeding up the creation of a breach, i.e. an opening in a defensive wall.

The standard British siege gun used in the Peninsular War was the iron 24lb, 7.12" caliber gun. Barrel length varied from seven to nine feet. These guns fired a cast iron roundshot with a velocity of 1600 ft/sec. After 100 yards, this velocity dropped to 800 ft/sec. After 1500 yards, it halved again, to around 400 ft/sec.[42] Eighteen pound guns were also in use, but these lacked the punch of the 24lb guns. Trade-offs were frequently made between range and power, as different variables came in to play. For example, 24lb guns at a range of 100 yards could create a breach in a certain amount of time. Using the same guns at a range of 200 yards had several effects. First, a breach

[40] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 16.
[41] Sir John May, *Observations on the mode of attack and employment of the heavy artillery at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz in 1812, and St. Sebastian in 1813* (Lexington, KY: The Naval & Military Press, 2014), 34.
[42] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 18.

took longer to create, as each shot caused less damage due to its lower velocity upon impact. Second, the time required to create a breach increased still further, as the defenders were afforded more time to repair damage. Third, more ammunition would be expended, of which there was a finite supply. If the distance increased to 400 or 800 yards, these factors were compounded. While in theory, placing siege guns as close as possible to the fortress was ideal, the reality of closing the distance increased the risks. Defenders offered counter battery fire, musket/rifle fire aimed at the gun crews, and sorties out into the siege works.

Besides the 24 and 18lb guns, howitzers were also used. These served primarily as anti-personnel weapons; indirect fire lobbing shells over fortress walls and clearing areas around potential breach sites. Brass 10" howitzers fired 92lb shells, and lighter iron howitzers fired a 24lb shell. Mortars, similar in type, were also used for anti-personnel purposes.[43] Lieutenant Colonel John May of the Artillery emphasized their desirability, as they were effective against enemy artillery, prevented retrenchment of a breach, and also helped clear impediments in front of an assault.[44] However, it will be shown that Wellington limited the use of mortars and howitzers at both Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, most likely out of fear of injury to the Spanish inhabitants inside the fortresses.

Besides the standard round shot, heated shot was also used when wooden structures were targeted. Grape shot and canister were primarily used by defensive artillery, firing multiple musket sized balls in a single shot. This form of ammunition essentially turned a heavy artillery gun into an oversized shotgun which could scour a breach if not silenced quickly.[45]

[43] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 19.
[44] May, *Observations*, *19.*
[45] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 20.

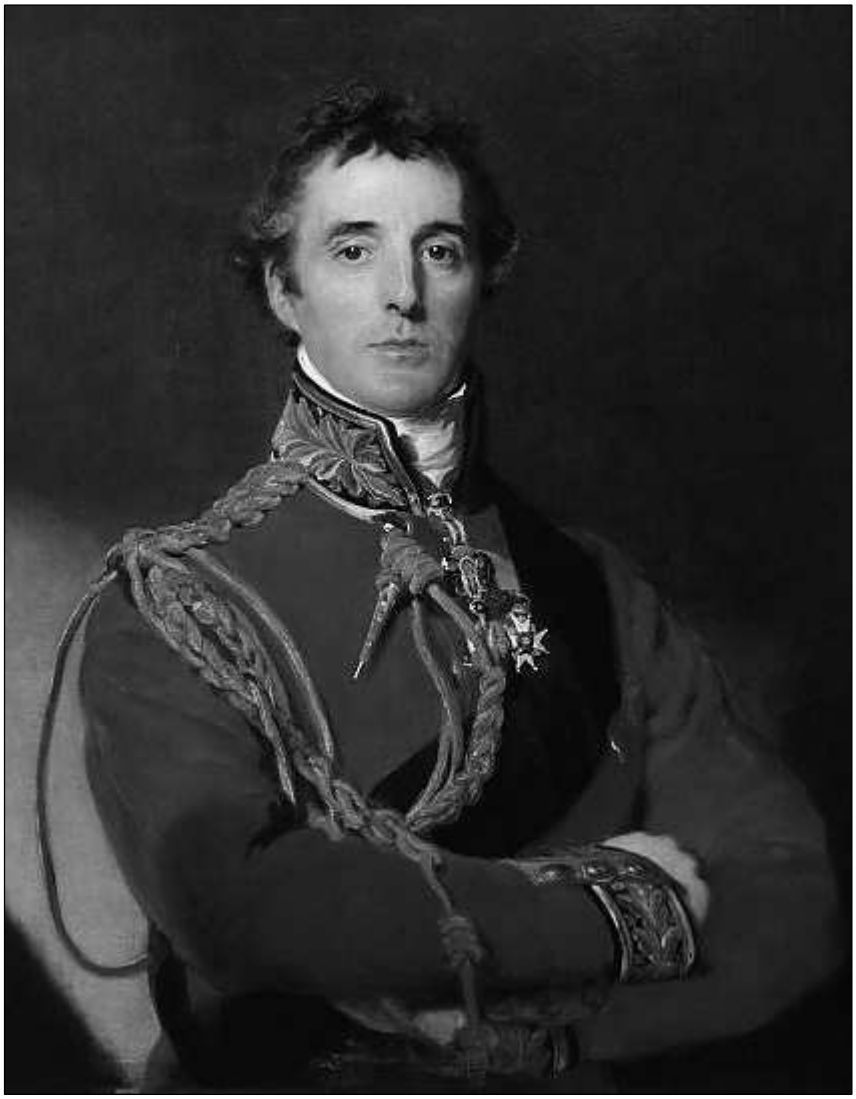

FIGURE 1
1814 Portrait of the Duke of Wellington, by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

BRITISH FORCES IN THE PENINSULA

Following the death of General Moore, Arthur Wellesley arrived in Lisbon in April 1809 to take command of the British and Portuguese troops. Several battles took place over the following two years, with the British avoiding any critical defeats against larger French forces.[46] By late 1811, as Wellington prepared to march on Ciudad Rodrigo, he had 45,000 men ready for duty. These were supported by 33,000 Portuguese regulars. Many of these men had eighteen months experience fighting the French by this point.[47]

When examining his command decisions, an understanding of Wellington's past military experience is useful to better know his character and his tactical knowledge of siege warfare.

In the earlier years of his military career, Arthur Wellesley[48] spent time in India. Several events from that period are of particular note. In 1799, as a young colonel under General George Harris, Arthur Wellesley was involved in the siege of Seringapatam. It should be noted that Seringapatam had been modernized under French supervision. In the *Years of the Sword,* Elizabeth Longford provides a flowery, but intensely relevant description. "Now at last the siege-works could begin… according to the hallowed ritual

[46] Connelly, *Blundering to Glory*, 128.
[47] Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 378.
[48] He would not become Viscount Wellington until after the Battle of Talavera in 1809.

of the master, Vauban – batteries, parallels, zigzags to move advanced parallels and batteries, the enemy guns silenced, and then- the breach. At Seringapatam nothing was allowed to break the relentless, scientific pattern."[49]

The attack on the breach was a success, and the fort was captured. Wellesley did not enter the breach, but he commanded the reserve in the trenches.[50] Given the paucity of British siege experience in the Peninsular War, it is notable that Wellesley did have knowledge and first-hand exposure to Vauban-type siege warfare. He had witnessed the planning, bombardment, and assault of a modern fortress. With respect to the nature of the Vauban-type defenses, Wellesley was appointed military governor of Seringapatam following the assault, and he was tasked with "rebuilding the defences of the city."[51]

The second major siege in the subcontinent saw Wellesley in a more active role at Gawilghur. There he orchestrated two diversionary assaults while the main force escaladed an inner wall (the outer wall having been breached by artillery fire). A well planned operation (by Major General James Stevenson, rather than Wellesley) captured the fortress with minimal casualties; British losses were only 126, against 4,000 estimated Maratha casualties.[52]

Although not a siege, one particular battle in India warrants mention. In 1803, Wellesley commanded a combined British and Sepoy army at the Battle of Assaye. His forces sustained heavy casualties in achieving victory, but he was "visibly shaken" by both the ordeal of battle and the losses suffered by his men.[53] That experience influenced his approach to warfare. Many historians believe that his adversity to wanton death is

[49] Longford, *The Years of the Sword*, 74.
[50] Longford, *The Years of the Sword*, 71.
[51] Huw Davies, *Wellington's Wars: The Making of a Military Genius* (Padstow, Cornwall: Yale University Press, 2012), 20.
[52] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 68.
[53] Davies, *Wellington's Wars*, 64.

exemplified by his preference to use a reverse slope to protect his troops. That tactic was used at several battles in Portugal and Spain, as well as at the Battle of Waterloo.[54]

Wellington's relation with his soldiers was complex, and often contradictory. A peer, he reportedly despised his men, describing them as the "scum of the earth" in one notorious dispatch.[55] Yet, he trusted his army to perform its duties without hesitation. Prior to Waterloo he commented, "It all depends on that article [a redcoat], whether we do the business or not. Give me enough, and I am sure [of victory]."[56] In Napier's *History of the War in the Peninsula,* he dedicated the book to Wellington with the following quote. "This History I dedicate to your Grace, because I have served long enough under your command to know, why the Soldiers of the Tenth Legion were attached to Caesar."[57]

During sieges in Spain, Wellington had to send his soldiers into the breach. For soldiers sent into a breach, fear is inevitable. However, belief in their commander and a desire to impress him are strong tools to assist in following his orders. The divisions used in the siege at Ciudad Rodrigo were the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and the Light Division. At Badajoz, the 5th Division was also involved. Few of the soldiers were experienced in siege warfare. The only offensive sieges to date were two failed attempts to invest Badajoz. However, these divisions did contain some of the cream of the British army; the green-coated 95th rifles and the 88th Connaught Rangers had excellent reputations.[58]

Two of Wellington's divisional commanders warrant special mention. Sir Thomas Picton led the "Fighting" 3rd Division at both Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, and he was wounded at the latter siege. Picton had a reputation for being "supremely

[54] John Keegan, *Mask of Command* (New York, NY: Viking, 1987), 132.
[55] Wellington to Bathurst, 2 July 1813 WD, Vol. X, 496.
[56] Davies, W*ellington's Wars*, xiv.
[57] Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, 2.
[58] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 17.

brave,"[59] and he continued to serve Wellington up to the Battle of Waterloo. "Black Bob" Craufurd commanded the Light Division during the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo. A strict disciplinarian, Craufurd took great pride in his division. Every movement of his soldiers was "calculated to excite the admiration of Sir Arthur Wellesley."[60] Whilst leading his men in the assault, he was shot through a lung, and the bullet lodged in his spine.[61] Wellington's Divisional Commanders showed a propensity to lead from the front in siege assaults. While such acts were clearly gallant, the risk of losing such trusted subordinates may not have been the wisest decision.

General William Beresford served in the Peninsula from 1808 under Moore, and later with Wellington. He was the commanding officer at the first siege of Badajoz in 1811, and the subsequent Battle of Albuera. Historian David Chandler noted that "his true gifts were as an administrator and trainer,"[62] and it is certainly true that Beresford showed little flair or imagination at the siege.

One individual who played a key role in Wellington's sieges is Lieutenant Colonel Sir Richard Fletcher. Fletcher, previously mentioned for his role in constructing the Lines of Torres Vedras, served as Wellington's Commanding Royal Engineer, and was present at Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo. Later, he served Wellington at other field battles, and the siege of San Sebastian.[63] Sir John Jones served as Fletcher's Brigade-Major at the sieges, and gave testimony that, "Fletcher possessed, in an unusual degree, the knowledge and accomplishments of a finished soldier… [with] long and varied military experience. He was… hardy, active, and brave to excess" In addition, Jones noticed Fletcher's humanity since "these valuable qualities were alloyed by… a

[59] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 14.
[60] Mark Urban, *Rifles: Six Years with Wellington's Legendary Sharpshooters* (Kent: Faber and Faber, 2003), 13.
[61] Urban, *Rifles*, 152.
[62] David Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1979), 50.
[63] Sir Charles Porter Whitworth, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers Vol. II* (Longmans, Green, and Co, 1889), 405.

deficiency of moral courage being too sensitive to the awful responsibility of risking human life, and being too…distrustful of his own judgment, to plan or direct any unusually bold or hazardous enterprise."[64]

An appreciation of Fletcher's personality provides further valuable insight for analyzing command decisions in the British Army. If Wellington did see the common soldier as "scum of the earth,"[65] then Fletcher may have provided a valuable counter balance while planning operations.

Leading into the Napoleonic Wars, the British lagged behind continental Europe with regards to a professional engineering corps. Until the Peninsular War, Britain's only real experience had been limited. The majority of Western European armies had a full establishment of engineers, along with sappers, miners, pioneers, and supporting tradesmen.[66] It should be noted that Royal Engineers were not part of the regular army. They reported to the Board of Ordnance. They numbered only 143 in 1808, growing to 229 in 1815. In the Peninsular War, only fifteen were present in 1809, rising to forty by 1814.[67] This limited number of engineers had a broad range of duties. Their first area of responsibility was defense: the Lines of Torres Vedras, strengthening towns, security of Cadiz, and so on. Their second area of responsibility was communications: road building (and destruction), clearing river channels, and bridge building (and destruction). Finally, they held staff roles such as surveying, reconnaissance, linguistics (translation), and so on.[68] The small corps of Royal Engineers was certainly not expert at siege warfare, since there were a number of areas that demanded their attention.

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[64] Porter Whitworth, *Engineers Vol. II*, 406.
[65] This is not to suggest that Wellington would throw away the lives of his men cheaply; given the size of his force compared to the French, every soldier was valuable. However, it raises questions as to his sentimentality towards the common soldier when making decisions.
[66] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 15.
[67] Mark Thompson, "A Re-evaluation of the Role of the Royal Engineers and their Relationship with Wellington", accessed 27 March 2014, http://www.bcmh.org.uk/archive/conferences/2010SummerConfSappersThompson.pdf.
[68] Thompson, *Role of the Royal Engineers*, 4.

The Commander of the Royal Engineers was part of Wellington's Headquarters, and traveled with him. Fletcher worked very closely with the army commander from 1809. After his death in 1813, he was succeeded by Howard Elphinstone. Elphinstone was somewhat unpopular, and Wellington did not want him at Headquarters. Wellington showed more confidence in engineers John Jones and John Burgoyne. Burgoyne held command in America in 1815, and Jones went on to become Wellington's Chief Engineer after Waterloo. It can be questioned how much control the Engineers had during his early siege operations. Wellington treated them with mistrust and even "[acted as] his own engineer."[69] Fletcher commented in an 1809 letter that "I do not believe that Sir A[rthur, i.e. Wellington] attaches much importance to our department."[70] This was not an attitude unique to the Engineers. For much of the Peninsular War, Wellington held the opinion that he alone was competent to make decisions. In a letter to Liverpool in 1811, he wrote, "I am obliged to be everywhere, and if absent from any operation, something goes wrong."[71]

[69] Thompson, *Role of the Royal Engineers*, 8.
[70] Thompson, *Role of the Royal Engineers*, 6.
[71] Wellington to Liverpool, 15 May 1811, WD, Vol. VII, 565.

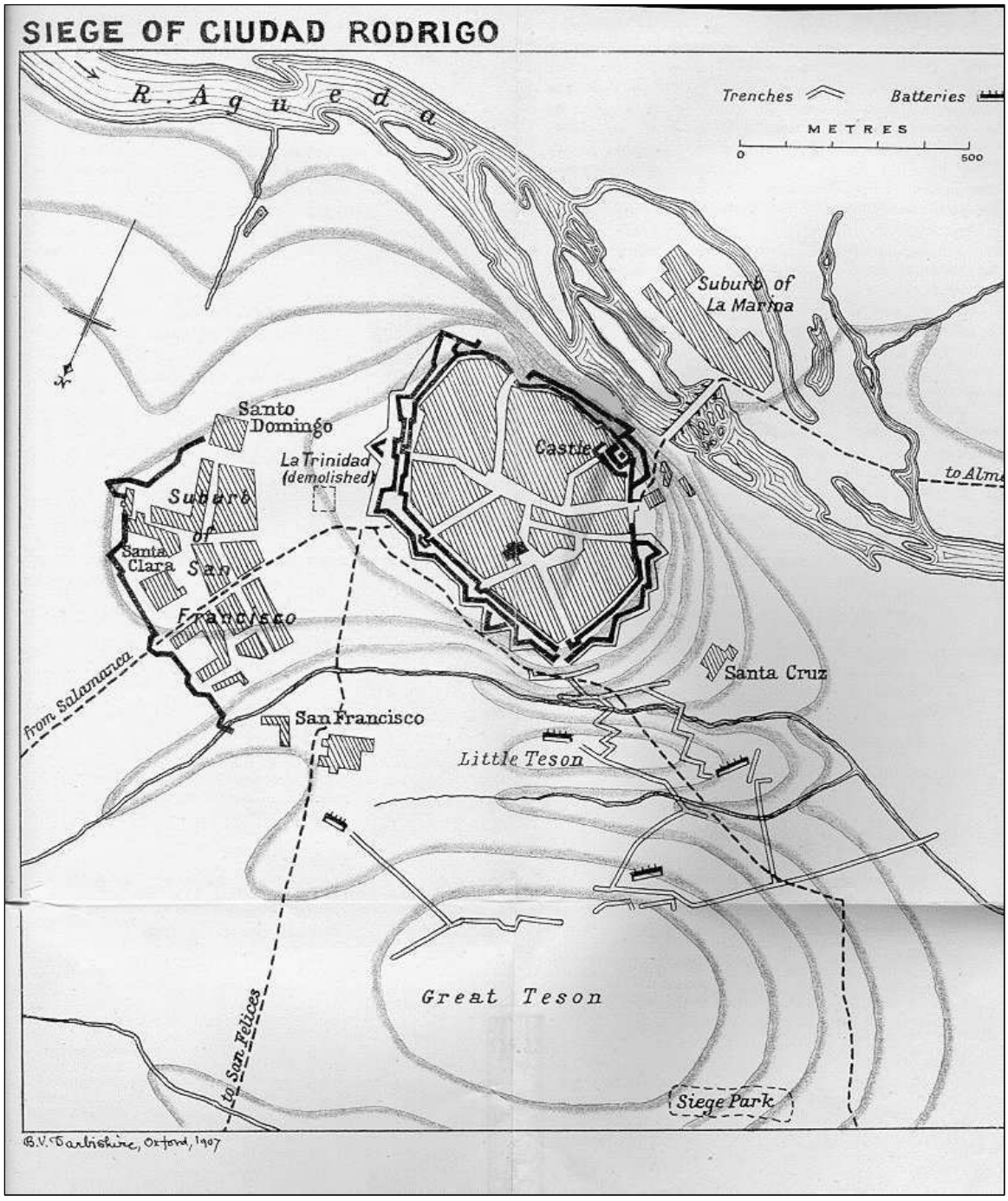

FIGURE 2

Map of the French Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1810. Sir Charles Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. III.*

THE 1810 FRENCH SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO

Ciudad Rodrigo has existed as a settlement since Roman times, (the Roman bridge still stands over the Agueda river), and likely earlier with Celtic origins. The town was rebuilt and fortified in the twelfth century for King Ferdinand II of Leon, to guard the frontier.[72] The fortress controlled the strategically important main road from Portugal leading to Salamanca, as shown in the map (Appendix C). Wellington observed that the Agueda "is difficult for an army to pass at any time; the only road which is practicable… when the rains have filled the rivers, is by the bridge of Ciudad Rodrigo."[73]

In 1810-12, the town stood on a plateau over a Spanish plain. The river Agueda flowed from east to west, to the immediate south of the town. A "steep precipice" dropped eighty feet down from the ramparts[74] to the river, making an assault from the river extremely difficult. Figure 2 shows Ciudad Rodrigo in 1810.

A stone and brick wall, twenty nine feet high and thirty feet thick, running for a circumference of around one mile, surrounded the town.[75] The bastions, as such, were medieval in nature; square, and lacking the advantages of modern, Vauban-style fortifications. During a siege in the War of Spanish Succession, the walls were breached in 1706. Afterwards, a more modern *faussebraie* was constructed in front of the original

[72] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia: The Twin Sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, 1810* (Tallahassee, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 84.
[73] Wellington to Liverpool, 6 November 1811, WD Vol. VIII, 378.
[74] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 86.
[75] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 86.

wall.[76] The *faussebraie* was a revetted earth bank, constructed inside the current ditch, essentially creating two ditches. Along with several *redans* (V-shaped works, similar to ravelins), the *faussebraie* provided some protection to the walls (except on the southern flank, where the Agueda river provided ample defense). A long, rocky glacis offered further protection to the walls.[77] However, these features worked on the assumption that enemy artillery batteries would occupy a similar elevation. Outside of the fortress, the suburb of San Francisco lay approximately eight hundred feet to the northeast (surrounding the aforementioned convent of San Francisco). To the southeast, the suburb of Santa Marina lay on the opposition bank of the Agueda River, across the four hundred foot long Roman bridge.[78] As the map (Figure 2) shows, two hills exist to the north of the fortress. The Lower (or Little) Teson, was located approximately 180 yards from the closest wall. The Upper (or Great) Teson was six hundred yards north of the walls, and, crucially, thirteen feet higher in elevation.[79] Modern artillery of the Napoleonic Era made these elevations the most valuable sites to attack the fortress. French Engineer Jacques Belmas opined *"La place était dans un état médiocre de défense"*[80] (the place was in a poor state of defense).

In 1810, French forces under *Maréchal* Michel Ney besieged Ciudad Rodrigo, then under Spanish control. Napoleonic historian Donald Horward has researched the French siege in considerable detail, and his text on the twin sieges of Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo is used as the principle reference. The successful French siege needs to be considered in detail since Ney's siege showed that decisions he made and action he took were appropriate. The French siege influenced the English siege, but Ney faced an

[76] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 86.
[77] Myatt, *British Sieges,* 57.
[78] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia,* 91.
[79] Fleming, *Fortresses,* 16.
[80] Jacques Belmas, *Journaux des Sieges Faits ou Soutenus par Les Francais dans la Peninsule 1807-1814 Vol. III* (Paris: Chez Firmin Didot Freres, 1837), 215.

easier task. Governor Don Andrés Peréz de Herrasti commanded the fortress and the Spanish garrison. In 1810, this comprised of over six thousand men, including 310 officers and 390 artillerymen. However, 2,432 of the garrison were members of a civic guard comprised of local residents. In terms of armament, the fortress held one hundred cannon and eighteen howitzers/mortars.[81] Wellington would face a tougher French garrison and formidable French defence in 1812.

Unfortunately, Horward does not break down Ney's VI corps or provide detailed numbers. However, French engineer Jacques-Vital Belmas' *Journaux de Sieges* provides the specifics. Ney's Corps comprised three infantry divisions, under *générals* Jean Gabriel Marchand, Julien Mermet, and Louis Henri Loison. French infantry numbered a little over 23,000. The cavalry numbered around twelve hundred, and was commanded by General of Brigade Auguste Etienne Lamotte.[82] The 6th corps of artillery was under the command of General of Brigade Joseph Claude Marie Charbonnel, and comprised of 1,119 men and 1,313 horse.[83]

In addition, Ney's Army of Portugal had a siege train that provided significant firepower. Under the command of General of Brigade Charles-Etienne Ruty, the artillery comprised over two thousand men and twenty two hundred horse.[84] Ruty's siege train consisted of the following artillery pieces: fifteen *bouches a feu* (cannon), ten 24lb guns, seven 16lb guns, twelve 12lb guns, eleven *mortier* (mortars), eight *obusier* (howitzers) and twelve *pierriers* (breech-loading cannon).[85]

The French began preparations for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in early May 1810. Horward commented that "the logistical problems faced by Masséna's army were

[81] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 95.
[82] Belmas, *Journaux des Sieges*, 264.
[83] Belmas, *Journaux des Sieges*, 264.
[84] Belmas, *Journaux des Sieges*, 265.
[85] Belmas, *Journaux des Sieges*, 223.

more imposing than the 120 guns of Ciudad Rodrigo and its defiant garrison."[86] French engineer Jean-Jacques Pelet noted that "the obstacles of the countryside, the inclement weather, and lack of every necessity"[87] created problems. It is likely however, that the Spanish guerrillas also deserve some credit for disrupting communications and forcing the French to commit large numbers to escort their convoys from Salamanca. By 31 May, the majority of the pieces were in place for the French at La Caridad, three miles south of Ciudad Rodrigo. Ney, along with artillery commander Ruty and engineer Couche, reconnoitered the town and determined a plan of attack.[88]

The Spanish made efforts to protect the fortress at points where the French attack appeared likely. Outside the walls, the suburb of San Francisco was entrenched, and the convents of San Francisco and Santo Domingo were fortified. The main road to Salamanca was barricaded. Also, the convent of Trinidad was demolished to clear firing lines and provide rubble to construct a new *demi-lune*. The convent of Santa Cruz was fortified, and the main ditch was cleared of debris. With respect to the fortress itself, the *enceinte* and *faussebraie* were reinforced, as were the four main gates. Ammunition depots were established, and the cathedral tower on the north side was also turned into a lookout post. Shelters were built for the garrison and civilians; and firefighting equipment, provided by the Portuguese after a late request, arrived shortly before the French began the siege.[89]

The French identified the weakest area of the fortress as the northwest wall, near the cathedral. It was poorly escarped, offered little in the way of flanking fire, and could be targeted from the Tesons.[90]

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[86] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 80.
[87] Jean-Jacques Pelet, *The French Campaign in Portugal 1810-1811* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 43.
[88] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 83.
[89] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 93.
[90] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 96.

Following initial skirmishing action, Ney requested Masséna's VIII Corps to support the forthcoming siege. Masséna attended upon Ney, but the two Marshals butted heads. Masséna's aide-de-camp Jean-Jacques Pelet observed that "disagreement was apparent on every occasion."[91] Returning later to Salamanca, Masséna wrote to Louis-Alexandre Berthier, Napoleon's Chief of Staff, expressing concern about Ney's judgment. Masséna also worried about the weather, "continuous rain, extreme variations in heat and cold," and the lack of cartridges for the infantry.[92]

In early June, the French-Spanish skirmishing grew in significance. French forces established a double-cordon, essentially surrounding the city.[93] After several minor actions, the Spanish garrison made a concerted effort to disrupt the French on 6 June. An early infantry attack to dislodge troops near the Upper Teson was unsuccessful. The French reserve troops forced the Spanish back. Later, around 2,500 to 3,000 Spanish infantry (around half of the total Spanish force) attempted to clear French troops from the suburbs surrounding the fortress. However, they were again pushed back. Casualties were fairly low for both sides; ten French dead, and thirty Spanish.[94] The Spanish governor Andreas Herrasti tried to buy time in order for the British/allied forces to relieve the siege, rather than break out of the cordon.

British and allied troops were nearby; they threatened the French without directly engaging. Elements of the Light Division were "literally in sight of the French lines."[95] This added to the pressure on the French in terms of time. However, Wellington never seriously committed to an attack on the besieging forces. In a letter to his brother Henry (from Celorico, dated 11 June), he explained that "with an army considerably inferior in numbers…. I think I ought not now to risk a general action in the plains to relieve the

[91] Pelet, *French Campaign in Portugal,* 69.
[92] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 101.
[93] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 99.
[94] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 107.
[95] Esdaile, *The Peninsula War*, 297.

place."[96] In the same letter, he also made a telling comment that may have influenced his actions during the later British siege of 1812. "Having obliged the French to collect an army for this enterprise, that is, to make the attack of the worst fortified place in the world, I fear that I can do no more for it." He also questioned the lethargy of the French action. "A fortnight has elapsed since the [French] guns moved from Salamanca; and the French are not yet in possession of the ground they must have for the siege (the assumption here is that he is referring to the Tesons). This is not the way in which they have conquered Europe!"[97]

The French continued preparations, but logistics remained an issue. Ney "complained bitterly"[98]about the lack of supplies. It appears that basic subsistence (flour, biscuit, and meat) sent on convoys from Salamanca was the main shortage for the troops. The French cavalry also suffered from a lack of barley for their mounts.[99] Clearly, the area around Ciudad Rodrigo proved unyielding for troops attempting to live off the land.

The weather also created issues: heavy rain made the roads impracticable to move the heavy artillery guns. The French were slow to occupy desired areas around the Agueda River.[100]

By 13 June, The French finalized plans for the establishment of trenches. The French aimed at the Convent of Santa Cruz. The building had been taken from the Spanish several days earlier, but was later recaptured. Ney now resolved to open the initial trenches on 15 June.[101] Each division contributed to the 2,300 trench diggers. That night, under cover of darkness and diversionary attacks, the first parallel trench was

[96] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 11 June 1810, *WD* Vol. VI, 181.
[97] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 11 June 1810, *WD* Vol. VI, 180.
[98] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 109.
[99] Pelet, *French Campaign in Portugal*, 51.
[100] Ruty to _____, 8 June 1810, Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 113.
[101] Pelet, *French Campaign in Portugal*, *63.*

constructed. In all, fourteen hundred feet of parallel was opened less than fifteen hundred feet from the closest wall. Work also commenced on the communications trenches.[102]

The Spanish offered resistance. On 16 June, the fortress artillery opened fire on the trench works. However, the weather created greater issues for the French, with almost three hundred feet of the parallel "absolutely impractical" due to flooding. The following day, a minor Spanish infantry sortie probed the trenches.[103] Nevertheless, by 20 June, the French opened two new approaches – zig-zag trenches in front of the parallel. The following night, work began on the construction of six gun batteries. Well within range of the fortress guns, the number of French casualties rose. Inside the fortress, Herrasti announced that forty thousand British and Portuguese troops were heading to their aid.[104] It is unclear whether Herrasti believed this, or whether it was a ruse designed to maintain morale.

With the nearest approach within five hundred yards of the Convent of Santa Cruz, Ney resolved to take the convent for a second and final time. However a night attack on 23 June failed, and boosted Spanish morale. Herrasti wrote that "the night was full of glory for us, and they paid dearly for the single barbaric satisfaction they gained" in burning some buildings at the convent.[105]

However, three French batteries had been completed, and two were fully armed. On 24 June, Masséna left Salamanca and arrived on site for the siege. Additional wagon trains also brought much needed supplies.[106] The next day, all French guns were in place, and the bombardment began. According to Pelet, "At dawn, every battery opened fire at the same time with their forty-six guns… soon guns were firing vigorously from both

[102] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 122.
[103] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 123.
[104] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 129.
[105] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 132.
[106] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 134.

sides and the noise was terrible."[107] The howitzers and mortar fire were effective; 150 inhabitants of the fortress were killed, and five hundred wounded. However, the Spanish guns did succeed in knocking out a French battery. Meanwhile, trench work continued at night. The Convent of Santa Cruz was finally seized after French artillery had created breaches in the convent walls. The French were in secure possession of ground just over one hundred yards from the glacis.[108]

Masséna commanded the siege in person, but he was unhappy at the progress. He wrote General Jean-Baptiste Eblé (artillery commander), "Everything demands that this siege be conducted with the greatest vigor. It is important to the health of the arm that it be ended as soon as possible."[109] Accordingly, French howitzer fire continued through the night. Over 1,200 shells fell inside of twenty four hours, turning parts of the town into "holocausts."[110] During the day, artillery pieces continued to work on creating a breach, targeting both the wall and *the faussebraie*. By 28 June, a breach appeared "complete", with the *faussebraie* and a segment of wall "in ruin."[111] At this point, Ney sent an aide-de-camp to offer terms with Herrasti, who declined. Artillery fire and trench work opened up again.

Despite damage to the wall and faussebraie, the breach was still not practicable, as the counterscarp was still intact. Damaging the front side of the ditch creates an artificial slope for assaulting soldiers to use; without it, they have to jump straight down into the deep ditch, likely sustaining injury. In order to damage the counterscarp, the suburb and Convent of San Francisco would have to be captured. Pelet was critical of the French trench work. He wrote that "the approaches were sometimes poorly laid out. A

[107] Pelet, *French Campaign in Portugal*, 67.
[108] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 139.
[109] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 139.
[110] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 140.
[111] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 141.

few of them were enfiladed, especially on 29 June. The fire of the enemy regained its superiority; our guns fired little."[112]

Ney and Masséna continued to disagree. Ammunition was running low for the 16lb and 24lb siege guns, and Ruty wanted to restrict firing to smaller caliber guns. Three weeks earlier Ruty and Couche promised just three hours were needed to silence the Spanish guns, and a few days would be needed to capture the fortress. Masséna believed he was being blamed for the siege's delay. To Ney's displeasure, Masséna replaced Couche and Ruty with Colonel Eléonor Valazé and General Eblé.[113]

For a successful assault, the French staff determined that several key events were needed. The suburbs of San Francisco had to be controlled, the approach trenches had to be pushed to the crest of the glacis, and a gallery had to be sunk to the counterscarp to blow it up.[114] Accordingly, the attack on San Francisco began on 1 July. General Edouard-François Simon led an infantry assault while artillery bombarded the area, and he successfully captured the convent. Meanwhile, the trench network continued to grow as a second parallel was extended, with plans to add a battery upon the Lower Teson.[115] By the night of 3 July, a flying sap trench from the second parallel reached within eighteen feet of the counterscarp.[116] A new enfilading battery was under construction at the Convent of San Francisco. Despite strong Spanish fire from the fortress, the French made progress towards their goals.

On 6 July, work began on the construction of the covered gallery behind the counterscarp. The French built a tunnel which they planned to mine and blow up the counterscarp. By 8 July, they had reached the counterscarp and prepared the parallel

[112] Pelet, *French Campaign in Portugal*, 68.
[113] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 145.
[114] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 147.
[115] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 157.
[116] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 163.

tunnel to mine.[117] The following night, eight hundred pounds of explosives were used to blow the counterscarp, creating a twenty five foot breach and the necessary ramp of debris for the assaulting soldiers to use. Finally, after twenty five nights of open trenches, a breach was now practicable.[118]

On 10 July, all available French guns opened fire on the breach, clearing away temporary repairs and a newly constructed palisade. The French prepared for an assault. Two columns made ready in the approaches before the second parallel, and planned to march straight at the breach.[119] As the French columns began their advance, Herrasti surrendered before fighting began. With 1,400 casualties and no British support forthcoming, the Spanish governor believed that any further defense would likely fail. The town would have been subject to the abuses of a sack.[120]

The siege had lasted for seventy two days: trenches were opened for thirty five days, artillery fire lasted for sixteen days, and a breach was open for thirteen days. When the Spanish commander submitted, the breach was wide enough "to accommodate sixty men abreast". The French had fired 28,286 shells, and 11,859 bombs. Fourteen officers and 168 enlisted men were killed. Thirty four officers and 1,009 men were wounded. There were 1,800 Spanish soldiers and civilians killed or wounded.[121]

Several consequences from the siege need to be considered. The impact of the French fire upon the walls of the fortress is not quantifiable. However, in his history of the Peninsular War, David Gates comments that "the repairs to Ney's breaches had not been particularly effective: the mortar was weak due to a shortage of lime, and rapidly crumbled."[122] Despite making what appears to have been the best long-term decision by

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[117] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 171.
[118] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia,* 172; Pelet, *French Campaign, 77.*
[119] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 174. The contingency plan was to dig into the breach itself and await reinforcements, if access could not be gained to the fortress.
[120] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 178.
[121] Horward, *Napoleon & Iberia*, 180.
[122] Gates, *The Spanish Ulcer*, 330.

not attempting to engage the French, Wellington angered the Spanish by his inaction. Herrasti openly accused Wellington of betrayal.[123] The Spanish cursed the British, and claimed that they had "broke[n] their word of honor and betrayed the confraternity of arms which had been sworn."[124] In fact, many Spaniards involved in the siege would support the French against the British. In the future, Wellington would take great care to keep the Spanish happy. He received control of all Spanish forces in 1812.

[123] Esdaile, *The Peninsula War*, 298.
[124] Pelet, *French Campaign*, *83.*

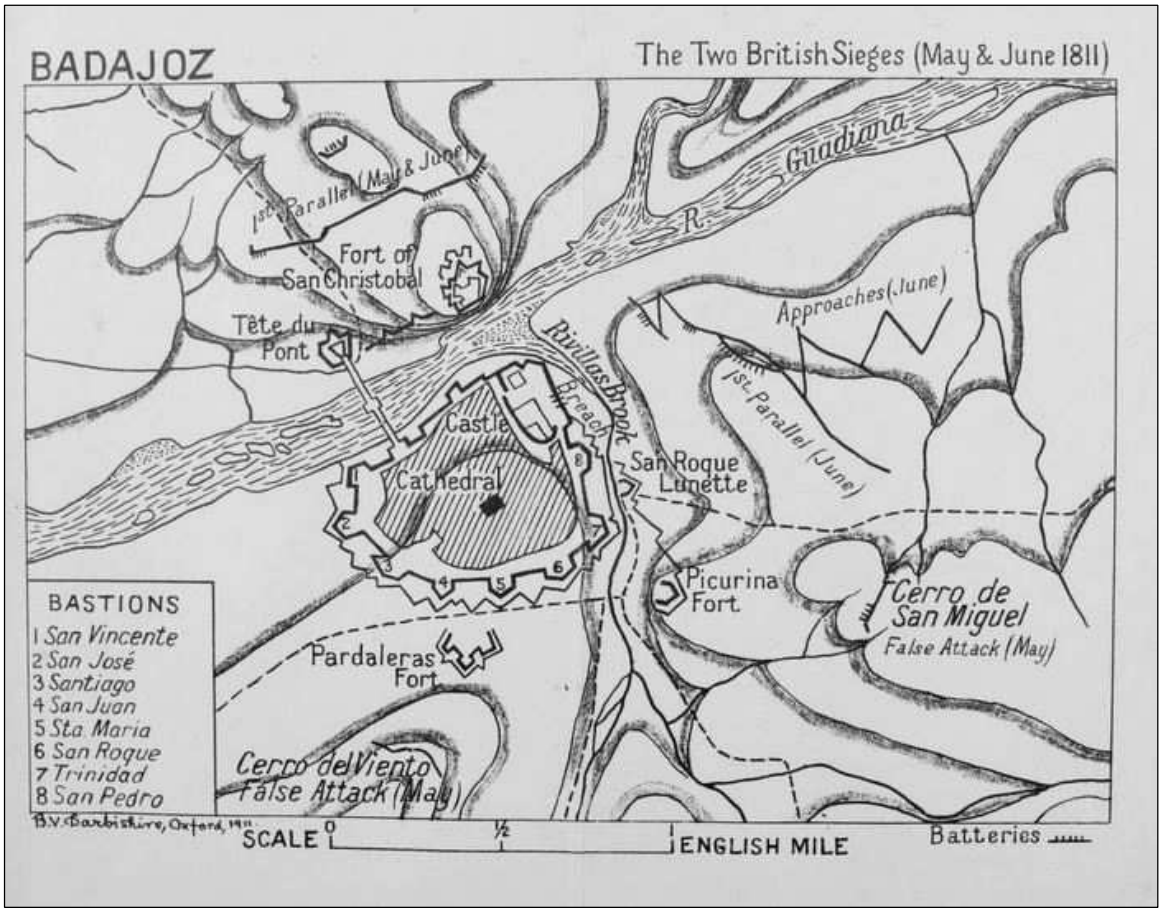

FIGURE 3
Map of the British Sieges of Badajoz in 1811. Sir Charles Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV.*

THE 1811 SIEGES OF BADAJOZ

The town of Badajoz is located in the community of Extramadura, in western Spain near the border with Portugal. During the time of the Peninsular War, estimates of the town's population varied between seven and seventeen thousand.[125] In addition to residential areas inside the walls, Badajoz also had a cathedral and numerous churches.[126] The countryside was described as fertile, as it contained wine, wheat, and fodder.[127]

Historically, Badajoz emerged as small Roman town. It grew under Moorish control, and was later won by Alfonso IX of Leon in 1229.[128] It changed hands a number of times in the following centuries, and during the Portuguese Restoration War (1640-1688). The "Vaubanization" of the defenses took place between during this conflict between Portugal and Spain, when the modern bastions and defensive features were constructed and incorporated into the original Moorish *Alcabazar* (castle).[129] It proved important during the War of Spanish Succession. The French recognized the strategic importance of Badajoz. When the Spanish revolt broke out in 1808, the French invaders made several attempts to take it from the Spanish. They finally succeeded in 1811.

[125] Fluctuations were largely due to movement in and out of the town caused by changes in governorship, and the various sieges during the war.
[126] Henry Barker, *A Short Description of Badajoz and the surrounding country* (J. Adlard, 1813), 2.
[127] Jean LaMere, *Relation des Siéges et Défenses D'Olivença, de Badajoz et de Campo-Mayor en 1811 et 1812* (Paris: Anselin et Pochard, 1825), 113.
[128] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Badajoz," accessed 17 July 2014, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/48408/Badajoz.
[129] "Ayuntamiento de Badajoz", accessed 5 Aug 2014 http://www.aytobadajoz.es/es/ayto/monumentos/fortificacion-vauban#.U87lT7FhsTC

The fortress stood on the left bank on the Guadiana River. In 1811, the Guadiana spanned three hundred to five hundred yards in close proximity to the fortress. Thus, the river provided an excellent physical defense and limited the need for additional man-made features other than a curtain wall.[130] On the eastern side of the fortress, the smaller Rivillas River ran parallel to the wall. The remaining sides were dominated by eight bastions: San Vicente, San Jose, Santiago, San Juan, Santa Maria, San Roque, Trinidad, and San Pedro. On the north-east corner of the fortress stood the old Moorish castle. The castle served as a ninth bastion. These are identified on the map in Figure 3. The bastion walls exceeded thirty feet in height, and the curtain wall varied in height from twenty three to twenty six feet.[131]

A Roman bridge spanned the Guadiana to the northern bank. On the opposite side of the bank, two outerworks existed. The *tete-du-pont* protected the bridge, and Fort San Christoval protected the *tete-du-pont*, controlling access to the city from the north. In 1812, the French built a *lunette* to protect higher ground up the slope from Fort San Christoval.[132] Charles Oman observed that the "the towering height of San Cristo[v]al" made it the "most striking feature of Badajoz".[133] He believed that the fort had to be blockaded or attacked in order to besiege Badajoz.

South of the fortress, three more key outerworks existed. Fort Pardaleras controlled the high ground immediately outside the southern wall. The San Roque *lunette* covered access to the gate near the Trinidad bastion, and Fort Picurina stood on the high ground opposite the southeastern corner, across the Rivillas River. Oman

[130] Sir John Jones, *Journal of Sieges carried on by the army under the Duke of Wellington in Spain, during the years 1811-1814 Volume I* (London: John Weale, 1846), 11.
[131] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 11.
[132] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 49-50.
[133] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 38.

considered Badajoz a "stronghold of the first class," due to its integration of the landscape features and the man-made defenses. [134]

In 1811, the French invaded Extramadura. *Maréchal* Jean de Dieu Soult marched on Badajoz in January with just under six thousand infantry, ten companies of artillery, and seven companies of sappers. He chose to invest the southern side of the fortress, while French cavalry blockaded the northern side. Opposing the French was a garrison of around five thousand Spaniards under the command of General Rafael Manacho, a well-regarded officer.[135]

French engineers determined the ideal direction for an assault to be from the west, between the Pardaleras fort and the river. However, Soult did not have a large enough force to invest the fortress properly, so the Spanish defenders were able to enfilade approach trenches from the north bank. As a result, the French decided to approach from a southern front and capture the Pardaleras fort. Trenches were constructed, and an additional division of French troops arrived and doubled the size of Soult's force.[136] The Spanish garrison, along with soldiers under the command of Carlos de Espana, fought against the besiegers, but without decisive results.

On 8 February, the French captured the Pardaleras Fort by escalade. However, fire from the near bastions made the fort initially untenable. In the days following the assault, more men were killed than during the actual escalade.[137]

A large Spanish army under General Gabriel Medizabal attempted to lift the siege on 19 February. However, French troops commanded by *Maréchal* Édouard Mortier easily defeated the Spanish at the San Cristobal heights, in what became known as the Battle of the Gebora. This allowed Soult to continue with the siege of the fortress.[138]

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[134] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 38.
[135] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 38.
[136] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 41.
[137] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 51.
[138] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 337.

This he did, albeit at a slow pace. By 3 March, the approach trenches neared the *demi-lune* close to the San Juan bastion. While observing a sortie out of the fortress, governor Menacho was killed on the ramparts by a random French shot. French engineer Colonel Jean LaMare believed Menacho's death sapped the Spanish morale and led to a decline in their sorties.[139]

After establishing a battery of six 24lb guns, the French began work on a breach in the curtain wall between the San Juan and Santiago bastions. A practicable breach was created, but flanking fire from the two bastions remained a threat. The French could expect heavy casualties if they assaulted the breach.[140] An assault was not needed, however. Menacho's replacement, José Imaz, surrendered the fortress. The Spanish garrison was well provisioned and had expected relief from the British General William Beresford and two divisions of men. Oman was of the opinion that "there is not the slightest doubt that if Menacho had lived the place would have held out."[141]

Wellington was well aware of the significance of Badajoz falling into French hands. "The first object of our attention must be to regain Badajoz," he wrote to Liverpool. "This is very important, not only in respect to Portugal, but to the subsistence of Cadiz."[142] Accordingly, with the French in control of Badajoz, Wellington moved to Elvas in April with plans to take the fortress back. He planned to reconnoiter the area, and informed General Beresford, "I shall write to you my opinion upon the several points which occur to me, in regard to the siege of Badajoz, which is your principal object."[143] Of primary importance were siege guns, and he directed Beresford to discover if any 24lb guns or carriages existed at the Portuguese arsenal in Lisbon. Wellington worried that "if

[139] LaMere, *Relation des Sieges*, 98.
[140] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 57.
[141] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 61.
[142] Wellington to Liverpool 7 May 1811, WD, Vol. VII, 508.
[143] Wellington to Beresford 20 April 1811, WD, Vol. VII, 472.

there should be none, those of our train must be sent up, which will cripple us for other operations."[144] Beresford would command the first attempt to reclaim Badajoz.

Wellington's initial plan called for Beresford to focus on the outworks of St. Christoval, Picurina, and Pardaleras. Once these were in British hands, Beresford had the freedom to determine the point of attack. "It is believed, however," Wellington advised, "that upon the whole, one of the south faces will be the most advantageous."[145] The British were fully aware of the French operations that had captured the fortress. On the 25 April, Wellington wrote Beresford, "I enclose two intercepted letters sent me by General Castanos…I shall send you tomorrow their plan of Badajoz, with the plan of their attack upon the place."[146]

Wellington moved north from Elvas and fought *Maréchal* Masséna at the Battle of Fuentes de Onoro, 3-5 May. Beresford prepared to invest Badajoz. His final plan called for diversionary attacks on the Pardaleras and Picurina, while Fort San Christoval was the primary target. He commenced the siege on 6 May. During the following nine days, Beresford's forces accomplished little. The siege was raised on 15 May following the approach of *Maréchal* Soult's army. In his journal, Sir John Jones of the Engineers made several telling observations. He believed the strength of Badajoz had been underestimated. The British artillery, ammunition, tools and stores provided for the siege were insufficient, in his opinion. He also commented that the Portuguese gunners, "though brave and zealous, were very young and inexpert."[147] Indeed, Jones believed the arrival of Soult's force was a blessing in disguise. Beresford had stopped the siege and prevented "a further sacrifice of men in other feeble attempts."[148]

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[144] Wellington to Beresford 20 April 1811, WD Vol. VII, 473.
[145] Wellington to Beresford, Fletcher and Dickson 23 April 1811, WD Vol. VII, 482.
[146] Wellington to Beresford 25 April 1811 WD Vol. VII, 491.
[147] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 28.
[148] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 29.

Wellington was not physically present at the first siege of Badajoz, and it is patently unfair to lay the blame at Beresford's doorstep for the failure of the Anglo-Portuguese force. His force was unprepared for the task undertaken, particularly lacking in artillery. Major Dickson had acquired sixteen 24lb and eight 16lb guns from Elvas, all brass instead of the more modern iron models.[149] Indeed, the most modern of those used were of early 18th century build, and others were almost two hundred years old.[150] The combination of inadequate artillery pieces and inexperienced gunners meant the siege was almost doomed to failure from the start. [151] Major Alexander Dickson of the artillery observed, "The brass guns could not stand the necessary fire." Further, he noted that they "generally had so much windage that you could put your fingers in between the shot and the bore."[152] This greatly affected the accuracy of Beresford's artillery.

Major John Burgoyne of the Engineers wrote a scathing opinion of the plan, implying that Beresford had blundered. The attacks on San Christoval garnered the attention of both the fort and the main fortress of Badajoz itself. He commented that the attacks had caused a "useless sacrifice of lives, from the very superior fire from the place."[153] Unsurprisingly, Burgoyne had an agenda. He wrote that "had the plan originally proposed [by the Engineers] been allowed to be carried into execution, it is the opinion of many of the Engineers there that the place would have been taken in six or seven days." After nine days, Beresford raised the siege. Should it be recommenced, Burgoyne warned, "it will be under many more disadvantages."[154] In a letter to Lord Derby, he was explicit in his finger-pointing. "At the siege of Badajoz, by his

[149] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 18.
[150] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War, Vol. IV*, 275. Some of the cannon found by Dickson at Elvas bore the name Philip III of Spain. Specific dates on guns used included 1620, 1636, 1646, and 1652.
[151] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 31.
[152] J. Leslie (ed)., *The Dickson manuscripts: being diaries, letters, maps, account books, with various other papers of the late Major-General Sir Alexander Dickson, G.C.B., K.C.H., K.T.S., Royal Artillery.*, (Woolwich: Royal Artillery Institution Printing House, 1905), 405.
[153] George Wrottesley, *The Life and Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, Bart.* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1873), 131.
[154] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 131.

[Beresford] acting contrary to the advice of his Engineers, and of everyone else, he was the cause of a great number of lives being lost." Historian Sir William Napier, writing later in the 19th century, sided with Burgoyne. "The concert essential to success in double operations had been neglected by Beresford. The attack on San Christoval," Napier wrote, "was exposed to the undivided fire of the fortress before the approaches against the castle were even commenced, and the false attacks scarcely attracted the notice of the enemy."[155]

After raising the initial siege, Beresford fought an action at Albuera against the French under *Maréchal* Soult. Despite heavy casualties on both sides, Beresford ultimately drove the French off. He returned to Badajoz to re-invest the fortress. After proving victorious at Fuentes de Onoro, Wellington headed south to join Beresford and arrived at Elvas on 19 May. He proceeded on to Badajoz and took command of the operation. Beresford returned to his previous post with the Portuguese contingent of the allied forces.[156]

Wellington resumed the siege following the same plan given to Beresford, albeit with changes to correct for the issues observed in the first siege. For example, enemy fire from the fortress would be opposed by counter-battery fire, and a new parallel was planned to limit the risk of sorties.[157] Wellington did significantly improve his resources for the second siege. The bulk of the army was now present, and additional siege stores reached Elvas from Lisbon. However, the issues regarding the condition of the artillery remained.[158]

Burgoyne welcomed Wellington's arrival. "The army is much pleased to be placed under a man of the decision and firmness of Lord Wellington," he wrote in his

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[155] Sir William Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula: Extracted from his "Peninsula War"* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1852), 106.
[156] David Gates, *The Spanish Ulcer: A History of the Peninsular War* (London: Pimlico), 272.
[157] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 31.
[158] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 37.

journal.[159] It may seem ironic that Beresford was castigated for executing Wellington's plan. It is questionable whether Burgoyne, a captain at the time, would have been aware of this.[160]

Works were opened on the night of 29 May and continued over the following days. The focus was placed on San Christoval again. A southern assault was discounted. Wellington did not appear overly confident in his chances, initially. He wrote to his brother Henry, "We break ground at Badajoz tomorrow, and we hope to get the place in a few days. If we do not succeed in a few days, we shall not succeed at all."[161] Wellington believed that the 5th Spanish Army, theoretically covering his forces, would not be able to stop *Maréchal* Soult if a French army arrived to relieve Badajoz again.[162] However, after a couple of days his confidence grew. He wrote to Henry again on 1 June to express his delight that the siege was going "very well", and that losses had been "trifling."[163]

On 3 June, the British batteries opened fire. Fourteen 24lb guns and six howitzers were employed against the castle. For the attack against the Christoval fort, twelve 24lb guns, four 16lb guns, and six howitzers were used. The batteries fired on the castle from at a range of around eight hundred yards. However, this distance, combined with the excessive windage of the guns limited the effectiveness of the fire. Jones noted that "the failure of the brass guns became now so very alarming." He lamented that "an interval of 7 or 8 minutes was ordered between each round, to give the metal time to cool."[164] Nevertheless, by 3 June Wellington appeared convinced that a quick success was almost

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[159] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 133.
[160] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne,* 135. In a later letter to Major John Squire of the Engineers, Burgoyne wrote "Whatever faults were committed at Badajoz, I suspect [Wellington] was not aware of them, and I think it is very doubtful whether he knows them now."
[161] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 29 May 1811, WD Vol. VII, 607.
[162] Wellington to Lt. Gen. Thomas Graham, 29 May 1811, WD Vol. VII, 606. "I acknowledge that I have little faith in distant diversions, and am very much of opinion, that if it is an object with Soult to collect another army to make a second attempt to relieve Badajoz, he will not be prevented by any diversion that may be made"
[163] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 1 June 1811, WD Vol. VII, 615.
[164] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I,* 46.

inevitable. He wrote to Major General Picton, "From the manner in which we are going on, I think it is not impossible but that we may have a breach in the castle wall this evening."[165] He went on to give details for the eventual surrender of the garrison. His genuine belief in success was tarnished when later that day, Fletcher informed Wellington that the castle wall was damaged, but no practicable breach existed. He advised that "the guns employed are so uncertain in their effects that it may become necessary to push yet farther forward… about a hundred and fifty yards in advance of our parallel."[166] Similarly, fire upon the Christoval fort failed to create a practicable breach.

On the night of 6 June, Wellington ordered an assault on San Christoval, using an escalade in lieu of a breach. This medieval-era tactic consisted of attacking troops climbing over defensive walls with the use of ladders. A storming party of 180 men (two companies of grenadiers, with support) failed in their attempt on the fort, largely due to a logistical mishap. The attackers carried with them "twelve ladders of 15 feet in length"[167], but the scarp wall was more than twenty feet in height. The storming party retired, after taking over one hundred casualties (twelve killed and ninety wounded).[168]

By 9 June, the breach at San Christoval was deemed practicable. Fire from the fort had diminished to the point where no casualties were sustained in the British batteries during the day.[169] A second assault was ordered, with a larger force of four hundred men employed against the French garrison at the fort. This time the assault was repulsed by "the enormous quantity of large shells, hand-grenades, bags of powder and combustibles" the French had thrown into the breach.[170] The British suffered 140 casualties.

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[165] Wellington to Picton, 3 June 1811, WD Vol. VII, 620.
[166] Fletcher to Wellington, 3 June 1811, WSD Vol. VII, 151.
[167] Wellington's disposition for the assault did not specify the size of ladder, only that the advance of the assault party should carry two ladders, with ten more carried in reserve. In his plan for the assault on Ciudad Rodrigo the following year, he includes both size and number of ladders (see Appendix A).
[168] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 55.
[169] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 60.
[170] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I,* 65.

Given his failure to capture the San Christoval fort, Wellington decided to lift the siege the following morning. Without control of fort, any attempt to storm the castle would have been unlikely to succeed. In addition, *Maréchal* Auguste Marmont had moved south to join forces with Soult, and the French could now bring sixty thousand men to bear against Wellington.[171] Thus, the second siege of Badajoz ended. Nine British officers had been killed and twenty five wounded, along with 109 men killed and 342 wounded.

In his summary of the year's operations, Wellington attributed the failure of the attack(s) upon San Christoval to "the want of experience in the British army."[172] Specifically, he believed the artillery battery needed to have been sited on the crest of the glacis, and greater care should have been taken to prevent the French from clearing the breach.[173] In his letter to Liverpool dated 13 June, Wellington complained, "The ordnance belonging to the garrison of Elvas is very ancient and incomplete… the fire from this ordnance was therefore very uncertain…both guns and carriages were rendered useless so frequently by the effect of our own fire as to create delay…"[174] Even after eight full days of fire from fourteen 24lb guns at four hundred to six hundred yards, no practicable breach was created in the wall of the castle.[175]

In his history of the Peninsula War, historian Charles Oman held strong views on the initial sieges. He stated that "there can be no doubt that all the mishaps of the two first British sieges of Badajoz had their origin in the original orders of Wellington, which were drawn up on the advice of his chief engineer, Col. Fletcher." Oman believed that

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[171] Rory Muir, *Wellington, the Path to Victory 1769-1814* (London: Yale Press, 2013), 433. Wellington's combined Anglo-Portuguese force numbered 50,000. WSD Vol. VII, 176.
[172] WD Vol. VIII, 510.
[173] The debris created from firing upon a wall is used to fill the ditch and create a slope, therefore aiding the creation of a practicable breach.
[174] During the second siege, fifteen of the 24lb brass guns were out of action at different times due to damage caused by firing shot.
[175] Wellington to Liverpool, 13 June 1811, WD Vol. VIII, 13-14.

"the great mistake was choosing the almost impregnable fort of San Christoval as one of the first three points of attack, and the making all subsequent operations depend upon its capture."[176] Oman went on to point out that as Wellington was not an engineer by trade, he was dependent on the advice of his engineers. Oman believed that these advisors "gave him bad counsel, as they certainly did to Beresford."[177] Specifically, he questioned why Fletcher ignored what the French had done successfully. Soult's plan had attacked the Pardaleras front. Fletcher's efforts were wasted on the outworks, and had only limited artillery resources. It is important to note that Oman wrote at the turn of the twentieth century, one hundred years after the wars in Spain. Recent scholarly research into the Engineers during the Peninsula War suggests Oman did not take all elements into consideration.[178]

Valuable lessons were learned from the 1811 sieges of Badajoz. While these were unsuccessful, on a strategic level little damage was done. The soldiers, engineers, artillery officers, and Wellington himself gained experience in siege warfare. Sieges required a true artillery train (comprising iron guns of large caliber), and such a train was high on the list of priorities when Wellington prepared for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo the following winter. He addressed a lack of miners and sappers, but only partially. On 14 September 1811, Major Burgoyne of the Engineers wrote to his sister, "My principal business now is training 200 men of different regiments to the duties required in a siege, which, to our disgrace and misfortune, we have no regular establishment equal to."[179] The failed sieges demonstrated the importance of outworks such as San Christoval. The

[176] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 282.
[177] Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. IV*, 283.
[178] Specifically, see articles published by Dr. Mark Thompson, "A Re-evaluation of the Role of the Royal Engineers and their Relationship with Wellington" and "The Rise of the Scientific Soldier as Seen Through the Performance of the Corps of Royal Engineers During the Early 19th Century."
[179] Wrottesley*, Burgoyne*, 137.

overall strength of Badajoz was fully recognized. Capturing the fortress would require a major undertaking, with proper planning and preparations.

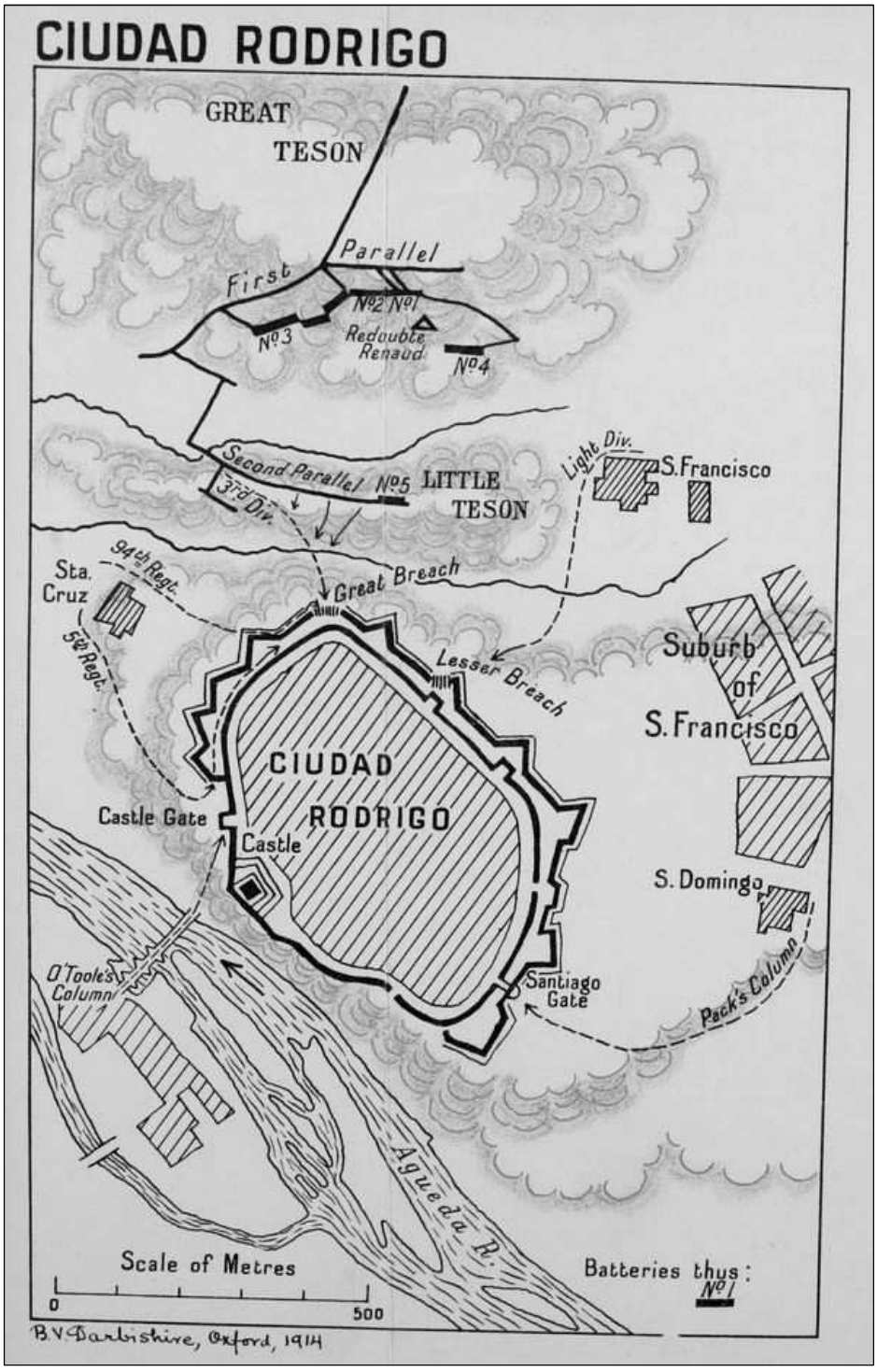

FIGURE 4

Map of the British Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812. Sir Charles Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. V.*

THE BRITISH SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO

In the summer of 1811, Wellington had consolidated his position in Portugal, and was looking to move into Spain. The strategic importance of Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo was paramount, if Wellington was to advance from Portugal. The two fortresses controlled two key routes into Spain, and they held sufficiently large French garrisons that could not be bypassed. Large French garrisons could expose the British supply train and threaten any retreat if needed.

In July, preparations began. Wellington ordered his siege train to Trancoso, a town west of Almeida, the Portuguese fortress opposing Ciudad Rodrigo. A copy of the orders is included in the Dickson manuscripts, (the memoirs of Major Alexander Dickson of the Royal Artillery). A letter by Dickson to Major General John Macleod, R.A (dated 23 July) stated that Dickson had met with Wellington, Fletcher, and Colonel Hoylet Framingham, R.A. "His Lordship informed us that it was his intention to attempt the Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo."[180] Wellington estimated the total time for the operation at sixty two days for the siege train to be in situ. This proves two key facts. First, Wellington had six months to plan the siege. Thus, when considering logistics and preparation, most decisions were made in advance, rather than at the spur of the moment. Second, Fletcher and Framingham were involved from the start, so both the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery had ample time to plan and prepare.

[180] Leslie, *Dickson manuscripts*, 421.

Wellington wrote to Lord Liverpool, Secretary of State, on 18 July to explain his thinking. British numbers had risen to 44,810 infantry, with an additional five thousand men expected within a fortnight. The prospect of the renewal of hostilities in northern Europe suggested a time of weakness for the French, and Wellington intended to "improve the situation of the allies in the Peninsula." A siege of Badajoz was not an option given the summer heat and Soult's ability to reinforce (the failed spring sieges were not even mentioned). An open battle against the French Army of Portugal was too risky, with French superiority in terms of numbers. Any attempt to relieve Cadiz would likely be hampered by the aforementioned Army of Portugal, supported by the French V Corps. This left the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo as the only viable option, and the one for which Wellington had prepared.[181]

On 1 November, French General de Brigade Jean Léonard Barrié arrived at Ciudad Rodrigo from Salamanca and assumed command of the garrison. Barrié and the accompanying convoy were the last French reinforcements to arrive at the fortress. Wellington moved troops to loosely blockade the area. He had hoped to move quickly and surprise the French at Ciudad Rodrigo, but on 27 November, he informed Liverpool that "I think it probable they will have heard of our movements."[182] The movement of the siege train towards the fortress plus the commencement of the blockade would have alerted the French to the upcoming siege. Still, Rifleman John Kincaid believed that Wellington had planned the siege with "such admirable secresy [sic], that his preparations were not even known to his own army [until late December]."[183]

Up until this time, Wellington's forces had been hampered by illness. The so called "Walcheren fever" had continued to afflict the soldiers who "recently arrived from England, and all those who had been in Walcheren", and rendered them "unable to

[181] Wellington to Liverpool, 18 July, 1811. WD Vol. VIII, 112.
[182] Wellington to Liverpool, 27 November 1811. WD Vol. VIII, 410.
[183] Kincaid, *Random Shots*, 252.

perform any duty."[184] These are Wellington's words, but a review by the British Medical Journal suggests that Walcheren fever was a combination of malaria, typhus, typhoid and dysentery. In mid-1810, a year after the failed expedition to the Dutch island,[185] around eleven thousand soldiers were still registered as sick, and many were permanently debilitated. In later Peninsular campaigning, "the Walcheren regiments were always the first to fall ill." It was not until 18 December 1811 that Wellington for the first time noted that his army was in a "state of health to make any forward movement."[186]

Around the time that the British and allied army was healthy enough to proceed with the assault, the French garrison ran low on some necessary supplies. Wellington appears to have had excellent intelligence on the matter, stating that the garrison would run out of bread and meat by 20 February 1812.[187] However, supply issues also plagued Wellington's army. Its offensive actions had also been limited by a lack of provisions, but a move into Spain required co-operation from the Spanish. In his 18 December correspondence, Wellington complained to Liverpool that "the Spaniards are so unwilling to furnish any [provisions]."[188] Complaints against the Iberian allies were not uncommon throughout the war.

By Christmas Day 1811, Wellington wrote that his forces were "continuing… preparations to attack Ciudad Rodrigo with the utmost activity, and [he] shall act according to the circumstances."[189] Indeed, on 18 December his General Orders directed soldiers from the 1st, 3rd, 4th and Light Divisions to assist construction of fascines and

[184] Wellington to Liverpool, 18 December 1811, WD Vol. VIII, 455.
[185] In July 1809, a British expeditionary force of 40,000 men landed at Walcheren, on the Dutch coast. The goal was to support the Austrian Empire against the French by opening a new European front. The operation was a failure, with the vast majority of British casualties due to illness.
[186] Martin Howard *Walcheren 1809: a medical catastrophe. (*BMJ. 1999 December 18; 319(7225)) 1642–1645. Accessed 1 April 2014 from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1127097/
[187] Wellington to Liverpool, 18 December 1811, WD Vol. VIII, 455.
[188] Wellington to Liverpool, 18 December 1811 WD Vol. VIII, 456.
[189] Wellington, *Memorandum of Operations in 1811*, WD Vol. VIII, 685.

gabions,[190] in preparation for the siege.[191] Colonel Jones of the Engineers stated that by 1 January, such "auxiliary arrangements" were completed. Wellington made the decision to invest the fortress on 6 January, and break ground the following day. Bad weather delayed movement of supplies and ammunition, which in turn delayed investment of the fortress until 8 January.[192]

Wellington chose to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo from the northwest, as the French had done in 1810. As was the case with the French, geography dictated this decision. The Agueda River ran east-west on the south side of the town, and steep slopes offered effective protection. To the west, the Convent of Santa Cruz had been converted into an infantry post.[193] To the northeast, three convents (San Francisco, Santa Domingo, and Santa Clara) had been fortified to offer additional protection to the suburbs. In addition, Jones noted that the soil was rocky, "except on the north side, where there are two hills [the Tesons]."[194] Rocky ground would hinder construction of trenches, and limited the depth to which they could be dug. As the French showed in their 1810 siege, the Tesons also offered the advantage of an elevated firing position. Jones pointed out an additional benefit there: on the northern side, a small ravine at the foot of the glacis would protect workers from French fire when mining to blow the counterscarp.[195] Following their successful siege in 1810 the French recognized the strategic importance of controlling the high ground to the north and established a redoubt, "Reynaud," on the Upper Teson. They also fortified both the Convent of San Francisco and the Convent of Santa Cruz to provide cross-fire onto the hill.[196]

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[190] Fascines were bundles of sticks, used to shore up trenches and earthworks. Gabions were large baskets filled with soil, used to protect artillery emplacements.
[191] Gurwood, *The General Orders of Field Marshal The Duke of Wellington in Portugal, Spain and France from 1809 to 1814 (*London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1837), 273.
[192] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 95.
[193] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 96.
[194] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 97.
[195] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 98.
[196] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 59.

The "Reynaud" redoubt was a *lunette* containing a garrison of fifty French troops. The French estimated it would take the British four to five days to capture the redoubt,[197] buying valuable time for the overall defense. However, Wellington achieved a remarkable success here. On the night on 8 January, Lieutenant Colonel John Colborne led three regiments to assault the redoubt. Due to the element of surprise, success was almost total. Colborne's men captured the redoubt, killing or capturing forty six of the fifty man garrison. British casualties were six killed and nineteen injured.[198] Historian Frederick Myatt believes that this operation was "brilliantly planned and executed,"[199] and set the tone for the siege. Rifleman John Kincaid observed in his memoirs that the commanding French officer complained bitterly of the unfairness of taking the redoubt without first besieging it in due form, going as far as to request an explanation from his captors of their behavior.[200]

With the redoubt on Grand Teson captured, the British now began the work of digging trenches. The first parallel was constructed on the Grand Teson and completed on 13 January. Three batteries were placed there to fire upon the French defenses, with two guns also situated to fire upon the fortified convent of San Francisco.[201] During construction of the first parallel, two factors led to numerous casualties amongst the British. Jones noted that the French garrison had pre-determined the range to the British battery site so that fully two-thirds of their shells were fired on target, with round shot in particular causing "many casualties." The French garrison also moved a howitzer up to the convent of San Francisco and fired upon battery #1, again causing "many casualties" and interrupting work.[202]

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[197] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 64.
[198] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 105.
[199] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 64.
[200] W.H. Fitchett, *Wellington's Men. Some Soldier Autobiographies, including Kincaid's "Adventures in the Rifle Brigade"* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1900), 88.
[201] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 107.
[202] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 108.

According to Colonel John Jones, Wellington received intelligence on 13 January suggesting that *Maréchal* Marmont was preparing to move from Salamanca to lift the siege. Trying to expedite operations, Wellington enquired as to the practicability of forming a breach from the first batteries alone. When told this was possible, he considered the option of an assault with the counterscarp intact, if needed.[203] In his 15 January dispatch to Lord Liverpool, he was relieved that "preparations to a certain extent are making at Salamanca for the movement of troops in this direction. It appears, however, that the enemy did not even know at Salamanca that we had attacked Ciudad Rodrigo till the 13th; and it is not probable that a sufficient force can be collected to oblige us to raise the siege, at least for some days."[204]

It seems surprising that Wellington would downplay the risk of Marmont's coming to relieve the garrison if he was planning to assault the fortress in haste. Rushed sieges lead to higher casualty rates, as previously noted, and casualties are never popular on the home front. For this reason, it seems likely Wellington would have at least indicated to Liverpool that shortcuts may have been needed.

On the night of 13 January, trenches were pushed forward and the second parallel was opened with only "trifling" losses. The Convent of Santa Cruz was also taken by escalade with no losses. This position was essential as it enfiladed the second parallel trench.[205]

During 14 January, five hundred French troops sallied out of the fortress in an attempt to disrupt British operations. However, their impact was minimal and largely restricted to upsetting the gabions placed the night prior. At 4.30pm, the British guns opened fire on the fortress wall. From the first parallel, twenty three 24lb guns and two 18lb guns were used to begin the breach. In addition, two 18lb guns targeted the convent

[203] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 111.
[204] Wellington to Liverpool, 15 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 548.
[205] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 111.

of San Francisco. By the time the breaching batteries had their fire "steady and correct", darkness ended operations for the day. [206]

The British fire upon the convent of San Francisco did not drive the French garrison out. During the night of 14 January, a detachment of the 40th regiment assaulted the convent. The French retired to the fortress. This success secured the flank of the second parallel, and British forces held the convent for the remainder of the siege.[207] Artillery fire continued uninterrupted throughout the day of 15 January. By the evening, the main and *faussebraie* walls of Ciudad Rodrigo were "so much shaken and injured as to give hopes of speedily bringing them down."[208] During the night, construction began on a new battery (#4) in a more advanced position, while five more 24lb guns were added to batteries #1 and #2.

For several days, the British artillery continued to work on creating a breach. By 18 January, battery #4 was active with seven 24lb guns targeting a tower on the south wall, while batteries #1, #2 and #3 continued to expand the breach. By the evening, "the great breach was considered practicable up its center."[209] Work also continued on the second parallel, which was completed overnight.

During the day of the 19th, Wellington reconnoitered both the main breach and the tower. He believed the breaches were practical. "I therefore determined to storm the place," he decided, "notwithstanding that the approaches had not been brought to the crest of the glacis, and the counterscarp of the ditch was still entire."[210] The assault was scheduled for that evening. For the remainder of the day, the batteries were directed to fire upon the defenses. (A complete copy of the order to attack is included as Appendix A.)

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[206] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 115.
[207] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 116.
[208] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 118.
[209] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 121.
[210] Wellington to Liverpool 20 Jan 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 550.

The overall plan was complex. Wellington's orders were thorough to the point of micromanagement. "Each column [of five companies of the 94th] must have three ladders, 12 feet long, by which they are to descend into the ditch, and they are to have 10 axes to cut down any palisades."[211] In overview, the principal assault on the primary breach would be led by Major General Henry Mackinnon's Third Division. Sappers would throw large hay bags into the ditch, enabling the soldiers to descend into the (unblown) counter-scarp.[212] At the lesser breach, created by fire from battery #5, the Light Division led by Major General Robert "Black Bob" Craufurd would assault in a similar fashion. Both Divisions were led by men of the "forlorn hopes", the volunteers leading the assault.[213] Brigadier General Denis Pack was to lead a diversionary attack on the southern face of the fortress.

The assault took place at around seven in the evening, just after darkness had fallen. Overall, it "generally went according to Wellington's plan."[214] Both breaches fell to the assaulting forces, although the Light Division experienced far less resistance. The main breach was accessible to a width of one hundred feet, compared to thirty feet for the lesser breach. However, the lesser breach had little in the way of defense, other than French troops with small-arms fire. Inside the main breach, two French guns had been mounted to fire grape shot. In addition, it had been retrenched so attackers had a sixteen foot drop onto a *chevaux de frise.*[215] The "forlorn hope" were forced to skirt the sides of the breach, directly into the fire of the guns. The French had mined the main breach, and the subsequent explosion killed Mackinnon and a number of other men as they accessed

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[211] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 124.
[212] The consequence of launching an assault before sapping forward and mining the counterscarp: attackers had a 13 ½ foot drop into the ditch. Theoretically use of hay bags did reduce the distance of the drop, and led to a softer landing.
[213] From the Dutch phrase *Verloren hoop,*or "lost troop." Casualty rates for the first men into a breach were extremely high, but survival resulted in promotion, glory and prizes.
[214] Muir, *Path to Victory,* 442.
[215] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 131.

the breach. Despite sustaining losses, the attackers were able to drive the French gunners and infantry back.[216] French troops retreated to the Plaza inside the town. General Barrié surrendered without a fight, along with around seventy eight officers and 1700 men.[217]

To Wellington's chagrin, "Our loss was also, I am concerned to add, severe, particularly in Officers of high rank and estimation in this army."[218] Major Generals Mackinnon and Craufurd were both killed in the assault. From the infantry, nine officers and 217 men were killed. Eighty four officers and one thousand men were wounded. Of these, six officers and 140 men were killed, and sixty officers and five hundred men were wounded assaulting the fortress. From the artillery, eight gunners were killed, seventeen severely wounded, and forty nine slightly wounded.[219]

The conduct of British soldiers following the siege was deplorable. Historian Charles Esdaile quoted William Grattan of the 88th Connaught Rangers, "Scenes of the greatest outrage now took place, and it was pitiable to see groups of the inhabitants half-naked in the streets... some of the soldiers turned to the wine and spirit houses, where, having drunk sufficiently, they again sallied out in quest of more plunder."[220] While order was soon restored, it should be noted that Wellington did not criticize his troops for their conduct. Indeed, two soldiers from the 88th who were charged with crimes against the population had their punishments remitted by Wellington, in "consideration of the distinguished part played by the regiment in the storm."[221] During the siege, Wellington had shown more consideration towards the Spanish inhabitants of the town by forbidding the use of howitzers and mortars. One possible explanation for Wellington allowing a

[216] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 442.
[217] Wellington to Liverpool 20 Jan 1812, WD Vol VIII, 556.
[218] Wellington to Liverpool 20 Jan 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 551.
[219] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 129. In terms of ammunition expended to create the breaches, 8,950 24lb rounds were fired, along with 565 18lb rounds. In comparison, the French had fired over 19,000 shot in 1810, although only 6,285 were 24lb rounds (with the remainder the far less effective 16lb and 12lb rounds).
[220] Esdaile, *The Peninsula War*, 380.
[221] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 443.

sack of the city is that he was cognizant of the likely upcoming siege at Badajoz. He wished to maintain the morale of his men, since they would soon be ordered into the breach once more.

While it possible to play armchair general and second guess every decision Wellington made, four key factors regarding the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo can be identified and assessed.

First, was the siege necessary? In order to meet the objective of fighting for Spanish liberation, offensive action into Spanish territory was necessary. Ciudad Rodrigo controlled the main road into northern Spain. The British relied on supply lines,[222] as opposed to foraging off the land. The road was needed in order to transport supplies, as the carts were limited in their off-road abilities. Ciudad Rodrigo could not be by-passed without leaving an unacceptably large number of soldiers behind to secure the supply line.

Was the decision to besiege the fortress in January the best option? The offensive did go against the accepted convention of not operating during the winter. British numbers had been built up to their highest level, whereas the French saw a reduction in force size with soldiers recalled from the Peninsula as Napoleon planned his invasion of Russia.[223] While the reduction in the amount of daylight may have had a small influence on the duration of the siege, the hard, frozen ground made it easier to maneuver both the siege train and supplies. The French had struggled in the mud during their summer siege of 1810. However, the frozen ground made trench construction difficult, and the cold temperatures made for harsh conditions for the British. One soldier observed, "The frost was so excessive that we were almost completely benumbed." He believed the intensity

[222] For a thorough analysis of the British supply system in the Peninsula, see Troy Kirby, *The Duke of Wellington and the Supply System during the Peninsula War*, Diss. US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011.
[223] Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 370. By January 1812, all troops of the Imperial Guard and units of Polish origin were recalled, over 25,000 men.

of the work in the trenches saved the soldiers from perishing due to the cold.[224] Wellington did make allowances, rotating the Divisions so that after every full day of work, two days were spent at rest.[225] Engineer John Burgoyne believed Wellington had been lucky, since the British were "highly fortunate in having a continuation of fine weather for the whole operation at such a time of year."[226] Given the precise artillery fire required to create a breach, daylight was a prerequisite to operate batteries. By choosing to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo in January, Wellington's artillery was limited to a window of under ten hours per day in which to operate. In comparison, the French artillery in the siege of 1810 had a window of fifteen hours. In addition, French defenders in 1812 had over fourteen hours of darkness to repair damage, compared to nine for the Spanish in 1810.[227]

Did Wellington unduly rush the siege? The speed at which the siege was conducted was certainly rapid, compared to the French siege of 1810. Capturing the "Reynaud" redoubt early on set the tone, and the British were extremely positive in subduing the outworks. The decision to assault the breaches without further extending the trenches is likely to have caused the casualty rates. Engineer John Jones held the opinion that if the counterscarp had been blown in, the approaches could have been carried up to the foot of the wall, and the fortress taken with less than half of the actual loss.[228] In the French siege, blowing the counterscarp caused the Spanish defense to capitulate without the need for an assault.

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[224] Peter Snow, *To War with Wellington, from the Peninsula to Waterloo*, (London: John Murray, 2010), 128.
[225] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 440.
[226] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 160.
[227] Approximate sunset time was 6:12pm, using sunrise/sunset times for January 14, 2014. January 14 enjoyed 9hr 35 minutes of daylight. In comparison, June 25 2014 enjoyed 15hr 3 minutes of daylight. (Information for Madrid, Spain taken from www.timeanddate.com).
[228] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 135.

Despite the opinion of Jones, there are other factors to consider. The French guns in the fortress caused casualties daily. British fire was focused on the breaches rather than against the French guns.[229] Therefore, work to extend trenches closer to the fortress would likely have resulted in increased casualty rates, and Wellington would have weighed the options accordingly. In addition, a lack of professional miners and sappers may have also influenced Wellington's decision not to mine (and blow) the counterscarp. While the French inability to react and failure to raise the siege can be debated, it is clear that time was a major consideration for Wellington. However, it is apparent that the pressure was not so great that an extra day of artillery fire would have been unfeasible. Given the ability of the British guns to create the lesser breach in a single day, it is very possible that a third breach could have been created to provide an additional option. While the main breach was well defended, the lack of defensive features at the lesser breach suggests that a third breach may have further stretched and weakened the French defenses. It is possible that Wellington was attempting to prove himself to his critics back home. Immediately after taking Ciudad Rodrigo, he bragged to the Duke of Richmond, "The French, however, who are supposed to know everything, could not take [Ciudad Rodrigo] in less than forty days after it was completely invested, or than twenty five days after breaking ground." [230]

The pressure of maintaining relations with the Spanish allies certainly affected Wellington's decisions (likely to the detriment of the British soldiers). This is an excellent example of the conflicting objectives Wellington faced in the Peninsular War. He needed to preserve his limited forces, and he also needed to maintain good relations with the Spanish allies. The presence of Spanish civilians inside Ciudad Rodrigo likely influenced Wellington's decision not to use vertical fire (mortars and howitzers) during

[229] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 137. The French used 48 pieces of ordnance, and "not one shot was fired at them."
[230] Wellington to Richmond, 29 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 580.

the siege.[231] However, it is noteworthy that he had specifically requested "160 rounds [for] each mortar,"[232] in July 1811. There is no definitive proof that limiting Spanish casualties was Wellington's sole motivating factor. In fact, Intelligence Officer Major Edward Charles Cocks observed "It is a principle of [Wellington's] to avoid the use of mortars: 'The way to take a place,' I heard him say, 'is to make a hole in the wall by which the troops can get in and mortars never do this, they are not worth the expenditure of transport they require."[233]

While it is easy to get caught up on the minutiae detail of the siege, it was ultimately a success. The fortress was captured in the first successful British siege since the Indian wars. Wellington was feted for his achievement. Parliament voted him a £2,000 bonus, and the Prince Regent bestowed the title "Earl of Wellington" upon him.[234] Wellington was already planning the next move. The fortress of Badajoz had to be taken.

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[231] Wellington to Richmond, 29 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 580. "We had not one mortar; nor a howitzer, excepting to prevent the enemy from clearing the breaches, and for that purpose we had only two."
[232] Leslie, *Dickson manuscripts*, 418.
[233] Julia Page, *Intelligence Officer in the Peninsula. Letters and Diaries of Major the Hon Edward Charles Cocks* (Kent:Spellmount, 1986), 162.
[234] Snow, *To War with Wellington*, 137.

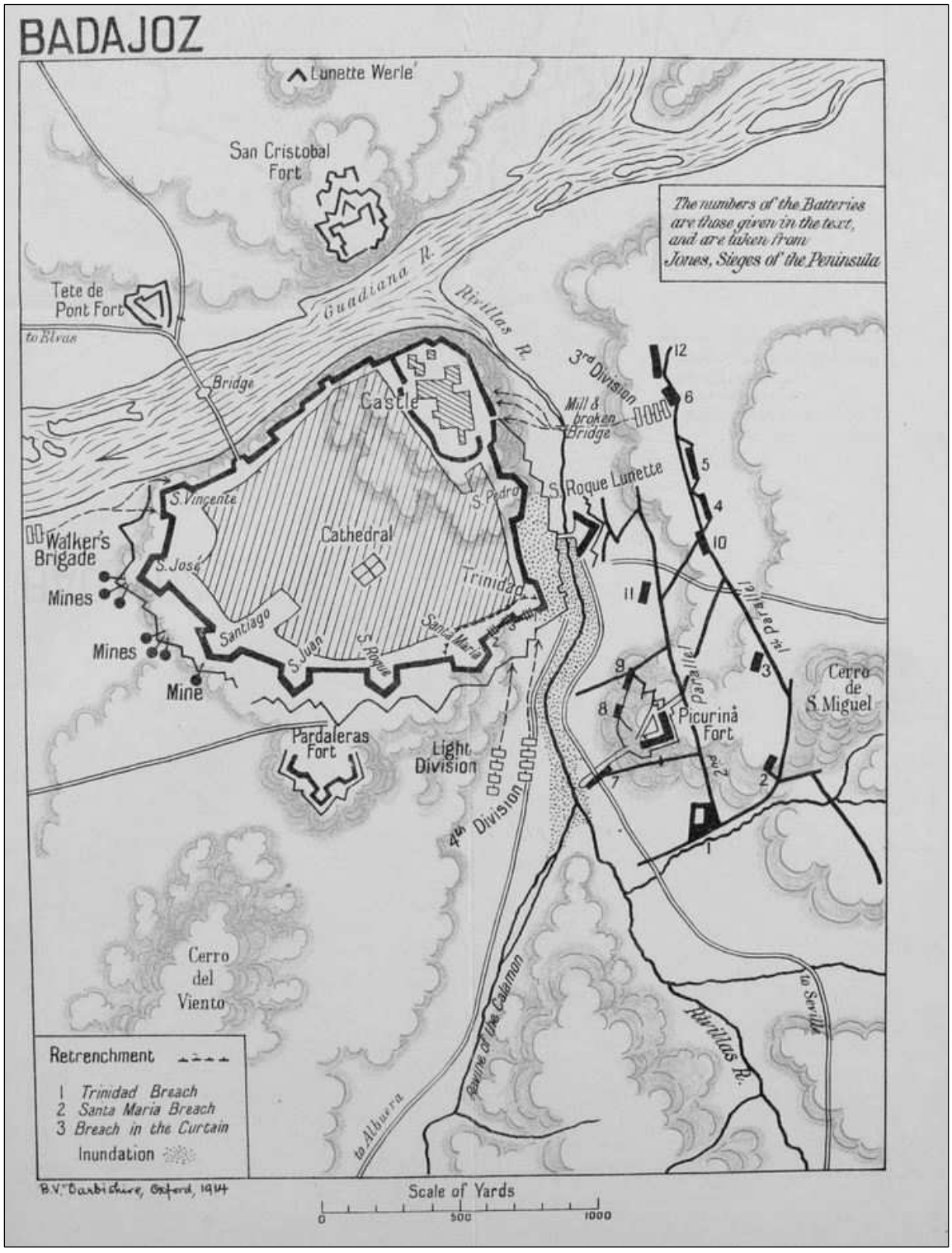

FIGURE 5

Map of the British Siege of Badajoz in 1812. Sir Charles Oman, *History of the Peninsular War Vol. V.*

THE 1812 BRITISH SIEGE OF BADAJOZ

Barely a week had passed since Ciudad Rodrigo fell to the British assault, and Wellington's attention was already focused on his next objective. He informed Lieutenant General Rowland "Daddy" Hill that his intention was to begin operations to capture Badajoz by the second week of March.[235] Of immediate concern was the need for a siege train there.

Some uncertainty exists over the siege train used at Badajoz. Historian Ian Fletcher states that, "the heavy siege guns used at Ciudad Rodrigo were removed to Almeida and from there to Barca d'Alva. From here they would be taken by boat to Oporto, by sea to Setubal and finally by road to Elvas."[236] However, it appears likely that this is incorrect. In his journal, Royal Engineer John Jones recorded that the draft bullocks needed to move the train were in poor shape, and a decision was made to use sixteen 24lb guns in storage on transport ships on the Tagus River.[237] Confusion may be due to a Memorandum issued on 26 January to Major Dickson that requested sixteen 24lbers from Almeida to Alentejo (to be pulled by bullocks), and twenty 24lb guns from Almeida to Barca d'Alva, and then via boat to Setuval.[238] On 29 January, Wellington informed Dickson, "I have seen Fletcher, who says the 18 pounders will answer if we cannot get 24 pounders." Wellington told Dickson that he had also contacted the Admiral, requesting him to send 24 pounders to Setuval. He also had written to Major

[235] Wellington to Hill, 28 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 572.
[236] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 45.
[237] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 144.
[238] Wellington to Dickson, 26 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 568.

William Tulloh to enquire if there were any "24 pounder or 18 pounder Carron guns nine feet long at Elvas." He continued to Dickson, "If there are, it is of course useless for you to bring up from Alcacer more than will be necessary to make, with them and our sixteen guns, thirty six pieces."[239] A likely explanation of this letter is that after the memorandum dated 26 January, Wellington was informed that the draft bullocks were unable to move the siege guns from Almeida. After conferring with his chief engineer Fletcher, he sought alternative arrangements such as those described on the 29th. The reference to the "Admiral" was a request to Admiral Sir George Berkeley of the Royal Navy, who could only offer 18lb guns (the largest carried on his ships).[240] These turned out to be Russian made guns, and of a different caliber. While a source of ammunition was eventually found, much of it proved unusable.[241]

Even once the siege began, interpretation of the primary sources has proved difficult, and contradictory. According to Fletcher, fifty two guns formed the breaching batteries; sixteen 24lbers, twelve 24lb howitzers, and twenty 18lb Russian guns.[242] Historian David Gates claims fifty eight heavy caliber guns were assembled for the siege.[243] However, in his siege journal, Jones clearly stated that the battering train ordnance consisted of sixteen 24lb guns, twenty 18lb guns, and sixteen howitzers. This would be the artillery with which Wellington conducted the siege.[244]

By 16 February, Wellington continued preparations for a siege. He informed the Spanish General Victoria of his plans to invest Badajoz early in March, and he called for

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[239] Wellington to Dickson, 29 January 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 574-5.
[240] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 145.
[241] Fletcher, *In Hell Before Daylight*, 16.
[242] Fletcher, *In Hell Before Daylight*, 17. It is likely that this is a simple mistake; his total of 52 guns matches Jones', but he only lists 12 howitzers in the breakdown, rather than the expected 16.
[243] Gates, *The Spanish Ulcer*, 334.
[244] To further muddy the waters; on 26 February Wellington informed Dickson that Berkeley ordered ten English 18lb guns to Alcacer. He states "If they should arrive before you shall have moved the Russian guns, you will of course have left ten of the Russians." (WD Vol. VIII, 635) In his notes, Engineer Jones commented that these guns made it as far as Estremoz, but a lack of available draught animals meant they were never brought further forward.

fascines, gabions and piquets to be constructed and brought to Elvas by 4 March.[245] While his forces moved south towards Extramadura, Wellington remained in Frenada until the last possible moment. He observed, "I am anxious to take advantage as much as possible of the difficulties which the enemy experience in obtaining intelligence to gain time. With this view, I have remained so long in this part of the country after the body of the army has marched."[246] Wellington soon headed south, arriving at Elvas on 11 March. Two days later, he informed Liverpool that everything was ready for the siege, and he proposed to invest Badajoz on the 16th, providing the remaining siege stores arrived. He also identified that the French had made no recent movement, with *Maréchal* Soult still in the Cadiz area according to the most recent reports.[247]

Even if the French armies on the Peninsula did not react to the British movement towards Badajoz, the garrison itself had not been idle. Since the sieges of 1811, the French commander General Armand Phillipon had upgraded the defenses of the fortress. To protect against another assault on Fort Christoval, a new redoubt had been built on the higher ground to the north, where the original British breaching battery had been sited. At Fort Christoval itself, both the glacis and counterscarp were raised. To the south, a new ravelin was built, and two others were repaired. A *cunette* was cut into the ditch, increasing the difficulty of infantry crossing it. Furthermore, the French defenders mined areas of the south front to prevent approach trenches being constructed up to the curtain wall. The Pardaleras outwork was secured and covered by battery fire. To the east, the Rivillas River was dammed to protect the area between bastions 7 and 8, and an interior retrenchment was added to the castle.[248]

[245] Wellington to Gen. Victoria 16 February 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 611.
[246] Wellington to Major General ____, 5 March 1812. WD Vol. VIII, 650.
[247] Wellington to Liverpool 13 March 1812, WD Vol. VIII, 664.
[248] Jones, *Journal of Sieges*, 150-52.

Given the lessons learned from Beresford's failure the previous year, Wellington planned to assault the fortress from the south. Fletcher disagreed with this. In his professional opinion, such an operation would require an additional thirty pieces of ordnance, five or six times the number of gabions available, copious amounts of timber, plus a number of "well-instructed miners as well as sappers."[249]

With the input of the engineers, Wellington modified his plan of attack based on the knowledge that the counterguard[250] in front of the La Trinidad bastion (on the southeastern corner) was unfinished, and the main scarp of the bastion could be seen from the location of Fort Picurina. The fort was to be assaulted, and the first parallel constructed on the hill whereby breaching batteries could be established to fire upon the Trinidad bastion.[251] It is interesting to note that in a letter between two Royal Engineers back on 7 February, (then) Captain Burgoyne mentioned that a deserter had reported Badajoz was extensively mined, and that "the rumour is that Picurina has been mentioned [amongst the British Engineers] as the probable side of attack."[252]

On 16 March, the 3rd, 4th and Light Divisions[253], along with a squadron of Portuguese cavalry, invested Badajoz on the south side. Ground was broken on the night of the 17th. The first parallel stretching for six hundred yards was dug by a work party of 1,800 soldiers some 250 yards from Fort Picurina. The weather was dismal; heavy rain fell from the outset. While this made for unpleasant working conditions, it proved to the advantage of the British. The "wet and tempestuous" skies meant that the French did not discover the trench work until the morning of the 18th.[254] By that time, the parallel was already three feet deep. Work continued on extending the trenches, and construction of

[249] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 376-7.
[250] Similar to a *fausse-braie*, a counterguard was an earthwork that protected a curtain wall or bastion.
[251] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 154.
[252] Capt. Burgoyne, RE to Maj. Squire, RE 7 February 1812. Wrottesley, *Burgoyne,* 161.
[253] The 5th Division had remained in the north with Wellington while the divisions involved in investing the fortress moved south earlier in the spring.
[254] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 159.

the initial batteries commenced. On 19 March, a large French contingent of one thousand infantry sallied out of the fortress, and attacked the British forces in the trenches. Colonel Fletcher was injured in the raid, shot in the groin by a French soldier. Several consequences came from this raid. First, work was delayed and disrupted as the French carried off approximately two hundred shovels and other tools.[255] Belatedly, the covering party was increased in size to provide additional protection to the working party.[256] Second, Fletcher was put out of action for much of the siege. Historian Rory Muir believes this gave Wellington a "much freer hand" in directing the siege to his own preference.[257] Instead of replacing Fletcher, Wellington visited him daily in his tent to discuss the progress of the siege.

Work on the first parallel and the breaching batteries continued over the next week and was completed by 24 March. While the poor weather offered some protection from garrison fire, it also slowed progress as the trenches filled with water and proved difficult to drain.[258] Jones noted that on the 23rd, the French sent out work parties to strengthen the curtain wall between the St. Pedro and St. Antonio bastions, misreading the British plan of attack.[259]

On 25 March, the batteries were finally situated, and they opened fire. The map in Figure 5 shows the distribution of the artillery amongst the six batteries. Fire was directed against the Picurina, the Trinidad bastion, and enfilading fire against the adjacent bastions.[260] The decision was made to assault Fort Picurina that night, before the French had time to reinforce the garrison and repair the defenses.

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[255] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, 162.
[256] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 170.
[257] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 448.
[258] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 164, 168, 169.
[259] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 169.
[260] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 85.

At the time of the assault, the Picurina fort held between two and three hundred French soldiers. Under the command of Major General James Kempt,[261] five hundred men of the 3rd and Light Divisions attacked that evening, guided into the assault by Royal Engineers. The assault came close to failure when the ladders carried forward proved too short to reach the top of the ramparts. However, they were used instead to bridge the ditch. The British soldiers finally gained access to the fort in several areas, and seized control.[262] Casualties were heavy on both sides. The French suffered 130 casualties, and eighty men were taken prisoner. On the British side, four officers and fifty men were killed, while fifteen officers and 250 men were wounded (out of a force of five hundred men).[263]

One engineer observed that the defensives of the Picurina were "extremely strong", and the British artillery fire had done "no injury whatsoever." Therefore, he questioned the élan of the French troops defending the fort, stating they "must have behaved very ill" for the fort to fall so easily.[264] Wellington's intelligence officer Major Edward Charles Cocks supported this viewpoint. "The enemy did not defend himself well", he wrote. "The instant our people got on the crest of the parapet they mostly threw down their arms or ran into the guard room."[265]

With Fort Picurina secured, a second parallel was dug, and new batteries were constructed. The reduced distance to the fortress increased the effectiveness of the British artillery fire. The new batteries, finished by 30 March, are shown in Figure 5. Battery #7 would use twelve 24lbers (six of which were moved forward from batteries #2 and #4), and targeted the right face of the Trinidad bastion. Battery #8 consisted of three

[261] While Kempt commanded the attack, he was "directed" by Wellington to do so. It is unclear as to how much input Kempt had in the plan.
[262] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 57-8.
[263] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 176.
[264] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 174.
[265] Page, *Intelligence Officer in the Peninsula*, 229-30.

24lb guns moved forward from #2, and three new 18lb guns. This battery targeted the St. Maria bastion.[266]

The creation of a practicable breach came slowly, for number of reasons. Certainly the construction of French defenses played a large role in this. "The flank of Sta. Maria [bastion] also began to show injury; it was, however, a very solid mass of masonry, and evidently casemated."[267] Additionally, the limited number of 24lb guns and the range to the intended breach slowed progress. There was active French defense. The counterguard in front of the Trinidad bastion was raised after the 26th (when the British plan became more evident), debris was cleared to prevent a slope developing, and sandbags were employed to reinforce damaged parapets.[268]

With regards to the movement of French relief forces, Wellington informed Lieutenant General Rowland Hill on 29 March that he had received word that Soult was moving north from Cadiz. "He [Soult] may therefore be expected shortly in Estramadura, probably by Guadalcanal."[269] To the north, *Maréchal* Marmont was in Salamanca. Wellington expected him to make an attempt on Ciudad Rodrigo or Almeida.[270] The French, however, lacked the firepower to be a real threat since their siege train had been lost when Ciudad Rodrigo fell in January 1812. This lack of a viable threat from Marmont meant that Wellington could concentrate on Badajoz. Although Soult was moving in his direction, there was not excessive pressure on Wellington to rush the siege.[271]

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[266] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 184-5.
[267] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 187.
[268] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 90.
[269] Wellington to Lt. Gen. Hill, 29 March 1812. WD Vol. IX, 24.
[270] WD Vol. IX, 27.
[271] In addition to a slow reaction, Soult only brought 13,000 men from Cadiz (Muir, *Path to Victory*, 431). Even if he combined with the Comte d'Erlon's 12,000, this was not an overwhelmingly large force with which to force an abandonment of the siege, unlike with Beresford the year prior.

On the night of 2 April, a group of sappers commanded by Engineer Lieutenant Stanway attempted to blow up the dam on the Rivillas. Success would have reduced the flooding on the east side. The attempt failed when the powder was placed too far from the dam, and the initial explosion had little effect other than to alert the French, who opened fire from the fortress.[272]

The breaches in the Trinidad and St. Maria bastions were evaluated on the 4th, but these were deemed not practicable. However, on the morning of 5 April, Wellington was advised that a few more hours of firing would render them practicable. He personally reconnoitered the breaches from an advanced position in the trenches, and "assured himself of both openings being of very easy ascent." Jones believed that this evaluation, combined with the approach of *Maréchal* Soult's army, led to Wellington's order for the assault that evening.[273]

However, "to the surprise and disappointment of everyone,"[274] at 5pm the assault was put on hold. In Jones' journal, he noted that in the afternoon, the "commanding engineer" evaluated the breaches and "reported that the principal breach appeared to be prepared for an obstinate and protracted resistance."[275] Colonel Fletcher had recovered sufficiently from his wounds to inspect the breaches. From the trenches, he observed that they had "been strongly retrenched, and in every way prepared for a most obstinate resistance."[276] Given Burgoyne's disappointment, it appears that he did not share the opinion of his superior officer, Fletcher. This incident deserves closer attention. Wellington's weak relationship with the engineers has been previously identified, as well as his desire for control and micromanagement. Thus, it speaks highly of his trust in Fletcher that his opinion was enough to change Wellington's mind, especially after he

[272] Myatt, *British Sieges*, 91.
[273] Jones, *Journal of Sieges* Vol. I, 192-3.
[274] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 174.
[275] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 193.
[276] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers, Vol. I*, 302.

had already made his own contrary evaluation of the situation. In a letter to Liverpool, Wellington took full responsibility for the decision to postpone, "as I had observed that the enemy had entrenched the bastion of La Trinidad, and the most formidable preparations….I determined to delay the attack for another day."[277] The artillery was ordered to create a third breach.

During the day of the 6th, eight 24lb guns and six 18lb guns were used to create a third breach. Jones evaluated the masonry as "extremely bad", and as a result, by early evening a "good practicable breach" was formed.[278] With that report, Wellington made the decision to attack that evening. (His complete orders for the assault can be found in Appendix F.) As at Ciudad Rodrigo, the plan was complex, with numerous elements. However, in essence it called for a three pronged attack, against the castle, the bastion of La Trinidad, and the bastion of Santa Maria.

After a two and half hour delay, during which time the French covered the breaches with caltrops[279] and *chevaux-de-frise*,[280] the attack began with a successful assault on the *lunette* of San Roque (see Figure 5). The next move saw the 3rd Division under Picton attempt to escalade the castle. Picton himself was wounded in the attack, and the 3rd Division was repulsed by the defenders. The assault on the main breaches was assigned to the 4th and Light Divisions. "The storming party of the advance of the Light Division will then descend into the ditch, and turning to its left, storm the breach in the flank of the bastion of Sta. Maria, while the storming part of the 4th Division will likewise descend into the ditch, and storm the breach in the face of the bastion of La Trinidad."[281] Like much in warfare, the assault did not go entirely to plan.

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[277] Wellington to Liverpool, 7 April 1812, WD Vol. IX, 40.
[278] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 195.
[279] Small anti-personnel weapon of a design that always results in a spike pointing upwards. Caltrops were used to slow the progress of foot soldiers and cavalry.
[280] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 195.
[281] Memorandum for the Attack of Badajoz, 6 April 6 1812 WD Vol. IX, 38.

Numerous accounts have been written about the breaches at Badajoz.[282] French defenders mined them, filled them with combustible material, and topped the defenses with *chevaux-de-frise*. In addition, the *cunette* cut in the ditch had not been previously detected by the British. The defenders stood ready, well-armed with hand grenades and incendiary devices.[283] The myriad personal tales regarding the breaches can be summed up in one line written by an English officer after the event; "If hell is as bad as that ditch was, it is a worse place than I took it for."[284]

The defenders spotted two assaulting divisions as they crossed the glacis, and the British infantry came under heavy fire.[285] In a similar manner to Ciudad Rodrigo, by not sapping forward into the glacis or blowing the counterscarp of the ditch, the attacking troops were exposed to fire at an earlier point than would have been the case in an ideal assault. While entering the ditch, the 4th Division became disorientated and assaulted an unfinished ravelin, believing it to be the breach. The men of the Light Division similarly found themselves out of position and sustained casualties before locating the breach. The French defense was of good quality, and "the garrison never appeared intimidated nor to lose their decision and coolness for a moment on any point."[286] The initial assault here, like at the castle, was repulsed with heavy casualties. The garrison and its commander, Phillipon, received praise from the British for the defense of the fortress. Major Cocks wrote, "Ciudad Rodrigo is not to be compared to [Badajoz], Phillipon had a very different garrison and was a very different man to Barrier [sic]. A town has perhaps seldom been defended better or carried in a more daring manner."[287]

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[282] Amongst others, John Cooke of the 43th Light Infantry, William Grattan of the Connaught Rangers, Edward Costello of the 95th Rifles, and Robert Blakeney of the 28th have all written memoirs describing their experiences at Badajoz.
[283] Esdaile, *Peninsula War*. 384.
[284] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 453.
[285] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 204.
[286] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 205.
[287] Maj. Edward Cocks to his mother, 15 April 1812. Page, *Intelligence Officer*, 174.

Regarding the issue of the 4th Division becoming lost; two Engineers, Captain William Nicholas and Lieutenant Wells, had been assigned to guide the assaulting troops. However, both fell at the covered way, depriving the assault column of "professional guidance."[288] The history of the Corps of Engineers correctly observed that "much of the disaster at the breaches must be attributed to the early loss of the only men competent to guide the columns through the complications of the enceinte."[289] Only twenty four Engineers were on site at the siege, and four had only just arrived on 5 April.[290] With the various elements to the attack, there were simply no available Engineers to provide guiding support when men fell.

While the main assault on the breaches struggled, the 3rd Division renewed its attempt to escalade the castle. Since Phillipon had "concentrated all his best troops and officers at the breaches,"[291] a half-company of the 5th regiment under Colonel Henry Ridge established a foothold. By around midnight, the castle was securely held by the 3rd Division. Muir established that, "the British… could not have succeeded against serious resistance, but the French were distracted."[292]

Several diversionary attacks were also employed, and were the responsibility of the 5th Division, newly arrived at the siege. The plan called for them to threaten the Pardaleras fort, however, permission was given to Lieutenant General James Leith to "escalade the bastion of San Vicente, or the curtain between the bastion and the bridge, if circumstances should permit."[293] Around midnight, Major General George Walker's brigade succeeded in escalading the San Vicente and gained access to the garrison. At the San Vicente, the scarp wall of the bastion had been recently rebuilt, and was partially

[288] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers, Vol. I,* 304.
[289] Whitworth Porter *History of the Corps of Engineers, Vol. I,* 304.
[290] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers, Vol. I*, 309.
[291] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 454.
[292] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 454.
[293] Memorandum for the Attack of Badajoz, 6 April 1812 WD Vol. IX, 40.

unfinished in order to add a planned *guerite.*[294] This weakness in the defenses explains Walker's successful escalade, but there is no mention of whether this weakness had been previously detected by the British.

In his correspondence with Liverpool, Wellington recorded that with British troops now inside the fortress, he ordered the 4th and Light Divisions to retire and abandon their efforts at the breaches.[295] Unknown to Wellington, the French commander, Phillipon, had pulled out of the main fortress and found shelter across the river at the San Christoval fort. When he received news that the breaches were abandoned and the French had retreated, Wellington ordered the 4th and Light Divisions back through the breaches and into the fortress. The French garrison of troops was still intact, but Wellington called upon Phillipon to surrender the following morning. To the relief of all involved, the French commander surrendered to the British.

The French force of around five thousand men had suffered 1200 casualties (killed or wounded). Four thousand men were taken prisoner (it can be assumed that the discrepancy in numbers is caused by wounded prisoners being counted in both categories).[296] Allied[297] losses were seventy two officers and 963 men killed, 306 officers and 3483 men were wounded. Of these losses, fifty nine officers and 744 men were killed in the main assault, and 258 officers and 2600 men were wounded on the night of the assault.[298]

A few officers of high rank fell. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Macleod of the 43rd and Major O'Hara of the 95th were killed, and several generals including Picton and Kempt were wounded.[299] In comparison, in the final assault at Ciudad Rodrigo, six

[294] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers, Vol. I*, 304.
[295] Wellington to Liverpool, 7 April 1812 WD Vol. IX, 42.
[296] Wellington to Liverpool, 7 April 1812 WD Vol. IX, 43.
[297] i.e. British and Portuguese.
[298] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 208.
[299] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 208.

officers and 140 men were killed, sixty officers and five hundred men wounded. On 7 April, Wellington wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Henry Torrens, Military Secretary to H.R.H. the Commander in Chief. He stated, "Our loss has been very great; but I send you a letter to Lord Liverpool which accounts for it.[300] The truth is that, equipped as we are, the British army are not capable of carrying on a regular siege."[301]

As in the previous siege, disorder followed the city's capture. However, "the scenes of looting, rape and plunder that followed were far more prolonged and brutal than at Ciudad Rodrigo."[302] Wellington neglected to mention this fact in his report to Liverpool. His General Order to the troops issued the same day commanded, "It is now full time that the plunder of Badajoz should cease… The Commander of the Forces has ordered the Provost Marshal into the town, and he has orders to execute any men he may find in the act of plunder, after he shall arrive there."[303] Nevertheless, it was not until gallows were erected inside the fortress that order was restored.

To evaluate Wellington's decisions at Badajoz, a similar framework to that of the Ciudad Rodrigo siege can be used.[304] In the context of the Peninsula campaign, it is fair to assess that the fortress had to be captured. From the perspective of liberating Spain, it gave the British access to the central and southern parts of the country. Controlling Badajoz also helped secure Portugal, ensuring the French would not have a forward base near to the border from which to launch an offensive operation. The speed of the British movement down to Badajoz from Ciudad Rodrigo appeared to catch the French somewhat by surprise, although credit for this can be in part attributed to Wellington's decision not to move south personally until the last possible moment. The British moved

[300] A footnote by Gurwood in the Dispatches comments that the exact identity of the letter is not known, but is believed to be the earlier request for a Corps of Sappers and Miners.
[301] Wellington to Lt. Col. Torrens, 7 April 1812, WD Vol. IX, 49.
[302] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 455.
[303] General Order, 7 April 1812, Wellington Supplementary Dispatches, 311.
[304] i.e. looking at them in the context of the overall campaign objectives: defeat the French, defend Portugal, sustain the Spanish alliance, and preserve the British army.

swiftly and were better prepared than in 1811. They had sufficient troop strength to invest the fortress, and artillery that was of both effective size and quality.[305]

Given the commitment of men and resources to the siege, it appears that a coup de main was almost inevitable. The fortress was well provisioned; a convoy of sixty mules carrying flour had arrived just prior to the investment in March.[306] Given the successful defense of Badajoz the previous year, it is likely that morale would have been high amongst the garrison troops. With the expectation of either Soult or Marmont moving to lift the siege, Wellington did not have time to starve out the garrison.

Regarding the overall plan for the siege, it is worth remembering that it was not Wellington's initial goal to attack from the east. He wanted to besiege the fortress from the south, but Fletcher convinced him otherwise when he explained the sheer scale of resources required. Jones' journal continued the logic of the final decision. "To attack the castle in its improved state of defense, was out of the question." He believed that "without *miners*, without *mortars*, and having only *inexperienced sappers*, and a most *inadequate number of guns*, to attack the south fronts, which were countermined, and which would necessitate three or four lodgments being formed, could not be recommended."[307] There is little evidence to suggest that Wellington truly desired to attack from the south. Rather, it seems more plausible that he was averse to repeat the failed sieges of the previous year.

The decision to capture Fort Picurina early in the siege was sound, and the benefits were extensive. The ability to move the besieging batteries forward early on speeded the creation of the breaches and reduced the risk of French sorties. While casualties were high as a percentage of the attacking force (10% killed, and 50%

[305]Snow, *To War with Wellington*, 154. "Wellington had proved himself yet again a master of strategic maneuver and logistics in moving his entire army and siege train across western Spain without being forced into battle by the French."
[306] Fletcher, *Badajoz 1812*, 16.
[307] Jones, *Journal of Sieges*, *Vol. I*, 224.

wounded of five hundred men), the assault was successful on the first attempt. The failed assault on San Christoval in 1811 had stalled Beresford's entire operation.

While it would have been ideal to sap forward to the counterscarp, the French decision to dam the Rivellas and inundate the east side forced the Light and Fourth Divisions to attack the breaches from a more southern direction. The breaches themselves, while practicable, were still physically difficult to access. Given the quality of the French defense, it is not surprising that the British failed in their initial attempts to access the fortress through the breaches.

In a letter to Major General George Murray dated 28 May 1812, Wellington offered excuses for casualties at Badajoz. He blamed the weather, which filled trenches with mud, and an overflowing Guadiana that carried away a recently built pontoon bridge.[308] Wellington blamed the engineers. He stated, "I trust, however, that future armies will be equipped for sieges with the people necessary to carry them on as they ought to be." He claimed that his engineers need to "learn how to put their batteries on the crest of the glacis, and to blow in the counterscarp, instead of placing them wherever the wall can be seen, leaving the poor officers and troops to get into and cross the ditch as they can."[309]

Unsurprisingly, Jones believed the blame was unfairly heaped on the engineers. He pointed out that in the French siege of 1811, they used one hundred miners, 483 sappers, sixty artificers, and still failed to take the fortress after forty one days of open trenches. In his opinion, the high casualty rate of Wellington's attack was due to the lack of mortars employed; since "vertical fire… would have prevented the intrenchments being made which were formed in the rear of the front attacked."[310] It appears his

[308] The weather also impacted the French by limiting their ability to detect early trench work, not mentioned by Wellington.
[309] Wellington to Maj. Gen. Murray, 28 May 1812, WD Vol. IX, 183.
[310] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 225.

primary complaint was the lack of any sort of fire upon the defenders. Intelligence Officer Major Cocks was present at Badajoz, and observed that "Lord Wellington's principle in besieging is to open one or more breaches, according to the strength of garrison, as soon as possible." "To enable his troops to advance the assault he directs all the fire he has over and above the breaching batteries or those defenses which flank the points to be breached", Cocks described. He claimed Wellington disregarded "that part of the enemy's fire which only bears on the trenches or batteries."[311] So, it appears that Wellington had little regard for both vertical and counter-battery fire. As at Ciudad Rodrigo, the consideration of maintaining the Spanish alliance may have been causal in limiting the fire beyond the defenses, as it would have increased the casualty rate for Spanish civilians. It is ironic that the sack of the town following the assault greatly threatened the alliance in any case. However, Wellington could use the excuse that his soldiers had disobeyed orders in sacking the town, whereas the use of vertical fire would have been directly attributable to him.

Ammunition expended was over 18,800 24lb round shot, 13,000 18lb round shot, 1,800 5 ½" shells, plus around 1,000 rounds of grape and case shot from the 24lb guns.[312] These numbers also need to be placed into context. At Ciudad Rodrigo, less than 10,000 rounds of 24lb and 18lb shot were used to create the breaches. These numbers reflect both the weakness of the Ciudad Rodrigo defenses, and the strength of those at Badajoz.

The delay of the main attack from seven thirty in the evening to ten o'clock might have increased the numbers of British casualties. For whatever reason, artillery fire on the breaches ceased for two and half hours, permitting the French to build up the defenses and lay traps.[313] There appears to have been a breakdown in communication, possibly

[311] Page, *Intelligence Officer*, 231.
[312] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 209.
[313] Jones, *Journal of Sieges, Vol. I*, 195.

stemming from the original postponement the previous night. It is unclear where the blame lies; at the feet of Wellington or the artillery.

The variety of alternative attacks used (3rd Division at the castle, 5th Division at the San Vicente bastion) suggests that Wellington lacked faith in soldiers' attack on the main breaches. However, given their ultimate success, Wellington must receive credit for the creativity shown in creating a diverse overall strategy.[314] Success was a direct result of the commitment to the repeated assaults on the main breaches. It is entirely likely that if Wellington had attempted to limit casualties on those assaults, the secondary attacks could never have succeeded. In a letter dated 4 April (prior to the siege), Jones had predicted "the breach will be well defended, and our loss will be great. Badajoz, however, is worth 2,000 men, the number I calculate will fall in the breach…"[315]

Wellington lamented, "The assault was a terrible business, of which I foresaw the loss when I was ordering it."[316] His reaction immediately following the assault showed that the price was indeed high. But Major General Picton effectively summed up the costly victory, "This is allowed to be the most brilliant achievement which has taken place in the Peninsula during the War; but it has been most dearly Purchased by many valuable Lives." He defended Wellington, since "military reputation is not to be purchased without blood, and ambition has nothing to do with humanity. Yet our Chief, when I waited upon him next morning, shed as copious a torrent of Tears as any woman could have done on the occasion, and appeared most profoundly affected by our loss."[317] Nevertheless, Wellington had succeeded in his goal and obtained control of a key strategic location. His preservation of the British army was always a major goal, but now

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[314] Page, *Intelligence Officer,* 175. Intelligence Officer Major Edward Cocks wrote to a relative on April 22 "Had it not been for the Escalade of the Castle, which was Earl Wellington's favorite idea but not relied on by the Engineers, I suspect it would have been an *affair manquée.*

[315] Maj. John T Jones to Capt. Jones, RN 4 April 1812. Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers Vol. I,* 301.

[316] Wellington to Maj. Gen. Murray, 28 May 1812, WD Vol. IX, 183.

[317] Muir, *Path to Victory*, 457.

increasing support (i.e. increased troop numbers from England) meant that he would have more flexibility than in previous years.

CONCLUSION

When evaluating Wellington's decisions, it is important to look at them in the context of the overall objectives of the Peninsular campaign rather than seeing each siege and battle as stand-alone events. Historian Huw Davies identifies four objectives attached to Wellington's command: 1) defeat the French forces (and expel them from the Pensinsula), 2) defend Portugal, 3) sustain the alliance with Spain by fighting for her liberation, and 4) preserve the British army.[318] These often contradictory objectives influenced the decisions made by Wellington at the strategic level, but these also held sway down to the tactical level at times.

Based on the information available, several conclusions can be drawn regarding Wellington's early sieges in the Peninsula. First, broad differences can be seen between the early sieges of Badajoz and the successful sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz in 1812.

The 1811 sieges were largely amateur efforts. First, the British lacked the artillery to carry out an effective siege against a modern fortress. Sir Charles Oman made this point clear in his history of the war. "Looking at the war in Portugal as essentially defensive in character, the Home authorities had forgotten that it might have offensive episodes, and that a great siege might not impossibly be one of them."[319] The British lacked in all fields of specialization relating to siege warfare; artillerymen, engineers,

[318] Huw Davies, "Wellington as a Political General: A Re-Evaluation of the Military Career of the Iron Duke." *British Commission for Military History*, Summer Conference 2010, 5.
[319] Oman, *History of the Peninsula War, Vol. IV*, 274.

miners and sappers. Portuguese gunners were used, a small number of engineers were involved, and there was no dedicated corps of miners to construct the required trenches and saps. Most important, given the strategic situation, the British did not fully commit the numbers required to prosecute any siege effectively. In appointing Beresford as commander, Wellington essentially made the siege of Badajoz a low priority for the British. The effort may have simply been a gesture to his Spanish allies, as he may have felt obligated to attempt to recapture the recently lost fortress. Sir William Napier offered this assessment of the first siege. "Thus the first serious siege undertaken by the British army in the Peninsula was commenced, and, to the discredit of the English government, no army was ever worse provided for such an enterprise."[320]

Wellington had several important issues that he attempted to address, albeit with various levels of success. To conduct a siege he needed the right tools, and expertise in the field of siege warfare. The necessity of a modern siege train was emphasized. Iron 24lb guns were essential to execute Napoleonic-era sieges effectively. In terms of expertise Wellington lacked adequate numbers of skilled engineers to direct operations, and skilled miners and sappers to carry out work in the field.

The successful sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz in 1812 highlighted these factors clearly. With regards to the artillery, the siege train Wellington used at Ciudad Rodrigo proved adequate for the task. These artillery pieces had been in Lisbon since March of 1811, but Wellington had not committed the resources to move them to Badajoz for the first sieges.[321] At the siege of Badajoz, new 24lb iron guns arrived and were used in conjunction with smaller guns provided by Admiral Berkeley. The

[320] Napier, *British Sieges*, 109. It should be considered that Napier's view of sieges may have been skewed by several factors. When writing his magnum opus, his relationship with Beresford became strained over differing views of Albuera. He was also personally present at Badajoz in 1812.
[321] Nick Lipscombe, *Wellington's Guns* (Oxford: Osprey, 2013), 202. Lipscombe also suggests Wellington may have been unwilling to use his modern siege train at the early Badajoz sieges in order to keep its existence a secret from the French.

improved firepower allowed for the creation of breaches that facilitated the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz.

The lack of engineers was a constant problem in the Peninsula War. Further, the lack of sappers and miners meant that soldiers from the infantry were recruited to these tasks. As witnessed by Burgoyne's letter in September 1811, efforts were made to train two hundred regular soldiers in the arts of siege warfare. As Burgoyne pointed out, "the undertaking I am set about will be only temporary, and will supply very imperfectly this deficiency."[322] However, it was a step in the right direction, and was followed up by attempted reform on a larger scale. Sir John Jones, Royal Engineer, believed the lack of skilled engineers directly led to the high casualty rates in the Peninsula sieges. He reasoned that more skilled engineers would have been able to construct trenches closer to the breaches, therefore exposing the assaulting forces to enemy fire for a shorter period of time.[323] At Ciudad Rodrigo the British trenches did not reach the counterscarp, unlike at the French siege of 1810.

Following Ciudad Rodrigo, Wellington expressed his feelings clearly to Liverpool. "I would beg to suggest to your Lordship the expediency of adding to the Engineers' establishment a corps of sappers and miners. It is inconceivable with what disadvantage we undertake anything like a siege for want of assistance of this description." He drew comparison to any of Napoleon's corps which included a battalion of sappers and a company of miners. "But we are obliged to depend upon the regiments of the line; and although the men are brave and willing, they want the knowledge and training which are necessary." Wellington correctly saw that, "many casualties among them consequently occur, and much valuable time is lost at the most critical period of the siege."[324] At Badajoz, assault troops were exposed leading to high casualties. Over two

[322] Wrottesley, *Burgoyne*, 137.
[323] Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*, xvi.
[324] Wellington to Liverpool, 11 February 1812. WD Vol. VII.

thousand men were wounded on the night of the storming, and around eight hundred officers and men were killed.

Contemporary historian Mark Thompson attributes poor performance by British forces in the Peninsular sieges to lack of time, insufficient/poor quality guns and ammunition, insufficient transport, and insufficient engineering resources. He placed no blame at the feet of the Royal Engineer officers.[325] Napier echoed the latter point, "The engineers were zealous, and some of them well versed in the theory of their business, but the ablest trembled at their utter destitution." He continued, "The sieges carried on by the British in Spain were a succession of butcheries, because the commonest materials and the means necessary for their art were denied to the engineers."[326]

With Wellington's prompting, the Field Establishment for Royal Engineers (now Royal School of Military Engineering) at Chatham was established just a few weeks after the successful siege of Badajoz in 1812. This ensured that engineering officers received formal training, and became fully acquainted with the details of siege warfare.[327] However, the impact of this would not be seen during the British Peninsula sieges. In their own History of the Corps (written in 1889), the Engineers continued to believe Wellington himself was to blame for poor preparation for the British sieges. "It is well known that Lord Wellington habitually underrated the impediments attending siege operations, and neglected to make due preparation for them, even when there seemed no great difficulty in so doing." Author Sir Charles Whitworth Porter also recognized that "the Artillery suffered from this cause quite as much as did the [Engineers]; and their complaints were equally bitter and well founded."[328]

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[325] Thompson, "A Re-evaluation of the Role of the Royal Engineers and their Relationship with Wellington", 3.
[326] Napier, *British Sieges*, 109.
[327] Jones, Journal of *Sieges Vol. II,* 210.
[328] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Engineers*, *Vol. I,* 310.

However, when it came to the execution of the sieges, it is hard to find fault with Wellington's strategy. His simplistic method of committing available resources to creating a practicable breach in the shortest time possible proved effective. His decisions for *coups de main* proved costly in terms of lives of his men. His greatest asset was the quality of the British soldiers, as proved in their ability to storm and capture two fortresses despite less than ideal circumstances. He put his faith in them to get the job done, and they did so on both occasions in 1812 when they were given a reasonable chance to succeed. Wellington's correspondence makes it very clear that he was no fool regarding siege warfare, but his true genius lay in his ability to work with Fletcher to make the best of what they had to work with. The British sieges of early 1812 will never be used as textbook examples to highlight the science so beloved by disciples of Vauban. The means by which Wellington had to conduct a proper siege were extremely limited.[329] As Lieutenant General Picton observed, "Wellington sued Badajoz in *forma pauperis.*"[330] However, he had achieved his objective of controlling the keys to Spain, and moved deeper into Spanish territory with the goal of expelling the French from the Peninsula.

[329] It is critical to realize that until early 1812, Wellington was a General fighting a limited war that was far from popular back home. Whilst he had the support of Secretary of State Lord Liverpool and Foreign Secretary Richard Wellesley, Wellington still lacked the financial clout to prosecute the war to his liking. This only altered after a change in Government following Perceval's assassination saw Lord Bathhurst appointed Secretary of State in June 1812 in Liverpool's cabinet. Bathurst found a loophole that would finally provide the funding requested by Wellington.

[330] Oman, *History of the Peninsula War, Vol. IV*, 274.

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APPENDIX A

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ASSAULT [on Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812].
Source: Sir John T Jones, *Journal of Sieges Vol. I*
The attack upon Ciudad Rodrigo must be made this evening at 7 o'clock.
The Light infantry company of the 83rd regiment will join Lieutenant-Colonel O'Toole at sunset.
Lieutenant-Colonel O'Toole, with the 2nd Cacadores, and the light company of the 83rd regiment, will, 10minutes before 7, cross the Agueda by the bridge, and make an attack upon the outwork in front of the castle.
The object of this attack is to drive the artillerymen from two guns (B) in that outwork, which bear upon the entrance into the ditch, at the junction of the counterscarp with the main wall of the place: if Lieutenant-Colonel O'Toole can get into the outwork, it would be desirable to destroy these guns. Major Sturgeon will show Lieutenant- Colonel O'Toole his point of attack. Six ladders, 12 feet long each, will be sent from the engineer park to the old French guard-room, at the mill on the Agueda, for the use of this detachment.
The 5th regiment will attack the entrance of the ditch at the point above referred to; Major Sturgeon will likewise show them the point of attack; they must issue from the right of the convent of Santa Cruz ; they must have 12 axes to cut down the gate by which the ditch is entered, at the junction of the counterscarp with the body of the place. The 5th regiment are likewise to have 12 scaling ladders, 25 feet long, and immediately on entering the ditch, are to scale the fausse-braie wall, and are to proceed along the fausse-braie, in order to clear it of the enemy's posts on their left, towards the principal breach.
The 77th regiment are to be in reserve on the right of the convent of Santa Cruz, to support the first party, which will have entered the ditch. The ditch must besides be entered on the right of the breach by two columns, to be formed on the left of the convent of Santa Cruz, each to consist of five companies of the 94th regiment. Each column must have three ladders, 12 feet long, by which they are to descend into the ditch, and they are to have 10 axes to cut down any palisades which may be placed in the ditch to impede the communication along it.
The detachment of the 94th regiment, when descended into the ditch, is to turn to its left to the main breach. The 5th regiment will issue from the convent of Santa Cruz 10 minutes before 7.At the same time a party consisting of 180 sappers, carrying bags containing hay, will move out of the second parallel, covered by a fire of the 83rd regiment, formed in the second parallel, upon the works of the place, which bags are to be thrown into the ditch, so as to enable the troops to descend the counterscarp to the attack of the breach : they are to be followed immediately by the storming party of the great breach, which is to consist of the troops of Major-General McKinnon's brigade. Major- General McKinnon's brigade is to be formed in the first parallel, and in the communications between the first and second parallel, ready to move up to the breach immediately in rear of the sappers with bags. The storming party of the great breach must be provided with six scaling ladders, 12 feet long each, and with 10 axes. The ditch must likewise be entered by a column on the left of the great breach, consisting of three

companies of the 95th regiment, which are to issue from the right of the convent of St. Francisco. This column will be provided with three ladders, 12 feet long, with which they are to descend into the ditch, at a point which will be pointed out to them by Lieutenant Wright: on descending into the ditch, they are to turn to their right, and to proceed towards the main breach; they are to have 10 axes, to enable them to cut down the obstacles which may have been erected to impede the communication along the ditch on the left of the breach.

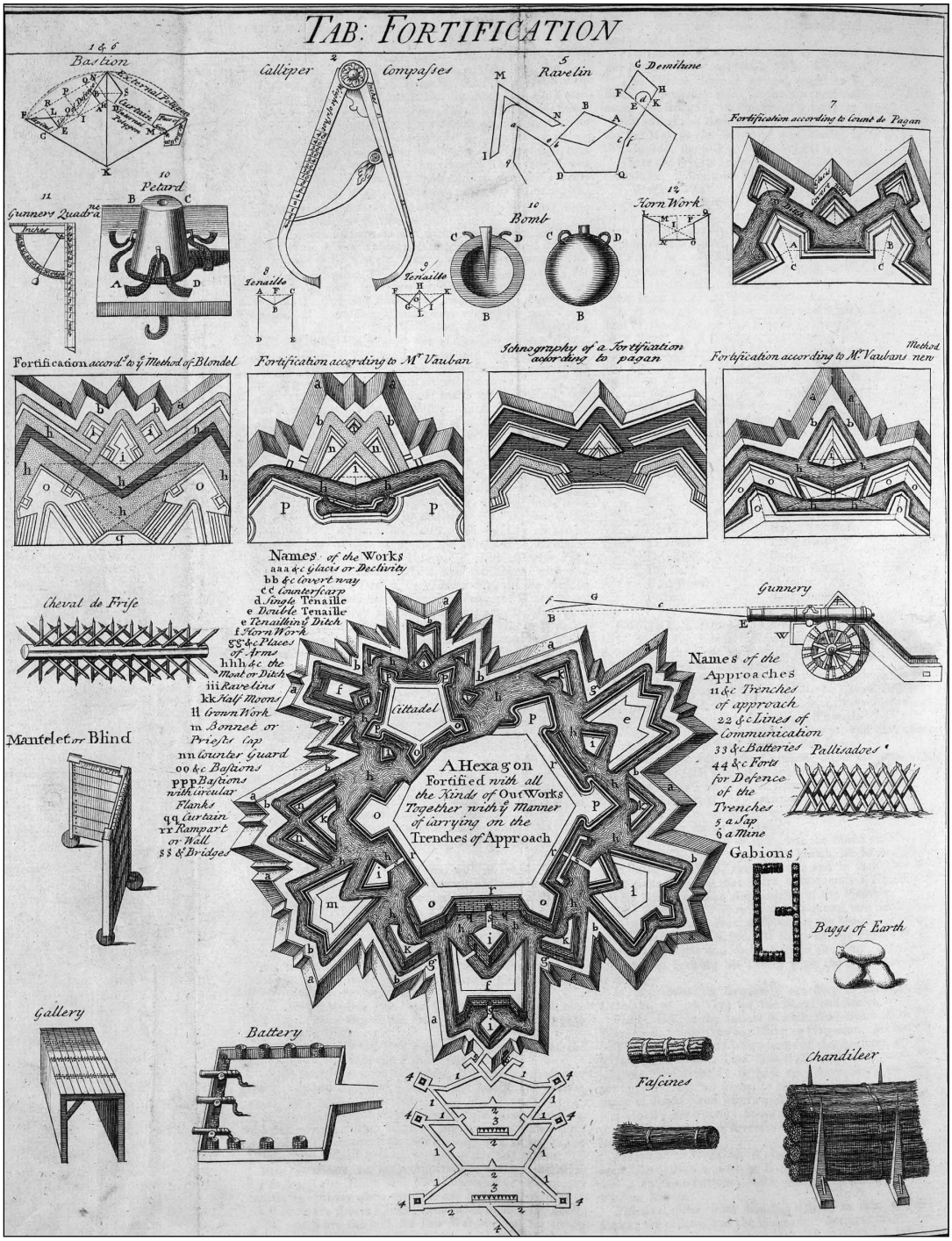
Another column, consisting of Major-General Vandeleur's brigade, will issue out from the left of the convent of St. Francisco, and are to attack the breach to the left of the main breach; this column must have 12 ladders, each 12 feet long, with which they are to descend into the ditch, at a point which will be shown them by Captain Ellicombe : on arriving in the ditch, they are to turn to their left, to storm the breach in the fausse-braie, on their left, of the small ravelin, and thence to the breach in the tower of the body of the place : as soon as this body will have reached the top of the breach, in the fausse-braie wall, a detachment of five companies are to be sent to the right, to cover the attack of Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade, by the principal breach, and as soon as they have reached the top of the tower, they are to turn to their right, and communicate with the rampart of the main breach : as soon as this communication can be established, endeavour should be made to open the gate of Salamanca. The Portuguese brigade in the 3rd division will be formed in the communication to the first parallel, and behind the hill of St. Francisco (upper Teson), and will move up to the entrance of the second parallel, ready to support Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade.

Colonel Barnard's brigade will be formed behind the convent of St. Francisco, ready to support Major-General Vandeleur's brigade ; all these columns will have detached parties especially appointed to keep up a fire on the defences during the above. The men with ladders, and axes, and bags, must not have their arms ; those who are to storm, must not fire.Brigadier-General Pack, with his brigade, will make a false attack upon the outwork of the gate of St. Jago, and upon the works towards La Caridad. The different regiments and brigades to receive ladders are to send parties to the engineers' depot to receive them, three men for each ladder.

W. [ellington]

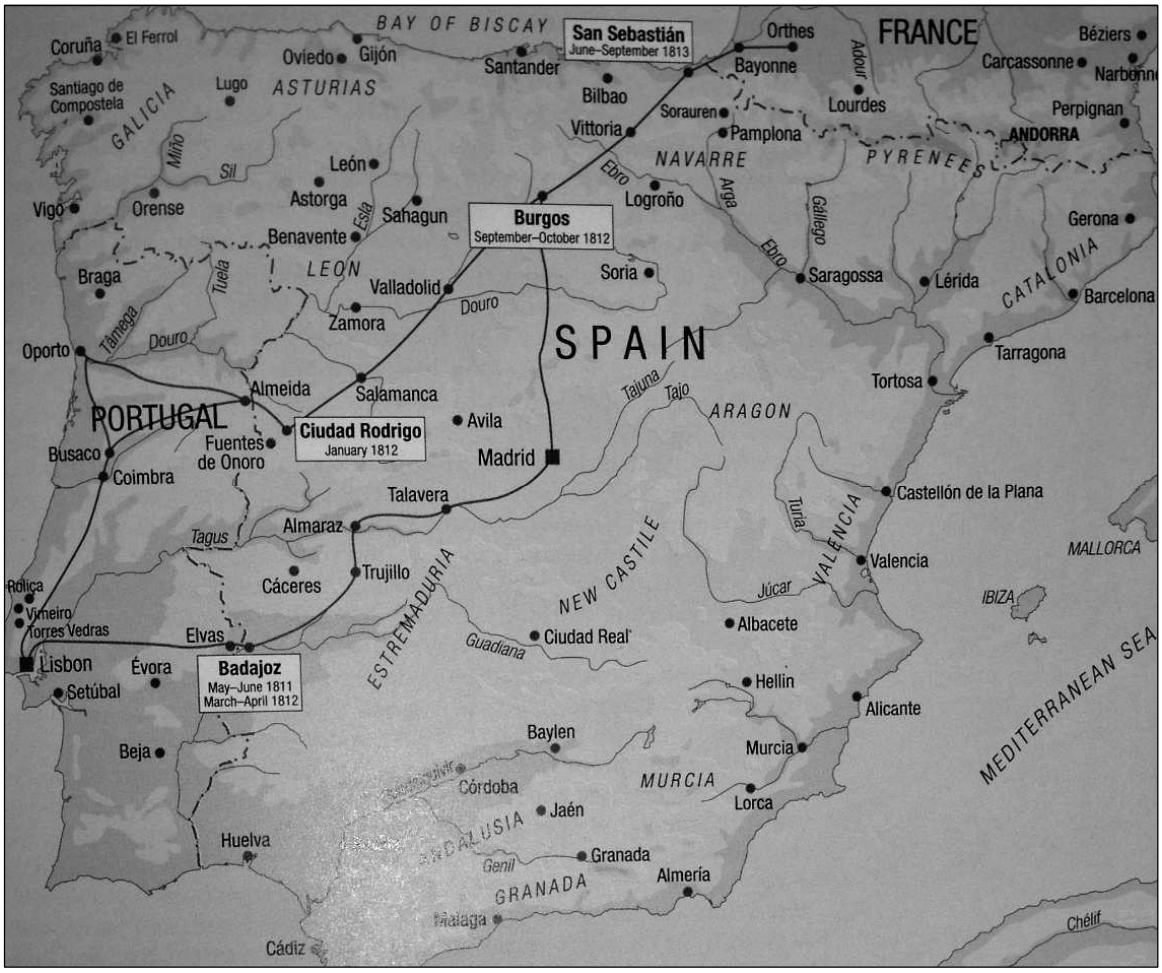
APPENDIX B

Diagram of Vauban-style fortress features.
Source: Table of Fortification, 1728 *Cyclopaedia*.



APPENDIX C

Map of the Iberian Peninsula showing major sieges of 1810-13
Source: Ian Fletcher, *Fortresses of the Peninsular War 1808-14*



APPENDIX D

Map showing the British plan of attack at Badajoz in 1812.
Source: WO 78/1017/7/16

APPENDIX E

Map showing the British plan of attack at Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812.
Source: MPH 1/243

APPENDIX F

Memorandum for the attack of Badajoz [in 1812].

Source: WD IX, 32-36.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTACK OF BADAJOZ. (The parts in the smaller print are alterations and Explanations afterwards made by the Earl of Wellington.) ' Camp, 6th April, 1812.

' 1. The Fort of Badajoz is to be attacked at 10 o'clock this night *.

' 2. The attack must be made on three points ; the castle, the face of the bastion of La Trinidad, and the flank of the bastion of Sta Maria.

' 3. The attack of the castle to be by escalade ; that of the two bastions, by the storm of the breaches.

' 4. The troops for the storm of the castle, consisting of the 3rd division of infantry, should move out from the right of the first parallel at a little before 10 o'clock, but not to attack till 10 o'clock.

' 5. They should cross the river Rivillas below the broken bridge over that river, and attack that part of the castle which is on the right, looking from the trenches and in the rear of the great battery constructed by the enemy to fire on the bastion of La Trinidad.

' 6. Having arrived within the castle, and having secured the possession of it, parties must be sent to the left along the rampart, to fall on the rear of those defending the great breach, in the bastion of La Trinidad, and to communicate with the right of the attack on that bastion.

' It is recommended that the attack of the 3rd division should be kept clear of the bastion of San Antonio, at least till the castle which is above and commands that bastion shall be carried.'

' 7. The troops for this attack must have all the long ladders in the engineers' park, and six of the lengths of the engineers' ladders. They must be attended by 12 carpenters with axes, and by six miners with crow-bars, &c.

' 8. The 4th division, with the exception of the covering party in the trenches, must make the attack on the face of the bastion of La Trinidad, and the Light division on the flank of the bastion of Sta Maria.

' 9. These two divisions must parade in close columns of divisions at 9 o'clock. The Light division, with the left in front, the 4th division with its advanced guard, with the left in front ; the remainder with the right in front. The 4th division must be on the right of the little stream, near the piquet of the 4th division, and the Light division must have the river on their right.

' This arrangement of the columns is made in order that the Light division may extend along the ramparts to the left ; and that the 4th division, with the exception of the advanced guard, which is to communicate by its left with the Light division, might extend along the ramparts to the right. It may be necessary, however, for these two divisions mutually to support each other, and attention must in this case be paid to the formations.'

' 10. The Light division must throw 100 men forward into the quarries, close to the covered-way of the bastion of Sta Maria, who, as soon as the garrison are disturbed, must keep down by their fire the fire from the face of the bastion of Su Maria, and that from the covered-way.

' 11. The advance of both divisions must consist of 500 men from each, attended by 12 ladders ; and the men of the storming party should carry sacks filled with light materials, to be thrown into the ditch, to enable the troops to descend into it. Care must be taken that these bags are not thrown into the covered-way.

' 12. The advance of the Light division must precede that of the 4th division; and both must keep as near the inundation as they possibly can.

' 13. The advance of both divisions must be formed into firing parties and storming parties. The firing parties must be spread along the crest of the glacis, to keep down the fire of the enemy ; while the men of the storming party, who carry bags, will enter the covered-way at the *place d'armes*, under the breached

face of the bastion of La Trinidad ; those attached to the 4th division on its right, those to the Light division on its left, looking from the trenches or the camp. ' No. 13 will run thus :— after the words " while the men of the storming party who carry bags will enter the covered-way," insert, " those of the Light division, at the *place d'armes* on the left, looking from camp, of the unfinished ravelin ; those of the 4th division, on the right of that ravelin, at the *place d'armes* under the breached face of the bastion of La Trinidad."

'14. The storming party of the advance of the Light division will then descend into the ditch, and turning to its left, storm the breach in the flank of the bastion of Sta Maria, while the storming party of the 4th division will likewise descend into the ditch, and storm the breach in the face of the bastion of La Trinidad.

' The firing parties are to follow immediately in the rear of their respective storming parties.

' Major General Colville will observe that a part of the advance of the 4th division must be allotted to storm the new breach in the curtain.'

' 15. The heads of the two divisions will follow their advanced guards, keeping nearly together, but they will not advance beyond the shelter afforded by the quarries on the left of the road, till they shall have seen the heads of the advanced guards ascend the breaches : they will then move forward to the storm in double quick time. ' The place here pointed out maybe too distant. The heads of the columns should be brought as near as they can without being exposed to fire.'

' 16. If the Light division should find the bastion of Su Maria entrenched, they will turn the right of the entrenchment, by moving along the parapet of the bastion. The 4th division will do the same by an entrenchment which appears in the left face, looking from the trenches of the bastion of La Trinidad.

' 17. The Light division, as soon as they are in possession of the rampart of Su Maria, are to turn to their left, and to proceed along the rampart to their left, keeping always a reserve at the breach.

' 18. The advanced guard of the 4th division are to turn to their left, and to keep up the communication with the Light division. The 4th division are to turn to their right, and to communicate with the 3rd division, by the bastion of San Pedro, and the demi-bastion of San Antonio, taking care to keep a reserve at the bastion of La Trinidad.

' 19. Each (the 4th and Light) division must leave 1000 men in reserve in the quarries.

' It will be necessary for the commanding officer of the Light division to attend to the ditch on his left as he makes his attack. He should post a detachment in the ditch towards the salient angle of the bastion of S" Maria, so as to be covered by the angle from the fire of the next bastion on its left, looking from the trenches.'

' 20. The 4th division must endeavour to get open the gate of La Trinidad ; the Light division must do the same by the gate called Puerto del Pilar.

' 21. The soldiers must leave their knapsacks in camp.

' 22. In order to aid these operations, the howitzers in No. 4 are to open a fire upon the batteries constructed by the enemy to fire upon the breach, as soon as the officers shall observe that the enemy are aware of the attack, which they must continue till they see that the 3rd division are in possession of the castle.

' Some signal must be arranged between the commanding officer of the artillery and the officer who shall command the attack on the castle, for ceasing the fire in No. 4.'

' 23. The commanding officer in the trenches is to attack the ravelin of San Roque with 200 of the covering party, moving from the right of the second parallel, and round the right of the ravelin, looking from the trenches, and attacking the barriers and gates of communication between the ravelin and the bridge; while 200 men likewise of the covering party will rush from the right of the sap into the salient angle of the covered-way of the ravelin, and keep up a fire on its faces. These last should not advance from the sap, till the party to attack the gorge of the ravelin shall have turned it. That which will move into the covered-way on the right of the ravelin looking from the trenches, ought not to proceed further down than the angle formed by the face and the flank.

' It would be better that this attack should move from the right of the sap. The commanding officer in the trenches must begin it as soon as he shall observe that the attack of the 3rd division on the castle is

perceived by the enemy.'
' 24. The remainder of the covering party to be a reserve in the trenches. The working parties in the trenches are to join their regiments at half past seven o'clock. ' Twelve carpenters with axes, and ten miners with crowbars must be with each (the 4th and Light) division. A party of one officer and 20 artillerymen must be with each division.
' 25. The 5th division must be formed, one brigade on the ground occupied by the 48th regiment ; one brigade on the Sierra del Viento; and one brigade in the low grounds extending to the Guadiana, now occupied by the piquets of the Light division.
' 26. The piquets of the brigades on the Sierra del Viento, and that in the low grounds towards the Guadiana, should endeavor to alarm the enemy during the attack by firing at the Pardaleras, and at the men in the covered-way of the works towards the Guadiana.
' A plan has been settled with Lieut. General Leith for an attempt to be made to escalade the bastion of San Vicente, or the curtain between that bastion and the bridge, if circumstances should permit. The commanding officer of the Light division will attend to this. ' General Power will likewise make a false attack on the tete-du-pont.'
' 27. The Commander of the Forces particularly requests the General Officers commanding divisions and brigades, and the Commanding Officers of regiments, and the Officers commanding companies, to impress upon their men the necessity of their keeping together, and formed as a military body after the storm, and during the night. Not only the success of the operation, and the honor of the army, but their own individual safety, depend upon their being in a situation to repel any attack by the enemy, and to overcome all resistance which they may be inclined to make, till the garrison are completely subdued.

Wellington.

* The hour originally named was half- past seven, being immediately after dusk, but it was subsequently changed to ten, in consequence of the arrangements being found to require that delay. The garrison took advantage of the interval between the breaching batteries ceasing to batter, and the commencement of the assault, to cover the front of the breaches with harrows and crow's- feet, and to fix a *chevaux-de-frise* of sword blades.