

# THE BRITISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PORTUGAL

THIRTY FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT  
AND REVIEW 2008

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**THE RESTORATION  
OF COLONEL LAKE'S MEMORIAL:  
Clive Gilbert**

Colonel Lake's Memorial lies on the heights of Columbeira near Roliça, south of Óbidos. Roliça was the site of the first battle fought by the future Duke of Wellington on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1808 against the French during the first Napoleonic invasion of Portugal in 1807.

Colonel Lake, at the head of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Worcestershire Regiment, was responsible for the brave, if somewhat foolhardy, action against Wellesley's orders that led to the advance of the British Army and the subsequent retreat and defeat of the French under General Laborde. Lake was killed at the head of his troops at the top of the gully of the heights of Columbeira, close to the second position of the French Army.

Subsequently his men and brother officers subscribed to the memorial tomb that was placed on the site where he fell. In 1903 a group of officers of Lake's Regiment, on their return from the Boer War, stopped off at Roliça and arranged for the restoration of the Memorial that had suffered damage done by local farmers over the years. It is thought that it was at this stage that the railings were placed around the Memorial in order to protect it.

In 1972-3 a group of expatriates, mainly belonging to the British Embassy and the British Legion, led by Sir Alfred Norris, decided to collect funds for some further restoration. In the meantime however they found they had been beaten to the

task by an impromptu restoration carried out by the 5<sup>th</sup> Caldas Infantry Regiment.

In 2004 The British Historical Society felt that the Memorial required cleaning in order to make the lettering more visible and that the railing required repainting. For this purpose they arranged a meeting with the local Council at Roliça. At the meeting it was decided that this work would be carried out by the Council and paid for by the BHS. Sadly the job was completely 'botched': not only was the painting of the railings poorly done but the Memorial itself was 'cleaned' to such an extent that much of the lettering became illegible and as a result the Junta decided to paint over the lettering. This action however only made matters worse as the paint became 'smudged' since the Memorial is of limestone.

Subsequently The British Historical Society, realising that the Roliça Council was not going to repair the damage it had caused, put to good use of its excellent relationship with the Lisbon Municipality's Department of Monuments (the BHS has presented Lisbon with three busts, King Edward VII, the Duke of Wellington and Catherine of Braganza) by arranging that a team of experts in the restoration and maintenance of monuments should be taken to the site by the BHS. Following their report on the state of the Memorial and proposal for the solution to repair the damage, the experts came up with the names of three companies to carry out the restoration. These were consulted and the results were shown to staff at the DGEMN (Directorate-General of Buildings and Monuments) who confirmed the correctness of the initial report and the good reputation of the companies.

The next phase involved discussions with the President

of the Bombarral Municipality and his staff in order to try to interest them in the project. Most importantly they were needed to help with the finance since the Memorial stands on private land. Various discussions were held and it was finally agreed that the Municipality would fund 50% of the total costs. Therefore in 2007 the BHS began contacts to obtain the finance for the remainder of the total cost and this it was able to do in time for the work to be carried out for the bi-centenary of the Battle of Roliça on 17th August 2008. Thanks are due to the generous contributions of The Worcestershire Regiment Museum Trust, the Friends of the Waterloo Committee, the Waterloo Committee (Brussels) and The British Historical Society of Portugal.