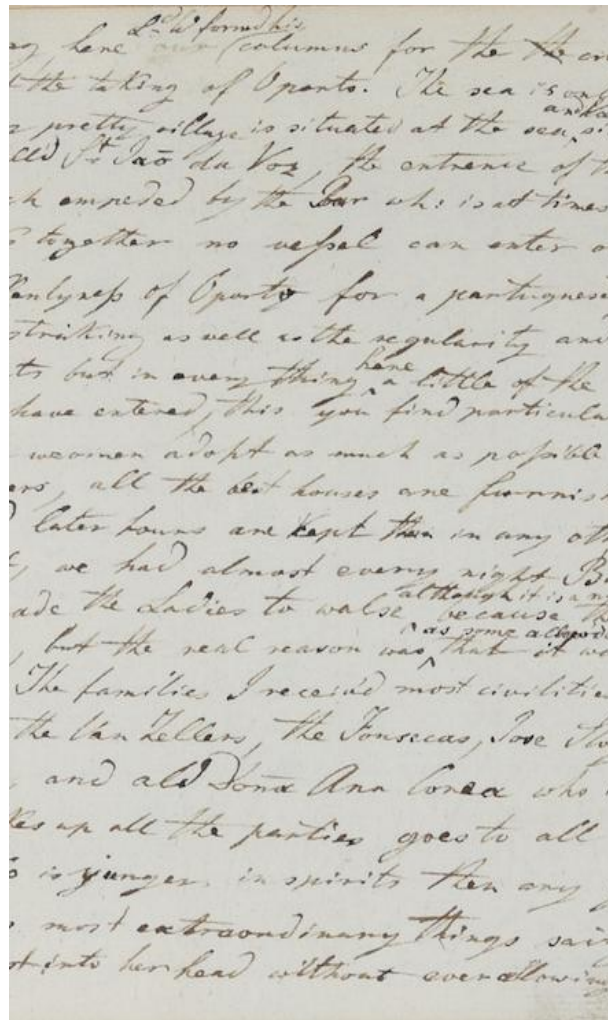


Prince William of Orange's Visit to Porto in 1812/1813: Extracts from his Diaries¹

Transcribed by Tim Richardson

Prince William of Orange (Willem II of The Netherlands) was only two when, in 1792, the French Revolution surged into the Netherlands and forced his father to flee into exile in England with his family. William spent his youth in Berlin at the Prussian court, where he followed a military education and served in the Prussian Army.² He arrived in Lisbon in July 1811. Beresford, the military governor, held a dinner in his honour.³ He was aged 19, had just entered the British army and been made an ADC to Wellington. After this, he took part in the Siege of Badajoz and the Battle of Salamanca.



Page from the diary of William, Prince of Orange

¹ Reproduced with the kind permission of the *Archief Koninklijke Verzamelingen* (Royal House Archives), The Hague

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_II_of_the_Netherlands

³ Ricardo Raimundo Nogueira - [MEMÓRIA DAS COISAS MAIS NOTÁVEIS QUE SE TRATARAM NAS CONFERÊNCIAS DO GOVERNO \(1810-1820\)](#) p. 137

The winter of 1812/1813 was a short period of respite for all the armies involved in the Peninsular War - referred to in Portugal as The French Invasions. The Spanish Government had assembled in Cadiz and The Cortes (Spanish Parliament) was considering asking Wellington to become commander of the Spanish army. For this, amongst other reasons, Wellington decided to go to Cadiz. His ADCs, left behind in the Winter Quarters with sparse accommodation and little entertainment, set out on a visit to Porto.

Prince William recorded this visit in his diary.⁴ He wrote in English; it might have been the language he was most fluent in, having studied Civil Law at Christ Church in Oxford. His idiosyncratic spelling has been maintained in the transcript below, together with annotations to guide the reader. Relevant diary entries by Clarissa Trant, daughter of the Governor of Porto, have also been included.



After the battles of Salamanca and Ciudad Rodrigo, Wellington returned over the Portuguese border and set up his Winter Quarters (1812/1813) in the village of Freineda, not far from Vilar Formoso.

Diary Entries of Prince William of Orange

24th November 1812

[.] [.] leave Ciudad Rodrigo and march to Freineda Burgh and March return to day from England and bring to Lord Wellington my Medal for C. Rodrigo and Badajos *wh*: he *gaves* me to day and of *wh*: I am quite *prowed*, I am likewise recommended for the Medal of the Battle of Salamanca.

26th November

Col? Gordon [our] [famous] [Dr] [Master] [Perth] is going home. We begin again the usual Winter Quarters amusements consisting [in] Fox Hunting and all kinds of sports of the field.

⁴ Royal Collections, The Netherlands, Archive King Willem II, inventory number A40-IV-64

30th November

[H[Hear] of the Governor of Alba and its Gallant Leader Major Miranda having effected their escape through the French army and [reached] Extremadura.

12th December

Lord Wellington [Faltz] [bay] and Alava, set of for Cadiz, the [Peen] is going to settle some business with regard to the Spanish [Armys]. Having received the Pr. Regent's leave to [assume] the command of the Spanish Forces.

15th December

Freemantle, March, Rowan, Francis [Rapele] and myself set of for Oporto, I go today by Sobral da Sierra on the Sierra Estrella and Celorico crossing the Mondego River first at the Ponte de Ladron and afterwards again at the Ponte de Juncais to Mangualde, I stay at the [Paisso] house an excellent Portuguese family, their house is almost the best in Portugal and they live uncommonly well. The first Division is quartered at Mangualde and its Neighbourhood, Col. Farmon is living in the house. Lt. Genl. the Honble William [Hendart] Lt Holloway's brother who commands the Division is likewise quartered in the Village of Mangualde but not at the Paiss's.

16th December

Stop here

17th December

Likewise and dine with Lt Genl Stewart, the Countryside about Mangualde is very beautiful the Sierra d'Estrella forms the most remarkable object in the landscape, and is only 4 leagues distant.

18th December

Go to Moimenta de Beira were we stay with the Gent Pakenham. the 3rd Division quartered in this neighbourhood.

19th December

Lamego, the situation of wh; place es extremely fine the [Ho] [V] of the 5th Division are here, I dine with [Genl] Bacelar Viscount of Montalegre governor of Lamego.

20th December

Cross the Douro at the [Barka] da Regoa and march to Amarante *were* we sleep in the Convent. The country is extremely mountainous and fine between Lamego and Amarante and very rich in vineyards, which give the Port wine.

21st December

Go on to Oporto where I am received in the most civil possible manner by Brigd. Govr. Sir Nicholas Trant [K.J.S.] and by *every body*, being the first Prince that ever visited this city the Oporto people expected something quite out of the common way and hardly knew how to be civil enough *wh*: was extremely boring at first, they however very soon mended and became truly kind. I was Quartered in the Casa da Caranca, the finest house in the town belonging to gold lace merchants the brothers Isodoro

Luis, and Manuel Mendes de Moraes e Castro. It was the [HQ] house of Soult and Ld Wellington and is quite a Palace but the owners although immensely rich never see company and live [retired] in some small nasty rooms in the house, and are excellent good people but entirely without *usage du monde*. The situation of the town is beyond all description fine being built on the right bank of the Douro on a series of hills and sloping down to the water side with a number of *guardens* and Orange trees upon *wh*: you look down from the upper part of the town, on the other side of the Douro at the foot of beautiful wooded hills lies the Suburb of Villanova, and the Convent of [la Serra] with a very fine *guarden* and the views from it are quite enchanting, here Ld. W formed his columns for the crossing of the River at the [taking] of Oporto. The sea is only a league of and a very pretty village is situated at the sea and harbour side with a fort it is called St. [Jão] da Voz, the entrance of the harbour is very much impeded by the bar *wh*: is at times so bad that for weeks together no vessel can enter or leave it.

The *klenlyness* of Oporto for a portuguese town is particularly striking as well as the regularity and *largeness* of the streets but in every thing here a little of the English spirit seems to have entered, this you find particularly in Society where the *weomen* adopt as much as possible English *facions* and manners, all the best houses are furnished in the English style and later hours are kept than in any other part of Portugal, we had almost every night Balls but could not persuade the Ladies to *walse* although it is a national portuguese dance because they said it was *endecent*, but the real reason was as some [alleged] that it was not done in England. The families I received most civilities of were the Kopkes, the Van Zellers, the Foncescas, Jose Hogen, São Montemo, and also Dona Ana Corea who is first in rank here makes up all the parties goes to all and although about 60 is younger in spirits than any girl of 15, and [sais] most extraordinary things *saing* whatever comes first into her head without even allowing herself a second thought she is *realy* the life of the Society, and *every body* agrees that her death will be a publick calamity for Oporto. I *past* one of the pleasantest months of my life here, having nothing to think of but amusement amongst the kindest of all people. I was *realy inceptated* as a member of some of the families. Having that Ld W had left Lisbon on his way from Cadiz [bak] to the [Ho Q] I left Oporto really with much regret on the 23rd of January thus after having [staied] a full month.

Diary of Clarissa Trant

We were quietly seated at our family dinner when some officers entered the room who proved to be the Prince of Orange, Lord March, and Colonel Freemantle. The following day was one of delightful bustle - the whole house was in confusion. My father sent out invitations to the hotel to grab the ball and supper, and as it was then that the Prince was very fond of dancing, all the young ladies were determined to outvie one another in finery so to secure the honour of being selected as his partner.

I confess that I was more frightened than pleased when the Prince, out of compliment to my father, selected me as his partner.

23rd January 1813

I return by another road across the Sierra de Caramula, crossing the bridge of boats to Villa Nova. I went by Carvalhos @1, Cabeças 31, Farrapa 11/41, Marujal 11/21, Gestoso 11, Manhouse 21, to the Convent of St Cristoval 11/2 1 [were] we stayd the night. This road is generally very stony and rocky and in parts I should think after rainy weather extremely [bogy] [are] found it however today [tallesably] good.. but I do not think it can be recommended for any thing but a [bridel] road. The Sta Bernardo friars gave me a very good Supper and beds. We went as far as this on post mules.

24th January

We proceed on our horses by St Pedro de Sul 3l, Viseu 3l, a very pretty town, to Mangualde 2l.

25th January

Stay and have the pleasure of seeing two grand inquisitors a bernadine friar and a Kt of Malta playing at Farao which is a prohibited game in Portugal but played publicly every where.

27th January

Ride home to Frenada where Ld W had returned since 2 days and [love] has [tamed] him at Cadiz, for never have we known him more good [humored], & great deal of scandal is talk'd about him and the Marchioness of Sta Cruz, and since there is never smoke without fire. I am rather inclined to believe that there is some foundation for it. The News from Russia is excellent in the 29th Bulletin Bonaparte himself confesses that his whole army is retiring and is terribly suffering by the climate. (vide the Bulletin).

3rd February

In a conversation I have with [Alava] he tells me that Ld Wellington had many times [prais'd] me to him during their Journey.

Diary of Clarissa Trant

During his three weeks day at Oporto an event occurred which materially affected the Prince's future life. My father received dispatches containing an account of Bonaparte's retreat from Moscow: he was the first to announce this news to the Prince and prophesied that within two years the Nassau family would be restored to the throne of their ancestors.

Some years later my father had an opportunity at Brussels of congratulating him upon the fulfilment of this prediction which the Prince had not forgotten. When he left Oporto he said that it was with real regret, as my father was the first person who had treated him "veritablement en Prince".

Conclusion

Following his visit to Porto, Prince William was made an aide-de-camp to the Prince Regent (the future King George IV) in September and on 14 December 1813 promoted to major-general. His courage and good nature made him very popular with the British, who nicknamed him "Slender Billy". He returned to the Netherlands in 1813 when his father became sovereign prince, and in May 1814 succeeded Sir Thomas Graham as the highest-ranking officer of the British forces stationed there.

Twenty years later⁵, Sir Nicholas Trant and his daughter Clarissa encountered The Prince of Orange while walking in Hyde Park. In parting, the Prince remarked:

"God bless you, Sir Nicholas, – a thousand thanks to you".

⁵ 15/1/1831

He did eventually succeed his father and reigned as King of The Netherlands from 1840 to 1849.



Route of Prince William and his entourage. From Mangualde (J) the group headed north to the Douro and then along the north bank to Porto. On the return journey they headed south through the hills to Mangualde and then back to the Winter Quarters at Freineda (B).

Acknowledgments

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Tim Richardson, a member of the Society, is the author of a forthcoming book entitled Forgetting Nicholas Trant. In 2025 he also organised the popular Cascais Memorial Lectures on 'Portugal and The British' given by Eduardo Gomes, held in association with the Society.