

HAL B11: 1951-1953

## THE WELLINGTON CENTENARY EXHIBITION

A very successful Exhibition to commemorate the Centenary of the Death of the Duke of Wellington was held in the British Institute, Lisbon, under the auspices of the Lisbon Branch of the Historical Association, from December 13th to 18th, 1952. The Branch owes a great debt of gratitude to the principal organizers, Dr. Carlos Estorninho, Professor Virginia Rau and Mr. A. R. Walford. Owners of many famous private collections of Peninsular War relics responded most generously to the appeal for exhibits and the Lisbon Branch would like to take this opportunity to express thanks to: H. B. M. Ambassador, Sir Nigel Ronald, K.C.M.G., C.V.O., the family of Sr. Frederico Ferreira Pinto Basto, Dr. Rafael Salinas Calado, D. Martinho Pereira Coutinho, Dr. George R. Champalimaud Duff, Dr. Fausto de Figueiredo, Mr. E. Flower, Mr. H. E. O. Gilbert, Dr. J. Monteiro Grilo, The British Institute in Portugal, Mrs. R. G. Jayne, Mrs. H. Jennings, Dr. Fernando Pessoa Jorge, Dr. J. da Cruz Jorge, Eng. Mário Pessoa Jorge, D. Maria Mendes Leal, Sr. Fernando Mardel, Capt. Gastão de Mello de Matos, D. Georgina Avelar Machado Soares Mendes, Sr. Diogo Oleiro, Sr. Emmanuel Ribeiro, Sr. Francisco Barros e Sá, Mr. G. M. Tait, Com. Ernesto de Vilhena and Mr. F. G. Wood.

The Exhibition was opened by H.B.M. Ambassador and Professor Virginia Rau also spoke a few words of explanation on the Opening Day. Talks were also delivered during the Exhibition by Capt. Gastão de Mello de Matos, Mr. L. A. C. Fry, O.B.E., Dr. Carlos Mascarenhas de Azevedo, Mr. F. G. Wood, Sr. José Ferreira Pinto Basto and Mr. Martin Blake.

The talks by Capt. Gastão de Mello de Matos and Mr. L.A.C. Fry are reproduced in full in this Report. The subject chosen by Dr. Carlos de Azevedo was *Domingos Sequeira and Wellington*

and the speaker dealt with the famous service of silver designed by Sequeira and presented to Wellington by his faithful Portuguese allies. This superb example of the art of the silversmith is now on view at the Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London. Sequeira's designs are preserved in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Mr. F. G. Wood gave a most interesting talk on *The Wellington Museum*, London, which was opened in connection with the Centenary Celebrations. Sr. José Ferreira Pinto Basto explained why his father Frederico Pinto Basto started his unique collection of Peninsular War relics which is now one of the most famous in Portugal. Sr. Frederico Pinto Basto was an expert on the history of the Peninsular War campaigns and the catalogues which he himself compiled of his museum at Quinta das Gaeiras, near Óbidos, are reference works of the greatest value. On the Closing Day of the Centenary Exhibition Mr. Martin Blake, Director of the British Institute and Representative of the British Council in Portugal, spoke of *Wellington the Statesman*. He stressed the Duke's long career as a member of Parliament and reminded listeners that Wellington first became an M.P. in 1807 and that from 1830 until his death in 1852 he was leader of the Tory Party in the House of Lords.

There were long and appreciative notices of the Exhibition not only in the Lisbon and Oporto Press but in many provincial papers and a paragraph appeared in *The Daily Telegraph*, London, of December 15th, 1952, which read as follows:

#### WELLINGTON AND PORTUGAL

«The Wellington centenary exhibition in Lisbon has a large number of exhibits from private collections which have not been shown in public before. Among them is the Duke's field medicine chest.

Many of the exhibits come from the celebrated Peninsular War collection assembled by the late Frederico Pinto Basto at Gaeiras. He had a reputation as an expert on the Peninsular campaigns, and British military historians used to consult him to check which battalions were at which engagement.

Portugal has a certain proprietary interest in the Duke. Besides being a marshal in the Portuguese Army and a member of the regency council during the King's absence in

South America, he held the Portuguese titles of Count of Vimeira, Marquess of Torres Vedras and Duke of Victoria».

The Exhibition was the means of attracting several new members and it is hoped that after the publication of this Report the membership will further increase, particularly as a new feature of the activities of the Lisbon Branch will be monthly excursions to places of historical interest in and near Lisbon when distinguished historians have very kindly promised to act as guides to the members and their friends.