

**THE BRITISH  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF PORTUGAL**

TWENTY SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT  
AND REVIEW 2000

Quinta Nova  
Carcavelos  
2777 PAREDE

## WELLINGTON'S BATONS

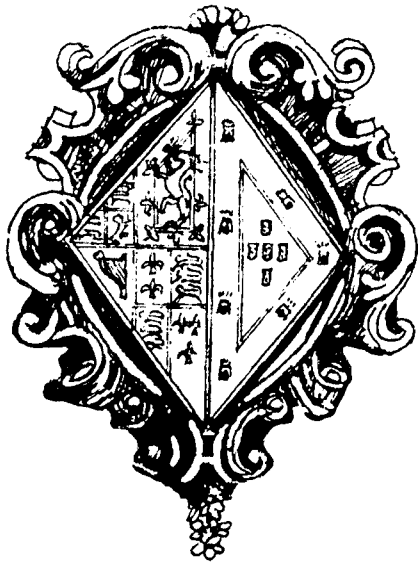
by Malcolm Howe

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 1809, the Prince Regent of Portugal, later King Dom João VI, appointed Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wellesley, later to become Duke of Wellington, Marshal General of the Portuguese Army. Wellesley was previously appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in Portugal on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1809.

At the age of thirty-nine, he had already been given the chief command in the Peninsula in June 1808 and appointed Captain-General in the Spanish Army in August 1808. Following his military successes, he was successively ennobled with the Portuguese titles of Count of Vimeiro (13<sup>th</sup> May 1813), Marquess of Torres Vedras (17<sup>th</sup> December 1811) and then Duke of the Victory (17<sup>th</sup> December 1812)<sup>1</sup> to commemorate the final expulsion of Napoleon's forces from Portugal. Successive peerages in the United Kingdom were also conferred on him and he was nominated a Knight of the Garter.

At the decisive battle of Vitória, in Spain, Wellington defeated Marshal Jourdan on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1813 and was retrospectively appointed a Field Marshal in the British Army. The victors were allowed to loot the baggage, abandoned by the fleeing French, most of which had been pillaged from the Spanish people. Rolled up inside the coach of Joseph Bonaparte, appointed King of Spain after his brother Napoleon had deposed King Ferdinand VII, were the priceless pictures of the captive Spanish King. When Ferdinand was restored, he graciously allowed Wellington to keep some of his pictures which are now at Apsley House, colloquially known as Number One, London.

A corporal in the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars helped himself to the gold ends from Marshal Jourdan's baton, which he found in an ornamental case of blue velvet embroidered with Napoleonic eagles. The rest of the baton was promptly taken by a drummer in the 87<sup>th</sup>



Regiment. On the next day, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the 87<sup>th</sup> presented their share of this trophy to Wellington whereupon the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars sent along the engraved gold caps to undeceive him about the 87<sup>th</sup>. The French Marshal's baton was despatched to the Prince Regent of Great Britain, later King George IV, together with the now deposed ex-King Joseph's sword and were presented in Wellington's name. The Prince Regent graciously replied "*You have sent me, among the trophies of your unrivalled fame, the staff of a French Marshal and I send you in return that of England*".<sup>2</sup> Wellington soldierly replied "*I can evince my Gratitude for Your Royal Highness's repeated favours only by devoting my life to your service.*"<sup>3</sup>

However, British Field Marshals did not have batons: this rank was first conferred in January 1736 by George II on the Earl of Orkney and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Argyll. The Prince Regent personally designed the first baton adorned with the lions of England and the finial displaying Saint George slaying the dragon. It was made from gold, splendidly fashioned and was a magnificent tribute. Colonel Henry Torrens, Military Secretary at the Horse Guards (i.e. the War Office), recorded "*It does not appear that there has ever has been an English baton and no better occasion can ever occur of establishing*

<sup>1</sup>The Portuguese texts of the copies, in the national archives in the Torre do Tombo, of the Royal decrees granting these titles were published in the 26<sup>th</sup> annual report and review 1999, appended to an article about these titles by J.B.Dominick. The original documents presented to Wellington had been lost sometime before 1910. The 4<sup>th</sup> Duke went to Portugal for celebrations of the centenary in 1910 of the battle of Bussaco. The last King, Dom Manuel II confirmed the titles of his forebear to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke in a document bearing his signature dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 1910, a matter of days before the Monarchy fell on the 5<sup>th</sup> October. The 4<sup>th</sup> Duke had asked for copies of the original decrees which were sent to him, via the Portuguese Legation in London, in 1911. Translations of these four documents are appended.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Archives, Windsor 20699; Wellington Dispatches X 532 3 July 1813

<sup>3</sup> Dispatch X 532 16 July 1813

*one than the present. I am therefore getting one prepared to present to each of our Marshals: and if I am not interfered with from the fountain of taste (i.e. the Prince Regent) I trust it will be found an appropriate badge of command.*"<sup>4</sup> The subsequent issue of batons, although modelled on the Prince Regent's design, had the staff covered with red velvet embellished with gold lions rather than completely made of expensive precious metal.

In February 1915 Wellington was created a Field Marshall of Hanover and later that year, after the great victory of Waterloo, he was appointed a Field Marshal in the Netherlands Army. In November 1818 the Duke was honoured by Austria, Russia and Prussia, the other allies, and granted the equivalent rank in their armies. Wellington was rewarded with this honour by eight nations, surely a world record. All the associated batons are displayed at Apsley House with the exception that there is no insignia relating to Russia there. Presumably Russian Marshals did not carry batons like their British counterparts had not earlier.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington was appointed Lord High Constable of England for the coronations of George IV (19<sup>th</sup> July 1821), William IV (8<sup>th</sup> September 1831) and Queen Victoria (28<sup>th</sup> June 1838). This ancient office had been instituted in England in Saxon times and eventually became the hereditary perquisite of the Bohuns, Earls of Hereford and their heirs, the Staffords. The castle of Caldecote, near Chepstow, Monmouthshire, used to be the official residence of the Lord High Constables of England. The office was forfeited to King Henry VIII when Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was attainted for high treason in 1521. The office in England then ceased to be hereditary and Lord High Constables were henceforth appointed for special occasions, normally to officiate at coronations.

At George IV's coronation, Wellington carried the standard Field Marshal's baton, which is displayed at Apsley House, marked 1821, rather than the beautiful elaborate original gold baton. Curiously there is also on display a larger than standard baton

<sup>4</sup>Wellington Supplementary Dispatches, viii, 95

fashioned in silver gilt with the velvet cover in poorer condition. Presumably this was one of the batons issued in 1813, replaced by the smaller model that became standard as exemplified in 1821, which it is assumed was also the baton carried by Wellington at the coronation of William IV.

For the coronation of Victoria, a special baton was made, which Wellington carried, to signify the office of Lord High Constable. It is silver gilt, with the hallmark for 1837/38 and is surmounted with the Royal Crown. The caps resemble the ends of the batons of Earls Marshal of England, gold tipped with ebony and the High Constables of Scotland, silver tipped with gold. These offices are hereditary perquisites of the Dukes of Norfolk and Earls of Erroll respectively.

Field Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke (1883-1963) was appointed Lord High Constable of England, for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953. His silver rod of office, surmounted by a gold ducal crest coronet, can be seen in the officers' mess of the Royal Artillery at Woolwich<sup>5</sup>.

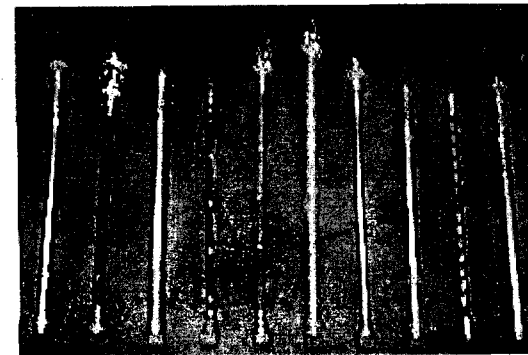
In Portugal the office of Constable of the Realm was greatly coveted by medieval magnates. The first holder of the Portuguese office was Dom Alvaro Count of Arraiolos and brother of the ill-fated Inês de Castro. The second was the famed Nuno Alvares Pereira, who fought gloriously to victory over the Spanish invaders, at the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385 and later became known as the Holy Constable -*O Santo Condestavel*. As in England, the office became less powerful and more ceremonial and was bestowed for the acclamation of a new Sovereign. The last Portuguese Constable was the Duke of Oporto (1865-1920) and Dom Afonso can be seen bearing his staff-*estoque* of office in illustrations of the acclamation ceremonies of his brother, Dom Carlos, in 1889 and photographs of those of his nephew, Dom Manuel II, in 1908.

<sup>5</sup>The present day descendants of all the other Lord High Constables of England, where the main line has continued, say they have no knowledge or illustrations of the relevant insignia of their ancestors. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Abercorn was High Constable of Ireland at the coronation of George V in 1911.



1953 Lord High Constable's rod of Viscount Alanbrooke in the Royal Artillery Officers' Mess at Woolwich

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*From the reader's left to right from the display at Apsley House, with From the reader's left to right from the display at Apsley House, with acknowledgement to the Victoria and Albert Museum, Wellington's batons of office as field marshal or equivalent in the armies of:*

*Portugal; Hanover; Austria, Britain (3+constable's); Netherlands; Prussia; Spain*  
 1809 1815 1818 1821 1813? 1813 1838 1815 1818 1808

1. Copy (Literal translation set out line by line following the punctuation of the document)

(Decree) 13<sup>th</sup> May 1811  
Count of Vimeiro, and other  
rewards)

Having consideration to the illustrious and Sublime Qualities, that concur in the Person of Lord Wellington, Marshal General of My Armies, and whose grand enlightened and known talents to his valour, in the Military Art(s), and of War, as also to good order, with which he had arranged, and directed the different attacks against the Common Enemy in the most important cause of the defence of My Realms the glorious Triumphs due to him that he attained over the French in the brilliant Battles of Roliça and Vimeiro and the worthy Victories that the Valorous Portuguese Soldiers, My faithful Vassals, aided by the brave British Troops, whom they sought to emulate, obtained Gloriously, in the Douro, and on the memorable day the twenty seventh of September of the last year, in the Combat next to the Mountain of Bussaco, at which they valorously drove back The Army commanded by General Massena with considerable loss of dead and wounded. Frustrating totally the attempt of the Enemy to take possession of the advantageous position that the combined Armies had occupied on the heights of the same Mountain resulting from the correct movements, and dispositions from the said Lord Wellington, My Troops covered themselves in Glory: Making himself by all these notable Services, and praiseworthy actions to whom the credit that I may give to him a sign of My Gratitude, and of all that I consider and admire in his Person: I will deign and it Pleases Me to make him the Reward of the Title of Count of Vimeiro,

of raising him to the Dignity of Honorary Grand Cross of the Order of the Tower and the Sword with a Commandery of the same Order, and of an Pension of twenty thousand cruzados, for two lives, from the Coffe of the vacant Commanderies; exempting him from the payment of New and Old Duties, and from such other Emolument, that for these Rewards is customary to pay. – Palace of Rio de Janeiro on the thirteenth of May of eighteen hundred and eleven. With the Seal of the Prince Regent Our Seigneur.

Agrees. Public National Archive,  
11<sup>th</sup> of February 1911. Arthur  
F. d'Neves Head of Section  
? (signature) Director

This title was originally granted for two lives only which was normal Portuguese practice: Wellington's heir had been born in 1807. However the confirmation by the Dukes of Braganza has conferred heredity status.

II (Literal translation following the punctuation of the documents line by line.)

Copy  
(Decree) 17<sup>th</sup> December 1811  
Marquess of Torres Vedras)

The Count of Vimeiro, Marshal General and Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies having continued with valour and glory in the defence of Portugal, sustaining the well merited reputation of the Armies of his Command, the independence of My Realms and the Sacred Rights of My Throne, by the successive triumphs, wise manoeuvres, and well arranged Plans,

with which he has frustrated the stubborn and repeated endeavours of the Enemy, who still ventures and seeks to invade my States: and Wanting to give him a new and worthy Testimony of My Royal satisfaction and recognition for such distinctive and notable Services: I will deign and it Pleases Me To Make him the Reward of the Title of Marquess of Torres Vedras: Exempting him from the payment of New and Old Duties, and of such other Emolument, that for this Reward is customary to pay. Palace of Rio de Janeiro seventeenth of December eighteen hundred and eleven /With the Seal of the Prince Regent./ P.P. on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December of 1811./ Reg(ister)ed the folio 172/ Agrees Public National Archive, 11<sup>th</sup> of February of 1911, Arthur F. d'? (signature) Neves Head of Section ? (signature) Director

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III Copy  
Dec(ree) of 17<sup>th</sup> December 1812  
(Duke of the Victory)

Wanting to give the Marquess of Torres Vedras, Marshal General, and Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies, a new Testimony of My Royal Satisfaction, and Recognition, to whom so much credit is due, by the continuation of the brilliant Victories, with which he has with immortal Glory humbled the arrogance of the common Enemy and frustrated his projects in the Peninsular, and making himself worthy that I augment him in (the) Grandeeship with a Title that records such memorable Triumphs: I will deign, and it Pleases Me To Make him the Reward of the title of Duke of the Victory; Exempting him from the payment

of the Old and New Duties, and such other Emoluments, that for this Reward is customary to pay. Palace of Rio de Janeiro, on the seventeenth of December eighteen hundred and twelve/With the seal of the Prince Regent/P. Charter on 11<sup>th</sup> of January of 1813/Re(ister)ed the folio 5?/ Agrees Public National Archive, 11<sup>th</sup> of February of 1911. Arthur F. D'? (signature) Neves Head of Section ? (signature) Director

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It is clear from these documents that notwithstanding the assertion that all Portuguese Counts, Marquesses and Dukes were Grandees, the Grandeeship was not conferred until Wellington became a Portuguese Duke.

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Confirmation of the titles of Count of Vimeiro, Marquess of Torres Vedras and Duke of the Victory to the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington by Dom Manuel II, King of Portugal, in 1910.

This literal translation follows the document line by line, with the same punctuation.

Lord Arthur Charles Wellesley, Duke of Wellington and of Ciudad Rodrigo, Prince of Waterloo.  
I The-King of Portugal and the Algarves  
Send you many greetings.  
On the occasion of the centenary of the peninsular war, and solemn commemoration of the heroic battle of Bussaco, in which attained undying fame and glory your Grandfather the first Duke of Wellington, General in Chief of the courageous anglo-portuguese army: Having in attention your distinctive qualities and worthiness, and Wanting To Give you an authentic testimony thus of My Royal consideration and benevolence for your person since as well

profound admiration, recognition and gratitude  
that I and all the Realm pay tribute  
to that renowned warrior and distinguished General,  
whose brilliant deeds and victories will always  
be celebrated universally, and that such eminent  
services he rendered to these Realms and to the cause of  
national independence: I see fit  
to Confirm you in the Titles, conferred  
on that glorious forebear of yours, of Count  
of Vimeiro, Marquess of Torres Vedras and Duke  
of the Victory. Which manifested Me to notify  
you for your knowledge and satisfaction.

Written in the Royal Palace of Necessidades  
on the 24<sup>th</sup> September of 1910.

(signed) The-King

For Lord Arthur Charles Wellesley,  
Duke of Wellington, Count of Vimeiro,  
Marquess of Torres Vedras, Duke of the  
Victory, Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo,  
Prince of Waterloo.

(sealed with the Royal Arms over a pale blue and white moiré silk ribbon)

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**Malcolm Howe is a member of the Society who has contributed various articles in the past. He has recently published a book – The Braganza Story – which can be obtained through the Society.**