

Waterloo Remembered

The Napoleonic Wars 1803 - 1814

Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the greatest military leaders in history. The Napoleonic Wars, a continuation of the wars sparked by the French Revolution of 1789, were waged by Napoleon's French Empire and its allies against a series of coalitions of other European nations.

On 9 November 1799 Napoleon seized power in France and in 1800 he defeated Austria and negotiated a peace which established French power across the continent. On 18 May 1803 Britain and France declared war.

Napoleon appointed himself Emperor of France on 2 December 1804. When Britain defeated the French at Trafalgar in 1805 Napoleon abandoned plans to invade Britain and turned on the Austro-Russian forces, defeating them at Austerlitz later the same year. The Holy Roman Empire was dissolved, Holland and Westphalia (part of Germany) were created, and

within five years, Napoleon's relatives and those loyal to him were installed as leaders in Holland, Westphalia, Italy, Naples, Spain and Sweden.

In 1808 France began fighting Spain, Britain and Portugal for control of the Iberian Peninsula. Costly French defeats over the next five years drained French military resources and Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 resulted in a disastrous retreat. The tide started to turn in favour of the allies and in March 1814 Paris fell and the French monarchy returned to the throne. Napoleon was detained on the Mediterranean island of Elba.

Portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte by Robert Lafevre, 1813.
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Map of Europe, 1812

Napoleon's Empire at its height in 1812.



Prisoners of War

During these wars over 100,000 French Prisoners of War were captured and sent to Britain. While officers were allowed their freedom, other ranks were housed on board ships. By 1808 these floating prisons were full. The government began to send prisoners to the Edinburgh port of Leith, and from there north to Perth or south to Dumfries, Lanark, Melrose, Selkirk, Lockerbie, Lochmaben and Sanquhar. When Napoleon was defeated in 1814 the prisoners were released and allowed to return to France.

Defending Britain

During the early Napoleonic Wars Volunteer units were formed by citizens to assist with home defence. The military efficiency of the Volunteers was extremely variable. In 1808 parliament encouraged the formation of regiments of Local Militia, into which the Volunteers were invited to transfer their service. By early 1809, 250 regiments had been raised with almost 200,000 men.

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The Battle of Waterloo 1815

In March 1815 Napoleon escaped, marched on the French capital, gathering support as he went, and overthrew the French King Louis XVIII. This began “The Hundred Days War” which ended with a decisive battle near the town of Waterloo in Belgium on Sunday 18 June 1815.

Upon Napoleon’s return to power in March 1815, many states that had opposed him formed the Seventh Coalition. An Anglo-allied army comprising of two large forces under The Duke of Wellington and the Prussian General von Blücher assembled close to the north-eastern border of France. Napoleon chose to attack in the hope of destroying them before they could join in a co-ordinated invasion of France with other members of the coalition.

Mistakes were made on both sides and, according to Wellington, the battle was “the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life”. Napoleon was defeated, the coalition forces entered France and returned King Louis XVIII to the French throne. Napoleon abdicated, and travelled to Rochefort intending to flee France for the United States, but was

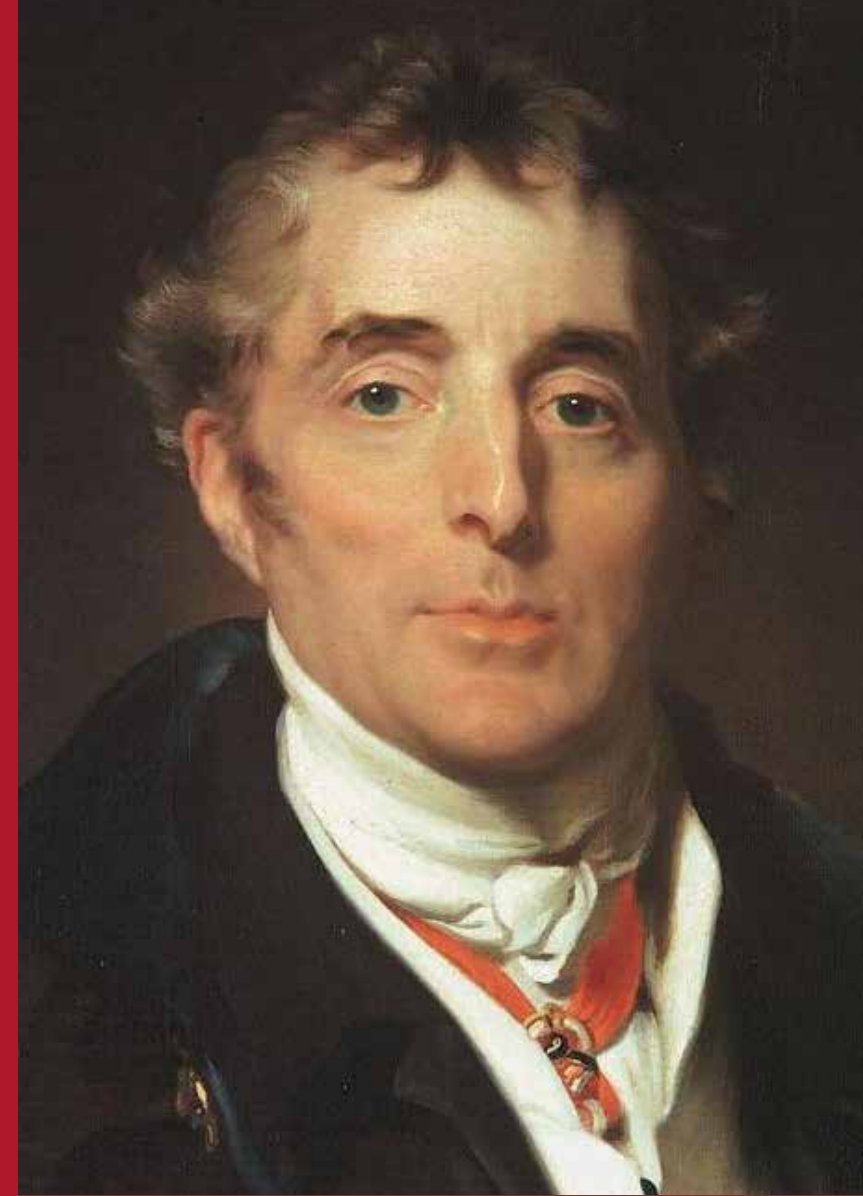
persuaded to surrender to Captain Maitland of HMS Bellerophon, part of the British blockade. He was imprisoned by the British on the remote island of Saint Helena, in the southern Atlantic Ocean.

Waterloo was a decisive battle in more than one sense. It definitively ended the series of wars that had ravaged Europe following the French Revolution and ushered in almost half a century of international peace in Europe. No further major conflict occurred until the Crimean War. It was an immense relief to the ordinary people of that time.

Portrait of Sir Pulteney Malcolm by George Engleheart, 1806

Between 1816 and 1817 Sir Pulteney Malcolm was Commander-in-Chief on the Saint Helena station, especially appointed to enforce a rigid blockade of the island and to keep a close guard on Napoleon Bonaparte. The two men are believed to have become friends, developing considerable respect for each other. Napoleon died in captivity on 5 May 1821.

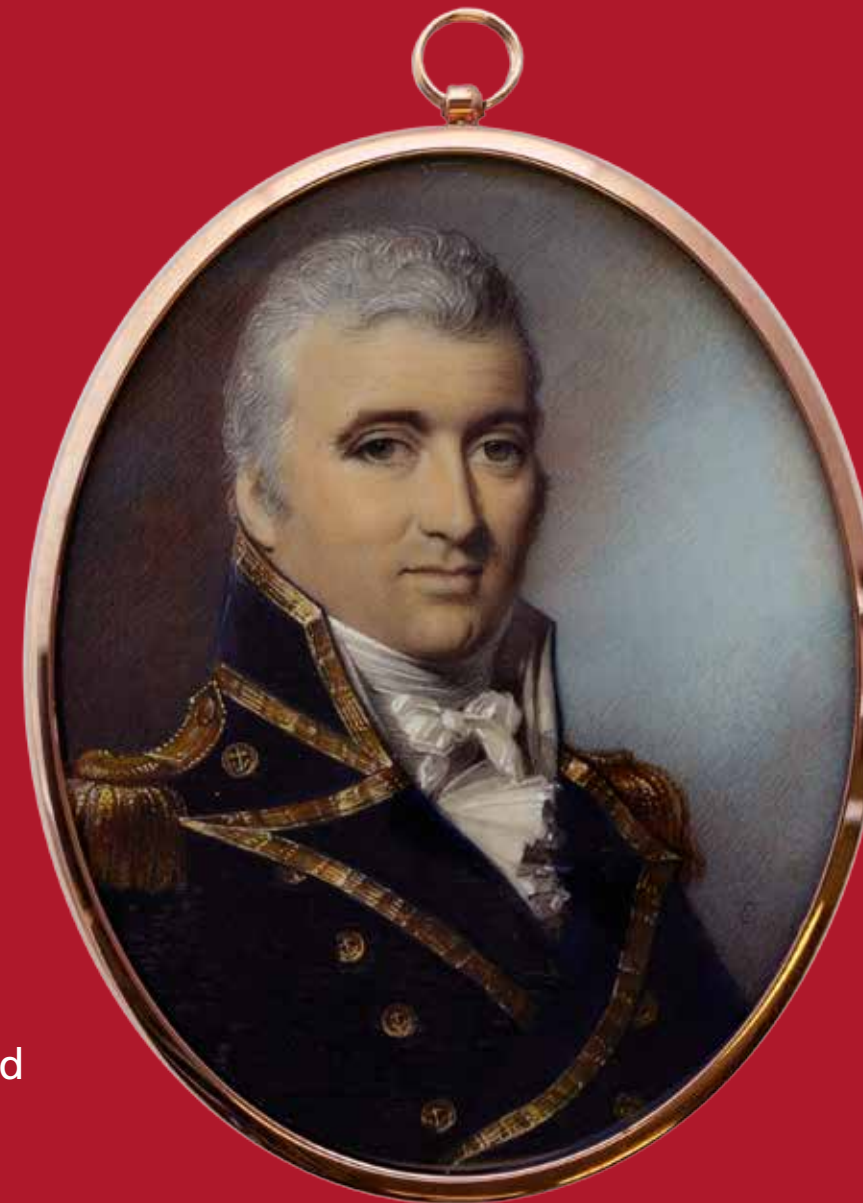
In the collection of Dumfries Museum.



Portrait of the Duke of Wellington by Thomas Lawrence

George IV knighted Thomas Lawrence in 1815 and commissioned a series of portraits of European royalty and statesmen.

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Waterloo Monument, New Abbey



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Many British men were killed during the Battle of Waterloo including some from Dumfries and Galloway. Those who survived were celebrated for years to come. Monuments to these men were erected all over Britain and include the Waterloo Monument at New Abbey. The inscription on this monument reads:

*Erected A.D. 1816
To record the Valour
Of those British, Belgian
And Prussian soldiers.
Who under WELLINGTON and
BLUCHER
On the 18th of June 1815
Gained the victory
Of
WATERLOO;
By which, French tyranny
Was overthrown;
And peace restored,
To the world.*

The Battle of Waterloo painted by George Jones in 1815

Trained as an artist, George Jones joined the Royal Montgomery Militia in February 1812. His obituary states that he volunteered for active service with his company in Spain and he was part of the army of occupation in Paris after the Battle of Waterloo.

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Galloway Militia Jacket Conservation

This jacket has been part of the Dumfries Museum collection since 1948 when it was donated by the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society.



The jacket before conservation.

supervision, students studying for their MPhil in Textile Conservation cleaned and stabilised the fabric.

The principles of conservation were followed in that treatments were kept to a minimum and aimed to stabilise the textiles and prevent further damage. The jacket is now robust enough to be displayed for the first time.

Alice Young conserving the inside of the jacket in 2014.



Jennifer Beasley conserving the outside of the jacket in 2013.



The jacket was too fragile to display. It had suffered water damage, tearing and red dye had leached into the lining. The outer wool fabric was dirty and insect damaged. Abrasive sandy dirt on the jacket damaged the fabric when it was handled. Heavy metal decorations had also torn the fabric. The jacket had been roughly repaired in the past and this was distorting its shape.

In January 2013 the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow wanted to exhibit the jacket and asked the Centre for Textile Conservation at Glasgow University to conserve it. Under close



Sequin decoration on the back of the jacket.



The conserved jacket.

How the jacket was conserved:

- conservation vacuuming to lift the sandy dust away from the surface.
- spot cleaning with water and chemicals.
- humidification to restore moisture and remove creases and distortion.
- tears and holes in the jacket were supported with a similar fabric dyed to the same shade and stitched with silk thread.
- weakened or missing fabric was supported with nylon net to restore the original shape.
- heavy metal decoration was supported with internal strips of fabric to ensure no further damage.

Research

Detailed examination and research carried out during conservation has added to our knowledge of this fascinating object.

We now know that the jacket:

- was hand sewn to a standard pattern rather than tailored for an individual as it is symmetrical in cut and construction.
- has removable pads under the arms to stop damage to the coat from sweat.
- belonged to an Officer of a "Light Company" because of the style of coat, shoulder wings and embroidered bugle insignia on the coat tails.
- was worn by an Officer in the Galloway Militia, a home defence and home security regiment in the British Isles.
- may date from before 1808. The black ribbons on the collar were added to protect the jacket from the greased pigtail hairstyle called a "queue" which was abolished in 1808.