

= Battle record of Arthur Wellesley , 1st Duke of Wellington =

Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley , 1st Duke of Wellington , KG , GCB , GCH , PC , FRS (1 May 1769 ? 14 September 1852) , was one of the leading British military and political figures of the 19th century . Often referred to as " The Duke of Wellington " , he led a successful military career during the Napoleonic Wars .

Starting his career in 1787 as a commissioned officer in the infantry , before seeing his first action in the Flanders Campaign , Wellesley rose in rank by purchasing his first four commissions , as was common practice in the British Army for wealthy officers . His continued rise in status and fame thereafter was the result of his ability as a commander .

Between 1794 and 1815 Wellesley participated in a number of military campaigns where he achieved tactical , strategic , and decisive victories in India and across six countries of western Europe . He faced and defeated many of Napoleon 's marshals as the commander in chief of the Anglo @-@ Portuguese Army during the Peninsular War , but his best known battle was at Waterloo in 1815 where he led an Anglo @-@ Allied force to a decisive victory over Napoleon I. It was to be his last battle .

= = Military career = =

There is speculation by historians and biographers about how many battles Wellington actually participated in during his career . Military historian , Ian Fletcher , identifies twenty @-@ four major battles and sieges involving the British Army between 1808 and 1815 with Wellington in command of seventeen . Military historian , Mark Adkin , comments that " Wellington had fought in some twenty @-@ four battles and sieges prior to Waterloo " . Although this is easily contested , the precise number of battles may never be known . It can be established from records , dispatches and reports dating back to the events that he was present in at least fifty separate military actions , including an assortment of meeting engagements , pitched battles , sieges , skirmishes and minor engagements , throughout his career . He also ordered countless other remote engagements mostly whilst serving in the Napoleonic Wars , during which Britain played a major role in securing Europe against French occupation , between 1805 and 1815 .

= = = Commissions and promotions = = =

Wellington was gazetted ensign on 7 March 1787 , in the 73rd (Highland) Regiment of Foot , and became an aide @-@ de @-@ camp in October . He purchased his commission to lieutenant on 25 December 1787 , in the 76th Regiment . As a junior officer he transferred to the 41st Regiment soon after to avoid duty in the East Indies , and in June 1789 transferred again , to the 12th (Prince of Wales 's) Light Dragoons cavalry regiment . He obtained his commission to captain on 30 June 1791 , in the 58th (Rutlandshire) Regiment , having served the regulation minimum of three years , and again to major on 30 April 1793 , in the 33rd (First Yorkshire West Riding) Regiment , having served six years . He purchased his final commission to lieutenant @-@ colonel on 30 September 1793 , at the age of 24 . From there on further promotion could only be attained through seniority , per Army Regulations .

In September 1794 , Wellesley experienced his first battle , against the French , at the Battle of Boxtel with the 33rd . His promotion to colonel , on 3 May 1796 , came by seniority , and in June he was sent with the 33rd to India . In 1799 he fought in the Fourth Anglo @-@ Mysore War , commanding three victorious actions with the British East India Company . After winning the war , and serving as governor of Seringapatam and Mysore , Wellesley was promoted to major @-@ general on 29 April 1802 , although he did not receive the news until September . Whilst in India he wrote of his regiment " I have commanded them for nearly ten years during which I have scarcely been away from them and I have always found them to be the quietest and best behaved body of men in the army . "

Wellesley gained further success in India during the Second Anglo @-@ Maratha War of 1803 ? 05

, and in 1806 Wellesley succeeded the Marquis Cornwallis as Colonel of the 33rd , which he held until 1813 . By 1807 , Napoleon 's attempt to prevent continental Europe from trading with Britain had resulted in all but Sweden , Denmark and Portugal closing their ports . In June 1807 , Napoleon pressured Denmark further , resulting in the British naval bombardment of Copenhagen and seizure of the Danish fleet to prevent it from falling into French hands . Wellesley 's brief role against Danish land forces at the Battle of Køge helped secure Denmark . Wellesley later disapproved of the bombardment , saying " we might have taken the capital with greater ease " . He was promoted to lieutenant @-@ general on 25 April 1808 , and in June was given command of 9 @,@ 000 men set to invade revolutionary Spanish America . But in 1807 , Napoleon had invaded Portugal , via Spain , intent on preventing its continued trade with Britain , but replaced the Spanish royal family with his own brother , Joseph Bonaparte , in May 1808 . In Madrid , the Spanish resisted the French occupation , leading the Portuguese to call on British support . In August 1808 , Wellesley entered the Peninsular War with 15 @,@ 000 men .

When the head of the British forces in the Peninsula , Sir John Moore , was killed in the Battle of Corunna in January 1809 , the British Army having been driven from the Peninsula in disarray , Wellington sent the Secretary of War a memo insisting that a British force of no less than 30 @,@ 000 British troops should be sent to defend and rebuild Portugal 's military strength . His proposal was approved and he re @-@ embarked to Lisbon on 16 April 1809 , where he was appointed to head of the forces in Portugal ? a motion supported by the government and Prince Regent George IV , as Wellington did not hold seniority .

On 31 July 1811 , he was promoted to general , although it only applied in the Peninsula . His final promotion to field marshal came on 21 June 1813 , following his success at the Battle of Vitoria which had broken the remaining French hold in Spain . Wellington was awarded with a Marshal 's baton ? partially designed by the Prince Regent himself ? the first of its kind in the Britain Army .

= = = Allied commander = = =

Wellington was appointed head of all British forces from April 1809 , following the death of Sir John Moore , and due to the second invasion of Portugal by the French he remained to continue the Peninsular War for a further five years , engaging the French armies across Portugal , Spain , and north into France until Napoleon 's abdication in 1814 . He returned to Europe in 1815 appointed overall commander of the Anglo @-@ Allied forces of the Seventh Coalition , better known as the Hundred Days , following Napoleon 's escape from exile and attempt to retain power .

Despite many battles to his name , over twenty @-@ one years of duty , it would be shortly after the battle at Waterloo upon hearing of approximately 50 @,@ 000 casualties dead or dying that he wept , saying " I hope to God I have fought my last battle " . It had been a close victory at such great cost that it broke his fighting spirit , and marked the end of his long service overseas with a notable military career . He returned to British politics and became a leading statesman . He was appointed Master @-@ General of the Ordnance (1819 ? 27) and Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Forces (1827 ? 28 / 1842 ? 52) , but Wellington did not fight again .

= = Generalship = =

Wellington 's understanding of logistics was to prove valuable in leading an expeditionary force against the French invasion of Portugal and Spain . He was adept at planning long marches through unknown territory , understanding that he not only had thousands of men to manage efficiently , but that a huge amount of supplies were required to adequately feed and sustain his army . Secure supply lines to the Portuguese coast were of vital importance if he was to maintain his ability to fight the French .

In April 1809 , Wellington returned to Portugal with 28 @,@ 000 British and 16 @,@ 000 Portuguese troops under his command ? the French Army of Spain numbered 360 @,@ 000 . Despite many French troops having been dispersed to garrisons across Spain or located to protect supply and communication lines , even with the Portuguese Army and militia , and remnants of the

Spanish Army and guerrillas to support him , Wellington faced overwhelming odds . Throughout the Peninsular War the number of soldiers enlisted in Britain rarely exceeded 40 @,@ 000 , though Wellington had some 57 @,@ 000 British soldiers under his command at Vitoria in 1813 . He also had the men of the King 's German Legion (KGL) and the British @-@ trained Portuguese Army under his command . Many British politicians were opposed to the war in Europe and favoured withdrawal , which hampered its will to muster a larger force to defeat Napoleon . This served in sharpening Wellington 's awareness that a defensive strategy was essential , initially , to ensure the British Army survived . At Waterloo , of his roughly 73 @,@ 000 strong army , around 26 @,@ 000 (36 percent) were British , though this relatively low number was due to the majority of his Peninsular veterans being shipped elsewhere after Napoleon 's first abdication , many being sent to North America to serve in the final months of the war against the United States .

Wellington faced armies formed from the disbanded French Grande Armée , once an overpowering force , which having conquered Europe and expanded the French Empire had been led by Napoleon and his marshals since 1804 . It had been reformed into multiple smaller and more mobile armies from October 1808 . In the Peninsula the French were grouped into multiple armies , each operating chiefly in its own area , in order to secure Portugal and Spain . These forces were commanded by French marshals , senior generals chosen for elevation by Napoleon himself . Though these armies were under the nominal command of Napoleon 's brother , King Joseph Bonaparte , the marshals commanded their armies with a high degree of independence . Wellington arrived in Lisbon in 1809 with an army composed mostly of volunteers . British troops were better trained than their French counterparts and were required to repeatedly practice firing with live rounds before encountering combat . Napoleon only personally campaigned in Spain once , between October 1808 and January 1809 , taking most of his Guard and many élite troops with him when he left . After the disastrous failure of the invasion of Russia , Napoleon weakened his forces in Spain in early 1813 by redeploying many veteran troops from the Peninsula to Germany to shore up his losses . Subsequently , many of the remaining troops became a second line in quality , experience and equipment ? some new recruits were often not French .

Wellington 's army consisted of four combat arms : Infantry , cavalry and artillery . Engineers also played a valuable role in the Peninsula , such as the building of the Lines of Torres Vedras ? a defensive line of forts built to protect Lisbon ? and making preparations for any sieges throughout the war . Wellington 's main combat arm was his well @-@ trained infantry . He never had more than 2 @,@ 000 cavalry before 1812 and his cannons , although highly competent , were inferior to French guns in both number and quality . It was with this force that Wellington aimed to defend Portugal until he took to an offensive strategy in 1812 , beating the French at the Salamanca . He advanced on to Madrid , arriving on 12 August 1812 ? Joseph Bonaparte had abandoned the capital after the defeat at Salamanca .

The Spanish government made Wellington commander @-@ in @-@ chief of all allied armies , providing an extra 21 @,@ 000 Spanish troops after Salamanca . Although not completely undefeated he never lost a major battle . His greatest defeat came at the Siege of Burgos in 1812 , where he had hoped to prevent French forces concentrating . After losing 2 @,@ 000 men and causing only 600 French casualties he was forced to raise the siege and retreat , calling it " the worst scrape I was ever in . " Retiring to winter quarters , where he received reinforcements that brought his regular army up to 75 @,@ 000 men , Wellington began his final offensive in June 1813 . He advanced north , through the Pyrenees , and into France itself . The French were no longer fighting to keep Spain but to defend their own border .

Ultimately , between the battles of Roliça (August 1808) and Toulouse (April 1814) , the war against the French lasted for six years , with Wellington finally managing to drive the French from the Iberian Peninsula . Shortly thereafter , on 12 April 1814 , word reached Wellington that Napoleon had abdicated on 6 April . The war on the Peninsula was over . Wellington and his army had marched over an estimated 6 @,@ 000 miles (9 @,@ 656 km) and fought in many engagements through Portugal and Spain , the consequences of which helped bring the downfall of Napoleon , resulting in peace across Europe .

= = Battle record = =

There are a large number of battles attributed to Wellington . Although many leave the impression that he was present or in command at those actions , it was sometimes the case that he entrusted other officers to engage the enemy , such as at remote locations , and that he could not have attended them all in person . Similarly , Wellington was not usually in command of rear guard actions , during advances or retreats , despite his army engaging in them often . Engagements where the lack of his presence is absolutely certain , or where his position is unconfirmed by records and accounts , are not included in his battle record .

Key to opponent flags

Key to outcome

* Indicates a decisive victory