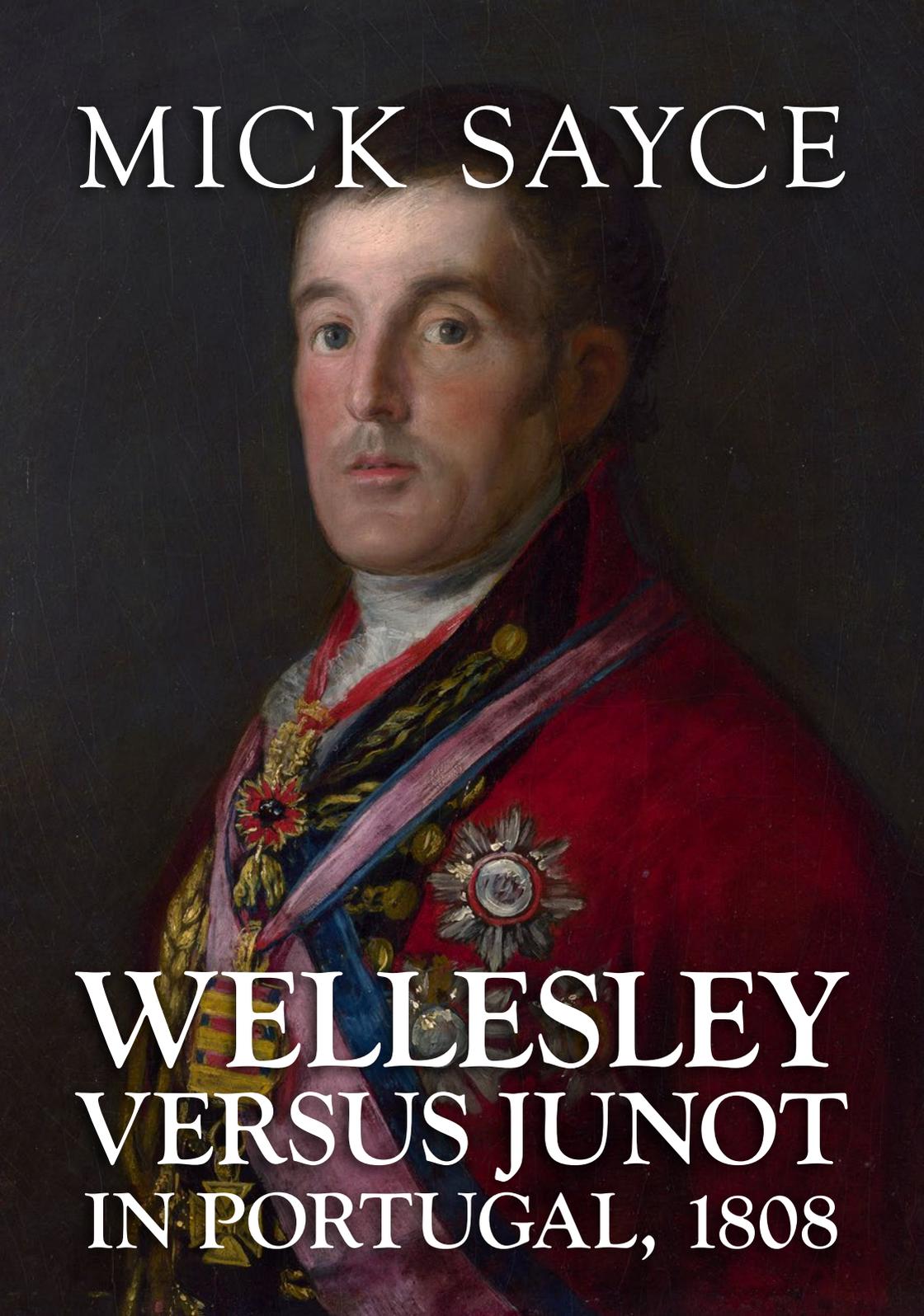


MICK SAYCE

A portrait of a man in military uniform, likely a general, wearing a red coat with a blue sash and a large silver star-shaped medal on his chest. The background is dark.

WELLESLEY
VERSUS JUNOT
IN PORTUGAL, 1808

ABOUT THIS BOOK

By 1807, Napoleon's enforcement of a non-trading pact and coastal blockade of Britain – known as the Continental System – stretched from Russia and the Baltic, right around the northern coast of Europe and all the way down to the coastline of Spain. However, on the south-western corner of Europe was Portugal, a country that was openly trading with its ally Britain, and this situation could not be tolerated. The country was given an ultimatum by Napoleon, readily accepted by the Portuguese government, but not by the general population or, for that matter, by Great Britain. So, just in case anything should happen, Napoleon ordered Général de Division Androche Junot and his 25,000 strong Corps of Observation of the Gironde to occupy the country as soon as possible and stop the trade.

Starting from Bayonne in France and marching overland through Spain, he entered the capital Lisbon on 30th November 1807 and took it almost without a fight. Because of his success, he was elevated to be the Governor of Portugal and given the title Duc d'Abrantes by Napoleon in recognition of his perceived victory.

Meanwhile, in England, the implacable enemy of the 'upstart' Napoleon, plans were afoot to return Portugal to being a trading partner. A relatively unknown and recently promoted officer, Lieutenant General Arthur Wellesley, was ordered to take command of a 9,000-man expeditionary force which had originally been intended for South America, but was instead ordered to Portugal to join up with a further 5,000 troops coming from Gibraltar.

Wellesley and his small army landed in Portugal in August 1808, and the Peninsular War now began in earnest.

CONTENTS

Meet the Author	2
Introduction	3
The Battle of Roliça 17th August 1808	4
The Battle of Vimeiro 21st August 1808	13
Personalities	24
Appendix One	26
Appendix Two	27
Appendix Three	28
Bibliography	29

MEET THE AUTHOR



Mick Sayce (who also writes as A Michael Sayce) first became interested in wargaming in the mid-1970s at school. Aged 14, he joined the local club in Southend which met in an upstairs room of the Nelson pub, but then moved to the Rocheway Youth Centre where the fledgling South East Essex Military Society (SEEMS) had a dedicated club room. Once a year, it took over the whole complex of ex-school buildings for one of the premier shows of the time, *Present Arms*.

Mick's main, though not exclusive interest – some people might say “obsession” – in the Mongol army of Chingis Khan and his family began when he found a book by T N Dupuy, *The Military Life of Genghis, Khan of Khans* in Southend Library back in the 1970s, which planted the seed for an ever-growing and lifelong fascination.

After meeting his future – and long suffering – wife at a Sealed Knot muster in Brownhills near Birmingham, they moved north and spent the next 28 years in the West Midlands, where Mick had a varied career before moving back south to Kent a few years ago.

While living in Birmingham and working in the security business, he began writing military history booklets for wargamers on topics throughout history, mainly in areas for which current information was either scattered, sketchy or practically non-existent for the English speaking wargamer. At about the same time, he began writing occasional articles for magazines, including a series on Napoleon's campaign in Italy, painting 6mm figures, undertook the construction of homemade 6mm terrain and wrote three series about the various campaigns of the Mongols.

It is these booklets that Gladius Publications are bringing back into publication, which is itself a labour of love because most of them are having to be scanned in and re-composed from old, photocopied editions!

Mick's passion for the hobby has not diminished, although nowadays he spends more time painting and collecting than playing. He has built up a large collection of armies, mostly 6mm and 15mm, ranging from Ancients, Asian Medieval, ECW, Napoleonic, ACW, WWI, WWII, modern and even Sci-Fi.

Follow the author's wargaming blog at <http://thewordsofsubedai.blogspot.co.uk>

INTRODUCTION

By the middle months of 1808 the French armies of Napoleon Bonaparte had successfully invaded and were occupying the Iberian peninsula. One of the reasons this had come about was Napoleon's fixation with the isolation of Britain through his 'Continental System'. With this, he hoped to deprive the country of its economic livelihood from imports, which would force her to the peace table on his terms. By 1808, with most of Europe under French control, the odds of this happening were increasing all the time.

The Spanish, however, were not the docile people Napoleon had hoped for and they promptly rose up in armed insurrection against the invaders. News of this reached the British in June and it gave the government a handy excuse for an expeditionary force to be sent, ostensibly to support Portugal. The interim commander was to be a relatively unknown officer in European circles: Lieutenant General Arthur Wellesley. On 14th June, when he received his new orders, he was at Cork in Ireland.

In fact, the troops at Cork were to be only the forerunners of a much larger expeditionary force that would total over 37,000 men, to be commanded by the 58-year-old Lieutenant General Sir Hew Dalrymple, the current Governor of Gibraltar, with Lieutenant General Sir Harry Burrard, a 50-year-old guardsman as his second-in-command (Glover [2], p.59 notes 37,311 – see Bibliography). The choice of both of these had been forced upon Viscount Castlereagh, the Secretary for War, by the Duke of York, the second son of the monarch, George III. Apparently, King George had recommended them on the basis that length of service was more important in an officer than talent – and who could gainsay the king? When all these commanders were in place, Wellesley would be in eighth position down the chain of command and had been marked in a proposed organization as only the commander of a division (McGuigan's internet article lists the proposed organization)!

While Wellesley was at Mondego Bay, disembarking troops and unloading supplies, the majority of the rest of the army was under sail and heading towards Portugal. This meant that as the 'commander on the spot', Wellesley had little time to make his mark before his new commander arrived (possibly earlier than Wellesley had envisaged; two brigades of infantry – Anstruther's and Acland's – arrived during the morning of the 18th and Burrard arrived during the evening of the same day).

THE BATTLE OF ROLIÇA

17th AUGUST 1808

BACKGROUND

British

Moving with a certain amount of alacrity, the expedition was organized. Troops, transport ships and naval escorts were all allocated and by 1st August, the first troops began to disembark at Figueira da Foz in Mondego Bay, approximately one hundred miles north of the capital, Lisbon. The troops from Ireland – see Appendix One for the Order of Battle – embarked during 15th-17th June, but had to wait until 10th-11th July for favourable winds so that they could sail. They were soon joined by the artillery and the cavalry contingent – 20th Light Dragoons – who had sailed from Portsmouth. The site was deemed to be safe because the local roads were all but impassable to cavalry and artillery and a fort that overlooked the bay had been taken by marines earlier. Four days later, a total of 13,000 troops were ashore, including all 9,000 from Wellesley's command and 4,000 from Major General Sir Brent Spencer's brigade sent from Cadiz. The latter arrived on 6th August and had all disembarked by the 8th.

The readiness for battle and the overall fitness of his troops was a major source of concern for Wellesley. His own troops from Ireland were inexperienced – the 29th Foot from Nightingale's Brigade hadn't been in a battle for nine years and the rest weren't much better, with numbers of the new recruits being barely sixteen years of age. But they were still in better condition than the troops from Cadiz. These had been, for the most part, languishing in transport ships since the previous December. Even more of a problem was the lack of horses. Each battery of artillery required large numbers of horses for complete mobility and the 20th Dragoons totalled 372. However, the troopships from Cork could only carry a maximum of 180 mounts, so the quartermaster had a major procurement programme to instigate once ashore, or the army would have no artillery and very few cavalry! (Glover [2], says the transports carried 215 horses.)

Wellesley left his seaside camp on 10th August and, keeping to the road nearest the coastline so that the troops could be supplied from the sea by the navy, Wellesley began his advance. While on the beaches, the Quartermaster and his staff had managed to acquire enough local horses for the remainder of the cavalry, but only enough to move eighteen of the cannon; the rest had to be left on the beach for retrieval later. Twenty-four hours later, at the town of Leiria, he received reinforcements promised by the Portuguese – unfortunately, less than 2,000 soldiers, but including about 250-300 much-needed cavalry (he also left the army's baggage in town). As soldiers, the martial bearing of these Portuguese troops left a lot to be desired. It didn't appear as if they had a recognised uniform, apart from a civilian style white jacket and large hat with one side of the brim turned up.