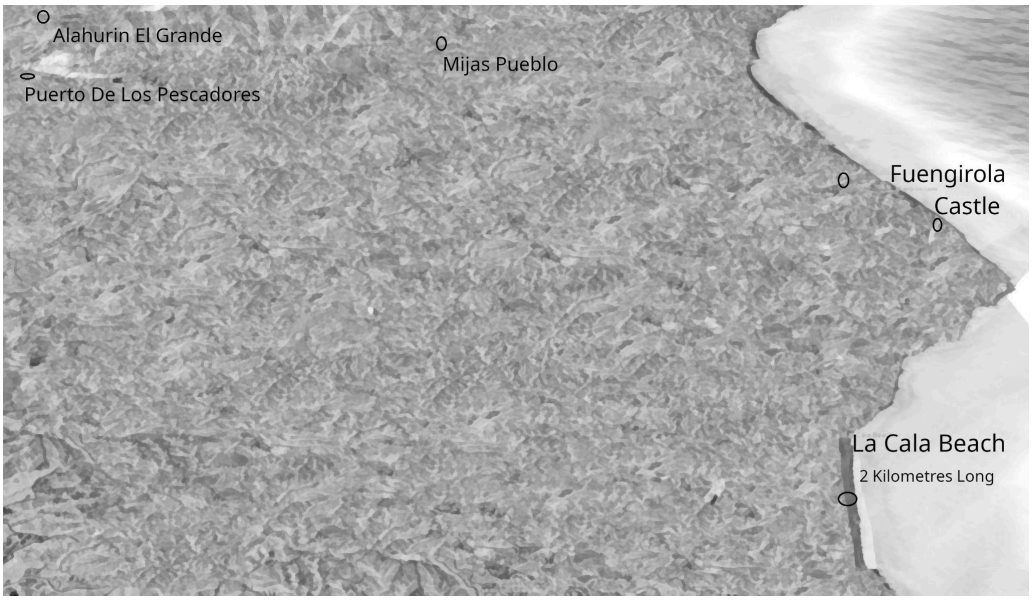
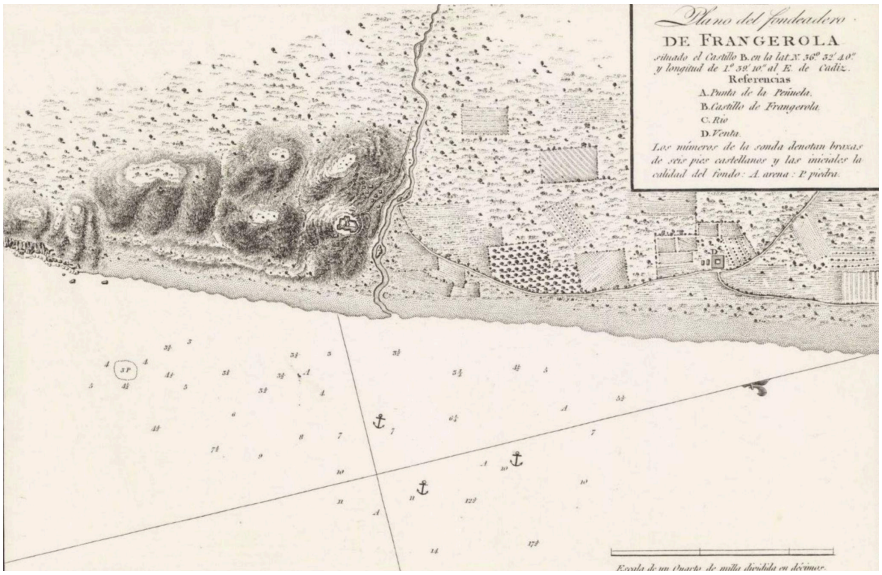
The Forgotten Battles Of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo

14th 15th October 1810



Patrick H Meehan

October 2024



Preface to Version 1

The following document is written in preparation for the book I am researching about the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo. Though often overlooked, these battles hold local historical importance and fall to local people to preserve the memory they leave. By sharing this draft, I aim to raise awareness of these remarkable events and gather the remaining information that will help me bring this story to light. Ultimately, this will allow me to write a comprehensive work to ensure these events are no longer forgotten.

As you read, I invite your thoughts, comments, and suggestions. This version represents an ongoing effort to deepen the research and refine the delivery of a fantastic story. Your feedback is welcome and crucial to shaping this book's final version. My sincerest hope is that by sharing, we can preserve the memory of this battle from the shadow of more prominent and well-known conflicts. This is our chance to ensure that future generations remember the bravery and sacrifices made here.

Thank you for joining me in rediscovering this forgotten event. I eagerly await your thoughts and suggestions as we explore this extraordinary piece of history.

Enjoy the story.

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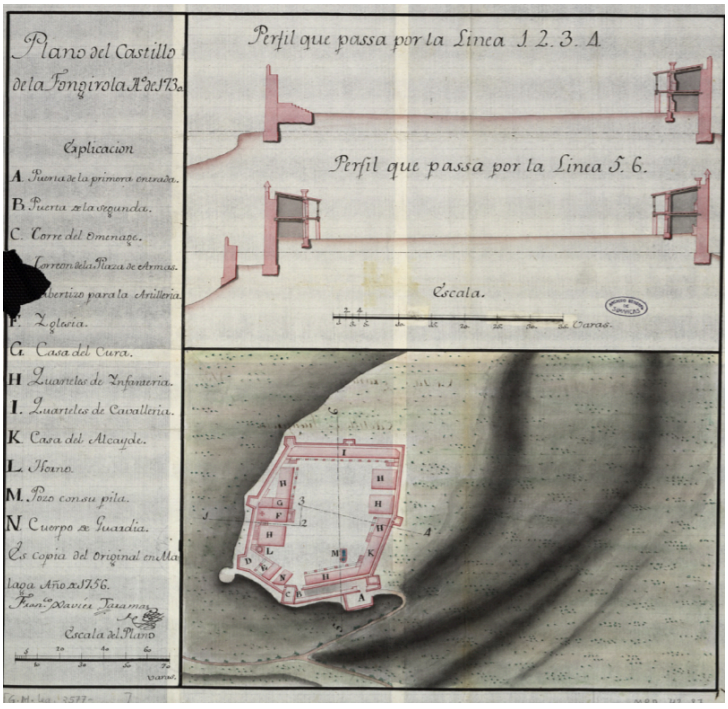


Introduction

In the following pages, you will find a unique exploration of a brief but astonishing episode in the long tapestry of the Napoleonic Wars. It aims to recount a series of historical events and bring to life the human experience, courage and chaos of war as seen through the eyes of those who lived through them.

This account offers a documentary-style report and a narrative rich with details of the place, weather, and human emotion with twists and turns. By reading this document, you will be able to immerse yourself in the preparation, terror, desperation, and unyielding bravery that unfolded on the shores of Fuengirola and the hills of Mijas. You will learn how a small contingent of Polish soldiers, outnumbered and outgunned, defied and caught one of Britain's most seasoned generals with a large army.

The work aims to give a local and broader perspective of the failed international relations that caused the Battle. Fuengirola and its Castle and Mijas Pueblo become the backdrop for a story that has captivated military historians yet remains relatively unknown to the broader public. The Castle of Fuengirola, where much of the action occurs, remains a silent witness to the extraordinary events. This book takes you into the heart of the Castle, not just as a location but as a character in its own right, shaping the battle and the men who fought for control of it.

This book is unique because of its foundation in diverse, often conflicting, historical sources. It is drawn from various firsthand accounts, including Major General Andrew Blayney's memoirs and reports from the Polish, British and local Spanish perspectives. Blayney's *Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France as a Prisoner of War* offers an incredible, somewhat biased, window into the British mindset during the battle. Complementing this is the Polish sources, particularly the records of Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz, whose brilliant defence of the Castle turned a routine assault into a military disaster for the British. He is said to have written his account because Blayney had done so.

This variety of sources provides a multi-dimensional view of the battle, allowing us to piece together the events from different angles. I have arranged the narrative chronologically to give readers a clear understanding of how the battle unfolded, from the strategic planning stages to the aftermath. Yet, this is not meant to be a dry historical account, *The Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo* wants to be a story. Whilst this work is based entirely on facts, I have allowed myself some poetic licence to flesh out the emotional and physical realities of the soldiers, officers and civilians caught in the vortex of battle. For example, what must it have felt like for Polish soldiers stranded in a foreign land, surrounded by enemies, with only a crumbling Castle for protection? What went through Blayney's mind as his carefully laid plans disintegrated in the face of fierce resistance?

As you read, you will learn about the military strategies and historical context and connect with the people who lived through this dramatic episode. You'll experience the freezing rain that soaked both the attackers and defenders, feel the fear of those trapped within the Castle walls

and witness the surprise, frustration and, ultimately, the defeat of an army that expected an easy victory. This book is not intended as the final word on the Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo; instead, it is an invitation to rediscover a forgotten historical moment. It is not an academic history or simply a retelling of military facts. Instead, I hope to tell a story that feels alive, filled with the tension and drama of real people in extraordinary circumstances.

Based on the available records, I have endeavoured to paint a faithful picture of the battle and its setting, but also with an eye toward the broader human experience of war. The weather, the terrain and the sheer terror of combat are as much a part of this story as the tactics and troop movements. In doing so, I hope to bring to life a battle that deserves to be remembered, not just as a minor footnote in the Napoleonic Wars but as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. The Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo offers valuable lessons about leadership, warfare's unpredictability and the importance of perseverance. Lord Baden Powell would say 90 years later that 'the best form of defence is attack'. Keep reading to find out how true that was in this case. This account does not glorify war; it is just another story of its folly told from a safe historical distance.

On a linguistic note, I refer to Fuengirola Castle, knowing that 350 years earlier, the name was Sohail Castle and would return to vogue in the modern era. The plans and maps of the time called it Fuengirola Castle, and history recorded it as the Battle of Fuengirola; the Pueblo of Fuengirola was 2 kilometres away and safe from this action. The almost unknown Battle of Mijas happened on the same day, and a more accurate name is the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo to preserve the memory of what happened and where historical context.

The Rivalry Between Britain, France and Spain

Our story begins with the complex relationship between England, Spain and France, which saw 28 significant wars in the centuries before the Napoleonic era. These conflicts, spanning seven centuries, laid the groundwork for the Napoleonic Wars to become the most devastating of all. The following paragraphs will briefly review the rivalries and struggles that shaped this turbulent period in European history.

England and Spain fought eight major wars over nearly 200 years before the Napoleonic era. Their conflicts began with the Anglo-Castilian War (1372–1388), a naval struggle involving England and the kingdom of Castile. The rivalry grew more intense during the Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604), where religious differences and imperial competition fueled hostilities, famously including the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Later wars, such as the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748), focused on trade dominance in the Caribbean. In the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Spain entered conflicts as an ally of France, facing off against England in battles over colonial territories. These confrontations spanned roughly 177 years in total.

England and France engaged in over 11 major wars, totalling more than 300 years of conflict before the Napoleonic era. This began with territorial skirmishes in the Anglo-French War (1109–1113) and escalated into the protracted Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), which involved a fight for the French crown and dominated both nations for over a century. The rivalry

continued into the early modern period with the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), where France and Britain clashed in Europe and across their growing empires. These wars collectively lasted around 305 years, reflecting deep-seated political and dynastic tensions between the two nations.

Spain and France fought nine major wars over 250 years before the Napoleonic era. Their rivalry began with the Italian Wars (1494–1559), where both sought control over Italy. The Franco-Spanish War (1635–1659) marked a fundamental struggle for European dominance, ending with the Treaty of the Pyrenees, favouring France. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) was a pivotal conflict to prevent the union of France and Spain under one crown. Other notable clashes, like the War of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697) and the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718–1720), further underscored their long-standing rivalry, lasting 265 years.

Overview of the Napoleonic Wars

The longstanding rivalry between Britain and France reached a new level of intensity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, driven by profound political transformations and expanding imperial ambitions. The French Revolution, which began in 1789, altered the landscape of European politics. The overthrow of the French monarchy and the rise of a republic based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity sent shockwaves through the conservative monarchies of Europe, particularly Britain.

Fear of Revolution and British Response

The British ruling class viewed the French Revolution with alarm, fearing that the revolutionary fervour could spread and destabilise their society. The execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette in 1793 starkly demonstrated the revolution's radical and violent potential. Britain's fear was not just theoretical; there was a tangible concern that revolutionary ideas could inspire similar uprisings among the British working class, working under increasingly difficult economic and social conditions.

This fear drove Britain to take a firm stand against revolutionary France. Under Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, the British government led efforts to form coalitions with other European monarchies to counteract the French threat. The First Coalition (1793-1797) and subsequent alliances aimed to restore the French monarchy and contain the spread of revolutionary ideology.

Napoleon's Rise

Napoleon Bonaparte was a military genius who rose to prominence during the revolution and seized power in France through a coup d'état in 1799. He entered a volatile political landscape with grand ambitions. Napoleon's vision extended beyond merely stabilising France; he sought to expand its influence and create a vast empire that dominated Europe. His military campaigns from 1803 to 1815, known collectively as the Napoleonic Wars, were characterised by aggressive territorial expansions that alarmed and antagonised France's neighbours.

Napoleon's empire-building efforts included significant territorial acquisitions, such as the annexation of the Austrian Netherlands and parts of Italy and the reorganisation of the German states under the Confederation of the Rhine. He also established the Continental System, an economic blockade against Britain to weaken its most persistent enemy by disrupting trade. This move was seen as a direct threat to British economic interests and provoked further military confrontations.

Britain's war against Napoleon transitioned from diplomatic tensions into a 'hot' war in 1803. This marked the end of the brief *Peace of Amiens*, a temporary truce between Britain and France that lasted just over a year. During this period, tensions steadily rose as Napoleon expanded his influence across Europe and Britain refused to return captured colonies. When Napoleon, consolidating power as First Consul, planned an invasion of Britain and continued to support French allies on the continent, war became inevitable.

The Peninsular War: A War Within A War

The Peninsular War (1808-1814) was a pivotal conflict within the larger Napoleonic Wars. It involved Spain, Portugal and France, with substantial British support. The war began amidst a turbulent political landscape exacerbated by Napoleon Bonaparte's European ambitions.

In 1808, under the guise of mediating a dispute between King Charles IV of Spain and his son, Ferdinand VII, Napoleon invited both monarchs to the French city of Bayonne. However, instead of acting as a neutral mediator, Napoleon coerced (some say tricked) Charles and Ferdinand to surrender their claims to the Spanish throne. This manoeuvre allowed Napoleon to install his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as King of Spain, a deeply unpopular move that triggered widespread resistance nationwide. This resistance soon escalated into a broader conflict, fueled by nationalistic fervour and the desire to oppose French hegemony.

Napoleon’s installation of Joseph was part of his broader strategy to control the Iberian Peninsula and enforce the Continental System, a blockade designed to cripple Britain economically by cutting off its trade with mainland Europe. However, this sparked a fierce and protracted struggle, as both regular Spanish forces and guerrilla fighters resisted French occupation, drawing significant British and Portuguese support into the fray.

A lasting linguistic effect of this war was the use of the term ‘Guerrilla’ to describe a type of warfare. It’s from the Spanish diminutive form of ‘guerra’, meaning "war." translates to ‘little war’. It is the nature of guerrilla warfare small-scale, irregular and often involving skirmishes rather than full-scale battles. The Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal was a significant theatre of operations in which British forces, eventually led by Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington), fought to liberate the Iberian Peninsula from French control. This war was marked by a complex interplay of conventional and guerrilla warfare within a hostile local population.

Napoleon's initial success in Spain was rapid. French forces occupied key cities and installed Joseph Bonaparte as king. However, the harsh realities of occupation and resistance became

apparent. The Spanish populace rose in revolt, forming guerrilla bands that harassed French troops, disrupted supply lines and gathered intelligence for the British. This asymmetric warfare, alongside conventional battles, severely strained French resources and morale. Outside of Andalucia, it was a different and bloody story.

British Military Engagements

Before October 1810, British forces engaged in several key battles during the Peninsular War. The first was the Battle of Roliça (August 17, 1808) in Portugal, where Sir Arthur Wellesley led the British to victory, with 500 British casualties and 700 French losses. Days later, at the Battle of Vimeiro (August 21, 1808), Wellesley's forces inflicted 2,000 casualties on the French, with 720 British losses. In Corunna (January 16, 1809), British troops under Sir John Moore successfully retreated, though Moore was killed; 900 British and 1,500 French soldiers were casualties. The Second Battle of Porto (May 12, 1809) saw Wellesley's forces outflank the French, suffering 400 casualties but inflicting 2,000 on Marshal Soult's army.

The Battle of Talavera (July 27–28, 1809) resulted in a British-Spanish victory with 5,365 British casualties and 7,268 French losses. Spanish forces suffered a devastating defeat at Ocaña (November 19, 1809), losing 19,000 men. Finally, the Battle of Bussaco (September 27, 1810) saw the Anglo-Portuguese army repel a French attack, inflicting 4,500 casualties while losing 1,250 soldiers. These engagements shaped the war, showcasing both British resilience and heavy losses. In response to Napoleon's ambitions, Britain engaged in numerous military actions to curtail French dominance. The British Navy played a crucial role in maintaining a blockade of French ports, effectively hampering French trade and the army movements. On land, British forces participated in battles across Europe, often in coalition with other nations. Although the Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo was a minor engagement in the grand scope of the Napoleonic Wars, it exemplified these broader strategic efforts to challenge French positions and support local resistance movements against French occupation.

French Control of Málaga

Málaga's strategic importance as a Mediterranean port city made it an early target for French forces. On February 5, 1810, General Horace Sébastiani led a combined force of approximately 10,000 French and Polish troops to capture the city. The operation was marked by intense combat between the invading forces, Spanish soldiers and civilian volunteers who joined the defence. The Spanish resistance was fierce, with priests, women and children taking up arms to defend the city. The French and Polish forces overwhelmed Málaga's defenders despite this valiant defence. After a bloody battle, which some have referred to as a massacre or genocide(it is difficult to find actual numbers), the city fell under French control. This allowed the French to secure control over the region's coastal resources, significantly bolstering their strategic position in southern Spain. While the number of casualties during the capture is not documented, the engagement was described as bloody, indicating significant losses on both sides. The French took control of the strategic locations to protect Málaga from the West, where the British dominated the seas.

The French occupation of Andalucia in 1810 and the securing of critical areas such as Málaga in February 1810 and then its Western outposts from Estepona, San Roque, Algeciras and Marbella, Mijas, Alhaurínand Fuengirola were part of Napoleon's broader strategy to control all of Spain. However, the resistance from Spanish guerrillas, supported by British and allied forces, made the occupation increasingly difficult to sustain.

By October 1810, the conflict had reached a significant phase. Napoleon's domination over most of Europe was uncontested, with victories that solidified his empire. France had subdued or allied with Austria, Prussia and Spain. While Napoleon's *Continental System*, an embargo aimed at crippling Britain's economy by blocking European ports, severely strained relations. The British, however, resisted this blockade with their powerful navy, continuing trade by controlling key sea routes. The French knew it could not allow armies to gather on the Western road to Málaga as they had during the Christian conquest three hundred and twenty-four years earlier.

Mijas

Following the capture of Málaga in February 1810, attention shifted to securing the nearby towns that held strategic significance. Mijas, located inland with an elevated position on the slopes of the Sierra de Mijas, offered a commanding view of the surrounding areas. It also controlled crucial routes leading into the interior of Andalusia, making it a valuable location and a natural, safe location for the administration of the area. The French occupation of Mijas began in the spring of 1810, and although primarily peaceful, it was difficult due to the operations of guerilla forces in the mountains. They were stationed there to maintain communication lines between Málaga and the strategically important Castillo de Fuengirola in Fuengirola and control the food supply.

Mijas served as the administrative capital for an area of approximately 200 square kilometres, including the Fuengirola Castle. For over 300 years, coastal towns faced constant threats from pirates, making Mijas the safest location for governance and settlement. Perched on a natural rock, the Pueblo offered commanding coast views and a defendable position. However, its most vital asset, often overlooked, was its eternal water supply. This reliable access to fresh water ensured the town's long-term sustainability, reinforcing its strategic importance in the region.

Because of its small population, the occupation of Mijas was initially met with minimal resistance, with no military presence and the overwhelming advantage in numbers and coordination held by the French and their allies. In early October 1810, the French forces were reinforced with Polish troops from the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. The small force of Polish soldiers in Mijas guarded the routes connecting the village to other key locations, such as Alhaurín el Grande and Málaga. This positioning allowed the French to monitor and intercept guerrilla forces attempting to disrupt their supply lines or launch attacks on their positions. The occupation of Mijas proved essential for maintaining French control over the inland routes and securing the region against guerrilla warfare. However, the steep and narrow streets of Mijas Pueblo and its elevated terrain posed challenges to the occupiers and any opposing forces.

By 1810, with the invasion of Malaga, guerrilla warfare had intensified throughout the region, with local groups striking back against the French invaders. Mijas Pueblo housed a small garrison of French and Polish troops, which fluctuated between 75 and 100 men. A local oral tradition describes a famous ambush near "La Matanza" in the Entrerríos district. In it, a band of Mijas' guerrilleros surprised a French detachment, sending them off a cliff. Though the details of this skirmish have faded into legend, the story reflects the fierce local resistance that echoed throughout the area.

Puerto De Los Pescadores

At a dip in the mountains between Mijas, Alhaurín, and Fuengirola, the area once known as Puerto de los Pescadores meeting point for the region's fishermen and inland traders. Here, the Fuengirola fishermen would load their sacks of salted fish onto mules, making the arduous trek along perilous tracks to trade with buyers from Alhaurín, Coin and the surrounding villages. Today, this historically significant site corresponds to the BP roundabout near Alhaurín Golf, where four major routes converge. In 1810, however, it was a maze of rugged mule paths, carved into the undulating landscape. These precarious routes wound above steep drops and beneath cliffs prone to rockfalls—hazards no cart dared to brave. Its strategic importance was undeniable, playing a pivotal role in the events of this story.

Alhaurín

Because of its location on the most usable road to Malaga, French forces firmly controlled Alhaurín el Grande. This occupation was part of a broader French strategy to secure links to Mijas and Fuengirola Castle to hold on to the region and prevent resistance in the rural hinterlands. Alhaurín el Grande, located on a key route between Málaga and the interior, provided the French with a strategic position to monitor and control movement throughout the area.

To solidify their control over Alhaurín el Grande, the French stationed 200 troops there, mainly soldiers from the French Imperial Army. In October 1810, these troops were reinforced by Polish forces from the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Major Bronisz, leading the contingent of 200 infantry and 40 dragoons (Troops that fight on horse), established defensive positions within the town to protect against potential guerrilla activities and ensure the security of supply routes linking Málaga with other garrisons in Fuengirola and Mijas.

The occupation of Alhaurín el Grande also faced challenges from the rugged terrain and the threat of guerrilla warfare from local resistance groups. These groups, composed of local fighters familiar with the rugged landscape, frequently harassed French supply lines and conducted hit-and-run attacks, forcing the French to maintain a constant state of vigilance. The local population's resistance to the occupation was further fueled by resentment towards the heavy-handed tactics employed by the occupying forces, including requisitioning supplies and enforcing strict controls over movement within and around the town.

Fuengirola Castle

Fuengirola Castle sits atop a commanding hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and the mouth of the Fuengirola River. This location has been strategically significant for over two millennia, offering natural protection and an ideal site for human settlement, trade and defence. The area's geographical advantages include its sheltered bay, fertile plains fed by several rivers, and location, a vital stopover point along the coastal route between Málaga and Marbella. These natural features made it an ideal location for ancient civilisations to establish a presence and fortify against potential threats.

Syalis

The first known inhabitants to recognise the site's strategic importance were the Phoenicians, who arrived around the 7th century BC. They established a settlement and constructed rudimentary fortifications on the hill where the Castle now stands it was know in the historical records as Syalis. Archaeological excavations have uncovered evidence of Phoenician pottery and structural foundations beneath the existing Castle, indicating that this site served as an early coastal stronghold and trading post. The Phoenicians utilised the natural harbour for trade, creating a crucial link between their trading empire and the Iberian Peninsula.

Roman Era: Suel

Following the Phoenicians, the Romans conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the 3rd century BC and transformed Syalis into the Roman town of Suel. Under Roman rule, Suel became a municipium, a semi-autonomous city within the Roman Empire. Fuengirola Castle became a Roman fort or center for defensive and administrative purposes during Roman dominance. One of the towers is said to remain from the original Roman fort, and the foundations have been discovered. The Romans expanded upon the existing Phoenician foundations, creating a more substantial and permanent settlement. They built roads, aqueducts and villas in and around Suel, linking it to other major cities and facilitating the movement of goods and military forces. Suel grew into a bustling town with a thriving economy, bolstered by its strategic location along the Roman road connecting Málaga to Cádiz. However, as the Roman Empire began to decline in the 5th century, Suel, like many other Roman towns, fell into disrepair and was eventually abandoned.

Visigoth and Byzantine Periods:

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the region came under the control of the Visigoths, a Germanic tribe that conquered much of the Iberian Peninsula by the 5th century AD. The Visigothic period marked a relative decline as the sophisticated infrastructure and economic systems established by the Romans gradually deteriorated. Few remnants from the Visigothic period remain, but the site of the Castle likely continued to serve as a fortified settlement, providing a degree of protection against raiders and other invaders who frequently targeted the Mediterranean coast. The Castle would have remained an important defensive position during this turbulent transition period between empires.

Islamic Period and Construction of the Castle

The arrival of the Moors in 711 AD marked the beginning of a new era for the region. The town, renamed Suhayl, became part of the expansive Umayyad Caliphate and the following great Cordoba and Granada caliphates. The Moors quickly recognised the strategic importance of the hill and began to develop a more substantial military presence there. The Roman watchtower was initially adapted to oversee the coast and monitor potential threats. This was the first step in what would become a comprehensive network of watchtowers stretching along the coast, designed to provide early warning of pirate raids or invasions by sea.

By the 10th century, the Moors expanded from a simple watchtower to a full-fledged Castle due to the real threats faced by the Almoravid rulers, who were engaged in constant conflict with rival factions within the Iberian Peninsula and faced the ongoing threat of Christian reconquest from the north. The Almoravids were a Berber dynasty from North Africa who ruled much of Spain and fortified key positions like Suhayl to protect their territories and maintain control over strategic trade routes and agricultural lands. The Castle was designed with state-of-the-art fortification techniques, reflecting the necessity for a robust defence. It featured an octagonal layout with square towers at each corner, allowing defenders to cover all angles and withstand prolonged sieges. The high, thick walls were constructed using advanced building techniques perfected across the Arab world, ensuring the Castle could repel attacks from land and sea. The design also included provisions for storing supplies and armaments, making it a formidable stronghold.

The construction of the Castle was not only a military necessity but also served as a symbol of Almoravid power and stability in the region. During this period, Suhayl flourished under Moorish rule, benefiting from the security provided by the Castle and the prosperity of a thriving agricultural economy. The surrounding lands were cultivated extensively, producing grains, figs and other crops traded throughout the Islamic world. The river provided a steady water supply, and the natural harbour facilitated trade and communication between different parts of the Mediterranean. The Moors developed a network of coastal watchtowers extending either side of Suhayl along the coast to bolster the region's security further. These watchtowers were strategically placed to provide overlapping fields of view, enabling rapid communication in response to seaborne threats. The towers were staffed with sentinels who could quickly relay signals to the Castle, allowing its defenders to prepare for incoming raids or invasions.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, the Castle was significantly reinforced to counter the increasing threat from the Christian Conquistas in the campaign by Christian forces to reclaim the Iberian Peninsula from Muslim rule. The Castle's walls were strengthened, and additional defensive structures were added, including a barbican and a fortified gate. These improvements were designed to withstand the growing power of the Christian kingdoms, slowly advancing southward. As the Castle became more vulnerable to attacks from the sea, it became apparent that the administrative capital should be moved to Mijas, which would be more secure and flow with water.

The Fall of Suhayl and Mijas

The Conquistas reached the southern coast of Spain in the late 15th century. After a prolonged siege in 1486, Suhayl fell to the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. It is unknown if there was a final battle at the Castle, as the stories conflict. What is known is that it took another two years of fighting to get Mijas. The following short historical fact will not have been known by those who would invade Mijas in October 1810: They will not have known that in 1486, Mijas Pueblo held out for two years and was never taken. The defendending Moors killed so many assailants, even those from elite rock climbing troops that they could not take Mijas Pueblo for two years. In retribution, King Ferdinand showed them no mercy when 900 surrendered following the fall of Málaga in 1488.

The capture of the Malaga marked the end of Moorish rule in the region and the beginning of a new chapter in its history under Christian control. The Castle and environs were renamed Fuengirola and were incorporated into the defensive network of the newly established Christian territories. Under Christian rule, the Castle underwent further modifications to adapt to the changing nature of warfare and the needs of its new occupants. The existing walls were repaired and reinforced, and new defensive features were added. The mosque outside the Castle was demolished, and the Castle's strategic importance gradually declined. Mijas, the impregnable fortress on the hill overlooking all with an endless water supply, became the natural location for the local authority to be based, as the coast would remain insecure and difficult to inhabit.

The Decline of Fuengirola Castle

By the late 16th century, Fuengirola Castle had shifted from a frontline fortress to a more administrative role, serving as a local garrison and an administrative centre. The renovations included walling up the original entrance on the north facade and creating a new entry point to address potential vulnerabilities. One of the towers was also increased in height to improve visibility. In 1553, further improvements were made to accommodate larger cannons on the upper walls, enhancing the Castle's ability to cover the mouth of the river and sea approaches.

The Castle's significance in regional defence continued diminishing over the following centuries. In 1653, a devastating fire broke out around the Castle, severely damaging its internal structures and destroying many of the wooden buildings that had sprung up around it. This disaster accelerated the Castle's decline as a defensive stronghold and significantly impacted the local settlement patterns.

Following the fire, many residents who lost their homes began to relocate away from the Castle, building new homes around the watchtower at Tarahal, now the modern town centre of Fuengirola, now known as Plaza de la Constitución. The Castle underwent several refortifications throughout the 16th and 17th centuries to maintain its defensive capabilities. In the early 16th century, two major renovation projects were undertaken to reinforce the eastern slope and strengthen the walls.

The Defender's Greatest Asset

Fuengirola Castle's greatest strength lies in its design and location. The high vantage point allowed defenders to monitor and control the surrounding area, providing early warning of incoming threats. The Castle's thick stone walls could withstand substantial bombardment, and its limited access points made it difficult for attackers to breach. Additionally, the enclosed design meant that a few defenders could effectively cover all approaches, leveraging their position to maximise defensive firepower while minimising exposure. As British forces approached in the mist and stillness of October 1810, the Castle's defenders relied on these strengths. The fortress stood as a silent sentinel, its ancient walls ready to repel another invasion.

Fuengirola Before the Battle

Before the Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo, Fuengirola was already recognised for its commercial significance. Situated approximately one kilometre from the Castle, the mouth of 6 rivers between the Mediterranean Sea and the rugged Andalusian mountains was a critical hub for fishing, agriculture and trade. Fuengirola's strategic importance extended beyond its geographical advantages. As a hub of maritime and land routes, it was critical to maintain communication and supply lines. The presence of the Castile, 2 kilometres away, added to its military significance. At the time of the French occupation, the town was a modest but thriving community with a diverse agriculture, fishing and trade economy. Fuengirola's economic activities and social conditions reflected its geographical advantages and strategic importance. Several vital activities supported the town's economy and social structure, shaped by its role as a regional hub for trade and communication.

Fuengirola was sustained through a combination of fishing, agriculture and trade. The town's coastal location made fishing a primary occupation for many residents. Local fishermen used traditional methods to catch sardines, anchovies, and other fish, then salted and preserved for trade. Fish were packed in baskets and transported inland on donkeys, where they became local delicacies, reflecting Fuengirola's integration into the broader regional economy. Agriculture was also vital, with fertile lands supporting the cultivation of wheat, barley, corn, sweet potatoes and legumes. Livestock farming, including cattle, sheep, and goats, further contributed to the local economy by supplying food and trade goods. Thanks to Fuengirola's strategic position along the coastal road, trade flourished, making it a key trading post. The town's local markets offered a variety of goods, including fish, agricultural produce and livestock. The Posada Inn, at the centre of the Peublo, provided accommodation and services for travellers and merchants. A watchtower identical to the one in La Cala stood next to the Posada and had become a shrine since the end of the pirate raids 50 years earlier.

Economic activities and its strategic location also influenced Fuengirola's social fabric. By the late 17th century, the town's growing population comprised fishermen, farmers, traders, and artisans. The community was organized around key economic hubs like the central market square, fishing ports, and agricultural fields. The town's infrastructure consists of wooden and stone buildings, including homes, stores, auction houses, and hostelries.

The watchtower at the centre of town next to the Possada Inn and the Castle nearby offered security, encouraging the growth of permanent settlements. In the 1790s, the first property deeds were included in the Málaga registry and before 1810, some of the recognisable lines of stone fishermen's cottages were being built to replace wooden constructions. Before the Battle, the town was a vibrant and strategically important location with a diverse economy and a closely-knit community centred around its church. Its geographical advantages, economic activities and social structures made it a key location in the region. The presence of Castillo Fuengirola as a fortified garrison added to its strategic value. The Pueblo had a population of around 500 people, perhaps spreading to 1000 into the hills and was under the administrative control of Mijas Pueblo.

William Jacob's Visits Fuengirola in 1810:

In the spring of 1810, William Jacob, a British Member of Parliament and economist, travelled through southern Spain during the Peninsular War and, among other places, visited Fuengirola just six months before the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo. This visit is celebrated as the first known English description of Fuengirola, often without reference to events surrounding it. The circumstances surrounding Jacob's travels, including his wearing of an English military uniform and his ability to move freely through a war-torn region, raise intriguing questions about the nature and purpose of his journey. What is most amazing is that Jacob wrote a book about the trip, which you can see today. Just search "Travels in the South of Spain, William Jacob," which is free to read and provides a remarkable glimpse into this area at this critical time. Jacob's visit took place against the backdrop of a Spain embroiled in a brutal conflict. On February 5, 1810, just a few months before Jacob's arrival, the French army under Marshal Claude Victor-Perrin had captured Málaga after a fierce battle. The city and surrounding region, including Fuengirola, were firmly under French control. In such a hostile environment, the presence of a British traveller, especially one in uniform, is remarkable.

Jacob was not a soldier by profession. Born into a well-connected family, he married into the wealthy banking family of the Abel Smiths, which may have afforded him certain privileges and protections during his travels. His background as a merchant, scientist and politician, with a keen interest in economic conditions, would have made him an astute observer of the war's impact on the local economy and society. However, his need to wear an English military uniform while travelling across a war zone suggests that his visit may have had more than an academic or economic purpose.

In his book, Jacob provides a vivid description of Fuengirola as he saw it in the spring of 1810:

> "The town of Fuengirola in the Valli and the tiny white houses, interspersed among the vineyards upon the rising ground, was admirably contrasted with the various green tints below and the brown and red colour of the marble mountains which towers majestically above.
>
> We reached the Posada at Fuengirola about noon and rested ourselves and our horses; the house was filled with tubs in which they were salting sardines and

> anchovies. These fish are slightly cured, packed in baskets and conveyed on asses into the mountainous parts of the country, where they are considered the most desirable and luxurious repast. The price paid by the fishermen to the fishermen is about half a dollar a bushel.
>
> We left Fuengirola at half past one, expecting, as the distance was only four leagues, to reach Málaga early in the afternoon, but we found the road most intolerably bad..."

This passage captures Fuengirola's tranquil yet economically active nature, a town seemingly untouched by the war's immediate violence. Jacob's detailed observations of the landscape, the local economy and even the condition of the roads reflect his background as a scholar and economist.

Jacob's Team and Their Movements

Jacob's team likely consisted of other British nationals or individuals allied with the British cause. Given the risks of travelling through a region under French control, it is probable that they were a small, well-organised group capable of moving quickly and discreetly. Using military uniforms would have afforded them some level of protection under the laws of war, distinguishing them from spies, who are legally distinguishable by their civilian clothing. This would have allowed them to present themselves as part of an official British delegation or reconnaissance team rather than as covert operatives. The team would have relied on local guides from the anti-French guerrilla forces; they would have been valuable allies in navigating the region and avoiding French patrols. As Jacob noted, the roads' poor condition would have made travel challenging and less likely to attract the attention of French forces, who may have focused on more strategic routes.

A Reconnaissance Mission?

Given the timing of Jacob's visit and the strategic importance of Fuengirola and the other places on his route, it is plausible that his journey was, in part, a reconnaissance mission. The British were actively planning operations along the southern coast of Spain. Detailed intelligence about the condition of roads, the layout of towns and the strength of local defences would have been invaluable. Jacob's background as a politician and economist would have made him an ideal candidate for such a mission, as he could blend his observations of the local economy with strategic military intelligence. The fact that Jacob was in uniform further supports this theory, suggesting that the British military sanctioned his journey and expected him to gather information that could aid in future operations. While there is no direct evidence that Jacob's observations were used in planning the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo, his report likely contributed to the overall intelligence picture that the British command relied upon.

In the coming decades, British industrialists would turn Málaga into Spain’s second most productive city in the Industrial Revolution. His detailed descriptions of the town and its surroundings provide a valuable snapshot of Andalusia during a tumultuous period. The fact that

Jacob travelled in uniform and through a war zone under French control suggests that his journey was more than just an academic exercise.

Bad intelligence was among the culprits in the British inquiries into the embarrassing defeat at Fuengirola. Jacob's memoir may be remembered as the first known account of Fuengirola in English, and his other mission was forgotten because of the failed intelligence it provided.

Battle Plans and Preparations

The British decision to launch an expedition against the forces in southern Spain in October 1810 was part of a carefully calculated strategy to exploit perceived weaknesses in the French defensive network. Lieutenant General Colin Campbell, stationed in Gibraltar and closely monitoring French activities along the southern coast of Spain, conceived the plan months in advance. Such an attack could stretch the French supply lines and relieve pressure on forces heavily engaged further north with General Wellington's army in Portugal and northern Spain.

Under Marshal Soult, the French were heavily committed to maintaining control over the Iberian Peninsula, particularly in the north, where Wellington was making significant advances. Campbell believed that by creating a credible threat in the south, the British could force the French to divert troops away from their primary operations. The intelligence provided by William Jacob and others in the region would have been instrumental in this decision. Jacob reported the vulnerabilities he observed in French-held Málaga, including the French garrison's low morale, local resistance and stretched supply lines. These reports, combined with the outrage following the brutal suppression of the Spanish in Málaga earlier in the year, fueled the determination of the British command to act.

The timing of the operation was critical. By early October 1810, the French forces were heavily engaged in battles to the north and were not expecting a British assault from the south. Wellington’s advances in northern Spain and Portugal put additional strain on French resources. The British hoped that by creating a new front in the south, they could further stretch French lines and create a diversion that would force them to redeploy troops away from the main front, ultimately weakening their overall position in the Peninsula.

Lieutenant General Campbell's plan included multiple simultaneous attacks along the coast to maximise disruption. However, the primary objective was to attack Málaga from the west and open the port. Local support could be counted on due to the bad feeling created by the massacre of Spanish defenders six months earlier. The goal was to capture territory and send a clear message of British capability and intent to the French troops occupying Spain.

By launching this expedition, the British sought to exploit the thinly stretched French defences, harass their supply lines and demonstrate their commitment to supporting the Spanish resistance and maintaining pressure on French positions throughout the Peninsula. The hope was that this would provide a much-needed reprieve for Wellington’s forces in the north, enabling them to continue their offensive operations with less fear of immediate French counterattacks.

The expedition to Fuengirola and other operations along the southern coast of Spain were integral parts of a broader strategy to weaken French control over the Iberian Peninsula and support the overall Allied war effort against Napoleon.

French Military Leadership:

French military strategy in Spain, particularly in the southern regions, was under the command of Marshal Nicolas Jean-de-Dieu Soult. Soult was a seasoned strategist who effectively utilised the terrain and his available resources to counter the Allied forces. The French military leadership was crucial in coordinating defences and ensuring that critical positions, like Fuengirola, were well-defended. Despite ongoing guerrilla warfare and the challenging logistics of the Peninsular War, Soult's command ensured the French could maintain control over key locations.

Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz

Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz, born in 1770 in Poland, was a distinguished officer of the Polish forces under the command of Napoleon's Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Before the Peninsular War, Młokosiewicz served with distinction in several critical battles during the Napoleonic Wars. He fought in the Battle of Austerlitz (1805), where Napoleon achieved one of his most significant victories against the Third Coalition and later in the Battle of Friedland (1807), which was instrumental in securing a decisive French victory over the Russian army. His combat experience and demonstrated leadership skills earned him promotion to Captain. Młokosiewicz's military career took a significant turn when he was deployed to Spain as part of the French-allied Polish forces. In October 1810, he commanded a small garrison of Polish soldiers at Castillo Fuengirola in Fuengirola.

Captain Młokosiewicz’s success at Fuengirola is a notable example of effective leadership and the fighting spirit of the Polish soldiers, contributing significantly to the legacy of the Polish forces in the Napoleonic Wars.

Polish Forces

The Polish soldiers were aligned with the French due to geopolitical necessity following the Treaties of Tilsit in 1807. These agreements, which reorganised European territories after Napoleon's military successes, led to the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, a French client state. This alliance was more than strategic for Poland; it was a means of survival. The hope of regaining full sovereignty and reunifying their divided lands drove Polish leaders to support Napoleon. In return, Polish soldiers were obliged to serve in French campaigns. Far from just political manoeuvring, this military commitment represented a national duty, as the Poles saw Napoleon's victories as the only realistic path toward restoring an independent Poland. Therefore, Polish troops, including those at Fuengirola, fought for France and their nation's future.

Conscription in the Duchy of Warsaw was strict and often harsh. Many young Polish men conscripted into the army were motivated by patriotic fervour and the harsh reality of their occupied homeland. Serving in Napoleon’s army was seen as both a duty and a path to the potential restoration of a free Poland. Therefore, The Polish troops fought with a purpose beyond mere obedience; they were fighting for their nation's future. The gruelling conditions of service compounded the rigours of conscription. The soldiers faced long marches, minimal rations, and exposure to harsh weather, which tested their endurance and resolve. However, this harsh regimen also forged them into a highly effective fighting force capable of adapting to various combat situations and enduring significant hardships.

The 4th Regiment of the Duchy of Warsaw endured significant hardships before their assignment at Fuengirola. The regiment was composed mainly of young Polish men driven by a deep sense of patriotism and a desire to restore Poland's sovereignty, which had been stripped away through the partitions by Austria, Prussia and Russia in the late 18th century. These soldiers viewed their alliance with Napoleon and service in his campaigns as a means to achieve national independence. The regiment participated in several critical battles across Europe, including the Battle of Raszyn in 1809, where they played a crucial role in defending Warsaw against Austrian forces. Their courage and tactical skill were noted in subsequent operations in Germany and Austria, where they further distinguished themselves despite facing overwhelming odds and harsh conditions.

The Polish troops became known for their resilience and ability to fight effectively under challenging conditions. Their experiences in Germany and Austria further tested their mettle as they endured brutal winter campaigns, scarce provisions and constant engagements with enemy forces. These trials forged a seasoned and battle-hardened unit capable of facing any challenge with stoic determination. The journey to Spain was one of the most arduous undertakings for the Polish troops. They travelled thousands of miles on foot, marching from their homeland through France and across the Pyrenees into Spain. Logistical difficulties, a shortage of provisions, and exposure to harsh elements marked this journey. The relentless marching under these conditions further hardened these men into a formidable force, respected by their commanders and adversaries for their resilience and tenacity.

Once in Malaga, the Polish soldiers were stationed across several strategic locations, including Mijas, Alhaurín el Grande and Fuengirola. Their role was to bolster French defences and provide support against guerrilla activities in the region. Their conditions were challenging; the climate was harsher than they were accustomed to, and they had to adapt quickly to the terrain and the constant threat of guerrilla attacks. The Polish troops lived a rugged life, always maintaining strict discipline and readiness. They arrived at Fuengirola at the beginning of October 1810, where they fortified their positions, reinforced the ageing Castle and prepared for potential attacks.

The Polish contingent at Fuengirola Castle consisted of 164 soldiers from the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Duchy of Warsaw, supported by 50 French troops. The Polish troops' determination, discipline and resilience were pivotal to their success, turning what seemed like a hopeless situation into a stunning defensive victory.

Málaga’s Western Defence Line

The Polish troops at Fuengirola Castle were part of a coordinated defensive network to protect Málaga from potential attacks along its western front. This small force at the Castle was complemented by additional contingents stationed in nearby towns: Mijas and Alhaurín el Grande. Around 60 infantrymen defended Mijas under the leadership of Lieutenant Eustachy Chełmicki, while Alhaurín el Grande had a more significant force of 200 Polish infantry and 40 French dragoons commanded by Major Bronisz. Together, these positions formed a critical line of defence for French-held Málaga, guarding key inland routes and ensuring the protection of supply lines.

The combined strength of these garrisons was around 450 men, strategically distributed to cover various approaches to Málaga. Their mission was to act as a buffer against any Allied attempts to disrupt French operations in the region. These seasoned veterans, accustomed to adversity from previous battles across Europe, were highly disciplined and well-prepared for the task. Despite their relatively small numbers, the troops stationed in Fuengirola, Mijas and Alhaurín el Grande used their strategic positions to monitor enemy movements and counter threats. Their presence was crucial in maintaining the integrity of the French defensive network, as they provided early warnings of any British or allied incursions and helped coordinate defensive responses to protect Málaga and its vital resources. Under Captain Młokosiewicz's leadership at Fuengirola Castle, the Polish contingent, alongside their French allies, prepared to defend their position with unwavering resolve. Their experience, combined with the Castle's and the surrounding terrain's natural fortifications, made them a formidable defensive force capable of repelling even numerically superior attackers.

The British and Allied Forces:

The following briefly introduces the individuals and regiments shaping events in this story.

Major-General Andrew Thomas Blayney

Major-General Andrew Thomas Blayney, 11th Baron Blayney, was a prominent figure in British military and political circles in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Born in 1770 in Ireland, Blayney was thrust into the responsibilities of aristocracy and military service early in life. He inherited the title of 11th Baron Blayney of Monaghan in 1784, after the death of his brother and quickly embarked on a military career that would see him involved in numerous conflicts across the globe. Blayney began his military service in the British Army in 1789 as an Ensign in the 32nd Regiment. Rapid promotions marked his early career: he became a Lieutenant in the 41st Regiment in 1791, a Captain in the 38th Regiment in 1792 and a Major in the 89th Regiment in 1794. His most significant early service was during the turbulent years of the 1790s, where he distinguished himself in the Flanders Campaign and later during the retreat through Holland in 1794-1795. Notably, he played a vital role at the Battle of Boxtel, where his steadfast resistance prevented the retreat from becoming a rout, saving the Duke of York’s army.

Blayney’s career continued to rise as he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1798 and took command of the 89th Regiment, which he helped form and train. The regiment, known as “Blayney's Bloodhounds,” gained a fierce reputation, particularly during their deployment to suppress the United Irishmen rebellion in 1798. This period was marked by brutal repression and the 89th Regiment became infamous for its harsh measures in Ireland, which would haunt Blayney’s reputation. Following his service in Ireland, Blayney’s military career saw him posted to several colonial and foreign theatres, including the West Indies, where he was involved in various campaigns against French colonial forces. His service there, particularly during the invasion of Trinidad in 1797 and subsequent operations in the Caribbean, further demonstrated his leadership skills and ability to operate in challenging environments. Blayney had also been active in the Egyptian campaign of 1801, where British forces fought to expel the French from Egypt. These experiences further solidified his reputation as a capable, if occasionally controversial, officer.

In addition to his military career, Blayney was also involved in politics. Between 1806 and 1807, he served as a Member of Parliament for the "rotten borough" (it had no voters) of Old Sarum. His tenure in Parliament was brief and largely unremarkable, but it allowed him to cultivate connections within the government, aristocracy and military establishment. His dual role as a military leader and a politician positioned him well for further advancement, and he remained a figure of influence and ambition within both spheres. By 1810, with the Peninsular War raging and British forces seeking to disrupt French control in Spain, Blayney was chosen to lead an ambitious expedition to recapture Málaga from the French. His political connections and victory, such as in Málaga, could put him alongside another general fighting in this war, who would later become the prime minister and the Duke of Wellington.

The 82nd Regiment of Foot

(Prince of Wales's Volunteers) was a well-regarded unit within the British Army, known for its versatility and combat effectiveness. Before the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo, the 82nd had seen significant action in the West Indies, where they were involved in various operations to secure British colonial interests and suppress revolts. Their experience in these harsh environments honed their ability to operate in hot, rugged terrain and under adverse conditions. In 1808, the regiment was redeployed to the Iberian Peninsula. By the time of the expedition to Fuengirola, the 82nd Regiment was battle-hardened, with roughly 932 men ready for combat. Their previous engagements had prepared them well for the challenges ahead.

The 89th Regiment of Foot,

They were known as "Blayney's Bloodhounds," of whom the most would be expected in this conflict. Raised mainly in Ireland and composed initially of Irish recruits, the regiment gained notoriety for its harsh tactics in suppressing the 1798 Irish Rebellion. The "Bloodhounds" were known for their relentless pursuit of Irish insurgents, which earned them a fearsome reputation. Their actions during this period were characterised by a willingness to employ brutal measures, including scorched earth tactics and summary executions, which left a lasting mark on the unit's legacy. Following their service in Ireland, the 89th Regiment was deployed in various

campaigns, including the West Indies and the Mediterranean, where they fought in Egypt and later in the capture of Minorca. By 1810, the regiment was a seasoned and resilient unit planned to form the core of Blayney's force during the expedition.

The Spanish Contingent.

The expedition included 600 men of the Spanish Toledo Regiment, local guerrilla forces, and a mix of German, Austrian, and other allied troops. These diverse groups brought their unique challenges and strengths to the battlefield, reflecting the fragmented and often strained alliances of the Peninsular War. The Spanish Toledo Regiment's and other allied contingents' involvement must be understood within the broader context of the Peninsular War. Napoleon’s forces invaded Spain in 1808, forcing the Spanish government and royal family into exile in Cádiz. This city became the heart of Spanish resistance, serving as the headquarters for the exiled government and a rallying point for forces loyal to the Spanish crown.

The Spanish Regimiento Imperial de Toledo was vital to the Spanish forces fighting against Napoleonic control during the Peninsular War. The regiment, stationed in Ceuta, a strategic Spanish enclave in North Africa, comprised over 600 men. These troops were primarily Spanish regulars drawn from the lower classes of society, including poor farmers and labourers who had few options other than to join the army due to the harsh economic conditions of the time. Before being deployed to support the British-led assault on Fuengirola and Mijas, the Toledo Regiment's primary mission had been to protect the exiled Spanish government in Cádiz. During this period, Cádiz served as the last bastion of resistance for the Spanish monarchy against the Napoleonic forces. The city had become a stronghold where Spanish leaders and exiles regrouped and planned their efforts to reclaim the nation from French control.

Like many Spanish units, the Toledo Regiment was formed in response to Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808. The socio-economic conditions in Spain, marked by poverty and a lack of employment opportunities, meant that many of the regiment's men had little choice but to enlist. The fields could not sustain them and joining the military was often seen as the only viable means of survival and gaining some form of income.

Deployment and Challenges:

Upon their deployment from Ceuta to support the Allied invasion, the Toledo Regiment faced severe logistical challenges. There was a reported shortage of 150 muskets and inadequate ammunition supplies. These shortages delayed their embarkation and arrival at the battlefield, preventing them from effectively coordinating with the other allied forces. The lack of proper equipment impacted their readiness and morale, as they faced the prospect of engaging a well-prepared enemy with limited resources.

Despite these setbacks, the Toledo Regiment was sent to hold the Puerto De los Pescadores crossroads near Mijas. Their primary task was to block any reinforcements attempting to reach the Polish defenders at Fuengirola Castle.

Local Guerrilla Forces: The Serranos

The local guerrilla forces, known as the Serranos, played a crucial role in the battle. These fiercely independent, well-armed mountain men were intimately familiar with the treacherous terrain surrounding Mijas and Fuengirola. Unlike the formal Spanish troops, the Serranos were not constrained by rigid military structures, allowing them greater flexibility and adaptability on the battlefield. Masters of guerrilla tactics they excelled in hit-and-run assaults, ambushes, and other forms of irregular warfare. Using the steep, rocky terrain to their advantage, they launched surprise attacks on the advancing French-led troops and their Polish allies. Their deep knowledge of the local geography enabled them to exploit natural choke points and conceal their movements, complicating the Allied forces' attempts to mount a coordinated response.

There is a local story about a rock cliff near Atalaya where some soldiers on horses went over it, but this story has no sources other than residents and seems disconnected from this battle. It does, however, indicate the level of fighting that was going on in the area.

Defectors and Mercenaries

About 100 soldiers from various German, Austrian, and Italian backgrounds who had previously served under Napoleon had switched sides out of necessity or disillusionment with his regime. These soldiers, including deserters from the French foreign troops, were often motivated more by survival than loyalty to the British cause. Their varied experiences, languages and mixed allegiances sometimes led to a lack of cohesion and trust within the allied ranks.

The soldiers of the British and allied forces and their Spanish and German counterparts lived under challenging conditions. Campaign life was harsh, with troops facing long marches, often through rugged terrain and under extreme weather conditions. Supplies were scarce and the threat of disease and malnutrition was ever-present. The multicultural composition of the force, while a strength in numbers, also posed challenges in discipline and cohesion. Officers had to navigate these complexities, maintaining morale and ensuring their men were battle-ready.

The British Naval Component

The British and allied naval fleet assembled for the assault on Fuengirola was a formidable force, meticulously planned and stocked over several months to support a full-scale attack on Málaga. Under the overall coordination of Lieutenant General Colin Campbell, command was handed to Major General Bllanay when the fleet set sail.

The fleet consisted of several classes of ships, each with specific roles and capabilities. The primary vessels included the British ships *HMS Rodney* (74-gun ship of the line), *HMS Topaze* (38-gun frigate), *HMS Sparrowhawk* (18-gun brig), *HMS Rambler* (14-gun brig), *HMS Onyx* (10-gun brig)and *HMS Encounter* (10-gun brig), as well as the Spanish ship-of-the-line *El Vencedor* (74 guns).

1. **HMS Rodney**: As the latest addition to the British Royal Navy, *HMS Rodney* was a 74-gun ship of the line, commissioned to provide heavy naval bombardment. Equipped with powerful artillery capable of delivering devastating broadsides, *Rodney* was intended to be the fleet's flagship.
2. **HMS Topaze**: A 38-gun frigate, *HMS Topaze* was fast and manoeuvrable, ideal for surveillance and supporting the main fleet. During the operation, it served as Major General Andrew Thomas Blayney's command ship, from which he coordinated the assault on Fuengirola Castle. The frigate was stocked with additional munitions, medical supplies and food, which was crucial for leading the assault.
3. **HMS Sparrowhawk** and **HMS Rambler**: Both briggs were small, agile vessels used for patrol and escort duties. Armed with 18 and 14 guns, these ships were designed for quick manoeuvres and light engagements. Their role was to support the landing operations and provide flexible firepower against unexpected threats from the shore or smaller enemy craft.
4. **HMS Onyx** and **HMS Encounter**: These 10-gun brigs were smaller warships effective in shallow waters and close support. They were well-suited for shore bombardment and providing additional cover for landing troops.
5. **El Vencedor**: A 74-gun ship of the line, *El Vencedor* was originally a French vessel captured by the Spanish after the Battle of Trafalgar and later renamed. It was meant to carry elements of the 82nd Regiment of Foot but was found to be in such a state of disrepair that it required extensive work on its hull, sails and rigging. This delayed its readiness, causing significant logistical issues for the expedition.

Mobilisation and Logistics

The mobilisation for the British expedition to Fuengirola was a remarkable feat of planning and logistics, showcasing the complexity of mounting a military operation far from home. Many months of logistics and provisioning went to assemble the force at Gibraltar, Cádizand Ceuta. The expedition's assembly point was strategically chosen off the North African coast, allowing for coordination and final preparations away from the prying eyes of French intelligence. Planning such an operation required meticulous attention to detail. The logistics supporting an expedition over 1,000 miles from home were formidable. Supplies, including food, ammunition, medical supplies and equipment necessary for siege warfare, had to be carefully positioned. Transporting these supplies across the sea posed significant challenges, necessitating careful planning and coordination between the naval and land forces. The operation's success depended on maintaining adequate supplies and ensuring the forces were well-provisioned throughout the campaign.

The expedition's mobilisation and logistics demonstrated the British military's capability to project power over great distances and coordinate complex, multinational operations. The fleet prepared for the assault, marking the beginning of what was expected to be a swift and morale-boosting victory aimed at disrupting French operations and bolstering the British campaign in Spain.

The expedition was stocked with extensive supplies in anticipation of a full assault on Málaga. The ships were loaded with vast amounts of food, including salted beef, hardtack and dried vegetables, enough to sustain the troops and their crews for several weeks. Freshwater was carried in large casks, while barrels of gunpowder, shot and other munitions were carefully stored to avoid vessel moisture and damage. Medical supplies, including bandages, laudanum and surgical instruments, were prepared for the inevitable battle casualties. The fleet also carried artillery pieces, including 18-pounders and 32-pound carronades, intended for siege warfare and the anticipated engagement with French coastal defences.

The journey from the United Kingdom to the Mediterranean bases at Gibraltar, Cádiz and Ceuta was always fraught with challenges. Rough seas and unpredictable weather tested the endurance of both the ships and their crews. Many vessels, particularly the older ones like *El Vencedor*, suffered from wear and tear, which required constant repairs and maintenance. Crews, consisting of seasoned sailors and pressed men, lived in cramped and unsanitary conditions below decks. The presence of 2,500 troops added to the congestion, with soldiers quartered wherever space could be found. The lack of fresh provisions and the difficulty of maintaining hygiene could lead to disease outbreaks, lowering morale among the ranks.

The Naval Bases

The Napoleonic Wars reshaped the political landscape of Europe, with Spain becoming a critical battleground as Napoleon Bonaparte sought to expand his empire. The significance of various locations within Spain grew, especially those with strategic military and naval importance. Gibraltar, Cádiz, Ceuta and Málaga were particularly pivotal due to their roles in both the broader conflict and the specific events described in this story. This chapter explores the historical and strategic importance of these four locations during the Napoleonic occupation of Spain.

Gibraltar: The British Stronghold

Gibraltar, a British overseas territory since 1713, played a crucial role during the Napoleonic Wars. Its strategic position at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea made it an invaluable naval base for the British. The British Navy used Gibraltar as a staging point for operations against the French and Spanish fleets, ensuring control over the crucial maritime routes that connected the Atlantic Ocean with the Mediterranean.

With its natural fortifications, the Rock of Gibraltar provided a formidable defence that Napoleon's forces found impossible to breach. The British fortifications included an extensive network of tunnels and gun emplacements, significantly enhancing its defensive capabilities. These defences and Gibraltar's natural geography made it a nearly impregnable fortress. The British fleet anchored at Gibraltar disrupted French supply lines and supported Allied forces throughout the Mediterranean.

The presence of the British Navy at Gibraltar ensured that the French could not gain naval superiority in the region, a crucial factor in maintaining the balance of power in the

Mediterranean. Gibraltar's strategic importance cannot be overstated; it served as a linchpin for British operations in the Mediterranean, safeguarding vital sea lanes and supporting land campaigns on the Iberian Peninsula and beyond.

Cádiz: The Bastion of Resistance

Located on Spain's southwestern coast, Cádiz symbolised Spanish resistance against Napoleonic occupation. When French forces invaded Spain, Cádiz became a refuge for the Spanish Cortes (parliament) and a centre for revolutionary ideas. The city's robust fortifications and access to the sea allowed it to withstand several sieges by French forces. The port of Cádiz was vital for the British Royal Navy, which supported the Spanish resistance by providing supplies and reinforcements. Cádiz's strategic position enabled it to serve as a base for military and political resistance against French control. The city's resilience during repeated French attacks and its role in promulgating the 1812 Constitution—known as "La Pepa"—underscored its importance during this tumultuous period. This pioneering democratic document laid the foundation for modern Spanish democracy and inspired liberal movements across Europe. Cádiz's ability to hold out against the French was a significant morale booster for the Spanish resistance and an inspiration for other regions under occupation. Its steadfast defence played a critical role in the broader strategy to resist Napoleonic domination and ultimately contributed to the weakening of French influence in the Iberian Peninsula.

Ceuta: The African Outpost

Ceuta, a Spanish enclave on the northern coast of Africa, served as a strategic outpost during the Napoleonic Wars. Its proximity to the Iberian Peninsula made it a critical point for monitoring naval activities in the Strait of Gibraltar. Although less renowned than Gibraltar or Cádiz, Ceuta's fortifications and strategic position allowed it to play a defensive role against French ambitions in the region. Control of Ceuta helped maintain Spanish influence over the crucial maritime routes connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The enclave's ability to monitor and control the narrow strait—a vital chokepoint for naval traffic—was of immense strategic value. By maintaining a presence in Ceuta, the Spanish and their British allies could exert influence over naval movements, protect supply lines and keep French forces in check. This strategic oversight ensured that the Allies retained control over one of the most critical maritime passages of the era.

The Weather

The weather was pivotal in the events leading up to and during the Battles. The autumn climate along the southern coast of Spain was variable in October 1810; it was particularly unforgiving. As they left their meeting point off Cueta, the fleet sailed into light rain and mist. These adverse conditions hampered visibility and contributed to the difficulty of executing their operation. Had the campaign been scheduled earlier in the year during the summer, the weather would have likely been more favourable, improving the overall chances of success for the British-led forces. However, the demands of war dictated their timeline, leaving the British and their allies at the mercy of one of the worst weather conditions in the area.

Despite the harsh weather, Blayney's regiment, with its experience fighting in Ireland's challenging climate, pressed on. He may have believed that some rain would not deter seasoned troops accustomed to much worse conditions. Yet, the reality was far graver; the rain, mist and winds would continue throughout the battle, exacerbating the conditions for naval and land operations. The rain limited visibility and made it harder to keep the gunpowder dry, delaying efforts to unload artillery from the ships and making the steep, muddy climb to the Castle even more treacherous.

To set the scene for the rest of the story, the weather forecast may have looked as follows: had they been invented then.

> **Shipping Forecast: Western Mediterranean Sea Area**
> **Issued October 13, 1810**
>
> **Outlook:**
> October 13
> Overcast skies, with visibility reduced by heavy mist. Light winds throughout the day. Drizzle persistent, damp air prevailing. Rain intermittent, easing into the evening. Poor conditions expected along the coast.
>
> October 14
> Misty morning. By mid-morning, steady rain developing and intensifying by late afternoon. Winds moderate, freshening by evening. Ground becoming muddy. Expect severe thunderstorms with heavy rain through the night, coupled with continuous lightning and gusty winds. Difficult and dangerous conditions anticipated throughout the night, with heavy downpours persisting.
>
> October 15
> Morning rain lighter than the previous night, but still significant. Winds moderate. Rain intensifying again by afternoon, leading to very slippery conditions. Overcast skies with persistent drizzle into the evening. Conditions remain cold and damp.
>
> October 16
> Rain easing by early morning, overcast skies lingering. Light winds, with occasional drizzle in the afternoon. The ground remains muddy but rain mostly ceasing by evening. Overcast and cool throughout.

There was no weather forecast then; if there had been, the mission could have been cancelled.

Foresight

Before delving into the battles, it is worth asking whether the French were caught off guard. Two weeks before the assault, French forces bolstered their presence in Fuengirola with significant reinforcements, a sign that they may have anticipated something. Organising an expedition of 2,500 troops and 16 ships is no small task, and such extensive preparations would have been impossible to keep hidden. French intelligence could easily have tracked British ship movements and spies in the three docks and could have kept a close watch on British activity. It is entirely plausible that early warnings of an impending attack had reached the French, prompting them to strengthen their defences in Fuengirola. Though often portrayed as a surprise attack, the reality may have been that the French were on high alert, prepared for the assault even if they hadn't pinpointed the exact moment it would strike.

The Battle

Saturday, October 13th, 1810

On the evening of Saturday, October 13th, 1810, 14 ships gathered off the coast of Ceuta, having successfully coordinated the logistics of the upcoming amphibious operation. These vessels, fully loaded with troops, artillery, ammunition, and supplies, were destined to take Fuengirola and Mijas and form the bridgehead to capture Málaga.

A Setback

HMS Rodney was one of the Royal Navy's most formidable ships. A 74-gun line ship commissioned to symbolise British naval might, it was integral to the amphibious assault against the French-held Castle at Fuengirola in 1810. Onboard HMS Rodney was the 89th Regiment of Foot, Lord Blayney's regiment, which had fought with him globally. These highly trained and experienced troops were expected to spearhead the assault alongside British and Spanish forces. However, while leaving Ceuta, HMS Rodney collided with the Spanish ship El Vencedor, a 74-gun vessel of the line that was originally French but was seized as a prize after the Battle of Trafalgar. The collision, caused by strong winds in a crowded harbour, damaged both ships. El Vencedor's hull was significantly weakened, while HMS Rodney sustained damage to its rudder and lower rigging. The repairs delayed Rodney's departure by more than 24 hours, forcing Blayney to proceed without the full complement of troops for the initial phase of the operation.

Faced with the delay, Lord Blayney made the tactical decision not to wait for HMS Rodney's repairs. While the ship and troops would be vital for larger-scale engagements in Málaga, Blayney reasoned that they had sufficient firepower for the first phase of the operation; they could be re-supplied before an assault on Málaga. With smaller vessels and the rest of the fleet ready to go, Blayney sent signals to the fleet, informing them of the revised plan. Rather than risking further delays or collisions and more time on the sea, Blayney gave the order to commence the expedition and sail to a point southeast of La Cala. This would allow the landing boats to disembark at La Cala's long sandy beach while the gunboats remained offshore to provide cover if needed.

Sunday 14th October 1810

A Dull Wet Sunday

Logistical delays at the ports meant that the battle would inevitably begin on a Sunday, a day sacred to the Spanish Catholic troops and some British for whom the Sabbath was varyingly holy. For the Spaniards, this unholy timing may have stirred feelings of divine abandonment, compounding their unease. On the other hand, the Polish defenders, devout in their faith, likely viewed the attack with a mixture of disbelief and anger, wondering what kind of savages would choose to strike on a day reserved for rest and worship. While the Spanish soldiers were missing Mass, the Poles likely held a complete service that morning, with the distant toll of church bells from Fuengirola and Mijas echoing across the fields around them.

The Polish defenders awoke to a misty, damp day. From the battlements of the ancient Moorish Castle, they peered through the fog, maintaining a vigilant watch. The sea lay still, and visibility was poor. Despite the gloom, the soldiers remained alert, knowing that a British fleet could strike any moment. Their signalling system, though primitive, was adequate. It relied on simple visual cues such as flags, smoke and fire to communicate between Castillo Fuengirola, El Faro to the west and Torreblanca to the east.

As the morning progressed, the Polish troops continued their watch, prepared for whatever this war might throw. The rain and mist did little to dampen their spirits; they had faced far worse in the harsh European campaigns. Their seasoned experience and indomitable spirit were displayed as they readied themselves on a Sunday morning.

The first to land from the swiftest of the boats was a detachment of Spanish guerrilla soldiers tasked with neutralising the beach's defences and preventing any word from reaching the Castle. Their target was the tower in the centre of the beach at La Cala, a ten-metre high and 35-square-metre coastal fortification built in 1773. Though once formidable, the tower had mysteriously been left open, and its defenders were swiftly killed. Shrouded in mist and buffeted by rolling seas, the landings began. Once the beach was secure, the signal was sent to commence the full disembarkation of the invasion force.

Landing

The early hours of October 14, 1810, were shrouded in a thick, oppressive mist, with visibility reduced to mere feet. Though initially calm, the sea grew restless under the influence of the incoming storm. The mist hung heavily over the British flotilla as it carefully navigated toward the designated landing site, with the weather serving as both an ally and an adversary.

These troop carriers, including *HMS Topaze*, *Sparrowhawk,* and *HMS Rambler*, carried approximately 1,500 troops. Seasoned British soldiers, Spanish allies, and other multinational forces crammed into the small vessels after a day on the sea before a three-hour landing operation. Coordination was paramount as troops were put on the light frigates to around 200 meters out and small landing boats were readied to ferry them and their equipment to shore. The boats, heavily laden with soldiers gripping their muskets and artillerymen guarding their cannons, cut through the surf under the cover of the morning mist.

By 9:00 A.M. on October 14, 1810, the first wave of British and allied troops landed. The thick morning mist that had concealed their approach still blanketed the coast, making it difficult for the landing troops and the defenders at Fuengirola Castle to gauge each other’s movements. The weather was worsening, and a light rain fell, making the beach at La Cala de Mijas slippery and treacherous.

The soldiers carried the standard *Brown Bess muskets*, known for their reliability, while sharpshooters held *Baker rifles*, a more accurate firearm favoured for its precision. Each man was weighed down by his kit—bayonet, ammunition pouch and a day's rations. Their heavy, woollen uniform will have become wet in the damp air and their boots will not have dried out

from a soaking on the landing. The artillery, including 18-pounders and a 32-pounder carronade, were offloaded onto the beach near the Castle later in the day. The landing itself was logistically challenging with the weather. With visibility low, the officers shouted orders through the rain, struggling to keep the operation under control. The surf was rough, and the small boats pitched and yawned as they went to shore. While there are no detailed records of the exact number of injuries during the landing, the problematic conditions undoubtedly contributed to the troops' overall burden, which was a bad start to the day.

The March to Fuengirola and Mijas

By noon, the central column had assembled away from the chaotic beach, regrouping in protective columns for the next phase of their operation. The force was divided into two groups. The first, consisting of 600 Spanish troops, were to march toward Puerto De Los Pescadores under the command of Captain Thomas Mullins, newly promoted to Brigade Major, in command of forces sent to defend the crossroads from Puerto De Los Pescadores.

The Army Divides

At a point probably guided by local guerillas, the two parts of the invasion parted, and the Spanish Toledo Regiment of 600 men moved up the hill. They will have crossed the river and marched along what we now call the Coin Road. In those days, this was a difficult path, challenging, winding, steep, rocky terrain that tested the troops' endurance more so given the rain.

Mullins's original orders were defensive: to secure Puerto De Los Pescadores, the strategically vital crossroads connecting Fuengirola, Mijasand Alhaurín. This geographical junction was chosen with meticulous intelligence, and its importance cannot be overstated. To its right, mountains rise sharply, forming a natural barrier, while to its left, a valley gives way to more mountain ranges. This crossroads was the key to controlling the region, cutting off French reinforcements and ensuring the success of the more extensive campaign. Even today, with the clarity of Google Earth, this pinpoint's tactical significance is undeniable the linchpin holds the entire area together. Despite the critical nature of this position, the first significant error occurred when Haro convinced Mullins that rather than keeping the crossroads, capturing Mijas Pueblo would be a better tactical move. Their orders had been precise; however, the newly promoted Mullins agreed that Haro could deviate from them. This decision ignored the overwhelming strategic importance of the crossroads, gambling instead on the fortified village of Mijas, a move that risked derailing the mission by redirecting resources to a more difficult target and leaving the pivotal access point exposed.

Our narrative will leave Brigade Major Mullins and his troops to learn the challenges of attacking Mijas and return to the day's main target.

The Castle in Sight

The march from La Cala to Fuengirola followed an inland path, the back road today, avoiding the coastal route now used by the modern N340 highway, which was impassable for troops. The inland route, though better preserved since the days of the Romans and Moors, was still challenging. The terrain was rugged, with jagged outcrops of rock and dense, thorny underbrush that slowed their progress. As the rain intensified, soldiers struggled to push forward. Boots sank deep into the mud, pulling with each step, making the march torturous.

As Blayney described it in his book,

> *"The mountains and ravines which occupy the entire space between the Calle de la Moralle and Fiangerolla, rendered our march extremely fatiguing and tedious."*

After a two-hour march from La Cala, the main force saw Fuengirola Castle come into view at 2 PM, perched high on its hill overlooking the coastal plain. Its dark stone walls were a daunting reminder of the battle awaited them. They halted outside the 350-meter artillery range to pause, reorganise and prepare their position. With its elevated position and commanding view, the fortress was well-defended and prepared to repel any assault.

Inside the Castle, Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz and his 150 Polish soldiers were ready for the assault. They held the advantage of high ground and a clear field of fire over the approaching British forces. A formidable sight unfolded outside when over 1,000 British and Allied soldiers lined up in formation, their ranks stretching along the shoreline and hilltops. Though dampened by the persistent rain, the soldiers presented an imposing spectacle; their uniforms still gleamed with a sense of disciplined order under the overcast sky. The rhythmic march of the infantry, the clinking of their gear and the fluttering banners added a tense energy to the air.

Through the mist between 500 and 1000 meters from the shore, 15 ships were shrouded, mainly by the limited visibility, making them impossible to count. Their sails billowed, catching the slight breeze, and their wooden hulls creaked eerily over the calm waters. The fleet formed an imposing line about a kilometre along the coast in front of the Castle. The British forces sent a messenger to approach the Castle under a flag of truce, demanding the garrison's surrender with formal gravity. Blayney probably believed the understrength defenders of the old Moorish fortress would swiftly yield in the face of overwhelming force. His offer to Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz was straightforward: surrender and be treated with the honours of war or 'else'. However, the British gravely underestimated the Polish garrison's motivation, experience, resolve and confidence. Without hesitation, Młokosiewicz refused. He sent a message to the British: the Poles would fight to the last man, fully committed to defending their post, signalling that the defenders intended to hold their position regardless of odds.

Fully aware of the oncoming assault, the Poles dispatched messengers to get reinforcements from Mijas, Alhaurinand, and Málaga. The defenders, although outnumbered, only had to delay

the British advance long enough for reinforcements to arrive. Młokosiewicz and his men had spent a year marching from Poland and fighting battles. They had spent two weeks preparing themselves and the Castle for this moment; they were ready.

Fifteen minutes later, the British fleet initiated a ferocious naval bombardment to soften the Castle's defences before launching a ground assault. The fleet, led by HMS Topaze with her 32 guns, was supported by HMS Sparrowhawk and a group of smaller gunboats. Even without HMS Rodney, the British flotilla should have had enough firepower to overwhelm an 800-year-old Castle. The Gunships, up to a thousand metres from the shore, opened fire, sending thunderous booms across the coastline as their cannons targeted the Castle's thick stone walls. The smaller gunboats attempted to move closer to increase the accuracy of their shots, but the worsening weather hindered their effectiveness. Heavy rain and wind complicated their positioning, making it difficult for the British ships to maintain a clear line of fire. The assault, while intense, lacked precision.

The Poles responded swiftly and decisively, returning fire with their limited artillery. The Castle's defensive capabilities were modest at this far end of the supply line: just two old 16-pounder cannons and a pair of smaller 2-pounder field guns. Nonetheless, from their elevated position, the Poles had a significant advantage. Cannonballs launched from the Castle had better range and velocity as they fired downward, making each shot more devastating (as every golfer knows). Equally, the ships had more problems firing up at the Castle, especially from a moving deck. In one of the early volleys, a Polish cannon scored a direct hit on a British gunboat full of explosives, causing a colossal explosion, sinking the ship and causing chaos among the fleet. The destruction of the vessel confused the British fleet, with many sailors killed and injured. The loss of the gunboat briefly disrupted the bombardment, forcing the remaining vessels to reposition themselves to avoid further damage.

When the cannonade stopped, the British ground forces prepared to advance toward the Castle. With naval bombardment intended to damage the Castle before their approach, the British infantry marched through the rain-soaked landscape, turning the ascent toward the Castle with all walls intact. The Polish defenders, high above, awaited the advancing troops. From their fortified position, they fired down with deadly accuracy, their musket shots raining on the British ranks. In addition to musket fire, the Poles hurled anything they could find—rocks, logs and debris—down the steep slopes. The defence was fierce and the attackers were exposed, struggling to find cover as they pushed forward.

Blayney's attempt to turn the tide of battle failed. As the Polish reinforcements joined the fray, the British were forced to retreat down the hill, leaving their artillery and supplies behind. The combination of musket fire and the unforgiving terrain began to take its toll on the British troops. In the opening moments of the assault, a British officer fell, along with at least four soldiers, killed with many more injured by the relentless Polish defence; as more soldiers attempted to reach the base of the Castle, the weight of casualties mounted. The British light infantry, meant to spearhead the assault, was an easy target for fire from above. It quickly became clear that

the combination of weather, terrain and the Poles' defensive advantage would make entering the Castle almost impossible.

After the troops withdrew at around 15:30, the British fleet resumed its bombardment of the Castle, hoping to weaken its walls and provide further cover for the advancing infantry. Despite losing the gunboat, the remaining HMS Topaze, HMS Sparrowhawk and the smaller gunboats continued firing despite the earlier setback. Yet, the Castle's thick stone walls, built eight centuries earlier, absorbed much of the bombardment's impact. While one of the towers took a direct hit, the Castle remained largely intact, with only minor structural damage. The relentless rain and wind further hampered the accuracy of the British gunners. For the defenders, the constant bombardment was punishing but not debilitating. They knew the Castle could hold, at least for now. With their first assault repelled and their infantry suffering heavy losses, Blayney ordered a tactical retreat at 16:00. Bloodied and soaked, the British forces returned to their beachhead to regroup.

The Evening

By 19:00, the naval bombardment ceased for the day. With the sun setting over the Mountains, the British fleet withdrew slightly offshore to avoid further damage from the Polish artillery. Out of protection of the shoreline, they would spend the night on the rolling sea, feeling the discomfort of all aboard. The weather, a constant hindrance throughout the day, worsened, making it nearly impossible to continue the assault. Tired and demoralised British soldiers faced a long, cold night in the rain, either on the decks of their rolling ships or in hastily constructed beachhead camps. The rain-soaked conditions made rest difficult, and the soldiers were left to contemplate the brutal day of fighting and the challenges ahead.

As 20:00 arrived, the first day of the Battle ended. Both sides had suffered, but the Castle defenders had successfully repelled the British assault. The day had seen the destruction of a British gunboat, the deaths of many soldiers and the failure of the British infantry to breach the Castle's defences.

In the Castle, there would have been a scene of activity, shoring up the damage and preparing for the next attack. After darkness fell, a welcome sight appeared for the defenders of the Caste. Around 100 Polish and French reinforcements arrived with stories of a ferocious battle that repelled an invasion of Mijas. As the night wore on, additional troops entered the fortifications, bringing manpower and morale to the defenders. Młokosiewicz, now bolstered by fresh troops, began preparing for the renewed assault he knew would come the next day. The Poles were still heavily outnumbered, but the arrival of reinforcements strengthened their resolve. They knew the British would try again and were determined to hold the Castle. The rain continued to fall as both armies prepared for the second day of battle, with the knowledge that the conflict was far from over.

Major General Blayney now had to reassess his strategy. His initial plan, which assumed the Poles would capitulate against overwhelming odds, had been shattered. He had no idea where HMS Rodney was and knew he would have to lead an assault with a regiment of Lancashire

men whom he did not know. The Polish defenders had shown their determination to fight, and the British forces now faced the daunting task of trying to break a well-fortified position defended by troops who had the advantage of high ground and experience. As the rain-soaked night wore on, the British forces were left to recover and prepare for a renewed assault. The first day had ended in stalemate, but the battle was far from decided. Both sides knew that the coming days would be decisive, with the fate of Fuengirola Castle and the broader strategic objectives of the campaign hanging in the balance.

On that same day, the Spanish contingent had attempted to take Mijas. Before we describe day two at the Castle, let's review what is known about the day an army tried to capture Mijas Pueblo from another army one-tenth of its size.

The Battle of Mijas Pueblo

The Battle of Mijas Pueblo is a lesser-known engagement and occurred on the day of the assault on Fuengirola Castle. The primary objective of this Mission was to capture and hold the strategic crossroads at Puerto De Los Pescadores, where the roads from Alhaurin, Fuengirola, Coin and Mijas meet. The crossroads on the slopes of the Sierra de Mijas were positioned at the natural point where two mountains meet; think of the lowest point of a ‘horse saddle’. Taking this point would give complete control of the inland routes and prevent French and Polish reinforcements from reaching the besieged garrison at Fuengirola Castle.

Brigade Major Mullins and the 600 troops of the Spanish Toledo Regiment marched across the Rio Fuengirola, which would have been in full flow given the amount of rain present and headed west up the hill. The terrain between La Cala and Mijas was unforgiving, with steep, narrow mountain trails covered in mud due to rain. These treacherous conditions exhausted the march for the troops burdened with ammunition and supplies.

Before achieving their initial objective of holding the crossroads, the plan changed from defence of a crossroads to an attack on Mijas Pueblo. This is because securing the Pueblo would better serve the broader operation and provide shelter that night. Six hundred soldiers were a lot for an uninhabited crossroads. They agreed Mijas Pueblo was also a target, hoping to capture the village quickly. Troops were then divided, with some sent along a more direct route to Mijas Pueblo. This decision, though bold, would ultimately contribute to the failure of this mission and the whole expedition. The assault on Mijas Pueblo on day one was not a priority; the priority was stopping the troops from arriving from Alhaurin El Grande.

The Suprise

As the Spanish forces approached Puerto De Los Pescadores, the Poles under Captain Bronisz in Alhaurin El Grande received word of the assault and sent 200 troops and 80 horsemen. By the worst of coincidences, these fresh reinforcements charged down the hill and met Brigade Major Mullins and most of his troops after spending hours in the rain. Casualties were massive, and forces were scattered, sent in retreat down the hillside or to back up the assault on the Pueblo.

The soldiers advancing on Mijas Pueblo were unaware of the failure at the crossroads and continued the assault at the far end of the village.

However, Lieutenant Eustachy Chełmicki, commanding a small Polish detachment of approximately 60 men, had anticipated an attack. The defenders prepared for the assault by using the village's natural defences, steep, rocky slopes, narrow, winding streets, and limited entry points. Despite being heavily outnumbered, Lieutenant Chełmicki and his men effectively used the village's defensive architecture, setting up ambushes in the narrow alleys and steep slopes leading up to the town. The Polish defenders knew the rugged terrain would limit the attackers' ability to use their superior numbers and firepower effectively. As the Spanish troops advanced into the edge of the Pueblo, they were met with fierce resistance, forcing them into close-quarters combat. Chełmicki's defence of Mijas became legendary. He had initially reported the impending attack to General Sébastiani in Málaga. He requested reinforcements from Captain Ignacy Bronisz in Alhaurín el Grande. Still, communication issues and the situation's intensity meant that the defenders were mainly left to fend for themselves. Even with limited resources and just 60 troops, they held their ground, launching counterattacks from behind stone walls and firing down from rooftops, causing significant casualties among the attackers.

The Turning Point

As the day wore on, the attackers became increasingly bogged down by the fierce resistance. The rugged terrain, poor weather and the defenders' intimate knowledge of the area and the town's layout caused confusion and disarray among the advancing troops. Several attempts to break through the Polish defences were repelled, with the attackers suffering heavy casualties. According to reports, around 20 men were killed or wounded and the Polish forces captured 40 soldiers; these numbers may be underestimated. Exhausted, demoralised and having achieved nothing, they withdrew toward the beach at the coast, hoping to regroup safely. The retreat was chaotic, with many soldiers abandoning their positions and equipment as they fled the steep slopes. The arrival of additional Polish forces only hastened the retreat, as the attackers realised they could no longer hope to hold them back on a dark, rainy night. The troops were forced back to the beach, which marked a significant defeat.

> Blayney described the assault on Mijas in his book;
> *“and though I gave him positive orders to act only on the defensive, the importunities of the Spaniards led him to exceed these orders and to make an attack on the town, where he met a most vigorous and unexpected resistance, that obliged him to fall back rapidly on the main body of the troops. Mijas is a small town, containing about one thousand inhabitants, and the approach to it is so difficult, that a very small force may defend it against a very large one. It is situated on the declivity of a rocky hill, the side of which, facing Fiangerolla, is inaccessible, except by a narrow and winding pathway, skirted on one side by a deep rocky ravine.”*

And Młokosiewicz described the event in more detail in his memoir.

“As the enemy approached Mijas, they encountered the forces of Captain Bronisz, who, with his mobile column of 200 men of the 4th Regiment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and 80 dragoons from the 21st Regiment, was thoroughly prepared to receive the enemy. That enemy was astonished to see that instead of Chełmicki’s small detachment, a considerable body of troops had come up through the heavy storm and darkness and was waiting for them. After a courageous fight between the belligerents, in which some Anglo-Spanish force made their way up to Mijas, Polish bayonets eventually triumphed and broke the enemy, pushing them out of the town and down the surrounding mountains. The enemy lost some 20 killed and wounded men, about 40 were taken captive, and the rest of the Anglo-Spanish troops were broken and ran away.”

Civilian Deaths?

There is a story suggesting that up to four civilians were either injured or killed during the street fighting in Mijas Pueblo, but a thorough search of the published accounts provides no evidence to support this claim. While it remains part of local lore, it may have occurred at any time during the two-year French occupation of Mias. With time, further research or discoveries may bring this part of the narrative to light. The Battle of Mijas Pueblo highlights the complexity of mountain warfare and the critical role that local knowledge and determination can play in overcoming a numerically superior force. The decision to engage in the narrow streets of Mijas rather than holding the crossroads was a costly mistake because it could have prevented the reinforcements. Lieutenant Chełmicki and his small detachment of Polish soldiers' skilful defence demonstrated their tactical understanding and resilience.

Back To the Beachhead

As the Spanish soldiers returned to the beach, they were briefly mistaken for French troops due to the similar colours of their uniforms. The British, prepared to engage this apparent enemy, were greatly relieved when someone called out, "We are Spanish!" they were welcomed back into the lines. Stories circulated among the troops of the day's events in the castle, including the failed attack on Mijas and how the elite Dragoon Guards chased the Spanish down the hill. That night, in the mist and relentless rain, the British forces worked through the harsh conditions to unload their artillery, which included a 32-pounder carronade, two 12-pounders, and a howitzer. These heavy guns were laboriously positioned on the beach and nearby hills before dawn, though the rugged terrain and terrible weather delayed their setup. The artillery was entrenched within 75 meters of the castle walls, but the conditions slowed progress. As night fell, both sides prepared for the next stage of the battle. The Polish defenders, emboldened by reinforcements and their earlier success, steeled themselves to defend the castle against further assaults. On the other side, Blayney and his officers regrouped, realising they had underestimated their opponents' skill and determination. The rain continued to pour, and cold winds swept across the battlefield, with both sides bracing for another day of fierce combat.

Blayney describes the night in his memoir.

“Neither difficulty nor danger could however depress the persevering ardour of the soldiers and sailors, who before day broke had completed a battery of two twelve-pounders and a howitzer, at the distance of three hundred and fifty yards from the Castle, and on the summit of a rocky hill, the ascent to which is difficult even to an unencumbered individual. Another battery was also complicated on the beach with one thirty-two pound carronade. The whole of the detachment suffered severely during this dreadful night, neither officers nor men having shelter or rest; those only who have been accustomed to tropical rains can form an adequate idea of the torrents that poured down.”

15 October 1810

As dawn broke on 15 October 1810, a second day of combat awaited both sides.
In the Castle, Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz and his newly re-enforced garrison braced themselves for another ferocious assault by the British forces. Rain that fell throughout the night continued to soak the leaking fortress and its defenders, casting a gloomy veil over the battlefield. Yet there was hope. Reinforcements on the first night included Lieutenant Eustachy Chełmicki leading a small detachment of 60 men from Mijas and Chef de Bataillon Ignacy Bronisz arriving with 200 men from Alhaurín el Grande, along with 80 dragoons from the 21st Regiment. Their arrival bolstered the Polish defenders, revitalising their spirits and preparing them for the day's trials.

They anticipated the renewed bombardment and prepared accordingly. During the night, the troops reinforced the earthworks and the remaining artillery was carefully repositioned to protect the most vulnerable sections of the fortress. Hardened by battle, the Poles were firm behind their defences, determined and able to resist at all costs. The night had been ‘extended’ for the British and now began an unwelcome day. The soldiers lucky enough to remain on land had endured the cold and wet in their makeshift camps, their morale wavering after the unsuccessful assault on the Castle the previous day.

Bombardment Begins

After significant losses on the first day, another failed attempt would damage the forces' resolve, so as a prelude to battle, Blayney ordered the ships to commence a slow cannonade on the Castle. They would mostly miss, but if one in 10 landed, it could open the Castle for his troops. As the morning went by, he was filled with panicked meetings with his officers and watching from the deck as the cannons roared. Blayney was helped to understand that morale was low and his leadership at the front of the 89th of Foot was the only way to avoid mutiny.
The matter had to be concluded that day; another night in the rain would not be possible. In the late morning, he boarded a shore boat to take personal charge of the beachhead operation. The arrival of HMS Rodney with reinforcements around noon transformed the atmosphere among the British. The plan was simple: bombard the Castle and follow up with an overwhelming infantry assault. During the morning, at least one tower was hit and partially collapsed as the 32 pounder kept up a bombardment and pierced a massive hole in one of the Castle’s walls. The boats were sent to bring the fresh troops ashore; the distance can be calculated from Balyneys

statement that “ these boats were so close to the shore that I could have gone and returned in five minutes” would indicate that ships were about 300 metres out.

The Ground Assault

The 89th regiment would need no time to prepare for battle. As the first of the 89th came ashore, Blayney decided to form the front line with the 89th and the 82nd behind and make the charge into the Castle. Time was running out as defenders fiercely resisted. Blayney had no choice but to lead a charge they pushed forward with these recently landed hastily assembled troops, hoping to overrun the Polish defenders before nightfall. When the Castle walls showed a huge hole, Blayney ordered the firing to stop and, with the extraordinary courage of an experienced veteran, led 700 infantry up the hill toward the Castle.

The weather, which had plagued the British throughout the battle, continued to take its toll. Rain and winds met them on the steep, muddy slopes—the wet conditions rendered many firearms useless due to misfires. In contrast, the Polish defenders, sheltered within the Castle's walls, could easily maintain their positions. Młokosiewicz's earlier orders to keep their powder dry and conserve ammunition had paid off, as the Poles could fire with precision when it mattered most.

Polish Counterattack

Captain Młokosiewicz, a fighter and strategist, knew that if many troops breached the Castle, they would all die, so he decided on a daring counterattack that would enter military history. He may have realised that the ships would eventually demolish the Castle, so he had to use a surprise strategy. He assembled a force of 200 of his best men, including soldiers from the reinforcements brought in by Chełmicki and Bronisz, for an audacious sortie.

As the British troops struggled up the muddy slopes, hindered by the rain-soaked terrain, Młokosiewicz sent his men out from the new hole in the Castle walls and down the hill. They descended on the British troops in a sudden and furious charge with bayonets fixed at an enemy caught off guard by the ferocity and momentum of the attack. The British artillery positions, set up earlier in the day in anticipation of a prolonged siege, became a prize of the Polish charge. The gunners, taken by surprise, had little time to react before the Poles were upon them and bayoneted those who did not run quickly enough. Chaos ensued as the Polish forces stormed the British positions, which did not have time to neutralise their artillery, allowing the Poles to capture two cannons. The Polish soldiers quickly turned the captured artillery on the retreating British infantry. The close-range cannons that punched the Castle now unleashed fire upon their former owners.

The effect was devastating. The British lines, already disorganised by the Polish charge, broke under the weight of the unexpected cannon fire. The captured guns, expertly manned by Polish artillerymen, poured shots into the British ranks, inflicting more casualties and further demoralising the attackers. Despite Blayney's bravery, the Polish defenders were unrelenting. Reinforced by more troops from Alhaurín and Mijas and buoyed by their success, the Poles fought fiercely. The rain-soaked slopes had become a killing ground, where British soldiers slipped and fell under the relentless musket fire and bayonet charges of the Polish forces.

Blayney's Capture

During this moment of retreat, the most dramatic event of the battle occurred. As the line broke, Blayney found himself among a much smaller group that had become cut off from the rest of the troops as the British lines broke and scattered. The group grew smaller as some were killed, injured or retreated. Surrounded by Polish soldiers and with no chance of escape, he was taken prisoner along with just 9 of his closest men. Another 180 were captured, and many were killed and most were from the newly arrived 89th. The capture of Blayney, the commanding general of the British forces, marked the turning point in the battle. His capture, coupled with the failure of the British assault, demoralised the remaining troops, who now had little hope of victory. After Blayney's capture, chaos erupted among the remaining British forces. The news of their commander's capture was slow to reach the ships offshore. Instead of retreating, the British vessels resumed their bombardment of the Castle, desperate to salvage the situation. From within the fortress walls, Captain Młokosiewicz, recognising the futility of continued bloodshed, seized the moment and brought Blayney to the upper wall of the Castle, ordering him to signal the ships to cease fire. Standing high on a wall, rain pouring down and facing death if he refused, Blayney had no choice but to reluctantly raise his arm, gesturing for his fleet to withdraw.

British Defeat and Retreat

With their commander now a prisoner and the Polish cannons trained on them, the British ships had no choice but to comply. The troops retreated from the shore in small boats to the waiting frigates, marking the end of the Battle and sealing an improbable Polish victory. By late afternoon, it was clear that the British had been decisively defeated. The attempted counter-offensive had failed, and the capture of Blayney left the British forces leaderless and in disarray. With darkness falling and the weather deteriorating, the remaining British troops retreated to their beachhead, where they rapidly evacuated. The once-confident British force, which had set out to capture Málaga, was now broken and demoralised, having suffered significant casualties and the loss of their commanding officer. With his boss a prisoner, the Acting commander, Brigade Major Mullins, will have decided to abandon the assault on Málaga and go home.

> Blayney wrote in his memoir;
> *"While thus absorbed in my own melancholy reflections, I could not help exclaiming, as I looked on the Rodney and Topaze leaving, there is the ship where a few days since I dined in social friendship, and there the frigate which brought me to this shore, rejoicing in the sanguine hope of serving my country; all on board them are free, while I am doomed to pass an indefinite period in captivity, deprived of the society of all those who are dear to me in the world ! What, thought I, will my country say of my failure, or how will it appreciate my conduct in this unfortunate day ?"*

Polish Victory

The Polish defenders celebrated their victory as night fell on the second day of battle. They had not only withstood the might of the British Empire but also captured a British General—a rare

and humiliating defeat for the British during the Peninsular War. The defence of Fuengirola Castle would go down in history as a remarkable feat of military strategy and courage, with Młokosiewicz and his men earning their place in the annals of Polish and Napoleonic military history.

In the days following the battle, Blayney, now a prisoner of war, would reflect on the events that had led to his defeat. In his memoirs, he would admit that the Polish defenders had fought with a ferocity and determination that he had not anticipated. His miscalculation of their resolve and the strength of their defences had cost him the battle—and his freedom. For the Poles, the victory at Fuengirola was not just a military triumph but a symbol of their unwavering spirit and loyalty to their cause. Against overwhelming odds, they had defended their position. They turned what seemed to be an inevitable defeat into a resounding victory.

The Prisoners

Inside Fuengirola Castle, the British prisoners were lined up under the wary eyes of their Polish captors and immediately marched to Mijas. They were guarded by hundreds led by Chef de Bataillon Bronisz, who ensured that none would escape this imprisonment where the odds of survival were a grim 60%. The Poles, mindful of the British attempts to rally during the battle, knew they could not afford complacency. The journey to Mijas, Málaga, Madrid and Verdun would be long and arduous and the Poles took no chances. They moved out in a disciplined line, the captured British limping along under the watchful eyes of their captors, each step taking them further from the possibility of rescue and closer to their fate in a French prison camp. Blayney was given a horse to ride and the other office donkeys while the troops walked.

Aftermath

The morning of October 16, 1810, dawned with heavy air and continued rain over the Castle and its surroundings. The previous 36 hours had been a whirlwind of chaos, violence, unexpected outcomes and death. As the sun rose, casting long shadows over the damaged walls of Fuengirola Castle, the echoes of battle were replaced by the groans of the wounded, the whispered prayers of the living and Officers barking orders to maintain order. There was still tension in the air, horror of events and the possibility of a larger fleet returning.

On Blayney's first night as a prisoner, he was taken to Mijas. The next day would start early when he was brought back to Fuengirola, where one of history's great encounters occurred. General Horace François Bastien Sébastiani de La Porta, known as General Sebastiani, was a key figure in the defence and control of southern Spain during the Peninsular War; the prisoner General, a member of the aristocracy and ex-member of Parliament. Rather than re-telling the story, the following is from Blayney's account.

> *“In Mijas, I passed the first part of a miserable night; for at three o'clock in the morning (October 16), I was called up to return to Fiangerolla to meet General Sebastiani. Though in the greatest pain I was obliged to mount a horse, and was escorted by one*

hundred dragoons, and several officers, while the rest of the prisoners were ordered to proceed direct to Malaga.

On approaching Fiangerolla, I observed the General surrounded by a large body of troops, and was immediately presented to him. After the first salutation, he enquired what had become of my sword, and on my answering that I supposed some of the officers or soldiers had it in their possession, General Milhaw instantly took of his own and presented it to me, saying, ' Monsieur le General, here is one which has been employed in all the campaigns " against the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians, and it is now much at your " service." This speech, though tinctured with the vanity natural to a Frenchman, was applauded by the bravos of both officers and soldiers who were within hearing ; I accepted the sword, and indeed felt somewhat gratified at being paid such a public compliment by an enemy.

I begged permission of the General to visit the scene of action, which was readily granted, and two of his aides de camp, one of whom was his brother, were directed to accompany me. The scene was such as a recent field of battle usually exhibits; it was strewed with the naked and terribly mangled bodies of the soldiers of both parties. Such a scene would probably have lost much of its effect on my feelings, had fortune favoured instead of deserting me ; but now the melancholy reflections on my situation, almost made me regret not having shared the fate of the gallant fellows that had fallen around me. On my return from the field I entered into conversation with the General, who, as well as his aides de camp, soon recollected me as having served in Egypt ; and their attentions from this time were redoubled."

Blayney's account highlights the intersection of personal honour, military decorum, and the harsh realities of war. His encounter with Sebastiani reflects both the chivalric customs of the time and the deeply personal reflections that come in the aftermath of defeat. The likely setting of the Posada Inn for their initial meeting provides a backdrop to the story's human elements, where military leaders, despite their differing allegiances, met to reflect on the events that had just unfolded. Blayney's asking to visit the battlefield implies they were not there and the Possada seems the most likely location, being at the bottom of a path from Mijjas. His story adds a poignant layer to the narrative, offering a stark reminder of the high cost of the battle and the toll it took on its participants.

Inside the Castle

Within the scarred, battered walls of Fuengirola Castle, the mood was a complex mix of euphoria and exhaustion, joy and sorrow. The defenders had achieved a remarkable victory against a superior force. Yet, this triumph was stained with the blood of comrades. The Castle itself, though still standing, bore the deep wounds of battle. The once formidable walls. One missing others with cannon shot holes, crumbling and scorched by fire. Now a makeshift hospital, the courtyard was littered with debris and the fallen. Polish soldiers, who had fought bravely, faced the grim reality of their situation amid these ruins. The inside had been transformed into a scene of chaos and suffering. Bodies lay sprawled across the stone ground,

some covered hastily, others left exposed to the elements. The wounded, both Polish and British, were stretched out on blood-soaked straw, their groans filling the air. With few medical supplies, surgeons worked under appalling conditions, their saws dull, their bandages torn from uniforms or any scrap of cloth they could find. The sharp, metallic scent of gunpowder still hung in the air, mixed with the stench of sweat, blood, and death. The cries of the injured echoed through the Castle as soldiers laboured to repair breaches in the walls, the hammering of wood and stone punctuating the grim scene. Polish soldiers, many of them young and facing the horror of battle, wandered the courtyard in shock, their faces pale, their eyes hollow. Some stood in a daze, still trying to comprehend the carnage they had survived. Others moved with a grim determination, stacking munitions, repairing the shattered fortifications, or tending to their comrades with trembling hands. One soldier remembered, “The battle was over, but in our minds, it raged on. We saw the faces of the fallen in every shadow and heard their cries in the wind.”

Orders were barked to fortify the Castle further, though its walls, like the men defending them, were broken and exhausted. The soldiers, driven by the ever-present fear of another assault, worked past the limits of their strength. The Castle itself, once a symbol of defence, now stood as a grim reminder of the cost of war, its stones soaked in the fresh blood of those who fought to protect it.

The Journey to Imprisonment

For the British prisoners, the march to Mijas, Málaga and through Spain to France was a gruelling ordeal. Weak from battle wounds and lack of food, they were forced to march under the scorching sun, flanked by Polish guards who were vigilant against any attempt to escape. The knowledge that only a 60% chance of surviving a French prison would have escaped this ghostly column; they were just lucky to be alive. In his account, Blayney described the march as a "journey through purgatory," each step taking them further from the hope of rescue and deeper into despair. The prisoners knew the grim statistics: those who survived the march would face years in captivity, and for many, this would be their final journey. The French prisons were notorious for their harsh conditions, where disease and malnutrition were rampant, and the prospect of freedom was a distant dream.

As the march continued, some British soldiers, unaccustomed to the rigours of such an ordeal, began to falter. Their comrades urged them on, but a few stumbled and fell, unable to go on. The Polish guards, though firm, showed a degree of sympathy. They had faced similar trials under French command and understood the hardships of war. Occasionally, a guard would offer a fallen soldier a drink from his canteen or help lift him to his feet. These small acts of kindness were rare but deeply appreciated by the British prisoners, a brief respite from their otherwise bleak situation.

Sailing Home

On the evening of Monday, 15th October, the remaining British forces had gathered on the beach, embarking on their ships for the return journey. The boarding had begun the moment

Blayney was forced to signal them to leave from the battlements. With solemn resignation, they boarded over 2000 men from small boats to large ones as the rain fell. The mist enveloped the ships, obscuring the shore, the moon and the stars as they headed west through the wind and rain. The next day was a continuation of the nightmare. Surgeons worked tirelessly in cramped, rolling quarters, performing surgeries, often without adequate supplies or pain relief. Some succumbed to their injuries, their bodies committed to the sea or kept for burial. Despite the challenges, each ship eventually found its way back to its base, guided by the seasoned navigators of the Royal Navy.

At Gibraltar's command centre, Lieutenant General Colin Campbell received the news of the failed expedition. A messenger pigeon will have arrived before the fleet carrying a small slip of paper detailing the defeat at Fuengirola. As Campbell read the report, his face grew grim. The planned strike against the French had ended not in triumph but in a costly and humiliating defeat. Campbell knew that questions would be asked and that inquiries would follow.

The End of the French Occupation

By 1812, the tide of the war had turned dramatically. The Battle of Salamanca on July 22, 1812, marked a significant victory for the British-led forces under Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington. As Wellington advanced across Spain, French troops were forced to withdraw from key locations, including Málaga, by August 1812. The French occupation was no longer sustainable due to diminishing supplies, growing guerrilla resistance and Wellington's strategic military victories.

In Mijas, constant skirmishes between Spanish and French forces created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, with villages like Mijas caught in the crossfire. In August 1812, tensions escalated when French troops requisitioned a large store of food in Mijas, supplies that local authorities had set aside for General Ballesteros, leader of the Spanish forces harassing the French. The confiscation act was more than a military manoeuvre; it was a calculated blow to morale. As punishment for aiding Ballesteros, the French levied a crippling fine of 25,000 reales on the town and, in a brutal display of authority, executed two residents. Just two days later, however, the tide of war shifted. French forces, stretched thin and unable to hold their positions, began their retreat from Mijas. This withdrawal was not just a tactical move but the beginning of a larger retreat to Málaga, where they would eventually abandon the province entirely. For the people of Mijas, it was a bittersweet moment; relief from occupation came at the cost of years of suffering, violence, and loss.

By September 1812, the French flags that had flown over Fuengirola Castle, Mijas and Alhaurín were gone, signalling the end of French control in these regions. Guerrilla groups and local Spanish militias were critical in reclaiming these towns, ensuring that French control in southern Spain collapsed as their forces retreated to protect their northern lines.

The war continued for two more years after the liberation of Málaga. By 1813, Wellington's forces had pushed deeper into Spain, with the decisive Battle of Vitoria on June 21, 1813, effectively breaking French control in the Iberian Peninsula. Following this, Joseph Bonaparte,

Napoleon's brother and the imposed king of Spain, fled the country, leaving French forces in disarray. By April 1814, after the fall of Toulouse, the Peninsular War was officially over.

The final defeat came at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, where The Duke of Wellington commanded an allied force that decisively defeated the French army. This battle ended Napoleon's rule for good and led to his second exile to Saint Helena, where he spent the remaining years of his life. Wellington's role at Waterloo solidified his reputation as one of Britain's most outstanding military leaders and the battle marked the close of the Napoleonic Wars, restoring peace to Europe; until.....

Consequences and Enquiries

The aftermath of the Battles of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo in October 1810 was marked by confusion, controversy and numerous enquiries from all sides involved. The battle, a shocking defeat for the British and their allies, exposed the vulnerabilities in British military planning. It highlighted the strength and resilience of the Polish garrison defending Fuengirola Castle. The British expeditionary force had underestimated the strength and resolve of the Polish defenders. Blayney, known for his audacious leadership style, had chosen to assault the Castle directly instead of laying siege to it or focusing on the broader strategic objective of capturing Málaga. In his book, Blayney says

> *“The Castle I found to be infinitely stronger than it had been represented, consisting of a large square fort, situated on a hillock, of which it occupies the entire summit”*.

The result was a humiliating defeat; Blayney himself was captured and spent three years as a prisoner of war. This outcome was a major embarrassment for Britain, given the initial confidence with which the mission was launched. In the wake of the defeat, the British, French and Poles conducted official enquiries to determine what went wrong. Each side had its narrative and vested interests in shaping the outcome of these enquiries.

British Enquiries: The British enquiry focused mainly on the tactical decisions made by Blayney and the logistical failures that plagued the expedition. Also cited were severe underestimation of the enemy's capabilities and a need for proper reconnaissance. Criticism was levelled at the delayed arrival of HMS *Rodney*, which was expected to bring reinforcements and heavy artillery. The delay prevented the British from establishing a strong position early in the battle. Additionally, there needed to be more clarity about the orders given to Mullins and the Spanish forces to take the crossroads at Puerto De Los Pescadores and the decision to attack Mijas. Given hindsight, it seemed overly ambitious given the terrain and enemy positions, it may have been a different decision for Mullins with 600 soldiers in the pouring rain waiting at a crossroads.

French Enquiries: The French, for whom the Polish defenders were fighting, conducted their investigation, which praised the courage and tactical prowess of Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz and his men. They highlighted the effective use of the Castle's defensive position and the quick adaptation to the unfolding battle conditions. However, the French also noted the

significant loss of manpower and resources during the defence, contributing to their later difficulties in holding southern Spain against further British and Spanish incursions.

Polish Enquiries: The Polish enquiry celebrated the battle as a symbol of Polish bravery and resilience. The defence of Fuengirola became a celebrated moment in Polish military history, showcasing their ability to hold off a larger, better-equipped enemy. The enquiry did, however, criticise some logistical oversights, such as the inadequate supply lines and the poor state of the fort's artillery and infrastructure, which could have been disastrous under slightly different circumstances.

The Fate of the Prisoners

The aftermath of the battle was brutal for the British and allied soldiers who were captured. Approximately 200 prisoners were taken by the Polish and French forces. Historical records suggest that about 60% of prisoners taken during the Napoleonic Wars survived captivity, implying that roughly 120 of the 200 captured at Fuengirola might have survived to be released three or four years later. However, the surviving prisoners would have endured harsh conditions, including inadequate food, disease, forced labour and the psychological toll of imprisonment. The relatively high mortality rate underscores the grim reality faced by those captured in wartime during this period. The fate of the injured was equally dire. This was a time before antibiotics, and while some of the wounded may have survived, it is estimated less than 50% would have made it through their injuries, given the primitive medical care available. This further adds to the tragedy of the battle and the significant human cost of what was, in the end, a strategically insignificant engagement.

Why Was This Battle Forgotten?

While this was a small and seemingly insignificant engagement in the broader context of the Napoleonic Wars, it provides a valuable case study in military history. It reminds us of the complexities and tragedies of war, the importance of leadership and planning and the enduring human cost of conflict. Despite its significance, the Battle remains relatively obscure in the broader context of the Napoleonic Wars. Several factors contributed to this obscurity, including:

More Significant Battles Elsewhere: The Peninsular War was characterised by numerous large-scale battles and sieges, particularly in northern Spain, where General Wellington's forces were engaged. The strategic importance of these battles, such as the Siege of Badajoz and the Battle of Salamanca, overshadowed minor engagements like Fuengirola, which, despite its dramatic narrative, did not have a decisive impact on the overall campaign.

Embarrassment for Britain and Spain: The defeat at Fuengirola was a source of embarrassment for the British and the Spanish. For Britain, it was a stark reminder of the dangers of overconfidence and poor planning. For Spain, still reeling from the occupation by Napoleon's forces and struggling to mount a cohesive resistance, the defeat was a reminder of their dependency on British military support. It was easier for both nations to minimise the significance of the defeat and focus on more successful engagements.

Career Repercussions: Following the battle, careers were at stake. Many British officers planning and executing the Fuengirola expedition were eager to downplay their involvement in the debacle. Although criticised, Blayney was exonerated mainly in official records, with blame often shifted to lower-ranking officers or external circumstances such as weather and unexpected enemy resistance.

The Afterlives.

As we have learned so much about some people and groups involved in the Battle, the following is a brief ‘what happened next’ to the victors and vanquished of this forgotten engagement.

The Afterlife of Andrew Thomas Blayney

Andrew Thomas Blayney lived a long, complex life that extended far beyond this defeat. Following his capture at Fuengirola in 1810, Blayney's post-battle experiences were marked by personal trials, political shifts and a reflective end to his storied career.

Prisoner of War: 1810–1814
After being captured by Polish forces led by Captain Młokosiewicz, Lord Blayney faced an unexpected twist of fate. He was treated with chivalric respect by the French and was carried for much of the journey of senior French Generals eager to talk and learn.

During his imprisonment, Blayney was taken to France, where he spent the next four years as a prisoner of war. Despite his circumstances, he was treated with respect due to his high rank, and he gave his word that he would not attempt to escape. This promise earned him favourable treatment compared to many other prisoners, who endured much harsher conditions. He found himself 'managed' by Colonel O'Callaghan, an Irishman who had fled Ireland after being suspected of participating in the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798. O'Callaghan hailed from a Catholic landlord family in Cullaville, near Blayney's estate in County Monaghan. His family had been directly affected by the violent suppression of the uprising, particularly by the 89th Regiment, 'Blayney's Bloodhounds. O'Callaghan’s involvement in the uprising led him to escape to France, where he joined the French army and rose to Colonel. When the Fuengirola campaign began, O'Callaghan was stationed in Spain as part of the French forces. He recognised Blayney, his former enemy, but in a surprising move, he intervened to ensure Blayney's survival, persuading the Poles to spare him. There is also an unsubstantiated story that the two men met again later in life, though no solid evidence exists to support this. O'Callaghan's actions likely played a role in Blayney's eventual release in exchange for Irish prisoners held by the British. At the end of his imprisonment, Blayney was exchanged for several Irish republican prisoners.
Blayney used his time in captivity to write extensively, most notably in his two-volume work *Narrative of a Forced Journey through Spain and France as a Prisoner of War in 1810 to 1814*. His writings, filled with reflections on his experiences and the broader Napoleonic conflict, were published soon after his release. In his accounts, Blayney described the difficulties the British prisoners and their captors faced. His book documented the military aspects of his journey and

explored the human side of war, showing empathy for the soldiers and civilians he encountered. His time in captivity shaped his views on leadership and war, making him a more reflective figure upon his return.

Post-War Political Career and Personal Life
Upon his release in 1814, Blayney returned to Britain, where he was celebrated for his endurance. Despite the defeat at Fuengirola, his reputation as a brave and honourable soldier remained largely intact. His account of the battle and subsequent captivity earned him respect and sympathy in military and political circles. In 1815, Blayney returned to his estate in Ireland and London to resume his peer and politician roles. He was given back the safest parliamentary seat in British democracy as a Member of Parliament for the infamous "rotten borough" of Old Sarum until the borough was abolished under the 1832 Reform Act. His time in Parliament was less notable than his military career and he struggled to adapt to the political realities of post-war Britain.

Nevertheless, Blayney remained active in public life, developing Castleblayney. He focused on modernising the local economy, introducing small industries and investing in infrastructure improvements such as roads and market facilities. Blayney's legacy in Castleblayney extended to constructing Protestant and Catholic churches, a notable gesture for a Protestant landlord in a divided Ireland. His relationship with the Catholic community was complex, shaped by his military actions during the United Irishmen uprising and his later efforts to rebuild bridges.

Later Years and Death
By the 1830s, Blayney's health had declined and personal and public struggles marked his final years. In 1832, he made an "unhappy speech" in Parliament that was poorly received, leading to public embarrassment. He spent his remaining years at Castleblayney, overseeing its development and reflecting on his long career. Blayney died suddenly in 1834 at 63, at Bilton's Hotel in Dublin. He was buried at his family estate in Castleblayney and his death marked the end of a life filled with military glory, political power and personal hardship.

Legacy
Andrew Thomas Blayney's life is remembered through various lenses: as a military leader, an Irish landlord and a man of letters for bravery at Fuengirola. His defeat is still acknowledged, with his sword displayed in Kraków, Poland, as a symbol of the Poles' victory. His written works continue to offer valuable insights into the Napoleonic Wars, particularly the experiences of prisoners of war during that era. Blayney's complex legacy is also tied to the land and people of Ireland. As a figure who both repressed and later worked with the Catholic community, his life reflects the broader tensions of the time. Today, Castleblayney stands as a testament to his efforts to modernise his estate and improve the lives of its inhabitants.

Irony of Leadership
One of the ironic twists was that his regiment would continue to serve under General Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington, who would eventually lead Britain to victory in the Peninsular War and later serve as Prime Minister of Great Britain. If history were different and

Wellington had been taken prisoner while Balyney freed Spain from Fuengirola upwards, he may have become Prime Minister. Ultimately, Blayney's life after Fuengirola was one of reflection and continued service, albeit in a more subdued and localised manner. His contributions to military history, politics, and the local community ensure his legacy endures, even if his ambitions are never fully realised.

The Afterlife of Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz

Following his remarkable victory at Fuengirola, Młokosiewicz continued his service in the Army of the Duchy of Warsaw. Although his role at Fuengirola was highly celebrated in Poland, it was downplayed in the British and French accounts. Nonetheless, his defence of the Castle became an enduring point of Polish pride. Młokosiewicz retired from active duty following the Napoleonic Wars, settling with his wife Anna on her estate near Szydłowiec. Despite retiring with the rank of Major, he was fondly referred to as "The General" by the local community, a testament to his bravery and reputation.

The November Uprising of 1830-1831

In 1830, Młokosiewicz came out of retirement to support the Polish November Uprising, a national effort to gain independence from Russia. Although 60 years old and in poor health, his extensive military experience was needed. He was promoted to Colonel and played a crucial role in the defence of Warsaw during the final stages of the uprising. Młokosiewicz led his forces in the borough of Wola, where his tactical skills delayed the Russian capture of Warsaw for an additional day. The Polish troops were eventually overwhelmed, so despite these efforts, Warsaw fell.

Literary Legacy

In the final years of his life, Młokosiewicz became an author, publishing an account of the Battle in response to inaccuracies he found in Lord Blayney's memoirs. His version offered a Polish perspective on the battle, ensuring that the bravery of his fellow soldiers was recognised correctly.

Family and Death

Młokosiewicz and his wife had three children, including Ludwik Młokosiewicz, a renowned botanist and Helena Mikorska, who was notably connected to the composer Frédéric Chopin. Colonel Młokosiewicz died on March 23, 1845, in Warsaw, at 75. He was buried in the prestigious Powązki Cemetery, a fitting resting place for a national hero. His legacy as a symbol of Polish resilience and his role in the Napoleonic Wars remains a source of pride in Poland, where his military accomplishments, especially at Fuengirola, are celebrated today.

The Afterlife of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Duchy of Warsaw

The Polish 4th Infantry Regiment of the Duchy of Warsaw, which fought bravely at the Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo in 1810, saw an eventful yet tumultuous journey after their celebrated defence of Fuengirola Castle. The regiment's victory over a much larger Anglo-Spanish force was a significant moment, earning recognition from Napoleon, who honoured some officers with the Legion of Honour for their bravery.

Following their service in Malaga, many members of the 4th Regiment were stationed across other key Spanish regions, serving in further operations during the Peninsular War. However, by 1812, their focus shifted dramatically as Napoleon recalled Polish forces, including the 4th Regiment, for his infamous and doomed invasion of Russia. This campaign marked a tragic turn in the regiment's fortunes. Like many Napoleonic units, the 4th Infantry faced catastrophic losses due to the severe Russian winter, logistical failures and continuous battles against the Russian army.

The Russian Campaign and Losses

The regiment's involvement in the Russian campaign exacted a heavy toll. Remarkably few soldiers survived the retreat from Moscow, as thousands succumbed to the cold and starvation or were killed in battle. Many Polish soldiers were taken as prisoners by the Russians, while others perished during the fighting. Though exact figures are difficult to confirm, most of the regiment never returned to Poland. Of the original troops who fought in battles like Fuengirola and later campaigns, only a fraction survived to return home.

Personal Stories and Return Home

Among the survivors, estimated to be about 60%, many faced shattered lives upon their return. Those who did make it back to Poland found themselves in a politically unstable region, as the Duchy of Warsaw was dissolved following Napoleon's downfall. Some soldiers continued their military careers, joining the Polish forces that later took part in uprisings against Russian dominance, particularly the November Uprising of 1830. Others, however, returned to their homes and resumed civilian lives, their military careers behind them but forever marked by their service under Napoleon.

The Regiment’s Legacy

The remnants of the 4th Infantry Regiment eventually became part of the Polish Kingdom's Army, under Russian control, following the fall of the Duchy of Warsaw. By 1815, Napoleon's Polish units had mostly dissolved as they had served their purpose, and the gamble on Napoleon's success had failed. The legacy of the 4th Infantry Regiment is preserved in the traditions of Poland’s current armed forces, honouring the bravery of regiments that fought for independence during the Napoleonic era.

The Afterlife of the 89th Regiment of Foot

The 89th Regiment of Foot arrived last and sustained the most casualties in the attack on Fuengirola Castle. With the late arrival of HMS Rodney, many were dead, and more were

prisoners within hours of landing. Like most prisoners in this war, they endured a journey to Verdun that was brutal, and a significant number of the captured soldiers died from injuries, exhaustion and disease during the long march. Many of those who were wounded during the battle later succumbed to their injuries due to the poor conditions they faced while in captivity.

After Fuengirola, the 2nd Battalion of the 89th Regiment was soon redeployed. They continued their service in the Peninsular War (1808–1814), though losing men and officers hampered their effectiveness. Following the Peninsular campaign, the Regiment shifted its focus to the War of 1812 in North America. The 89th saw fierce combat during the Battle of Niagara in 1814, where they sustained further casualties but earned commendations for their bravery. The battle was brutal, with over 1,000 casualties on both sides and the 89th Regiment played a critical role in the British defence.

During the War of 1812, the 89th's engagements continued to be marked by high casualty rates, both from combat and disease. After their involvement in the Battle of Fort Erie in September 1814, where they took part in counter-attacks against American forces, the Regiment experienced heavy losses yet again, mainly as sickness spread through the ranks in the harsh conditions of the North American frontier. By the time the War of 1812 ended in 1815, the 89th Regiment was depleted. Despite their losses, they had played a crucial role in the British campaigns in North America, earning the battle honour 'Niagara' for their distinguished service.

Amalgamation and Legacy

In 1881, as part of the Childers Reforms, the 89th Regiment was amalgamated with the 87th Regiment of Foot to form the Royal Irish Fusiliers. This newly formed Regiment carried forward the honours and traditions of the 89th, preserving their legacy through continued service in the British Army. The Royal Irish Fusiliers continued to serve with distinction until further amalgamations in the 20th century when they became part of the modern Royal Irish Regiment. The legacies of the 89th Regiment of Foot are commemorated in the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum in Armagh, where the Regiment's history, including their role in battles such as Fuengirola and Niagara, is preserved. Although the Regiment no longer exists as a distinct entity, its contributions to British military history remain integral to the heritage of the modern Royal Irish Regiment.

The Afterlife of the 82nd Regiment of Foot

The Battle in October 1810 was a bad experience for the 2nd Battalion of the 82nd Regiment of Foot, resulting in significant casualties. In the aftermath of the battle, the captured members of the 82nd Regiment were marched towards Verdun as prisoners of war.
Later that year, the remaining Regiment participated in the defence of Tarifa, successfully holding off a 15,000-strong French siege.
The defenders, which included both British and Spanish troops, endured harsh conditions but ultimately forced the French to retreat after inflicting nearly 680 casualties on the attackers.

In 1812, the 82nd participated in the Burgos campaign, during which Wellington's forces attempted to capture the city of Burgos. Although the siege failed, they played a vital role in the retreat, suffering significant losses as the British withdrew under constant pressure from French forces. The following year, the Regiment fought at the decisive Battle of Vitoria in 1813, where they earned commendations from Wellington for their bravery. The victory at Vitoria effectively ended French control of Spain and marked the beginning of the final phase of the Peninsular War. The 82nd Regiment was dispatched to Canada during the latter stages of the War of 1812. While they arrived too late to participate in significant engagements, they took part in defending the Niagara frontier, including counterattacks at Fort Erie. 1815, following the war's conclusion, the Regiment returned to Europe, briefly serving as part of the Army of Occupation in France.

Legacy and Amalgamation
In 1881, as part of the Childers Reforms of the British Army, the 82nd Regiment was amalgamated with the 40th Regiment of Foot to form the Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment). This unit continued to serve with distinction and eventually became part of today's Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, ensuring the proud legacy of the 82nd lives on.

The Afterlife of the Regimiento Imperial de Toledo

The attack on Mias and the disastrous retreat cost the Regimiento Imperial de Toledo 40 captured soldiers, at least 20 dead and more wounded. The eventual failure to take Mijas meant the British and Spanish forces could not block reinforcements heading to Fuengirola, which contributed to the overall collapse of Blayney's offensive strategy.

Prisoners and Deaths on the Road to Verdun
Following the disastrous outcome, many Spanish soldiers from the Regimiento Imperial de Toledo who were captured were marched along with their British counterparts toward Verdun. This long and arduous journey claimed more lives. Several soldiers, already weakened from injuries and exhaustion, perished due to inadequate medical care and harsh conditions during the march. While exact numbers are elusive, it is known that a significant portion of the prisoners did not survive to see their homeland again.

Subsequent Campaigns and Casualties
Despite their defeat at Mijas, the Regimiento Imperial de Toledo continued to fight in the Peninsular War. They were redeployed in 1811 during the Battle of Albuera, where the Allied forces, including the Spanish, suffered over 5,000 casualties. The regiment, already weakened by losses at Mijas, faced further reductions as it engaged the French in this costly but ultimately 'victorious' battle.

In 1812, the regiment took part in the Siege of Valencia, culminating in a disastrous surrender to French forces on 9 January 1812. The surrender marked the end of the Imperial de Toledo's active role in the Napoleonic Wars. The regiment was disbanded soon after and many surviving soldiers either returned to civilian life or were absorbed into other units.

Legacy and Amalgamation

Though the Imperial de Toledo Regiment was disbanded in 1812, its legacy lives on through military archives and Spanish regimental histories. Despite their overwhelming challenges, the regiment's role in defending Spain during the Peninsular War remains an important chapter in Spanish military history. Their engagement in critical battles like Mijas and Albuera is a testament to the sacrifices made by Spanish forces in the fight against Napoleonic domination.

Historical Memory

In Mijas and Fuengirola, these events are not noticeably remembered; no memorial has been erected, and when complete, this will be the first book on the subject. Two exceptions are the 2010 re-enactment at the Castle and a series of re-enactments of the period in Mijas Pueblo.

The 2010 Re-Enactment

The 2010 re-enactment of the Battle of Fuengirola, held from October 15 to 17, was a significant event commemorating the 200th anniversary of this historical engagement. The re-enactment took place at the Castle. Participants dressed in period-appropriate military uniforms represented the Franco-Polish defenders and the Anglo-Spanish attacking forces.

The event featured detailed recreations of key moments from the battle, including the amphibious assault by British and Spanish forces. The re-enactment included dramatic artillery and musket fire, simulating the intense fighting in 1810. Additionally, the event highlighted the strategic manoeuvres, such as the surprise sally by the Polish forces, which led to the capture of British artillery positions and, ultimately, the capture of Lord Blayney himself.

The event was a spectacle of historical accuracy and pageantry and served as a tool for education and tourism, drawing attention to Fuengirola's historical significance and its Castle. It brought together historians, residents and international visitors, offering a vivid portrayal of the hardships and heroism experienced by the soldiers during the Peninsular War.

A DVD was produced to document the event, capturing the action-packed re-enactment moments. It was later made available for those interested in this unique historical celebration. You can view some footage and learn more about the event on YouTube.

The 2017 Re-enactment in Mijas

In September 2017, the quiet gardens surrounding the walls of Mijas Pueblo were once again filled with the sounds of battle as history was brought to life in a vivid re-enactment of the French occupation. It had been over two centuries since Napoleon’s troops had marched into the town, but on this day, the drama of that invasion was relieved with striking intensity.

Organised by the cultural association “Torrijos 1831” alongside local groups and the Bandoleros de Grazalema. The reenactment drew residents and visitors alike to witness Mijas’ historical fight for survival. The French arrived, as they did in 1810, marching into the town that had once been used as a strategic lookout. From there, a two-year occupation began, which the reenactment captured with startling realism. Actors portraying French soldiers enforced strict

curfews, seized food supplies, and issued harsh punishments for any resistance, recreating the daily struggles faced by the residents of Mijas. One of the most poignant moments of the event was the recreation of a local hero's sacrifice. The bandolero, Mejías, who had fought bravely against the occupying forces, was killed during a skirmish, and his body was returned to his family. The sombre scene, reenacted in front of the crowd, was a reminder of the personal toll that the fight for freedom took on Mijas' residents.

The event's highlight was the reenactment of the guerrilla uprising that eventually drove the French from the town. Inspired by the events of 1812, local fighters, led by the infamous bandoleros, struck back at the French in a surprise attack. In a dramatic retelling of that final clash, the bandoleros descended upon the unsuspecting French troops, defeating them in a fierce battle that ended the occupation. This reenactment was a living reminder of the town's spirit, the courage of those who fought, and the victory that freed them from foreign rule. In period costumes, the reenactors marched through the same streets their ancestors once defended, offering a poignant connection to the past. Even after 200 years, the pride and determination that helped drive out the invaders remain alive in the hearts of those who call Mijas home.

Conclusion

The Battle of Fuengirola Castle and Mijas Pueblo was an astonishing and unexpected clash between a small Polish garrison defending the Castle of Fuengirola and a much larger British force. What began as a meticulously planned operation to capture a supposedly weakly defended outpost spiralled into a fierce and chaotic fight, marked by poor intelligence, challenging weather conditions, and determined resistance by the Polish defenders.

Blayney planned a swift landing and took the Castle with overwhelming force, more than 2,000 soldiers, supported by the firepower of the HMS *Rodney* and other ships. But from the start, things went wrong with the biggest ship and half the British soldiers delayed, a difficult beach landing and the weather. The Polish commander, Captain Franciszek Młokosiewicz, had fortified his position well, and his men were prepared for the onslaught. Over two days, the British were met with a relentless defence that included aggressive counterattacks. The Polish soldiers, though outnumbered, took advantage of the Castle's elevated position, inflicting significant losses on the attacking forces.

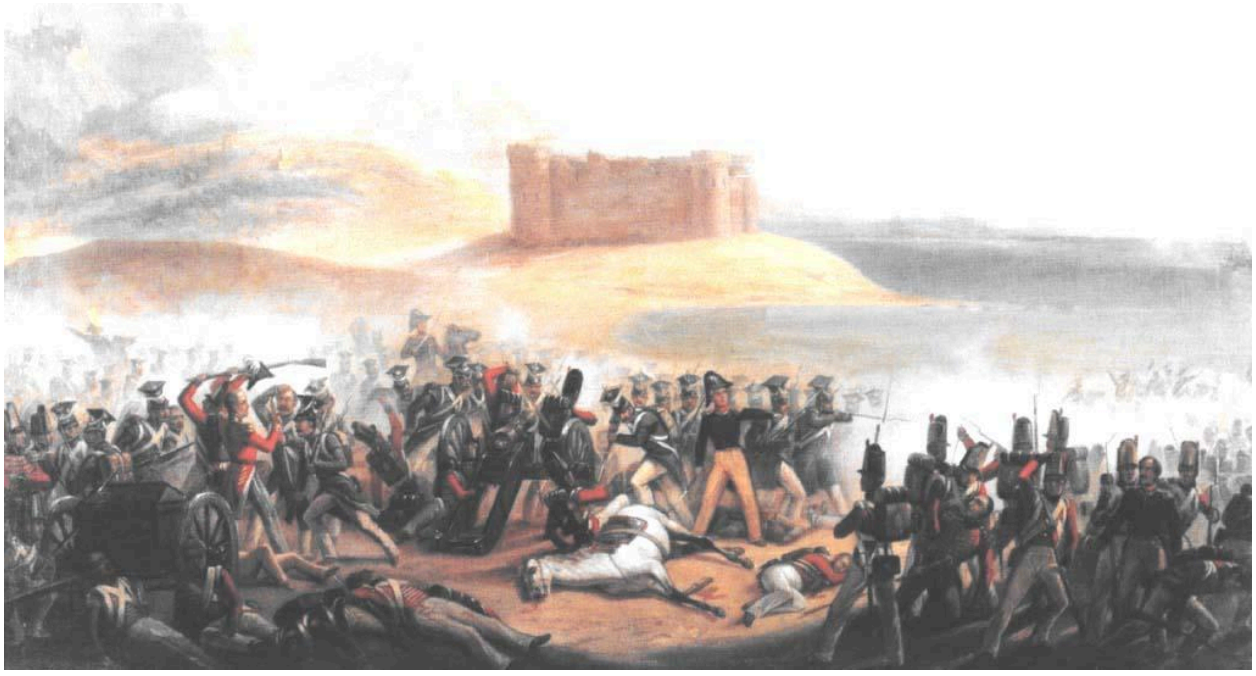
Despite several attempts to breach the Castle's defences, including bombardments from ships at sea and direct assaults on land, the British were pushed back. In a bold move, the Polish defenders even captured British cannons, turning them against their enemies. By the end of the second day, Blayney was captured in a final counterattack and his forces were forced to retreat in disarray. What was an easy victory turned into a humiliating defeat for the British.

The aftermath of the battle left its mark on all who participated. For the British, it was a stark reminder of the unpredictability of war, while for the Polish soldiers, it was a moment of pride and courage. The French garrison, primarily supported by these Polish troops, held the region

for longer, though the larger war continued to shift. Blayney spent 3 years as a prisoner of war, and the events at Fuengirola became a cautionary tale in the annals of military history. Mijas proved as impregnable as it was when the Moors held it for two years longer than the Castle of Fuengirola, and then it surrendered after Malaga fell.

Today, the Castle of Fuengirola and the impregnable rock face of Mijas Pueblo are silent sentinels to these dramatic events. As you walk the Castle's grounds, you can imagine the echoes of cannon fire from ships at sea, the flashes of musket volleys cutting through the rain-soaked hills, and feel the desperate battle unfolding below. Both the Castle and the rock face are more than historical landmarks; they are monuments to the courage and determination of those who defended them, reminders that even the most unlikely battles can leave a lasting legacy.

As you close this document, I hope the story has revived this forgotten chapter of history, honouring the past and inviting reflection on the power of human resilience. History is never far away when you stand before these rocks, a testament to the strength of those who stood their ground.



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The Siege of Fuengirola

The Castle walls stood solid and proud,
While British shells fell like a shroud,
But Młokosiewicz swore aloud,
"Fuengirola will stand by morning!"
With iron will, his men held fast,
Through storm and shot till dawn had passed,
Their flag flew high upon the mast,
Defiant in the morning.

Oh, Blayney bold, did you march in vain,
With your thousands strong upon the plain?
For the Polish roar and the cannon's strain,
Would break your charge by morning!

The cannon roared, the muskets cracked,
But Polish hearts would not be sacked,
The British line was forced to back,
And flee from the field by morning.
Blayney captured, humbly bowed,
His grand defeat, the foe avowed,
As Fuengirola cheered aloud,
For the victory won that morning.

Oh, Blayney bold, did you march in vain,
With your thousands strong upon the plain?
For the Polish roar and the cannon's strain,
Would break your charge by morning!

So let this tale be known to all,
Of Castle Stones and Mijas' call,
Where brave men stood, though few and small,
And fought with their lives that morning.
Though history's pen forgets to write,
Of Fuengirola's fiery fight,
The Polish standstill shines so brightly,
As it did in the dawn that morning.

Oh, Blayney bold, did you march in vain,
With your thousands strong upon the plain?
For the Polish roar and the cannon's strain,
Would break your charge by morning!