

## **EL PATRIMONIO DE LA GUERRA DE LA INDEPENDENCIA: LA RUTA DE NAPOLEÓN A LO LARGO DEL RIO DUERO**

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### **Resumen:**

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo identificar, registrar y analizar diferentes valores patrimoniales asociados a la presencia de Napoleón Bonaparte en el valle del Duero durante la Guerra de la Independencia, entre noviembre de 1808 y enero de 1809. Desarrollamos una ruta cultural como marco que aportará un significado pleno a estas huellas y vestigios, y fortalecerá la identidad del patrimonio cultural y turístico de la ruta. Además se ofrece un relato de distintos acontecimientos destacados que tuvieron lugar durante esos días y se hace referencia a monumentos históricos representativos algunos de ellos todavía en uso-relacionados con la visita de Napoleón.

Este itinerario, de gran valor histórico, no ha sido suficientemente difundido, por lo que nuestro principal interés es potenciar sus hitos emblemáticos, que han sido testigos del paso de Napoleón durante su campaña.

**Palabras clave:** Guerra de la Independencia, patrimonio, turismo, valle del Duero, guerras napoleónicas

## **THE HERITAGE OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE: NAPOLEON'S ROUTE ALONG THE DUERO RIVER**

### **Abstract:**

This work aims to identify, record and analyze different heritage values associated with the presence of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Douro Valley during the War of Independence, between November 1808 and January 1809. We develop a cultural route as a framework

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that will bring full meaning to these traces and vestiges, and strengthen the identity of the cultural and tourist heritage of the route. It also provides an account of various highlights that took place during those days and refers to representative historical monuments - some of them still in use - related to Napoleon's visit. This itinerary, of great historical value, has not been widespread enough, so our main interest is to enhance its emblematic milestones, which have witnessed Napoleon's passage during his campaign.

**Key words:** War of Independence, heritage, tourism, Duero Valley, Napoleonic wars

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Peninsular War (1808-1814), a military conflict for the control of the Iberian Peninsula during the Napoleonic Wars, despite being determinant in Napoleon's final defeat, had a disastrous social and economic impact in Spain and marked the history of all the nations involved (Spain, France, Portugal, Great Britain and Ireland).

From the point of view of tourism and heritage, Napoleon's achievements and major landmarks have been greatly valued throughout Europe due to their historic significance. Thus, national and regional governments as well as community and private institutions are responsible for many of the actions carried out in this sense<sup>2</sup> –route planning, museums, signalling of battlefields. Unfortunately, the case of Spain, and more precisely of Castile and Leon, is different. Despite the fact that we have recently celebrated the second centenary of the Peninsular War, and that different actions have been organized to commemorate the occasion -conferences, exhibitions, commemorative ceremonies, battle re-enactments, etc.- this region still has a lot to do in terms of preserving, protecting and publicizing its many landmarks and historical sites related to its Peninsular War heritage.

There are a lot of milestones related to this part of our history along the Duero Valley, later to become the autonomous region of Castile and Leon, where most towns and villages suffered the conflict considerably. In fact, in this territory very decisive battles took place -Arapiles, Cabezón de Pisuegra, Medina de Rioseco, Espinosa de los Monteros, Gamonal- it also witnessed long sieges –Astorga, Ciudad Rodrigo, the Castle of Burgos- and even longer occupations, as in the case of Valladolid and Burgos.

One event which was a major determining factor for the duration of the conflict was the presence of Napoleon in the Castilian plateau from November 1808 to January 1809. Following this brief and personal campaign of Bonaparte, our goal is to carry out a review of different historical and heritage landmarks associated with his presence in the Duero Valley. Our interest is to identify, register and analyse all these cultural and heritage materials with the objective of contributing to their protection and safeguard, so as to, why not, fitting the current fashion for *war tourism* and thematic routes.

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<sup>2</sup> A detailed account of many of these sites, and an events agenda, can be found in Fondation Napoleon (n. d.).

## 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After several setbacks following his initial easy and successful seize of Spain –the French defeat of Bailén, the siege of Zaragoza, and the continuous activity of the guerrillas in the North– Napoleon decided to lead his army himself in the Peninsula, so as to guarantee a complete and lasting victory. He declared “that he in person would descend on Madrid and restore his brother to the throne; the Spaniards would either bow down or die.” (Day, 2008, p. 114) He also stated that “with the assistance of God he intended to crown his brother king of Spain at Madrid, and to plant the eagles of France on the towers of Lisbon.” (Gorton, 1851, BUO)

The emperor departed from Paris towards Spain on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1808, entering the country like a desolating whirlwind, with an impressive army. On November 8<sup>th</sup> he spent the night at the *Casa de las Cadenas* in Miranda de Ebro, and the following day he stayed in Briviesca.

On the march towards Madrid he launched massive offensives. His men victoriously fought the battle of Gamonal –in Burgos– being their objective to occupy that city. Marshall Soult routed Count Belvedere in Gamonal’s woods on November 10<sup>th</sup>, thus granting the capture, sack and occupation of Burgos. Napoleon eventually entered the city in the early hours of 11<sup>th</sup> November, remaining there until the 22<sup>nd</sup>. During those days, Marshall Victor beat the army of general Blake in Espinosa de los Monteros, a town almost 100 km north of Burgos.

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> they left Burgos and headed towards Lerma and Aranda de Duero. Having been informed that his army had won the battle of Tudela de Navarre, Bonaparte decided to march towards Madrid. On November 29<sup>th</sup> the headquarters was established in Bocegillas (Segovia) at the bottom of the Somosierra Pass, a gorge through the mountains of the Puerto de Somosierra, the last barrier to Madrid. A body of 13.000 Spanish soldiers occupied and were prepared to defend it. The French army defeated the Spanish troops at the renowned battle of Somosierra, thanks to the Polish Light Cavalry

Regiment under the orders of the emperor. Napoleon arrived to Chamartín –outside of Madrid– on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and kept his headquarters there for several days, sending the authorities in Madrid three summons to capitulate, what they did on December 4<sup>th</sup>. He did not set foot in Madrid, though, until December 9<sup>th</sup> so as to maintain the pretension that his brother Joseph was the king of Spain.

Napoleon’s intention now was to drive his army towards the south and west of the Peninsula, in order to complete the occupation and conquest of the whole territory. But he had to alter his plans somewhat when he received news that British forces under the command of General John Moore were traveling towards the northwest of Spain. Consequently, he decided to confront and crush them. So, Napoleon left his Chamartín headquarters on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, intending to proceed to Villacastín, where he arrived later than expected due to a severe blizzard. In their pursuit towards Moore’s troops, Napoleon and his men went along various Castile and Leon towns, Arevalo (24<sup>th</sup> December), Tordesillas (25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>), Medina de Rioseco (28<sup>th</sup>), Valderas (29<sup>th</sup>), Benavente

(30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>th</sup>) and Astorga (1<sup>st</sup> January 1809). But upon arriving to Astorga, he was “alarmed by news of intrigues against him by two of his ministers and, even more, by

credible reports of Austrian moves threatening war" (Gerstein, 2011, p. 61). So it was that Napoleon was informed of the new alliance between Great Britain and Austria, and how the Austrian troops had started to be mobilized. Thus the emperor decided to return to France and leave part of his armies in pursuit of Moore's men. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> he left for Benavente, and travelled to Valladolid the following day –a convenient location for his headquarters, given that there he could get news from Paris in just five days. He remained in Valladolid from January 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, and then he definitely left for Paris never to return to the Peninsula again.

During this brief but intense tour along the northern part of Spain, many of the territories that Napoleon went by are part of the Duero Valley and the Castilian plateau. Here, during these days, plenty of battles, skirmishes of greater or lesser degree, clashes, and other episodes worth remembering, and still alive specially in rural areas, took place. In fact, there are numerous landmarks –some somewhat neglected- that should be taken care of and explored in order to provide with a tourism marketing strategy intended for those interested in heritage and culture and in Napoleon's deeds.

### **3. TOURISM AND CULTURAL ROUTES**

Viewed from an economic perspective, tourism is nowadays one of the most rapid growing sectors in the world. However, most of this progression is taking place in countries and areas with emerging economies, but not so much in developed countries, as is the case of Western Europe. This situation has triggered the need for an offer of alternative ways of tourism. The literature on this theme is extensive (Smith & Eadington, 1992; Ei & Karamanis, 2017; Fragaki, 2003) and, among the possible alternatives being considered in this search for new markets, cultural tourism is acquiring a growing importance.

Cultural tourism is practiced by people who visit those attractions located away from their home in order to "satisfy their cultural needs" (Richards, 2003, Conceptual definition, para. 4). One type of cultural tourism is cultural heritage –i.e. when "culture becomes heritage by the character of accumulating traditions" (Nagy, 2012, p. 47)– a category with a great present and future potential. Taking into account that 2018 has been the European Year of Cultural Heritage, Spain and, more specifically, Castile and Leon play a leading role as a heritage destination, both tangible and intangible. Not in vain "the region also contains the creation story of Spain" (Gilbert, 2016, para. 4).

One very effective way of experiencing heritage tourism is through thematic routes, that is, an itinerary that connects natural or artificial attractions on the basis of a certain theme, and that are accessible by a form of transport (Nagy, 2012, p. 46). In our case, since the main milestones to be visited have to do with heritage and historical events related to the campaign of Napoleon in this territory, and due to the fact that many of the tourists visit these sites due to a "growth of nostalgia" (Richards, 2003, The colourisation of tourist practices, para. 6), doing it in a route fashion will contribute to have them witness first hand, and in a chronological order, the important locations where the events of interest took place.

#### **4. SOME EXAMPLES OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE NAPOLEONIC HERITAGE IN THE AREA**

In this section we present a selection of the most outstanding tangible and intangible heritage, related to the presence and actions in the Duero valley of Napoleon Bonaparte, during his campaign in Spain. Following our previous line of thought, we will take advantage of the route the Emperor followed along the Castilian territory as a framework that will provide these emblematic highlights with a full meaning. One key aim of this type of routes, apart from attracting tourists to an area, is to tie-up several attractions that would independently not have the potential to entice visitors to spend time and money.

The idea of a Napoleon route in the Duero valley is not new, in fact it was proposed by regional parliament representatives a few years ago, causing some controversy (Hosteltur, n. d.). This reluctance towards the creation of touristic sites related to Bonaparte has not been an isolated event. Actually it has also arisen in other parts of Europe, not in vain he "crowned himself emperor and waged war on the rest of Europe" (Schofield, 2012, para 26). But the fact is that no such an itinerary has been created in the area to this day, and that when checking the routes proposed by the Castile and Leon tourist board in their Web site (Turismo Castilla y León, n. d.) none of them is dedicated to the Peninsular War or any related event.

During Napoleon's tour along Castile and Leon, which lasted 49 days, Bonaparte marched by 200 miles of hostile country under very adverse weather conditions moving an army of 50.000 soldiers. This itinerary has two main sections. The first stretch starts with the emperor's entrance in this territory through the province of Burgos (November 8<sup>th</sup>) and goes all the way to the Somosierra pass in the province of Segovia, which he crossed on November 30<sup>th</sup> after the action which took place there. It took these men 22 days to complete it.

The second section of the tour (27 days) commences in the Guadarrama pass, crossed by the *Grande Armée* on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, and ends again in the northern part of the province of Burgos, when Bonaparte secretly returned to Paris never to visit Spain again (19 January). This second section, *The route of Napoleon along the Duero valley*, is the route we intend to describe in more detail for the rest of this work.

### **5. THE NAPOLEON ROUTE ALONG THE DUERO VALLEY**

#### **5.1 From Guadarrama to Tordesillas**

On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, the day Napoleon and his men left Madrid in pursue of General Moore, the weather was good, but things changed as they approached the Guadarrama Range. Even though at the time there were no tunnels and highway connecting both sides of the range, under normal circumstances the ample road that had just been built in 1749 provided a fairly easy access. But the mountainous landscapes and huge pine groves that at present are the delight of hikers and excursionists, where not a pleasant view for the French soldiers that day, given that they had to endure terrible weather conditions along their march. The situation was so precarious that the first units of men even began to retreat. But despite the raging blizzard and the biting cold, the emperor, far from

disheartening, left his weather-proofed carriage and “went on foot at the head of the different columns, and by his example induced” (de Bausset, 1828, p. 239) and inspired his men to follow.

These events caused the French troops great delay in their pursue of the British troops, and had to spend the night at San Rafael, at the foot of the Guadarrama Range on the Castilian side. Today San Rafael is a small town of around 2500 inhabitants, but in

1808 it was a mere group of houses on the *Calzada Real* –Royal Highway- which connected Madrid with Castile, where only three families lived. Napoleon spent the night at a staging post, where some other historical figures have stayed throughout the years. The building was later used for a variety of other purposes -hotel, post office, police station- but unfortunately, in 1978, when the area was renovated, it was demolished and the site is nowadays a square, *plaza de Castilla*. Interestingly, the Spanish name for staging post is *fonda*, and this is how the people from San Rafael are also called, *fondilleros*.

**Figure 1:** The Spanish campaign of Napoleon



Source: the author

The following day Bonaparte and his men descended into the Castilian plateau along the *carretera general de Castilla* –today N-IV- on their way to Villacastín. It wasn't an easy path: “The road over which we had to pursue the English was a very difficult one, and we lost a great deal of time and many horses. It was imagined, from the Spanish maps, that it must be an extremely fine one, for it was designated the Royal Way, Camino Real. But this miserable road was called Royal only because it served for the couriers of the cabinet on horseback. The Spaniards whom we encountered in the towns through which

we passed, took care not to tell us that the fine road from Madrid to Leon lay some leagues on our right." (de Bausset, 1828, p. 241)

At one point along the road he stopped to contemplate the impressive view of the villa and its surroundings. Everything in this village is big, probably evoking a great past which it no longer held or holds. Bonaparte established his headquarters in Villacastín and stayed the night in a house in *calle Real*, at the time property of Roque Delgado, and which was later owned by the parish, and home of the local priest. It was a house in fairly good condition and quite comfortable.

During the evening something happened that might have changed the course of history. The emperor, after taking a short nap by the fireplace, decided to look out from the balcony. When a servant known as *Tío Grillo* saw him, he fetched his master's shotgun and, hiding behind the window of a nearby barn, determined to shoot him. But when warned of this by one of the maids, the owner of the house him not to do it. Eventually *Tío Grillo* gave up. Fortunately for them, Napoleon was never aware of this incident (Becerril Dimas, 1882).

Bonaparte left Villacastín in the early afternoon of November 24<sup>th</sup>, and their next stop was Arevalo, in the province of Avila. Galán Martín (1955, p. 31) provides a detailed account of the disasters that the French troops caused in the town that day and the following –this was a common behaviour, soldiers looted and vandalised property, assaulted citizens... Again, churches, convents and chapels suffered terrible damage and traces of those past events are visible still today in some of these temples.

On his way to Tordesillas, where they arrived on November 25<sup>th</sup>, the *Grande Armée* stopped at Medina del Campo. This was reported by brother San José, a Carmelite Monk (Sánchez Fernández, 2000, p. 194). He mentions how they had to accommodate around 1000 soldiers in the Corpus Christi convent - in ruins today- and how an officer, whom he guessed was Napoleon, had personally inspected the premises.

On Christmas day Napoleon set his headquarters in Tordesillas, on the river Duero, where they remained for a couple days. Bonaparte was aware that his men were exhausted and needed some rest. The emperor stayed at the Convent of Santa Clara, where he met with the abbess:

In his hurried advance, he had been quartered at Tordesillas, in the exterior portion of the convent of Santa Clara, where Jane, the insane mother of Charles V had died. The abbess, an aged lady of seventy, was presented to the Emperor, who, in spite of his excessive haste, and the anxieties of impending events, received her with respect, listened to her conversation, and granted several requests. (Horne, Raffet & Vernet, 1841: 117)

This event has been widely described by different authors, and also in the Spanish national press on the occasion of the second centenary of the visit of Bonaparte to the area. The convent of Santa Clara, a Mudejar-style monastery dating from 1340, is still home of Franciscan nuns, although it is now under the administration of the Spanish National Trust. Back in 1808 the nuns were very fortunate since, after the encounter with the abbess, among the 'several request' that Napoleon granted the convent was the privilege of not being assaulted or robbed and he also gave them 1.000 gold coins.

## 5.2 The Race of Benavente

On the 27<sup>th</sup>, in his pursuit of the British troops, the next stop was Medina de Rioseco. He wrote to his brother: "I shall reach Medina de Rio Seco to-day; and either to-day or tomorrow great events will probably take place." (Bonaparte, 1856a, p. 385) He was confident that it was going to be an easy task to defeat the English in their retreat.

Earlier that year, in July, the sadly famous battle of Medina de Rioseco had ended with the Spanish forces been defeated and an "unlicensed sacking of the city, which was accompanied by all types of atrocities" (Fernández Suárez, Pérez Estévez, Pérez Ruiz, Sheerin & Vázquez de Prada, 2007, p. 91). As an anecdote, this had prevented (if the story told by locals is true) Josephine Bonaparte's wife- from getting the false teeth, that she so desperately needed, to hide her poor teeth. In Paris, the Spanish queen Maria Luisa de Parma had shown her the one that an artisan from Medina de Rioseco -the inventor and manufacturer of such an innovative artifact- had made for her. But when the emperor's messenger arrived to Medina de Rioseco, the artisan and all his family had been killed during the sacking of the town.

While in Medina de Rioseco, marshal Bessières took Napoleon on a tour around the site where the battle had taken place -el teso de Monclín- of "strategic importance to both armies since it is located in the heart of Tierra de Campos, at a crossing of the ways close to the Torozos hills, which command the highest vantage point in the province of

Valladolid." (Fernández Suárez et al, 2007, p. 90)

The following day, All Saints day, they arrived at Valderas and set their headquarters on the first floor of the Seminary, a building that had been opened in 1738, and where the French burnt and destroyed a lot of valuable documents. This building still exists today, but has not been used as a Seminary since 1970. At present it is owned by the Town Hall and has different uses - retiring home, library, visitor's centre, etc.

Bonaparte remained in Valderas for two days. While in this town, he ordered general Lefebvre to cross the river Esla to check the direction the British were heading to and to cut them off at the pass. But he was soon informed that while fording the river, the general and some of his men had been taken prisoners by the British. Napoleon got very upset since "to be outflanked and cut up in this fashion was a rude and novel experience for the emperor's 'favourite children'" (Young, 1971, p. 8). The *Race to Benavente* had begun (Dodge, 1904).

The *Race to Benavente* -term coined by French historiography- refers to all the events and vicissitudes that took place in the area of the Castrogonzalo bridge -near Benavente- during the last days of December (del Pozo, 2010). The French troops, in pursuit of the British soldiers under the command of Sir John Moore, had great difficulties in finding a forge to cross the river after the bridge had been blown and the barges along the river destroyed. Several skirmishes between the French vanguard and the British rearguard took place during those days.

The Castrogonzalo bridge -built and rebuilt along 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries- has throughout history been a very important pass over the river Esla due to its strategic position connecting Galicia and Asturias with the Castilian plateau. During those final days of



1808 once again the river Esla turned into a difficult barrier that had to be trespassed after the bridge had been partly blown by the British: "Craufurd commenced destroying the bridge amidst torrents of rain and snow; ...this anxiety to interrupt the work induced Craufurd to destroy two arches instead of one, and blow up the connecting buttress." (Craufurd, 2011, p. 17). There is at present a general claim for this area to be protected and safeguarded (Huerga Miñambres, 2010) given that it was of such a vital importance during the said *Race of Benavente*.

Napoleon was said to have been watching these events from a hill on the road to Benavente "from which there is a very fine prospect as far as Zamora and the river Esla, to the south, and the town of Benavente, at the distance of three miles" (Ormsby, 1809,

p. 99) and in his letter to Josephine on December 31<sup>st</sup>, he wrote how he had "been in pursuit of the English for several days past; but they fled in a sort of panic." (Hall, 1901, p. 138) This was the last action Bonaparte participated in, while in Spain.

The events that took place during those last days of 1808 in Benavente have been narrated with great detail by some of the soldiers that took part in the Benavente race, not only British and French, but also from other nationalities (Martín Benito, 2010, p. 139). Thus, on December 30<sup>th</sup>, when Napoleon and his men crossed the partially rebuilt bridge of Castrogonzalo and entered Benavente, they could see first hand the deplorable state of the town. The castle of Pimentel was still in flames after the British had set it on fire before hurrying toward Corunna. Just a few days before, J. Ormsby (1809), a British army chaplain, had described it as follows:

The castle, which belongs to the Countess of Benavente, by marriage Duchess of Ossuna, is by many degrees the most magnificent edifice and exquisite specimen of Moorish and Gothic architecture I have seen, and is about five hundred years old. It stands on a proud elevation, the plains of Leon, through which the lovely waters of the Marez and the Esla flow. On the exterior, the sculpture of the turrets, and the columns of porphyry and granite, are principally to be admired; and on the inside, in the decoration of the grand saloon, or gallery, and the antechamber which leads to it, the arts appear to be assembled and exhausted in their rude efforts to dazzle and delight. It is impossible to give you an idea of the profusion of painting, gilding and carving, which is lavished upon the ceiling and alcoves. (101102)

As a result of the fire, many of these treasures were lost and the building very badly damaged. This action was partly the outcome of an strategic decision, but it is also true that General Moore "had inherited a very undisciplined and badly trained army from general Dalrymple [which] reverted to the committal of certain excesses." (Pérez Ruiz, Fernández Suárez, Pérez Estévez, Sheerin & Vázquez de Prada Merino, 2007, p. 444) Napoleon, wanting to take advantage of these vandalic events, commented his brother that this behaviour was "a barbarous and unusual use of the rights of war, as it ruins the country to no purpose" adding that "there could not have been a better sedative for Spain than to send to her an English army. The newspapers should make the most of it." (Bonaparte, 1856a, p. 386)

Today just a tower, *Torre del Caracol*, from the original palace is preserved. The tower together with other more recent constructions have been adapted into a *Parador Nacional de Turismo*, a state run high-standard hotel.

The inhabitants of Benavente had also hurriedly abandoned the town, and in their haste left behind most of their valuable. Moore's men also left supplies and ammunition they had not been able to take with them or destroy. All these items were of great use for the French soldiers.

The emperor stayed for two nights at the house known as *Nuñez*, located in the *Plaza de los Bueyes* -today *Plaza del Grano*- named after the oxen that were sold there on market days. Then, on New Year's day, they continued their pursuit of the English soldiers, towards Astorga.

Astorga is the westernmost town the emperor ever visited. Bonaparte stayed at the seminary but he didn't show much regard for the bishop (Toreno, 1837, p. 232). The building, which had been built in 1799 and is still in use today, was utilized during the Peninsular War as a hospital and barracks, and locals say that Napoleon entered it riding his horse up the stairs. In his description of the seminary Ormsby (1809) wrote: "There are some good pictures (...) on the very handsome staircase of a spacious edifice, which was designed for a college, but is used as a hospital" (p. 118). The presence of the Grande Armée and the emperor in Astorga is one that the town greatly values, and its municipality regularly organizes re-enactments of Napoleon's stay, as they also do of several other events related to the Peninsular War.

On travelling to Astorga -Ormsby (1809) thought the scenery resembled that of Lincolnshire- a messenger from Paris had reached Bonaparte with the news that there were intrigues against him from Great Britain and Austria. Thus, after remaining in the town for three days so as to organize the pursue of the British troops, Napoleon commenced his journey back, first stopping in Benavente and arriving to Valladolid on January 6<sup>th</sup>. "[He] thought that he should be better placed at Valladolid, because from that point he could conduct war in Spain, and be there upon the route of the couriers from France." (Thiers, 1855, p. 35)

### **5.3 Valladolid**

The French troops first occupied Valladolid in October 1807, and by February 1808 the detachments of generals Junot and Dupont had arrived to the city. During this occupation numerous revolts were organized at the *Plaza Mayor*, the main square of the city: after the removal of Godoy, when king Carlos IV abdicated or when king Fernando VII was crowned.

In order to accommodate the French soldiers -brave, arrogant, lustful and thieving men (Sánchez Fernández, 2000, p. 98)- many administrative and private buildings, as well as convents, had to be adapted. Some of the monasteries used for this purpose were San Francisco, San Pablo, San Benito, San Ignacio, San Ambrosio, Merced Calzada, Filipinos, Agustinos Recoletos, Trinidad Descalza, Clérigos Menores, San Agustín, Hospedería de los Mártires and San Juan de Letrán. A few of these are still used as religious houses today, despite the many adversities they have gone through. Just to name a few that took place during the Peninsular War, on January 14<sup>th</sup> 1809 the convent of Trinidad Calzada was set fire and it was completely destroyed except for its the tower that was blown by Bonaparte's men so as to sell its bells and stones (Sancho, Gallardo &

Martinez, 1989). Also, Napoleon decreed the suppression of religious congregations on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1809.

Interestingly, probably the only symbol of the reign of Joseph I in Spain -his coat of arms- can be seen in one of these convents, San Benito: "The restoration of the façade of the Monastery of San Benito in Valladolid, which ended in the year 2001, has yielded a surprise: The discovery of the coat of arms of King Joseph Bonaparte found under a finish put up after the French defeat of 1813." (Domínguez Casas, 2010, p. 271)

In May 1808, when only the barracks of San Benito were in use, there was an uprising in the city that ended up with the French soldiers being captured and their munition and arms taken. But less than a month later, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, the battle of Cabezón de Pisuerga was fought just 12 km away from Valladolid, resulting in the Spanish troops being defeated and in the re-occupation of the city. A lot of *vallisoletanos* took part in this battle, but many of them hardly had any military experienced, as inferred from British seminarian Robert Brindle's (2011) memoirs:

The following day about 6,000 muskets arrived and were received by the mob with the greatest avidity. The Captain General had exerted his authority to prevent the English students from being obliged to quit the house but the mob declared they would burn the College to the ground if we did not join them. Accordingly we were obliged to go to the depot for arms but fortunately, the last musket was distributed when we were within fifty yards of the spot. If we had gone two minutes sooner, it's probable we had all been killed for the body of students with whom we were associated was entirely destroyed. (p. 80)

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, riding his horse and accompanied by 12,000 soldiers, Napoleon entered Valladolid by crossing what at the time was known as the *Puerta del Puente* – Door of the Bridge- beyond the city walls at the *Puerta Mayor* –Main Bridge- over the Pisuerga river. It was around four in the afternoon and some members of the municipal corporation welcomed him. But there were no cheers from the people of Valladolid, they neither took off their hats at the passing of the emperor (Sancho et al, 1989). Again, the populace was not happy with the visit. The official reception was held the following day and representatives from the University, the incumbents of the church, and other authorities attended it.

Bonaparte stayed at the Royal Palace, at San Pablo square. The palace, built in 1522, had been the residence of king Felipe III when he established Valladolid as the capital of Spain. At present, and since 1876, it holds the military government of the 7th Military District, and regular guided visits are organized.

Two or three days after the arrival of Napoleon to the city, one of the servants of the Dominican monks from the San Pablo convent –situated opposite the palace- known as Roche, assassinated a French cavalry officer and threw the corpse inside a well in the convent's orchard. The emperor blamed the murder on the monks and in retaliation the convent of San Pablo was immediately suppressed and all its belongings confiscated.

These were used to pay for the mint of the first coins displaying the profile of the emperor's brother, Joseph Bonaparte.

The emperor also had all the other monks in town appearing before him at an appointed audience at the Royal Palace:

[The monks] prostrated themselves at the Emperor's feet, while he showered reproaches upon them, called them assassins and brigands, and said they all deserved to be hung. These poor men listened in silence and humility to the terrible language of the irritated conqueror whom their patience alone could appease; and finally, the Emperor's anger having exhausted itself, he grew calmer, and at last, struck by the reflection that it was hardly just to heap abuse on men thus prostrate on their knees and uttering not a word in their own defence, he left the group of officers who surrounded him, and advanced into the midst of the monks, making them a sign to rise from their supplicating posture. (Wairy, 1904, p. 152-3).

One of the first measures the emperor took after arriving to Valladolid was ordering the local authorities the immediate handing over of the leader and accomplices of the popular conspiracies. Should they fail to do so, five members of the municipality would be beheaded. This strategy of threat and punishment was successful and five people were sentenced to die. In his believe that "with the Spaniards it is necessary to be severe", he told his brother: "I have arrested here fifteen of the worst characters, and I have ordered them to be shot." (Bonaparte, 1856b, p. 20)

On January 9<sup>th</sup> a Supreme Junta met to publicly express the emperor the capitulation of the city (Archivo Municipal de Valladolid, 1809). The following day, Napoleon, satisfied with this action, inspected the troops –around 9000 soldiers- at the Campo Grande, the largest park in Valladolid which can still be admired and enjoyed by locals and visitors.

Two were the reasons why Napoleon decided to remain in Valladolid for a few days before leaving for Paris. The first one has already been stated –Valladolid was only 5 days away for a messenger to bring news from Paris. During his stay in Valladolid Bonaparte wrote 165 letters with his orders on how to proceed in different front in Spain -Valladolid, Zamora, Madrid- and Europe –Italy, Turkey, etc.

The second reason was that he wished to leave matters organized in the Peninsula before he left to attend other issues: "This time was necessary for the new combinations which the absence of the chief would require" (de Bausset, 1828, p. 241). Thus, he held an audience with a deputation who asked, as expected by the emperor, that Joseph would command the army in Spain and reside in Madrid (Gazeta de Madrid 41, p. 217). "His last act was to declare his brother Joseph Generalissimo over the French armies" (Scott, 1858, p. 230)

Finally, on January 17<sup>th</sup>, one day later than planned due to the heavy fog, Napoleon secretly left Valladolid heading to Burgos. Only king Joseph, prince Neufchatel, and Marshals Soult, Lannes and Ney knowing it.

But this wasn't the end of it for this city. The French troops occupied Valladolid almost until the end of the Peninsular War, June 1813. Fortunately for the citizens and the city, this wasn't a very cruel presence, since Valladolid was considered a frenchified town, i.e. "in appearance" it supported the French, and also, it did not witness any major clashes. But it is additionally true that the city's architectonic and artistic richness was

very much deteriorated and weakened due to the long French occupation (Domínguez Casas, 2010).

One positive outcome of this French imposed presence is Valladolid's God Friday General Procession, that dates back to 1810 when general Kellermen, governor of the province—after great popular pressure- permitted it to be first organized (Arribas Arranz, 1946). This procession is very popular today and in it all the brotherhoods of the city participate with their *Pasos* – moveable floats of wood with statues representing parts of the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

Napoleon left at seven in the morning, he rode all the way to Burgos: "He rode the first seventy miles, to Burgos, in five and a half hours, stopping only to change horses. Well might Savary say, 'Never had a sovereign ridden at such a speed.'" (Hall, 1901, p. 277) He left Valladolid on January 17th, and was in Paris on January 24<sup>th</sup>. This hurried return to Paris was noticed by the populace and word was rapidly spread that the emperor was having problems in Austria (Pipollet, 1913). That was the end of the presence of Napoleon in the Duero Valley and in Spain. Even though at the time, Bonaparte left our territory with the idea that his campaign had been successful: "The Emperor once more returned to Paris after having defeated Sir John Moore, taken Madrid, and, as he believed, chastised the Spaniards." (Junot, 1901, p. 135), in reality, as time demonstrated, this was not so: "By seeking to assert his position in both theatres in early 1809, he had to delegate to his subordinate commanders in Spain. In military terms, this meant an inexorable decline." (Schmidt, 1995: 371)

## 6. CONCLUSION

We have presented a general view of Napoleon's campaign in Spain in 1808-9, paying specific attention to its emblematic milestones and historical value. Our purpose has been to enhance this part of our history, the different stages, the sites and landmarks as well as the most salient events that took place along *the route of Napoleon along the Duero valley* on his pursuit of Sir John Moore's soldiers and subsequent return to Paris. We believe that this historical route that has been traced should be supported and disseminated by public and private institutions since it can contribute to bring visitors interested in heritage and history to the area.

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