REPORT ON THE SYMPOSIUM 12 TO 14 OCTOBER 2016

This was the fourth Symposium organised by the Friends of the British Cemetery and for the second time it was held in the Bull Hotel, at Long Melford in Suffolk. 31 people attended. This was rather fewer than last year, but did mean the conference room was not so crowded and stuffy.

Our intention as ever is not to deal with the battles, but the myriad subjects of interest during and just after the war and we were treated to some fascinating talks. Subjects ranged from Carole Divall's 'Crime and Punishment in Wellington's army', to Mark Thompson's 'Telegraphs' and 'The Cavalry and their leaders'; from Tim Pritchard-Barrett's 'Wellington's Divisional Commanders, to the 'Massacre at Coimbra'. The latter was given by Rui Moura, who had come all the way from Portugal with Maria João. It was the same talk as he gave in Elvas in May, but to a fresh audience. The fascinating tale of Commissary Schaumann by Mike Hyde is not to be forgotten. I am sure the other speakers will forgive me if I say that the highlight was the presentation given by Anne Grimshaw on the problems facing returning soldiers in the years after Waterloo. She arrived dressed as a poor Lancashire woman and told us this was the stage version. She told the story through the eyes of first, his mother, then his sister and finally his wife. The changes of character were signalled by a change of bonnet and shawl and the tale came from letters he had written, or might have written, their content gleaned from a variety sources.

The customary formal dinner was graced by bottles of Periquita, presented by Pedro de Avillez last year and I still have 9 bottles for next year.

Since the programme last year had felt a little cramped, we extended it to cover two nights in the hotel and included an afternoon for sightseeing or shopping. The majority opinion was that it was preferable to keep it to a 24-hour period. Some suggestions have been made for subjects for next year and also possible venues for a resuscitated London reception. Please keep the suggestions coming.