

BENEVOLENCE SHOWN BY THE VILLAGE OF WORTHINGTON IN 1815

<i>Waterloo Subscription.</i>			
	£	s.	d.
Amount of Subscriptions already advertised...	2,537	4	2
Collection at Shackerston, by Rev. J. Singleton	5	3	0
Rev. Richard Williams	2	2	0
Collection at Diseworth, by ditto	2	1	0
Collection at Long Whatton, by Rev. T. Beer.	10	5	4
Collection at Tugby, by Rev. — — Bloomfield..	2	18	6
Collection at Sibson	7	8	6
Collection at Whitwick	1	0	0
Collection at Thringston	2	13	6
Collection at Swannington	3	4	0
Collection at <u>Worthington</u>	8	2	6
W. Radcliffe, Esq.	1	1	0

BY SAMUEL T STEWART OCTOBER 2020

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

Napoleon Bonaparte had been plotting a return to power in France after he had been exiled to the island of Elba in 1814. In the following spring of 1815, he arrived back in France, where he hoped to take advantage of the discontent within the population over the dissolution of the empire that had been built during his rule. The troops who had previously served under him were keen to return in an effort to rebuild the army under his command.

The Congress of Vienna however, did not share the enthusiasm of the people of France for Napoleon's return. The ambassadors of the European states which formed the Congress of Vienna, who were seeking long-term peace, declared him to be an outlaw and called on the member states to provide troops to put down his resurgence. A military alliance known as the Seventh Coalition was formed against Napoleon as he began his campaign.

Napoleon planned to defeat the coalition before British forces could return from fighting in the War of 1812 in North America. He started his offensive by moving through Belgium, with the hope of defeating weaker units. However, Napoleon was surprised that the British and Prussian armies of the Seventh Coalition were able to bring forces together against him at Waterloo in Belgium.

On June 18, 1815, the Battle of Waterloo began. Napoleon's troops fought well and bravely, but the British forces commanded by the Duke of Wellington hung on until fresh Prussian and Dutch troops arrived. At the end of the day, the French forces suffered defeat. Napoleon was forced to abdicate four days later, and within a month following his defeat at Waterloo he surrendered to the British forces. The 1815 Treaty of Paris marked the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Napoleon was exiled to the island of St. Helena in the middle of the South Atlantic, where he died in 1821.

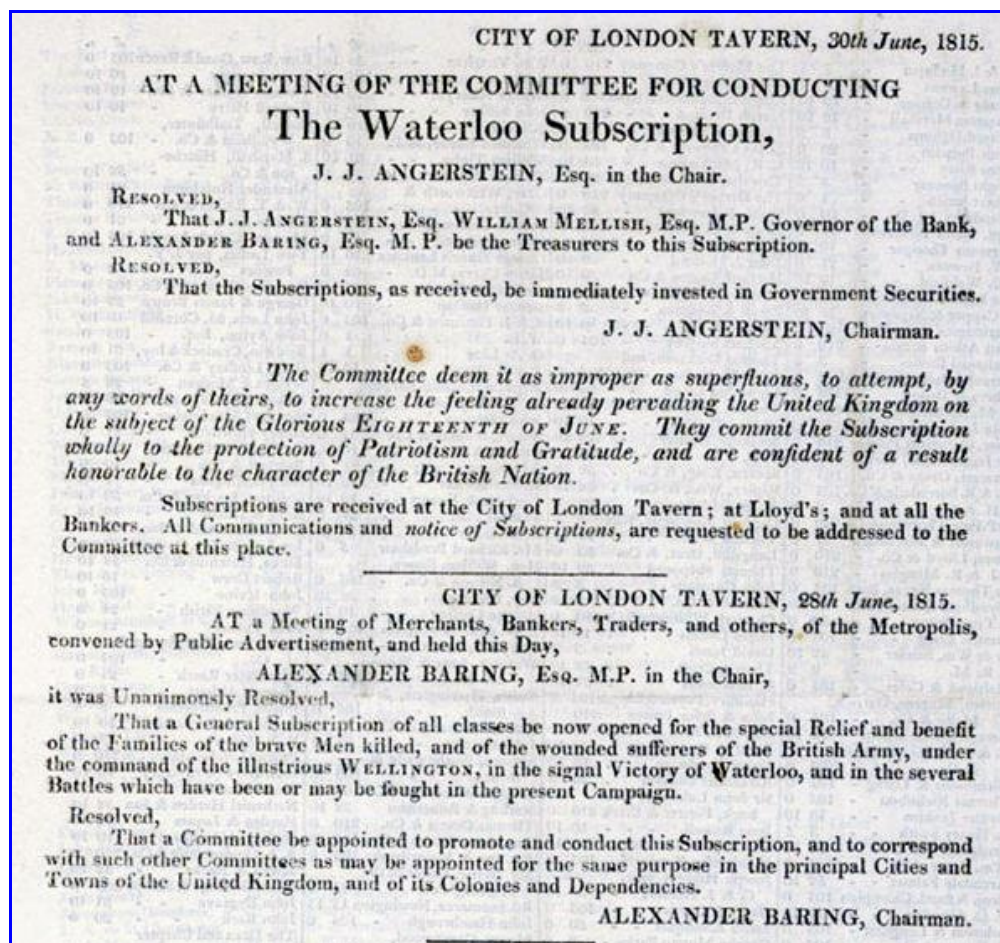
'The nearest run thing you ever saw in your life,' was Wellington's verdict on the Battle of Waterloo. Wellington's triumph was celebrated with the usual outpouring of relief and joy in the form of bonfires, feasts, and the ringing of church bells etc. These celebrations did not make up for the intense feelings of grief and loss, with upwards of 50,000 troops lying dead on the battlefield, which included about 15,000 British troops. There were also thousands of wounded men lying on the battlefield with horrendous injuries, who were destined to lay there in agony for days on end. The word "*Carnage*" was used on numerous occasions to describe the scene.

Five days after the battle, Parliament recorded a vote of thanks to the Duke of Wellington and his army: They have done their duty, and merited every mark of

gratitude; but adequate thanks they cannot receive, because their services are above all praise, and adequate rewards it is not in the country's power to bestow. (*British Library Newspapers, Sussex Advertiser, 26th June 1815*) Indeed, how could the nation possibly show sufficient thanks to those who had fought at Waterloo?

Parliament led the way, awarding Wellington £200K (circa £13M today), and public opinion swiftly followed suit. Money should form the basis of the nation's gratitude. Money which could be used to shield those left widowed, fatherless, orphaned or disabled from any future suffering.

It was with this idea in mind that a group of men, mostly merchants, bankers and brokers, gathered at the City of London Tavern on 28th June to discuss the merits of a public subscription. One of the prime movers behind the scheme, merchant banker Alexander Baring, opened proceedings by stating his belief that the provision of meaningful assistance to all that might require it would strain the government's already beleaguered finances beyond endurance. Private benevolence must therefore play its part. Below is an extract from the minutes of that meeting:-



WATERLOO SUBSCRIPTION FROM LOCAL VILLAGES

Below is a record from the *Leicester Chronicle* dated September 30th 1815 of "Waterloo Subscriptions" made in local villages. It is interesting to see that the **Worthington** subscription was the second highest amongst the villagers recorded.

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The Waterloo Subscription account at Hoare's Bank was opened on 29th June, a day after the City of London Tavern meeting. Predictably, the first donation (£210) came from the bank itself. And during the next year nearly £5,000 was paid into the account. Some donors had obvious military connections. The Earl of St Vincent, soon to be appointed Admiral of the Fleet, gave £500, several regiments donated one or two days' pay, while a general officer's widow, 'ZZ', contributed £10. Others, including Joseph Butterworth Esq (£21) and the Earl of Dartmouth (£105), were seasoned subscribers. But alongside them were dozens of random donations: By a Collection at Hyde Abbey School, Winchester per Rev Chas Richards (£10-10-0); By a Free Will Offering from the Dinner Booth at Harlow Bush Fair (£5-13-0); By a Lady, a most sincere Friend to Loyalty to the good old King, the Army and the Navy (£1 1s 0d). Within a week of its establishment, the City of London subscription had raised £62,640 10s 10d. A month later the total exceeded £107,000. And while this included several large

donations, not least £10,000 in 3% Consols (*perpetual bonds*) from the Society of Lloyd's and £5,000 from the Bank of England, **the vast majority consisted of just a few pounds or even shillings each. They came from every part of society: men and women, young and old, rich and poor. Children surrendered their pocket money, servants added their shillings to family donations, and widows proffered their proverbial mites. An official Thanksgiving Prayer, meanwhile, read out from the pulpit of every church, regardless of denomination, resulted in a flood of locally organised collections.** Donations were collected all over the British Empire to assist the widows and families of the soldiers who bravely gave their lives. Even in the far flung penal colony of New South Wales subscriptions were collected.

The first Annuities from the subscriptions were issued during the autumn of 1816. Privates' widows received Life Annuities of £10 for as long as they remained unmarried, as well as £4 p.a. for each child under seven. Children aged between seven and fourteen were entitled to Fixed Term Annuities, payable to nominated trustees, usually a local clergyman or magistrate. At fourteen, these Annuities would cease, but each child would then be presented with £10 and the promise of an additional £50 at the age of twenty one (or earlier if a girl married, provided that marriage was sanctioned by her mother and/or trustee).

Larger sums were allocated to widows and children of officers or non-commissioned officers, according to rank, while orphans, deprived as they are of parental care, received allowances proportionate to their rank and to the circumstances of their aggravated calamity. (*BL, Oxford Journal, 22nd June 1816*) Additional Life Annuities were awarded to disabled privates and non-commissioned officers, most of whom had been blinded or lost limbs, and lump sums to those discharged on account of wounds.

Nor were the families of Britain's Allies forgotten; £62,000 was remitted to Berlin, Hanover, Amsterdam and Brunswick for their relief. By the summer of 1817, the Committee was able to report significant progress. A total of £168,051 9s 11d had been paid out, including £11,783 in Life Annuities and £9,209 in Fixed Term Annuities.

In particular, the Committee expressed satisfaction at the provision made for soldiers' children, believing that any money invested in their care and education would go a long way towards ensuring they became useful, upstanding members of society. But as an extra precaution, recipients were warned that the payment of Annuities and coming of age presents depended on their continued good behaviour. Furthermore, any attempt to sell, mortgage or pawn them would result in instant forfeiture.

The Waterloo Subscription account at Hoare's Bank closed in January 1817.