

He found Major-General Galbraith Lowry Cole, commanding that formation, in rather a bad mood. Cole was under orders from Beresford not to move his division, positioned along the Valverde road, without orders from the marshal himself. In obedience Cole and his regiments had remained as distant spectators of the ferocious battle being waged east of their position. Given rain, smoke and the contours of the ground, they could not see much of the fighting on the hill but were able to gauge, from the noise and the human wreckage limping or crawling back, that it was severe. When no orders came, Cole sent one of his aides, Captain Alexandre de Roverea, to wait on Beresford but Roverea had not returned and, as one of Cole’s staff later remarked, the commander of the 4th Division “continued anxiously to watch the progress of the contest” because without orders he could do nothing.<sup>41</sup>

When a somewhat excited Hardinge rode up and proposed that the 4th Division should attack the French flank, Cole was not at all amused. A competent and professional but somewhat conservative soldier, the 39-year-old Cole had fought in the West Indies, Egypt and at Maida and for two years had commanded a division under Wellington, with whom he had unsuccessfully vied for the hand of Kitty Pakenham. He could sense that the battle was at a crucial point and did not need to be told so by some jumped-up puppy on the Portuguese staff, nor did he need to have a course of action proposed to him by that same puppy because Cole knew, better than Hardinge, what had to be done. Decades later, he would somewhat primly remark that “the advice of Colonel Hardinge, at [age] twenty-three or twenty-four . . . without much professional experience,” did not carry “the authority which in later years it might have been entitled to.”<sup>42</sup> Cole therefore told Hardinge plain that he was under “positive orders” from Beresford “*not* to leave the position” in which he was placed without the marshal’s “special instructions.”<sup>43</sup> Things were thus at an impasse that was only broken when Lieutenant-Colonel John Rooke, Beresford’s deputy adjutant-general, arrived and Cole asked his opinion. Rooke replied that if Stewart’s troops were not soon reinforced, the battle would be lost. This seems to have tipped the balance and Cole decided to advance to support the 2nd Division, thus disobeying a direct order but acting, in the words of one of his staff officers, “with a moral courage of which few English generals have given an example.”<sup>44</sup>

Cole was fully aware that this advance would be both “hazardous and difficult.”<sup>45</sup> His two brigades would have to cross nearly a mile and more of open ground swept by French artillery fire and then move up a slope with their right flank vulnerable to the masses of enemy cavalry. Although he intended to at-



**Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Hardinge (1785-1856)**

Just 26 years old in 1811, Hardinge served as a senior staff officer to Beresford during the battle of Albuera. Realizing that Stewart's division on the hill would have to be reinforced or the battle was lost, he rode to Major-General Lowry Cole, the commander of the 4th Division and proposed that he move forward and support Stewart. Cole, who was under orders from Beresford only to move on the marshal's personal word, was not amused by this proposal but finally came to the conclusion that he would have to disobey orders and attack. (From W.H. Maxwell, *Life of His Grace, the Duke of Wellington*, 1839)

tack in line, Cole had no intention of marching in that formation because his division would have to move slowly so its units could maintain their alignment. There was also the consideration that, although Lieutenant-Colonel William Myers's Fusilier Brigade was composed of first-class troops, Brigadier-General William Harvey's Portuguese brigade (*Regimentos de Infantaria* nos 11 and 23) was about to fight its first major action. Taking all these factors into consideration, Cole decided to advance in battalion columns in echelon from the left – that is, staggered back from the left to the right – as this would not only allow the two brigades to move faster but would also permit them to deploy into line or square more quickly to counter any threat from the French cavalry. But it was not going to be an easy manoeuvre to execute. As Cole explained it, the 4th Division would have to carry out an evolution “difficult to perform correctly even in a common field-day” and Harvey's brigade would have the worst of it as it would have “to show front to the enemy's cavalry” while at the same time, preserving “its distance from, and cover the right flank of, the Fusilier Brigade.”<sup>46</sup>

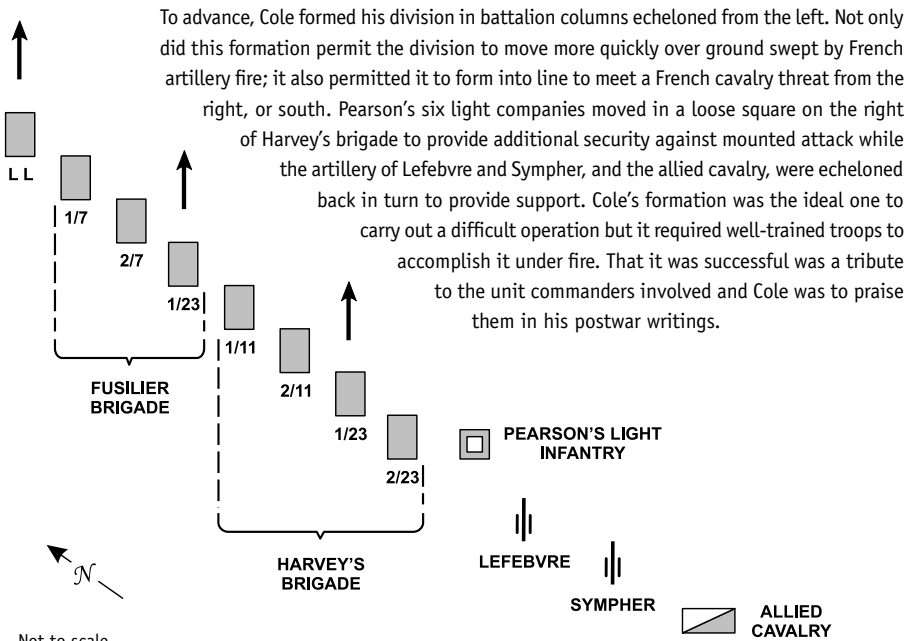
To provide flank guards for the division, Cole placed the Loyal Lusitanian Legion of battalion strength in column on his left while Major Thomas Pear-

**Major-General Lowry Cole (1772-1842)**

A professional but somewhat conservative soldier, Cole had once vied unsuccessfully with Wellington for the hand of Kitty Pakenham. A veteran of the Egyptian campaigns and Maida, Cole had the moral courage to disobey a direct order and move his division forward into the battle on the hill. The result was a British victory and one of the most famous prose passages in the English language. (Print after painting by Thomas Lawrence)



Tactical Diagram C: Cole's Formation for the Attack of the 4th Division



son (who has been absent from our story for quite some time), was stationed on the right of Harvey's brigade with the three light companies of the Fusilier Brigade and the three "orphan" light companies from Kemmis's brigade. Artillery support would be provided by Captain George Lefebvre's troop of Royal Horse Artillery with four 6-pdr. guns, and Captain Frederick Sympher's No. 2 Company of King's German Legion artillery with five 6-pdr. guns and one 5.5-inch howitzer, which would take position to the right rear of Harvey's brigade and move in tandem with it. Finally, Major-General William Lumley's allied cavalry would move on the far right.

Once made, these decisions were quickly put into effect. Corporal Cooper of the 7th Foot remembered that the shout of "Fall in Fusileers!" brought him and his comrades, who had been sitting or lying under a downpour of rain for the last few hours, to their feet.<sup>47</sup> Obeying the orders of officers and sergeants, the men of the three Fusilier battalions formed close columns of companies, each column consisting of a single company breadth and a nine-company depth (the tenth or light company having been detached under Pearson) with only a few paces between companies. The two regiments of Harvey's brigade, each

with two battalions, adopted a similar formation and, finally, the Lusitanian Legion took post on the left of the division while Pearson did the same on the right with his six light companies.

We will never know, of course, what was going through Thomas Pearson's mind at this moment. Perhaps he thought of Ann and the son which she had recently brought into the world, but more likely, having just been given an important independent command, he was too busy to think about anything other than his duties. Although Pearson was not a man given to introspection (which, under the circumstances, was just as well) it must have crossed his mind that he was about to enter the toughest action of his career. As a veteran who had seen combat on three continents and was now at the height of his abilities after 14 years of professional preparation that had begun at Chatham in 1797, Pearson likely did not spare a thought about anything other than getting his six companies, with a total strength of about 300 all ranks, into proper position on the right of Harvey's Portuguese.

As the two brigades were forming, Lieutenant John Harrison of the 23rd Foot arrived, looking for his commanding officer. Harrison had been a mile or so in the rear as part of the brigade baggage guard of about 50 men drawn from all three Fusilier battalions. Just 23 years old and anxious to see action, Harrison was desperate to get rid of this "troublesome office" and join his unit and was, it appears, an enterprising young officer because, ignoring the protests of both the commander of the baggage guard and Major-General Lowry Cole himself, he managed to ride forward to his regiment.<sup>48</sup> When Harrison found it, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Ellis of the 23rd told him to go "and bring the drums [drummers] up and all the spare hands I could collect from the baggage." Harrison departed on this mission and returned to the unit just in time to take over a company whose captain was absent.

All being ready, Cole and his staff took their proper place in the front of the division, which was now in a line of close columns, nine blocks of red or blue uniforms with about 5,000 men in their ranks. While the battalion commanders at the front of each unit waited for orders to advance, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Blakeney, commanding the 2/7th Foot, remembered that the fog and heavy rain, which had obscured his vision of the battle on the hill, cleared for a few minutes and suddenly Blakeney could see "the French columns placed in echelon on our side of the hill, with the artillery – twenty-three pieces – above, and an echelon of cavalry on their left flank, covering the whole plain with their swords."<sup>49</sup>

*“Fall in Fusileers!”*

It was about 1 P.M. when Cole issued the cautionary order “The division will advance!” It was repeated by the commanding officer of each unit with the words “The battalion will advance!” and each officer no doubt took care, as the manual of the army advised, to issue these orders “short, quick and loud ... to the full extent of his voice, and in a sharp tone” so as to be heard clearly by all those “dependent on his motions.”<sup>50</sup> The cautionary was then repeated by the company commanders in each battalion column. Not long afterward came the executive order, “March!” and since the order of march was left in front, the units on the left flank, the Lusitanian Legion and the 1/7th Foot, moved off at the quick step of 108 paces per minute, so as to cross the required distance in the shortest possible time. They were followed, as soon as their predecessors had reached the correct interval, by the 2/7th Foot, the 23rd Foot, the two battalions of 11th Portuguese Line, then of the two of the 23rd Portuguese Line and, finally, Pearson’s light infantry companies (see Diagram C).

As the division moved toward that fatal line of hills where the smoke of battle was clearly visible, Private Horsefall of the 7th Foot marching beside Corporal Cooper suddenly asked, “Whor’s ar *Arthur?*” meaning Wellington. Cooper replied that he didn’t know and hadn’t seen him, to which Horsefall responded, “Aw wish he wor here.” As Cooper later remarked, “So did I.”<sup>51</sup>