

The Napoleon Series

Wellington's Generals Who Were Members of Parliament

By [Robert Burnham](#) and [Ron McGuigan](#)

There were 92 British generals who served under the Duke of Wellington as either a brigade or division commander or as a member of his senior staff during the Peninsular War, the Waterloo Campaign, or as part of the Army of Occupation of France. Twenty-eight, or 30%, of them were Members of Parliament (MP) sometime during their lives. Surprisingly, almost 60% of these generals were MPs while they worked for Wellington on active service in Portugal, Spain, Flanders, or France.

Time when a Member of Parliament	Number
Before serving under Wellington	6
While serving under Wellington	16
After serving under Wellington	6

Among them were some of the most senior generals in Wellington's Army, including William Beresford, Galbraith Cole, Stapleton Cotton, Rowland Hill, Edward Paget, and Thomas Picton. A complete list of them can be found at the end of this paper.

Sixteen (60%) were Tories and eleven were Whigs. One, Thomas Picton, refused to be identified with either party, but felt he should always support the government. Regardless of the period when they were MPs, they were not noted for their attendance during sessions. They did become more diligent about attending Parliament after the Napoleonic Wars, but none were known to be very active. Very few of them ever gave a speech in Parliament.

There is no evidence to indicate that Wellington tried to use his generals to influence a vote in Parliament. Most of those who were MPs when they worked for him did not return to England while Parliament was in session, although several used the excuse that they needed to take care of their parliamentary duties as a reason to go home on leave. The one who did this the most was George Anson. During his four years in the Peninsula, General Anson spent over twelve months away from his command so he could attend Parliament. While in England he missed key battles and campaigns. It finally reached a point that Wellington asked that he be replaced.

Edward Stopford had a different attitude about returning home for Parliamentary sessions. After Napoleon abdicated in 1814, General Stopford decided to spend several months touring France rather than going back to take up his duties as a MP. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he never received the Thanks of Parliament for his service in the Peninsula. The Speaker of Parliament refused to thank him "because he stayed

abroad for several months for his own private amusement after the war was over”¹ and neglected his duties as a MP.

Three of Wellington’s generals, who were MPs, were killed in action:

Member of Parliament	Date of Death
John Randoll Mackenzie	Talavera 28 July 1809
Thomas Picton	Waterloo 18 June 1815
William Ponsonby	Waterloo 18 June 1815

General Edward Paget was a MP while serving as Wellington’s second-in-command. He was captured by the French on 17 November 1812 and was a prisoner-of-war until April 1814.

Members of Parliament

Name	Party
Anson, George	Whig
Barnes, Edward	Tory
Beresford, George	Tory
Beresford, William	Tory
Byng, John	Whig
Campbell, Henry Frederick	Whig
Cole, Galbraith Lowry	Tory
Cotton, Stapleton	Whig
Craufurd, Robert	Whig
Dunlop, James	Tory
Fane, Henry	Tory
Ferguson, Ronald	Whig then Liberal
Grant, Colquhoun	Tory
Graham, Thomas	Whig
Hill, Rowland	Tory
Hope, John	Tory
Mackenzie, John Randoll	Whig
Murray, George	Tory
Nightingall, Miles	Tory
Paget, Edward	Tory
Paget, Henry William²	Tory
Picton, Thomas	Neither Whig or Tory
Ponsonby, William	Whig

¹ “[Stopford, Hon. Edward \(1766-1837\)](#).” *The History of Parliament Online*. 8 October 2016.

² General Paget was a MP from 1790 – 1804 and then from 1806 – 1810. He was never a MP when he worked for Wellington.

Pringle, William
Somerset, Lord Edward
Stewart, William
Stopford, Edward
Vivian, Richard

Tory
Tory
Whig
Tory
Whig

Bold means the individual was a Member of Parliament while serving under Wellington during the Napoleonic Wars

Bold means individual was a Member of Parliament prior to the Peninsular War but not while serving under Wellington

Bold means the individual was a Member of Parliament after he was no longer serving under Wellington and usually after the Napoleonic Wars.

Placed on the Napoleon Series: October 2016