



The Rifles Regiment Freedom of Wellington – Quotations About the Event

It seems that in the blink of an eye an historic event for Wellington is upon us. After eighteen months of planning, on Saturday 17th June, The Rifles Regiment will be granted the Freedom of Wellington. This rare event will see a parade of over 300 people marching through the centre of Wellington. The parade will include Regular and Reserve Riflemen, Somerset Army Cadets, the Wellington School Combined Cadet Force, and two marching bands.

One of the bands in the parade is the Salamanca Band and Bugles who are based nearby at the Wyvern Barracks in Exeter. This band has just completed a tour of Spain, including the city of Salamanca for which the band is named. The Battle of Salamanca in 1812 is an important event in the history of The Rifles and its antecedent regiments due to its role as a turning point in the Peninsular War. The regimental day of The Rifles is celebrated on the anniversary of this battle on 22nd July.

Ahead of this momentous occasion, we asked some key people three questions:

1. Are you excited to see the Freedom of the Town granted to The Rifles?
2. What are you most looking forward to?
3. What is the importance of this event for Wellington and its citizens?

Here are their answers:

Mayor of Wellington – Councillor Marcus Barr

1. I am really looking forward to this. I was in the Light Infantry myself so this event is very important to me personally.
2. I am looking forward to meeting our honoured guests from near and far. This will be a great opportunity to show off Wellington.
3. This event is important as it allows the people of this town to connect with our shared history. I also feel that it will allow us to celebrate our Armed Forces in an increasingly uncertain time.

Town Clerk – Dave Farrow

1. Absolutely! I cannot wait to see all the hard work that has gone into putting on this event come to fruition.
2. The sight and sound of military bands and marching troops in full regalia along with the army cadets and Wellington School CCF marching through the town. I think it will look and sound spectacular.
3. It properly recognises and marks the link between the town and the Rifles Regiment and its antecedent regiments. Our War Memorial contains the names of many who served in the Somerset Light Infantry and it is fitting that we recognise that connection as a town. It will be a very special event which I hope all the community will enjoy and remember for years to come.

Rifles Regional Secretary South West – Major Rory McCaffrey

1. The Rifles are honoured and delighted to have been offered the Freedom of Wellington, which means a huge amount to the Regiment because it helps cement our already strong relationship with the area and community. Our history with the area goes back many years through our forming and antecedent forebearers and it is critical that we continue to nurture one another's support. I am particularly excited to be involved as an ex-Wellingtonian with many friends still living in the area, and have a real soft spot for your wonderful town.
2. The Rifles are looking forward to celebrating the close bond between the 5 Pillars of our regiment (Regulars, Reserves, Cadets, Veterans and Communities) as we parade through Wellington. A Freedom Parade of a Town or City is the perfect way to see those pillars at their best, as we remind ourselves of the importance of each pillar to one another. I will feel very proud to be part of this parade and see the true spirit of our great regiment represented in one place, at one time.
3. Building relationships with our Freedom towns and cities is a vital part of The Rifles' ethos, not least because many of our soldiers derive from the local community and continue to work and live in the area once they leave the Army. Being able to march through a town is a rare privilege and our Riflemen will be feeling incredibly proud representing their cap badge and the Regiment as they do so in Wellington. I hope this parade will give the citizens of Wellington a good insight into their local regiment and remind our soldiers of those we serve.

We also have a quotation from the man who first proposed that the Freedom of the Town be granted to The Rifles: Chris Penney.

Freedom Proposer – Chris Penney

While promoting the Wellington Monument fund-raising appeal in the Pop-Up Shop I became aware that there were no formal links between the many regiments that has fought at Waterloo and the town. A Civic Freedom is a very appropriate way of putting our town on the military map and I am sure The Rifles won't be the last regiment holding the battle honour "Waterloo" to be granted the Freedom of Wellington.