

El Cubo del Revellín

ENGLISH GUIDE EXHIBITION



Ayuntamiento
de Logroño



7,000 years ago

The space of nature.

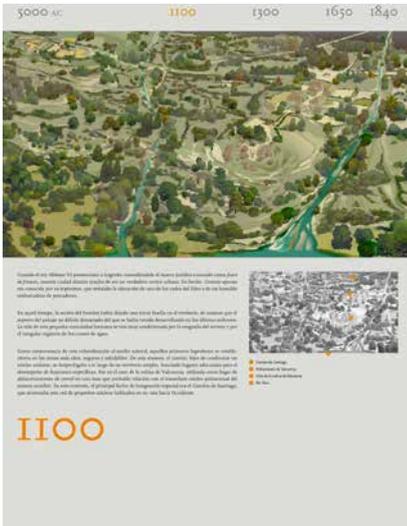
The time is shortly after a small community with a Neolithic economy set up its seasonal camp near the area we will call Valbuena, near the banks of the Ebro but at a safe distance from the many watercourses that cross the territory. They are our first protagonists.

At the time, Valbuena was a hill encircled by two watercourses occupying a slightly elevated position similar to other small hills dotted along the banks of the river. This was an ideal location to cater for the bare necessities of these early farmers. Despite their rudimentary techniques, these people were able to produce their own food, anticipate the needs of crops and animals, adapt their cycles to them and establish an effective survival strategy.

The changing landscape is conditioned by erratic water flows. Heavy spring floods and summer droughts are responsible for the abrupt morphology, highly exposed banks where entrained materials lacking the necessary stability to maintain permanent vegetation are deposited. Under these conditions, perhaps the most characteristic feature would be the rugged terrain of the surrounding landscape and the dense vegetation cover that has flourished just a few metres from the riverbank.

In all likelihood, the action that triggered the process of humanisation of the landscape, the first act that initiated the human impact on the environment by those early settlers, was the removal of vegetation cover, probably by the action of fire.

1. Neolithic settlement.
 2. River Ebro.
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IIOO

...in Gronnio, in barrio qui dicunt Balquerna...

When King Alfonso VI granted Logroño the legal status of “fuero de francos” or charter of privileges, our city was still a long way from being a genuine urban centre. In fact, *Gronnio* was hardly known by its place name, which marked the location of one of the fords of the river Ebro and a modest fishing pier.

At that time, man had only left a faint mark on the territory. In fact, the appearance of the landscape was not very different to that in recent millennia. The life of this small human community was strongly conditioned by the terrain and the irregular regime of the watercourses. Since the first settlers in what is now Logroño were subordinate to the natural environment, they settled in the highest, safest and most healthy areas. Thus, the settlement, far from forming a single nucleus, was scattered over a wide area, as the settlers sought places for specific purposes. That was the case of the Valcuerna hill, which was used as a place to store grain, most probably to supply the nearby town of the same name. In this context, the main factor of spatial integration was the Way of St. James, which passed through this network of small inhabited areas en route to the West.

1. The Way of St. James.
2. The settlement of Valcuerna.
3. Storage silos on Valcuerna hill.
4. River Ebro.



1840

The space of war.

In the mid-19th century the convent of Valbuena was converted into a military establishment. After the confiscation and final expulsion of the Dominicans in 1833, its installations were reused for different purposes: as a hospital, military prison, barracks ...

The state of war arising from the Napoleonic invasion and the subsequent outbreak of the First Carlist War prompted the construction of a new wall during the first third of the 19th century. The Valbuena hill was included within its perimeter, now converted into an artillery battery.

Military priorities required not only the demolition of buildings outside the walls - such as the Inquisition building - to make the city easier to defend, but also the elimination of all surrounding vegetation. In practice, Logroño had been transformed into a huge barracks.

The “Espolón de Valbuena” and the nearby meadows were reconverted into a parade ground. The building where we are now, the “Escuelas Trevijano”, stands on the guardhouse of one of the gates in the wall.

1. Logroño town centre.
2. Former “La Merced” Convent.
3. Old fortifications.
4. Valbuena artillery battery.
5. Maintenance work on the “Ebro Chiquito”.
6. Guardhouse of the new fortifications.
7. Current location of the “Escuelas Trevijano” Centre.
8. Gate of Castile.
9. Parade ground.
10. Valbuena military hospital.
11. Fort moat.
12. Vintners road of the Royal Economic Society of Castilian La Rioja.
13. River Ebro.



Historical-Archaeological Heritage of the Excuevas-Cuarteles Special Interior Reform Plan (PERI)

In the 19th century, the lines that marked the urban expansion of Logroño left most of the area today included within the Excuevas-Cuarteles Special Interior Reform Plan under military jurisdiction. For this reason, in this part of the city the archaeological remains of many of the quarters that mark its history have been conserved. We are standing before a book carved in stone in which the lives of the early Neolithic communities that settled on the river terrace, the Dominicans, the Jacobean pilgrims or the defenders of its walls have been engraved.

1. Valbuena Convent.
 2. Tribunal and prisons of the Inquisition.
 3. Revellín artillery tower
 4. Revellín wall and gate. 16th Century
 5. 19th century fortifications
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The Revellín Tower was completed three years after the French laid siege to the city in 1521, an event that is commemorated every June 11 during the festivities of Saint Barnaba's day.

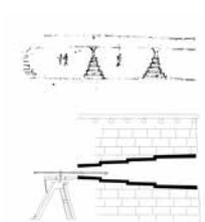


The upper gallery of the tower was used by the sculptor and painter Alejandro Rubio Dalmati as a studio in the 1930s. The bas-relief on the wall corresponds to a materials test conducted at the studio itself.



The Revellín Tower was used to support various buildings in the 20th century. These include one adjoining building designed by the architect Fermín Álamo, dating from 1930, and another residential building designed by the architect José María Carreras and which was erected on the building between 1952 and 1982.

This space was converted into a bar or buffet for the Frontón cinema, which was not opened to the public. The adjacent projection room was inaugurated in 1940 with the screening of the film "Guard! Alert" and was finally closed in 1969 with a double session in which the films "El comandante Furia" and "Anne of the Indies" were shown.



The hole that can be seen is an embrasure or gunloop. Its graded design is repeated on walls such as the San Sebastián and Fuenterrabía walls and was intended to protect soldiers firing guns from inside the walls.



The weapons used in gunnery towers such as the Revellín Tower were small calibre and were mainly used to defend the moat alongside the walls.

The Revellín Tower is the work of Master Lope de Insturizaga (†-1545), who later worked on the fortifications of Pamplona and Fuenterrabía at the service of great royal engineers such as Benedetto of Ravenna or Gabriele Tadino, also known as the Prior of La Barletta.



The plague of 1564

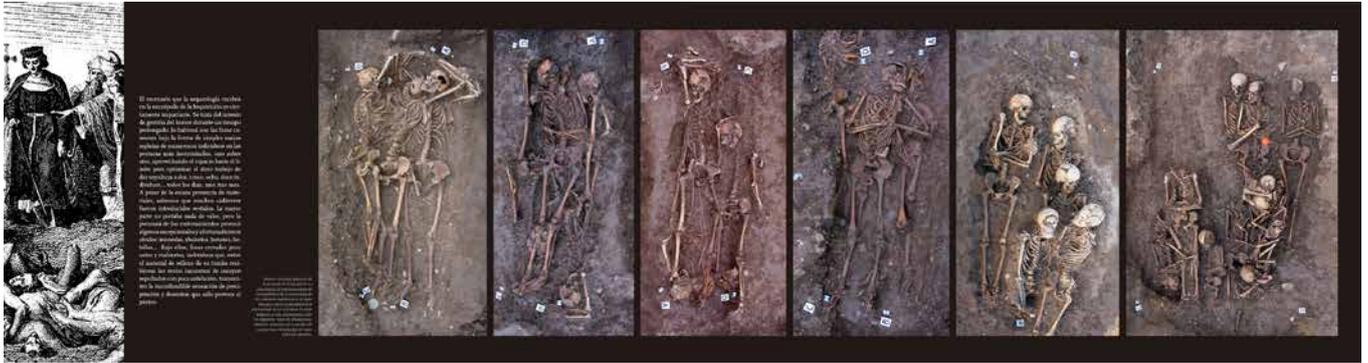
The plague is a disease caused by a bacillus (*Yersinia pestis*) transmitted by fleas and other insects carried by different rodents. The development of the disease causes inflammation in the lymph nodes (or buboes), high fever, severe headache and blood clots giving certain areas of the skin a blackish or bluish appearance (hence the term “Black Death”). The passage of bacteria into the blood causes respiratory and nervous problems and lack of adequate treatment results in a very high mortality. It should be highlighted that, even today, there are still *foci* of plague in different corners of the world and it has yet to be completely eradicated.

Although epidemics have habitually accompanied human societies since ancient times, the epidemic known as the Black Death spread throughout Europe between 1346 and 1351, killing no less than one third of the population, i.e. around twenty-five million people. The great plague of the 14th century is evidently the most famous mortality crisis in history: the problems caused by this demographic disaster undermined socio-economic development in Europe for a long time and left an indelible mark on late medieval literature, art and religion. The uncertainty that people must have felt when faced with a mysterious illness that almost invariably ended with the death of the infected person, was like a nightmare that is repeated today in often exaggerated social reactions to health scares, such as the famous mad cow disease or avian flu.

The plague that led to the construction of the famous necropolis opposite the Rocamador Hospital in Logroño in 1564 was not such an unusual event: we have knowledge of two other epidemics, presumably of the same nature, that struck our city in the same century, one earlier between 1523 and 1525 and another later in 1599. Documentary evidence of the 1564 epidemic is relatively limited due to the lack of corresponding parish records at the time. However, the disproportionate number of wills that were written in the years just after the epidemic is truly revealing. Some directly mention the cause of death of the testator: “loss of life and pestilence ..., which happened in this city”.

Many of the keys regarding this necropolis appear in a revealing document dating from 1572. It describes the verbal accounts given by some doctors regarding the major, severe and lengthy illnesses suffered by the occupants of the house of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. The document is a compendium of the principles on which medical science of the time was based. This document, after taking stock of the possible causes of this rare calamity (damp, exposure to unhealthy air, celestial conjunctions, etc.), includes various references to a situation that the Council of Logroño had probably concealed when it provided a place for the establishment of the Inquisition in Logroño: the courtyard of the building contained the corpses of between seven hundred and one thousand people who had perished before and after 1564, the year of the plague.

Based on such clear documentary evidence, and in the light of the initial findings, the excavation work required a complex topographical system to determine the correct location of all remains. The result of this study is striking: the connected bones of three hundred individuals were recovered, together with other disconnected sets of bones corresponding to at least the same or probably a higher number of people. A very conservative estimate is that the plague of 1564 killed at least one of every five or six people in Logroño. Extrapolating the calculation to the current population of Logroño, the percentage would correspond to between twenty and thirty thousand people.



The situation unveiled by archaeological excavation work at the necropolis of the Inquisition is certainly striking. It reveals an attempt to control the horror for an extended period of time: the most common elements were mass graves in the form of simple ditches lined with numerous corpses in the most unlikely positions, one on top of another, taking maximum advantage of the space available to optimize the gruelling task of having to bury two, five, eight, twelve individuals ... every day, month after month. Despite the scarcity of materials, we know that many corpses were buried in their clothes. Most did not carry anything of value, but the urgent nature of the burials meant that some exceptional items were, fortunately, forgotten: coins, beads, buttons, and buckles.... Below the corpses were graves of individuals closed shortly before and reopened. The materials used to fill these graves were mixed with the unconnected remains of corpses buried shortly before, conveying the unmistakable feeling that they the haste and disorder in which they were dug was only caused by panic.

Anticipating the difficulties that plotting such a complex space as the necropolis of the Inquisition would entail, a computer-assisted field-based photographic and data-gathering method was developed to draw and situate the remains with pinpoint accuracy. The result will allow a thorough and detailed analysis of each individual, the groups of graves and the necropolis as a whole.

Image of Yersinia Pestis, the bacillus causing the plague.

Person with bubonic plague treated by a surgeon, according to a xylography by Hans Folz, 1482.

Romantic engraving recreating the burial of plague victims in mass graves.

Apparel used by a doctor when inspecting plague victims.

This unusual clothing was used in an attempt to isolate the doctor from contaminated air and miasmas. The mask with "crane beak" contained gauzes soaked in different liquids to prevent contagion.

Peter Bruegel. The Triumph of Death. 1562.

Different funerary complexes of the necropolis of the Inquisition.

The concurrence of piles of skeletons and conserved bones is unmistakable evidence that the individuals were buried simultaneously. Other images show the remains of earlier burials, piled on top of skeletons and moved when the new pit was opened and the corpses were then reburied.



The Revellín artillery tower

The evolution in the design of walled enclosures between the end of the 15th and early 16th centuries is known as transitional fortification. Due to the need to deal with the destructive power of heavy artillery, circular towers were one military engineering design used during those years of continuous testing and seem to respond to a hasty search for a solution. The success of constructions like the Revellín Tower was short-lived and was soon replaced by new architectural designs dominated by rectilinear bastions, introduced in 1540 and designed based on the rigorous application of scientific principles to deal the problems that heavy artillery caused for walled systems. Circular artillery towers therefore represent, on the one hand, an intermediate solution between the elementary rules of old-style constructions with medieval roots and, on the other, sophisticated mathematical theories that provided a structure to bastioned fortifications.

A. Upper shooting plaza

1. Bailey
2. Cannon embrasures
3. Graded cannon embrasures

B. Access corridor

C. The pillbox or lower shooting gallery

1. Gunloops
2. Smoke holes
3. Puteal
4. Listening gallery and countermine

D. The moat

1. scarp
2. Counter-scarp



Logroño Coat of Arms

Second half of the 16th century

Limestone coat of arms representing a fortified bridge with three towers - the emblem of Logroño - between two lambrequins with scrolls on both sides, on a cherub with wings spread wide, and crowned with a royal crown.

Donated by Mr. Jesús Gil-Gibernau del Río, on June 2, 2010



Three-dimensional image of the Revellín Tower. 1522-1524.

Plan for the construction of a security outpost in the old convent of Valbuena. 1844. Courtesy of Jesús González Menorca.

Plan of Logroño and its fortifications. 1837-1839. Institute of Military History and Culture. El Prado National Museum.

Fortification of the Valbuena artillery battery in the Ebro Park. Napoleon's expeditionary force. In around 1810.

Rank insignia from a cavalry uniform. Early 19th century.

Military button of an artillery unit.

Military button of an infantry unit.

The Fortifications

In different stages of its history, Logroño served as a border town and therefore needed to be fortified. As a protector of the gateway to Castile, it defended its bridge and fortress against attacks by mercenaries from Navarre in 1335 and repelled the attack of the French army in 1521.

However, the main role played by the city in the wars of the past was as a rear-guard operations base. For example, the troops of Ferdinand the Catholic departed from these fortifications and conquered Navarre in 1512. Similarly, the Napoleonic expeditionary force organized its defensive system along the course of the Ebro in 1810. Finally, General Espartero himself used this as a base to plan his campaigns against the Carlists in 1837.

The fortification of Logroño in those unstable times inevitably imposed certain conditions on the development of the city. The disappearance of the military threat and the growth of the city from the second half of the 19th century rendered the encircling walls ineffective and an obstacle to its development. The city walls were finally demolished in 1863.

As regards the space of the Excuevas-Cuarteles Special Interior Reform Plan, the remains of three fortified enclosures have been preserved.

The first fortification was built during the first third of the 16th century and is characterized by the combination of a defensive system comprising a moat, wall and counterwall surrounding the perimeter of the city. The vulnerability of the gates of the compound was mitigated by the construction of artillery towers to protect the various bridges that crossed the moat and provided access to the city.

Almost three centuries later, Napoleon's expeditionary force built a new defensive system based on the reuse and fortification of buildings then outside the walls, a project that enjoyed the full cooperation of the pro-French municipality. This task could not be completed because the Napoleonic troops finally evacuated the city in 1813, after the Battle of Vitoria.

In practice, the fortification works carried out by the liberals during the First Carlist War were limited to completing the project initiated by French engineers. The most notable project was the conversion of the old Valbuena hill into a large artillery battery.



Image of the “Way gate”. Western side of the fortified enclosure of Logroño. 1524.

Coat of arms of Charles I.

Equestrian Portrait of Charles I. Titian. 1548. Prado Museum. El Prado National Museum.

Central image of the royal charter of Charles I granting Logroño the privilege of decorating its coat of arms with three fleurs-de-lis. 1523. Municipal Archive of Logroño.

“The Way Gate”

The coat of arms of Charles of Ghent, king of Castile and Aragon and future emperor of Germany, was installed on the west gate of the walled city of Logroño in 1524, after completion of the fortifications on the northwest corner of the walled enclosure, very close to the artillery tower known as the Revellín Tower (“cubo”).

The ornamentation of the king’s coat of arms must have been much more striking than its current weathered appearance suggests, since we know it was made of polychrome. The work on the gate ended in 1535 with the inscription of a legend, now lost. The sumptuous decoration on what was merely an access gate to the city was mainly designed to imbue the defensive enclosure with symbolic meaning, to remind future generations of the unequal battle that had taken place three years earlier when the citizens of Logroño fought against the expeditionary force sent by the king of France. In parallel to this commemoration, Logroño proclaimed itself a real city after it began building its own wall and guaranteeing its presence among the main possessions of the crown.

The coat of arms on the “Puerta del Camino” contains the symbols of the territories of the crown, a vast legacy made up of the possessions of the Trastámara and Habsburg families: Castile, Aragon, Granada, the Two Sicilies, Flanders, Austria, Tirol, Burgundy ... all presided over by the double-headed eagle of the house of Austria. The Logroño coat of arms repeatedly accompanies these emblems, incorporating the fleurs-de-lis that were granted as a reward after the victory over the French.

Throughout his reign, Charles I repeatedly included his coat of arms on the many fortifications built during this reign, a sign of ownership that clearly revealed the nature of his defensive policy on both the northern border of the Peninsula, facing the French, and on the southern flank as protection against the threat from the Ottomans and Berbers.



The Inquisition

The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition was one of the main pillars underpinning the Spanish absolute monarchy between the 16th and 18th centuries.

It was established by the Catholic Monarchs in 1478 as a legal institution that would enable the creation of the first modern European state.

In this context, its objectives were focused on the complete eradication of all forms of dissent that were considered a threat to the political and social order. It is therefore important to understand that the Inquisition was the main guarantor of religious unity under which the Spanish kingdoms sought protection.

The seat of the Tribunal in Logroño was established in 1570, the inquisitors occupying the old quarters of a former hospital outside the strict limits of the city. This location was not selected at random since it fitted perfectly with the vigilante image the institution transmitted not only to the city of Logroño but also to other territories falling within its jurisdiction: La Rioja, Navarre, the Basque Country and much of Cantabria and Burgos.

Lutherans heretics, false converted Jews and Mohammedans were most strongly persecuted by the Inquisition, with many ending up at the stake, located on the left bank of the Ebro, near the current cemetery. However, it is important to bear in mind that the Holy Tribunal did not only persecute the most serious dissenters. In fact, many convicted merely for blasphemy, reading banned books or superstition were punished by the inquisitors with very harsh financial penalties, imprisonment and exile, accompanied by stigmatising and enduring public ridicule.

With time, the severity of inquisitorial activity diminished. In the late 18th century, social control procedures focused mainly on the seizure of foreign books at Cantabrian ports. These books were suspected of serving as propaganda for the ideas born in the French Revolution. It was precisely the Napoleonic invasion and the installation of a French garrison in Logroño that prompted the inquisitors to flee and their buildings were demolished. In 1810, both the administrative building and the prisons used for interrogations were dismantled and their emaciated remains were incorporated into the fortifications that created a second enclosure for the city, a project started by the invaders themselves. After the war, the Holy Tribunal was restored by the new authorities but so precariously that in its final years its existence was merely testimonial. The Spanish Inquisition was finally abolished in 1834.

Image of archaeological remains of the Tribunal and Secret Prisons of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Logroño.

Inquisition Tribunal in Plaza Mayor in Madrid. Francisco Rizi. 1683. El Prado National Museum..

The Inquisition Tribunal. Francisco de Goya. 1815-1819. Academy of San Fernando, Madrid.

The Inquisitor General Fernando Niño de Guevara. El Greco. Circa 1600. Museum of Art. New York.

Insignia with the emblem of the Inquisition. Enamel on gold. Lázaro Galdeano Museum. El Prado National Museum.



The Valbuena convent

The Valbuena convent, located in the north-western corner of the city and outside the city walls, was administered for over four centuries by the Order of Saint Dominic.

The Dominicans had owned the old parish church of Santa María since 1443, but it was not until the early 16th century that they were in a position to be able to build their own church. After demolishing the old church, the Dominicans erected a new church for sermons. The convent itself, adjacent on its southern side and erected immediately afterwards, is arranged in line with the canonical design of a central cloister and perimeter naves. Until it permanently became public property following its irreversible confiscation, Valbuena is associated with a series of events, anecdotes and circumstances. Its historical legacy is no less complex than that of any of the other convents that animated life in our city during that period.

During that period, the community of Valbuena behaved like a respected entity, owning possessions and resources throughout the municipality, able to influence the decisions of those in power. However, at the same time, the community claimed its status as a model of perfection through their commitment to worship, public service and charitable work. Beggars and the needy found shelter from their plight at the convent, while the owners of its chapels, the brothers, the members of that society, for countless reasons, found the peace and quiet of the convent ideal for resolving conflicts and discussing their affairs, transmitting the image of a society that fulfilled its liturgical obligations. These meetings were held in the basement of the church, where prominent figures and anonymous people, women and men who paid, according to their means, to have a tomb in the house of God and paid for prayers to facilitate the survival of their souls alongside those of the chosen.

Year after year, the walls of the Valbuena convent bore witness to the joy of great festivities. Devout pilgrims left the convent on pilgrimages, its walls echoed the harsh sentences of the Inquisition Tribunal ... But the 19th century marked the upheaval of daily life in the community. After the convent was confiscated and the structured life of the Order was replaced by military discipline, the presence of the Dominicans in Valbuena became a shadow that faded into obscurity after their expulsion in 1833.

Photograph of the church and convent of Valbuena after its conversion into a military barracks. F.J. Gómez 1870.

Plan for the construction of a military hospital at the former convent of Valbuena. 1849. Institute of Military History and Culture. Museo Nacional del Prado.

Anonymous engraving. Last moments of Don Martín Zurbano. Circa 1845. National Library. Museo Nacional del Prado.

Grave goods from the necropolis of Valbuena. Rosary of jet beads. 17th-18th centuries.

Image of the church of Santa María de Valbuena from its apse today.

Grave goods from the necropolis of Valbuena. Embossed cross-shaped silver pendant. 16th Century.

Two maravedíes (old coins) issued in Valencia by Philip V in 1718.



Conserved defensive structures in Norte street.

The walls are the result of the inertia and emergency work carried out due to the war but they also reveal the age-old need to draw physical boundaries between the institutional sphere and life outside the community.

Until well into the 19th century, technological, economic and social development would require a much more flexible paradigm in large population centres. The city walls were incorporated into the urban structure and the image of the city was inseparable from walls that clearly marked its boundaries and jurisdiction.

Largely due to chance circumstances, at the confluence of the Norte and Once de Junio streets, an archaeological site has been restored containing the combined remains of the three fortified enclosures that were built in Logroño throughout its history.

The oldest structures date back to the late Middle Ages and are hardly visible on the bases of the rear façades of the current buildings in Barriocepo street. Originally, they provided a solid but simple wall that soon became obsolete against the offensive power of fledgling artillery.

The second milestone refers to the Revellín Tower, built according to the new requirements of military engineering in the early 16th century: a wide and deep moat, low but deep walls, cannon embrasures ... all designed to withstand the onslaught of firearms and artillery. It is an exception when compared to rest of the contemporary wall, much more modest in design. Finally, the remains of the moat scarp, which seems so out of place with respect to the rest of the defensive system, are related to a late initiative, which, once again, attempted to mitigate the vulnerability of the enclosure against the rapid advances in the military industry. Although categorical conclusions may not be drawn due to the lack of documentary evidence, it appears that this fortification, clumsily attached to earlier volumes, was erected by the pro-French authorities of Logroño during the War of Independence, between 1810 and 1814.

Until 2009, all of this was concealed by the Revellín “pelota” court, inherited from the fronton or walled court for playing pelota built by Benigno Iturbe according to a design by Louis Barrón in 1884. The expansion of Logroño after the walls were demolished led to the incorporation of new spaces and new uses: the excitement of the popular sport helped alleviate the uncertainties and pains of war, and the city’s real boundaries dissolved amidst the sound of people cheering and betting.

Remains of the wall prior to the 16th century

Revellín Tower (1522-1524)

Vestiges of the French fortification (1810-1814)

Chronological outline of the defensive elements in the south-east corner of the walled city of Logroño

Photograph of the area where the old Revellín pelota court was located during the excavation process.

Current appearance of the area where the old Revellín pelota court was located.

Project for the façade of the Logroño pelota court in Norte street. Luis Barrón, 1884.

Municipal Archive of Logroño 169/21.

Military button bearing the French imperial eagle. Excavation of the area occupied by the Inquisition.

