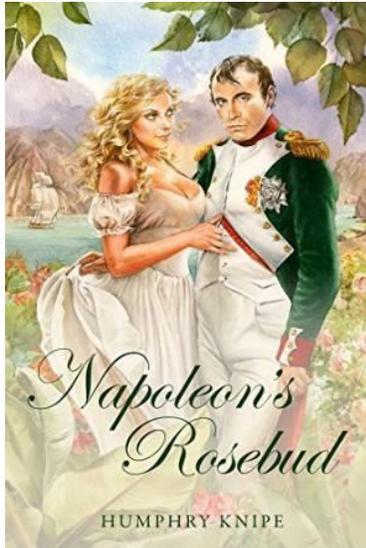


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Knipe, Humphrey. *Napoleon's Rosebud*. Amazon E-Book. 2016. \$1.



According to the author, his family has legend that one of their ancestors, Charlotte Knipe, was Napoleon's mistress during the final years of his life on St. Helena. There is little to support the legend other than that Charlotte was born on St. Helena, was a young woman during the time Napoleon was there, and she eventually immigrated to South Africa.

Napoleon's Rosebud is a romance novel based on the premise that might be some truth in the family legend. The book covers the time of Napoleon's arrival through the year before his death. Once Napoleon arrives on the island, Charlotte is quickly roped into his web. There are a large number of historical characters in the book, most are cast as villains set to cause problems for Charlotte.

Central to the book's plot is Napoleon using Charlotte as a secret conduit for him to pass letters to his supporters in Europe. Her fiancé is studying botany in London and she sends him plants from Saint Helena every month. Hidden among the plants are the letters from Napoleon. The plan is uncovered quickly, but the British governor, Sir Hudson Lowe, decides to allow the secret correspondence to continue in an effort to keep himself informed on what Napoleon is plotting.

Napoleon knows that the governor is reading his mail and begins a campaign to force the governor to make his living conditions as harsh as possible. He hopes that this mistreatment will cause an out-pouring of sympathy among the elite of England and they will bring political pressure on the British government to release him from the island. He convinces the Charlotte to go to London to meet with Baroness Holland, the wife of the Whig politician Henry Vassal Fox. Lady Holland is at the heart of British high society and Charlotte is soon mingling with the social elite. From there she is sent to Venice to convince Lord Byron to compose an epic poem about the mistreatment of Napoleon. Upon her return to England, Charlotte becomes embroiled in a plot to help Napoleon escape by a submarine.

In many ways *Napoleon's Rosebud* is a romantic farce. Throughout the story, the heroine desperately tries to stay true to her fiancé and avoid the clutches of General Gaspard Gourgaud and Lord Byron, who are both trying to seduce her. The reader is soon left with the question on whether all the machinations by Napoleon are truly because he wishes to escape from St. Helena or a grand scheme for him to bed her.

Mr. Humphrey does a good job of capturing the flavor of the times – whether it be the social life on St. Helena, in Regency London, and among the British expatriates in

Venice or the political debate over whether Napoleon should have been imprisoned on St. Helena and his treatment by his captors. It is entertaining and reminds me of a romantic comedy from the 1960s.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: July 2016