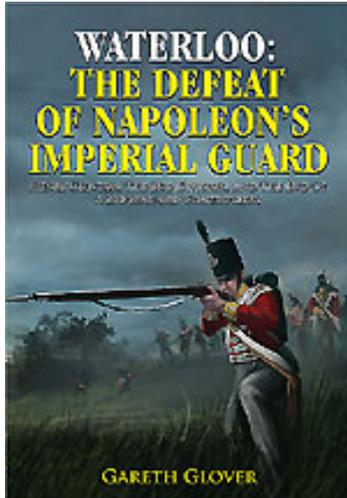


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Glover, Gareth. *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard*. Barnsley: Frontline; 2015. 253 pages. ISBN# 9781848327443. Hardcover. \$40 / £20



The name of this book is a bit of a misnomer. Although it is about the defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard at Waterloo, it is really a history of the Anglo-Allied 2nd Division in the Allied Army at Waterloo. It Mr. Glover was recently granted access to the Clinton Family Archives, the bulk of which contains the papers of Sir Henry Clinton, the commander of the 2nd Division at Waterloo. The author copied over 6000 documents that pertain to the Waterloo Campaign. In addition to General Clinton's personal diary, letters to the army headquarters and the Duke of Wellington, there are letters and reports from his subordinate commanders, letters to and from his wife whose was staying in Brussels during the campaign, strength reports for every unit assigned to the

division, plus his inspection reports of his battalions for the prior year. Needless to say these previously unpublished documents are a treasure trove of information! However, *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard* is not just based on the Clinton papers. Mr. Glover, who is also known for his six volume *Waterloo Archives*,¹ has used the many letters and diaries in the *Archives* to tell the story of the officers and soldiers of each of the individual battalions in the 2nd Division.

Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard begins with the arrival of General Clinton in the Netherlands in the summer of 1814 and his duties as the second-in-command of the force that would eventually become the nucleus of the Anglo-Allied Army during the Waterloo Campaign. It then covers the formation of the 2nd Division in April 1815 and his attempts to form its three brigades into a cohesive fighting force. This was not a simple task, since only one of the brigades was British. One brigade was the Light Brigade and consisted of the 52nd Foot, 71st Foot, 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles, and two companies of the 3rd Battalion 95th Rifles. There was a brigade of the King's German Legion of four battalions, but only two had seen service in the Peninsula. The third brigade was Hanoverian and had four landwehr battalions. Almost every battalion, with the exception of the 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles, had numerous issues. Even the famed 52nd Foot had problems for the previous three months they had been on ships waiting to sail to North America.

One of the most fascinating parts of the book is Mr. Glover's incorporation of Inspection Reports on each battalion within the division. Upon assumption of his position as the second-in-command of the Anglo-Dutch Army in the Netherlands in 1814, he undertook

¹ The *Waterloo Archives* were published by Frontline Books between 2010 and 2014.

an inspection of every battalion in the army. The author provides a condensed version of the report on each battalion that would comprise the 2nd Division. These reports were confidential and General Clinton provided detailed information – both good and bad – on the state of the battalion. The reports on the King's German Legion and the Hanoverian in the autumn of 1814 were scathing at times. For example he wrote about the 2nd Battalion KGL "This detachment was very loosely put together, many of those present in the shape of servants &c did not appear & no officer could account for their men or answer the questions arising respecting companies. The arms & accoutrements were not marked & though the arms were not in bad order they were not properly cleaned. . . "²

General Clinton goes into great detail on the overall readiness of the Hanoverian battalions and concluded with "they contain materials for forming a fine army but they have everything to learn, the circumstance of their having a system of exercise different from that of the British army is attended with great inconvenience & will prevent the two armies from moving in the field with that precision which is desirable in all cases & in some circumstances to avoid confusion."³ Nor does he spare the British battalions, especially the state of their equipment.

Chapter Five covers these same units in the spring of 1815, after the 2nd Division was formed and General Clinton appointed its commander. He conducts another inspection of the battalions and his reports make very interesting reading, especially when compared to the reports from the previous year. Some improvements had been made, but many of the problems, especially with the level of training and equipment have not been fixed. Of particular concern to him was the battalions' inability to maneuver in conjunction with each other. These reports are worth the price of the book in itself!

By June General Clinton's efforts had begun to bear fruit and when the orders came to march, they were mostly ready. The division did not fight at Quatre Bras on 16 June 1815 and was in reserve near Hougoumont for much of Waterloo on 18 June. However they were still exposed to the heavy French artillery bombardment and numerous cavalry charges. Their time came when Napoleon ordered his Imperial Guard to attack the Allied line. They were to the right of the British Guards Division and were heavily involved in the fighting. *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial* then follows the division on its march to Paris.

Those who own Mr. Glover's *Waterloo Archives* might rightfully ask themselves why they should buy this book, since it draws heavily on the *Archives*. The best reason is because the author takes the different accounts in the *Archives* to illustrate what is happening to each battalion during the key parts of the battle, including the march to the battle, the devastating artillery bombardments, the cavalry charges, the fight with the Imperial Guard, and the dealing with the wounded and dead after the battle. While the *Archives* tell their stories, they are spread out over six volumes and there is no attempt

² Page 13

³ Page 16

to explain what the writer of the account is witnessing. *Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard* does an outstanding job integrating all their stories into one very readable volume to tell how the 2nd Division fought and bled that day.

The final part of the book is a discussion over which Allied unit was most responsible for the defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard. For many decades there has been great debates about which brigade was most responsible for stopping the attack of the Imperial Guard. The British Guards are often given sole credit even to the point that the 1st Foot Guards were re-designated the Grenadier Guards shortly after the battle in honor of this feat. Yet there are many others who believe it was Adam's Brigade of the 2nd Division, in particular the British 52nd Foot, who was most instrumental in their defeat. The author examines both sides of the argument, drawing heavily on new information that has come to light in the past decade to sort out the truth. Mr. Glover finishes his study with a comprehensive discussion on whether there was a conspiracy to discredit the role of the British 52nd Foot in the Guard's defeat. You will have to read the book to find out his conclusions!

Waterloo: the Defeat of Napoleon's Imperial Guard is not a book for someone looking for an overview of Waterloo. It does a superb job of dissecting the controversy over whether it was Adam's Brigade or the Guards' Brigade that was instrumental in defeating the Imperial Guard. However its real appeal is in its study of the General Clinton's 2nd Division during the Waterloo Campaign. Mr. Glover's detailed look at the internal workings of the division and the strengths and weaknesses of each of its battalions makes it a rare and welcomed addition to our knowledge of the British Army of the era. This in depth study of the nuts and bolts of a single division is without a doubt the best book I have ever read on Waterloo.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: July 2015