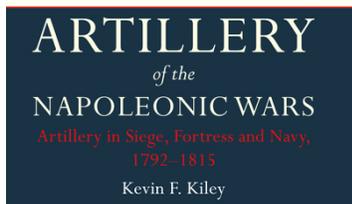


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Kiley, Kevin F. *Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars: Artillery in Siege, Fortress and Navy, 1792 – 1815*. Barnsley (UK): Frontline, 2015. 352 pages. ISBN# 1848326378 £30 / \$50.



In 2004, Mr. Kiley wrote [Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars 1792 – 1815](#) which focused on the field artillery of the major combatants of the era. This new volume is a follow up of the first volume, but looks at the less mobile artillery of the period – the siege, fortress, and naval guns – that played an important role in the wars. The author divides the book into three major sections. The first looks at the development and employment of the guns. The second examines how they were used in a variety of sieges, while the third is how the navy used them.

Mr. Kiley begins with the artillery pieces themselves. When they were first developed, the battles the various inventors had to get their designs accepted, and the theoretical deployment of them. I use artillery pieces rather than siege and fortress artillery, because the author does not just limit the section to the heavy guns and

howitzers used by the army. He also includes chapters on British rockets, plus and naval guns and carronades. Included in the section is detailed information on the drill used to fire the guns. He provides the actual commands used by the gunners and a description of each. He does this not just for the long guns, but also for the heavy howitzers, fortress guns, and naval guns. The gun drill is taken from Louis de Tousard's *American Artillerist's Companion* which was published in 1809 and was the manual used by U.S. artillery in the War of 1812. This book was based on French artillery manuals and although the terms used by other nations might be different, the steps would be similar.

Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars is primarily concerned with the guns. However because they were only one part of a siege, the author also includes in the section an overview of fortifications of the Napoleonic Era. Furthermore, he provides a brief discussion of the major countries' engineers and sappers whose job was to direct the siege and build the siege works. Of course he includes the French, British, Austrian, Prussian, and Russian engineers, but also the Spanish, Portuguese, and Americans!

Part II of *Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars* takes the reader from the theoretical side of the topic to the practical. Here Mr. Kiley examines seven different sieges and how the artillery and engineers succeeded or in one case failed to take the fortress or city. Two are French sieges in the Peninsula (2nd Saragossa in 1809 and Ciudad Rodrigo in 1810), two sieges by the British of French garrisons in Spain (Badajoz in 1812 and San Sebastian in 1813), and two allied sieges of French garrisons in central Europe (Danzig in 1813 and Hamburg in 1813 and 1814). He closes the section with the unsuccessful British siege of Fort Erie, New York in 1814.

The final section looks at the use of naval guns. This is a very large topic in itself, so Mr. Kiley limits it to the ship-to-ship engagements between the British and Americans during the War of 1812. He examines the American Navy and why it was so effective against the Royal Navy in the opening days of the war, when the numbers were relatively equal. Included is information on the USS *Constitution* and why it was able to defeat HMS *Guerriere* and *Java*. The last chapter looks at the naval war to control the Great Lakes that lie between the U.S. and Canada. Because the British could not bring the ocean going navy into Lake Erie, this became a race to see which who could build and man the most gunboats and sloops. The British launched their flotilla first and the ensuing action became known as the Battle of Lake Erie.

Interspersed throughout the book are 56 tables that provide a variety of information such as the range for 20 different heavy long guns and howitzers used by seven of the countries of the period. Surprisingly Russian guns are not listed. Another table lists the type of ammunition that was expended by the French during their siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1810. Naval data is also represented, including information on weight of different British canister rounds and the number of guns on a ship and how it affects its rating. For example a 1st Rate ship had over 100 guns while a 6th Rate ship had only 20 – 28 guns.

Mr. Kiley subscribes to the belief that a picture is worth 1,000 words and has added numerous contemporary images of the artillery. These images range from crew drill to a Vallière mortar showing the use of a gunner's quadrant to a sketch of a 24 pounder Gribreauval gun to instructions on how to construct siege saps. In addition to these 40+ images, there are another 30 images of sieges and photographs of different fortifications. The large number of images are well worth the price of the book in themselves!

Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars closes with 10 appendices and a glossary. Appendix One is a short biography of Jean-Baptiste Gribeauval and the impact he had on artillery development. Appendix Two is titled "Spiking of Cannon" which describes how to render an artillery piece inoperable by driving a spike or nail in to its touch hole. Unfortunately, Mr. Kiley does not provide a source for this appendix. The final eight appendices are extracts from *American Artillerist's Companion*. They cover a variety of topics on artillery and siege operations, such as artillery cartridges, how cannons are made, naval ordnance, and how to construct fortifications.

Because of the broad scope of *Artillery of the Napoleonic Wars*, the author rightly chose to make it a survey of the topic, rather than a dry compilation of data on guns. In many ways it is reminiscent of Colonel John Elting's [Swords around the Throne](#) -- packed with information that is only available in obscure technical manuals, but written in a style that will hold the reader's interest.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: April 2016