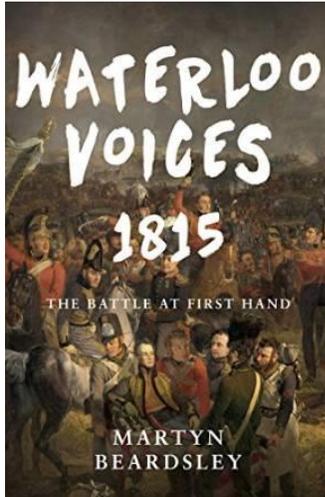


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Beardsley, Martyn. *Waterloo Voices 1815: the Battle at First Hand*. Stroud (UK): Amberley, 2015. 288 pages. ISBN# 9781445619828. Hardcover. £20 / \$25



Waterloo Voices 1815 is not a history of the battle or campaign per se. The author uses hundreds of eye-witness accounts to place the reader in the midst of the events of the 100 Days. The book is divided into twelve sections ranging from Napoleon's return to power to Quatre Bras to all the major events of the battle of Waterloo to caring for the wounded to Napoleon's surrender to the British. He then breaks down each section into chapters covering the significant actions of that topic. For example, Part IV is titled "The Charge of the Heavy Cavalry" which is about the charge of the British cavalry that broke the French infantry corps commanded by General d'Erlon. This section has two chapters. Chapter 12: "Ewart and the Cavalry" describes how Sergeant Ewart captured the eagle of the French 45th Line Regiment. Chapter 13: "Scotland Forever" goes into greater depth and is about the charge of the Union Brigade.

Mr. Beardsley does a great job with finding the best quotes to illustrate the action in each chapter. He lists 50 different sources for them, which does not sound like a lot. But several of the books are compilations of journals, letters, and memoirs. Many of these sources, such as Sergeant Major Cotton, Lieutenant Kincaid, Private Farmer, Lieutenant Colonel Augustus Frazer, and Captain Mercer, will be familiar to the Napoleon Series readers. However, some of his sources, such as John Booth's *The Battle of Waterloo*¹ and the *Journal of the Three Days of the Battle of Waterloo by an Eyewitness* by an anonymous French soldier,² might be new to them. The author closes with an appendix that gives a short biography of many of those whose letters and memoirs were used in the book.

Waterloo Voices 1815 does have two major flaws that might turn off Napoleon Series readers. Although the sources do a very good job describing the topic of each chapter, the author does little to place the topic in context to the overall battle. For example, looking at Part IV: "The Charge of the Heavy Cavalry" he introduces it with three sentences:

"One of the key actions of the early stages of the battle was the charge of the British heavy cavalry: Somerset's Life Guards, Royal Horse Guards, 1st Dragoon Guard[sic]; Ponsonby's 1st Royal Dragoons, 2nd

¹ Published in 1816.

² Published in 1816.

Dragoons (Scots Greys) and 6th Dragoons. 'Charge' is something of a misnomer, however. Initially at least, owing to the cavalry having to pick its way through the British ranks and there being very little distance between them and the French, most of the horsemen advanced at walking pace."³

If the reader is not familiar with the events already he will be left with only a partial impression of the scope of the campaign and battle. The second flaw is that while the author does cite where the quote came from, he numbers all the sources he used in the back of the book. He then uses that number to show the reader where the quote was from. Unfortunately this method does not permit the author to give a page number for the quote.

Waterloo Voices 1815 is a quick and entertaining read. It is a good resource for someone looking for primary sources on the battle and will make a nice introduction for someone who is new to the topic.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: December 2015