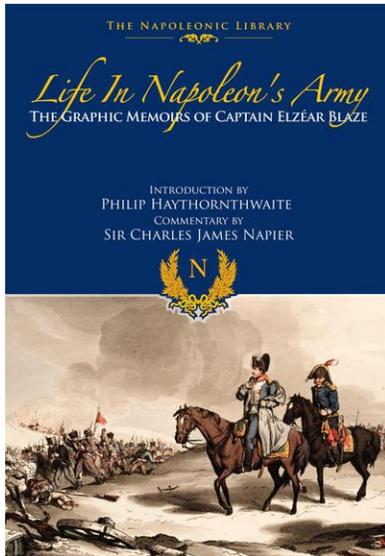


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Blaze, Elzéar. *Life in Napoleon's Army: The Graphic Memoirs of Captain Elzéar Blaze*. Frontline Books, Barnsley (UK), 2015. 198 pages. ISBN# 1848328222. Hardcover. £19.95, US\$39.95

Colin Pengelly. *H.M.S. Bellerophon*. Pen and Sword Maritime, Barnsley (UK), 2014. 304 pages, ISBN# 9781783462407. Hardcover. £19.95, US \$39.95.



The British publisher Pen and Sword is starting to reprint older Greenhill titles on Napoleonic subjects and these two books are part of that venture. Many readers will have purchased copies of these titles when they were in the Greenhill line but for those who did not, these re-issues in hard cover of some classic works of Napoleonic literature are worth acquiring. They are also reasonably priced.

The military memoirs of Elzéar Blaze will be known to any serious student of the French army. They have seen many reprints -- in the last two decades alone Greenhill printed them in 1995, The Empire's Press in 2001 and Leonaur in 2007. The Pen and Sword/Frontline edition is a reprint of the 1995 edition and has an introduction by Philip Haythornthwaite and commentary by General Sir Charles James Napier, brother of the Peninsular historian, William

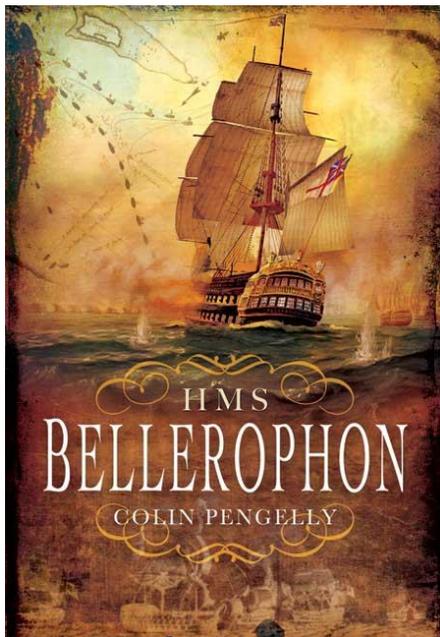
Napier. Bluntly honest, Charles Napier notes that, in his editorial comments, he has been

stupid and prosy, I am sorry for it; but the reader has the remedy in his hands. Few men read observations and notes, so the former may skip over the "Editor's" dull notes and lose very little; for the small merit they contain is like a bad gold mine, and will not, I fear, repay the trouble of working. After this honest confession, I consider that all accounts of conscience between myself and the reader are clear.

One wishes more authors would adopt that attitude.

Blaze joined the French army in 1805, first as a *velite* of the guard and then as a cadet at the Fontainebleau military academy. He was commissioned a sous-lieutenant in 1807 and fought in all the major campaigns from that year to 1815. His memoir is a chatty narrative of bivouacs and billets, foraging and cooking, amours and escapades and of the field and garrison. Blaze says remarkably little about his experience in battle but does provide much information about the daily life of the French soldier and about the civilians with whom he came into contact.

It is significant that, while Blaze is generally positive about his experiences in the German-speaking states, he does not have one good word to say about Spain, where he served three years. He not only dislikes Spanish culture, cuisine, religion and architecture but also the Spanish people themselves whom he characterizes as backward, slovenly, prideful, superstitious and ignorant. He does admit that the guerilla war was a costly business for the French who could maintain themselves in the towns and cities but whose dominion ended a few hundred feet beyond the urban area.



HMS *Bellerophon* (the sailors' "Billy Ruffian") was a 74-gun ship of the line, launched in 1786, that saw extensive service during the great war with France. She fought in the Glorious First of June engagement and the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar. Her most famous service was perhaps that Bonaparte went on board her to surrender in July 1815, when he realized he could not escape from allied forces and she carried him to England.

This is a reprint of Colin Pengelly's 1966 book and is a competent narrative of one of the more famous ships in the sailing British navy, from her construction to her ignominious end as a prison hulk. Readers should be aware, however, of a more recent study of the same vessel, David Cordingly's 2003 title, *The Billy Ruffian. The Bellerophon and the Downfall of Napoleon*, which enjoys the advantage of later research.

These titles are recommended for readers interested in either the daily life of the French soldier or Nelson's navy.

Reviewed by Donald E. Graves

Placed on the Napoleon Series: October 2015