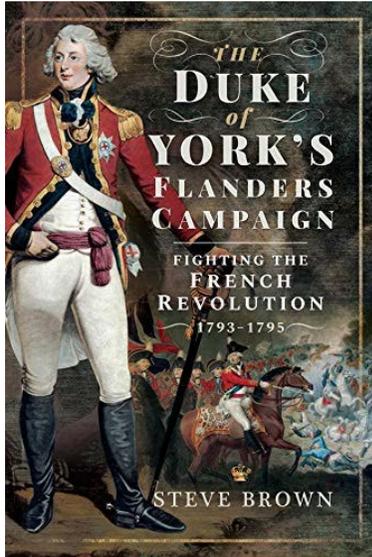


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Brown, Steve. *The Duke of York's Flanders Campaign: Fighting the French Revolution 1793 – 1795*. Barnsley (UK): Frontline, 2019. 403 pages. ISBN# 9781526742698. Hardcover. £25/\$34.



Steve Brown is a frequent contributor to and an assistant editor of the Napoleon Series. This is his fourth book in three years, all of which deal with some aspect of the British Army in the Napoleonic Wars.¹ Like his last book, *By Fire and Bayonet*, he writes about a topic that has received scant coverage in the past: the British fight against revolutionary France. This book takes us to the mainland of Europe, where the First Coalition² tried to destroy the French in the Low Countries.

In 1793 Great Britain was not prepared to go to war with France, but joined the 1st Coalition anyway. The British Prime Minister believed the war would be short and committed 5,000 soldiers to the operations in Flanders in April 1793. Command of this force was given to the Duke of York, the second son of King George III. The Prime Minister could not have been more wrong. Soon the British were caught in a morass and more troops were needed. By August, another 1300 British troops were sent over. Within a year the British had over 25,000 troops in Flanders. The two years were marked by some successes and many failures. By January 1795, the British Army had retreated to Bremerhaven and were evacuated home. This book is its story.

The author begins with a description of how the British expedition was raised and its leaders chosen. He then takes the reader to Flanders and tells of it on campaign, including the sieges and battles it fought in, such as that of the siege of Valenciennes (13 June - 28 July 1792); and the battles of Famars (23 May 1793), Lincelles (17 August 1793), the battles for the Channel ports, Le Cateau (29 March 1794), Willems (10 May 1794), Fleurus (26 June 1794), Tourcoing (18 May 1794), Tournai (22 May 1794), to Nijmenan in October and November.

Although *The Duke of York's Flanders Campaign* focuses primarily on the British Army and its allies, the Hanoverians, they did not fight alone. The Austrians provided more

¹ They include: *The Autobiography or Narrative of a Soldier: The Peninsular War Memoirs of William Brown of the 45th Foot*, [Wellington's Redjackets](#), and [By Fire and Bayonet: Grey's West Indies Campaign of 1794](#).

² The First Coalition's forces in Flanders were primarily composed of British, Hanoverian, Austrian, Dutch, German, and Prussian troops.

troops than the British and generally commanded the overall forces. The book examines the Coalition, how it was commanded, how the staff operated, and its impact of a joint command on the campaign. Coalition warfare was not easy and the campaign was doomed from the start. Few armies had recent experience operating on such a large scale and few commanders had any experience operating as part of a coalition. Mr. Brown examines all these factors and gives a very balanced account of the difficulties of coalition warfare in the late 18th Century.

Although this is a military history of the events, the armies of both sides had to respond to their political masters. As the war dragged on politics began to play a key role and by the end of 1794, the coalition fractured and eventually collapsed. Throughout the book, the author interweaves into the narrative the political problems that also impacted the coalition's ability to win the war.

Not much has been written on the campaign so Mr. Brown spent many hours in the archives in England to find material.³ There are inspection reports, as well monthly returns, for many of the units; as well as numerous unpublished journals and journals. He also used many of the published diaries and letters and drew on a huge number of regimental histories, which often had letters in them. The result of his efforts was to provide reader with many eye-witness accounts of the battles, sieges, and life on campaign.

The Duke of York's Flanders Campaign is a fantastic resource for those who wargame the Revolutionary Wars. It has many maps including five on the campaigns that show how the forces maneuver and six battle maps! In addition to this abundance of cartography, there are orders-of-battle and strength reports for the various forces during the campaign and battles. This book is a gold mine for those looking for this kind of information!

Like the author's other books, *The Duke of York's Flanders Campaign* is rich in detail and is a superb read. It is destined become the go-to book for anyone interested in this long-neglected period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by: [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: January 2020

³ Which says something about his dedication, since Steve Brown lives in Australia.