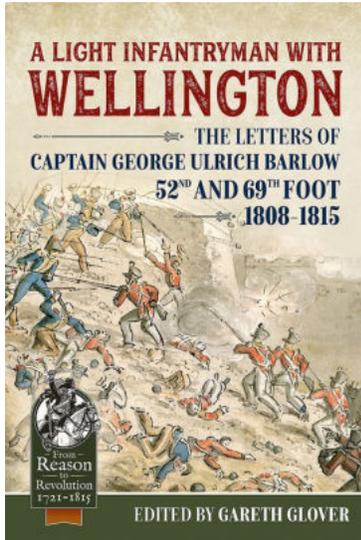


The Napoleon Series

Barlow, George Ulrich. *A Light Infantryman with Wellington: The Letters of Captain George Ulrich Barlow, 52nd and 69th Foot, 1808-1815* (From Reason to Revolution No. 25) Edited by Gareth Glover. Solihull (UK): Helion, 2018. 312 pages. ISBN# 9781911628101. Paperback. \$29.95/£15.95



As the members of the Napoleon Series probably know, Gareth Glover is a 54-year-old ex-Royal Navy Officer who has studied the Napoleonic wars for over 40 years. He is now renowned as one of the foremost experts on British memoirs and letters in this fascinating period of history. Gareth Glover has published over sixty of them to date, known as the Gareth Glover Collection.

A Light Infantryman with Wellington, The Letters of Captain George Ulrich Barlow 1808-1815 is the newest addition to the Collection. Mr. Glover had procrastinated on tackling the extensive collection of Captain Barlow's letters because of the 'very difficult handwriting and very faint ink', but for that reason he decided he needed to if the letters were not to be lost forever. Any lover of the period will be glad he made the effort. This is a substantial book, with over 300 pages. The letters are set in chapters with Barlow joining the army in 1808, then:

- Entering Portugal the First Time
- To Portugal Again
- Watching Ciudad Rodrigo
- The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo
- The Siege of Badajoz [Where he is wounded]
- Home Again.
- The Vitoria Campaign
- The Pyrenees
- A Change of Regiment
- The Waterloo Campaign
- Paris and the Army of Occupation
- India [Where he dies in 1824 at 33 of Malaria]
- Those That Remained.

What is strange is that the Captain's letters from the Paris Occupation ending in 1816 and his correspondence from India dating 1822 to 1824 are not mentioned in the book's title, which give the dates of just 1808-1815. Those letters are worthwhile additions and should have been mentioned [in the dates given] in the title.

These letters are far different from memoirs such as Mr. Glover's *The Veteran or 40 Years' Service in the British Army: The Scurrilous Recollections of Paymaster John Harley 47th Foot – 1798-1838*. Paymaster John Harley wrote his memoirs in the late 1830's, some fifteen years after he had left the army under somewhat questionable circumstances.

There are several memoirs from members of the 52nd, but few published letters like Barlow's 52nd Light compatriot, Captain Kinloch's letters in Mr. Grover's *A Hellish Business, The Letters of Captain Charles Kinloch 52nd Light Infantry, 1806-16*. Letters are far closer to events and thus include details and thoughts lost to memoirs. Captain Barlow was an excellent letter writer and had a fondness for detail. He enjoyed the support of his uncles in England and wrote them often as his father was Sir G.H. Barlow Bart KB, the Governor of Madras, India.

Captain Barlow's letters begin in 1808 when he enters the army as an ensign in the 22nd Foot, transfers to the 33rd as a lieutenant when a vacancy opens up, trading places with a Lieutenant Wright to the 52nd, all in just few months. Even that is interesting. Barlow explains how he won entrance to the 52nd so quickly to his Uncle in a letter of 8 November, 1809 from Shorncliffe Barracks:

"I am under the highest obligation to him [Colonel Ross] for his unceasing exertions in procuring the exchange with Wright in the course of which I gave him a great deal of trouble. No one is admitted into this regiment or allowed to continue in it except men of the strictest principles of honour: or if by some chance one should gain admittance, as was the case with Wright, he is instantly obliged to suit it. In the event of a duel taking place, an enquiry is set on foot & the party which shall appear to have the blame of the affair & to have been the cause is instantaneously obliged to leave the regiment."

What the letters offer is a window into the day-to-day experience and opinions of a young man of the gentry. As above, how officers which 'did not suit' could be moved out of a regiment, a Napoleonic "passing of the lemons."

Barlow's opinions of the 52nd provide a more immediate view of the regiment. Even in 1808-9, Barlow believed that the 52nd was

"...a regiment which if it has its equal is allowed to possess no superior in the in the British Army... Sir John Moore has the credit of the whole as the regiment was trained under his special regulations. We have several rules peculiar to ourselves, distinct from any other corps and entirely of his formation. "

He reports that Sir John Moore was well-known to the subalterns, with the General "Acting the part of a common drill sergeant when they were originally metamorphosed into a light infantry corps..."

The day-to-day details of the Shorncliffe training, such as Colonel Ross discouraging his officers from obtaining mounts, the campaigns and fighting in the Peninsula and the Continent, described in vivid detail, are fascinating and a number observations were new

to me. However, the particulars of living the life of an officer off the battlefield are just as intriguing. Barlow gives a detailed accounting of his expenses, including the yearly £100 'allowance' provided by his family...which was a necessity as the pay of a lieutenant did not cover normal expenses. Yet, he continues to spend money of all sorts of things like extra linens, spoons and several dark blue pantaloons, which his uncles are obliged to send him or the money for them. He also writes 'drafts' on his Uncle's money which he reports in letters after the fact.

Barlow starts his military career with a Scottish servant. [Not a batman, though he notes that he still receives a military allowance for him.] His description of how Barlow employs his servant, including not trusting him with the keys to his trunks, yet never mentioning the man's name is an eye-opening. Barlow was a true son of the landed gentry and the British class system.

These attitudes were very evident and wonderful antidotes. For instance, Barlow reports that during the Battle of Waterloo his servant was tending his horse when a Dutch soldier attacked him and stole the horse. As an aside he mentioned that the servant had to have his arm amputated after the attack. Again, we never know the poor man's name.

Hearsay is also relayed in the letters, something that is often scrubbed from memoirs. As an example, Barlow reports that Marshal Murat was the commander of the French cavalry charges at Waterloo.

The details of the Allied occupation of Paris in 1815 through 1816 is another area which was new to me. Barlow provides several detailed descriptions of the city, the people, the changing security procedures and the army organization processes during that time. In Paris, Barlow was acting brigade major until General Halkett in Brussels nominated someone else for the position. He writes of dining with Wellington and working with other notables and officers of the other Allied nations.

Throughout the letters, the methods for communication and Barlow's knowledge of what mail coaches were running, how to address letters and when packets left port to what destinations continually amazed me, but I can only imagine that is what one needed to know to effectively communicate with family from the other parts of Britain, the Continent and India.

Gareth Glover has extensive experience in providing background and footnotes to memoirs and letters. He does an admirable job with this book. If I can find any fault with the work, it is minor: The introductions to letters from Mr. Glover are in the same print so that several times I was taken back to realize I was reading his introductions to the next letters and not the end to Barlow's letter.

As a slice of intimate history, I cannot recommend this book more. It is a valuable and eye-opening addition to my library which already holds a large number of memoirs and letters edited by Mr. Glover and others. with family from the other parts of Britain, the Continent and India.

Reviewed by [Bill Haggart](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: January 2019