

Gareth Glover, *The Forgotten War Against Napoleon: Conflict in the Mediterranean 1793-1815* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2017), xviii+265 pp. ISBN: 1473833957. £25.

Reviewed by Zack White

It is often said that history is written by the victors. Whilst this is often true, it is sometimes the case that history is not written at all. Both of these circumstances are, of course, problems in their own right, and Gareth Glover's latest book *The Forgotten War Against Napoleon: Conflict in the Mediterranean 1792-1815* seeks to address the second of the two issues. This is very welcome, since, as Glover himself amply explains in his preface, the story of Britain's war against Napoleon has primarily focused on Wellington's campaigns in the Peninsular. In two hundred years, there has never been a full and detailed analysis of Britain's efforts in the Mediterranean, until now.

Gareth Glover, therefore, deserves credit for identifying a significant gap in our understanding of the wider Napoleonic Wars. In truth, this is the latest in a long line of significant and impressive publications which Glover has been responsible for. In recent years he has made strenuous efforts to bring a huge range of previously unpublished, or little known, primary source material into the public eye. The best example of this is the multi-volume Waterloo archive, published in association with Pen and Sword, providing accounts of the famous battle from multiple perspectives. This, in conjunction with a number of other works, means that few historians have ever done more than Glover to make eye witness testimony available to a mass audience.

In this, his latest book, Glover has proven himself to also be a master of the historical narrative, writing in short, punchy, informative chapters. The entire book is written with exceptional clarity, opening with one of the best concise summaries of the origins of the French revolution that you will ever read. Neither the pace, nor the lightness of the text let up throughout this superb work, making it a genuine pleasure to read, and one of those rare history books that genuinely leaves you in a position where you cannot wait to read more.

The only major criticism that can be made of this book is that the footnotes are far too sparse. Whilst brevity of footnotes could be excused by the fact that this work breaks new ground, and therefore there is very little in the way of secondary texts to refer to, there is almost no indication, throughout much of the book, where Glover's information has come from. Whilst no-one would question the accuracy of his findings, given his reputation, this is frustrating, as historians will inevitably want to explore specific aspects and issues that Glover raises in more depth. Given the absence of detailed footnotes, that process will be much more difficult than it might otherwise have been.

However, this is by no means to suggest that Glover's work is not helpful to historians. At relevant points in the book, Glover pauses to dispute long-held historical consensuses on the importance of individuals on the Mediterranean campaign, or offer his own assessments on

whether criticisms that have previously been levelled are justified. It is also pleasing that he remains fully analytical and scrupulously fair in his assessment of events, and is not inclined to lean in the direction of hero worshipping famous figures such as Admiral Horatio Nelson. Whilst serious scholars might expect such an approach, it is nonetheless pleasing to see, and means that this work not only manages to contribute to historical debate, but does so in an extremely engaging and light manner.

In *The Forgotten War Against Napoleon* Glover has firmly established himself as a first-rate historian. He has also demonstrated a rare gift - the ability to simultaneously write history that will engage and excite a mass audience, whilst also creating a work which dramatically deepens scholarly understanding about a little-known aspect of the Napoleonic Wars. This book is an example of history at its very best.