

David Buttery, *Waterloo: Battlefield Guide*, 2nd edition (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2013), x+291pp. ISBN: 1526731088. £16.99

Battlefields are strange places. The fields upon which blood are split on a single day can acquire a significance and resonance that far exceeds landscape which has not been a focal point in war. Yet touring battlefields can be a stranger experience still. The 'fog of war' and the confusion of battles makes it exceptionally hard to determine from primary accounts the precise locations where the pivotal points of a battlefield unfolded, and by extension the places where the course of history was changed.

It is for this reason that well written and carefully researched battlefield guides are so important. Over the years there have been many guides on Waterloo, as is to be expected of a battle which marked the culmination of the Napoleonic Wars, and ushered in a new, lasting era of peace. The quality of these guides varies widely, but David Buttery's *Waterloo Battlefield Guide* has long been recognised as a leader in the field. In fact, Bernard Cornwell, in his own account of Waterloo, described Buttery's work as being unequivocally the best on the market. Such high praise is thoroughly deserved, and it is only right that Pen and Sword have chosen to issue a second edition, to build upon its initial success.

This is an intelligently produced book. The paperback edition is compact, and although not quite pocket size, it is much easier to handle, and is more practical, than most other battlefield guides. The binding is strong, and the book is printed on high quality paper which can cope with a small amount of moisture, which is an added bonus on the rainy day, although the reader should avoid getting the book too wet. All of these mean that this is a rugged little companion, that can be kept to hand easily throughout your tour of the battlefield, and will survive the experience intact.

One of the original drawbacks to buying the First Edition of this book, was that it had been written prior to the bicentenary, and therefore failed to take into account the renovations and other work which was carried out on the battlefield sites in the run up to 2015. The reader will be please to discover that this has been remedied in the new edition, and 'Viewpoints' sections at the end of each have been edited accordingly in order to account for this. A further advantage of the latest edition is that all the images are now full colour, unlike the previous edition, in which many images were black and white.

Nonetheless, all the virtues of the first edition remain. All the maps are very clear, and produced in colour, effectively breaking down the large bodies of troops in the various stages of the battle into sub units, all of which are carefully located. In the process a good balance is achieved between allowing those with a general interest to understand the broader movements, and layout of the battle, whilst also allowing the research with a fascination for precise details to explore precisely the ground upon which each unit fought. Also included are maps helpfully labelling important landmarks and monuments, although it would have been an added advantage had the locations of the battlefield's memorials been added to the 'combat maps' to further aid navigation. It is also a shame that the maps give no indication the topography, in order to further assist the location of each unit for those looking to explore the battlefield in minute detail. However, these are minor details, and do not detract from the fact that this is an exceptionally helpful book.

It is particularly worth dwelling on the 'Viewpoints' sections at the end of each chapter, mentioned above. These provide significant pieces of information and advice to those planning to visit the battlefield, picking out significant landmarks, their locations, and the challenges of tracking them down. In road-testing the book for this review, it was found that these sections are extremely accurate and dramatically reduce the time needed to find what would otherwise be obscure locations.

It is also pleasing to see that Buttery has not fallen into the usual trap of Anglo-centricism, which for many years dominated the popular perception of the battle. Careful consideration has been given to the role of the Prussian troops whose arrival on the battlefield over the course of the afternoon of the 18th June not only reduced the number of troops which Napoleon could bring to bear on the Allied forces, but also helped to convert his defeat into a full scale rout. Not only does Buttery explore the fighting around Plancenoit (which changed hands between the French and Prussians multiple times on the 18th June) in great depth, but also, unusually devotes an entire chapter to the Battle of Wavre, which is often neglected. Whilst the depth on Quatre Bras and Ligny is not to the same level as the treatment of events on the 18th June, there is still enough there to enable those with an interest to tour both locations, though they will find the experience a greater challenge than touring Waterloo.

Crucially, this is a book which anyone can enjoy and become fascinated by the story of one of the most pivotal episodes in European history. David Buttery deftly weaves eyewitness testimony, factual description, anecdotes, and historical debate together to create a compelling narrative of the battle, which is supplemented by a host of helpful maps, and advice on visiting the battlefield. The result is a companion guide to Waterloo which is clear, well laid out, and exceptionally helpful for both understanding the battle, and for navigating the field itself. Do not visit Waterloo until you've read this book!