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James Bogle and Andrew Uffindell (eds) *A Waterloo Hero: The Reminiscences of Friedrich Lindau*

Frontline Books (Pen and Sword) 2009 ISBN: 978-1-84832-539-5 £19.99

Individual memoirs of the Napoleonic wars are rare enough, but those of enlisted men are the proverbial hen's teeth. Here we have, at last, a translation of the 1846 memoirs of a soldier of the King's German Legion, the only man to be mentioned by name in Ludlow Beamish's 'official history' of the KGL for his part in the defence of the farm of La Haye Sainte on 18th June 1815 (based on Major Baring's own account of that famous action).

Friedrich Lindau escaped his native Hanover, then under French occupation, and got to England to join the KGL. (His two brothers would follow him later). Enlisted in the 2nd Light Battalion, he served in Spain from 1811 to 1814, and in the Waterloo campaign, being wounded at Vittoria and Waterloo.

In an army supposedly famous for the rigour of its discipline and the harsh justice meted out by its Provost corps, Lindau and his mates were the most inveterate thieves! The property of no peasant within a mile of them was safe, and they were not averse to offering violence to any aggrieved protester. He delighted in looting from the French on the battlefield, and even at the height of the fighting around La Haye Sainte he finds the time to rob a fallen cuirassier. His chief complaint on being captured as the farm finally fell is that he is relieved of his hard-won loot by a Frenchman! (He had even begged Major Baring to look after his haul for him).

One very interesting tactical observation to note. He describes an incident where, long before the nineteenth-century French Zouaves are supposed to have invented the idea, his unit waited for a French unit to present their muskets, they all fell to the ground as the volley was fired, and then they leapt up and went in with the bayonet as the enemy were reloading. Great stuff!

While Lindau probably was rifle-armed, the translators/editors seem to have used the word 'rifle' rather freely. I am sure 'musket' would have been more appropriate on many occasions. But, that minor quibble aside, this is an excellent addition to any Napoleonic library.

John Lee

See also http://www.historyofwar.org/bookpage/lindau_waterloo_hero.html Ed

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