



David Rooney and Michael Scott, *In Love And War, the Lives of General Sir Harry and Lady Smith*, Pen & Sword £19.99

This is a most delightful book. It starts with one of the most famous stories of the Peninsular War, where on 7th June 1812 the fourteen year old Juana Maria de Los Dolores de Leon escaped from the sacking of Badajoz and with her elder sister threw herself on the mercy of the first British officers they encountered: Harry Smith and Johnny Kincaid of the Rifle Brigade. It was the former who spoke first, and within nine months they were married, the Duke of Wellington giving away the bride, despite his known disapproval of having women at his headquarters. They were seldom separated for the rest of their marriage and they are buried together in Cambridgeshire.

Harry Smith must have been a remarkable young officer. Coming from a large family he had no outstanding education, but he came from a gentlemanly family and that was enough to ensure entry to the Rifle Brigade in 1805. He served initially in the ignominious campaign in Argentina, then in the Baltic in 1807, and eventually in Spain, at first under Sir John Moore during the retreat to Corunna, and then under the future Duke of Wellington from 1809. Within a year he had been appointed Brigade Major (while only a Lieutenant) to the 2nd Brigade of the Light Division, serving throughout the campaign. When he asked his first Brigade commander for orders he was told "It is your duty to post the picquets, and mine to have a damned good dinner for you every day." Juana accompanied Harry throughout the campaign only leaving his side at the onset of battle against her strong protests. She gained the affection and respect of both officers and men throughout the Light Division, due to her high spirits and the way she shared all their dangers. Harry also became popular not just in the Light Division but also throughout the Peninsula Army as a highly professional staff officer and a man who enjoyed life to the full, owning a pack of foxhounds both in the Peninsula and in the occupying army in France later on.

Between the battle of Toulouse in 1814 and Waterloo Harry was a staff officer on the ill-fated expedition to America to fight against the USA taking part in the burning of Washington, and the disastrous attack on New Orleans, where his friend and champion, General Pakenham, was killed. This was one of the very few occasions that Harry and Juana were separated. He returned in time to be appointed a Brigade Major again for the Waterloo campaign, having two horses shot under him during the battle. In the occupying army after Waterloo Harry and Juana had some of their happiest months, while he served as a senior staff officer in the 6th Division. It was here that he grew close to the Duke frequently hunting with him, and some have said that the Duke looked on Harry as a son.

There is nothing so far that has not been long available to historians and although the story is well told there is nothing unusual. It is the conventional story of a highly successful, popular and professional young officer who does well and prospers while also enjoying a supremely happy marriage. It is the second half of the book which is certainly new to many. Returning to regimental duty for a short spell Harry later served in such diverse places as Glasgow (dealing successfully with radical disturbances) Ireland, Canada, Jamaica and South Africa (the first Kaffir War) before serving in India as Adjutant General. In the First Sikh War of 1845-6 he commanded a division at Ferozeshah, and then won the battle of Aliwal, described by none other than David Chandler as "the perfect battle". He served as Governor of Cape Colony



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1847-52, where his abilities as a soldier were of fewer assets in the murky world of colonial politics, and he found dealing with the Colonial Office less than easy. His leadership skills deserted him on occasions too as he tended to treat Africans (both white, black and in between) as though they were his soldiers, expecting them to respond to his blunt speaking in the same way as his beloved riflemen in the Peninsula War had done; but times had moved on and his sure touch then was no longer quite in evidence. He remained a devoted admirer of the Duke, and arriving back in England in time for the last Waterloo dinner that the Duke attended at Apsley House in June 1852, and he rode in the procession behind the duke's funeral cortege carrying a standard. He would have liked to have served as a divisional commander in the Crimean War (he was the same age as Raglan) but remained as Commander of the Western District, finally serving as Commander Northern and Midland District with his headquarters at Manchester, a surprisingly mundane place to end his 54 years of military service.

Harry Smith was typical of the Rifle Brigade officers who made their names in the Peninsular War. As we move into the bicentenary of all those battles that were fought in Spain, Portugal and France, culminating in 2015 in the anniversary of Waterloo, it is good to be reminded of the complete life of one of them. He was an outstanding professional soldier, who hardly made an enemy in the army, was revered in his regiment, admired by the greatest soldier of his time, but throughout his life was accompanied by the one person to whom he was wholly devoted, his wife Juana. This biography tells us warmly, simply and yet movingly of that life, and leaves us admiring the man, his wife and above all a society and an army that could produce such people so regularly.

Robin Brodhurst.

Mars & Clio 24
Spring 2009