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Review of *Walking Waterloo: A Guide* by Charles J. Esdaile

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which shaped this region's profile and character. In short - a model political-military history.

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Charles J. Esdaile, *Walking Waterloo: A Guide*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2019. xix + 300pp. ISBN 978-1526740786 (paperback). Price £16.99.

'I rode to a hill where there had been a battle [...]. There was nothing to see. Nothing to touch or hear. And yet somehow there was.' This extract from Kevin Crossley-Holland's novel *Arthur: King of the Middle March* brilliantly captures the unique atmosphere that shrouds battlefields. By their nature, battlefields are unremarkable contours of an emotionless landscape formed thousands of years ago, yet they are simultaneously imbued with a historical and emotional significance by the chaos and bloodshed they witnessed.

Battlefield visitors will know the challenge of reconciling the tranquillity of these locations with the violence which made them so remarkable. Perhaps the greatest difficulty though, is knowing precisely what they are looking at, for whilst the narrative of a battle may be well known, identifying the precise locations of a battle's pivotal episodes can be difficult in a relatively featureless landscape. Battlefield guides are invaluable in addressing these problems.

The Battle of Waterloo, one of the most famous, and most written about, battles in history, is well served with battlefield guides. Uffindell's *On the Fields of Glory* offered sage advice, useful maps, and, vitally, a consideration of Prussian operations. However, a gold standard was set by David Buttery's detailed, engaging and beautifully illustrated *Waterloo: Battlefield Guide*.

Walking Waterloo: A Guide therefore faces strong competition, something which is acknowledged by its author, Charles Esdaile. The publication is based on a tour guide app created in association with the Belgian War Heritage Institute, which is available for download. The app is itself a very valuable resource, and it is a shame that more is not made of it, given its portability, impressive layout, and relevance in the modern era.

BOOK REVIEWS

Nonetheless, *Walking Waterloo* is equally impressive. The book has been printed using high-quality paper and a strong spine to ensure that the volume will withstand sudden downpours or rough treatment in a traveller's bag. Colour photographs, taken by the author specifically to illustrate this volume, are used extensively and are useful in helping the reader orientate themselves. The photographs serve an additional purpose, illustrating wider points made by Esdaile about the nature of the landscape. This book therefore amply demonstrates its points irrespective of whether the reader is on the battlefield.

The benefits of using this book to tour the battlefield cannot be overstated. Its layout is intelligent, being the first book ever to offer bespoke tours of the field, which are broken down into instructions that guide the reader to important locations, followed by careful analysis of the events which occurred around each location. The walking instructions are clear and precise, making each tour easy to follow, although readers deviating from the instructions should retrace their steps carefully when re-joining the tour, as 'cutting corners' can lead to readers becoming lost.

Particularly evocative is Esdaile's inclusion of extracts from accounts written by soldiers of all nationalities and ranks to bring the battle alive. The result is the moving experience of reading the words of those who fought at Waterloo whilst standing on the very ground on which those events took place. This is a masterstroke for engaging readers on a personal level.

Another of *Walking Waterloo's* strengths is that, in addition to a 'grand tour' of Waterloo, the book contains smaller tours of other important locations on the field, totalling a remarkable 32 hours of tours. Furthermore, Esdaile does not duplicate material where his tours inevitably overlap, with each tour offering its own insights, and having a unique flavour. This variety ensures that the book offers perspectives on the British, Dutch, Prussian and French experiences of the battle. Crucially, a thorough tour is offered of the Prussian approach to the battlefield, a less well understood topic for which *Walking Waterloo* has filled an important void.

The guide is also laced with thoughtful additions. At the start of each tour is a comment on ground condition, and the length of time it should take. Esdaile has highlighted points where sections of the tour can be skipped if the reader's time is limited, and for those who are not familiar with the battle, its historical context, and the armies and their commanders are covered in brief and cogent chapters at the start of the book. Most importantly, the book contains excellent maps, which not only show how various stages of the battle unfolded, but also pinpoint locations in the tours themselves.

However, *Walking Waterloo* is far more than a guide to a well-known battlefield. Esdaile has brought a fresh perspective to the field, carefully examining the terrain and considering whether the oft-repeated stories about the battle are realistic when one stands on the landscape itself. The book therefore offers a highly persuasive re-evaluation of commonly held beliefs about the battle, including questioning how it is possible for the collapse of the imperial guard to have shattered the morale of the entire French army, when a ridge of high ground makes it impossible to see from one half of the field to the other. The advantage of presenting this information in a battlefield guide is that the visitor only needs to look up from the book to see the evidence for themselves.

The only notable omission is the absence of tours for Quatre Bras, and Ligny, which were important battles of the Waterloo campaign. Whilst this was necessitated by a lack of space, it is disappointing that they were not integrated into the book, perhaps as a unique download.

Overall, In *Walking Waterloo* Charles Esdaile has achieved the historian's 'Holy Grail'. This is a significant book for historians, which will also inspire the public to know more about this crucial battle. The reader is not only informed about discussions at the cutting edge of historical debate, but is physically involved in that process, being invited to investigate Esdaile's conclusions for themselves. This is quite simply one of the most important books on Waterloo to have been written in 200 years.

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Fergus O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha*. Dublin: UCD Press, 2018. xv + 111 pp. ISBN 978-1910820278 (paperback). Price £15.50

This short book is the first English-language biography of Cathal Brugha (born Charles William St John Burgess in Dublin in 1874). Portraits in Irish by Sceilg (J.J. O'Kelly) and Tomás Ó Dochartaigh were published in the 1940s and 1960s respectively and are dismissed by the author as hagiography. This neglect may seem unusual, not least given the explosion of biographical and prosopographical work on Irish revolutionaries in recent decades. Nor was Brugha a bit-part player: severely wounded in the 1916 Easter Rising; elected MP for Waterford in 1918 and subsequently a Teachta Dála and minister for defence in the underground Dáil Éireann government during the Irish War of Independence; one of the key opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty; and an early but