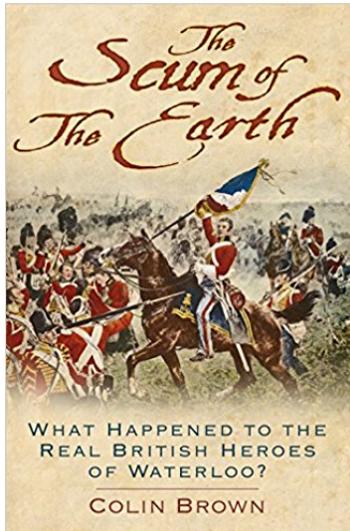


## The Napoleon Series Reviews

Brown, Colin. *The Scum of the Earth; What Happened to the Real British Heroes of Waterloo?* Barnsley (UK): Pen & Sword, 2015. 224 pages. ISBN# 9780750961851 £20/\$38. Hardcover.



Most books about the Waterloo Campaign usually end with Napoleon being sent into exile and a few words on post-Napoleonic Europe. Some might even discuss the senior officers and their lives when the Napoleonic Wars ended. Very few however examine what happened to the soldiers after the armies were disbanded and they were discharged back into civilian life. *Scum of the Earth* breaks the mold and tells the stories of the junior officers and other ranks.

*Scum of the Earth* uses the same formula for each individual it focuses on. The author recounts what the individual did at Waterloo, his life after the battle, and what traces of him are left today. Included in the book are:

Captain Alexander Kennedy Clark and Sergeant Francis Stiles and their post-Waterloo dispute about who captured the Eagle of the French 105<sup>th</sup> Line Infantry Regiment.

Sergeant Charles Ewart and the fame he earned by capturing the Eagle of the 45<sup>th</sup> Line Regiment. Sergeant Ewart was a larger than life character and the tidbits about his life after Waterloo are quite interesting. There is even a pub named after him in Edinburgh, which received notoriety in 2013 because they refused to serve Royal Navy sailors in uniform.

The wounding and death of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Gordon, Wellington's ADC.

The amputation of the leg of Earl of Uxbridge and how his false leg became a medical novelty.

Corporal James Graham of the Coldstream Guards who was known as the "Bravest Man in England" for his role in the defense of Hougoumont

Corporal Matthew Clay of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Foot Guards who wrote the best known account of the defense of Hougoumont and how he lived in poverty after being discharged.

John Lees a Royal Artillery Driver who was died from his injuries sustained after being beaten by constables during the Peterloo Massacre in 1819.

Despite the claim on the cover of the book that it is about “What Happened to the Real British Heroes of Waterloo” the author also covers non-military events of the time that had little to do with the participants of the battle. Nonetheless, since this is an area I have little knowledge of, I did find it interesting, such as:

Whether Nathan Rothschild really made his fortune by receiving news of the victory at Waterloo 24 hours before the government found out.

The social unrest, riots and cries for reforms in the decades following the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

The Cato Street Conspiracy to assassinate the British Cabinet, which was stopped with help from soldiers of the Coldstream Guards, several who had fought at Waterloo

How Wellington’s opposition to political reform caused the collapse of his government.

Although *Scum of the Earth* is a history, the author adds a personal touch with stories of his travels throughout Britain and Belgium and the people he met while researching the book. He finishes with a post script that compares how the discharged Waterloo veterans were treated with how the today’s British government is neglecting the British Iraq and Afghan War veterans.

*Scum of the Earth* is a quick read and was written more with the general public in mind than for the Napoleonic scholar. While it does not provide much new on the battle of Waterloo, the author’s stories of the lives of the men who fought there held my interest. Recommended.

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)