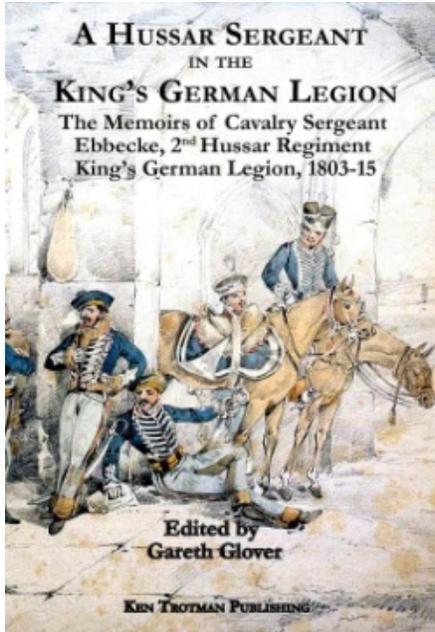


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Ebbecke, Ludwig. *A Hussar Sergeant in the King's German Legion: the Memoirs of Cavalry Sergeant Ebbecke, 2nd Hussar Regiment King's German Legion, 1803 - 1815*. Gareth Glover (ed.). Godmanchester: Ken Trotman, 2017. PB. 70 pages. £7.50



Primary sources in English by officers and men who served in the King's German Legion (KGL) in the Napoleonic Wars are readily available. For those interested in the Waterloo Campaign there is Gareth Glover's [Waterloo Archive: Vol. 2 the German Sources](#), [Waterloo Archive: Vol. 5 the German Sources](#), and *Letters from the Battle of Waterloo: Unpublished Correspondence by Allied Officers from the Siborne Papers*.¹ There are also several books that have been published in the past 30 years, mostly by officers, that cover the Peninsular War and other campaigns, such as *In the King's German Legion: Memoirs of Baron Ompteda*,² *Journal of an Officer in the King's German Legion*,³ [A Waterloo Hero: the Reminiscences of Friedrich Lindau](#), and of course one of my favorites [On the Road with Wellington: the Diary of a War Commissary](#)

Despite these many different primary sources, until recently, no book has been published in English by an individual who was either a line officer or an enlisted soldier in one of the KGL cavalry regiments. While both of the writers of *Journal of an Officer* and *On the Road with Wellington* were in the 1st KGL Hussars, the first was a surgeon and the other was a commissary officer. Their perspectives of events and life in the regiment is different than that of a troop commander, sergeant, or a private. *A Hussar Sergeant in the King's German Legion* is the first to fill this gap.

Ludwig Ebbecke was born in 1784 and enlisted in the 6th Hanoverian Dragoon Regiment in 1803 when war with France threatened. He was not with the regiment long when it was disbanded after the French invasion of Hanover on 5 July. With the help of his former

¹ Published in 2004 by Greenhill Books.

² Published in 1987 by Ken Trotman.

³ Also published by Ken Trotman in

company commander, Captain August von Reitzenstein,⁴ he evaded French patrols and boarded a ship to England.

Ludwig Ebbecke enlisted in the 2nd KGL Hussars and three years later went with the regiment to Denmark, as part of the Copenhagen Expedition. After three years of garrison duty, he went to Holland with the Walcheren Expedition in 1809, and the following year went to Spain. He fought in the Campaign in southern Spain in the winter of 1811 and at Barossa on 5 March 1811. By June 1811 he and the 2nd Hussars were sent to Portugal, where they were in the covering force under General Rowland Hill in the vicinity of Badajoz. There they stayed until the summer of 1812 when they participated in the Salamanca Campaign. In early 1813, the cadre of the 2nd KGL Hussars were sent back to England to rebuild their regiment. By the end of the year they were sent to Holland under General Thomas Graham. Sergeant Ebbecke and the 2nd KGL Hussars were not at Waterloo, despite being in Belgium for over a year. In 1816 the Legion was disbanded and Sergeant Ebbecke opted to join the Hanoverian Army. He served as a sergeant in the Country Dragoon Regiment until 1835.

The 2nd KGL Hussars was not the most famous KGL cavalry regiment. It seemed to have missed most of the Peninsular War and of course Waterloo. It was however, in three of the minor expeditions conducted by the British, including Copenhagen, Walcheren, and Holland in 1813 – 1814. *A Hussar Sergeant in the King's German Legion* is filled with anecdotes about life in the regiment and his adventures in several different theaters of war. It is more a series of reminiscences that reminds me of an old soldier telling war stories in the local tavern. They include:

- How he was spirited out of Hanover in 1803
- Why he ended up in the 2nd Hussars. . . it was not his first choice.
- Fighting in Denmark
- The cavalry fight at Barossa and the evacuation of the wounded
- Outpost duty in vicinity of Badajoz
- Carrying a dispatch from General Graham to the commander of the French fortress at Antwerp

On a side note, you would not want to go on a cruise with him. In a seven year period his transport floundered off the coast of England while returning from Copenhagen in 1806; almost sunk off Lisbon when his ship lost both its masts; and on his return voyage to England, his ship was caught in a violent storm that dispersed his convoy, was almost captured by a French privateer, ran out of rations, and eventually limped into Cork Ireland.

⁴ Captain von Reitzenstein also went to England, where he joined the 1st KGL Dragoons. He fought at Salamanca, Garcia Hernandez, Majadahonda, and was slightly wounded at Waterloo.

A Hussar Sergeant is a short, entertaining read that will leave the reader with a greater appreciation for what it took to serve in the King's German Legion and the dangers of ocean travel in the 19th Century. Recommended!

Reviewed by [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: October 2017