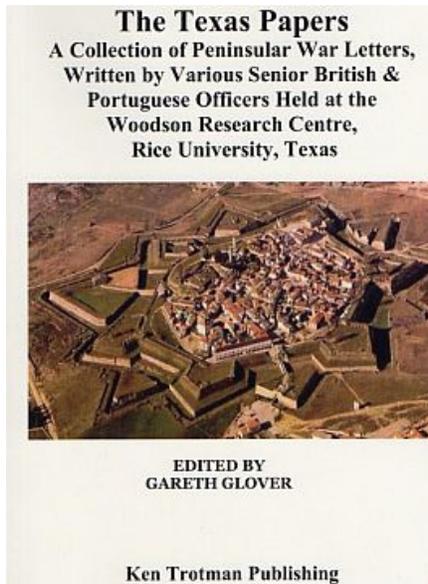


## The Napoleon Series Reviews

Glover, Gareth (ed.). *The Texas Papers: a Collection of Peninsular War Letters, Written by Various Senior British & Portuguese Officers held at the Woodson Research Center, Rice University, Texas*. Godmanchester: Ken Trotman, 2010. 58 pages. ISBN# 9781907417047. \$23



*The Texas Papers* consist of 26 documents that are held by the Woodson Research Center at Rice University in Houston, Texas. The first document is undated and from the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> French Division of the French 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of Observation of the Gironde. It concerns the setting up of the regimental Councils of Administration. The second document is dated 22 April 1808 and is the order-of-battle of the Spanish Division commanded by General Quesnel which was stationed between the Duero and Minho Rivers. The document provides the strength figures for each regiment, by rank.

The other 24 documents are official correspondence between participants in British and Portuguese Armies during the Peninsular War. The first eight letters were written in April 1809, after the main part of the British

Army had evacuated the Peninsula. The writers were mostly British officers seconded to the Portuguese Army and they were providing their observations of the state of the army in northern Portugal. All of this correspondence was written to Marshal William Beresford, the recently appointed British commander of the Portuguese Army. These writers did not pull any punches and painted a dismal picture. These letters include the number of soldiers still in their units, how poorly equipped and armed they are, morale that is extremely poor most of the time, the in-fighting between senior Portuguese Officers, and the possible mutiny of many of the troops should the marshal order them to retreat.

The second half of the book is mostly a series of letters between Fitzroy Somerset, the Military Secretary to Wellington and Henry Hardinge, Beresford's Military Secretary and Robert Arbutnot, Beresford's Aide-de-Camp. These letters are administrative in nature and are about the British officers in the Portuguese Army. They cover such things as officer transfers, leave, pay, etc. Three letters of this group stand out in particular. They are not about the officers, but instead detail the problems with the artillery in the Fortresses of Elvas and Bugio.

There are a handful of letters that are not about the Portuguese Army. One is from Colonel George Bingham, commander of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Foot, to his quartermaster about shortage of trousers for his battalion. Another is written by a surgeon to Beresford complaining about the reluctance of certain landlords who were tasked to give billets for two wounded Royal

Engineer officers and to provide appropriate quarters for them. In one case, the surgeon had to bring armed guards to get them to comply.

Primary source accounts written by British officers serving with the Portuguese Army during the Peninsular War are rare. I only know of eight. *The Texas Papers* provides us with quite a few more. But more importantly, it is one of the few sources that looks at the state of the Portuguese Army in early 1809 and the problems it had. Although it is a small volume, it is well worth the money!

For those looking for more information on the letters in this book and a listing of the various primary sources written by British officers in the Portuguese Army see: [British Memoirs of the Napoleonic Wars: British Officers Serving in the Portuguese Army](#)

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