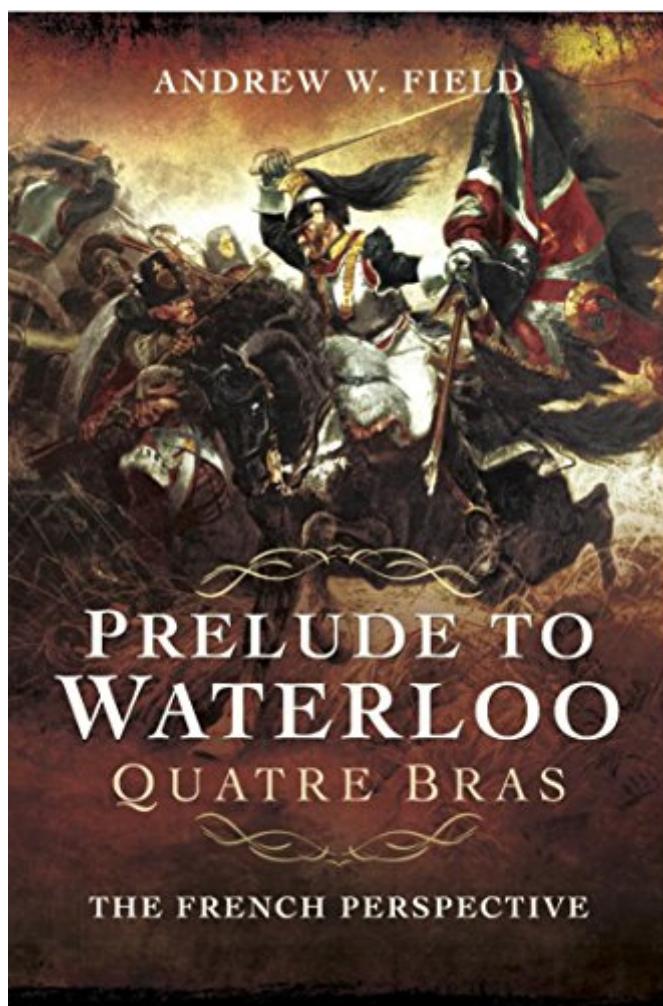


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Prelude To Waterloo: Quatre Bras: The French Perspective



Synopsis

The Battle of Quatre Bras was critical to the outcome of the Waterloo campaign — to the victory of the allied armies of Wellington and Blücher, the defeat of the French and the fall of Napoleon. But it has been overshadowed by the two larger-scale engagements at Ligny and at Waterloo itself. And too often the clash at Quatre Bras has been seen mainly through the eyes of the British and their allies — the viewpoint of the French has been neglected. It is this weakness in the history of the battle that Andrew Field focuses on in this original and highly readable new study. Drawing on French eyewitness recollections and later commentary, he reconstructs the French experience of the battle — and the French interpretation of it. He quotes extensively, and subjects to critical analysis, the conflicting accounts written by Napoleon and his subordinates as they sought to justify their decisions and actions at this pivotal moment in the campaign.

Book Information

File Size: 32532 KB

Print Length: 256 pages

Publisher: Pen and Sword Military (July 30, 2014)

Publication Date: October 19, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00ONZQ9EE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #167,244 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #13

in Books > History > Europe > Belgium #73 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Modern (16th-21st Centuries) > 19th Century #431 in Books > History > Europe > France

Customer Reviews

British historian Andrew Field, who earlier explored the French perspective to the Battle of Waterloo, now turns his methodical approach to the preliminary Battle of Quatre Bras. His carefully reasoned

analysis suggests how and why Napoleon failed to achieve his objectives on 16 June 1815, and how that affected the outcome of 18 June 1815. If this is familiar ground to many readers, Field's perspective is a worthwhile change of pace, with some interesting insights. In a brisk 200 pages, Fields examines Napoleon's opening moves in the Waterloo campaign and his initial success in wrong-footing his opponents. Blucher elected to fight at Ligny with only three of his four corps. Wellington only just held his ground at Quatre Bras, thanks to just-in-time reinforcements and to a series of painful mistakes on the French side. The nature of those mistakes come back largely to Marshal Ney, a courageous fighter but a man recalled to command only hours before the fight and working at cross purposes with his commander. The narrative captures the excitement of a close-fought battle. The text is enhanced by a nice selection of pictures and battle diagrams. The content is accessible to the general reader while having much to appeal to the student of the campaign. Recommended.

The author repeats at nausea, again and again each subject to make sure we, poor mortals, finally understands. He used the word "whilst" up to 3 times in one page and even in one sentence.!!! Ney failure to concentrate or understand is stated also every other page... I did not learn anything from this frustrating account "from the French side" except that the allied army was destroyed, cut down, massacred, slaughtered so many times that I wonder how the French lost with so many victories.

This book is an engaging study of decisions and results of action and, critically, lost opportunities, making the desperate battle of Waterloo unavoidable. The perspective of the participants cannot be known for certain, as the author makes clear. Field shows an army rife with desperation, looking over their shoulder, and lacking crucial elements and leaders, such as Murat and Davout, and relying on such as Ney who instead performed as he had in previous battles (such as Eylau, Bautzen and most of the time in the Peninsular War). I am next reading the book Waterloo: The French Perspective.

I immensely enjoyed Andrew Field's *Waterloo: The French Perspective*, and the author doesn't disappoint here. In many ways, the Battle of Quatre Bras set the stage for the Battle of Waterloo itself, and the author presents a comprehensive view of the former engagement. The broader strategic implications for the entire campaign are covered of course, and the author gives a terrific background on Napoleon's *Hundred Days* and his grand strategy for the campaign. A careful analysis of the Allied and French movements / concentration is

given, and the author paints a very colorful (and convincing) picture of the timidity of the French commanders, the communications breakdown, and the growing cracks in the French Army's morale. Some space is devoted to various military tactics of the French Army and how the infantry-cavalry-artillery collaboration was carried out. Saliently, the author devotes a lot of space to the infamous marches and countermarches of the Erlon corps during the day, and the (hesitant) participation of two divisions from that corps at Ligny (a much-ignored fact!) is analyzed. The book also illustrates just how close Wellington came to being captured, wounded, or killed. Moreover, we learn quite a bit about the key events before the battle — the nature of Wellington's promises to the Prussians and the alleged meeting between Napoleon and Ney. In short, buy this book!

Field is an excellent historian. He brings a serving officer's viewpoint and does a great job of filling out a lot of details that, even after years of studying Napoleonic military history, were relatively obscure to me. At the same time, this is a very readable book which will be very interesting and enjoyable to the general reader.

Informative, and really gives a sense of the hours leading up to Waterloo. Depicts the mistakes and courage of both the French and Allied Armies. Wellington was lucky. Napoleon was too concerned with destroying the Prussians. Ney, the "bravest of the brave", was a battle commander and not an overall strategic commander and this possibly lead to the French defeat. The author does a great job depicting this and Napoleon's mistake of not going to Ney's aid

This is a very detailed description of the battle with a good review on it the only thing I didn't like was no maps of the troop movements

Very engaging and well written. The chaos of a fluid battle, with no one really knowing what was going on and who was gonna show up or when, orders lost and orders countermanded, is brought to life in this gem of a book.

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