



Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon

Dr. Rory Muir

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What was it like to be a soldier on a Napoleonic battlefield? What happened when cavalry regiments charged directly at one another? What did the generals do during battle? Drawing on memoirs, diaries and letters of the time, this book explores what actually happened in battle and how the participants' feelings and reactions influenced the outcome. Rory Muir focuses on the dynamics of combat in the age of Napoleon, enhancing his analysis with accounts of those who were there - the frightened foot soldier, the general in command, the young cavalry officer whose boils made it impossible to ride, and the smartly dressed aide-de-camp, tripped up by his voluminous pantaloons. This book sheds light on how military tactics worked by concentrating on the experience of soldiers in the firing line instead of the abstractions of drill manuals. Muir considers the interaction of artillery, infantry and cavalry; the role of the general, subordinate commanders, staff officers and aides; morale, esprit de corps and the role of regimental officers; soldiers' attitudes towards death and feelings about the enemy; the plight of the wounded; the difficulty of surrendering; and how victories were finally decided. He discusses the mechanics of musketry, artillery and cavalry charges and shows how they influenced the morale, discipline and resolution of the opposing armies.

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