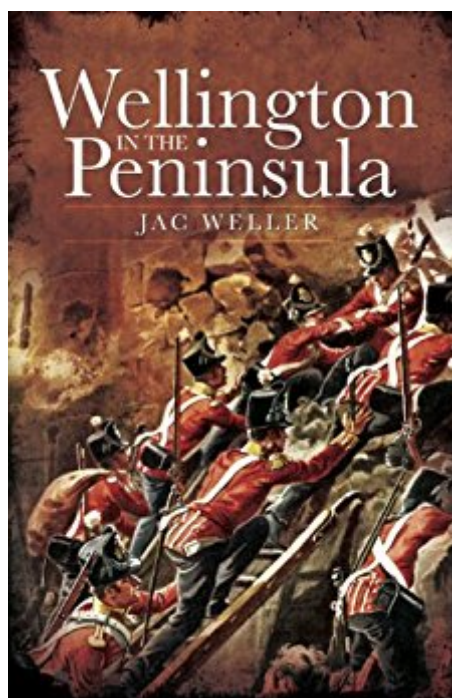


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Wellington In The Peninsula (Napoleonic Library)



Synopsis

This classic account of Wellington's tactics and strategy in the Peninsular War is one of the best single-volume works ever written on the epic campaign. Jac Weller covers all the battles with the French in which Wellington was involved. Talavera, Busaco, Salamanca and Vitoria are among the famous battles that he brings to life once more, with the aid of meticulous research, extensive visits to and photographs of the battlefields themselves, and an unwavering ability to cut a clear path through tangled military events. Wellington in the Peninsula brilliantly demonstrates how a great commander finally achieved victory after six years of battle against Napoleon's army.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

You would have to go back to Hannibal to find a more successful and sustained series of victories against a numerically superior enemy than Wellington's campaigns against the French in Spain (the Peninsula of the title) from 1808 to 1814. Hannibal ultimately failed, Wellington did not. The book has everything: tactics, strategy, maneuvers, sieges, escalades, forlorn hopes, sacks of towns and full-on battles. Jac Weller's research for this book is impressive. He has mastered the voluminous records of the period, he has visited every site. His descriptions and detailed diagrams enable every

battle to be reconstructed. The reader can vicariously die in the breach at Badajoz or advance with Picton's Division at Salamanca. Great stuff - if you like that sort of thing, and many do. But it is definitely a man's book. Somehow the real horrors of war do not seem to emerge from Weller's straightforward and clinical prose, in spite of the list of casualties which he scrupulously gives at the end of each action sequence. There are first-hand accounts quoted in the book which go some way to overcoming this problem. But not nearly enough. Sadly, and perhaps inevitably, the first-hand accounts are all by officers, which leaves one wondering what the experience of the poor bloody infantry was. Another weakness is that the campaigns are all described from the point of view of the allies (British, Portuguese & Spanish) who after all were on the winning side. The French might have had a different perspective, but in this book they are not allowed to speak. The criticisms are perhaps unfair. The book is what it is: a satisfying read and source book for its intended audience - military history buffs.

While I liked this book from a military history standpoint. The Kindle version makes it difficult to understand the battlefields - and they are many. Since Wellington was a master at using the terrain to defeat typically larger armies, that understanding is essential. Therefore, it would be more readily understood in a printed format. This book points out my only criticism of the Kindle: the graphics are usually too poor to be of much use.

I enjoyed Weller's book immensely. He gives a clear explanation of the reasons that Wellington was so successful in the Peninsula, from the larger strategic issues to the tactics that were distinctive to Wellington and that led to his successes against veteran French armies. Weller clearly has immense admiration for Wellington, and I came away with the sense that the Iron Duke has been under-rated by historians, and belongs in the same league as Napoleon and Alexander. There is limited discussion of the politics that Wellington had to master and virtually none of his personal life, but the focus is good, in my view...really understanding the reasons for military success or failure requires that focus, in my experience. On the down-side, the kindle edition I read contained many annoying typos, and included a section of text randomly cut from one part of the book and inserted elsewhere. I found the maps hard to read on the kindle. Nevertheless, I was inspired to go on and read Weller's book on Wellington at Waterloo, which was similarly excellent. There is a third volume on Wellington in India that I'm looking forward to reading.

For those who want a good brief survey of this campaign, this is a useful book. It does somewhat of

a thumbnail sketch of the Peninsula Campaign, together with reasonably detailed descriptions of the major battles. The author is extremely pro-Wellington, and he might minimize some flaws. For those who want a more in-depth coverage of this campaign, the multi-volume work by Oman would be recommended, but this book certainly is a good overview.

I read the kindle version and found it a little hard to follow in reference to the diagrammes and maps due to the quality of the scanning of the maps/photos, but very interesting and informative about the campaign on the peninsula. A none-too-dry read!

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