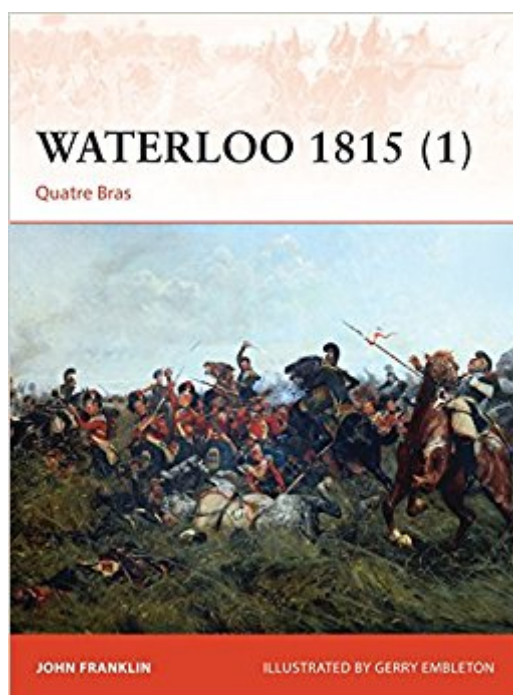


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# Waterloo 1815 (1): Quatre Bras



## Synopsis

To coincide with the 2015 bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo, Osprey publishes *Waterloo 1815*, a definitive three volume history of the historic battle. Based on new research drawn from unpublished first-hand accounts and illustrations, *Waterloo 1815* provides a detailed resource for all aspects of the famous battle. This first volume of the trilogy, *Quatre Bras*, focuses on the lead-up to Waterloo itself. Two days before the main battle, an initial 8,000 Allied troops faced the 48,000 men of the French Armée du Nord under Marshal Ney at the strategically vital crossroads of Quatre Bras. Having been tricked by Napoleon who was trying to drive a wedge between the Prussians and the Anglo-allied army, Wellington concentrated his troops at Quatre Bras, hoping to link up with the Prussians. There Wellington just managed to hold off Ney's attacks. The battle ended in a tactical stalemate but, because he was unable to join with Blücher's Prussians, Wellington retreated back along the road to Brussels to new positions at a small Belgian village called Waterloo, and thus set the stage for one of the greatest battles of all time. With detailed maps, illustrations and battlefield dispositions, *Quatre Bras* will lay the groundwork for any student of the Battle of Waterloo.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Franklin is a professional military historian based in Switzerland who specialises in the Napoleonic period, and the Waterloo campaign in particular. A Fellow of the International Napoleonic Society (FINS), and a graduate of the University of Bern, he has been engaged in one of the most comprehensive investigations of the campaign ever undertaken, with the aim of providing a wealth of previously unpublished material on the various armies and contingents present

during the dramatic climax to this important period of European history. The vast majority of his work is based on manuscript and archival sources, with the emphasis on primary research. He is the author of the acclaimed books of correspondence on the Hanoverian and Netherlands armies, with further publications on the French and Prussians scheduled. The author lives in Bern, Switzerland.

The bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo has brought renewed interest in the preliminary battles of Quatre Bras and Ligny. "Waterloo 1815 (2)" is an Osprey Campaign Series book, the second of three on the Waterloo Campaign. The author of the trilogy is historian John Franklin; illustrations are by Gerry Embleton. Franklin quickly recaps the preliminaries of Napoleon's return from Elba and the Allied strategy against him. The narrative addresses the opposing commanders and their forces and plans before getting to the battle at Ligny. As in the previous book, Franklin avoids still lingering controversies about the campaign in favor of a straightforward and fascinating narrative of the ferocious slugging match that was the battle of Ligny. The text is accompanied by an excellent selection of maps and diagrams explaining the battle, along with some choice period and modern illustrations. It was of interest to this reviewer that Napoleon apparently did not initially realize he was confronting the bulk of the Prussian Army at Ligny. It was also of interest that Blucher offered battle knowing he would have only three of four corps available. The failure by Napoleon to bring his I Corps to bear on the fight at Ligny cost him his best chance at his desired victory. Instead, at the end of this book, the stage is set for the movement of the Prussian Army, battered but still full of fight, to the decisive fight at Mont St. Jean, to be addressed in the final volume of the series. Well recommended as a solid introduction to the Battle of Ligny and the Campaign of Waterloo.

The bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo has prompted another batch of books to add to the mountain that already exists on the topic, while stirring the lingering controversies over the details of the battle. It would be a brave historian that produces yet another book, and author John Franklin wades into the fray with the third book of his trilogy on the Waterloo Campaign for the Osprey Campaign Series. "Waterloo 1815" picks up the campaign narrative with the retreats of the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian armies from the battle of Quatre Bras and Ligny, respectively. The Duke of Wellington chose to make a stand at Mont St Jean, based on reassurances of support by his Prussian counterpart. The narrative quickly sketches the opposing commanders and their forces and plans. The heart of the narrative is the actual Battle of Waterloo, a savage collision of three armies finally decided in the twilight hours of 18 June 1815. To the author's credit, the supporting battle of Wavre is also addressed. This book is a decent introduction to the Battle of Waterloo,

covering the basic movements of the battle with a readable amount of detail, supported by a good to excellent collection of illustrations, maps, and battle diagrams. The three volumes of the trilogy provide concise but worthwhile coverage of the campaign. The author has in some cases been unable to resist making some declarative statements that inevitably draw fire from reviewers while not adding much that is essential to the story. This reviewer wishes also that some of the many fine illustrations from the Anne SK Brown collection at Brown University has been rendered in larger than postage stamp size, but that is a small thing. Overall, recommended to the general reader as a suitable introduction to one of history's great battles.

thank you very much!

Despite poor reviews elsewhere, this book gives the casual reader exactly what they want. This book offers a short overview of the Battle of Waterloo and Wavre. I have seen other reviews taking the author to task for leaving out numbers such as the number of guns in a battery or the strength of a battalion at the time of battle or editorializing about Napoleon's ambition, but none of that is necessary in this book. The book gives us what we need, graphic maps of the battlefield, great original artwork of the action itself, and paintings of the battle from years past. I use the maps and 3D maps as a companion to other books I read about the battle. I also have Andrew Field's book on the French Perspective of Waterloo and Mark Atkins Waterloo Companion book. If the reader wishes to delve deeper into the battle those books, especially Mr. Atkins book, are what you need next. I still found this book very enjoyable. There were only two reasons I did not give the book five stars. First, the 3D maps aren't. Much has been made that the position at Mont St. Jean being chosen for its topography however, the 3D maps do not help the reader visualize what it actually looked like in 1815. The second was that once again Wavre gets shorted in the story of the battle.

This work is presented beautifully, and is well illustrated with maps and artwork. The orders of battle are extremely useful, as is the analysis of the decisions by the high commanders. However, I have several issues with this book. I grew very tired of constantly reading Willem, Hereditary Prince of Orange Nassau. I know who the Prince of Orange was and I did not need to be reminded that he was the hereditary prince. The next issue is that the author referred to General Kellerman as the Duke of Valmy throughout the book. He was, but not until the death of his father in 1820. In 1815, he was the future 2nd Duke of Valmy. And last, while I realize that Mr. Franklin is a noted historian, and has researched many Dutch records, he seems to absolve the Prince of Orange from several

mistakes that have been attributed to him by previous historians, and I would have liked a more thorough explanation. But all in all, a very good read, and a valuable addition to the library of any student of the period.

As usual from Osprey Publishing this is welcome addition to my military history library. Waterloo was such a complex campaign which involved all of the European powers in one way or another. This volume focuses on the chance confrontation at Quatre Bras. In the days when intel was collected and disseminated on horseback or carrier pigeon, armies could move unnoticed and be very close to each other unless cavalry sorties spotted them.

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