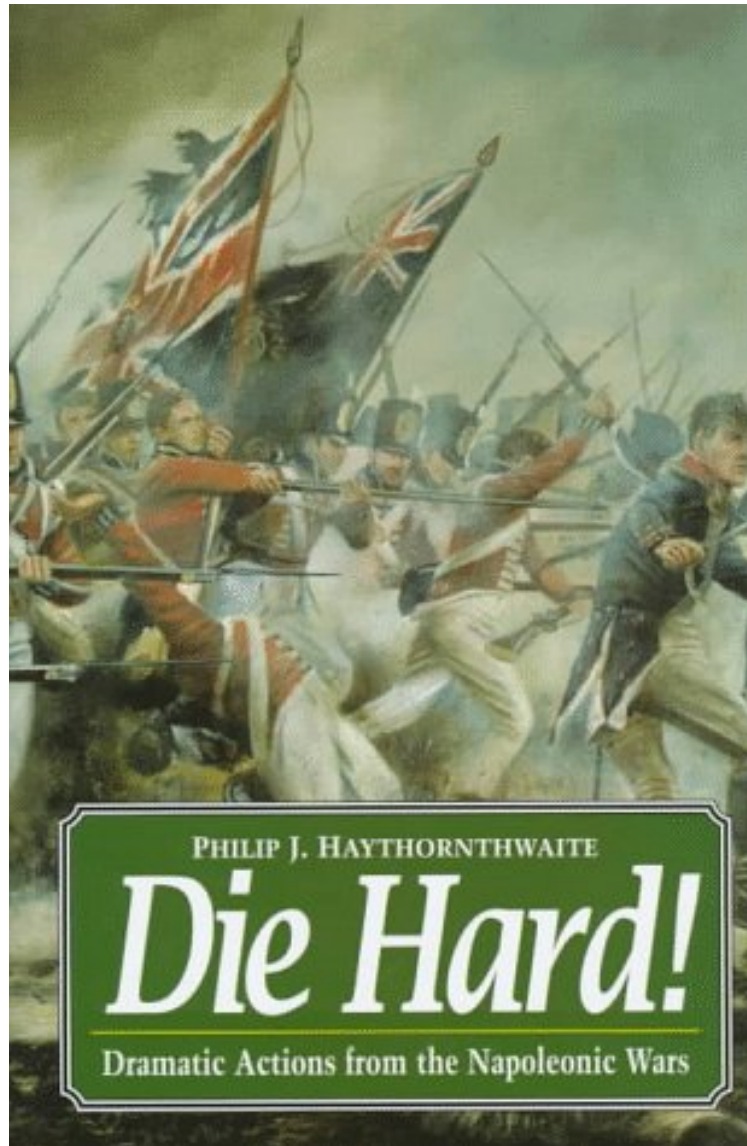


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Die Hard!: Dramatic Actions from the Napoleonic Wars

Philip J. Haythornthwaite

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Philip J. Haythornthwaite : Die Hard!: Dramatic Actions from the Napoleonic Wars before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Die Hard!: Dramatic Actions from the Napoleonic Wars:

7 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Suffers from a painfully pedantic writing styleBy David ReadThis book tells the story of 10 battles of the Napoleonic wars, four of which deal with the Peninsular campaign. As is usual with British authors, the sample is skewed toward the Peninsular campaign, because with the sole exception of

Waterloo, Portugal and Spain is where the British troops fought. And this author, like almost all other British authors, has an anti-Napoleon bias. Of the five battles chosen for inclusion in this book where Napoleon was personally present on the battlefield (Marengo, Eylau, Aspern-Essling, Berezina, Hougoumont (Waterloo)), all five place Napoleon in a negative light. And yet few doubt that Napoleon was one of the greatest military minds in world history. This book, subtitled "dramatic actions from the Napoleonic Wars" is obviously geared toward the general reader, not the scholar or specialist. And yet the book is written in the most pedantic style imaginable: "It has been assumed from an early date that the regiment concerned was the Leopold Hussars (as early as 1801 they were described as the "Imperial Corps Leopold Toscano", but it has been conjectured that, as Otto's report merely described them as "two hussar squadrons", this identification arose from the fact that Sentkeresky was the regimental colonel, and this identification has been repeated in a number of accounts). Austrian sources indicate that the unit involved was in fact the Archduke Ferdinand Hussars, one of whose members, Rittmeister (Captain) Daniel, Freiherr Meschery de Tsoor, was decorated for the action; yet his presence would seem not to be positive proof of the participation of his regiment, as Otto's account (which spells his name "Mezery") notes that he was serving in the role of ADC rather than in his regimental capacity." (page 23) Who really gives a damn? This sort of nonsense should be reserved for academic journals, or at the very worst, endnotes. Yet this unreadably pedantic garbage infests the book throughout. If you're going to write a book for the lay reader, then do so. If you want to write like Philip Haythornthwaite, confine your audience to academics and Napoleonic-era specialists.

The way most military history is written, you get the impression that warfare is largely a matter of tactical and strategic theory, and that human courage and ingenuity play only minor roles. This study focuses on the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and determines that many battles were decided by countless small actions by obscure individuals. These accounts were selected from some of the most desperate actions of the period, from decisive battles to sieges, as well as less important and significant episodes within a larger action. Some, such as the battle of Villers-en-Cauchies, were remarkable for their unpredictable outcome through the determination showed by one side. Others, such as Napoleon's bold leadership at Marengo, changes the course of military strategy by breaking the established rules.

About the Author Philip J Haythornthwaite is known to all followers of matters Napoleonic as a prolific and knowledgeable source of original research. A one time bookseller, he has an extensive private collection of Napoleonic material and is the a