

BOOKS

THE BEST NEW MILITARY HISTORY TITLES THIS MONTH

HIROHITO'S WAR: THE PACIFIC WAR, 1941-1945

Francis Pike

Bloomsbury, £29.99
ISBN 978-1472596703

Recent military commemorations have focused almost exclusively on the First World War and VE Day. Francis Pike's 1,109-page blockbuster reminds us that more than 31 million combatants and civilians lost their lives in the war fought in the Pacific and East Asia. Hopefully this will be acknowledged on 2 September, when we celebrate the 70th anniversary of VJ Day.

Pike is uniquely placed to research and produce a history of Japan during the Second World War. He has had nearly 40 years of first-hand experience in Japan and other Asian countries, as an investment banker and fund manager, before turning to writing in 2009 with a modern history of Asia.

He has spared no effort in creating what is likely to stand as the definitive reference book for students of the Pacific War. The book contains a wealth of detail on subjects such as logistics, the economic situation of the chief belligerent powers, submarine warfare, and the dreaded kamikazes. It also contains no fewer than 178 maps.

A niggle: the maps, as well as several hundred pages of notes, timelines, bibliography, and assorted

appendices, are only accessible online – an unorthodox and not altogether satisfactory arrangement.

Pike's approach is to tell timeline narratives based on individual campaigns rather than across multiple campaigns, with each chapter analysing specific campaigns or battles. This approach reflects some of the war's unique characteristics, such as the matter of sheer geographical scale, taking into account the fact that the European battlefield covered an area of some three million square miles, while the expanse of the Pacific War was nearly ten times greater. The book highlights another fact, that the war in Europe was mainly two-dimensional – fought on land and in the air – while in Asia it was fought on land, sea, in the air, and undersea.

'As a consequence of these special characteristics,' the author says, 'the Pacific War was probably the most complex conflict geopolitically, geographically, and militarily since the Thirty Years' War of 1618-1648.'

Pike throws up a challenge to the standard version of Pacific War history and its assumptions on the causes of the conflict. Taking the war back to its origins, he explains that America's

The Pacific War was probably the most complex conflict geopolitically, geographically, and militarily since 1648.



problem was Japan moving in the opposite direction to the global model envisaged by US leaders.

As early as September 1941, three months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese government was shifting rapidly away from the free-trade doctrine towards a system of autarky. Washington was uncomfortable with Japan's expansion as a colonial power, with expanding Japanese control of the region's strategic raw materials. Japan greatly feared what it perceived to be America's determination to control Asia and its markets, and this led to the rise of ultra-right wing and nationalist leaders.

The Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo had put forward a manifesto that emphasised his country's determination to take on the US (as well as Britain and the Netherlands) on all fronts, including war if necessary. In fact, preparations for war were to be completed within two months.

'Autarky was a philosophical difference

that was one of the root causes of the looming conflict between the two countries,' Pike explains.

The author offers a penetrating analysis of the atom-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There was deep division among military leaders over this weapon, which Admiral William Leahy, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, likened to 'an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.' But the bombs were dropped. Churchill, taking the opposite view, welcomed the news as 'a miracle of deliverance'.

Pike has thoroughly researched this dark episode in modern warfare, and advances the traditional argument that the dropping of the atom bomb saved millions of lives in the slaughter that would inevitably have ensued from a land war with Japan.

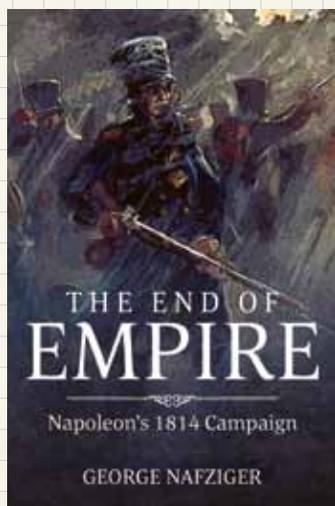
JULES STEWART

THE END OF EMPIRE: NAPOLEON'S 1814 CAMPAIGN

George Nafziger

Helion & Company, £37.50

ISBN 978-1909982963



From one point of view, Napoleon's failures are clear. Irresponsibly ambitious in his 1812 invasion of Russia, which decimated the Grande Armée, Napoleon lost his reputation of invincibility. Though continuing to fight, the tide had turned against him, and he suffered a catastrophic defeat in the Battle of Leipzig in 1813.

Beaten back to France itself, Napoleon fought, and often won against the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians, but the writing was on the wall. Paris fell in April 1814. The Emperor abdicated, was exiled to Elba, came back a year later, lost everything at Waterloo, and was banished to St Helena – as near to the middle of nowhere as could be found. It was all over.

However, modern histories of Napoleon's downfall usually miss what is arguably most fascinating about his story. During the 1814 campaign, for example, his defeat was often in doubt, as traced by George Nafziger in *The End of Empire*. Put plainly, Napoleon could act more swiftly than many of his enemies, even after grinding setbacks. Typically, as long as there was a chance to win, the 'French God of War' refused the fate his enemies had in mind. No wonder Europe put him as far away as it could in the end.

In his mammoth new study, Nafziger focuses on Napoleon's highly determined, even frantic efforts after the Grande Armée was forced behind the Rhine. The difficulties were immediate: a shortage of soldiers and equipment, limited cash flow, and his enemies in France itself. And yet Napoleon fought, directed his Marshals, reassured the Parisian government, planned for different outcomes in the field, and hardly ever lost faith in his own military star.

Nafziger narrates episodes from each of the 1814 campaigns in detail. There are many stories of bridges being destroyed and rebuilt, fierce skirmishes, and big set-piece battles. Frequently, luck seemed not to be against Napoleon, as his Marshals (and sometimes he) failed to grasp opportunities to smash Field Marshals Barclay de Tolly (Russia), Blücher (Prussia), and Schwarzenberg (Austria).

And yet Nafziger carefully describes the other times, when the Allies faltered against the opportunistic Grande Armée. For example, during the battles of Champaubert, Château-Thierry, Montmirail, and Vauchamps – known as the 'six marvellous days' – Napoleon was resurgent. The 1814 campaign should not have been as difficult as it was for the Allies, Nafziger notes, given their superior army sizes and stronger supply lines. The problem was an uncommon enemy.

The End of Empire is built on Nafziger's somewhat exhausting attention to detail. He includes over 80 appendices, listing the orders of battle. His text notes troop movements, skirmishes, engagements, and battles with supreme unhurriedness, not reflecting the pace of the events it describes. Also, he can fail to deliver memorable insights, often appearing to be weighed down by facts and numbers.

Despite its limitations, *The End of Empire* is fascinating. Nafziger does not shy away from describing Napoleon's occasional missteps, but his focus remains on the surprising time it took for him to be defeated. Of course, Europe would find out soon that the 1814 end of empire was not quite the end of the story.

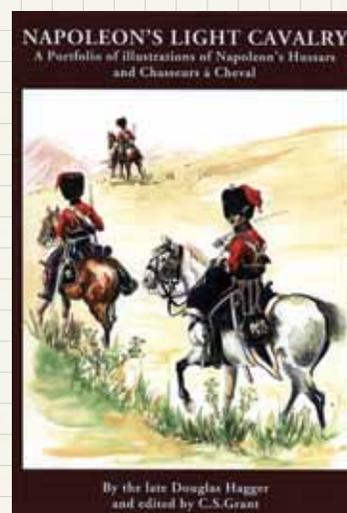
ANDRE VAN LOON

NAPOLEON'S LIGHT CAVALRY: A PORTFOLIO OF ILLUSTRATIONS OF NAPOLEON'S HUSSARS AND CHASSEURS À CHEVAL

Douglas Hagger, edited
by C S Grant

Partizan Press, £27.50

ISBN 978-1858186948



Illustrators of military uniforms are a small and dedicated band, and the recent death of the veteran illustrator Doug Hagger (1926-2013) prompted some who knew and admired him to publish this exceptional portfolio of his work. It was uncovered while Bob Marrion was helping Doug's widow to sort through the mass of files and watercolours that he had left behind.

Doug Hagger was born in Newham, in east London, and he spent his entire working life in public service in that borough. He had served in the RAF during the Second World War – he was a wireless operator in India and Burma – and one of his two great interests as a military illustrator was First and Second World War aircraft. His other principal interest was the cavalry of the European powers from the Napoleonic period until the outbreak of the First World War.

Hagger's watercolour paintings were his hobby, not his job, although retirement in 1981 afforded him far more time to indulge his passion. Regular visits to the National Army Museum then bore fruit in a series of images of British cavalry from c.1800.

Although he was not a commercial artist, throughout his life many of Hagger's illustrations were published, notably in the *British Model Soldier Society Bulletin*, *Tradition Magazine*, and *Military Modelling*. The highpoint of his artistic career was surely a trilogy of books produced on the Imperial German Cavalry from 1900 to 1914. This was published in 1975 in collaboration with two colleagues.

The illustrations in this volume – presented across 75 full-page colour plates – have a strong unifying theme. It was a wise decision of editor Charles Grant, fellow illustrator Bob Marrion, and publisher Dave Ryan (of Partizan Press/Caliver Books) to make it so, giving the book a value to military modellers and wargamers with specialist interests that it would not otherwise have.

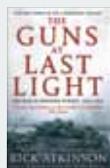
The style of the illustrations is simple and clean, with figures in a range of jaunty poses, but always arranged in such a way as so as to maximise the uniform and equipment details in view. The aim is not to depict the patched and mud-splattered appearance of the campaigning soldier, but to supply a painstakingly accurate depiction of the ideal: that is, to provide a reliable guide to those interested in creating their own reconstructions of these uniforms.

Doug Hagger was fascinated by the details, and obsessed with getting them right. 'If ever one needed to know a specific answer to a question on the minutiae of dress of a particular regiment,' recalls Bob Marrion, 'invariably Doug could supply the answer.'

The book deals only with the French light cavalry of the Napoleonic Wars. But many other illustrations have been unearthed, depicting, among others, dragoons and cuirassiers, Imperial Guard cavalry, and line infantry. If this first volume of Doug Hagger's work sells, more published collections will follow. Let us hope so: these fine images deserve to be seen.

NEIL FAULKNER

ON THE HORIZON



The Gun at Last Light: the war in Western Europe, 1944-1945
Rick Atkinson
Little, Brown, £35
ISBN 978-1250037817

A stirring final volume of a monumental trilogy, this book completes a definitive chronicle of the Second World War.



Gold Run: the rescue of Norway's gold bullion from the Nazis, April 1940
Robert Pearson
Casemate, £19.99
ISBN 978-1612002866

A detailed and fascinating account of a little-known episode from WWII, and a rare victory against the Germans in the darks days of 1940.



Field of Shadows: the remarkable true story of the English cricket tour of Nazi Germany 1937
Dan Waddell
Corgi, £9.99
ISBN 978-0552169882

A vivid account of an extraordinary sporting event, against a backdrop of repression and brutality.



Winston Churchill at the Telegraph
Edited by Dr Warren Dockter
Aurum Press, £16.99
ISBN 978-1781314524

A celebration of the intimate connection between the war-time Prime Minister and the *Telegraph*, which shows Churchill in all his paradoxical glory.



The Ariadne Objective
Wes Davis
Corgi, £8.99
ISBN 978-0552170185

A story of the gentleman spies who teamed up with Cretan partisans to hatch a daring plot to abduct the island's commander.



Hitler's Last Day: minute by minute
Jonathan Mayo and Emma Craigie
Short Books Ltd, £14.99
ISBN 978-1780722337

A pure chronological narrative, as seen through the eyes of those who were with Hitler in those last tumultuous hours.



THE GURKHAS: 200 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CROWN

Major General J C Lawrence
Uniform Press, £40.00
ISBN 978-1910500026

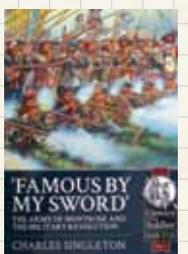
In 1814, the East India Company was pushing Britain's Indian Empire northwards. Simultaneously, the kingdom of Nepal was expanding in the opposite direction towards the Indian frontier. When the inevitable clash of arms took place, at a remote hill fort in Kalanga, the British force – consisting of 4,000 seasoned troops – took an astonishingly high number of casualties in the month it required to capture the fort, which was held by only 650 Nepalese soldiers. The garrison's defenders were Gurkhas, men of the central Nepal highlands famed for their ferocious martial skills. The British quickly recognised this as an opportunity to make use of these hill people's fighting capabilities, and in April 1815 the East India Company formally authorised the recruitment of four battalions of Gurkhas.

Thus began a relationship which, over the past two centuries, has seen Gurkha troops fighting alongside their British comrades in every major conflict, from the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 to the Falklands campaign of 1982, and most recently on operations in Afghanistan.

In fact, one of the most celebrated actions of the Gurkhas was during the Mutiny, when at the siege of Delhi they fearlessly repulsed 26 separate attacks by rebel forces. The Gurkhas also made an outstanding military contribution in both world wars. The Great War saw nearly 91,000 Gurkhas in the service of the Crown, taking 20 per cent casualties and winning three Victoria Crosses. In the Second World War, 138,000 Gurkhas served with British and imperial troops, and again suffered high losses, with more than 7,500 dead. To date, the Brigade of Gurkhas has been awarded 26 Victoria Crosses, a clear recognition of their extraordinary bravery in combat.

The author, Major General J C Lawrence, was commissioned into the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles in 1984. He has served with the Gurkhas in eight countries, and commanded Gurkhas on operations in Bosnia and on the Ivory Coast. As current Colonel of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, he is uniquely placed to provide an authoritative account of this remarkable military bond. The book is highly readable as well as informative, and has the added attraction of being lavishly illustrated on every page.

JULES STEWART



FAMOUS BY MY SWORD: THE ARMY OF MONTROSE AND THE MILITARY REVOLUTION

Charles Singleton
Helion & Company, £16.95
ISBN 978-1909384972

There can be few more Romantic figures to come out of the British Civil Wars than James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose. Tales of his annus mirabilis in 1644-1645, where he led his foes a merry dance across the Scottish Highlands, are the stuff of legend.

But while his status as a hero, established by his own chaplain and secretary, and reinforced by historians right up to the 1980s, has been challenged, until now there has not been an in-depth analysis of his Royalist army and its tactics, placing it in its contemporary European context.

For author Charles Singleton, Montrose's army is not the first 'Jacobite' army, as other authors have concluded, but an army typical of the mid-17th century. As the author points out, the use of irregular infantry – in this instance, highlanders – was not something unique to Montrose, as other European armies of the time included irregular troops. And, shattering another popular legend, the irregular element of Montrose's army never accounted for more than 40 per cent of the whole.

The 'military revolution' debate is several decades old now, but, surprisingly, it has frequently overlooked Scotland, something that Singleton seeks to address here by highlighting the developments in European warfare introduced to Scotland (and Ireland) by returning mercenaries.

Singleton also points out that, generally speaking, battles and campaigns of the 17th century were seldom conclusive: Montrose himself was victorious six times, yet was never able to win Scotland for Charles I. To further emphasise this point, of the number of battles fought during the English Civil War, only three had the potential to be decisive in terms of winning the war.

Overall, this is a well-written and very nicely illustrated book, and as such is an important addition to the study of the wider British Civil Wars, as well as being a solid introduction to the Montrose rebellion itself.

DAVID FLINTHAM