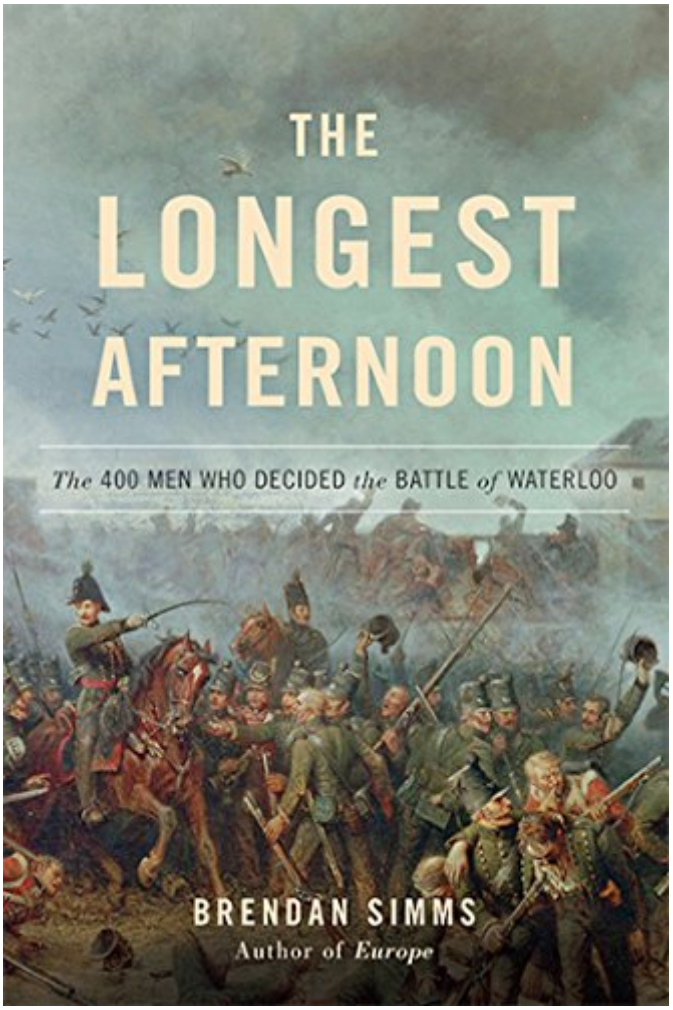
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The Longest Afternoon: The 400 Men Who Decided The Battle Of Waterloo



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Synopsis

In 1815, the deposed emperor Napoleon returned to France and threatened the already devastated and exhausted continent with yet another war. Near the small Belgian municipality of Waterloo, two large, hastily mobilized armies faced each other to decide the future of Europe—Napoleon's forces on one side, and the Duke of Wellington on the other.With so much at stake, neither commander could have predicted that the battle would be decided by the Second Light Battalion, King's German Legion, which was given the deceptively simple task of defending the Haye Sainte farmhouse, a crucial crossroads on the way to Brussels. In The Longest Afternoon, Brendan Simms recounts how these 400-odd riflemen beat back wave after wave of French infantry until finally forced to withdraw, but only after holding up Napoleon for so long that he lost the overall contest. Their actions alone decided the most influential battle in European history. Drawing on previously untapped eye-witness reports for accurate and vivid details of the course of the battle, Simms captures the grand choreography and pervasive chaos of Waterloo: the advances and retreats, the death and the maiming, the heroism and the cowardice. He describes the gallant fighting spirit of the French infantrymen, who clambered over the bodies of their fallen comrades as they assaulted the heavily fortified farmhouse—and whose bravery was only surpassed by that of their opponents in the Second Light Battalion. Motivated by opposition to Napoleonic tyranny, dynastic loyalty to the King of England, German patriotism, regimental camaraderie, personal bonds of friendship, and professional ethos, the battalion suffered terrible casualties and fought tirelessly for many long hours, but refused to capitulate or retreat until the evening, by which time the Prussians had arrived on the battlefield in large numbers.In reorienting Waterloo around the Haye Sainte farmhouse, Simms gives us a riveting new account of the famous battle—an account that reveals, among other things, that Napoleon came much closer than is commonly thought to winning it. A heroic tale of 400 soldiers who changed the course of history, The Longest Afternoon will become an instant classic of military history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Highly recommended not just for students of history but to those who like a good historical action-adventure novel. This wonderful book reads like a movie script, the narrative is so well-written. Rather than starting out with the background history of this unique unit comprised mostly of displaced Hanoverian Germans in the British Army, the action begins the night prior to the battle, to suck you into the narrative. Author Brendan Simms then introduces just enough background to appreciate the action taking place. Easily read and understood, the events of that long afternoon at Waterloo are both remarkable and thrilling. Simms then concludes with a mature, balanced ending which thankfully includes what happened to his protagonists as they either perished or lived out the rest of their lives in history. Never dull, every paragraph on point, this is one of the best books I have read in a long time, and the quality of the writing reminds me of Shelby Foote’s magnificent The Civil War: A Narrative. I sincerely wish someone would make a movie of it like the 1964 film Zulu (although that movie has some historical flaws) or with the high quality of the fictional 2003 film Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World. Alas, the movie industry is interested in other topics now...If I have one critique, it is the length versus the price. This is very short book at only 128 pages or so of reading material. The fact that it’s such a great read of a fascinating subject however more than makes up for the length. Well worth your time and money.

A wonderful micro history of this often overlooked but critical element of the Battle of Waterloo. Highly recommended for Napoleonic geeks but also a riveting account for history buffs in general. Very readable

Great little book on an overlooked fight at Waterloo.

a good thesis

This is a well researched history of the defense of a key farm site near the center of the British lines at the Battle of Waterloo. Most of the men defending were riflemen from the King's German Legion from Hanover. The King of Britain was also the Elector (Ruler) of Hanover. These riflemen held out literally until their last cartridges. They held this position until the Prussian army arrived and Napoleon's troops were out numbered and forced to retreat.

A concise, well written account of an appallingly bloody battle. Author uses primary sources of soldiers involved for a very personal account. Reader re-lives this horrific bloodbath through the soldier's eyes.

And there really wasn't much to this book it was more of an essay then a book actually and I certainly wouldn't recommend it to anybody else it was a waste of money

The King's German Legion was one of the most important elements of Wellington's Army. They had fought with him in the Peninsular and were crucial at Waterloo. The defence of La Haye Sainte by the KGL light Battalions was an epic finale to their more than ten years of service. Simms tells the tale well and it resonates with that edge-of-your-seat desperation like tales of Rorkes Drift and other such fights. I agree with many of the reviewers that it lacks illustrations and in particular detailed maps of the farm and its position on the battlefield. The map of Europe before the battle is an irrelevancy. Other than that an important addition to the Waterloo bibliography.

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