

# An Infantry Company at Waterloo

JOHN SLY

In the main, military historians are not concerned with the fate of individual soldiers. No unit smaller than a battalion is really practical for discussion in a review of, say, the fighting on the Somme in 1916, or at the Alma in 1854. Generally the only occasions when one finds individuals mentioned in military historical accounts are when they are quoted as eye-witnesses. Yet it is this personal aspect of military historical research which most fascinates the non-specialist.

It may be that someone is tracing a relative who fought in a particular action. It may be that a local historian is writing a history of the men from his town who served in a particular campaign. It may be that a collector has acquired some personalised relic, a letter or a named medal, that is unique to one long-dead soldier. To all these, the voice that echoes most hauntingly is that of the individual, picked out of the great crowd of ghosts by some random shaft of knowledge.

My own interest is mainly social. Who were these men who served their country during a perhaps tragically short military career? What kind of background did they come from? What happened to them after they took their

*Col. the Honourable William George Harris, 1782-1845 (2nd Lord Harris of Seringapatam and Mysore, 1829) commanded the 2/73rd from December 1808. He fought in India, 1799, and was one of the first men through the breach at Seringapatam. He served as a captain in the 49th Foot at Copenhagen aboard the frigate Glatton; at the Cape of Good Hope as a major in the 73rd in 1806; as commanding officer at Ghorda in 1813, at Merxem, at Quatre Bras and Waterloo. It is said that on one occasion on 18 June the 2/73rd hesitated to close up a gap torn in its ranks by enemy artillery fire, and the colonel urged his horse lengthways into the space, saying with a smile 'Well my lads, if you won't, I must'. He was immediately led back to his proper place inside the square, and his men closed up the ranks.*

*Engraving by Hopwood, 1816; courtesy Alan Lagden.*

discharge? This article is therefore an attempt to look at a microcosm of an army — a company of infantry — and to analyse, as far as existing records allow, the biographical details of the men who served in it.

They were, of course, theoretically volunteers, and although many tricks were known to recruiting sergeants there was no 'press gang' for the Army: conscription was unknown in this country before 1916. The troops who fought under Wellington in the Peninsula and at Waterloo did not, by any stretch of the imagination, constitute a 'citizen army' like that of the French Revolution, or even like the armies of the American Civil War. The men had no overwhelming cause for which to fight; but the army offered, against the hardships of campaigning and the risk of a horrible death, a regular income (when it was paid); a supply of food (however bad) and usually some form of shelter; companionship; the chance of fame, debauchery and loot; and, of course, an abundance of liquor, the anaesthetic of the soldier for most of the 19th century. At its best, life in the army could instil above all a sense of pride and achievement in the regiment, focussing on the colonel and the colours — remember that the men stood literally shoulder to shoulder to fight in square and line, and each man had to rely on his comrades not to desert him under fire.



**TOM MORRIS OF  
THE 73rd**

The company chosen for this analysis is that of the memoirist Thomas Morris: No.6 (Grenadier) Company of the 2/73rd Foot. Morris must be one of the most famous of the soldiers who left accounts of Waterloo, largely because he was a ranker, and literacy among private soldiers was a rarity at any time up to the end of the 19th century.

It might be worth clearing up one small anomaly at this point. Every authority who quotes his reminiscences refers to him as 'Sergeant' Morris, almost certainly because he included himself in the book *The Three Sergeants* (1858) which recorded the exploits of Thomas, his brother William, and his nephew William Morris junior. However, Thomas Morris was not only not a sergeant at Waterloo, but he never achieved a higher rank than corporal (17 October 1815); and was discharged as such on 20 November 1818.

Before going into the details of the events of the Waterloo campaign, it might

be sensible to look at the history of the 2nd Battalion, 73rd (Highland) Regiment of Foot. It was placed on the Army establishment on 24 December 1808, and built up its strength gradually over the next two or three years. Many, if not most members of the battalion were volunteers from the Militia, a not uncommon feature of the Peninsular period after the passing of the Militia Act of 1807. Although the 73rd Foot had been nominally a Highland regiment, the colonel, Lord George Harris, had obtained permission to abandon Highland dress during 1809 so as to encourage non-Scottish recruits. In fact, the Waterloo men of the 2/73rd included relatively few Scots, the majority of the battalion being Englishmen.

By the time the battalion saw its first action, at Ghorda in Hanover on 16 September 1813, it was up to full ten-company strength. The battalion then served in the Netherlands under Sir Thomas Graham in the winter of 1813-14, particularly distinguishing itself on 2 February 1814 in the capture of

Merxem, near Antwerp, where it sustained about 50 casualties of all ranks.

In dealing with the events of 16-18 June 1815, except in so far as the tactical details affected the fate of the individual soldiers, I do not intend to delve into the course of events that led up to the battle, or into the chronology of the battle itself, these having already been dealt with exhaustively in hundreds of books and articles.

#### QUATRE BRAS

On Thursday 15 June the 3rd Division of Wellington's army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir Charles Baron Alten, was based around Soignes. The 2/73rd, which formed part of the 5th Infantry Brigade under Sir Colin Halkett (the other units being the 2/30th, 33rd, and 2/69th), was billeted in what Morris called a 'sweet village' three miles away. After Wellington heard of Napoleon's advance, and gave orders for the army to concentrate, the 3rd Division set off at about 2 a.m. on the morning of 16 June; and reached Les Quatre Bras after a hard march of some 27 miles just after 5 p.m. At this vital crossroads the Prince of Orange had come into contact with the French earlier in the day, and had managed to take up a position in the woods of Bossu, Gemioncourt and Piermont, the only cover in the area. Here he was attacked by Marshal Ney in overwhelming force, and by the time the 3rd Division arrived the plight of the Allied army was desperate.

The 2/73rd found itself in a difficult position. According to Morris the battalion came on to the battlefield through a 'large wood' (the Bois de Bossu), and because of the height of the growing crop failed to see Gitaut's Brigade of Kellerman's cuirassiers, which had been unleashed — almost as Ney's last attempt to take the position — at the

5th Brigade. The 73rd scrambled back into the wood; but the 69th, caught in the open in extended order, were horribly cut-up and lost a colour.

The 73rd then took part in the advance of the brigade with the Brunswick troops. Morris described this movement, and how his company was ordered out skirmishing. His account makes it clear that he had no high opinion of his captain, Alexander Robertson, describing him as an officer 'who had been upwards of thirty years in the service, but was never before in action. He knew nothing of field movements . . . He now led us forward . . . Presently we saw a regiment of cuirassiers making towards us, and he was then at his wits' end . . .'. Morris went on to describe the timely intervention of Ensign Patrick Hay in bringing the company safely in.

The puzzling aspect of this account is that Alexander Robertson's military career simply does not fit Morris's description: it had, in fact,

been full of incident. He had served with the Fencibles in Ireland in the 1790s, and had been a Militia officer for five years before being commissioned ensign into the 36th Foot in 1804. He was promoted lieutenant into the 28th Foot in November 1805; and saw plenty of active service at Copenhagen, on the Walcheren expedition and in the Peninsula, commanding a company at Busaco, and obtaining his captaincy in the 73rd on 21 November 1811. Morris also makes the charge that 'our poor old Captain was horribly frightened, and several times came to me for a drop of something to keep his spirits up'. There is no doubt that Robertson was, at least, a seasoned campaigner, and it is almost impossible to reconcile the man that Morris knew with the character that emerges from the record books.

Two incidents that Morris recorded at Quatre Bras serve not only as interesting biographical references, but also

to illustrate how the power of weaponry has changed over the years. Lt. John Acres was a much respected even loved officer of Morris's company. Described by Morris as 'a man of gigantic stature, as brave as a lion, and almost as strong as one', he bore the nickname of 'Bob' Acres (after the country squire in Sheridan's play *The Rivals*). Commissioned ensign in the 73rd from the King's County Militia on 22 November 1809, and lieutenant on 20 November 1811, he distinguished himself by outstanding bravery and leadership in the attack on Merxem in 1814. At Quatre Bras he was fatally wounded by a pistol ball entering the back of his neck and penetrating so far as to lodge in his mouth. What is remarkable about this incident is that he was able to remove the ball and say a few words to his colonel before dying some hours later. A modern .38 pistol would probably have removed the lower part of his face.



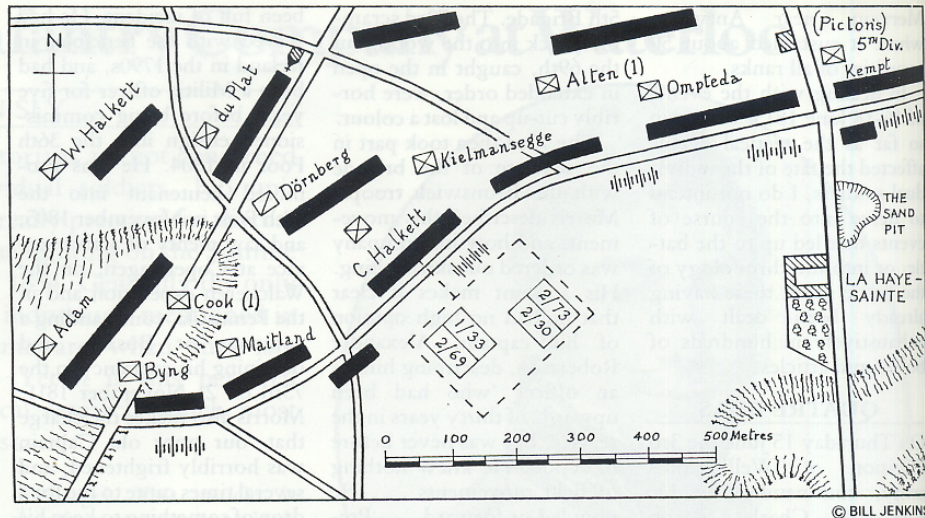
Coat of a battalion company officer, 73rd Foot, c.1812-15, showing distinctive regimental gold lace trim. (Courtesy Scottish United Services Museum)

Morris also related another convincing vignette of close action — he could capture brilliantly the passing moment: ‘Ensign Deacon . . . was on my right, close to me, when we were charging the enemy, and a private on my left being killed by a musket-ball through the temple, the officer said, “Who is that, Morris?” I replied, “Sam Shortly”; and pointing to the officer’s arm, where a musket ball had passed through, taking with it a portion of shirt sleeve, I said, “You are wounded, Sir”. “God bless me! so I am”, said he, and dropping his sword, made the best of his way to the rear.’

The retreat from Quatre Bras on 17 June was a sorry affair, harried by the French and made worse by the miserable weather, which produced an electrical storm of great severity in the middle of the sultry afternoon; both Morris and Macready mentioned its depressing effects. (Edward Neville Macready, a 16-year-old brother of a famous actor when he joined the Army as a volunteer in 1814, fought with the 30th Foot, and was one of the most famous diarists of the entire Waterloo campaign.) Eventually, in the dismal light of that June evening, the two armies took up their respective positions in full view of each other. By the morning of 18 June the rain has eased off, but both forces made their preparations to fight suffering from lack of sleep, sodden clothing, and the sheer discomfort of campaigning.

### WATERLOO

In purely physical terms it would have been an awesome prospect for those men at dawn on that day: fear, exhaustion, lack of food, and possible despair or resignation would all take their toll on men’s bodies, and for something like 12 hours the soldiers would have to remain in close formation, with no chance of relieving themselves except where they stood. Very few accounts of 18th and 19th



© BILL JENKINS

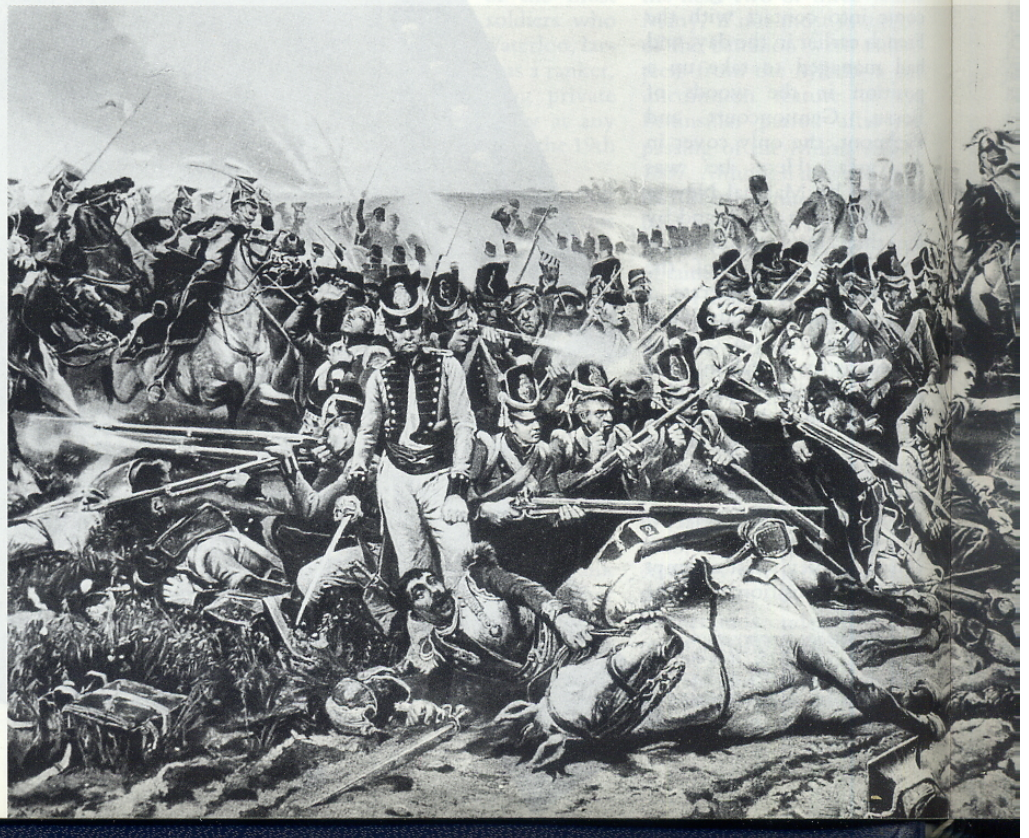
century warfare mention this aspect, but it would have an influence on the morale both of individuals and of formed units. By the end of the day the stench all over the battlefield would have been frightful: smoke from burning buildings, gunpowder from the artillery and muskets, the sweat, blood, vomit and excrement of thousands of men and horses, would have combined on a still, heavy day into an olfactory cocktail too rich for most modern noses. To have to continue to

fight in those circumstances for so many hours must have been one of the incidental horrors of Napoleonic combat, and it was hardly surprising that men turned to drink to deaden their senses.

Morris’s account of the battle was necessarily restricted, as is that of every eyewitness; however, he did manage to convey how it felt to be part of a battle in the Napoleonic period, although he was, to modern ears, strangely unemotional about his own part in the affair. At

the beginning of the day he came across his brother, who was on his way out with other men of the Light Company to co-operate with the 95th Rifles in skirmishing with the enemy:

‘As my brother was going on this duty, we shook hands, not supposing it likely that we should both be preserved through such a battle as this promised to be. From this time we had no opportunity of seeing each other until the close of the action.’ Either Morris has omitted the



sentiments exchanged by the two young men, or it must have been a remarkably phlegmatic parting.

### The lie of the field

Morris said very little about the ground on which the Allied army stood, except that it was a strong defensive position; but it is necessary to know the rough lie of the land and the disposition of the troops to understand the position of the 2/73rd. The Allied line was drawn up on rising ground on the north side of a shallow valley to the south of Mont St. Jean; the French were drawn up on the opposite side of the valley. The Allied right rested on the Brussels-Nivelles road, to the north and west of Hougomont, and the position stretched about a mile and half along a low rise running east to west towards Wavre, some ten miles away. Alten's 3rd Division had its left on the Brussels-Charleroi road which virtually bisected the positions of both armies. Ompteda's Brigade (four battalions of the King's German Legion) were drawn up with their left on the road, opposite Picton's 5th Division; to the right of Ompteda

was Kielmansegg's Hanoverian Brigade; to the right of the Hanoverians stood Colin Halkett's Brigade, with the composite 30th/73rd square slightly in front and to the left of the composite 33rd/69th square. Michael Glover (in *The Armies At Waterloo*, Sphere, 1973) wrote that this was a point, 'the place where the Brussels road crosses the ridge at its lowest, smoothest part', that could be specially threatened, and Wellington placed here 'the best of his infantry under his best divisional generals'. The 2/73rd was therefore, literally in the forefront of the battle, and it was unlikely that casualties would be anything but heavy.

This makes Morris's detachment even more remarkable. It is possible, of course, that he either genuinely believed that he was not going to be hit, or that he had had enough to drink to make him feel that way: 'Having distributed the usual allowance of spirits to the company, I had three canteens full left . . . I took an extra drop with my old friend Sergeant Burton; and he ordered me to keep some to drink together after the battle. I told him, I

### The 2/73rd in square

It is practically impossible to calculate where in the combined 'square' (actually a shallow rectangle, long faces at front and rear) of the 2/73rd and 2/30th Tom Morris's company stood. The normal formation of square from line put the Grenadier Company of a conventionally numbered battalion in the rear face. In this case there are three obstacles to certainty. Firstly, in the 2/73rd the Grenadiers were No. 6 Company. We may assume that tradition would keep Grenadiers in the post of honour on the right of the line, and thus in the rear when in square, but we cannot be sure.

Secondly, we know that Shaw Kennedy, AQMG of the 3rd Division, arrayed the division at Waterloo *vice* Gen. Alten. We know that the 2/73rd and 2/30th formed what Shaw Kennedy called an 'oblong' formation on a two-company front — two solid columns of companies, the 2/73rd on the left; and that 'the left hand battalion [formed] right in front'. We know that later the two

battalions formed a combined 'square'. If the 2/73rd Grenadiers were at their 'right', this would presumably put them somewhere in the middle of the forward face of the combined 'square' — but we cannot be sure. The internal evidence of Morris's account certainly suggests that he spent at least part of the battle in the forward face.

Thirdly, however, it is logical to assume that there must have been some shifting of position by companies within the 'square' during the long ordeal, or the forward face might have been annihilated whilst the other faces remained more or less intact; and this could have left the Grenadiers anywhere in the left hand half of the combined 'square'. About all that we can tell for certain is that they were drawn up in the traditional four ranks, the front two kneeling — note Morris's reference to ' . . . our rear ranks poured into them a well-directed fire . . . the two front ranks, kneeling, then discharged their pieces . . . '

thought very few of us would live to see the close of that day: when he said, "Tom, I'll tell you what it is; there is no shot made yet for either you or me".'

Burton had volunteered from the Tower Hamlets Militia on 2 April 1813, and was made sergeant within four days. Morris described him at one point as 'not at all soldierlike in appearance. Being on the wrong side of fifty, and having served some years on board a man-o'-war. He was one of those rough and ready, devil-may-care sort of fellows that an officer would select if he wanted something short and sweet done without any bother.' It is not hard to imagine the 18-year-old Thomas Morris finding an ideal father-figure in this obviously hard-bitten old former sea-dog, and it would be fascinating to discover something more about his background. In the event, Burton was right in his prediction: he and Morris survived the battle, and when the men were mustered towards the end of the day Burton was there: 'My worthy friend, Burton, gave me a hearty slap on the back, and said, "Out with the grog, Tom; did I not tell you there was no shot made for you or me?"'

Given the location of the 2/73rd on the battlefield, the battalion came under attack from all three arms of the French force: infantry, cavalry and artillery. Indeed, as William Siborne wrote (*The Waterloo Campaign*, London, 1844): 'Of all the troops comprising the Anglo-allied army, the most exposed to the fierce onslaught of the French cavalry and the continuous cannonade of their artillery were the British squares posted . . . in advance . . . of the narrow road which ran along the crest of the Duke's position. They consisted of the third battalion of the 1st Guards, and of the 30th and the 73rd, acting together as one Corps.' John Keegan, in his masterly study *The Face Of Battle* (Jonathan Cape, 1976) analysed the fighting from the point of view of how each arm succeeded or failed against its opponents; and together with Morris' anecdotal

Coloured print signed P. Jazet, 1882, showing the 2/73rd and 2/30th Foot in square at Waterloo. While the uniform details are very inaccurate (see accompanying article elsewhere in this issue for actual distinctions) this is a spirited example of an 'atmospheric' impression of a hard-pressed infantry unit during the successive French cavalry attacks. (Black Watch Regimental Museum, courtesy Alan Lagden)



JENKINS



dotes, this analysis presents a powerful verbal image of what the 2/73rd Grenadiers must have experienced.

### Artillery fire

The battle opened with the French cannonade, so perhaps it would be sensible to start with the category: artillery versus infantry. Psychologically this was the most difficult form of attack for the infantry to bear, as Keegan pointed out: 'For though the eighty-odd guns in Napoleon's "grand battery" . . . could not do any particular infantry formation the same concentration harm as could a "galloping battery" firing grape or cannister into it from close range, the arrival of their solid cannon-balls was so frequent, the effect of the balls on human flesh so destructive, the apprehension of those temporarily spared so intense that the cannonade came as near as anything suffered by the British at Waterloo to breaking their line.'

Morris told several horrific tales of his battalion's battering. To begin with, Capt. Robertson 'was cut in two by a cannon shot'. Then Morris himself was wounded by a shell splinter: 'About this time . . . a large shell fell just in front of us, and while the fuze was burning out, we were wondering how many of us it would destroy. When it burst, about seventeen men were either killed or wounded by it; the portion which came to my share, was a piece of rough cast-iron, about the size of a horse bean, which took its lodging in my left cheek; the blood ran copiously down inside my clothes, and made me feel rather uncomfortable.' Morris's taste for understatement is always impeccable.

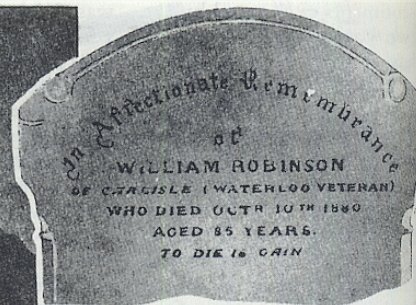
Finally in this category, Morris described the death of Sgt. Maj. William Ballam, in terms of pure gallows comedy: 'Our Sergeant-Major was a brave soldier, and had been through the whole of the engagements in the Peninsula with the 43rd Regiment . . . Noticing one of the men named Dent [William Dent, No.10 Company]

stooping every now and then, as the shots came whizzing by, he said "Damn you sir, what do you stoop for? You should not stoop if your head was blown off!" He had scarcely uttered these words, when a bullet struck him on the nose killing him on the spot. Dent immediately turned and said, "Damn it, Sir! what do you lie there for? You should not lie down if your head was off".'

### Cavalry attack

In contrast to its experience with the artillery, the British infantry formed up defensively at Waterloo fared much better against cavalry. The French generally had to charge up the hill at formed squares, and, as Keegan put it, 'if the story of Waterloo has a *leitmotiv* it is that of cavalry charging square and being repulsed . . . The feat of breaking a square was tried by the French cavalry time and again . . . and always . . . with a complete lack of success.' It required only a few horses to be brought down in the front rank of a cavalry regiment, which would be moving relatively slowly by the time they came within musket range, for the other horses to be upset; they would then either come to a complete halt or veer off to the side.

This is, in fact, what seems to have happened when the 73rd faced the first of many cavalry charges by the Cuirassiers: 'Their appearance was of such a formidable nature, that I thought we could not have the slightest chance with them. They came up rapidly, until within about ten or twelve paces of the square, when our rear ranks poured into them a well-directed fire, which put them into confusion, and they retired; the two front ranks, kneeling, then discharged their pieces at them. Some of the cuirassiers fell wounded, and several were killed; those of them that were dismounted by the death of their horses, immediately unclasped their armour to facilitate their escape.'



Mr William Robinson during his later years in Fleetwood and (above) his gravestone in Fleetwood cemetery. Below is his Waterloo campaign medal.



However, if cavalry acted together with horse artillery (uncommon at Waterloo because of the relatively crowded battlefield) it could be a different story. Morris gives a detailed depiction of an episode of what must have been sheer terror: 'The same body of the enemy . . . seemed determined to force a passage through us, and on their next advance they brought some artillery-men, turned the cannon in our front upon us, and fired into us with grape-shot . . . making complete lanes through us; and then the horsemen came up to dash in at the openings. But before they reached us we had closed our files, throwing the dead outside, and taking the wounded inside the square, and they were again forced to retire. They did not, however, go further than the pieces of cannon — waiting there to try the effect of some more grape-shot. We saw the match applied, and again it came as thick as hail upon us. On looking round, I saw my

left hand man falling backwards, the blood gushing from his left eye . . .

Contrary to what might be expected, this man was not killed, although needless to say he lost his left eye; and in later years, after reading Morris's account, the casualty wrote to him, identifying himself as William Robinson. The two men met in London in 1851; born in February 1795, Robinson survived for a further 65 years after the battle, apparently in generally good health, and died on 10 October 1880 in Fleetwood, Lancashire. He wore his Waterloo medal with great pride, and is said to have been fond of inviting his grandchildren to feel the lump of metal still lodged above his blind eye.

### The infantry battle

Keegan devotes more than thirty pages to the infantry-versus-infantry battle. He believes that, although the number of occasions when this form of combat took place was relatively limited at

Le  
Pte  
Mc  
str  
Wa  
85  
his  
At  
Di  
for  
his  
(5  
fre  
his  
he  
Th  
lis  
18  
per  
HT

W  
ou  
be  
th  
gr  
he  
of  
tis  
ac  
ter  
w  
hu  
th  
w  
in

[No. 2.]

204  
Camp



HIS MAJESTY'S 2<sup>d</sup> Regt. of Foot  
whereof Genl. Lane George Harris is Colonel.

THESE are to certify, that

William Robinson Private  
in Capt. Dewar's Company, in the Regiment aforesaid, born in the  
Parish of Carlisle in or near the Town of Carlisle  
in the County of Cumberland was enlisted at the Age of 18  
Years; and hath served in the said Regiment for the space of  
Three Years and 43

Days, as well as in other Corps, after the Age of Eighteen, according to the following  
Statement, but in consequence of loss of left Eye from a gun shot  
Wound received at Waterloo on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1815  
is rendered unfit for further Service, and is hereby discharged; having first received  
all just Demands of Pay, Clothing, &c. from his Entry into the said Regiment to  
the date of this Discharge, as appears by the Receipt on the back hereof.

And to prevent any improper use being made of this Discharge, by its falling into  
other Hands, the following is a Description of the said William Robinson

He is about Twenty One Years of Age; is Five Feet Seven Inches in  
height, Brown Hair, Grey Eyes, Fresh  
Complexion, by Trade a Tailor

Left:  
Pte. William Robinson, Tom  
Morris's 'left hand man', who was  
struck in the left eye by grapeshot at  
Waterloo. He survived to the age of  
85, and is pictured in old age with  
his headstone and Waterloo Medal.

Above:  
Discharge and pension documents  
for William Robinson, recording  
his service details, his appearance  
(5 ft. 7 in, brown hair, grey eyes,  
fresh complexion), and the loss of  
his left eye at Waterloo, for which  
he received a pension of 9d. a day.  
This apprentice tailor from Car-  
lisle was discharged aged 21 in June  
1816. (Crown copyright; by  
permission of the Controller,  
HMSO)

Waterloo, it was crucial to the  
outcome of the battle,  
because 'infantry was (and is)  
the only force with which  
ground could (and can) be  
held. . . ' The massed attacks  
of French infantry on the Bri-  
tish line were designed to  
achieve this occupation of the  
terrain. This form of warfare  
was guaranteed to produce  
huge casualty lists, even  
though the weapons used  
were relatively primitive and  
inaccurate. Considering the

denseness of the French col-  
umns and the small area  
within which the muskets on  
both sides were discharged, it  
would have been impossible  
to fire an aimed shot and not  
hit someone. Keegan sums  
up the phenomenon in a few  
telling sentences: 'The  
encounter which eludes the  
comprehension of the  
modern reader is . . . the  
Queen's Move of black-  
powder warfare, the head-on  
clash of heavy infantry, in  
close-order, over levelled  
musket barrels . . . What  
makes episodes of this sort so  
difficult for the modern  
reader to visualize, if visual-  
ized to believe in, if believed  
in to understand, is precisely  
this nakedly face-to-face qual-  
ity, their offering and deliv-  
ery of death over distances  
at which suburbanites swap  
neighbourly gardening hints,  
their letting of blood and  
infliction of pain in circum-  
stances of human congestion  
we expect to experience only  
at cocktail parties or tennis  
tournaments.'

Morris graphically des-

cribed incidents during the  
infantry clashes that are all the  
more horrifying for his mat-  
ter-of-fact style: 'The fire  
from the French infantry was  
so tremendous that our brig-  
ade divided, and sought  
shelter behind some banks  
. . . The only Captain we had  
left, invited us from the  
shelter of the bank to follow  
him in an attack on about  
three thousand of the French  
infantry. About a dozen of us  
accepted the invitation; and  
such was the destructive fire  
to which we were opposed,  
that we had not advanced  
more than six or seven paces,  
before every one of the party,  
except me and my brother,  
was either killed or  
wounded.'

It was also during an  
infantry clash, at the critical  
period of the battle, that Col.  
Sgt. Alexander Muir met his  
death: 'As we were retiring  
from the Imperial Guard,  
Sergeant Mure [sic] of the  
Grenadiers, a very brave and  
good soldier, in turning  
round to have a look at the  
enemy, received a musket

ball in the forehead, and fell  
on his back a corpse. A cousin  
of his named Morrison, ran  
back in the face of a most  
destructive fire, kissed his  
cousin on the cheek, let fall a  
tear or two, and then rejoined  
us.' The official records show  
only that Alexander Muir  
enlisted on 14 May 1811 and  
William Morrison a day later,  
but there is a lot more to be  
discovered about that rela-  
tionship than any official  
record can tell us.

Of all the stories of indivi-  
dual pain, loss and waste that  
summarise the personal  
agony of Waterloo, one in  
particular stands out from the  
ranks of the 2/73rd. One of  
the private soldiers of the  
Grenadier Company who  
was killed was Duncan  
Campbell; he had enlisted in  
June 1803, and had spent  
most of his career with the 1/  
73rd in the East Indies. He  
obtained special permission  
to transfer into the 2nd Batta-  
lion so that he could remain  
the soldier-servant of Maj.  
McLaine, who had recently  
been gazetted to the 2/73rd.  
At just about the same time as  
Campbell was killed, his  
master was mortally  
wounded.

Archibald John McLaine  
had 'celebrated' his 37th  
birthday on the day of Quatre  
Bras; and it is an interesting  
comment on those times that  
Macready, mentioning an in-  
cident just before McLaine's  
wounding when he rallied  
some unsteadiness in the 30th  
Foot, could refer to him as  
'old Major McLaine'. He was  
one of four soldier brothers  
who came from a family of  
Scallastle on the Isle of Mull.  
McLaine served for over 21  
years in the 73rd Foot, most  
of that time in the East Indies  
with the 1st Battalion. He  
was mortally wounded late in  
the day at Waterloo, subse-  
quently dying at Brussels;  
and Morris wrote that 'we  
regretted much the loss of our  
second Major, McLean, who  
had joined us some months  
before. . . He was. . . most  
deservedly popular with the  
men, for his urbanity and  
humanity, and it was on his  
suggestion that the Colonel  
had relinquished the practice

The Roll of No. 6 (Grenadier) Company, 2/73rd Foot, at Waterloo

of flogging.'

Perhaps the most uncanny story of the Grenadier Company was that of Pte. John Parsons, 'one of the best-hearted, good-humoured, generous, fellows that I ever met with', according to Morris. More fond of drink than he should have been, Parsons nevertheless captured the affections of a Flemish girl in Antwerp, and although they did not marry, the girl was allowed to 'follow' the regiment because she had some beneficial influence on Parsons' behaviour. On the morning of Waterloo Parsons reported to his captain requesting a signature to his will. He had apparently dreamed that his recently dead mother had come to him, foretelling his death that day; Parsons wanted to ensure that his arrears of pay would go to his 'poor Therese'. His captain agreeing to this, Jack went away satisfied. Whether or not he was the victim of a self-fulfilling prophesy, Jack Parsons was killed at Waterloo.

**The company roll**

These have been the personal stories of some of the men of the Grenadier Company of the 2/73rd as told by Thomas Morris; other soldiers in other battalions have written their own accounts, but perhaps Morris's knack of telling a good tale makes the men of his unit seem more real than some others. However, no matter how intriguing these individual anecdotes, we can learn about the effects of battle, or recruiting patterns, or other social trends only from a broader statistical interpretation of the data. The following roll provides the opportunity to make some comparisons, and try to draw elementary conclusions.

If we exclude the regimental staff (they were listed only nominally in the pay of the Grenadier Company, and their respective fates were subject to different environmental factors) and the only two officers who can be identified positively as having served with the company (Robertson and Acres), the

Name	Rank	Born	Trade	Enlisted	Career
<i>Staff:</i> William Ballam	Sgt. Mjr.	Shepton Mallet Somerset	Labourer	[43rd Foot] 20 Apr 1805 Hertfordshire Militia [73rd Foot] 24 Apr 1813	Killed in action Waterloo
Charles Collins	School-Master Sergeant	St. Mary's Nottingham	Framework knitter	27 Nov 1812 from Royal Hospital Chelsea	Killed in action Waterloo
John Taylor	Armourer Sergeant	Birmingham	Gunsmith	21 Apr 1807	Discharged to pension 24 Jun 1817
Robert Bain	Drum Mjr.	Glasgow	-	1 Oct 1812 Renfrew Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
<i>Company</i> Alexander Muir	Col. Sgt.	-	-	14 May 1811 Militia Volunteer	Killed in action Waterloo
John Burton	Sergeant	-	-	2 Apr 1813 2nd Royal Tower Hamlets Militia	Discharged 3 May 1817
William Dunn	Sergeant	Kirton, Lincs	-	5 Apr 1813 Militia Volunteer	Discharged, Broken leg 24 Apr 1817
Peter McCormick	Sergeant	-	-	26 Dec 1811 Leitrim Militia	To England wounded 17 Aug 1817
Hentry Atkinson	Corporal	-	-	15 May 1811	Discharged 3 May 1817
Michael Loane	Corporal	Clogher, Tyrone	Labourer	1 Jan 1812	Wounded 16/18 June 1815 Ceylon service Discharged, own request 14 Sep 1831
James Stretton	Drummer	Birmingham	Labourer	11 Aug 1809	Discharged, disability 9 Sep 1834
John Arnold	Private	Leeds	Carpet Weaver	5 May 1812	Ceylon service Discharged, debility 5 Feb 1822
Thomas Banford	Private	Dudley, Worcs	-	2 May 1811	Wounded 16/18 June 1815 Deserted 30 Mar 1816
Thomas Bould	Private	-	Weaver	8 May 1812 Staffordshire Militia	Died of wounds 28 July 1815
John Burley	Private	-	-	5 May 1812 Worcestershire Militia	Discharged 10 June 1817
Duncan Campbell	Private	Crothey, Aberdeenshire	Tailor	15 June 1803	Killed in action Waterloo
George Carey	Private	Frome, Somerset	Labourer	2 May 1811	Discharged, wounds 24 July 1816
John Connor	Private	Kilcobin, Kerry	Labourer	11 Oct 1811 King's County Militia	Discharged, amputation 4 July 1820
Thomas Connor	Private	Louth, Lincs	Labourer	14 Feb 1811 Louth Militia	Died of wounds 7 July 1815
Thomas Daniels	Private	Worcester	Labourer	1 Apr 1813	Died 28 Sep 1818 Ceylon
John Davey	Private	-	-	22 Feb 1813	Prisoner of war Quatre Bras. Rejoined 18 June Ceylon service Discharged 2 Feb 1820
Patrick Downie	Private	Birr, King's Co.	Labourer	10 Sep 1810	Discharged, wounds 17 Mar 1819
Thomas Ellwell	Private	-	-	19 Apr 1809	Discharged, time expired 19 Apr 1816
John Gee	Private	-	-	4 May 1812 Royal West Middlesex Militia	Wounded 16/18 June 1815. Discharged 3 May 1817
Bernard Greenham	Private	Tullamore, King's County	Labourer	20 Jan 1812	Discharged, wounds 18 May 1818
William Hadley	Private	Oxford	Shoemaker	1 Apr 1813 King's Own Staffordshire Militia	Deserted 26 Apr 1816 Returned 7 Nov 1816 Discharged 24 Jun 1821 Ceylon
Francis Harman	Private	King's County	Tailor	12 Sep 1810 King's County Militia	Died Ceylon 10 Apr 1819
Elias Hill	Private	-	-	4 May 1812 Warwickshire Militia	Discharged 10 June 1817
John Hunter (1)	Private	Dumfries	Tailor	20 Aug 1811	Discharged, worn out 3 May 1817
John Hunter (2)	Private	Edinburgh	Shoemaker	14 May 1812	Wounded 16/18 June 1815 Died Ceylon 29 Sep 1817
Samuel Kirton	Private	Denton, Lincs	Labourer	9 Dec 1813	Wounded 16/18 June 1815 Ceylon service Discharged, sickness 4 July 1820

Grenadiers consisted of the colour-sergeant, three sergeants, two corporals, a drummer and 49 privates, making a total of 56 individuals.

To start the analysis with national origin, we know the birthplaces of 40 men (71% of

the total). Of those 40, 27 (68%) were of English origin, four (10%) were Scottish, and eight (20%) Irish; the remaining man, John Meltzor, was a Saxon.

For those men for whom we have a trade — 38 — the largest single category (17

men) was given as labourer (45%). The other trades occurring more than once were six weavers (16%), five tailors (13%), three shoemakers (8%), two metalworkers (5%), and two framework-knitters (5%). Trades unique to this company were

The Roll of No. 6 (Grenadier) Company, 2/73rd Foot, at Waterloo

Name	Rank	Born	Trade	Enlisted	Career
William Lane	Private	Reigate, Surrey	Labourer	2 Apr 1813 2nd Royal Surrey Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
William Lawrence	Private	Birmingham	Brass Founder	2 Apr 1813 Warwickshire Militia	Died of wounds 20 June 1815
John Mannerly	Private	-	-	1 Apr 1813 Worcestershire Militia	Discharged 24 Apr 1817
James Manning	Private	Bewdley, Worcs	Tailor	11 May 1811	Died of wounds 11 July 1815
William Matthews	Private	Banstead, Surrey	Labourer	2 Apr 1813 2nd Royal Surrey Militia	Discharged, ophthalmia 24 June 1815
James McCabe	Private	Kilmarnick, Wicklow	Bronze Maker	11 June 1812	Discharged, wounds 24 June 1817
Roger McGinn	Private	Clogher, Tyrone	Labourer	3 Dec 1811 Louth Militia	Died Ceylon 13 July 1821
John Meltzor	Private	Luneburg, Saxony	Shoemaker	23 Oct 1813 [Stralsund]	Wounded 16/18 June 1815. Ceylon service Discharged, paralysis 24 June 1829
Thomas Morris	Private	St George's Middx	-	29 May 1813	Discharged 20 Nov 1818
William Morrison	Private	-	-	15 May 1811	Discharged 3 May 1817
John Mott	Private	Nottingham	Framework knitter	1 Apr 1813 Derbyshire Militia	Died Ceylon 6 Nov 1818
Patrick Murtagh	Private	St Peter's Louth	Weaver	3 Dec 1811 Louth Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
Edward Palmer	Private	Surrey	Labourer	2 Apr 1813 2nd Royal Surrey Militia	Died Ceylon 2 June 1819
William Pardoe	Private	-	-	1 Apr 1813	Sent to England 6 July 1815 wounded
John Parsons	Private	Shrewsbury	Cordwainer	5 May 1812 Warwickshire Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
John Patterson	Private	Paisley	Weaver	1 Oct 1811	Died Ceylon 3 Apr 1819
Samuel Pope	Private	Wolverly	Labourer	1 Apr 1813 Worcestershire Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
James Quinn	Private	Adgerworth	Labourer	5 Aug 1812 Westmeath Militia	Died of wounds 25 July 1815
Joseph Rice	Private	Ilkeston, Derbyshire	Framework knitter	30 Jan 1812 Derbyshire Militia	Discharged, wounds 10 June 1817
William Robinson	Private	Kendal, Westmoreland	Tailor's Apprentice	2 Apr 1813 Royal Cumberland Militia	Discharged, wounds 13 June 1816
Thomas Rotherham	Private	Walsall, Staffs	Coach Harness Maker	4 May 1812 Staffordshire Militia	Killed in action Waterloo
William Saxby	Private	-	-	10 June 1811 [his 16th Birthday]	Discharged Ceylon 15 Dec 1820
Samuel Shortley	Private	Coventry	Weaver	25 May 1811	Killed in action Quatre Bras
James Siverter	Private	Rowley Regis, Staffs	Nailor	3 Apr 1813 Worcestershire Militia	Wounded 16/18 June 1815. Ceylon service Discharged sickness 16 Oct 1833 [83rd Foot]
Richard Stanley	Private	Greashill King's Co.	Labourer	2 July 1811	Wounded 16/18 June 1815. Died Ceylon 4 June 1818
Thomas Stanton	Private	-	-	1 Apr 1813 King's Own Staffordshire Militia	Wounded 16/18 June 1815. Discharged by purchase Ceylon 24 Apr 1819
Ralph Surtees	Private	St Cuthbert's Cumberland	Weaver	5 Apr 1813 Royal Cumberland Militia	Discharged, wounds 14 Mar 1817
Thomas Thomas	Private	Somerset	Labourer	1 Apr 1813 Worcestershire Militia	Died Ceylon 16 Jan 1819
John Tolley	Private	-	-	1 Apr 1813 Worcestershire Militia	Ceylon service Discharged 18 May 1821
<p><b>Note</b></p> <p>We know the ages of just 12 men of the Grenadier Company: in 1815 five of these were aged 20, three 21, and one each 17, 19, 22 and 26. In the company, less the staff, 22 men had enlisted in 1813, 13 in 1812, 16 in 1811; only five had more than four years Regular service, two enlisting in 1809, two in 1810, and the faithful Duncan Campbell in 1803. We know the heights of only 14</p> <p>(random) members of the company, but these are enough to call into question the tradition that Grenadiers were big men; three were 5ft. 8in., four 5ft. 7in., one 5ft 6in., three 5ft. 5in., two 5ft 4in., and one 5ft. 2in. (At this period Foot Guards are recorded as averaging 5ft. 7in. in the Battalion Companies, 5ft. 8in. in the Light Companies, and 5ft 11in. in the Grenadier Companies).</p>					

73rd had 23 officers and 475 men present, totalling 498. At Waterloo five officers and 47 men were killed outright (10.5%); 12 officers and 175 men were listed as wounded (37.5%); and 41 men were listed missing. Total casualties were thus 280 out of 498 (56.49%).

Of the Grenadiers, eight men (14%) can be positively identified as having been killed in action at Quatre Bras or Waterloo, and a further five (9%) died of wounds. However, a further 19 men (34%) were recorded as either wounded, or were later discharged as a result of wounds received in the Waterloo campaign, making a total of 32 men (57%) who can be counted as casualties. The fact that Thomas Morris himself is not included in this total although he was palpably hit (see above) is, I suspect, because an official 'wound' in 1815 had to be disabling to be counted; and it may be that anything up to a notional 100% of the battalion, let alone the Grenadiers, were hit badly enough to draw blood, without being hit badly enough to be put off their feet. If this speculation is true, it makes casualty figures in the Napoleonic period very difficult to interpret.

Even so, and despite the fact that the battalion and company figures quoted above are not compiled on exactly the same basis, their broad similarity seems convincing. To fight with the 2/73rd at Waterloo was to run a one-in-eight chance of getting killed outright, and more than a one-in-three chance of suffering a serious wound.

One last mortality statistic: 19 of these Waterloo Grenadier veterans (34%) went to Ceylon to join the 1/73rd Foot in May 1817; and nine of them (16%) died there. This means that by the end of 1821, when the regiment returned to Britain, 24 (43%) out of the 56 men who marched off to battle with the Grenadier Company of the 2/73rd in the early hours of 16 June 1815 were dead.

MI

nailor, cordwainer and coach-harness maker. As for their enlistment, no less than 31 (55%) of our 56 men were volunteers from various Militias.

Now the statistics for mortality. Bearing in mind the anecdotal evidence for casual-

ties — Morris noted that at the end of the battle there were only two officers and 70 men to answer the muster — it might be imagined that the battalion had been virtually wiped out. In fact this is far from the picture painted by the official casualty returns,

and we must assume that the muster to which he refers took place in some confusion before the battalion had properly assembled after action. If the records are correct, on the morning of the 18th (having lost 56 casualties at Quatre Bras and on the retreat) the 2/