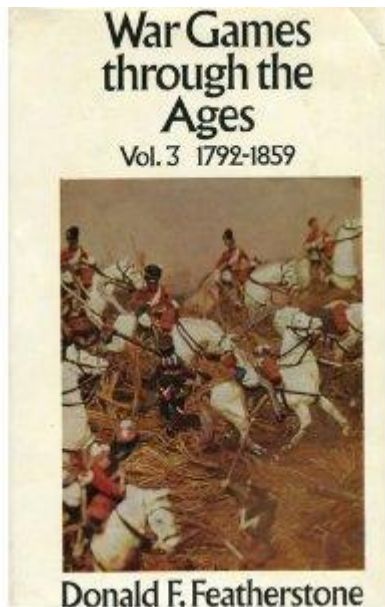


# **‘War Games Through the Ages Vol. 3, 1792-1859’**

**By Donald Featherstone**

**Review by Paul Le Long**

Let's start off by saying that all my comments relating to volume 1 of this series (which you can find in that review on this blog) apply to this present volume. Basically, what I said there was that although the analysis was dated and old-fashioned, and a bit simplistic, these volumes are a very useful overview of their respective periods and provide a good starting point if you want a more detailed analysis.



So what do we get in this particular volume? The book begins with 80 pages or thereabouts of discussion on various topics including the familiar classification of commanders, advice on wargaming and formulating rules for the period, how to recreate fog of war, and using 6mm figures to recreate large battles. Then there are some very interesting sections on tactical formations, column, line, square, cavalry and light infantry. There are quite a few illustrations throughout depicting formations and tactics.

As usual for this series you also get a Fighting Assessment Chart for the main armies featured in each chapter – the chart covers things like morale, training, discipline, tactical system and much else and gives a score for each with a total at the bottom so that you can compare the forces of different armies or campaigns.

The heart of the book is a series of chapters outlining a particular conflict: French Revolutionary Wars, Second Coalition, French in Egypt, Third Coalition, 1809 Campaign, Peninsular War, Russia 1812, Leipzig Campaign, Waterloo, War with America (1812-15), US-Mexican War, Crimean War, War of Austria, France and Piedmont (1859).

As with other volumes in the series, each chapter is headed by a rather evocative line drawing of a typical soldier from that conflict. Then you get a discussion of the history of the conflict or campaign under review as well as the tactics employed by various belligerent forces – accompanied by quite a few diagrams showing troop formations. I found these diagrams very clear and useful. The text is also well laid out, clear and authoritative.



This book is, I think, a really good introduction and primer to the Napoleonic Wars – both in terms of history and in terms of tactics. The many diagrams scattered throughout the text are especially helpful in explaining Napoleonic tactics and formations. Also, the discussions of light infantry, cavalry, column versus line and so on are all very interesting. They do represent the accepted, in some cases, dated, view of the period but the book is after all 37 years old, so you would expect that. The chapters on the Mexican-American War, War of 1859 and the Crimean War all feel like awkward appendages but they are no less interesting in their own right. And just because the analysis isn't all up to date, doesn't mean that it is worthless or wrong – as with all of these volumes, you just need to exercise a bit of discretion.

I suspect that most wargamers will be familiar with most of the material in this volume since the Napoleonic period is so popular. Nevertheless, I've always liked this book and it is a very accessible primer for the period with a certain charm of its own.

Recommended.

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