



## BOOK REVIEW

### **MEN OF STEEL: Surgery in the Napoleonic Wars**

Michael Crumplin FRCS (Quiller Press) £30

Few who have studied the Napoleonic period could have failed to have grasped the magnitude of the injuries caused by shot and sabre and to the often, what appears to us, brutal surgery which was undertaken in often far from satisfactory conditions.

This book produced by a retired general surgeon gives what is possibly the most definitive study to date of the surgical procedures of the period. Dealing authoritatively with the men and weapons of the period we are soon drawn into the trials and tribulations in retrieving the wounded and their treatment, often in graphic detail.

Given by modern standards the poor knowledge of the workings of the body, the lack of anaesthetics, disinfectant, X-rays and all the things we would take for granted before attempting major surgery, the success rate of these surgeons is phenomenal.

The book deals with medical services only in the British and French forces, and it may have been of interest to know how the other major powers organised their services, although the lack of easily available information may make this a work in itself. The references to surgical services in the Royal Navy often appears as an addition to the main subject.

It is apparent that this is a book written by a surgeon about a subject he is well familiar with and for the lay reader a glossary at the end may have assisted, although the writing is kept simple and clear and the book is well-illustrated throughout.

This is a book which may be restricted in its interest to those with an interest in the medical services of the time, but those in particular who wish to re-enact the surgeons of the time will do little worse than to have copy of this book to hand.