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The Battle of Maida 1806

Richard Hopton

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A nation's history is littered with conveniently forgotten defeats and military disasters but it is unusual for significant victories to be ignored. Richard Hopton, the up-and-coming historian, has uncovered the long overlooked defeat of Napoleon's forces by General Sir John Stuart at Maida, Southern Italy in 1806. For many years the only hint that there had been a triumph there has been the residential area of North West London that derives its name from the battle.

Following Ulm and Austerlitz, Napoleon's reputation for military genius was fast becoming a morale problem for his opponents, in the same way that Rommel's prowess did some 240 years later. No small part of the significance of the Allied victory at Maida in 1806 was the proof it offered that the French under Napoleon were not invincible.

The Author brilliantly describes the cast of colorful yet highly improbably characters who fate and circumstances brought together. Arguably pride of place must go to Ferdinand II, Ruler of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, whose eccentricity was only exceeded by his abject incompetence.

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