

Douglas's Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo. Edited by Stanley Monick. Leo Cooper: London, 1997. "I Join the Royal Scots," page 5.

Hay was a very strict disciplinarian, and did not bear the best of names among the men. Take a specimen. In the Spring of 1809 the 3rd and 4th Battalions lay together at Chelmsford, and something like children of a family, they did not agree well together. Even the officers got tainted with such nonsense. The happened that a man of the 4th Battalion Light Company, being on a spree, was taken by the picket in a state of intoxication, and snatching a pike (or halberd) from the Sergeant struck him on the head.

This is no doubt a very serious crime, and was as seriously handled. The man being confined, reported and tried was sentenced to 800 lashes by Col. Hay, he being the senior commander. The man received 775 lashes without so much as asking for a drink of water. He then ordered him to be taken down and, addressing the 2 battalions, or the man, says, 'Now Sir, I would sooner flog you for giving insolence to a Lance Corporal than for striking an officer, for that is the link in the chain by which the whole army is fastened.'

This quotation offers little information beyond the fact that the rank of Lance Corporal did exist in the British Army just prior to the War of 1812.

Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns, 1809-1815. John Spenser Cooper. The Spellmouny Library of Military History: Staplehurst, England, 1996. "Battle of Albuhera, May 16th, 1811," page 64.

Orders were here received that our skeleton regiment should be incorporated with the 1st Battalion; with these exceptions, that the officers, non-commissioned officers, and band, should go to England. Being only lance corporal, I had the mortification of being transferred, and of seeing my old comrades march merrily from the camp for old England.

While this quotation offers us little further information, it does confirm the low status of the Lance Corporal. He is not a non-commissioned officer, despite doing the work of one, and he receives none of the benefits of this rank.

The Letters of Private Wheeler. Edited by Captain B.H. Liddell Hart. The Riverside Press: Cambridge, 1951. "No. 57. Camp. Heights of Eschellar, 3rd. November, 1813."

Since my last I have been promoted to Corporal, I never undertook any thing with so much distrust and misgiving, it has been completely forced on me. Our pay Serjeant was killed at Lezaca and our Captain wounded, the men's accmpts were left in a very confused state. Our Paymaster recommended me to set the books to rights. I was in the Officers Tent, just finishing the debt and credit roll, when the officer commanding the company brought in our Adjutant. The Adjutant told me I was "a D-----d fool," I might have had a Serjeant's coat before this. He said I should have my choice of two things, that was, I should be

put in the Orders that day for Corporal, and I might do the duty, either with, or without pay. I had no alternative. If I refused, the I should be appointed Lance Corporal, that is, I should have to perform the duty on private's pay. Of course I consented to the wishes of my friends, and a few hours after I was appointed.

Wheeler has made it clear in earlier passages that he does not wish to hold rank in his unit. What he is saying here, therefore, is that if he refused to be promoted to the rank of Corporal, then he would still do the work, but would not receive any money for it. This is his definition of a Lance Corporal, and this is the best description written by a soldier in the Peninsular War – a Lance Corporal is a private, in dress and pay, but he does the work of a Corporal. In most cases, this only seems to last for a limited period of time until the permission of the Commanding Officer is received and the man confirmed a full Corporal.