



Sharpe's Company

Bernard Cornwell

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To stem the Napoleonic tide, Sharpe must capture a fortress—where his wife and infant daughter are trapped—while protecting himself from a fellow officer determined to destroy him.

Sharpe's Company Details

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From Reader Review Sharpe's Company for online ebook

Clark says

Sharpe's Company is the third of Bernard Cornwell's initial series of historical novels about daring British rifleman Richard Sharpe.

For new readers to the series, Sharpe was born in the gutters of London -- an orphan who had to fight and scrape his way out of his bleak world and into the ranks of the British army during the Napoleonic campaigns in Portugal and Spain (the Peninsular War). Napoleon would later refer to this on-going conflict with Wellington's army as his "Spanish ulcer".

An early fortuitous encounter with Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) at the Battle of Assaye sets Sharpe on a course that would take him from India, Denmark, Portugal and Spain into France itself. Sharpe is part of an elite company of rifleman -- selected as his "Chosen Men" -- who proudly wear their green jackets instead of the redcoats. As skirmishers, they are often at the front of any conflict and use the new Baker rifles with deadly accuracy.

Sharpe saved the future duke's life at Assaye and his reward was to be raised from the ranks. Sharpe's misfortune is that he wasn't born a gentleman. In the strictly hierarchical society of 19th century England, a man raised from the ranks was rare and even scandalous in the eyes of the proper officers of the battalion. It was assumed a ranker could never adjust to the ways and manners of his betters.

Sharpe is often in the thick of the action throughout the series and the Siege of Badajoz in 1812 provides him with such an opportunity.

The novel begins with Sharpe's frustrating visit to Whitehall to check if his promotion to captain was confirmed. He would learn that, safe in England, the bureaucrats cared little for his exploits on faraway battlefields. He was the Hero of the Field of Talavera and captured a French Eagle battle standard, a formidable deed. He was toasted briefly by London's high society, but these past glories mean nothing to either the government clerks who misplaced his information or to the powerful men on both sides of the English Channel who are running the war.

His ally, Lieutenant-Colonel Lawford, is seriously injured at Ciudad Rodrigo and Sharpe loses his only influential supporter in the South Essex, the fictional regiment that is now home to Sharpe. Sharpe is too proud to seek intervention from Wellington despite the duke's appreciation for his services in the battlefield. The new commander Windham is likeable enough, but like many officers, he feels that Sharpe is out of his element and doesn't fit in with the Officers' Mess.

Sharpe's promotion to captain has been refused. His company now has a new captain and he finds himself as a lieutenant again and a quartermaster, counting pickaxes and shovels. They are necessary tools for the siege, but Sharpe does not see it this way. It is not soldier's work and he repeatedly requests to lead a Forlorn Hope -- the first men in the breach, with a high probability of death. They would spring the fortress defences and traps (with their lives!), clearing the way for the attackers to pour into the city. Surviving a Forlorn Hope could confirm his captaincy.

Sharpe has other motivations too. His future wife, Teresa Moreno, has a new daughter in Badajoz. His daughter. The baby is ill and, if the fortress falls, Sharpe must ensure their safety for the aftermath of any siege is drunkenness, lawlessness, destruction and pillage. To the victors go the spoils and the city will be in chaos if Sharpe doesn't reach her first. He must be first into the breach, into Badajoz -- for his career, for his

new family and for a soldier's pride in accomplishing the impossible.

Badajoz is one of two great fortresses that guard the Portuguese-Spanish border. The other, Ciudad Rodrigo, was captured in January 1812 with fewer casualties than expected and many in the army naively believe that Badajoz would be just as easy. The rank-and-file know better. It is they who must jump into the mined and spiked ditches, they who must face the withering fire of cannon, canister and enemy muskets. Wellington must secure the fortress to pursue his campaign into Spain against the French and they all know that the price will be many lives. Wellington does not like sieges and must wait for the engineers to declare any breach in the wall as practicable: capable of being scaled by infantry.

It is a historical novel but don't let this dissuade you. There is plenty of action and intrigue, even though a Wikipedia search can tell you how the siege ended. Cornwell tells the story such a way that you feel like you are in the trenches with the South Essex, with victory a fleeting hope and death one bayonet or musket shot away.

It is an adventure with plenty of interesting characters that drive the dramatic moments. Cornwell creates a unique cast of characters and you'll meet them in Sharpe's Company, including the new commander Windham, Sharpe's sidekick the Irishman Patrick Harper, Spanish partisan girlfriend Teresa, engineer-spymaster Hogan, the cynical loyalist American officer Leroy and the rank-and-file soldiers who form the backbone of the South Essex.

Cornwell also excels in creating memorable antagonists – all the best heroes must have an equally convincing foil -- and none are as terrifying and evil as Obadiah Hakeswill. When Sharpe was in the ranks, Hakeswill framed him for a crime in India that resulted in a flogging. Hakeswill's return to the battalion presents another challenge to the recently-demoted Sharpe. If Hakeswill is allowed to manipulate both officers and the common soldiers and poison the regiment with mistrust and fear, the South Essex could be broken from within.

The novel may be set in a 200-year old conflict – the British won at Waterloo, no surprises here – but Richard Sharpe is one of the most relatable fictional heroes. We've all found ourselves faced with insurmountable odds: at work, at home, among colleagues, with friends and even with enemies or competitors. He is an everyman hero, who, despite the obstacles of his birth, the indifference of his employer, his own endearing self-doubt and the scheming of his rivals and enemies, he can still dust off his green jacket, fire three rounds a minute, fight like a demon and (occasionally) win the girl in the end.

In a modern world where it seems no one keeps his word, money talks above merit and injustice goes unanswered, Sharpe represents a comfort -- a harkening back to an age where honour, duty, loyalty and doing what is right held more value. They meant something more than some 21st-century marketing punch lines or catch phrases. Sharpe lives his life by them.

I first discovered the Sharpe novels after watching the 1990's ITV series of Sharpe TV movies based on them.

It's an addictive series for binge-readers – why not start during the Christmas break? Follow Sharpe from his lowly private days in India to the glorious field at Waterloo in time for the battle's 200th anniversary next June. Or you can start with this one -- it's one of the best in the series. It's also acceptable to envision Sharpe as actor Sean Bean when you read them.

Millennials might think that Bean launched his career as Boromir in Lord of the Rings or as Eddard Stark in HBO's Game of Thrones. Some may even remember him as the villainous 006 in the James Bond flick Goldeneye. There are also the (inaccurate) viral internet memes that suggest that he dies in everything he's ever starred in. He dies in plenty of them -- but let me put this meme to rest. There is one character he's

played that escapes this alleged curse.

The role that defined him, the one that made him an international name is Sharpe. And as any fan of Sharpe novels knows, he can never die. The TV series itself inspired the author to write more Sharpe novels and there were even two additional Sharpe TV movies made in 2006 and 2008. And, spoiler alert, he doesn't die in them either.

Sharpe's Company has everything you'd expect in a Napoleonic-era adventure novel, but Cornwell tells it better and with more style and verve than anyone in the business. Many historical novelists look to the Sharpe series as a standard to aspire to. These accolades are well-earned.

This novel would be a great way for a new reader to enter the world of Richard Sharpe.

Greg Strandberg says

This was definitely one of my favorites. You get some good city fighting here, lots of house to house stuff. The romance angle is building and it just goes to a great climax.

This is a fun series and I read all of them back to back in about a month or so. I read some of the books in one day because A) they're not that long, about 200 to 300 pages B) they're darn good and C) they don't have A,B,C lists like this.

If you want good historical fiction that is entertaining and has likable characters, this is it.

Kathy Davie says

Thirteenth in the Richard Sharpe military fiction series about an army captain who jumped up from the ranks and will do anything to keep his promotion.

My Take

It's amazing what power will do to a person, to a group. The Horse Guards in London thought it was more important to cater to men with money than with actually winning a war. Can you imagine what the English could have accomplished if they had promoted on merit instead of allowing men to buy their way into the rank they desired? As Cornwell points out, if the French had used the British system, there would never have been a Napoleon...ooh, wait, maybe that's a bad example... Still, the point remains the same.

How Windham can stand there and tell Sharpe that he has to give his Company up to Rymer because "He's purchased it, used his own money. You can see his rights..." Oh, yeah, instead of earning the rank and gaining experience while surviving combat, Rymer's *money* automatically makes him a natural and effective leader. Uh-huh. Let me out now!!!

We do have to give Windham credit for realizing that frame as quickly as he does. Not that it does much good for Harper's back. Still. Then Hogan takes a hand. At least Sharpe will have a chance at battle and get him away from the supply wagons, baggage train, and wives' inspections!

What *is* it with all these officers telling Sharpe he doesn't need the glory of leading a Forlorn Hope? His

commanding colonel should just be jumping for joy at the thought of a good chance of getting rid of Sharpe. Wellington. Well, we know why Wellington won't let Sharpe lead one and Hogan doesn't want him to; he appreciates Sharpe's abilities and, hoo boy, ain't he mad when he finds out Sharpe's captaincy was gutted! They all think that Sharpe will win promotion on the battlefield with all the potential dead captains. If that's true, then why isn't Sharpe a captain for real now??

This is the first story in which Richard starts to hanker after a Forlorn Hope. It would cement his promotion and be a test for himself.

As Cornwell notes at the end, there is a real-life romance at the sack of Badajoz when Lieutenant Harry Smith rescued and married Juana Maria de los Dolores de Leon. A love story that has found its way into many romances and history books.

The Story

It's at the assault on Ciudad Rodrigo where Sharpe's luck takes a sharp turn down, for Colonel Lawford is hit and the South Essex requires a new Colonel. One who won't be on Sharpe's side.

There's even a new captain along with the news that Sharpe's gazette as captain was refused. So Sharpe is back to being a lieutenant. Without a company. Instead his new colonel puts him in charge of baggage and the regiment's women.

If that isn't bad enough, Hakeswill is already up to his old tricks with a frame that takes a bit too long to be revealed to Colonel Windham, and Teresa is trapped in Badajoz, at risk from Hakeswill as well.

The Characters

Captain Richard Sharpe is a natural soldier and fearsome in battle for time slows down when Sharpe is in a battle rage and none can stand before him.

His men include **Sergeant Patrick Harper**, an Ulsterman from Donegal; **Sergeant Read** is a Methodist and worries about the men's souls; **Lieutenant Harry Price** is nice enough — his father bought him his commission to get him away from the ladies and the bottle or at least out of sight of Hampshire; **Daniel Hagman**, the oldest man in the regiment and a former poacher from Cheshire; **Roach**; **Parry Jenkins**; **Gutteridge**; **Cooper**; **Harris**, a former schoolteacher; **Perkins**, the youngest; **Green**; **Horrell**; **McDonald**; **Cresacre**; **Smith**; **Sergeant Latimer**; **Peters**; **Clayton** has a wife Sally with pretty tits; and, **Corporal Jackson**. **Sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill** joins the South Essex with its new officers: **Colonel Brian Windham**, an energetic hunter with a dislike of jumped-up officers (and a very moralistic wife); **Major Jack Collett**; **Captain Rymer** is slated to replace Sharpe — he's one of us, don't 'cha know although it's too bad he's so indecisive in battle; and, **Ensign William Matthews**.

Teresa Moreno, a.k.a., La Ajuga (The Needle), comes back into Richard's life with a little something extra named **Antonia** and earns the enmity of Hakeswill. In the sack of Badajoz, Sharpe and Harper rescue **Isabella** from a rape.

Lieutenant Colonel the Honorable William Lawford is only here briefly. **Major Forrest** and **Captain Leroy** are still here with the South Essex.

Major Michael Hogan is the head of Wellington's Intelligence services and Sharpe's friend. **Lieutenant Robert Knowles** is now a captain in a Fusilier Battalion; he leads by thinking of what Sharpe would do. **General Black Bob Crauford** bites it. **Colonel Fletcher** is the Chief Engineer.

Arthur Wellesley is now Viscount Wellington and the General Marshal of Portugal's army and commander

of the British forces in Portugal.

The Cover and Title

This must be the ugliest cover in the series. A black banner proclaims the author while the rest is a cream background with pen-and-ink sketches of a line of soldiers with fixed bayonets charging right behind Captain Sharpe with his sword in hand. There's a pastel [the media, not the colors] rendering in color of the smoke and fire of battle behind them.

The title rejoices in *Sharpe's Company* when he regains his men.

Kitty Jay says

Bold, Professional, Ruthless – Hero and Man of Action.

One day, I will have that printed on business cards. Until then, I am content to read about the exploits of Richard Sharpe, an officer brought up from the ranks, who fights as a rifleman in the Napoleonic Wars. *Sharpe's Company* finds Captain Sharpe being demoted to Lieutenant thanks to bureaucrats disapproving of his gazettement. Frustrated by an old enemy's arrival and with hurt pride, Sharpe turns his sights to Badajoz and the opportunity to lead a Forlorn Hope against the walls, securing his captaincy and proving his skill as a soldier.

Probably my favorite after *Sharpe's Eagle*, *Company* stands out for several reasons: the first is that we meet Sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill, a loathsome creature and villain who opposed Sharpe earlier in the India prequels. I have heard that Cornwell admitted he had a hard time creating a villain in equal to Hakeswill, and it's evident in the crop of devious and diabolical enemies Sharpe faces: Loup, the ruthless Frenchman; Simmerson, a useless and cowardly political enemy; and others who have come and gone. Hakeswill is a marvel; it seems amazing that a fictional creation can inspire so much blood-boiling rage, but Hakeswill manages it with every twitch and cackle. He's in fine form in *Company*, rotting the battalion from within, attempting to murder Sharpe, and persecuting the genial Harper.

The other reason it stands out is in the sheer scale of the book. Old friends, like the loyal and hero-worshipping Robert Knowles and the laconic American Leroy, rub shoulders with the new, like the affably drunk leech Lieutenant Harry Price. Hogan, of course, is there, along with many others. And the siege itself is bloody and dangerous and horrendous. Of all the battles and sieges, Badajoz stands out as one of the most terrible. Cornwell describes bodies stacked high in a ditch, of fighting through the grasping hands of the wounded, the sheer scale of the damage taken in the siege. Its descriptions are terrifying and terrible.

It is, also, a turning point for the philandering Sharpe – though I won't spoil why.

Savvy readers might notice a few inconsistencies sprinkled throughout. They are, for the most part, minor, and an almost unavoidable side effect of writing a chronological series out of order. Some readers may have picked up in an earlier book when Sharpe claims to have never met Daddy Hill, despite talking with him a book previous. These are much the same. The matter and manner of Sharpe's flogging are not in line with the story given in the India trilogy, but mistakes can be forgiven (though not editors).

Whether taken by itself or in the series, however, *Sharpe's Company* is one of the more finely written, the most triumphant and bloodthirsty, and one of the best of the Sharpe series.

Rob Trans says

This book is one of the better entries in the series. I would give it a high 4. Sharpe suffers several setbacks and some notable successes in this novel. He loses his captaincy because his gazette is not approved, he loses command of the Light Company, his mentor and battalion commander is badly wounded and replaced by someone who doesn't believe officers risen from the ranks can do anything but administrative work, and an old nemesis returns (Sgt. Hakeswill). He does reunite with Teresa Moreno and he learns he has a daughter, Antonia.

The story is set in the first 2/3rds of 1812 with the main focus being the Siege of Badajoz during the Peninsular War. This is one of the two invasion routes from Portugal into Spain. The actual attack on the fortress city is pretty engaging. Sharpe tries to be assigned as leader of the "Forlorn Hope," the first attackers into the breach, where he would be rewarded with a captaincy in the unlikely event he survived. He keeps disobeying orders to get into combat, shirking more mundane assignments. Hakeswill engineers the flogging of Patrick Harper and his demotion to private. He also attacks Moreno twice. Most things turn out ok.

It is a classic Sharpe story, displaying his reliance on his instincts, flare for tactics, and his characteristic bravery. The normal cast of characters is included.

Algernon says

Richard Sharpe and the Siege of Badajoz, Spring 1812.

I have been reading the Sharpe books in chronological order, and I believe my decision is both helping me understand the evolution of the main character better, and putting a brake on my enjoyment when I come across some earlier written books (I believe this is the third in publication order) that don't quite reach the high standards I expect from Bernard Cornwell. **Sharpe's Company** is both a bit simplistic, unsophisticated and an important turning point in the career of Sharpe during the Napoleonic Wars.

One criticism I have often felt like making about Richard Sharpe is that he is too much a Gary Stu, the embodiment of the perfect soldier, risen from the bottom of the military ladder through his courage, skill and a hefty dose of luck. In the opening pages of the present episode, Cornwell decided at last to give a little more depth to his hero, making Sharpe question his own bravery as he looks at the imposing stoneworks of the besieged cities of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. Does he have what it takes to lead a "Forlorn Hope" against a heavily defended breach in the walls, knowing that the chances of survival for the first troops in the attack are close to nil?

The decision is made for Sharpe when his temporary promotion to Captain is revoked by the bureaucrats in London. His pride demands nothing less than a quick reinstatement for bravery in battle, meaning that he **MUST** be there in the breach, leading the attack. An added aggravation is the return of his personal Nemesis from the time he served in the Indian Campaigns. Sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill comes back to the regiment together with a new batch of superior officers who know nothing of Sharpe and who despise him for his modest origins. Hakeswill may be the most repulsive and devious adversary in the whole of Sharpe's career, and this novel showcases the reasons why. Very soon Sharpe is accused unjustly of incompetence and his best friend, Sergeant Harper is whipped in front of the troops for thieving, mirroring an incident from the very first Sharpe book (**Sharpe's Tiger**)

Regarding the turning point in the career of Sharpe, the troubles with his Captaincy and with the ill will from Hakeswill, are only one side of the coin. On the other side, one of his former girlfriends returns to him, and brings news. (view spoiler)

Bernard Cornwell does one thing extremely well, and that is bringing to life famous battles by mixing historical detail with fictional characters. A quick check of online resources proves that most of the facts surrounding the bloody siege of the fortified city of Badajoz are accurate. The novel is one of the shortest in the series, but it makes in intensity what it lacks in bulk. Almost 5000 British soldiers died in the rushed and poorly prepared attack against the well defended French position, and Cornwell, through the eyes of Sharpe, puts the reader right in the middle of the carnage.

The aftermath of the battle though serves to remind me that the author doesn't need to claim the objectivity of the historian in the way he presents the tale, and it is pretty clear to me which team he plays for. Many British consider Badajoz one of the finest example of the bravery of their troops, but for the civilians in the city the so-called "liberators" are bunch of out-of-control drunkards, rapists and looters. Cornwell knows very well that the end of the siege saw almost as many civilians killed as soldiers trapped in the breach, and several times in the novel he tries to find excuses for the mob behaviour and to play down what by any definition of the word is a war crime. He couldn't leave out the details of the out of control mob that buned and pillaged the city for three days, while Wellington and his officers waited outside, but he repeatedly tries to argue that:

- everybody does it in war
- that the 'boys' were angry for the heavy losses they suffered
- that many of the common soldiers were criminals in England who found a way to escape prison by joining the army
- that the officers could do nothing to discipline their men

and so on ...

These arguments leave bitter aftertaste in my mouth, and taint all the glory that Richard Sharpe gains by his actions in the siege,

I will continue to read the Sharpe series, after all I'm almost two thirds through, but I don't think I will be tempted to keep the books for re-reads. I consider the Warlord and the Saxon books better examples of the talent of the author.

Steelwhisper says

Brian Turner says

Starts with Sharpe at Ciudad Rodrigo, which the English need to get through to Badajoz.

In between, he loses his captaincy of the South Essex regiment to a someone who bought the title, making him bitter about the situation.

Added to the mix, his old enemy Sergeant Hakeswill is also attached to the company.

The characters are all well written, Cornwell is in his element here (this is book 13 in the Sharpe series, and

they've had time to mature in his imagination).

It never comes across as lower vs upper class. Some of the higher-ups are written quite sympathetically, although there are also some written to show the injustice of buying a commission.

Hakeswill is a nasty piece of work, constantly working against Sharpe and trying to get rid of him.

The history is well researched and there are plenty of moments of suspense.

Deanne says

Sharpe has reached Badajoz at the start of this book in the series, it's January 1812. There's also the return of two characters from previous books, one I had hoped was dead but we're not that fortunate.

Sharpe is still waiting for confirmation of his captaincy, but it's a time where promotions could be bought and sold as well as earned, and Sharpe isn't a rich man, though seemingly a well known man.

Cornwell uses a blend of fact and fiction, with real characters popping up, though sometimes Sharpe takes the credit for others' actions which Cornwell explains at the end of each book.

Somnath Sengupta says

One of the more gripping Sharpe tales, the thrill quotient is enough to look over some of the flaws in this book.

I am reading the Sharpe series in chronological order and not in order of publication. This is the 13th Sharpe tale, though one of the earlier published books. Cornwell usually has a small story inside a big actual historical story approach. This works most of the times but in some Sharpe stories the small stories are just not interesting enough and often saved by Cornwell's absolute mastery of describing gritty battle scenes with historical accuracy.

Whether by design or because it is one of the early books, this one doesn't really have a small story. It's mostly about the actual siege of Badajoz and that's what makes this book a powerful and short-ish Sharpe story. It starts from one bloody siege and ends with a bloodier siege, one of the worst in the history of Napoleonic Wars. The plot even though it is simplistic does play to Cornwell's strengths.

Sharpe and Harper's friendship is already well established and I like how his relationship with Major Hogan is developing. Teresa Cortes is one of the very few interesting women in the Sharpe series, who doesn't come off as a cardboard character or an unnecessary plot prop. Hakeswill, the Joker to Sharpe's Batman makes a triumphant return in this book.

I have never been a fan of Cornwell's tendency to add greater emphasis to important points in finishing sentences of chapters. In Sharpe's Company the hoopla about his Company "going to Badajoz" is repeated with unnerving frequency. There are some continuity issues which can easily come when books are not published chronologically. There is no mention of Sharpe's attempts to previously kill Hakeswill, which is common in Sharpe's stories in India. Also Harper's Portuguese girl Joanna, after being mentioned in multiple books is gone without trace.

Brian V says

1812 British defeat French bastions at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, which are the 2 gateways in the mountains between Portugal and Spain. This allows Wellington access to attack Spain. Bloody, bloody battle and great losses at Badajos, where storm high, deep, thick walled fortress over water obstacles and steep ravine. Ladders up high walls, across moats, in the face of withering cannon and fires in pits. Quite remarkable.

To stem the Napoleonic tide, Sharpe must capture a fortress—where his wife and infant daughter are trapped—while protecting himself from a fellow officer determined to destroy him.

Anton says

I had seen the movie adaptation of Sharpe's Company before I read it and remember coming away from that one thinking Sharpe is actually a massive dickhead. In the novel, he's a lot more sympathetic yet still kind of a dick. Since Company is a lot smaller in scale and with fewer things going on than most Sharpe books, due to most of it just being the lads sitting around waiting for a siege to move on, there's more time for our hero to sit around with his angst, which is not Cornwell's strongest suit. All is forgiven, however, by the time the last third rolls around and treats the reader to a fucking horrific account of the assault on fortress Badajoz. It is Cornwell at his very best as he in gory detail paints the picture of thousands of men being torn to shreds or pounded to red mist by cannon fire. Like some Ypres-Artois shit.

Jason Koivu says

Rifleman risen from the ranks, Officer Richard Sharpe is the sort of ill-mannered, pissed off soldier to do any dirty work that needs doing. The Battle of Badajoz in 1812 Spain looks to be just the kind of dirty our hero was made for!

Most of the time, Sharpe is at odds with his commanding officers or anyone who ranks above him in anyway really, but this time he has a friend in Colonel Lawford. Of course, Lawford immediately dies. That's how Cornwell rolls. Get used to it. Nothing is made easy for Sharpe and having too many friends, especially influential ones, is too great an asset for a main character meant to be consistently shat upon.

And as if losing Lawford isn't enough, an old enemy returns to haunt Sharpe's every waking hour. This guy is the sort of evil you love to hate and is one of my favorite characters in the whole series.

AND AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, Sharpe must also defend his woman (I say "his woman" because this is just that kind of macho. But fear not, my femies, Teresa's one tough cookie). Cornwell really loves to pile it on, doesn't he? Sheesh!

Don't be deceived by my lackluster 3 star rating. I do love these books. Or perhaps I should say that I have a great fondness for them. I've read books in the series prior to this one, which I would rate 3 stars, yet I keep on reading these things. They're just flat out fun!

Carol Storm says

One of the best of the early SHARPE books -- Patrick Harper gets flogged, Sharpe loses his company, and Obadiah Hakeswell spends a lot of time talking into his hat.

Daniel Maloney says

As much as I enjoy this book series as something of a guilty pleasure, I can't say I was overly enthralled by this installment. A lot less character progression in this one, and a whole lot of dumb luck rather than the clever soldiering Sharpe's known for and that seemed a little too convenient for my liking. Sharpe's Dumb Luck.

Also, the whole thing with Hakeswill being far too evil of an antagonist to be taken seriously culminating in the "mummy-shako" of all things? Sharpe's Mummy Shako.

Additionally, the abundance of staccato one word sentences. Of. Gravitass. Common. To. Cornwell's. Novels. Was. A. Little. Overdone. I. Think. Sharpe's Staccato.

Short of the detailed and properly uncensored accounts of British brutality upon reaching Badajoz, this was something of an infectiously page-turning disappointment. Sharpe's Disappointment.
