

VINEGAR HILL

Synopsis

By Kevin Hopgood

Following the failed Irish Rebellion of 1798 a cohort of Irishmen fled to exile in Paris. In 1803 the Emperor Napoleon formed this band of freedom fighters into the Irish Legion, who were to spearhead a planned invasion of Ireland. These young men, the United Irishmen, make the journey from being idealistic rebels fighting colonial oppression to being professional soldiers in Napoleon's army.

The catastrophic naval defeat at Trafalgar in 1805 meant the French backed invasion of Ireland was not to be. Once again, a generation of Irishmen found themselves fighting across Europe, for any cause but their own.

We focus on four main protagonists, Miles Bryne, William Lawless, Hugh Ware and John Tennent. The story of how Miles and the rest of the '98 generation were affected by the horrors they lived through in that fateful summer is told in flashbacks spread throughout the main arc of the story. We follow the trials and tribulations of Bryne and his comrades as they fight in Spain, Holland and Germany until their final battle in 1813 when the regiment is effectively destroyed on the banks of the Bobr River in Silesia by Russian cossacks.

It's a tale of bravery, resistance and a refusal to accept subjugation by an implacable and seemingly invincible foe, the British Empire.