

FIX BAYONETS!

A ROYAL WELCH FUSILIER AT WAR, 1796-1815

by Donald E. Graves

Fix Bayonets! is the story of a soldier and the famous regiment in which he served. Set against the background of the Napoleonic wars, the book records the true-life adventures of Thomas Pearson, a country parson's son, who was commissioned in the Royal Welch Fusiliers in 1796 and campaigned in Europe, North America and North Africa. Pearson fought in 15 major battles, countless minor actions, was wounded five times, received two battle-field promotions, was captured by an American privateer, and ended his career as a lieutenant-general. He saw combat in jungles, deserts, mountains and on the oceans; he fought against the French, Danes, Poles and Americans; and he served alongside Spanish guerillas, Egyptian mamelukes and North American Mohawks.

Fix Bayonets! is a portrait of one of the most colourful periods in history as seen through the experiences of one soldier and his regiment. The reader following their adventures will learn about war, wine, women and song in a fascinating epoch and will meet a cast of famous and infamous characters, including King George III, Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Andrew Jackson, Winfield Scott, French Marshals Nicolas Soult and André Masséna, Lord Nelson and Major General William ("Auld Grog Willie") Stewart.

The centrepiece of *Fix Bayonets!* is a detailed, blow-by-blow account of the bloody battle of Albuera which took place in May 1811. For six hours, 60,000 British, French, German, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish soldiers fought

"The best way to characterize *Fix Bayonets!* is that it is the tale of a real-life Sharpe and of the exciting times in which he lived."

a bitter action under a downpour of rain, and when the last shots died away, 20,000 men lay dead or wounded in an area about the size of five modern football fields. Albuera was the high point of Pearson's combat career – he went into it as the junior major in his brigade and came out as the brigade commander because he was the only officer above the rank of captain still on his feet. The detailed account of this famous action, written by an author with an international reputation as a master of battlefield narratives, is based on new sources and is the most comprehensive account of this famous engagement yet to see print.

Fix Bayonets! will be of interest to Canadian and American readers because it contains detailed accounts of the War of 1812 battles of Crysler's Farm, Chippawa, Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie. Thomas Pearson fought in them all (and was wounded in two). In doing so, he not only taught young General Winfield Scott how to conduct a delaying action but came to have a high regard for his Yankee enemies, describing them as "bravest men I have ever seen" – high praise from a veteran soldier who had fought against some of the toughest armies of the time.

Fix Bayonets! will appeal to those interested in Napoleonic military history, including the War of 1812, musket-period tactics, as well as the general reader who likes a "good read" that is well written and well documented.



DONALD E. GRAVES
AUTHOR OF WHERE RIGHT AND GLORY LEAD!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donald E. Graves, one of Canada's best known and respected military historians, is the author, co-author or editor of 16 full-length books dealing with the War of 1812 and the Second World War. He has been called "the master of the battlefield narrative" and his studies of the battles of Lundy's Lane (*Where Right and Glory Lead!*) and Crysler's Farm (*Field of Glory*) have become established classics of musket-period tactical warfare. His history of the South Alberta Regiment was praised by a reviewer as "one of the finest unit histories ever published" and is regarded as a standard work on Commonwealth armour and tactics in the latter years of the Second World War.

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