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978-0-521-80783-8 - Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755–1763

Stephen Brumwell

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Redcoats

Recent scholarship has highlighted the significance of the Seven Years War for the destiny of Britain's Atlantic empire. This major study offers an important new perspective through a vivid and scholarly account of the regular troops at the sharp end of that conflict's bloody and decisive American campaigns. Fresh sources are employed to challenge enduring stereotypes regarding both the social composition and military prowess of the 'redcoats'. The book shows how the humble soldiers who fought from Nova Scotia to Cuba developed a powerful *esprit de corps* that equipped them to defy savage discipline in defence of their 'rights'. It traces the evolution of Britain's 'American Army' from a feeble, conservative and discredited organisation into a tough, flexible and innovative force whose victories ultimately won the respect of colonial Americans. By providing a voice for these neglected shock-troops of empire, *Redcoats* adds flesh and blood to Georgian Britain's 'sinews of power'.

A former newspaper journalist, Stephen Brumwell earned his Ph.D. in History from the University of Leeds in 1998. He is the author of several scholarly articles and co-author of *Cassell's Companion to 18th Century Britain* (Cassell: London, 2001). Dr Brumwell currently works as a freelance writer in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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For Mum and Dad

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Acknowledgements

This book stems from a deep-rooted interest in the redcoats and their experience of American warfare during the mid-eighteenth century. That fascination began some thirty years ago when the BBC televised an adaptation of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Although lacking a Hollywood-style budget, this wonderfully atmospheric and menacing production prompted much whooping and wielding of wooden tomahawks as school-boy gangs re-enacted pivotal scenes across Britain's wastelands. By an uncanny coincidence, at much the same time the young persons' magazine *Look and Learn* devoted its back page to an equally evocative series on the exploits of 'Rogers' Rangers': written and illustrated by Ronald Embleton, each eagerly awaited installment heightened my curiosity about the 'French and Indian War' and those who waged it. A growing interest in the Georgian army was bolstered when, as a thirteen-year-old, I first read John Prebble's *Culloden* (London, 1961): this gripping and compassionate account of the bloody confrontation that ended the last Jacobite rebellion also demonstrated the possibility of viewing the past through the eyes of even the most humble protagonists. Although my exposure to higher education was long postponed, these early influences endured: many years later, when I was granted the opportunity to undertake postgraduate study, my research proposal was never in doubt.

In the course of researching and writing my doctoral dissertation, 'The British Soldier in the Americas, 1755–1763' (University of Leeds, 1998), and the book that evolved from it, I received assistance from many quarters. In the first instance, the project would not have been feasible without funding from the British Academy; I remain extremely grateful to that body for the chance to pursue my studies. In addition, a generous grant from the Henry E. Huntington Library at San Marino made it possible to conduct extensive research among that institution's manuscript collections. The courteous and prompt assistance I received from the Huntington's staff was typical of that encountered elsewhere; however, a particular mention should be made of the Public Record Office at Kew, and the Scottish Record Office (now the National Archives of Scotland) in Edinburgh, where much of my archival research was conducted.

Work upon published primary sources was largely undertaken within the Brotherton Library at Leeds, an experience that has left me in no doubt

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of the excellence of that institution's holdings: modern history specialist Neil Plummer and the staff of the Special Collections deserve thanks for their efforts on my behalf. At the School of History, University of Leeds, I owe a particular debt to John Childs, the supervisor of my postgraduate research, and to the former Chairman, John Morison. The two anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press gave guidance that proved crucial as I struggled to reshape my doctoral dissertation into a book; whilst I have not always heeded their advice, I remain very grateful for it. I am also obliged to those scholars who expressed an interest in my researches and who took the trouble to comment upon my findings. I would like to thank the following: Bill Speck, Stephen Conway, John Gooch, Pete Edwards, John Houlding, Patrick Bell, Jeremy Black, Edward Spiers, Hugh Cecil, Alan Murray and Andrew Mackillop. In addition, I much appreciated the encouragement given by Brian R. Sullivan, Julie Flavell and Jack Pole. I also wish to acknowledge the generosity with which Dr Houlding, Charles E. Brodine Jr and Gerry Orvis shared the results of their own researches.

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The Duke of Wellington once described the Battle of Waterloo as 'hard pounding': his words could equally well be applied to some of the more gruelling aspects of protracted research projects. For me, the pounding would have been all the harder without the convivial company of friends on both sides of the Atlantic: much that appears in these pages was first discussed informally over a pint or two with Craig Gibson, John Finlayson, Catherine Sladen, Robin Shackleton, Matt Spring and Tim

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Finally I would like to make a special mention of my parents. As a history-obsessed youngster I was very lucky in possessing a father and mother willing to tolerate and even encourage this trait: indeed, barely a weekend of my childhood passed without a family excursion to some castle or other historic site prompted by my persistent pleading. The interest in the past that my parents kindled has never left me: I would therefore like to dedicate this book to them with affection and gratitude.

Note: Unless specified otherwise, all quotations retain their original spelling and punctuation; editorial insertions are placed within square brackets. Underlined passages in manuscripts are here indicated by italics. The army rank given to individuals reflects that relevant at the time of the incident concerned or quotation cited. The term ‘rank and file’ is used throughout in its mid-eighteenth century sense to denote private soldiers and corporals; sergeants and drummers were classed as non-commissioned officers.

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AB	Abercromby Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino
Add. MSS	Additional Manuscripts, British Library, London
ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Record Office, Kew
BFTM	<i>Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum</i>
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
CHR	<i>Canadian Historical Review</i>
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone
CO	Colonial Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew
DCB	<i>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
GCM	General Court Martial
GD	Gifts and Deposits, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
HMC	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission, Reports</i>
JSAHR	<i>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</i>
LO	Loudoun Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino
MM	<i>Mariner's Mirror</i>
MVHR	<i>Mississippi Valley Historical Review</i>
MSS	Manuscripts
NAM	National Army Museum, Chelsea
NYCD	<i>Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York</i>
NYHSC	<i>New-York Historical Society, Collections</i>
PMHB	<i>Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography</i>
RH	Register House Series (microfilms), National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
WMQ	<i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> (Third Series)
WPHM	<i>Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine</i>
WO	War Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew