



# **A History of the British Army - Vol. IV - Part Two (1789-1801)**

*Hon Sir John William Fortescue*

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Sir John Fortescue holds a pre-eminent place amongst British military historians, his enduring fame and legacy resting mainly on his life's work "The History of the British Army", issued in 20 volumes, which took him some 30 years to complete. In scope and breadth it is such that no modern scholar has attempted to cover such a large and diverse subject in its entirety; but Sir John did so and with aplomb, leading to a readable and comprehensive study.

According to Professor Emeritus of Military History at King's College, Brian Bond, the work was "the product of indefatigable research in original documents, a determination to present a clear, accurate, and readable narrative of military operations, and a close personal knowledge of the battlefields, which enabled him to elucidate his account with excellent maps. Most important, however, was his motivation: namely, a lifelong affection for the old, long-service, pre-Cardwell army, the spirit of the regiments of which it largely consisted, and the value of its traditions to the nation. An important part of his task was to distil and inculcate these soldierly virtues which, in his conservative view, contrasted sharply with the unedifying character of politicians who habitually meddled in military matters." ODNB.

This fourth volume covers the period from 1789 to 1801; as the tocsins of the French Revolution rang around the European continent their effects would lead to almost unceasing warfare for the next twenty years. During the Revolutionary Wars, the British Army would mature during the campaigns of the First Coalition against France always giving a good account of themselves, but their small number meant that the course of the campaign would not lead to victory. The effectiveness of the British Army in sea-borne assaults on French possessions across the world, would lead to much success but also bitter grumbling of Britain's coalition partners.

TIMES.—"We are witnessing the birth of a military classic which is, and will be for some generations to come, without a peer in the subject to which it relates. The debt which the British Army owes to the writer of this moving chronicle of its great achievements, its grandeurs, and its miseries can only be repaid if every member of the Army endeavours to assimilate for himself, and for the profit of his country, Mr. Fortescue's admirable and most instructive pages."

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