

Gordon K. Jones, *Defending the Inland Shores: Newfoundland in the War of 1812*. Markham, ON, 2016. Pp. 172.

The subtitle of Gordon Jones's book is somewhat misleading. Instead of providing his readers with a history of the colony of Newfoundland during the War of 1812, Jones instead seeks to chronicle the service of the men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, one of the two regiments of the Canadian Army still in existence that can trace its lineage as a regiment back to that conflict. Originally known as the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Foot, it was first established in 1795 as a local defence unit and was disbanded in 1802 with the Peace of Amiens, only to be reestablished as the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry the following year. With "local defense" defined as anywhere in British North America, the regiment was stationed outside of Newfoundland starting in 1807, and was based in Quebec City at the start of 1812.

When the war came the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles did not fight it as a unit. With tensions mounting in May 1812, Major General Sir Isaac Brock, the commander of British forces in North America, decided to use the regiment to reinforce British positions across the region. As a result, 367 of its officers and men were redeployed to several points throughout Upper Canada, where they saw combat in many of the key battles across the region. Jones describes each of these engagements in a series of short chapters that cover everything from the battles of Ogdensberg, Detroit, Frenchtown/Raisin River, York, Fort George, and Lake Erie, to the smaller skirmishes in between. Through them he demonstrates the considerable variety of roles these men played in the war, which ranged from garrison duty to employment as marines on board the warships on the Great Lakes. Jones concludes his coverage of each of these clashes by listing the names of each member of the regiment recorded as falling in combat, which stands as the ultimate testament of the service they performed.

What stands out most in Jones's book is the author's passion for his subject. His enthusiasm is evident on every page, as is his esteem for the regiment and the officers and men who served in it. Yet this zeal is not enough to compensate for the numerous flaws in his work, the foremost being the concept itself. Though a regimental history, Jones leaves out many important aspects of its service, such as the details about its training, organization, or its personnel. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that the Newfoundlanders themselves

left little in the way of personal accounts or other documentation of their service, giving him scant detail to work with. Other books about the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during this era addressed this problem by adopting a broader focus on their history, allowing them to draw upon a wider range of material or at least gloss over the gaps in the record.¹ By contrast, Jones's approach brings these gaps into sharp relief.

In the absence of these details Jones focuses instead on the battles in which the men fought. Yet here his documentation problem is compounded by a new one, which is that the regiment did not serve together but was scattered throughout Upper Canada by Brock. Because of this, Jones's book becomes less the history of a single group of men in the war and more of a series of descriptions of the engagements themselves. Moreover, the Royal Newfoundlanders usually made up only a fraction of the British forces that fought in these battles, and are subsumed into the whole. Pages go by without even a mention of the Royal Newfoundlanders, and when the regiment's name does appear in the text it is often as a perfunctory reference rather than because any of its members did something distinctive from the other British troops. Jones's penultimate chapter, which recounts the service of Andrew Bulger, only underscores this problem: as the most distinguished member of the regiment and the author of an autobiographical account of his service, his distinctiveness stands in stark contrast to the near-anonymity in which his fellow Newfoundlanders served, with most of their names known only through the final sacrifice they made.

It is unfortunate that Jones was unable to do more to give his subject the treatment he felt it deserved. His book is a true labour of love, one that seeks to honor the men who served loyally and fought bravely in the war. But in the end it stands best as an example of an author's intentions exceeding his resources, resulting in a book that is little more than a series of potted descriptions of battles that have been better covered by other historians. In his introduction, Jones notes that new information is being uncovered about the war every

¹ The others are Gerald W. L. Nicholson's *The Fighting Newfoundlander* (St. John's, Nfld.: Government of Newfoundland, 1964), Bernard D. Fardy's *Before Beaumont Hamel: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment 1795-1815* (St. John's, Nfld.: Creative Publishers, 1995), and Rodney T. Lee's *A Directory of the Officers and Men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, 1795-1816* (Guelph, Ont.: R.T. Lee, 2011).

day. His book demonstrates how much more remains to be discovered about the Royal Newfoundlanders before the book about the service in the War of 1812 can truly be written.

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