



Rifles: Six Years with Wellington's Legendary Sharpshooters

Mark Urban

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As part of the Light Division created to act as the advance guard of Wellington's army, the 95th Rifles are the first into battle and the last out. Fighting and thieving their way across Europe, they are clearly no ordinary troops. The 95th are in fact the first British soldiers to take aim at their targets, to take cover when being shot at, to move tactically by fire and manoeuvre. And by the end of the six-year campaign they have not only proved themselves the toughest fighters in the army, they have also - at huge personal cost - created the modern notion of the infantryman.

In an exhilarating work of narrative military history, Mark Urban traces the story of the 95th Rifles, the toughest and deadliest sharpshooters of Wellington's Army.

'If you like Sharpe, then this book is a must, your Christmas present solved.' Bernard Cornwell, *Daily Mail*

'Urban writes history the way it should be written, alive and exciting.' Andy McNab

Rifles: Six Years with Wellington's Legendary Sharpshooters Details

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From Reader Review Rifles: Six Years with Wellington's Legendary Sharpshooters for online ebook

Tony Rothwell says

Brilliant book about the Rifle brigade, who used rifled muskets which could hit a target at over 300 yards. A non rifled musket could miss at 50 yards! The author had an amazing amount of contemporary material to call on.

The books describes the life of a soldier in the Rifle Brigade throughout the Peninsular War of 1809 to 1814. Life in UK must have been awful to make people put up with the conditions.

It once again confirms my opinion that Napoleon was the most despicable tyrant, admittedly much beloved by those around him, who spread death and destruction throughout Europe.

John Gordon says

This is a fascinating work of narrative history which follows the famous 95th Rifles through their campaigns in Portugal, Spain and France; culminating with the 100 days campaign and Waterloo. The author manages to weave many a personal story into the book along with accounts of the campaigns, weaponry, tactics, supply, day to day life, hospitalisation, discipline and desertion. Due credit is also given to the other two famous regiments in the Light Brigade (43rd and 52nd), all of whom were at the sharp end of many tough engagements with the French. That the 95th Rifles is a famous regiment is beyond doubt, their accomplishments under arms are nothing short of remarkable. Fans of the Sharpe books or TV series will recognise the Green Jackets, this book provides a historical account which is much more informative and just as entertaining as those works. I recommend this book to any one with an interest in the Peninsula War or military history in general.

R.E. Thomas says

Most readers will be familiar with the famous greenjackets of the 95th Rifle Regiment through Bernard Cornwell's "Sharpe's Rifles" series. This is ironic because, while Sharpe and his core followers are soldiers of the 95th Rifles, the 95th itself appears only in the very first novel and then the Waterloo installment. Therefore, this profile of the regiment should have an instant audience among fans of the popular Cornwell serial who are curious about the famed, hard-fighting outfit that lends Sharpe so much mystique, but appears very rarely in his adventures.

Mark Urban has not strayed very far from his previous work, "The Man Who Broke Napoleon's Codes," a profile of the Duke of Wellington's intelligence chief. In his history of the 95th, Urban details their participation in the campaigns of the Peninsular War of 1809-14, and then at the climactic battle of Waterloo. However, the 95th built its reputation in numerous engagements with the French stemming from outpost duty, vanguard and rearguard actions, raids, and the storming of fortresses. As an elite light infantry unit, they participated in most of the major battles of the Napoleonic British Army, but were never at the center of such set piece action. Paradoxically then, the Rifles saw considerable action without being front and center at

any famous battle.

That considerable action makes the book exciting to read, and Urban ably weaves a story of Napoleonic soldiering through the personal experiences of a wide cast of characters, ranging from lowly privates to the Light Brigade's (later Division's) founder and first commander Brigadier "Black Bob" Craufurd. Heroism, chivalry, and honor stand side-by-side with privation, shirking and floggings in Urban's honest storytelling.

In an afterword, Urban outlines the rise of several officers of the 95th (and the larger Light Division) into the ranks of the general officers, how they came to dominate the mid-19th Century Royal Army, and how the Rifles tactics lived on to permeate the tactics and methods of that Army. The 95th Rifle Regiment itself lives on in the Royal Army (along with the sharpshooters of the 60th Royal Americans) as HM's Greenjackets, and their adventures live and breath in the pages of Urban's excellent book.

Doug Dams says

If your a fan of the Bernard Cornwall's Sharpe series or the television series, you'll find this book really interesting. Mark Urban tells the stories of the 1st Battalion of the 95th Rifles through personal diaries and letters and historic research. Urban helps you to understand about the combat during the Napolanic wars. The 95th rifles developed many of the tactics of the modern infantrymen. Some of these men were real heroes. It is a good read.

casapazzo says

I occasionally wish for a "dramatis personae" list and some sort of organizational chart for all the different regiments, battallions, and companies, but otherwise a very readable, comprehensible coverage of the Peninsular wars.

Includes a lot of interesting and sometimes surprising societal/cultural tidbits in amongst all the battling, which really makes for the quality of the narrative.

William says

"Wellington's Rifles" is a well-written account of the 95th Regiment in the Napoleonic wars. The book achieves a solid balance between the detail required to cover the small scale battles this type of unit thrives in and the broader view that is required to pace the book through six years of campaigning. The use of six members of the unit as touchstones for the progression of the narrative works for the most part, but with the additional anecdotes found throughout the text this device may have been unnecessary. This volume also seems to keep reader more detached than was the case in "Fusiliers," but since I am not British and had not heard of the 95th before reading this book, it is possible I simply had less invested.

Jamie Ramsay says

An awe inspiring insight into the lives of the men who fought through Portugal all the way up to Toulouse and then again at Waterloo, reading about the camaraderie and bonds formed between these men from all walks of life and reading their words and following their stories gives a real insight to a unique era of history

'not the memoirs of cannon fodder, but of spirited individuals who, somehow made a difference to the tide of history'

Sam says

An interesting narrative history, one that follows specific figures and uses their own words from journals and books to paint a great picture of the period and what it was like to be in the newly formed 95th. Can be a little unclear sometimes and a general knowledge of the period may be a useful addition going in - you may find yourself Googling battles along the way.

If you're into military history you'll get a lot out of this book.

Rob Markley says

Not really for serious historical interest and I couldn't get into it as an adventure either. A great idea from Urban but I don't think he really pulled it off, although Sharp enthusiasts might take this a the next step???

Jeffrey says

Wellington's Rifles: Six Years to Waterloo with England's Legendary Rifles by Mark Urban delighted me. I have been fascinated with the Napoleonic wars of late and have been intrigued by the rifles since I read my first Sharpe novel (by Bernard Cornwell). This history is well researched, highly readable, and insightful. It is also only 290 pages of actual text so it can be a fairly quick read. I loved it.

Nathan says

A narrative history about the work of the 95th regiment of Rifles during the Napoleonic War. Urban tries to make it human by focussing on a few soldiers and officers, but the base material he has to work with enables him to only partially succeed in making the men three dimensional and real. But what it has succeeded at is giving me a quick narrative of the Peninsular War, which is the backdrop of the Sharpe books by Cornwall, which I will have a peak at next. 2/5

David Buchan says

Excellent warts and all history of the 95th Rifles from 1809 to 1815, covering the Peninsular campaign & Waterloo. Mark Urban examines the legend & discloses the levels of desertion/criminality covered up in other accounts without diminishing Rifle's reputation for innovative tactics & hard fighting. The disproportionate number of generals produced by the Light Division was solid evidence of the free thinking of skirmishers. A recommended read for any Napoleonic history buff.

Elliot says

Reading this book was a pleasure! The author balanced details of the campaigns and battles with the anecdotes of the men very well, which made this book read like a story. It follows the lives of many of the soldiers of the 95th (both enlisted soldiers and officers), and through this gives you a taste of what these men felt and experienced in their campaigns in Iberia.

The plates are good and include original maps (drawn by a member of the 95th) and some nice paintings and portraits. Overall, the design of the book is very pleasing.

If you're interested in the Peninsular War, or have read Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe's books, then I think you'll enjoy this excellent book.

Des Pemberton says

Having just got passed Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe's Rifles, I thought I'd read Mark Urban's Rifles and see what the truth was. Well, I found the facts more interesting and enthralling than the fiction. I get the impression that the fictional Richard Sharpe is kept away from fighting with the Rifles; if he had stayed with them he would've seen more action and found his fellow officers more accommodating in real life.

The 95th of Foot was a very important evolutionary step for the British Army, and interesting to note that the French still hadn't learnt the lessons by the time they committed their troops during the Great War.

Shuhaha says

A great telling of the well-storied 95th rifles, a British light division of the Peninsula war who took the teachings of the American Revolutionary War tactics to Europe. Accurate rifle fire from cover, but with the same officer politicking of the British army.

The book tries to tell this history by picking a few main characters and treating it more like a story. Although some audiences may have enjoyed this style better, I found myself wanting for more of the full story at points. There already exists multiple accounts of this group in story-form.

