

Sir Thomas Picton

British General



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758 -1815

Unconventional and uncouth, Thomas Picton was one of the best of the senior officers working with the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsula.

A life-long soldier, Picton fought in the American War of Independence, served in the West Indies and eventually became Governor of Trinidad in 1801.

His style of leadership was unpopular and he resigned only to find himself facing charges of allowing a woman to be tortured.

Cleared of wrong doing, Picton became a major-general and went to Walcheren, but suffered health problems while Governor of Flushing and returned to Wales.

His next military assignment was to join Wellington in the Peninsula where he proved himself time and again as commander of the 3rd "Fighting" Division.

At Fuentes de Onoro, Badajoz and Vitoria he won admiration for his courage, if not his manners.

Wellington described him as "a rough-mouthed devil", but one in which he had supreme confidence.

In 1813 he was knighted and promoted to lieutenant-general. Joining Wellington again in 1815, he led the 5th Division at Quatre Bras and was wounded during the battle.

Fearing it would mean his being replaced, Picton hid the fact he had been injured and so lined up at Waterloo two days later.

It was a fatal decision, as he was shot through the head and died while leading his men forward.

Famed for his roughness and unusual dress style - a shabby greatcoat and round hat being favourites - he even wore a nightcap during the battle at Bussaco.