



Like Wolves on the Fold: The Defence of Rorke's Drift

Mike Snook

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Wednesday 22 January 1879 was one of the most dramatic days in the annals of military history. In the morning, a modern British army was swept aside by the onset of a seemingly unstoppable Zulu host at Isandlwana. Nearby, at a remote border outpost on the Buffalo River, a single company of the 24th Regiment and a few dozen recuperating hospital patients were passing another hot, monotonous day. News of the disaster across the river came like a bolt from the blue. Retreat was not an option. It seemed certain that the Rorke's Drift detachment would share the terrible fate of their comrades. Following on from *How Can Man Die Better*, Colonel Snook brings the insights of a military professional to bear in this strikingly original account. It is an extraordinary tale a victory largely achieved by the sheer bloody-mindedness in adversity of the British infantryman, fighting at the remarkable odds of over thirty to one. The heroics of all eleven VC winners are recounted in detail, and we are offered new insights into how the Zulu attack unfolded and how 150 men achieved their improbable victory. The author describes the remainder of the war, from the recovery of the lost Queen's Colour of the 24th to the climactic charge of the 17th Lancers at Ulundi. We return to Isandlwana to consider culpability, and learn of the often tragic fates of many of the war's participants. *Like Wolves* is a remarkable work, and the author's unbridled respect for the fighting qualities of British soldier and his abiding affection for the Zulu people shines through.

Like Wolves on the Fold: The Defence of Rorke's Drift Details

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Steven says

This book is a detailed discussion of what happened in Zululand. Movies have been made, and books written about this event, but in my mind, this is the definitive source.

Lt. Col Snook was actually with the impacted Regiment, so he was able to review many source documents. He presents these with detailed maps, sketches and artwork. It's a tremendous read. He's written one other book, How Can Man Die Better? about the slaughter at Isandlwana. I've not read this one yet, but want to.

You know how when you watch a post-game interview with a sports player (doesn't matter what sport) they say all the trite clichés- "We went out and gave 110%" blah blah blah? Lately I've noticed that this trend has extended into all fields, example: "We know you're giving 110%, but we're gonna ask you to give 120%!" Well, what these men did at Rorke's drift is a powerful illustration of what grit, wits, and pure gumption can attain. They didn't sit around talking about how much they were going to give, or how they could contribute to the team's shared goals: They dug in and commenced the grim work of defense.

Seems to me in modern times, we talk about it. But these men? They lived it. It's a true story of winning against overwhelming odds. While I still like heartwarming tales, Miracle comes to mind (great film) this story is a quantum leap in bravery.

Ian Hallam says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book which is written with clear incite & authority, I've seen both Zulu Dawn & Zulu but it was good to read the true story from an unbiased perspective.

What I particularly liked is that after recounting the defence of Rorke's Drift the author then went on to recount what happened to the major players in the defence. I also liked the fact the author gives a very comprehensive guide should you wish to visit the battlefields, along with advice on the precautions a traveller should take in the areas visited so that they stay safe.

John B. says

Absolute breathtakingly best book on the Battle of Rorke's drift, immortalized in the motion picture ZULU.

Ashton Reynolds says

This book was a great depiction of the fight at Rorke's Drift during the Zulu War. Snook conclusions are based on evidence, and his interpretations are well thought out and insightful. This book also clears up some

misperceptions that are often held about some of the players in the defense of Rorke's Drift (such as Hook, who was not a drunk [as depicted in the movie, Zulu] and in fact was quite a good man).

Snook finishes his book by taking a final look at the massacre at Isandwala. While it was readable and interesting, it was very apparent that in order to fully appreciate this section of the book you would need to have already read his previous book regarding Isandwala.

Billy says

Clearly a must-own book for any aficionado of the Anglo-Zulu Wars.

The mark down is for two reasons. First, the book is a clunky read as the author seemingly attempts to place every single individual associated with Rorke's Drift in his proper spot. This involves a great deal of hopping back and forth in space and time, which kills the flow of the story.

Second, the final chapter is a post-mortem on the preceding disaster at Isandlwana, which is somewhat akin to writing a book on the Battle of the Bulge and concluding it with an assessment of the Normandy landings. Interesting reading, but it seems as if the chapter more properly belongs in the author's first book, which is actually about Isandlwana.

Peter says

Very good and interesting book, liked the information of who defended and names of medal winners.

Peter says

I have a game about the Battle of Rorke's Drift, so I'd like to read this book first to learn some of the history before playing the game.

Jim Mcclanahan says

Anyone who has seen the 1964 movie, **Zulu** will be interested in this book. the author provides an exhaustive description of the real historical events of the battle of Rorke's Drift. Those who were led to believe that the Zulu sacrificed their soldiers to "count the enemy's guns" or that they saluted the British before departing will have those images dashed. And there was no fortuitous cattle stampede either. What is described in the book is a tale of ordinary men (on both sides) in extraordinary circumstances. Sometimes a little more detail than required, e.g., I really didn't need to know how many mealie bags were stacked or to what height. But the authenticity that emanates from this book more than makes up for any shortcomings.

Cropredy says

If you are reading this, you will fall into one of four camps:

- 1) You saw the movie *Zulu* and want to know more about the true story of Rorke's Drift.
- 2) You were inculcated (probably as a British schoolkid) in the glories of the Empire and the 11 VCs awarded at the battle but really don't know anything more and are curious.
- 3) You are interested in military history, know something about the Zulu War (perhaps from *The Washing of the Spears: A History of the Rise of the Zulu Nation Under Shaka and Its Fall in the Zulu War of 1879*) and want a thorough book-length treatment of Rorke's Drift.
- 4) You know nothing about Rorke's Drift

OK, first of all, if you are at all interested in the story, either before or after reading "Like Wolves on the Fold", go watch *Zulu*, a movie that made quite an impression on me when I was 12. The movie was made in 1964 but there is an anniversary Blu-Ray on Amazon for \$19.95.

Now, if you don't know anything about the Zulu War and Rorke's Drift, you might want to start with the author's first book, *How Can Man Die Better: The Secrets of Isandlwana Revealed* for the events leading up to Rorke's Drift earlier in the day when a British column was annihilated hence making the Rorke's Drift story even more amazing. Or, just take the annihilation as a given and pick up the action as the Rorke's Drift outpost learns of the disaster and sets out to take defensive measures.

Snook does a terrific job unfolding the battle minute-by-minute guided by modern day photographs of the station so you can appreciate the terrain and excellent maps for each stage of the battle (and I do mean excellent - right down to the mealie bag perimeter walls). Your visualization of the story is influenced by the movie if you've seen it. Snook takes pains to dispel some of the cinema's treatment of the battle but these are mere details. Since Snook was an infantry commander, he can tell the story from a soldier's point of view yet his writing style is that of a literate historian.

After the battle is over, Snook takes us back to Isandlwana and the field of dead British and colonial soldiers. If you know nothing of Isandlwana, this section is hard to follow as there are no maps (hence, either read about Isandlwana first or just accept the last chapter of *Like Wolves on the Fold* as is and satisfy your curiosity later).

I gave it 4 stars because I "knew how it ended". If you pick up the book with no prior knowledge it could be a 5 star book as the story is quite incredible.

George says

How do 120 men, many of them sick and injured, and few of them infantry, manage to do what 10 times as many tried and died earlier? Read the book and find out. One of the great defenses at all time. If you've seen the movie, you can see why the Welsh, and the English more vicariously, regard this action as one of the greatest moments in the history of the British army. And well they should. How would Americans feel if Crockett, Travis and Bowie not only survived the Alamo but won? There's little of the mythology of the battle in this book written by a present day Colonel of the same regiment. You won't find the Welsh and the

Zulu serenading each other as you did in the movie, but as in the movie, you will find a great deal of mutual respect for the bravery and skill of both sides. And you'll learn why the names of Bromhead, Chard and Hook, among others, remain as well known in Britain today as Crockett and Bowie do here.

Nathan says

For the fifth year in a row I've started with a history book about the Anglo-Zulu war of 1979. I'm getting quite used to it by now, so a lot of the material was not new to me. This was written as a sequel to Snook's book on Isandlwana, but it should have been all one volume, since he has some extra thoughts about that battle here as well. Not as good as his earlier one, since this fight is much better known and chronicled, leaving him with less to do. Rated PG for some war themes. 3/5

Ted says

Alas, there is no singing of "Men of Harlech" as the embattled band of the 24th Foot defends itself against thousands of Zulu warriors. Overall, an excellent account of one of the most glorious days in the history of the British Empire.

James Burns says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I saw the Movie Zulu the first time when I was about 7 or 8 and was so intrigued by the story, and I still read everything I Can about the Zulu history. At least 4000 or more. could be as many as 10000 Zulu,s against 130-150 British Officers and Men. After their victory at Isandlwana the Zulu's Attacked Rorke;s Drift. The battle at Rorke's Drift is text book study on Courage,Perserverance and Heroism. 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded in this battle alone, more would have been awarded except Brittish did not award the Victoria Cross posthmously. It is the highest award that could be awarded for Valor. The Zulu warrior was as courageous and as compitant as any soldier of the times. The Author was an officer in the Wales Regiment in the 1980 and has access to records and material from Regimental Historian. Tradition in the Brittish Army is treasured and very Important. GREAT BOOK

Susie Schroeder says

Superb account of the Defense of Rorke's Drift, with many original pictures I had never seen beofre

Robert says

I enjoyed this one quite a bit. Very detailed and well researched, while still exciting and readable- probably more of the first and less of the second than David Howarth's description of Waterloo, for comparison.

I did not read "How Can Man Die Better" first, and didn't really feel lost for that, but the last third or so of

the book does deal mostly with conclusions on blame and aftermath for the massacre at Isandlwana (the actual story of which is obviously not included in this book). I still found it interesting, but certainly it would have been more so if I'd read the books in order!
