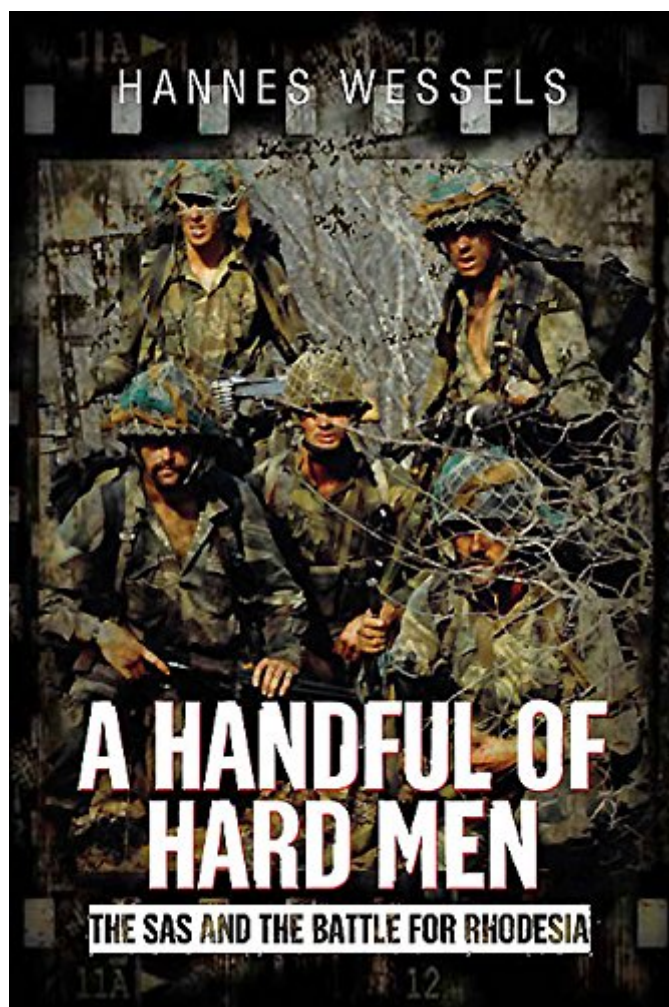


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A Handful Of Hard Men: The SAS And The Battle For Rhodesia



Synopsis

During the West's great transition into the post-Colonial age, the country of Rhodesia refused to succumb quietly, and throughout the 1970s fought back almost alone against Communist-supported elements that it did not believe would deliver proper governance. During this long war many heroes emerged, but none more skillful and courageous than Captain Darrell Watt of the Rhodesian SAS, who placed himself at the tip of the spear in the deadly battle to resist the forces of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. It is difficult to find another soldier's story to equal Watt's in terms of time spent on the field of battle and challenges faced. Even by the lofty standards of the SAS and Special Forces, one has to look far to find anyone who can match his record of resilience and valor in the face of such daunting odds and with resources so paltry. In the fight he showed himself to be a military maestro. A bush-lore genius, blessed with uncanny instincts and an unbridled determination to close with the enemy, he had no peers as a combat-tracker (and there was plenty of competition). But the Rhodesian theater was a fluid and volatile one in which he performed in almost every imaginable fighting role; as an airborne shock-trooper leading camp attacks, long range reconnaissance operator, covert urban operator, sniper, saboteur, seek-and-strike expert, and in the final stages as a key figure in mobilizing an allied army in neighboring Mozambique. After 12 years in the cauldron of war his cause slipped from beneath him, however, and Rhodesia gave way to Zimbabwe. When the guns went quiet Watt had won all his battles but lost the war. In this fascinating biography we learn that in his twilight years he is now concerned with saving wildlife on a continent where they are in continued danger, devoting himself to both the fauna and African people he has cared so deeply about.

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Customer Reviews

When writing a biography the writer establishes a time and back ground. This book does this well with insights into the machinations of Whitehall, the Whitehouse, Kremlin, Voortrekker Hoodgte and Beijing. All these seats of government played a part in the demise of Rhodesia becoming a one party communist orientated country. You will need to read the book to see how this plays out. Darrell Watts is a respected special forces operator and gives a deep insight into the methods and operations of C Squadron Special Air Services, later 1 SAS Rhodesia. To me the early days of the war from 1966 and the development of tracking by Alan Savory is very interesting. Watts pioneered this anti terror tool with the likes of Stretch Franklin and Andre Rabie. The SAS is known for the regiment's tough selection course. When one reads the operation reports of the individuals involved one sees why it was so tough. Men resorted to drinking their own urine and eating used teabags of external operations when the resupplies failed. They did this whilst being chased by superior numbers and behind enemy lines. I have a collection of over ten books about the Special Forces in Rhodesia and this is one I shan't be swopping or giving to the charity shop. It is a riveting read about proud brave men who overcame against all odds on the battle field with limited resources. Rhodesia was not lost on the battle field but due to political ineptitude. For those who served in C Squadron you dared and you won. In my opinion yours is a story of professional soldiering and this book goes a long way to dispel the myth that SAS men were not supermen. Rather they were selected and trained to a high level to become hard men who could endure, think on their feet and believe in themselves enough to win any firefight. I would recommend this book to any serious collector of Rhodesian Military History.

As an elderly American woman I am not usually into military stories. At the time the SAS was trying to save Rhodesia, I knew nothing about what was going on in Africa. However, this book was recommended to me and I could not put it down. How an accomplished and dedicated group of men could accomplish so much with so little still amazes me. Not only did they have to be watching their backs for military enemies, but often fighting in the African bush they also had to watch their backs,

fronts and sides watching for dangerous African wildlife that could kill them. The author did bring up the fact that prior to joining the military Darell Watt had grown up in the bush and was accustomed to wildlife. He is still helping to save wildlife today at Mushingashi Conservancy in Zambia. The thing that bothered me while reading the book, and still bothers me today, is that the UK and US didn't support the SAS as they should have, and as a result a corrupt dictator Robert Mugabe has been in charge of the country ever since. Had the UK and US been more supportive of the SAS, the entire continent of Africa might have been much better off today without all their corrupt leaders. Those in the SAS who fought so hard for their country are true heroes.

What a good book, excellent read, what gutsy blokes. It gives out lots of information that we did not know. Read it, you will not be disappointed. Well written too.

Very interesting reading, brings some little known facts out into the light. Leaves one with a bad taste in the mouth when it comes to politicians in general, and those of perfidious Albion in particular. Aluta Continua

This is one of the best books on Rhodesia and the Bush War I have read. It tells of the exploits of the Rhodesian SAS and in particular those of Darrell Watt, who seemed positively superhuman at times. It also details some of the political machinations that helped to undermine the Rhodesians in their fight against the communist terrorists. It is a book I am sure I will re-visit.

As an ex Rhodesian Soldier, Airman, and later involved in farm security in that Country, I found this to be a very good book, it shows how hard and selflessly a people will fight to protect their families and people from terrorism - glad I bought it !

I really enjoyed reading this book. It provided a different perspective on the war and corrected some historical narrative written by the victors. It was difficult to read in some ways because while I firmly believe in democratic rule (for all) the book is still tinged with colonialism. For me, I focused more on the bravery of the men who were outnumbered, outgunned but never outfought. In the end global politics (the cold war) and time was against them but they kicked the crap out of the Russian and Chinese backed terrorists, almost breaking the back of the Fascist dictator Mugabe, who unfortunately is still clinging to power.

A most interesting book for those interested in serious special forces operations. It covers what is now a barely-known 1970s war in which a tiny force of Rhodesian Special Air Service soldiers took on, and trounced, tens of thousands of insurgents trained and armed by the Soviet Union, China and Cuba and supported by virtually the entire Western world. Setting aside any feelings a reader might have about the rights and wrongs of a colonial remnant fighting to retain an unsustainable way of life, this book recounts a military epic. It is also a welcome change from the customary diet of special forces accounts of actions in Vietnam and the Middle East. Well written and structured, it is an excellent read, not to mention being a tour de force of what can be achieved in the face of terrible odds by a tiny number of highly skilled and totally committed soldiers.

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