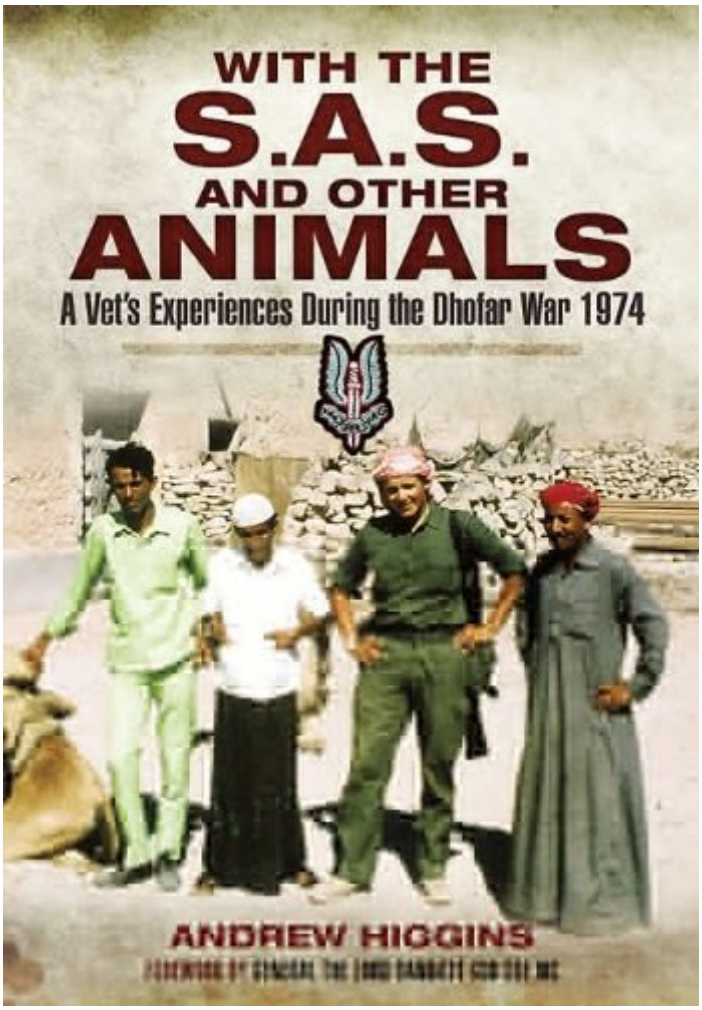
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With The SAS And Other Animals: A VetÃ¢â‚¬â„¢s Experiences During The Dhofar War 1974



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Synopsis

In 1970 at the height of the Cold War, the young Sandhurst-trained Sultan Qaboes of Oman, with secret British military backing, took on the communist rebels in a fierce but little known war. Along with regular British Army and Ã¢â ¬Ëœcontract Ã¢â ¬â„¢ officers, the SAS played a key role in this bitterly fought but ultimately successful campaign.The value of winning the Ã¢â ¬Ëœhearts and mindsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ of the local population was quickly recognized and this is where a select band of Royal Army Veterinary Corps officers came in. The local economy was a primitive one based on agriculture and the author, freshly qualified and, by his own admission, somewhat naÃƒÂ ve particularly in military matters, found himself solely responsible for the veterinary care of a territory the size of Hungary.Attached to D Squadron, 22 SAS, Andrew Higgins learnt how to respond to the Jebali peopleÃ¢â ¬â„¢s love and concern for the animals which provided their livelihood Ã¢â ¬â œ goats, camels, sheep, horses, cattle, even bears, hunting birds and pedigree hunting dogs.His firsthand experiences and anecdotes of life dealing with every level of Omani society from rulers to black slaves and their varied livestock make for wonderfully atmospheric and often amusing reading. In short, With the SAS and Other Animals is an unusual and potent mix of Special Forces action and veterinary experiences. Readers may well conclude that it really shouldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t have happened to a vet even in a desert war!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1970, the very young Sultan of Oman - who had been trained as an officer at Sandhurst, confronted the Communist rebels in his country and received some very secretive support from the British government. That support largely involved the SAS and other elite forces. I was a corporal serving with 22 SAS at that time and, whilst I knew nothing of the intimate details of operations so far away, I do recall wondering why a Veterinary Surgeon was attached to one of the operational squadrons. Well now I know!At a time when British Forces were failing to realise the importance of "winning the hearts and minds" of the local populace in Northern Ireland, that very concept of British troops not being hated by the people of Dhofar was instantly recognised and put into practise. Part of that recognition was an acceptance that the local people were poor and that their wealth was measured by how much cattle they owned. So important were those animals that a succession of officers from the RAVC (Royal Army Veterinary Corps) were attached to A Squadron 22 SAS as part of the overall military programme.After so many years, one of those young officers - Andrew Higgins, has finally put pen to paper to tell his incredible story from those days of an overlooked war. In an economy where animals were (and still are!) vitally important, he recounts his encounters with the camels, sheep and goats on the one side of the social scale before also including the pedigree horses, dogs, exotic birds and even bears and Hyenas which belonged to the Sultan.In this work, Higgins relives his first-hand experiences with every level of Omani society from the royal palace to the poorest people with their livestock alongside a potent mix of special forces military action. It is a fascinating and rather original mix which comes together very well in a work where the author simply wishes to tell his story.On finishing the book, I was left with two indelible thoughts. The first of these was how this book should be held up as a prime example of "HOW" to win those hearts and minds in any conflict - be it at home or abroad! The second was the irony of the time in question. British Vet James Wight wrote several part-fiction, part-factual accounts of his life as a Veterinary Surgeon under the name of James Herriot with the first being published in 1970. His more well known "All Creatures Great and Small" (which lent its name to a long-running TV series) was published in 1972. This book (with its own many amusing anecdotes) might so easily have been penned at the same time.Altogether an excellent read and one which adds another important piece to the overall jigsaw of history.NMBritish Army major (Retired)

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