



## The Horns of the Buffalo

*John Wilcox*

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## **The Horns of the Buffalo** John Wilcox

In 1879 the redcoats of the British Army are universally regarded as the finest fighting force in the world. Among them is Lieutenant Simon Fonthill, dispatched to South Africa with much to prove: for Colonel Covington, his former Commanding Officer, has slanderously branded him a coward.

In the Cape, tension is high. The Zulus, an independent nation of magnificently militant tribesmen, threaten the colonial government's vision of a united South Africa. And Simon has been chosen for a particularly dangerous mission: to travel deep into Zululand to discover the intentions of the king. Simon encounters violence and imprisonment before he is faced with his greatest challenge. Escaping from the massacre at the Battle of Isandlwana, he must warn the tiny garrison at Rorke's Drift of the threat posed by advancing Zulu impis. He has a chance to prove Covington a liar, but he may pay the ultimate price...

## **The Horns of the Buffalo Details**

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Author : John Wilcox

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# From Reader Review The Horns of the Buffalo for online ebook

## John says

A good read and a bit different take on the Zulu war. I will read more of Font hill and 352 in the future.

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## Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

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## Dimitri says

An everyman flawlessly entwined into the legendary twin battle of Islawanda and Rorke's Drift. These dramatic events don't need a deep embellishment and John Wilcox grasps this : the novel bends history far less to the demands of fiction as is common, which is neatly charted in his afterword. The greatest asset of its fictional characters is to look into the Zulu perspective even deeper than Stanley Baker's classic movie. The only criticism I can level at this book concerns the chapters leading up to Fonthill's deployment to the Cape. The casual mention of big events in history for the period 1865-such as the Crimean War, Reconstruction, the Great Game, P.M. Gladstone and the Russo-Turkish War could've used a little explanation. For those with an interest in technology, the dawn of electricity under Thomas A. Edison passes by as well. War correspondent for "the Morning Post" Alice, to my surprise, turned out to have a real-life inspiration present at the Commune of Paris and the first Anglo-Boer war, Frances Whitfield.

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## Nathan says

English officer and his amusing-yet-surprisingly-canny Celtic NCO sidekick fight the enemies of the crown and woo pretty women while fending off dastardly personal enemies of superior rank. Sounds familiar?

You betcha! This is a Sharpe clone.

And Wilcox is no Cornwell. At least, not yet. There are passages of quite good material here, but they are stuck between longer parts where Wilcox either takes too long to get anywhere (the court scene) or decides that the reader needs their hand held (the lengthy "these are te Zulus, and this is how they live and fight" info dump and the various "oh, superior officer, let me enlighten you about the state of the modern army" snippets).

That being said, it is not without promise, and the pace picks up somewhat about halfway through.

All in all, though, I think I'll wait until Wilcox has a bit more practice before I try again with him.

Rated M for frequent battle violence, brief nudity and moderate language. 2/5

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### **Ron Decaigny says**

A great start to an enjoyable series, OK it's not great literature, the characters and plot are somewhat formulaic, but come on, both the high and low water marks of the 19th Century British army, a little romance, a little humour, a little social intrigue and even some budding feminism. That's about all you could ask for. Rorkes Drift. nuff said.

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### **Derek Perumean says**

For some reason Rorke's Drift always fascinated me. This is historical fiction set at that battle. It reminded me a bit of the movie "Zulu" w/Michael Caine; and with the way somethings are written I'm willing to bet the author saw the movie, too. But he also did his homework and wrote a great book with good characters and a story line that will hold your attention. If you like Sharpe or Hornblower type of stories you'll like this one. The main character and his sidekick (there's always a sidekick) continue there adventures in 5 other books in the series and I highly recommend the first one.

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### **Sarah Allen says**

I re-read this book after around 10 years while on a recent trip to South Africa and it was a marvellous way of refreshing my memory in preparation for a battlefield tour of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. I love the Fonthill novels and this is an exceptionally good one and really sets the scene and the atmosphere for those terrible events.

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### **Nick says**

3.5

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### **Gary Wallis says**

This was a very good book. It`s like watching an old British movie. The characters are good and the story moves well. The battles are very well described..... I wouldn`t want to be a soldier at the battle of Isandlwana. I look forward to the next book..... I particularly like the main characters servant 352 Jenkins. His Welch attitude comes through admirably and is a good addition to the story.

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### **Lesley says**

No longer going to read

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## James says

When someone compares a character to Sharpe I am very sceptical. Such a comparison is often completely wrong, and by making the comparison to such a great character you lessen the new one. You no-longer judge him on his/her own merits, but on a comparison to Sharpe. Here is one of the few times such a comparison has not backfired, and is actually accurate. I can't believe I left this book unread on my shelf for four years or so, a pleasurable **Four Stars**. But as I have said before, maybe I just wasn't meant to read it until now. Either way, I am glad I have now read it.

### Plot: Four Stars

The immediate assumption upon comparison to Sharpe is that it is a military based book, and while certainly it is centred around the British army in SA and Zululand in particular, the main vibe I got off of this book was one where Simon Fonthill will not be a part of an army a la Sharpe, but a man who happens to be where the action is. In a period where the action of far flung and traipsing an army regiment/platoon/unit around the world is a far stretch to reality (whereas Sharpe in the Napoleonic wars was fed constant action), so Wilcox has created an army trained, skilled adventurer who will give us that Sharpe quality adventures in a latter period.

What I mean, and what this book does really well, is that Simon isn't constrained by the army. If he had been so constrained, it would have been a very boring book. Instead we get a great, kingdom spread spy mission of importance, mixed in with two great and momentous military engagements [by my local regiment as well!] and with your love interests, enemy - covington - and the usual character building events.

This was a great plot line, and I can't wait to see what Wilcox does with the rest of the series.

### Characters: Four Stars

What I loved most of all in this book was the constant questioning of the main character, Simon Fonthill. It wasn't like we knew he was skilled, brave or witty and no-one else did. He really seemed quite bland and a wimp, so he wasn't just proving himself to other characters, nor just to himself; he was proving himself to us the reader as well. In many ways he reminds me of Sharpe, but a younger, less assured version. It makes me think that he has great room for growth, more than most characters who turn up nearly formed and jump through a few hoops, and that as the series progresses we will see that inner core which is so well hidden, but still visible, blossom into a great military character.

Alice was also a revelation. It was quite a unique experience for me, in that most historical fiction that I read is written by men and as such tends to base itself around men. So having a female character, a strong one at that - so you feminists will be happy -, was a brilliant addition. She came across as intelligent, headstrong, brave and while I question who she slept with, she didn't do it because she was 'weak' and was whooped, it was a rational choice.

Of course, you can't mention this book without talking about 352 Jenkins. Yes, that's his name, 352 Jenkins. He becomes Simon's servant/assistant/friend/bodyguard/skilled person. He has a strong welsh brogue, sings, is a connoisseur of fine wine, is a master fighter and general cool guy. Oh, but he is a drunk.

Covington and Dunn are the two other characters worthy of mention, and both are done well and really come alive. You soon come to respect Dunn, hate Covington and see them as real people. Both giving a great insight into the attitudes of the time, and the sort of people you would meet.

Writing: Four Stars

Once again, the comparison to Sharpe here isn't far off. Wilcox is a skilled writer and he has crafted a well woven, intricate story that entertains well. It flows well and the dialogue is brilliantly done. This guy can write, and I can't wait to see what else he can produce in the future.

Overview: Four Stars

This is a hidden gem, a great novel that could be the start of a brilliant series. The plot was brilliant, the characters well written and the writing perfect. Add to that the fact that the heroes come from the Brecon area, from where I myself have sprung, meaning an instant connection and I have found a series that could fill the void left by no new Sharpe.

May Wilcox continue to write this well, and may his readership improve.

Have Fun Reading.

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### **Jonathon Laudinsky says**

1879, Lt. Simon Fonthill in South Africa fighting the Zulus. Fights at the battle of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. Horns of the Buffalo was a pretty good read. It's no Sharpe, and it kind of follows the same formula, Officer (Sharpe/Fonthill) loyal non-English NCO (Irish Harper/Welsh Jenkins) fights in historical battle. I would still recommend to historical fiction fans. Also check out "Flashman and the Tiger"

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