

A Review of *The Wolf of Kabul*

By Derek Clark

Six years into my retirement I decided that I needed a new hobby but it had to include reading. I cannot remember why I decided on wargaming especially after an unpleasant experience in the 1970's with a Don Featherstone book about Naval War Games, but I did.

After spending several hundred pounds on stuff that I have since either given away or stuffed into my loft I, only this year, settled on the type of game, the scale and the periods that I enjoy.

Having found those, I have been able to focus my reading and I have read some wonderful books. I normally read history books and my favourite subjects are Landscape history and Military history with a preference for events that happened in the UK, and particularly the Welsh Marches. I also like to read accounts of war by men of the 'other ranks'. Regrettably, much of the good writing of this type from the 19th Century on is, for obvious reasons, written by the officer class.

I also read novels for relaxation and particular favourites are of the detective, murder and mayhem genre. Jo Nesbo, George Pelecanos, Mark Billingham, Graham Hurley, Elmore Leonard, Caryl Freyer and Deon Meyer are recent or current enjoyments, and then we have the historical novelists. It is with those that I have focussed my reading to align with my war game periods of Dark Ages – particularly the 10th Century, the 12th and 13th Centuries of the Middle Ages and the NW Frontier.

There are plenty of novels for the first two periods but precious few in the third. It is there that I will start.

I know of only four authors dealing with the NW Frontier, and only one of those comes near my time of interest which is the 1920's and 30's.

The one author, Duncan McNeil (aka Philip McCutcheon), sets his books in the Afghan War of 1878 – 1880 and, I would suggest, they are intended for a juvenile audience. I read the first four and became increasingly alarmed that I was wasting what remains of my life. That said, he did, cover both man to man and column level of action. In fact, I might have stolen my own Simvastatin Moveable Column idea from him. :0)

Other than that you would be right to think that I was not impressed by these novels and instead of keeping them as reference material (my excuse for my library) they went to the charity shop.



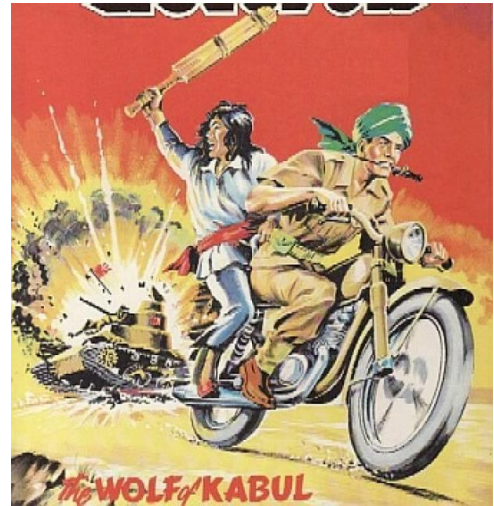
For a low strain read I prefer the illustrated adventures of one William Sampson aka The Wolf of Kabul and his trusty sidekick, Chung. The Wolf is an English officer armed only with two knives, which obviously debars him from being a gentleman, and he is an uncanny master of disguise. He can pass himself as a Pashtun, being fluent in that tricky tongue, despite his blue eyes. Chung is a Tibetan who owes a debt to the Wolf and has attached himself more firmly to his master than Arthur to The Tick (or a tick to Arthur).

Their adventures leave their native foe severely bamboozled, often poleaxed, but rarely dead as they romp from plot to plot in their gung-ho way. The action is always frenetic but is written in a series of 'cliff hangers' because the vagaries of the North West Frontier heliographic, telegraphic and postal service meant details could only emerge weekly.

The heroes gained a life of their own and fought even into the Second World War as comics rose, died and combined. The comic collections of *Wizard*, *Buddy*, and *Warlord*, the homes of the reporter's scribblings can now be found as dvd's in Fleabay and ebay at very reasonable prices. An App such as Comic Lover makes it readable on your iPad but readers for MS are often included on the dvd's. Place 'Warlord comics on DVD' (or Wizard or Buddy) in the search window and see what shows up.

For shrinking violets the stories are best read at home with the lights on. For myself, I read them on crowded buses and trains where the snorts, chortles and cackles I emit tend to clear the space around me as worried fellow travellers fall back. The occasional, guttural, "So sorry, master. Clicky-ba turned in my hand," delivered in cod Tibetan confirms their impression of my sanity. Hey, I like to be alone. I am a SOLO war gamer :0)

A very good read with great Skirmish war game and terrain inspiration potential: the Pashtuns are always leaping off cliffs onto people's backs, or missing them completely, so I assume they are rock dwellers in a very mountainous region.



Oops! I had meant to review *The Damascened Blade*, which I read especially, but no matter. If our editor invites me back I'll do that one next and then my favourite.

Thank you if you have read the piece what I have wrote this far.