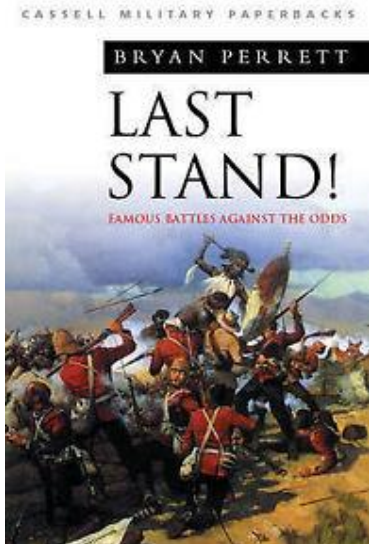


# **Last Stand**

## **By Bryan Perrett**

### **Review by Rob Morgan**

One of the more interesting forms of solo wargame with immense potential is the last stand, the final battle against the odds with, possibly, no hope of relief, nothing in support beyond what you start the action with. Remarkably often, the last-ditch fight can end in victory, or at least in survival, until promised or fortunate help arrives. Or, of course, the enemy gives up, and walks away. In the Cassell Military Paperback series, Bryan Perrett has compiled *Last Stand!* a series of 13 battles, sieges and encounters which he argues meet the criteria of being a last stand.



He begins with the Old Guard at Waterloo, which to my mind couldn't ever be considered anything more than a strange rearguard action. Then -- and all of these actions are illustrated with diagram or map -- he moves to the Alamo, one of the most astonishing of all last stands, militia and volunteers against a conscript army. I've seen this gamed frequently, and in several scales, but the inevitability of destruction is always there. A real last stand! The French Foreign Legion's action at Camerone in the Mexican War falls into a similar category, and interestingly I only ever remember seeing this played as a skirmish game with 54mm figures, a long time ago.

The next battle he chooses is Custer's debacle at the Little Big Horn. To my mind, another odd choice, but then, given Custer's mistakes it is.

The two Zulu Wars encounters, Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift, are two examples of very different last stands. Isandhlwana saw a number of company actions which are not infrequently gamed here in Wales, and which inevitably end in total defeat, while the defence of the mission hospital remains one of the remarkable achievements in military history. Eleven Victoria Crosses in one day.

The World War I choice of artillery actions, at Nery in 1914, is unusual. Most writers would, I suspect, take Kut-al-Amara as a better example, but an artillery action is different, easily gamed too, I think. For World War II, there are several

encounters, all worthy of inclusion, though none of the *OstFront* pockets or the 1940 encounters are included. Wake Atoll in 1941 has been gamed several times and companies like Ravenshorpe produced ranges of 2-25mm figures for the battle. While many will not know of the siege of Outpost Snipe during the Battle of Alamein. Nineteen 6pdr anti-tank guns on a small crest against a Panzer division and 88s, a fight on a par with Rorke's Drift, to my mind, and an excellent solo opportunity. Nor, I think is Sidi Nsir, the great fight of the Hampshires and their supporting guns against the Afrika Korps in early 1943 often gamed, but it makes an ideal 6mm solo game, with what can only be called waves of panzers and self-propelled guns to face.

Perrett's next choice, Tarawa Atoll and the Betio attack is again very well known, as indeed is the Admin Box in Burma in 1944. That's a very large, widely spread fight against the Japanese, and with complex and difficult terrain. Best avoided by the wargamer. Though Arnhem Bridge, in the wake of the film, went through a revival as a game, both as a campaign (again ideal solo stuff) and Frost's defence of the far end of it. A worthwhile game. The book ends with the Glorious Glosters at the Imjin in 1951. Now that is the stuff of legend, big for a solo fight, but worth the reading and the game.

An interesting book, and with some fine wargame possibilities in its pages, but of course there are a number of other last stands which could easily be added to the list. I like the sailor's lethal fight at Kronstadt against Trotsky's Red Army. As well as Gordon's defence of Khartoum and Hong Kong at Christmas 1941. Corregidor? For the Napoleonic Wars, I think Corunna a better choice.