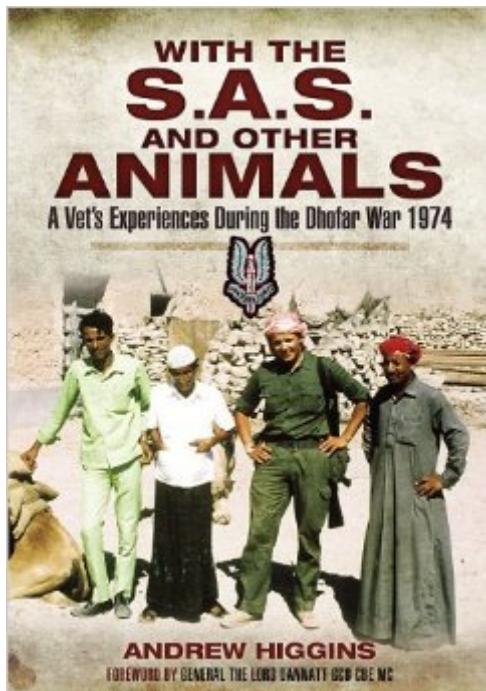


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With The SAS And Other Animals: A Vet's Experiences During The Dhofar War 1974



Synopsis

In 1970 at the height of the Cold War, the young Sandhurst-trained Sultan Qaboos 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 *contract* officers, the SAS played a key role in this bitterly fought but ultimately successful campaign. The value of winning the *hearts and minds* 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 *naïve* 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 people's love and concern for the animals which provided their livelihood – 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 shouldn'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.

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