



To the Last Round: The Epic British Stand on the Imjin River, Korea 1951

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Unraveling the chain of events that led to one of the most startling military encounters during the Korean War, this exhaustive account details how the Cold War abruptly ended with the Communist invasion of South Korea and explains in full the disastrous results that followed. Focusing on the inspirational story of Britain's 29th Infantry Brigade, this fascinating documentation details China's shock entry into the war, the panic experienced by UN forces as they were forced to retreat in sub-zero temperatures, the intense battle and hand-to-hand combat, and the near-decimation of British troops. Filled with exclusive interviews of the surviving veterans of every unit engaged—including those who survived for more than two years as POWs in grim North Korean prison camps—this is the true story of a handful of the men who remained at their posts, held off an army from their foxholes, and astonished the world with their courage and resolve. As the only account devoted exclusively to this now-legendary action, this remarkable narrative is an essential and historically invaluable resource for those interested in military history.

To the Last Round: The Epic British Stand on the Imjin River, Korea 1951 Details

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From Reader Review To the Last Round: The Epic British Stand on the Imjin River, Korea 1951 for online ebook

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

The Korean War isn't covered as much as it should be.

This book is a detailed account of the British 29th Brigade at the battle of Imjin. Where they stopped a large Chinese army in its tracks - but were decimated for that bravery.

Not only does it cover the battle, but also the prisoners held for the next two and a half years.

Fascinating read of the most intensive action of the British Army since the Second World War and the last British battle with a superpower.

Eric Grounds says

This is a cracking book, full of intricate detail and gritty insights to the Korean War. Hand to hand fighting, eternal hordes of fearless enemy, the cock-ups of warfare - all delivered by Andrew Salmon in crisp prose and nail-biting pace.

Chris says

Does a book you read:

1. Make you lose some sleep because you stay up too late reading it ?
2. Impinge on your subconscious through dreams or disturbed sleep?
3. Make you think about the people in it long after you have stopped ?
4. Move you ?
5. Become so engrossing you burn dinner / forget the chickens etc etc ?

It did all these things for me and so like the reviewers before me gets 5 stars.

Painstaking detail , just the right amount of background to the conflict itself and a jigsaw of the picture of the main battle that only emerges slowly as you stick with it. In a novel much of this action would be implausible and on occasion even risible but this is real and in a war our fathers generation fought. Salmon treads carefully on the right side of partisan but not attempting to be detached, it would not have worked.

The veterans he has interviewed so carefully and thoroughly come alive in the pages and the recounting as a result is akin to Paddy Leigh Fermor or Cecil Lewis in that the colours, smells and heat the narrative evokes. A stunning, moving and carefully balanced account of a forgotten war.

Garvan says

Terrific book.

Andy Charman says

Very well written lucid account of a war that deserves to be better remembered.

Geevee says

Andrew Salmon has written a fine book about a very bloody battle that had a bearing on the wider Korean War and one that is still studied by US Forces in Korea today.

The lead up to the battle including the political situation, earlier engagements and the dispositions of the forces deployed is well written without being over detailed or dry.

The story centres on the movements and actions of the men of 29 British Infantry Brigade - three battalions - who along with a Belgian battalion with artillery and tank support were to face the might of three Chinese divisions.

Mr Salmon ably and effortlessly draws the reader into the events and the descriptions of patrols, early Chinese probes and finally mass attacks (almost all at night) through to desperate holding actions, relief efforts and withdrawal or surrender. The terror, tenacity, desperation and indeed heroism of the British and Belgian units whilst defending their isolated positions is clear, as is the intensity of action and skilful support of the artillery.

The final chapters deal with captivity and the treatment meted out to the prisoners, a review of the tactics of both senior commanders (command down to unit level) and an appraisal of the effects and influence on the war for both UN and Chinese.

I was also pleased that Mr Salmon refrained deliberately from any mention of "fanatic enemy hordes" but recognises and describes the Chinese troops as soldiers who fought bravely and behaved in the main with fairness after action.

Two Victoria Crosses and a George Cross and many other honours for gallantry and distinguished service were awarded. The Glosters and the Belgians also received United States Distinguished Unit Citations.

Few people in Britain really know of this battle, or if they do it is with reference to the Gloucestershire Regiment (The Glorious Glosters). The numbers of Chinese and North Korean troops makes it one of the largest battles fought and had it been fought in a World War Two it would be as recognisable as D-Day, Stalingrad, Arnhem, Cassino or say Dunkirk.

But it wasn't it is part of the Korean War - the forgotten war.

Mr Salmon's book goes a long way to change that by telling the story of the men of 29 Brigade: The Northumberland Fusiliers, Royal Ulster Rifles, The Gloucestershire Regiment, 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, 45 Field Regiment RA and 170 Heavy Mortar Battery RA and Belgian Battalion; who fought to the last round.

Jesper Jorgensen says

Haven't read much about the British post WWII army exploits so I looked very much forward to read it. And I found it to be a good book. The author relates this account in a free flowing and easy read language. Including a brief but fine outline of the history of Korea up to the Korean War.

And I really wish I could have finished it, but had to abandon it because - and that's my bad, not the authors - I easily loose the 'big, chromium plated breadth of view' when too many names of NCO's, privates, corporals, Majors, Generals, regiments, places, hills, deployments, manoeuvres, dates etc. etc are tossed into an account. I really have to pay attention and stay focused on a book if not to. And that takes time and extended periods of reading which I did not give my self reading this one.

That said I can only recommend it to any with interest in the subject.

Simon Lewis says

There's probably not a British man in a thousand who can tell you what happened on the Imjin River in 1951, so poorly do we commemorate the men who sailed to a country they'd never heard of to fight a war they didn't understand, whose death toll would rival that of WWII's eastern front.

I'm so glad I read this book. First, it served as a primer on the Korean War and how devastating it was. Seoul changed hands four times, with massacres, revenge massacres, refugee crises and wholesale destruction each time. The background: Korea had been part of China's sphere of influence for centuries until Japan modernised and militarised in the late 19th century, and colonised what was still a poor, feudal, rural peninsula. Japan's defeat in WWII left in power a brutal police state who'd learned everything they knew about repression under Japanese rule but were now backed by the UN. Kim Il Sung's socialist rebels were backed by China. The first phase of the war was a blitzkrieg as the well trained and well-equipped rebels swept the government's forces and their UN allies all the way down into the southern tip of the peninsula. American policy was to 'bug out': retreat fast, while someone thought up a plan. General MacArthur's was brilliant: a marine invasion of Inchon, two-thirds of the way up the peninsula, cutting off the rebel's supply lines and encircling their tired and overstretched forces. Now the blitzkrieg went the other way, forcing the rebels all the way back to the Chinese border.

The Imjin River is north of Seoul, about three-quarters of the way up the peninsula. When three British battalions (about 3,000 men) arrived at the start of a freezing winter to protect UN supply lines to the north of the country, they thought the war was all but over. Unbeknownst to them, in the mountains to the north three entire army groups of Chinese 'volunteers' (about 270,000 men) were sneaking through the night to take back Korea. The story of the ensuing three-day fight to the death in the hills and valleys south of the Imjin is more brutal than any war film, as British defenders fight with rifles, grenades, bayonets, spades, fists and teeth. One officer is shot through the eye and fights on. One loses both legs and keeps shooting. When rifle ammunition runs out, one stands with a pistol in each fist, blasting away. For two nights (they only come at night), with no water, the 'Glorious Glosters' fight off wave after wave of Chinese who have got

around and behind their hilltop position, waiting for the promised relief force to cover their withdrawal. On the third day, they are told the relief will not be coming. Their desperate fight back towards UN lines (almost none would make it) is truly cinematic: one Royal Hussars tank commander finds a Chinese soldier on his turret, struggling to attach a magnetic mine. He drives at full speed through a house, knocking him off. You can almost hear the music swell.

This book is everything I love about military history. Action, adventure, bravery, tragedy, horror, stoicism, humour and the kind of men you never encounter these days. The survivors of this battle are in their 90s. We should honour them.

Tarn Richardson says

All war is dirty and achieves little. But Korea? What was that conflict? A dirty nasty aftershock of WW2, with America looking to face down some communists but not the main communists - primarily because Russia was a little bit too hefty and the world wasn't quite ready for another world war straight after ww2.

Korea was dirtier and crueler than most wars, simply because very few back home knew it was happening, what it was being fought for and who exactly was fighting within it. Ask the Average Joe on the street if the British fought in Korea and they'd say, "What?"

But Britain did fight, a small, dedicated and diamond hard unit of men and this book documents their actions. It's magnificent, a testament to the poor bastards who fought and died and won on some foreign field most people didn't give two sh*ts about. The scene of the hill top battle played out over an area the size of a tennis court beggars belief.

Martin Haynes says

I started this book knowing little about the Korean war, yes I knew the bare bones but this book details one battle, that of the Imjin. I found it difficult to read, not because it was badly written or dull, simply because the events were absolutely horrendous! It's largely the story of the British UN force of brigade strength holding against opposing forces with vastly superior numbers, also the Belgian contingent are honourably mentioned in the text. The centre piece is the defence by the Glosters of their position significantly delaying the Chinese armies in their fifth offensive, thus allowing the UN forces to withdraw and regroup. This action is said to be comparable to Thermopylae and the Charge of the light brigade at Balaclava, I throw in Rorkes Drift for good measure! If you want to understand a little more about the conflict and read of sheer determination in the face of dreadful odds, I can recommend this book but don't expect an easy read!
