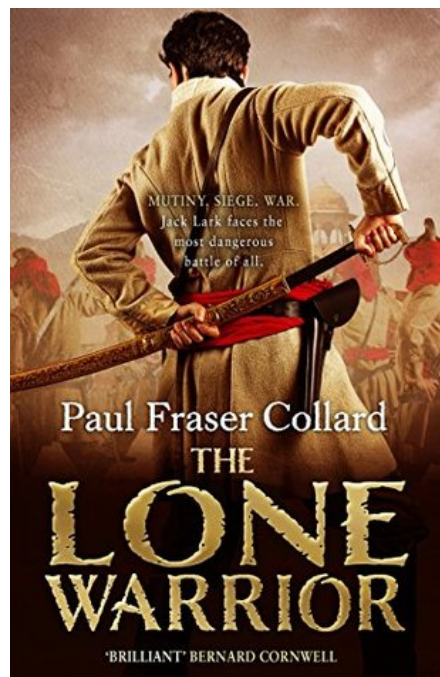




The Lone Warrior

Paul Fraser Collard

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Jack Lark, once the Scarlet Thief, has fought hard for his freedom. But will he risk it all to do the right thing?

Bombay, 1857. India is simmering with discontent, and Jack Lark, honourably discharged from the British Army, aims to take the first ship back to England. But before he leaves, he cannot resist the adventure of helping a young woman escape imprisonment in a gaming house. He promises to escort Aamira home, but they arrive in Delhi just as the Indian Mutiny explodes.

As both sides commit horrific slaughter and the siege of Delhi begins, Jack realises that despite the danger he cannot stand by and watch. At heart, he is still a soldier...

The Lone Warrior is a scintillating tale of battle and courage from the author of *The Scarlet Thief*.

Praise for Paul Fraser Collard:

'I love a writer who wears his history lightly enough for the story he's telling to blaze across the pages like this. Jack Lark is an unforgettable new hero' Anthony Riches

'Sharpe fans will be delighted to welcome a swashbuckling new hero to follow... Marvellous fun'
Peterborough Telegraph

'A confident, rich and exciting novel that gave me all the ingredients I would want for a historical adventure of the highest order' *For Winter Nights*

'It felt accurate, it felt real, it felt alive... The battles had me hooked, riveted to the page, there were times when I was almost as breathless as the exhausted soldiers' *Parmenion Books*

The Lone Warrior Details

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From Reader Review The Lone Warrior for online ebook

Kate says

Thrilling throughout, this is an increasingly harrowing depiction of the Indian Mutiny of the 1850s. It's always good to spend time with Jack Lark.

David Slater says

The best in the series. A fascinating insight into the Indian Mutiny and great action scenes. Jack Lark is a great creation. He's not tied to a particular regiment so who knows where he will turn up next?

S.J.A. Turney says

I'm behind on reading one of my favourite series, but I'm catching up now. The Lone Warrior is the fourth book in Paul Fraser Collard's excellent mid-nineteenth century series and, coincidentally is out in paperback today.

Jack Lark bean some time ago in The Scarlet Thief as something of an anomaly, an imposter. A low-ranker impersonating an officer. It was a very singular tale with, as far as I could see, little scope for an ongoing series. Then Paul surprised me with The Maharajah's General, which repeated certain elements of the first, with impersonation and subterfuge, but also blew a hole in the very idea by revealing his true self and sending the series on something of a sharp tangent. This was good as a series, especially one with such a unique concept, would soon become stale if it simply repeated that concept over and over. So the third book – The Devil's Assassin – took us in new directions. Jack was no longer wearing a mask, and instead went into tremendous action as his true self. And at the end of that book, he was free of his long-standing lie and released from the military.

So when I came to Lone Warrior, I truly had no idea what to expect. Jack was no longer in the army. He was no longer pretending to be someone he wasn't. What could happen next? In fact what does happen is a new and fascinating angle. What could drag Jack back into the world of war and danger? What else but a woman. And the danger? Well Jack has faced it in the Crimea, with a rogue Maharajah and then in Persia. And throughout the second book, when he was serving in India, I kept wondering when we would encounter the Sepoy Mutiny, one of the few great events of Raj history of which I'm actually aware. And now, in book four, we're there.

I won't spoil the plot. If you've read the other books then you know what sort of thing to expect. If not, you're in for derring-do and thunderous action. A character who is down-to-earth and practical living in the world of the English gentleman amid a sea of the empire's enemies. All right, I'll try to nudge the story without ruining it. Jack has fallen for a girl. It's easy to see why when you read her. And after saving her from some dreadful people, he agrees to take her back to her home in Delhi. His timing is somewhat poor, arriving in the city the day before said Sepoy Mutiny kicks off and drags the whole of India into war, challenging English rule and almost succeeding. And so Jack finds himself in a city besieged by the enemy. Oh it doesn't end there, and Jack finds himself once more serving with the British, displaying his forte – the

art of killing.

And therein lies what for me is the great strength of the novel: the British siege of Delhi. The action is brutal and thick and fast and the pace never lets up. Nor, incidentally does the horror or violence, though Collard manages to enfold it all in a great epic tale of adventure and sometimes Flashman-esque action. But yes, to the siege. There are two movie sequences that to me portray the utter chaos of battle better than all others. The lesser of the two is the opening to Gladiator. The better is the start of Saving Private Ryan. Well, that is what you've got in Collard's siege of Delhi. This is a third of the book at least, with all the action, intensity and brutality of the D-Day landings. It is warfare masterfully told. Gloriously horrifying, and it proves once more that Paul Fraser Collard is at the top of his game and the top of the genre.

Lone Warrior is exhilarating and packed with vivid characters and scenes and deserves to be read. Go buy it, people.

David says

Fourth entry in Paul Fraser Collard's 'Jack Lark' series (that started with The Scarlet Thief), this sees Jack Lark caught up in the Indian Mutiny (or First War of Independence, depending upon your point of view!) of 1857, and is my pick for the best of the series so far.

The novel starts out pretty much as it means to go on, with Jack rescuing someone from her indentured lifestyle, then agreeing to accompany her home to Delhi, arriving just in time to get caught up in the mutiny.

Despite holding a British passport myself (well, Northern Irish ...) this is actually a subject that I don't think we were ever taught anything about while I was at school. Sure, I'd heard of it, but only through word-of-mouth, and only ever forming a general impression of it rather than having any real knowledge of the cause, or the effects. As such, and (I.M.O.) like all the best kinds of historical fiction, I actually learned something while simultaneously being entertained (by the general story, NOT by the rather graphic depictions of some of the more harrowing events).

Talking of that story, I also feel that the book could (almost) be split into at least three distinct sections: Jack's journey to Delhi, his involvement in the siege of the British magazine while within it, and the final - and longest - part his involvement in the siege and (partial) recapture of the city.

Like the best of the Sharpe books (a hackneyed comparison, I know, but apt), I also read through this one in only a matter of days - always the sign of a good book!

Ed Curtis says

Another great story from Paul, thoroughly enjoyed it. The story telling leads you through the book smoothly and I've not wanted to put it down. I found that the series has grown and the development of Jack's character is particularly pleasing.

Keep them coming.

David says

I enjoyed this book immensely. After reading it I realized it is the only book of the Indian Mutiny or the first War of Independence depending on your view point I have read excepting 'Dando on Delhi Ridge' by William Clive which I read many years ago and is long out of print. Both novels capture the horror and atrocity on both sides.

If you are attracted to the genre I highly recommend it.

Andrew says

I concur with other reviewers in saying that 'The Lone Warrior' is the best Jack Lark novel yet. They seem to get better with every outing, which bodes extremely well for the future. I was hooked from the outset.

It's 1857 when former charlatan Jack Lark saves the life of a girl whilst waiting to journey back to England, and agrees to escort her to her childhood home in Delhi. Whilst there, the pair are caught up in the large-scale mutiny of Indian sepoys that touches off a malestrom of violence, culminating in the brutal Siege of Delhi.

'The Lone Warrior' is a hard read sometimes, because the author hasn't shied away from depicting exactly what was going on in India at the time. Certainly not pleasant, but necessary. Lark is as confused as he's ever been, looking for solace and - dare we say it? - love at the same time as being forced to rely on all of the tricks in his book to try and survive the uprising.

John Walker says

Finally free to use his own name, honorably discharged from the British Army and better yet going home to England Jack Lark seems to be on top of the world. Sadly there are two things that hold him to India. One is the woman he saved from heavens knows what and the other is this pesky little thing called the Indian Mutiny. All because Jack escorts dear Aamira to the city of Delhi to her mother, if this were going to be easy.

What follows is the long and bloody siege and the battle to retake Delhi from the mutineers and it's not pretty. Jack returns to the British army and fight his way through not only the enemy but his officers, including one Lt. William Hodson, General John Nicholson, and Frederick Roberts (all real people I might add also real) and a cast of thousands.

Paul Fraser Collard is one hell of a writer and admits that this was a difficult book write since there is the ugly truth of the Indian Mutiny which was a horrifically violent time for both sides.

I do not understand why this series isn't picked up in America, surely if the Flashman series was such a hit. Mister Collard's Jack Lark series should be just as popular.

As I've said in other reviews of this series this is one I'm sticking with. Great historical fiction.

Simon Howard says

The best but by far the most brutal outing for Jack yet. Starting with an almost boys own rescue of a damsel

in distress the action quickly moves on to Delhi as Jack and companion arrive at truly the worst time! Never one to sit on the sidelines and spurred on by being witness to some unspeakable acts Jack is soon part of the force tasked with retaking Delhi (Jack has very personal reasons for wanting back in) As the action becomes heated and more desperate then so does Jack, with this book we see Jack having to give free reign to the warrior inside and surrender to the battle madness that stalks through him. As always Paul's attention to detail and historical accuracy makes both the setting and period almost jump off the page.

You would be hard pressed to meet a more complexed and well rounded historical action figure than Jack and by the end of the book you couldn't help but sympathise with him and I ponder what's next for Jack?

Anietta says

Enjoyed immensely! Tirelessly written, so even when a lull in the breathless action occurred, there was plenty to capture my interest. It's a darker addition to the series. I think a huge amount of careful thought went into creating dialogue and atmosphere typical to the period, while ensuring the reader is in the heart of the scene and not consigned to the margins.

The chameleon-like Jack Lark is also far from the only one to have built a false story or two around himself. Yet, behind the mask exists a flexible and rich personality.

It's difficult to believe where it ended. Has Jack cast the life of an imposter aside or could he be drawn into stealing identities again. Surely, there will be more adventures!

Paul Bennett says

Even as a civilian Jack Lark finds himself enmeshed in mayhem. Caught up in a large scale mutiny by native contingents of the British Army in the city of Delhi, Jack is thrust once more into the gaping maw of bloody warfare. As in the other books in this enthralling series, the author doesn't stint when it comes to the brutality on a battlefield, nor in Jack's battle lust inspired prowess at killing. The author also continues to refine Jack's character to a point where the reader can really begin to feel the anguish he suffers; the joy of having someone to live for and the pain that results from it, the conflicting emotional results of his place in the army. Does he belong there? Does he belong anywhere? Many were the times I had to put the book down (okay, close my Kindle), and take a breath. This series started out great; it has only gotten better. I, for one, can't wait to read the next one. 5 stars

Speesh says

Reality is the key word with Paul Fraser Collard's superb series books. 19th Century India so real you can smell it. Feel the pulsing, stifling, all-enveloping heat. However, even from the very (very) little I know of the Indian Mutiny, we can maybe feel glad he has actually toned it down a little. Turned up the excitement though. Read this and I guarantee you'll be flinching as bullets whine past your ears, ducking as cannons fire over head. Believability pervades everything. I believe in the character of Lark, he acts as I hope I would, in

those situations. What he does, or doesn't do, is entirely believable. His worries are all our worries, were we back in the 19th Century. Reading these books, is like opening a window to that time, at least as all-enveloping as David Downing or Philip Kerr. We look a little closer and a little deeper, at Jack's mental struggles. Coming to terms with all that's gone before and the emotions and conflict that are swirling in and around him. I counted at least three Jack Lark personalities at play here!

Jack Lark comes really into his own here. He can of course see both sides. He is British, a British soldier first of all. Being of the lower classes back in England, it is maybe at least as difficult for him to escape his class, his caste, as it is for the Indians to escape their own castes. He understands more than most British of the time maybe, their struggle. Or at least, the why they're struggling, where their grievances have sprung from. Being second-class citizens, no matter what their rank, in their own country. As he is in his own. The Army does at least give him some escape from this, not always of course, but it evens the playing field a little. Not entirely based on merit, but enough to keep Lark interested. As the Mutiny takes shape, both sides do commit atrocious atrocities, the British, by considering the country a possession, commit perhaps the worst, without bothering to even realise it.

So, I ask, can it be better? Fortunately - for the anticipation of continued, if not improved enjoyment of further volumes - yes. I've never really been sure why, at the height of *A Battle*, as an opposing fighter is half an inch from running his sword through our hero's stomach/head/back/other body part, an author feels the need to have the 'love interest' shouting his name. "*Jack!*" In this case. As if he's going to look over his shoulder at her to enquire why she's calling his name. And die. Or if he'll say "*sorry old man, let me get this, would you?*" "*Be my guest, old boy.*" What does the bint think? That he hasn't seen the sword about to eviscerate him? Does she think that by shouting his name, that will alert and protect him? If I shout out to him, I'll distract him and he'll die. That, doesn't seem to occur to her. If I keep schtum and he gets on with doing what he does best, he'll survive. Or that. Like when you come to a road junction junction and the wife says "*watch out!*" You think it's a shout to alert you to something you haven't seen. You stop, peer around to see what you might have missed, and the lorry you had seen 100 yards away, had taken into account and were easily going to get in front of, kills you - and her. When I'm doing the driving, let me do the driving! Fortunately, Jack doesn't react. At the time, or later, as you and I would, say "*you dozy tart!*" Maybe he did, but that got cut at the editing stage. Maybe.

Love interests timely warnings aside, Lark does lead a charmed life generally, but he should. He is good. He is a General, in all but rank. He has natural leadership, where others have paid for it - as was the policy at the time. He is passionate, the book is also. And the intense, relentless writing of the battle of Delhi is quite simply superb, making *The Lone Warrior* in my view, most certainly the best of the series so far. Yikes!

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Elizabeth Law says

If you are new to the Jack Lark series by Paul Fraser Collard, you don't necessarily need to read the previous novels before this one. Each of Collard's novels of Lark's experiences can stand on their own. However, to understand our leading man, really get him I urge reading all of the books in the series.

These novels are not just about the battles Jack finds himself in; historical episodes written in tense pace and biting gruesome detail. As the series progresses, Jack's character too builds with the rise and fall of his wins and failures. Through his moments of battle euphoria, solace and grief the toll on his mental situation becomes more present. There are for sure the constants, Jack's maniacal force during battle, his wit and

sarcasm with authority or people in general. Yet Jack is very much alone in his world of deceit and pretence and that is a strong underlying current in The Lone Warrior, the book's title even alludes to it.

As much as this story is about the military period it takes place in it too is about the toll this life has carved into Jack's psyche. It is not an easy story, but if you care for the character, as this reader does, The Lone Warrior almost seems like a descent for our hero morally, psychologically. He comes out of this very much changed; the ending is not clean nor even satisfying and yet surprisingly that is as it should be. This is a fantastic series and Jack Lark unfolds rich and complicated . I look forward to seeing where Paul F. Collard takes Jack in the future.

Dave Broadbridge says

Yet another great book from Paul Fraser Collard, just can't put any of his books down. I look forward to the next instalment from this series.

Ian Langham says

This series gets better with each volume. I can't not say more than that. As looking back over the books so far, there is the Outstanding debut, expected quality followed up, then the difficult third volume. Now this is where the series really does start to shine and exceed expectations. Having in the last two (especially the last) stepped out of the shadow of a certain green jacketed rifleman. This story finds Jack discharged from the army under his own name at long last. Trying to adjust to civilian life in India. Of course Jack being Jack he agrees to escort a woman across country to Deli, after a relatively trouble free journey they arrive in Deli. Just as the Indian Mutiny kicks off. Great timing Mr Lark..

Now this is where this tale really gets into its stride. There is action aplenty, some of it showing Mr Collard's influences with scenes centered around a huge explosion and the final major battle scenes where Jack's insistence earlier to lead the assault on the city is played out in all its gut churning horror. Along with a quotation about being a "Killer Of Men".

The writer has created a character ruthless when he needs to be and yet not a soulless killing machine, as there some scenes that carry an impact to stain the hero's soul that haunt him (and maybe will return to do so in later life)

The Mutiny which 3/4s of the book centres around is shown to be merciless to the victims, both Indian and British. As the writer has no qualms of showing British troops hanging people without trial and also the killings of the British population by the Indian Mutineers.

With the battles depicted in a graphic style from a small skirmish to the final climatic storming of Deli and its aftermath you might think this is a simple if at times somewhat bloody adventure story. However it is so much more. This like all the best series's is a great standalone tale and fills out the series nicely.

Looking forward to Vol 5
