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Books I've Read

Wellington's Waterloo Allies

Wars and Soldiers Louis XIV: V7 German

Polaris: Subs, Missiles, USN, RN

Gettysburg Surgeons: ACW

German Command HQs in the West

War in Ukraine Vol 7: Europe at War 43

Opening the Gates of Hell: 1941

Dornier Do 217: Bomber to Nightfighter

Clontarf: An Illustrated History

USN Atlanta-Class CLs 1940-49: NV 340

Tanks in Ukraine 2022: New Vangrd 341

Second Sirte 1942: Campaign 417

Swordfish Units of WW2: Cmbt Airc 157

Mediterranean Sweep: WWII USAAF Italy

Exploring Nationalism: Identifying Forms

The Advance on Caen: 6-9 June 1944

Caribbean Crisis: Invasion Grenada 1983

We Stormed the Reichtag: WWII

Siege of Dunkirk 1944-1945 and Chann Ports

Hotol: Britain's Spaceplane

Jungle Ghosts: Walking Point in Vietnam

Araguaia War: COIN Brazil 1967-74 Vol 2

Sturmartillerie Crewman: Casemate Illus

Verdun 1914: The Opening Moves (Batlgrd)

Caesarian Legionary v Pompeian Legionary

Yugoslavia 1941-44: Anti-Partisan Cam418

Halo: The Fall of Reach (sci-fi novel)

Seeds of Victory: American Way of War



Above: The Heritage ballroom on Friday, 9:31am.

Below: Parking deck on Thursday about 1pm.

Historicon A Hit! HMGS Convention Report

by Russ Lockwood

The drive to the Lancaster Convention Center in Lancaster, PA, proved uneventful on Thursday, July 17, 2025. I pulled into the attached parking garage and spiraled up to the top floor. I pulled into a parking spot around 1pm and checked into the hotel. From my room, I could see the parking garage had about 20 spaces remaining. That's always a good sign.

As I had pre-registered, badge processing took seconds. It took me longer to put the paper badge into my holder than it took to print it out. I picked up the freebie figure -- Col. William Prescott, American commander at Bunker Hill. The convention theme was 250th Birthday of the US Army, so it seemed appropriate.

Fantastic. It was time to roam around.

The featured games -- 55 Days at Peking and Operation Jupiter -- were not in session, so that area behind registration was empty. The tables were set up, but the gamers would come later. Oddly enough, this area seemed to need more light even though it was in the middle of the atrium entryway.

Commonwealth ballroom. Thursday 5:07pm



So, like a heat-seeking missile, I descended the stairs and headed for the Dealer's Area. Of note, the previous conventions' Wally's Basement Flea Market area was under renovation and sealed off.

No matter, I veered left and into the Dealer's Area.

Dealer's area Thursday 2:53pm.

Dealer's Area

It wasn't crowded when I showed up, but I stopped to chat with a variety of dealers I've met over the years and some new ones, too. Alas, my gabbing interrupted my picture taking. I always have the best intention of snapping a pic of each row...alas...

I should point out that the Dealer's Area, like the Tournament Area next to it and later Wally's Basement Flea Market Area were all well lit. The air conditioning was going full bore all convention. Indeed, no complaints at all about the air conditioning all show.

As in past conventions, HMGS offered a free beer event in the Dealer's Area on Saturday afternoon – choice of Yuengling or a Lite beer, or soda or water for those who do not partake or too young. I hoisted a cup while chatting with Steven, a gamer whose brother owns the Bearded Dragon gaming store in Oneonta (NY).

Dealer's area Thursday 3:01pm.

And now for something complete the same: oh so brief mentions of products from some of the dealers. I apologize to the other dealers for the lack of mentions, but rest assured, like all the gamers, I walked the aisles multiple times.

Age of Glory

Said hello to Steve. Always good to chat a bit. As he was near the entrance and I popped in roughly mid afternoon, I asked about sales. After all, the parking deck was near full. He was rather pleased with sales, a sentiment echoed by other dealers. Of course, the grognards show up on Thursday, but not every show's sales begin at a fast clip.

Belle & Blade

Said hello to another Steve, who continues to offer the motherlode of war-related DVDs. Yeah, I know, I know, streaming's all the rage, but I'm old school and like DVDs and all their extras. Sure, most movies I only see once, but when you when you want to see it again, a DVD is just as convenient and I don't have to worry about sketchy internet. Every time I change the channel on my cable, or select an on demand movie, the circle of doom shows up for varying times. You can usually find gamers lined up like birdies on a telephone line to look at the action scenes playing on a number of monitors.



Black Powder

Talked about the American Revolution box of Black Powder - lots of "Epic" scale miniatures (about 12-13mm on strips given an eyeball look), rules, and so on. The set up had a number of Warlord's pre-painted American buildings. I didn't see a price, but looking it up on the *Black Powder* website: \$224.00. The watchtower comes with the box, but the other buildings are listed at \$21.50 for the church and \$45 for four buildings.

Black Powder display.



Blue Panther

Always good to chat with Steve from Blue Panther, which has released a number of new and relatively new wargames.

Tattered Flags: Into The Whirlpool is a hybrid historical wargame design that simulates tactical American Civil War combat. Volume 1 covers engagements that occurred in and around the salient formed by Union General Dan Sickles' III Corps as he was attacked by Confederate General James Longstreet's Corps at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2nd, 1863. Contains: 17x22-inch Canvas Map, two Player Aids, 176 Counters, 208 Markers, 40 Battle Cards, 1 Game Turn Track, four d10s, one Rulebook, one Scenario Book, and five Scenario Setup Maps. \$70.00

Blue Panther's Steve and Elaine.



No Such Blood contains two games: *Smash 'Em Up* covers the Battle of Belmont, Missouri on November 7th, 1861, and *I Fights Mit Sigel* covers the Battle of New Market, Virginia on May 15th, 1864. Contains two 17x22-inch maps of Belmont and New Market, over 420 counters, one Scenario Book, one System Rule Book and one Charts and Tables Booklet for "Huzzah v4" system, and two d10s. \$60.00

Close the Atlantic: World War III is a one- to four-player naval combat game set during the 21st century. NATO and Russian forces are on the brink of World War III. Contains 22x28-inch map; 44 page rulebook, over 400+ counters, and three dice (two d10s and one d6). \$70.00

The Pursuit of John Wilkes Booth is a one- to three-player deduction game set during the American Civil War. You are tasked with tracking down the assassin behind Abraham Lincoln's downfall. Travel across D.C., pick up clues, and capture the culprit before it's too late. Contains one 22x34-inch canvas map, one Rulebook, one Player Guide, three Player Aids, 18 Play Pieces, one Clue Bag, 62 Counters, 131 Cards, and one Custom d6. \$70.00

SPQR: The Battle of Alesia 52 BC is a solitaire wargame covering the Roman siege of Alesia. Contains one 17x22-inch map, two d6s, 24 Cards, 44 Counters, and one rulebook. \$45.00

Gloucester: The Battle of the Hook is a one- to two-player solitaire-system strategy wargame of the Battle of the largest written account of cavalry action during the waning days of the American Revolution. Contains one 16x22-inch map, one Rulebook, one Player Aid Chart, 54 Counters, and two d6s. \$45.00

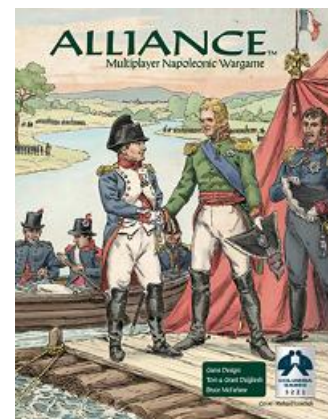
Other new games include: *Nightfighter*, *Black Skin Black Shirt*, and *Israel: The First Arab-Israeli War*.



Columbia Games

The king of block game companies has a new block system game out, or at least new to me: *Alliance*. From the website: Set in the Napoleonic era, *Alliance* is the game of diplomacy and conflict for up to seven players. The Diplomatic Phase forms alliances and if the deals fall apart, off to war. Countries with surplus gold can finance actions by their allies. Unlike most grand strategic games of these wars, the game includes naval units and battles and the effect of blockades. \$99.98

A larger 44x68-inch neoprene map is also available to give your game a feel of equal epicness of the conflict itself. \$99.00



Dave's Baggage Train

Tucked away in the corner was Dave and his carrying cases. A gaming buddy of mine has bought a number of them.

The Dietz Foundation: *Kremlin*

Well, nothing like Russian Kremlin politics to catch my eye. I'm not exactly sure of the victory conditions of this game other than get your faction into power and keep it in power, but the surviving part seems likely the hardest. Cards of various leaders are played on a organization chart, event cards are played, and a variety of actions are undertaken. The leader cards contain the starting age of the leader and as years pass, there is a possibility that any given leader will indeed pass (die roll) from his cardboard position. \$60.00

The Dietz Foundation began in July 2018, created by Jim Dietz, with the dream of making a difference in American society by helping teachers learn alternative means of education in the classroom; endowing scholarships at high schools for students going into education; endowing scholarships at the collegiate level for students pursuing teaching certificates; and teaching the general public through the play of games.



Miniature Building Authority

The houses, castles, and other buildings are just gorgeous. You see a lot of them on the gaming tables throughout the convention. I couldn't help but stop and look, and offer a chuckle to the sign out front of a tavern warning you about Killer Rabbits.

On Military Matters/Winged Hussar

The sad news, for those who have not heard, is that the OMM retail store in Hopewell (NJ) is completely emptied, the keys turned into the landlord, and closed.

The great news is that Dennis sold half of OMM to Winged Hussar owner Vince and his son Brandon, who have opened a new, larger book/game store in Point Pleasant



(NJ). The internet ordering and shipping element never ceased and with a larger store, has more stock in house.

George Nafziger

I said hello to George, but it was quick as folks lined up for his selections of translations. I never quite got back there, but it was good to see him at the show.

PaperTerrain

A number of new paper building products were on display at the booth. Certainly his offerings continue to grow.

At Historicon, the new items were: Austrian Village, fire markers, Aspern Church, and Essling Granary. Each is available in 10/12mm, 15mm, 20mm, and 25/28mm scales.

New PaperTerrain offerings.

These are only part of the items offered. All are printed on a heavy cardstock and are ready for immediate assembly and use. The structures offer a sturdy, lightweight, and economical alternative to resin or MDF.

PaperTerrain was created in 2005 with just a small number of products. Better yet, the company offers a downloadable sample (PDF) that you can print out and assemble. Granted, it won't be cardstock (unless your printer can handle such), but you'll get an idea of what the products look like up close and personal.

Podrik Miniatures

New to me was this 6mm sci-fi miniatures company -- 3D printing in action, so to speak. The STL files and miniatures will be released in August. The samples at the show looked sufficiently cool and the size seems to fit in well with other 6mm product lines.

Also showing was a simple sci-fi rules set *Trial By Fire* that will also be released in August.

Podrik Miniatures: 6mm Sci Fi.

The Wargame Company: *ESR Napoleonics*

I stopped and watched John Hollier demo an *Et Sans Résultat* (ESR) *Napoleonics* game. The figures are thermoplastic and 10mm. A salient point while I watched was an artillery battery, once unlimbered and emplaced, needed a leader order to limber up and move. Apparently, this is in its 3rd edition. *John (center) runs a demo of ESRN.*

Gil's Workshop

I love the smell of napalm in the morning, or sawdust in the afternoon. Gil brought exquisite game cabinets crafted out of wood as well as a table laser cutter that seemed to be going full bore all convention. Most amazing, besides the slight smell of sawdust, is the lack of sawdust in the aisle. Kicking myself that I gawked instead of taking a photo. No worries, he has a full set of pics for a wide variety of products on his Etsy site. I snagged one from the web for your viewing pleasure.



Wally Simon Flea Market



The mob at the Thursday night flea market.

I slipped away to the flea market twice: Thursday night 7pm to 9pm and Saturday afternoon 2pm to 4pm.

It was mobbed. I mean mobbed. At times, you just stood there in a solid pack of people. Every so often, a space would appear and the shuffle forward would start.

I bought a \$5 grab bag of 25mm painted minis. Later, I looked at 'em. Two of them were 28mm orcs or some such (whom I quickly named Sludge and Dreck), two of them were old school or small 25mm knights on horses sans weapon, two were 25mm gargoyles, and a dozen were 15mm fantasy figures of one sort or another. Sludge and Dreck are the stars -- good for the *D&D* campaign I'm in if ever I need two friendly orcs.

The other main purchase I made was a \$30 unpunched wargame *Narvik* (*Europa* system). My buddies Dan and Fred both have copies of the game, really enjoy the game, and I've been enamored with Bruce's Double Blind system, including his own Operation Weserubung double blind game (see the 4/21/2025, 5/23/2025, and 6/19/2025 AARs for the full recap of Bruce's brilliant effort). So, I have this idea of running an e-mail version of Double Blind *Narvik*. Not sure how but I'll review the AARs and make allowances for the *Europa* system. I also picked up a bunch of \$10 wargames: Avalon Hill *Guns of August*, Avalanche Press *Malta 1942*, and AH *Anzio*. Also one \$20 wargame: Victory Games *Pacific War*.

Now, I don't exactly know when I'll set them up -- mostly I find wargames useful for research and I primarily bought these for the OOBs and maps. Some of these rules border on unplayable -- from an era of complexity to include every nuance.

I also bought a \$5 WWI ruleset: *Over The Top*, which is a variant of *Command Decision*. While I play *CD*, I bought this for the voluminous OOBs of all the major countries.

Now, I saw a lot more oh-so-tempting purchases at good prices, but as I have plenty of projects from Dealer and Flea Market purchases in the past, I controlled myself.

Then again, if I spent as much time on these projects as creating my AARs, I'd have a lot of cool things to try, or at least try out on unsuspecting gaming buddies!



Heritage Ballroom at 4:32pm Friday.

Walkabout Wargaming: Eye Candy

My first game wasn't until Friday morning, so I had the rest of Thursday to wander about and gawk and kibbitz. Of course, that's also what I did on Friday and Saturday when I wasn't gaming. Hey, I enjoy chatting with gamers who make the trip. As long as you're not interrupting the game, it's an interesting and often informative way to spend a few days. HMGS conventions are like that.

55 Days at Peking in full swing.

In roughly alphabetical order:

55 Days at Peking

This has been around a while, but the event is still well attended. No doubt the big wall is a big draw. The only detriment was the dimness of the lobby compared to the well-lit dealer area and Heritage Ballroom. The Commonwealth Ballroom was also a bit dim, too.

The 1813 terrain.

1813 November 5: Best Terrain

I snapped a photo when the game was idle, but I could see the Best Terrain Award and the Pour Encourager Les Autres (PELA) Award. That's a fine looking table!



Airship Diplomacy

Another spectacular scenery event. My photos do not do the airships and other terrain justice.



Top: Airships. Right: *The Airship Diplomacy* terrain.

The Alamo

What a nifty-looking 15mm game of the Alamo. I seem to recall seeing this, or at least another 15mm Alamo at a previous convention.

The Alamo in mid attack.



Breakthrough

Jake ran a *Breakthrough* game, but I only watched for a minute or two as he was explaining a nuance of the rules.

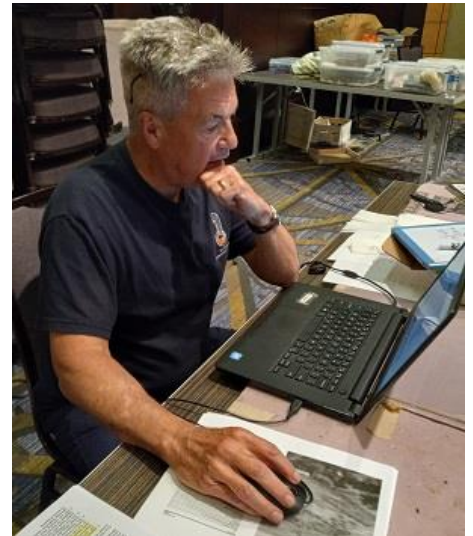
Jake (in black) explains a finer point.



Carnage & Glory



David Bonk (dark blue shirt) runs the computer for another Carnage and Glory game.



David and John ran several games of *Carnage & Glory*, their fingers typing up the orders given by the players. The computer program gave the results, unit by unit. Good looking games, as usual.



*Above: Mark Campbell in a rare moment of standing up as the captains consider their next moves.
Below and right: The chariot reigns supreme in this game.*

Close Action

The perennial favorite of the Age of Sail crowd once again met on the floor of hex battles. Give GM Mark Campbell credit -- he still can roam across the floor pushing ships in response to the orders of the captains.

Certainly my knees and other joints creak with objections.

I watched for about an hour -- fascinating how the British van sailed away as the Dutch cut off the rest of the British fleet. Yet the British van made the big maneuver to return. In the end, it was a minor Dutch victory.

Egyptians

Never mind walk like an Egyptian, with all the chariots, it's drive like an Egyptian. The players seemed rather into the game, which is what drew my attention.



El Morro

The Dutch try and take the El Morro fort from the Spanish in this magnificent looking game. I tried to decide which I liked more: the ships or the fort. I finally concluded: both.

Right: The El Morro attack.

Below: The ships of El Morro.



Right: Dennis picks out his LADG troops.



La Arte de la Guerre

On Military Matters owner Dennis begins to pick out his troops for the LADG tournament. Actually, he was in two tournaments, one per day, and came in third in both. Per usual, plenty of gamers in both tournaments.

The Marne

I'm not sure of the system, but the tabletop battle was the Marne in WWI. I liked the 6mm figs on the bases.

An attack at the Marne.

Operation Jupiter

Talk about 54mm scale! This featured game in the atrium was next to 55 Days at Peking. The lighting was a tad dim, but the players happily fired away.



Pavia 1525

As Martin says, the 500th Anniversary of a battle only comes along once. His extravaganza used a U-shaped table for the main battle. A separate table held the town. Absolutely gorgeous.



Martin sets up the 1525 Pavia game.

Romans vs. Celts

As a guesstimate, this was the Romans at Alesia. A relief force of Celts tries to storm the Roman fortifications to crack the siege.

A nicely constructed Roman fortification.

Starship Hawke

The HAWKS club put on a number of games using this sci-fi layout. This one happens to be representing a spaceship. One side had to clear out the ugly fuglies and the other had to wipe out these interlopers.





Warrior Tournament

Despite its age, *Warrior* still possesses enough followers to merit a tournament at the convention.

Left: Starship Hawke.

Below: Warrior Tournament stretches into the distance.



Freedom Hall Tournament area: 1:30pm Thursday.



*Freedom Hall Tournament area:
2:30pm Saturday.*

SPI Forever

Kudos to Russ Gifford for creating the SPI forever event. I must have visited a dozen times during the show to see the old games and watch the WWII *War in Europe* game play out over the weekend. Alas, despite gaming for three days, they had only just punched Barbarossa for a few turns by Saturday night. But you have to give them credit for starting in 1939. France fell and the North Africa campaign was in full swing.

Right: Terrible Swift Sword



Next table over was ACW *Terrible Swift Sword* game. That, too, had been going for a while. I don't know where they were in the game, but the players were hammering away at each other.

Now my personal curiosity: the sci-fi RPG *Universe*. I bought that when it first came out, figuring it might be a good alternative to *Traveller*. Er... No. I could never figure out all the modifiers that went into taking a shot. Yet, I gotta give GM David immense credit -- he knew the game inside and out, had immense patience in crafting the players' first

Left: GM David (standing) runs Universe.



shots (writing numbers on a pink sheet filled with a row of tiny boxes to get a percentage chance to hit), and worked through all the other nuances. It was watching a master at work calculating the three shots at 47%, 53%, and 87%. But it took a literal 25 to 30 minutes. Alas, to me, it was too much work. I can appreciate the game's details without wanting to do said work. To be fair, once calculated, the percentage should remain the same -- unless the terrain or range or weapon or defense changes. Other games played: *Battle for Germany*, *Panzergruppe Guderian*, and so on.

Fantastic effort, Russ. He said he had about 50 pre-registers, or about half what he expected. The thought occurs to me now that I should have signed up somewhere, but if it's any consolation, consider this glowing report of nostalgia gaming my contribution to keeping this an annual event.



Friday Game: The Anthill of WWI

It wasn't exactly a *Paths of Glory* movie scene, but I was certainly willing to give this WWI trench attack game a go. Beth and I were the British while Mark and Nic were the Germans. GM Bob Varga ran the scenario using homebrew rules.

The calm before the storm. GM Bob is ready. Germans in the foreground trenches. British in the background.

A master grid covered the battlefield, divided into six sections: two of British trenches, two of No Man's Land (NML), and two of German trenches. Within each section were smaller grids: each trench section was six by 12 squares while NML was 12x12 squares.

A random d6 roll activated a particular section for each player. If the trenches were rolled, artillery, mortars, and MGs could fire. A second random d6 roll determined if the artillery fired shrapnel or high explosive. A third roll, 2d12 for NML targets and a d6 and d12 roll for trench targets, were cross-indexed to locate the square that shell fell in.

Only high explosive could penetrate bunkers and tanks. Each shell had a random roll than pinpointed a particular square. Whatever was in that square was automatically dead. The eight squares around the impact point were rolled for -- 5 and 6s hit. Hits was saved on a 6. Artillery was easily explained and performed. I had three artillery guns (two attacks each) and three mortar units (one attack each).

Gas shells would impact as per artillery, but also drift by random roll. A 50-50 roll would determine if the targeted troops put on their gas masks fast enough to avoid casualties. Otherwise, all troops in gas-filled squares were eliminated.

The British forces stretch across No Man's Land, tanks and HMGs in the lead.

As for MGs, three squares across in front of the MG represented the arc. Originally, we just rolled 1d6 per targeted figure in those three squares. Bob noted that was wrong -- MGs toss 15d6s. Hits are spread among the figures in the three squares. That's quite a difference!

British movement consisted of a d6 throw for the number of squares the rear rank would advance ahead of the front rank. This, by the way, was a neat mechanic. You can see the waves of troops advance. Each figure was worth two when it came to implementing casualties in NML, but reverted to only one figure when into the German trenches. I'm not quite sure why other than to apply a filter for NML casualties so enough figures can reach the German wire and



trenches.

British infantry had to stop upon reaching German wire and toss a d6 to remove it. The other way to remove it was via high explosive artillery fire. Renault tanks and HMGs were also a d6 toss in squares.

German movement was d6 number of figures to exit a bunker and d6 number of squares.

There would be no coordination between teammates -- each of us had a frontage and none could cross with either troops or shelling. Only gas might drift across the boundary.

At start (L to R): Beth, Mark, GM Bob, and Nic.



The Attack

It started poorly for me. All but one of my tanks got stuck. My HMGs hardly moved at all.

But, it picked up as my artillery pounded the German trenches, racking up some casualties. The German artillery repaid the favor, but since NML was mostly empty, I incurred few casualties. Of some amusement were two German shells that straddled one of my tanks -- one in front and the other in back -- and I made the saving throws. Lucky tank.

My artillery thins out the German defenders.



My rear line (the third line) surged forward although sometimes I had to put three figures in a square due to an obstruction. I pulled my reserve line (fourth line) out of the trenches immediately and they formed behind the existing lines.

So it went, my tanks mostly inert, the HMGs struggling to move fast enough, and my lines leap-frogging ahead. My artillery did a good job (well... random rolls were good) in suppressing lots of German fire, especially HMG fire.

An artillery strike created a small gap in the German wire and I surged through with a couple lads to melee a HMG bunker. Alas, both lads were slaughtered, but it was the first of what I thought to be many melee attacks.

Unfortunately, I was bunched up at the rest of the wire. And worse was to come.

My leading troops reach the wire.

All my artillery fire came down to a 50-50 roll: either on the German trenches or in NML. When I had few troops in NML, not a problem. As I advanced, I had random rolled the German trenches. And then, I rolled NML. Uh-oh.



As only my troops were in NML, I declined to fire. Umpire Bob said that wasn't an option. I must fire the artillery.

But those are my troops.

Friendly fire was a problem.

But, but, but...

You must fire.

I looked at Nic, he looked at me, and we shrugged. I then proceeded to rain death upon my concentrated troops. Sure, about half the shells missed, but what did was hit after hit concentrated on my lines of troops.

Remember Lucky Tank that was straddled early in the game? I even managed to land a high explosive shell atop it and brewed it up. Oh, woe is the insult to injury.

Without suppression, Nic re-crewed his HMGs. That's also when GM Bob corrected our HMG fire to be 15 d6s instead of d6s based on the number of targeted troops.

The next turn, I rolled NML again.

I looked at Nic, he looked at me, and we shrugged anew. In came death and destruction that zeroed in on my troops. Nic valiantly suggested I didn't have to fire my trench mortars as they would be under local control. I accepted his generous offer.

End game positions after I shelled my own troops, the Germans shelled my troops, and the HMGs fired on what little remained of my troops.



His artillery and HMGs played across what was left of the British troops.

I lost 75% of my force in two turns. I mean, suffering German fire was bad enough, but I got a double dose. Whereas I had dismantled enough of the wire to begin the process of meleeing German troops in the trenches, now I had but a few sad remnants of my four lines of troops. I called for a retreat.

My teammate Beth had advanced her tanks farther than mine and a couple reached the German trenches. Her infantry was as decimated as mine, though, but were in a melee with the forward German infantry.

Thoughts

Up until that point, we had a competitive game going. During the game, Nic and I favorably commented on the random shell hits and the gas strikes. We liked the movement in waves. The HMGs were suitably dangerous when rolling a number of d6s equal to the targeted troops. Not to make a mountain out of an anthill, this was setting up to be a whopping good melee in the German trenches. Until it wasn't.

In retrospect, I was lucky that most of my 50-50 rolls had the NML shelling early and switched to the German trenches. That's kind of like a rolling barrage. I'm not sure if WWI artillery barrages ever rolled backwards, but in this game, my artillery forward observer would likely find himself busted to private and sent into the front lines.

If I was to tweak a generally good system, keep the 50-50 d6 for targeting either NML or enemy trenches for d3? turns. After that, if the attacker rolls NML and doesn't want to fire, allow the attacker to not fire that turn -- the defender gets a reprieve. The next and subsequent turns, the attacker only fires into the enemy trenches.

You could even go one step further and start in NML and roll a d6 after each artillery phase -- on a 6, artillery barrages lift to next section. Maybe divvy NML into two sections. Trench mortars continue targeting enemy trenches.

Like I said, until I self-immolated, the Anthill was a cracking good, competitive game.

Thanks to GM Bob for hosting the game, which I saw run multiple times throughout the convention.

Friday Night HMGS Meeting

Who wants to be at an HMGS member meeting when you could be gaming? I get that, but I've come to enjoy sitting with 25-30 gamers who are interested in keeping HMGS going. It lasts about 1.5 hours and filled with options and opinions about HMGS management and conventions.

HMGS Finances

We're still in good shape. We have \$406,700 in the bank in one form or another, with \$300,000 of that in cash reserves.

HMGS Website

The transition away from the YM website to a WordPress-based site continues, but understand it is a work in progress. I spoke a bit with IT guru John Hollier about the transition. It is going to take some time, but the plan is a full transfer by Historicon 2026.

Going to Tabletop Events relieved HMGS of a huge burden. Unfortunately, when I tried to sign on to TTE and buy a badge at the HMGS member rate, I couldn't. After some e-mails, including me sending screen shots, I discovered that despite the error message, I was indeed signed in and was able to buy a badge at the HMGS member rate and sign up for games. John fixed the problem, so I expect smooth sailing for Fall-In.

HMGS Website Book Reviews

Of import to me is the fate of my 1,800 book reviews. The big surprise was that each review, yes each review, had to be transferred manually instead of a massive transfer. Apparently, YM has restrictions on such. John did some test transfers with the first six reviews I did. I'm just going to say it's a work in progress, so no need to panic. The old links still work. I suggested that he put the reviews in reverse chronological order as they appear now. He'll look into it. Hope the WordPress search engine is as good as the YM one was -- "BOOK REVIEW" "Lockwood" and whatever topic or keyword was usually good enough to pull up what I was looking for.

John will noodle this out, as well making a space for my AARs. Just remember it's a work in progress.

Social Media Team

HMGS has a new team in place that will concentrate on social media. Some of them were around taking photos, so I expect those will appear wherever. Although I've used social media sites and created content for various freelance assignments, I've found them to range from helpful to toxic. Here's hoping the HMGS posts on whatever trend will be on the helpful side and chase away the toxic rants.

Cold Wars 2025

As the Cold Wars 2025 convention was a bit short on time to get everything squared away, give credit to those that pulled it off. The venue generally didn't seem to get high marks, but some said it was just fine, reminding them of the run-down Host. I didn't attend, so I have no opinion on the matter.

However, the numbers were 507 attendees (757 including GMs, dealers, and volunteers). Considering that it hadn't been held in a while, I'll put a positive spin and comment "not that shabby." Compared to past Cold Wars with 1500+, not great from a financial standpoint. The cost was about the same as usual, but the revenue was way down.

That said, HMGS signed a three-year commitment with the Host (er ... excuse me, Wyndham) for 2026, 2027, and 2028. Although some misgivings about February weather arose, moving it back to the Host seemed a pleasing move, at least to me.

Fall In 2025

The theme will be the 250th anniversary of the US Navy and Marines. It will be at the Host, November 7 through 9.

Administration

The Board discussed a variety of issues, including sponsorships, bylaws, complaint resolution, legal filings, and additional non-Board positions for expanded responsibilities.

Flea Market

The question came up about accepting electronic payments. Currently, no electronic payments, including credit cards and apps, are allowed. The Board noted only cash, checks, and barter are allowed as simple and efficient payment systems. Me? I pay in cash -- simple and easy.

Outreach

Historicon became a *Bolt Action* regional tournament, which is a nice feather in Dave Allnut's cap.

To that you can add the SPI Forever room on the third floor. Well done, but then again, I played lots of SPI games starting back in the 1970s. The event had 59 games listed.

An even bigger outreach event was the inclusion of a *Warhammer 40K* tournament at Historicon on Saturday and Sunday. Approximately 50 40K gamers participated. Considering that Sunday is pretty dead, the offering of well-lit, air conditioned, professional convention space to the 40K crowd seems like a good idea. I walked the tournament on Saturday for a quick look and I can say that the painting on most of the miniatures was well done.

That said, HMGS has been making contacts with other conventions, which include sci-fi and fantasy as well as historicals, to grow the organization and the hobby. The aforementioned social media efforts are another step in that direction. Given the rise of eurogaming-style boardgames with miniatures figures, getting the gamers to see, if not try, historicals can only help.

There is, of course, the potential pitfall that HMGS loses the H and turns into MGS, much the way Origins evolved from historicals to mainly sci-fi and fantasy, but given the “graying” slide in our convention attendance, the alternative may be eventual oblivion. Historicon attendance has dropped from the 4,000 level when I started in the 1990s to about the 2,500 level of today. That's a generational decline. Jus' sayin'.

I briefly spoke to Brenda Zartman, our new membership benefits director, who is looking into enhancing membership value. Certainly uppermost in my mind is enhanced distribution of this AAR. A non-profit without a newsletter seems like a missing piece of the membership jigsaw puzzle. IT guru John Hollier noted that the new website can include a spot for the AAR, the same way the book reviews have their own spot. In the meantime, I keep this AAR going via my personal e-mail list. Yet, obviously, I pass all the gamers at the convention who might enjoy a monthly dose of history and gaming.

Historicon Attendance

I don't have final numbers, but as of noon Friday, Historicon 2025 Convention Director Scott Landis reported 2,253 pre-registered attendees. This does not include the Saturday day-trippers.

You gotta give Landis and his team a round of applause for a great convention.

Hobby University

It took perseverance to find the Hobby U room. When I did, I found 20 to 25 gamers painting up a storm with the guidance of master painters. The painters were eager to learn and the masters eager to explain. I watched the painting of tank treads, including rust effects, a bit.

A Hobby U tutorial can really up your painting skills. My incompetence with a paintbrush has a direct correlation to praising the excellent results generated by these painters.





The American half of the board. Obviously, I didn't take any photos of the Japanese side until after the game. My 3rd battalion in left bottom corner, 2nd battalion in middle, and 1st battalion in upper right corner. HQ in upper left. Japanese entered on bottom and right edges.

Double Blind Saipan: *Command Decision*

I had watched Marc's double-blind WWII *Command Decision* games in past conventions and was fortunate enough to play in his Saipan game this convention. He and Jake certainly got their steps in shuttling between the two identical tabletops separated by a row of chairs atop a table draped with a sheet. Thus, I never saw the opposite tabletop and the opponents never saw ours.

This was a four-on-four game and by sitting down at the US table, I played 3rd battalion 6th Marines. Two other battalions were arrayed across the table backed by 75mm artillery, a trio of Sherman tank platoons, a platoon of GMC halftracks with 75mm gun, and three companies of combat engineers. Each player controlled about 20 or so stands.

The Japanese reached me just as I was switching some units around. The arrow cubes indicates direction. The other cube indicates two Overwatch stands.

Nighttime

The game was set at night, so line of sight was all of two inches. As you might imagine, the Japanese attackers could be sneaky and try to hit the seams between the battalions.

We had three starshells that covered a one foot radius and could



be fired by USN destroyers. The idea here was to fire them far enough away to spot the Japanese and not highlight our own Marines.

Us Marines needed to hold our original regimental line as much as possible.

A hole between L Company (next to swamp) and I Company (being surrounded by Japanese) needs closing! Turn 3.

The Battle

My line was more a sawtooth formation than a line. The first thing I did was move up the heavy weapons and attached MMG platoons to form an actual line, with three inches between platoons so no Japanese could sneak by. Remember that sighting distance was two inches.

I thought I had a turn to do so, but I was wrong. The Japanese were upon us instantly.

I should have known from the artillery fire that dropped around me, but it was described as “desultory.”

Now, Marines snug in their foxholes would hit Japanese infantry close assaulting them 90% of the time. However, in moving, I not only halved my firepower (one d10 instead of two), I also dropped my hit percentage to 50% and allowed simultaneous fire with the Japanese.

The first Japanese attack wasn't too bad -- I had the MMG forced back. As for the rest of the Japanese, they disappeared from view.

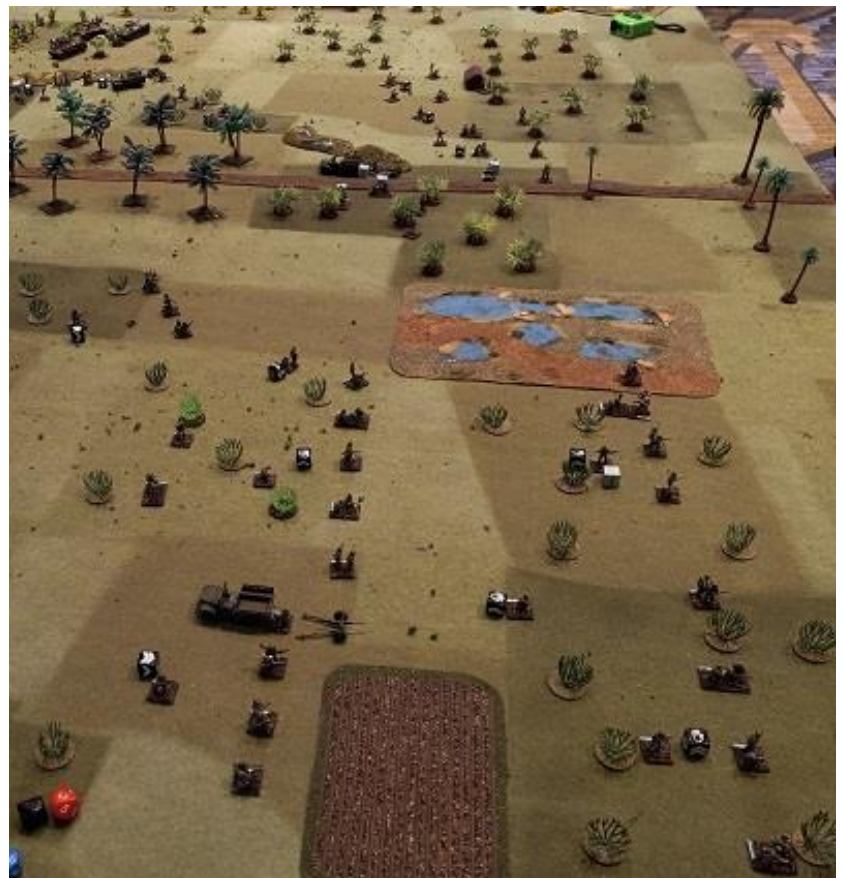
Blind Results

Ooooh. Here's a clever bit to enhance the uncertainty. Instead of the player rolling the results for a hit (roughly 1/3 no effect, 1/3 force back, and 1/3 eliminate), Marc and Jake consulted a list of random results. Got three hits? They checked off the next three numbers.

So, you knew about the no effect, as the enemy stand remained locked in combat. But whether a removed stand was forced back or eliminated, you didn't know. You just had to wait and see.

Likewise, the beginning of turn morale checks were secret from the opponents. Good to go, pin, or other results were never known to the other side.

Turn 3 Overview. My front line (swamp to bottom edge) has some gaps, but is generally intact. The second line is intact. The combat engineer company arrives (below and next to 37mm gun platoon). A second combat engineer company is making its way towards the center. The Japanese attack (upper left corner) slams into 1st battalion.



Company L

L Company was the hard-luck company in my battalion. Not only did it often fail to hit the enemy, it failed so many 90% to pass morale checks (i.e. fail only on a roll of “0” on a d10), their motto was “Loser Company” and the insignia was a “L” on the front of their helmets.

L Company routs (upper left corner) as I Company has mixed success with some fall backs. The red die and dark die indicate naval guns and battalion mortar plotting. The combat engineers (light blue cube) plug a gap.



A third of the company's stands ceased to exist and the remainder fled for their lives. In fact, they were so down in the dumps, they ran all the way back to the artillery gun line, where the regimental commander came out to meet them and put a stop to their running days. Sheesh.

I've commented often that this is a game of 10s. Even the best held line usually fails morale when you roll a 10 on a d10. Apparently, my morale rolls determined L Company was going to be the reserve.

Company I

I Company was made of sterner stuff. It managed to repel many of the Japanese attacks, including those that circled around through the former L Company positions. Indeed, 1st platoon stayed in its foxholes the entire game. Alas, even I Company rolled 10s and ended up Suppressed.

At one point in the cavalcade of 10s, and I mean four in a row, then not a 10, and then two more 10s, I looked at GM Marc, he looked at me, and we just busted out laughing. Some days the dice are kind. Other days unkind. And then there's just plain rude...

The Japanese tanks find a seam and overrun part of the 1st battalion. Marines try and recover at the ridge.

Company K

K Company backed up I and L Companies along with a HQ platoon, a 37mm gun platoon, mortar, and a flamethrower platoon. I sent the flamethrower stand to the center to help the other battalion. As it turned out, sending them to the other side of the swamp was an error.

“How did they get there?” asked GM Marc.

“I used the battalion commander to order them,” I answered.

Now, that's a fine and legal idea except



that the order is placed in Line of Sight, which, as you recall, was exactly two inches. Even given a 6-inch radius, the flamethrower lads possibly, perhaps, maaaaay have exceeded the inches allowed. OK, they humped halfway across the island. Ooops.

The magic GM teleport machine put them back into their pre-game assigned place. So much for walkie talkies...

The Japanese attack develops in the center against 2nd battalion. The four Japanese stands in a line at bottom screamed "Banzai" and charged a US platoon, which apparently couldn't hold. Whether it was overrun or just retreated, I don't know. The Japanese gun is pushed forward, although with only two-inch line of sight, I don't think it fired.



Combat Engineers

Our regimental commander sent two companies of combat engineers to reinforce my position. One of them was overkill and so headed to help the center. The other shored up my position after L Company routed to the rear and helped defend against the Japanese.

Offshore Bombardments

I had a USN destroyer on call, but the line of sight was only two inches. Nonetheless, three times during the game I sighted Japanese troops and tried to call in gunfire. It was a 50-50 chance. I failed all three times.

Here they come to save the day! Three Shermans and a GMC AT halftrack head towards the Japanese tanks on the ridge.

On The Left



First Battalion was hit hard from the start. They did damage but fell back as the Japanese stormed towards our artillery line.

It was here that the half dozen Japanese tank platoons first made their appearance, striking nearer the open seam with 2nd Battalion than not. The Marines fought valiantly, but seemingly futilely.

Regiment sent all three Sherman platoons and the GMC platoon to the rescue. In the shootout, two of the three Shermans brewed up while all but one Japanese tank flamed.

In an amazing move, the remaining Sherman and GMC pulled back towards the artillery line. The last Japanese tank ground forward to end up lined up for a rear shot on the Sherman. The GMC ended lined up behind the Japanese tank.

In The Center

The Japanese made a big push in the center down the road, well, dirt track. Every once in a while, we heard “Banzai” drifting across the battlefield as up to company-level charges struck the dug-in Marines. A small ridge was taken and the Marine position was starting to buckle. Combat engineers helped, but you could see the difficulty growing.

Game Called

My losses were reasonable, especially considering the ugly die rolling, and the position secure. The left and center Marine battalions were in far worse shape. The Shermans were a spent force, but so were the more numerous Japanese tanks and tankettes.

End game position on the Japanese tabletop. Note the last Sherman and last Japanese tank in a knife-fight. Our US artillery line and the now recovered Company L are not spotted by the road in bottom left corner of photo.



At the end of the game, I went to see the Japanese battlefield. Interesting. There looked to be two companies on the left heading for our artillery line -- probably take three or so turns. In the center was a hodge podge lodge of troops milling about.

In my area, not that many Japanese troops, but, somehow a Japanese company of four platoons in a conga line was on the wrong side of my line and heading towards the center. I say on the wrong side because I had a line of K Company platoons that stretched to the swamp since the beginning of the game to prevent just that maneuver.

Based on the victory conditions of holding our line and preventing the Japanese from getting to our artillery line, us Marines had a decreasing chance of doing so. While our right was safe, the center was a maelstrom, and the left was shattered. Oddly enough, L Company turned out to be a solid reserve. Go figure. So, to me, likely a draw.

I didn't know the overall casualties as that info was cleverly kept from us, I don't know if the Japanese battalions were decimated or relatively intact. That may have influenced Marc to call it a slight Marine victory.

Double Blind Fun

After playing in Bruce's double blind naval games, playing in a double blind ground game was fascinating. There's more waiting than usual because the GMs had to physically move between tables and measure and re-measure where units were. As they had done this multiple times, they were experienced at it, so it had a sort of ebb and flow to it. Action heated up, action broke off.

I asked why all their double blind games were at night with limited sight distance. Jake noted that with a daytime 60-inch spotting distance, most things would be spotted almost immediately. Fair point. I imagine if a daylight scenario would be attempted, it would need lots of patches of woods and undulations in the ground to mitigate the instant spot syndrome.

An interesting use of cellphones by the GMs was to snap a photo of a position to help locate sighted enemy troops.

A double thank you to Marc and Jake for GMing this double blind game. And thanks to all the players who made this double blind experience enjoyable and entertaining.

End Of Convention

I left Sunday morning and had an uneventful drive back home. On the whole, I must say that was an entertaining convention. It was great to see friends I only see at the show, game a bit, buy a bit, and gawk a lot. See you at Fall In.

The Battle of BORODINO

Napoleon in Russia, 1812

Borodino 1812: He Go, I Went

by Russ Lockwood

Dan pulled out a game I don't think we've played in 30 years: *Borodino* from *Strategy & Tactics* magazine Issue 32. Indeed, I had to unlearn a couple things that our more modern wargames allow.

Middle of the game, Dan plots the Russian demise.

For example, units (including infantry) cannot move into woods hexes unless along a road. Artillery in enemy ZOCs can shoot at units other than those in their ZOC. ZOCs are locking -- if a unit starts in a ZOC, it cannot move. That's actually a decent mechanic to showcase the difficulty in Napoleonic divisions breaking contact and moving elsewhere on the battlefield.

Next was unlearning miniatures mechanics. No defensive fire. No real difference in units -- each division-sized unit has a combat factor against any and all comers. About the only difference is that artillery either fires into an adjacent hex or two hexes away.

So, with that in mind, Dan set up Scenario Three: the battle for the redoubts. In case you're wondering, the French start with 172 Combat Factors (CFs) in 43 units vs 144 Russian CFs in 36 units. That is exactly an average of 4 CFs per unit for each side.

End of Turn 1.

A Few Other Mechanics

Units double their combat factor in redoubts if attacked through all redoubt hexsides. The Grand Redoubt also has 5 CFs in each hex and the Fleches redoubt has 3 CFs



for an extra 13 Russian CFs. For some reason, units are doubled on defense if on road hexes in woods. Units attacking across fords and bridges are halved and no ZOCs extend across the river. The stream hexsides add an extra Movement Point and oddly enough, do nothing to aid defense. Units in towns are doubled on defense.

End of Turn 2.

Both sides' Guard units cannot voluntarily move closer than four hexes to enemy, but a guard unit is activated when within three hexes. Also, for every 15 CFs lost, one Guard unit can be activated on a side with the exception of the biggest baddest unit on the map: the 11 CF French Old Guard division. That one always activates last.

The setup is fixed. This game is so old, SPI had yet to figure out that the hexes should have numbers in them. Yep, not a single four-digit on the map. Not even a Row number and Letter column of old Avalon Hill games.

Mid Turn 3. French capture redoubt hexes.

By random roll, I was the Russians. The French move first in each of the 15 turns.

The French Advance

Dan dutifully advanced to start the attack. He demonstrated on the Russian left in the woods patch, but I had the numerical advantage as I withdrew to defend two hexes: One clear and one with a woods road.

End of Turn 3.

The Fleches redoubt on the center left



was a different story. Using artillery and big units, he gathered a 3:1 attack on my flank guard while soaking off with artillery pounding the unit actually in the Fleches redoubt. While the bombardment did nothing, Dan rolled the magic “1” and destroyed my 6 CF unit. Egads! That was one of the highest CF units on the Russian side outside the Guard.



Mid Turn 4. French surge.

The rest of the French started moving towards the center of my line. A “gimmee” attack surrounded and eliminated a Russian 2-4 unit holding an exposed position in the town of Borodino. As this unit was set up there, there's nothing I could do.

End Turn 4. The Russians recapture the redoubts.

On my half of the turn, I swung a unit from the woods to counterattack at low odds next to the Fleches. I pushed the French back and maintained my original position.

I could only place weak units in the Grand Redoubt, but I had a line.

As for the Guard, I moved them up to see if they could be triggered by the French.

Mid Turn 5. Redoubt slugfest.

Early Game

Sure enough, the French advanced and we battled anew. The French came within the three hexes of my two big 10 CF Guard units, so they were put into battle. One 10 CF unit became the flank guard of the Fleches redoubt and the other lodged in the town of Semronskyra. The Grand Redoubt was still a big light on CFs.



A concerted French attack on Turn 3 captured the Fleches and one of the two Grand Redoubt hexes while maintaining contact with the rest of my line.

Here's where locking ZOCs impact the Russians. Without being able to withdraw, I was essentially pinned.

End Turn 5. Thinning.

Counterattacks are mandatory. The only question was how to allocate artillery. Remember that my Grand Redoubt was a bit light on CFs? Well, my counterattack was foiled and one of the two Grand Redoubt hexes remained in French hands and was therefore destroyed for defensive purposes. I did recapture the Fleches.

End Turn 6. Back and forth the battle went for the Fleches. The Grand Redoubt was lost.

Mid Game

In Turn 4, the French pushed through the woods on my left. In the center, the French pushed the Russian Guard unit out of the Fleches and a small Cavalry unit sat on the destroyed Grand Redoubt hex. Dan's other attack into the other Grand Redoubt hex misfired and he retreated. At the same time, Semronskyra remained empty.

On my half, the counter-attacks began again. I shoved a big Guard unit into Semronskyra while the other Guard unit led the recapture of the Fleches redoubt. Amazingly, I was able to mount a sharp counterattack that recaptured the entire Grand Redoubt -- although its destroyed hex was no better than any other clear hex. How had the French managed such an earth-leveling operation so quickly?

On the right, I demonstrated with the cavalry. The Cossack cavalry were woefully out gunned when a French infantry 5 CF 4 MP showed up to support the French 2 CF cavalry units. Remember, 5 CF is 5 CF is 5 CF and its 4 MPs were only one hex slower than cavalry. All my Cossacks were 1 CF and 3 CF units. Later, a French 4-5 cavalry unit showed up, which I had to counter with a Guard 4-5 when it finally was released.

Well, the French captured the Fleches and Grand Redoubts again and pushed a little bit farther into my line on the right of the Grand Redoubt.

My Russian counterattacks on Turn 5 suffered a couple of Exchanges. The one in the middle was bad enough, but the one to the right of the Grand Redoubt left a slight hole.

Uh-oh.

At least I took back the Fleches, but I could see that the dwindling number of units had to cover the same frontage. I had dealt damage to the French over the last couple turns, but that only released his Guard units.



End Game

At the end of Turn 6, my left was still holding the woods. The center was thin. I lost the other hex of the Grand Redoubt.

On the right, I tried an attack to distract the French, but Dan correctly saw through my ploy with a muttered, "This is just a sideshow."

End Turn 7. A scratch line.

As Russian units fell, the attacks to keep the redoubts became more and more desperate. The Russians need to hold the redoubts for any chance of victory, so desperation it became. I could see the end in sight.

End Turn 8. The hole!

The end of Turn 7 found the Russian line in every other hex instead of every hex and smaller CF units thrown into the maelstrom to soak off so the better odds attacks could go in.

On Turn 8, the French didn't grab the Fleches, but did push past the Grand Redoubt and did capture Semronskyra. Even the Cossacks on the right were thinning. On my left, the French finally pushed through the woods.

On my half of the Turn, disaster. A pair of 1-2 attacks ended up with me rolling the vaunted Attacker Eliminated not once, but twice. The entire center of the line was a four-hex opening, which meant that the middle two hexes had no Russian ZOCs and the French could sweep in and around to mop up my Guard 10 CF units. Then they would have six turns to fulfil the big victory condition of exiting units off the Russian edge of the map.

Dan broke the Russian line and my morale. I conceded.

Thoughts

For a brief moment in Turn 4 or 5, I had a stable line and ample freedom of movement. I thought, maybe I really could hold the redoubts, which is a condition of even a tiny Russian marginal victory.

Alas, the steady loss of Russian units from superior French positioning, especially in artillery support, combined with some disastrous 1 in 6 rolls soon depopulated the Russian force. It wasn't like the die was biased high or low, it's that the magic number showed up at a most inopportune time.

Still, we both had possibilities at various times in the game. I think the funniest event was when Dan attacked and we discovered his target was sitting on Semronskyra, which doubled the defense factor and threw off his attack. Then, I made the same mistake!

Borodino may be old, but it's still a challenging game. Thanks, Dan, for setting out this oldie but goodie.





Scenario 3 set up. Note that SPI had not yet figured out to put a number in each hex. French in blue. Photo by Daniel.

S&T 32: The Battle of Borodino

by Daniel

When Russ asked for a game, I offered a “golden oldie” Napoleonic wargame to play: *The Battle of Borodino* from Issue 32 of *Strategy & Tactics*. *S&T 32* was my first issue I received from SPI. *Napoleon at Waterloo* was also sent and both were perfect games to introduce me to SPI wargames. Both are still favorites of mine to play.

The *Borodino* rules are fairly simple for an “I-Go, You-Go” wargame:

1. “Frozen” zones-of-control (ie: can’t voluntarily leave an enemy ZoC).
2. ZoC does not extend across a bridge or ford (but you can attack across)
3. Russian redoubts have a ZoC to their front (even if unoccupied).
4. No stacking.
5. No unit can enter woods (except by road).
6. Artillery may bombard (2 hex range, only woods block LOS).

7. Every unit in an enemy ZoC must be attacked in your combat phase.
8. Both sides' Guard units have release restrictions.

The CRT: A = Attacker. D = Defender.
R = retreat. E = Eliminated. Ex = Exchange. Photo by Daniel.

Unlike later games that use the *Napoleon at Waterloo* system, there is no "Combined Arms" shift for an attack that uses artillery, cavalry and infantry against the same target defender.

Combat Resolution Table											
Probability ratios (Odds): Attacker's Strength to Defender's Strength											
Die roll	1 to 5	1 to 4	1 to 3	1 to 2	1 to 1	2 to 1	3 to 1	4 to 1	5 to 1	6 to 1	Die roll
1	Ae	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	De	De	De	De	1
2	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	De	De	De	2
3	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ar	Dr	Dr	Dr	De	De	De	3
4	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Dr	Dr	De	De	De	4
5	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ex	Dr	Ex	Ex	De	5
6	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ae	Ar	Ar	Ex	Ex	Ex	De	6
Attacks executed at greater than "6 to 1" are treated as "6 to 1".											
Attacks executed at worse than "1 to 5" are treated as "1 to 5".											

"Today's Sunrise Reminds Me Of Marengo..."

The French move first in each game turn, so at 0600, *La Grande Armee* moves to attack. The Russian Guard Jagers in Borodino village are eliminated by the leading divisions of Eugene's IV Corps, while Davout's I Corps manages to eliminate the Russian 1st Grenadiers holding the southern flank of the Fleches redoubt. The Polish V Corps attacks the Russian III Corps at Utitsa, pushing them back.

The Russians respond by shifting their forces to properly meet the next French attack. The Russian Guard spread out, but cannot get closer than 4 hexes away from any French unit, but if a French unit moves within 3 hexes of a Guard unit, that Guard unit gets released for duty.

Russian half of the 0800 turn. Time to drive the French out of both redoubts. Photo by Daniel.

At 0700, the French escalate the attack, engaging both redoubts and Utitsa. The French push their luck and put their units in compromising positions to try and cut-off Russian units from retreating (activating two Russian Guard units in the process from proximity). Some ploys work, others don't, and more than one French unit is left surrounded.

Yet even in many of these "that didn't quite work the way I wanted" situations, Russ still has to finish off these units that often paralyze most of his front line and some don't go down without taking some Russians with them. By 0800, the French get into both redoubts.

The Fleches redoubt is recaptured, but half of the Great Redoubt is not, allowing the French to destroy it. Casualties mount on both sides, but Russian units are leaving the table more often than French units. By 1000, all of the Russian Guard units are active and two French Guard units are activated from cumulative losses.

Uvarov's Diversion?

While French IV Corps prosecutes their attach across the Borodino bridge, the idle French cavalry migrate north and start to cross the bridges towards Borodino. The Russian cavalry cross to demonstrate at 0800, but stay far enough away to avoid contact – but not for long.



The Russian cavalry start their attacks first, but the French welcome getting their cavalry into action and wade into the Russian cavalry, but it's mostly a side-show (as it was historically).

The Thin Green Line

The “sleepy” little town of Semronskyra between the redoubts was sometimes forgotten in the heat of combat: I forgot it was there for a 3:1 attack that turned into a 1:1 attack. Then on the same turn, Russ forgot about the town when he counterattacked. It still played its role as a cornerstone of the Russian defense and influenced losses on both sides.

Russian half of the 1200 turn. The Great Redoubt is lost and the Russian line is getting stretched thin. Now most of the French cavalry start to get into action. Photo by Daniel.

Russ found what I find to be a contradiction in the rules, but the example was clear enough: Artillery adjacent to an enemy *must* participate in *combat* (which is distinguished from *bombardment*), but an example is cited that allows artillery adjacent to enemy to still conduct bombardment as long as the enemy adjacent to said artillery is attacked by another friendly unit. *Touché*. He used it to good effect in two instances.

Steady losses drained the Russians of any local reserves. By 1300, there was a single thin green line holding the front.

By 1400, there is no more intact Russian line with 23 of the original 39 Russian units eliminated and Russ concedes, despite retaining the Fleches redoubt. The French have lost 15 of their original 43 units and have 8 turns to exit units off the map and most can do that in 5 turns. We wrap things up and put away the game by 11:30pm – about 3 to 3.5 hours.

Running the Numbers

Post-game, Russ started doing the math: The Russians start the September 7th scenario with 39 units (143 strength points), while the French start with 43 units (172 strength points). Five Russian units (43 strength points) comprise the Russian Guard, which the two 10-4 infantry were released by 0700 from proximity to French advancing into the redoubts and the rest were activated by casualties by 0900.

Six French units (42 strength points) comprise the Imperial Guard. The Guard artillery was released first from casualties at 0900. The Old Guard (11-4) was never released during the game.

One Rules Anomaly

There was one situation that came up about attacking across a bridge or ford. Units cannot attack or cross a River hexside except at a bridge or ford and a zone of control does not extend across a bridge or ford. Pretty clear so far.

During combat, all attacks are not required to be announced before resolving any, but we routinely do this to avoid illegal attacks. The active player determines the order that attacks are resolved. Also clear so far.



The situation was this: Two adjacent Russian units were being attacked. One was being attacked from Borodino across a bridge and the adjacent Russian unit was being attacked by other French units from the Great Redoubt.

The attack from the Great Redoubt was resolved first, forcing a retreat. The only legal place to retreat would displace the Russian unit at the Borodino bridge. Since it was being attacked during Combat, I said it could not retreat – effectively cutting off the Russian unit forced to retreat, resulting in its elimination. An alternative interpretation is that the displacement is allowed, since ZoC does not extend across a bridge or ford. The displaced unit would cancel the subsequent attack across the Borodino bridge because no unit can attack or be attacked more than once during combat.

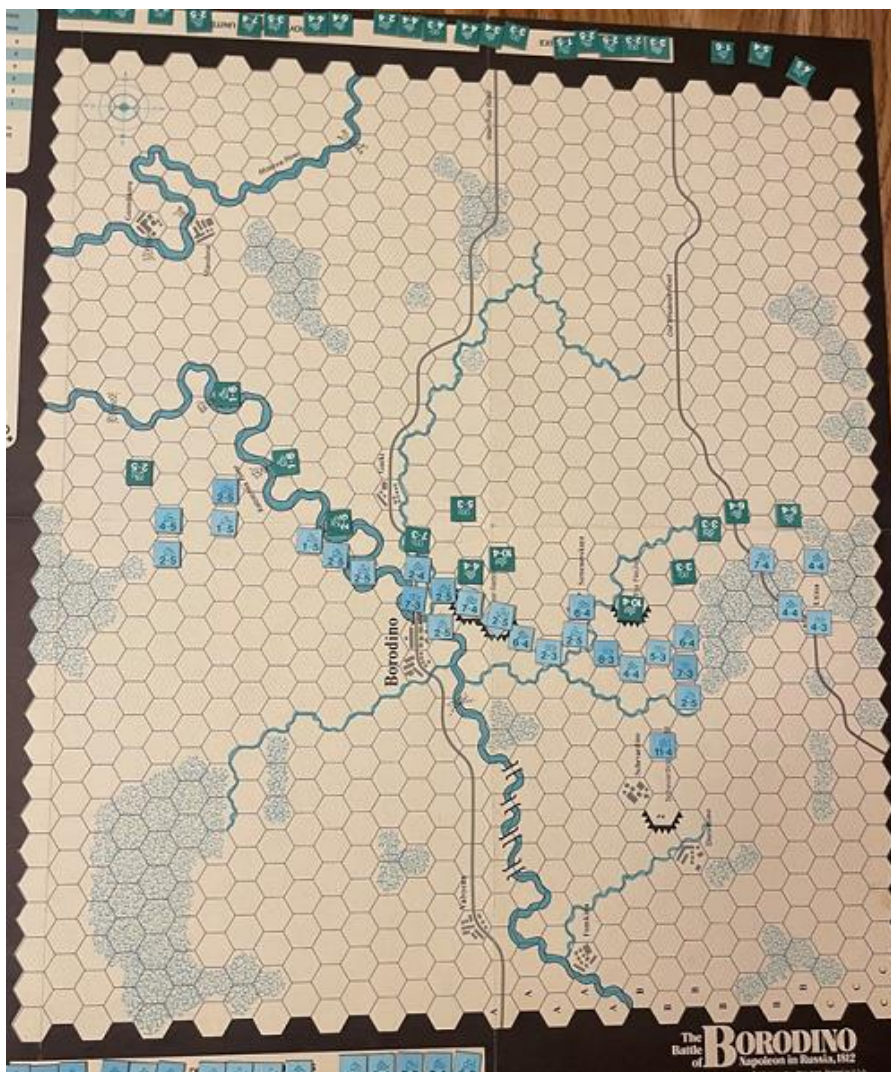
After the game, I wanted to see if we implemented the correct interpretation – so I looked up the errata and Q&A sections on BoardGameGeek. I found nothing on the subject, so I presented the situation and asked which interpretation was correct. Two gentlemen responded. One said the unit could not be displaced, but could not cite anything in the rules as written as to why.

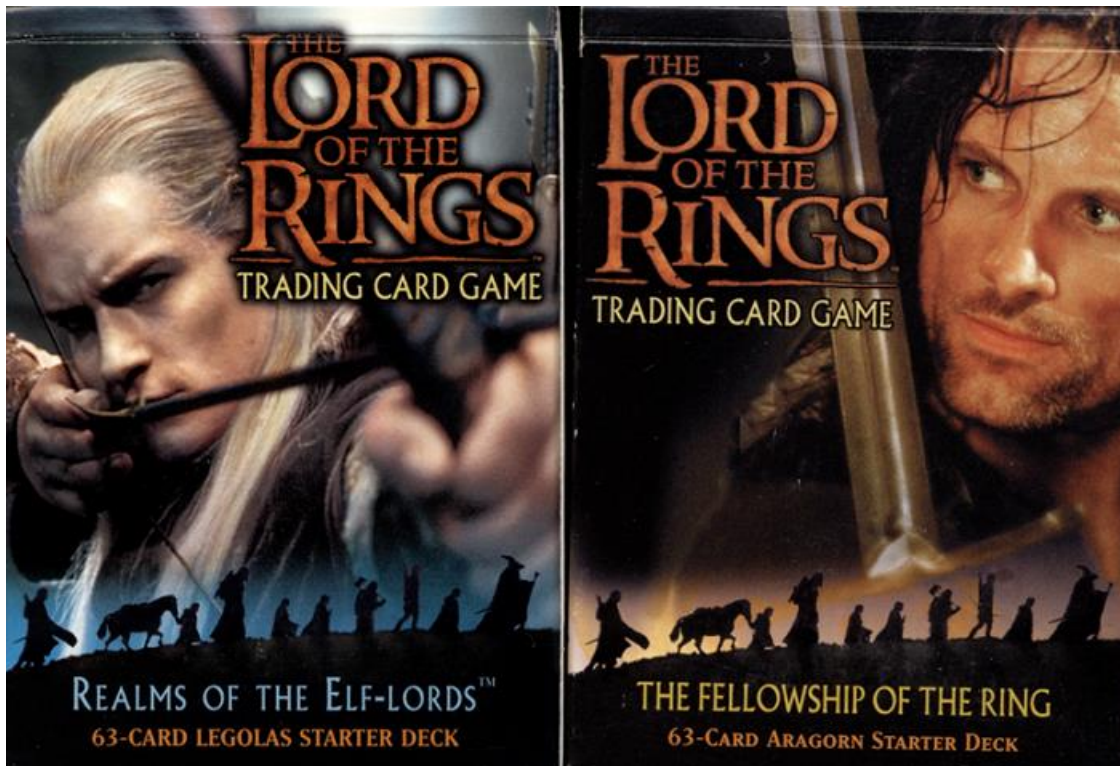
The second gentleman also thought the unit could not be displaced, citing Combat, section A, that stated “all units adjacent to enemy must be attacked” (regardless of ZoC). I pointed out Combat, section K, that indicated opposing units across a bridge or ford hexside may be attacked. No counter-argument was made.

So in retrospect, I believe that the Russian unit should have been displaced and my subsequent attack canceled. Other games in the Napoleon at Waterloo series (such as Napoleon’s Last Battles) allow ZoC to extend across a bridge or ford, so this anomaly would not occur.

Borodino is still a great game to play “as is.” Thank you, Russ, for indulging me in playing an old classic again.

Positions at the end of the game. Photo by Daniel.





LOTR: Trading Card Game

by Daniel

Russ asked me if I was up for a game. I asked if he had anything in mind. He suggested another “old” game and I came up with *The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game*. This is the first rendition published by Decipher from 2001-2007 before they re-designed and released it in 2008 (which obsoleted its predecessor, so I stuck with what I had). It follows the *LotR* movies but also includes lore from the book trilogy. The game still had a bit of a following, even if it is out of print.

There are three “blocks:” *Fellowship*, *Two Towers*, and *Return of the King*. Each block consists of three released sets. We played the *Fellowship* block, which is the simplest to learn and play, yet has good gameplay and important decision-making (plus some good luck).

I made four customized Starter Decks for each “block” many years ago, so after I blew off the dust, I asked Russ to pick one for himself (Aragorn) and one for me (Legolas).

Dual Roles

Each deck has a dual role: half the cards are used for your Fellowship, while the other half represents your Shadow role that will oppose the other player’s Fellowship. It’s a race to see which player’s Fellowship can complete their journey first. Following the first movie, the journey ends at the point when the Fellowship splits up.

My deck consisted of Frodo, Gandalf, Legolas, Arwen, and a number of supporting elves for the Fellowship side, while the Shadow side was organized around Saruman and his Uruk-Hai minions. Russ’ deck had Frodo, Merry, Pippin, Sam, Aragorn, and Boromir for his Fellowship, while the Shadow half was represented by the Balrog and the goblins of Moria.

It’s probably been close to 15+ years since we last played, but I did make a customized 1-page Sequence of Play that proved very useful for both of us to play the game properly.

Card Tour

After each of us separated our “Site Deck” of nine cards from the rest, we had to generate our starting Fellowship, consisting of Frodo and 4 points worth of Companions selected from the deck. Russ chose Frodo and Aragorn. I chose Frodo, Arwen, and Legolas. The cost of each card in Shadow tokens is shown at the upper left corner.

Each Companion or Ally has a combat strength (brown shield background) and number of wounds it can take (red background) before dying, plus any special card text describing any abilities or keywords. The signet at lower left can also play a role with certain cards. In general, cards having the same signet usually work well together.



Sequence of Play

Each player turn follows these eight steps or phases:

- 1. Start of the Turn Activities:** Especially important as a Sanctuary like Rivendell or Lorien.
- 2. Fellowship Phase:** The active player’s opportunity to play Fellowship cards and move to next site.
- 3. Shadow Phase:** The opponent’s opportunity to play Minions and Shadow cards.
- 4. Maneuver Phase:** Both sides can play Maneuver cards or abilities if they have any.
- 5. Archery:** Both sides can play Archery actions and resolve any shooting.
- 6. Assignment Phase:** Both sides can play Assignment actions. Fellowship assigns defenders.
- 7. Skirmish Phase(s):** Each defender resolves their melee in order Fellowship side chooses.
- 8. Regroup Phase:** Shadow player reconciles his hand. Fellowship decides if they advance to another site (go back to step 3, not step 1) or reconcile their hand as well.

Stutter Step

Russ suggested I go first. I incorrectly started my Team Legolas on Site 1 and moved to Site 2. Russ skipped his Shadow Phase because too few Shadow tokens were in the pool. By the time I finished my first turn after moving my team to a second site, I realized two things were wrong: I should have started “off-site” and moved to Site 1 instead of starting at Site 1. Also, when your Fellowship moves, one Shadow token is also added *per member* of the group. Now we’ve got the hang of it – and we caught the errors in time to avoid impacting the game.

Russ started out with a small group, while on my second turn I added two more elves to make a five-member party. The hazards associated with a larger group is that when it moves to a new site (usually from the opponent’s site deck), a Shadow token is placed in the pool for each member, plus any Shadow cost on the new site card -- the more dangerous a site, the greater the Shadow tokens. Also, if the Fellowship puts any new cards into play during the Fellowship Phase, that cost is paid by adding Shadow tokens to the pool as well. That pool of Shadow tokens is used by the opponent during the Shadow Phase to pay the cost of putting into play Shadow cards -- like dark minions, weapons, and special cards that might hinder the Fellowship.

The smaller group Russ had turned out to make decent progress. Besides the lower amounts of Shadow tokens placed in the pool for only two or three companions, he used Frodo to defend against my Uruk-Hai and played Hobbit cards that “cancelled” the Skirmish, avoiding combat completely – but this worked only for sites 1-4.

Russ is “reconciling his hand” during the Regroup Phase. Russ will start his turn 1 immediately after. Photo by Daniel.



My Uruk-Hai also had to pay a “roaming” penalty if played at sites 1-4 as they don’t normally appear in the movie until the Fellowship ventures deeper into their journey, so I could only deploy one or two each time he moved.

During the Skirmish Phase, the defender and minion compare strengths. The loser gets a wound, unless he is overwhelmed by being doubled or more.

Russ took a big gamble moving ahead of me at Site 3 instead of stopping (Site 3 is a Sanctuary and a great opportunity to recover wounds accumulated during archery and/or skirmishing). He forged on ahead, but the next site (Hollin) allowed me to avoid the roaming cost of Uruk-Hai. Russ had a card that added a Shadow cost for playing minions, plus another that reduced the number of Shadow tokens at the next site – so he had factored those advantages into his decision, but the removal of the “roaming” penalty canceled out much of the edge he thought he had and I was able to bring in three nasty Uruk-Hai that caused two wounds if they won a combat instead of the usual single wound.

Aragorn could remove a wound each turn, but his party was pretty beat up after that encounter at Hollin. When I reached Hollin, Russ introduced me to what he named “Bob:” a 13-strength Goblin minion (or group of minions more likely) which Arwen had to block at Strength 8, so Arwen took a wound. I stopped at Hollin as well, not wanting “Bob” to follow me to the next site.

When I moved to Site 5, I ended up adding 13 Shadow tokens between playing a one-point card, moving my six-member party, and six Shadow tokens for moving into Khazad-Dûm. The Balrog showed up (at a discount for being at Khazad-Dûm) and ate two of my elves. Fortunately, the Balrog can’t follow the Fellowship if they move to a site that is not underground, but the number of Shadow tokens remaining was still significant and I chose to halt at Khazad-Dûm and be content.

Late Game

When I left Khazad-Dûm next turn, Russ used *They Are Coming* card to recover “Bob” -- that 13 strength Goblin minion or group of minions -- from his discard pile. “Bob” would get recycled onto the table another time by another clever card play and I would have to sacrifice a companion to keep “Bob” at bay. Fortunately, most of the Moria Goblins are not as formidable...



We both stopped at the sanctuary at Site 6 to recover our wounds. Gandalf finally showed up in my hand. Apparently he saw the movie and decided to show up *after* the Balrog was encountered. I added Gandalf and two characters and passed Russ who sat at site 7 after eliminating the Goblin minions he played and moved on to Site 8.

Gandalf cast a spell that allowed me to use my Site 8 card instead of the one from Russ’ deck which was unknown to me. A very fortuitous decision: The site Russ would have played would have forced me to wound ALL my companions unless I had a Ranger -- although I later realized Arwen was considered a Ranger.

I also gambled he couldn’t use all the Shadow tokens I would be dumping into the pool. The gamble worked but I still lost two characters to “Bob.” I was still in good shape to make the last move to Site 9 on my next turn and drew my last cards in my deck.

“What happens when you run out of cards in your deck?” Russ inquired.

I looked it up: “You don’t lose the game, but play on with what you have left in your hand.”

Russ could see that I was in a good position and he saw he had one card left in his draw deck, so he realized he had to go for the double-move this turn to get to Site 9 before I did. It was the correct decision to make.

His card play and move to Site 8 placed nine Shadow tokens in the pool. I brought out Saruman, an Orc, and an Uruk-Hai for nine Shadow tokens. He has four members left, but one was killed in combat. Saruman and his minions are still alive and will pursue if Russ continues to the next (and last) site, but he can still handle three minions and keep Frodo alive. He knows I have no cards to draw during the Regroup Phase, so he elects to move to the next site.

Russ moved to site 9, Eryn Muil, with Saruman and his minions in close pursuit. Another nine Shadow tokens went in the pool. Did I have any more minions to play? Yes, I did: Another Uruk-Hai is played and the Fellowship is now outnumbered 4-to-3.

Normally, the Fellowship assigns defenders to each minion in play, but assignments are 1-to-1 unless you have a Defender+1 ability that lets you engage two minions. If there are any minions that have not been assigned a defender, the Shadow player determines which character gets double-teamed – and like the thugs they are, the Uruk-Hai pick on the little guy, Frodo. Frodo is overwhelmed and killed and Saruman looks at the ring and says, “I’ll take that.”

The game ended at this point.

I’m certain we probably did at least one thing wrong during game play, which I believe may have been the use of Allies, but I find the *Fellowship* block to still be a great game to play. I’m not so sure about the *Two Towers* or *Return*

of the King blocks, as they add a number of new rules (split Fellowship, Armies) that complicate the game to a significant degree, but we'll see if we get that far.

Post-Game Investigations

An Ally is not the same as a Companion and not a member of the Fellowship. They are placed below as part of the "Support". They can only participate in Archery and Combat at the site the Fellowship is at, but can use their abilities regardless where the Fellowship is.

Play of a card from the Discard Pile or Draw Deck follows the same requirements (is any) and Twilight cost as if played from your hand (unless it states a discount or played for "free").

I counted Allies as members of my Fellowship, so added Shadow tokens for them when the Fellowship moved, but I also used them as fodder for the Balrog.

Russ used *They Are Coming* to play Orc minions from his discard pile at no token cost. I balked at *Host of Thousands* allowing a discard minion to be played for free, so Russ paid the 6 Shadow tokens, but conceded to Russ' argument that he paid an alternative cost for *They Are Coming*.

Those are relatively minor errors for playing this game since at 15+ years ago...

I find playing the *LotR TCG Fellowship* "block" to still be a great game to play and easy to understand the mechanics and strategies. I'm not so sure about the *Two Towers* or *Return of the King* "blocks", as they add a number of new rules (Armies, "Control" of sites, Initiative, Ring-Bound, split Fellowship, Threats) to all those needed to play the Fellowship Block. That complicates the game to a significant degree above "novice-level" play, but we'll see if we put in a few more plays and see if we get that far.

Hobbit Helper: LOTR Card Game

by Russ Lockwood

Sometimes, in the quest for the latest and greatest, we have "oldie" latest and greatest games that haven't seen the tabletop light of day for quite a while. Dan broke out *The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game*. I vaguely remembered playing this, but so long ago only in memory fragments.

Dan had nicely summarized the sequence of play on a page and had a nearby three-ring binder with the full rules. So we began to relearn the game. It was as if it was a brand-new game. Dan's article recaps the salient mechanics, so I'll plunge into the adventure itself.

Sure enough, we laughed as we managed to make a starting mistake on Turn 1. Yet, we rewound the sequence to do a proper start and it wasn't a fatal error.

It's like trying to piece together the jigsaw pieces of memory fragments. If you're reading this, you can hear us saying, "Oh, right." "Oh yeah." "That's right." And every once in a while, "Let me look that up."

Dan has six members in his Fellowship. I have three plus Bill the Pony. I am temporarily ahead on Site 4 (the Boromir figure) while Dan is at Site 3 (Legolas figure).



The Adventure

Dan went first and we worked out the procedures for Shadow tokens, card play, and the Archery and Skirmish phases. With minimal opposition, he sped through Site 1 and into Site 2. I followed and did the same.

As he went to Site 3, my orcs managed to put hits on all his characters, so he stopped there. If you begin your turn on a Sanctuary site, you can remove up to five wounds.

Again, I followed. Thanks to special Hobbit escape cards, I could skip the skirmish phase with Frodo, frustrating Uruk-Hai attacks. The result was that I only had one wound on one character, so I pressed ahead. The key mechanic here is that while Dan can draw back his hand to eight cards, I was left with what was in my hand. Unused Shadow tokens are also retained and I played a card that made Dan pay additional tokens to play a card in addition to any roaming fees he might have to pay.

My Goblin Archer trades bowfire with the Elves. An arrow plunked Arwyn, but Gary Goblin sprouted a wound (red bead) back – and as you can see from his card, he only could take one wound (the “1” in the red circle). Mordor did not mourn Gary the Goblin.

Pressing ahead is always a gamble, but as the second player, if you never gamble, you will lose the race to Site 9.

Was I hammered! First, the site (Site 4) allowed Dan to ignore roaming costs. Then, Dan drew lots of Uruk-Hai, had the tokens to pay for them, and each Uruk-Hai caused two wounds instead of one in a successful skirmish.

Did I mention I was hammered? I had so many red beads (wounds) on my characters, they were diagnosed with orc measles.

Somewhere in here is where I think I lost Boromir. The Uruk-Hai enjoyed man-flesh that night.

The saving grace was that on Dan's turn, I played a big strength point orc card named Bob. OK, maybe the card wasn't officially called Bob, but that's what I named it. Bob seemed more like a tribe than individual, but delighted in bashing an elf with a wound. He also convinced Dan to stay in the site and not gamble.

Mr. Balrog whips a couple elves into oblivion.

Decision Point: Gambles

Whether to gamble on advancing to a second site or not is a key decision point that percolates through the game. You look at your cards. You look at the Shadow tokens. You look at the undefeated bad guys that stick around without costing tokens. And you know your opponent has a full hand versus your usually depleted hand, so more ugly fuglies are likely to appear. Then you make your decision.



Into The Mines of Moria

Site 5 was the Mines of Moria and that gave me one free card: The Balrog. You dig through your deck to find it and that's the only ugly fugly card that can be played. It's also worth 17 strength points -- highest in the game. It also has the "Fierce" attribute, which means it skirmishes twice.

Ah, it whipped one elf and sliced through a second. That helped convince Dan to stop.

I limped behind Dan and lived enough to also stop. Both of us moved into Site 6. I was pleasantly surprised to find a *They Are Coming* card that brought Bob back from the discard pile -- although it cost me three cards from my hand -- tough decision on which third card to toss. But Bob being Bob, he put an elf into a grave.

They Are Coming Card

We came to a conundrum with the *They Are Coming* card, which brings back a card from the discard pile. It costs three Shadow tokens to play and then charges you three cards from your hand to bring back an orc from the discard pile. Dan said you had to also pay the Shadow token cost of the card being brought back. I said the three cards were the payment for retrieval.

To the internet for a quick look. And of course, I found one note about cards brought back from the discard pile do not need to be paid for beyond what you paid to play *They Are Coming* (i.e. three tokens and three cards from your hand). I also found a mention of the difference between "play" (pay tokens) and "put" (don't pay tokens). As the card says "play" that would mean paying the tokens. I don't recall any card saying "put," although that may be in the revamp of the system or a different *LOTR* card game system, not the original. Dunno. The internet is the internet.

In the end, we decided that paying the three tokens and three cards was a steep enough cost to bring back the Bob card without paying his six token cost.

Later on, there was a zero-token card that allowed me to retrieve Bob (yet again) from the discard pile, but mentioned no cost. This one we decided had to have the Bob's token cost paid.

After the game, I found: "Some cards allow you to play a card directly from your discard pile. You must still pay any costs and meet requirements necessary for playing that card."

With that, then yes, you have to pay the token cost of a card from the discard pile in order to play the card. The key word in this rule is "requirements" -- that seems to refer to the three cards to discard as a requirement for retrieving an orc from the discard pile.

Post-game, Dan carefully combed the rules and found out you *always* pay Shadow tokens to play a discard card.

So, if you ever find yourself with the *They Are Coming* card and want to retrieve Bob, it'll cost you 3 tokens for the card, three cards from your hand, and another 6 tokens for Bob. Nine tokens and three cards make it the most expensive card in the deck. This won't be practical until mid game at the earliest and more likely late game. If you have the other similar card, which cost 0 (zero) tokens, it will still cost 6 tokens to bring back Bob.

Hence, as there wasn't nine tokens in total in the pot, I shouldn't have been able to bring back Bob the first time.

Back to the adventure.



Three of my orcs attack three of Dan's Fellowship. Bob is the 13-strength card on the right.

Race to the End

With all out wounds healed in the Site 6 Sanctuary, Dan powered ahead and reached Site 8. Funny, in all this way, he only drew Gandalf the Gray at this late stage. Dan popped him out right quick and his elf group slaughtered my weak goblins, who only needed one wound each to be eliminated.

I advanced into Site 8. In the skirmish, the Uruk-Hai killed the hobbit Pippin outright. Compared to Boromir, a hobbit is quite small, so the orcs added a little Hobbit Helper to make the hobbit-flesh go around.

Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?

If I stay there will be trouble. If I go there will be double...

So there we were and I had a decision to make: gamble and go on into Site 9 for the victory, or, stick. I looked at my cards. I had only two weak orcs in my hand and only one card left in my draw deck. Dan had plenty of elfen characters to shield Frodo. If I don't gamble, he goes in for the win.

Dan had three orcs in the field who would skirmish me anew if I tried the double move. You already know what happened the last time I gambled. Still, I could handle them. I think.

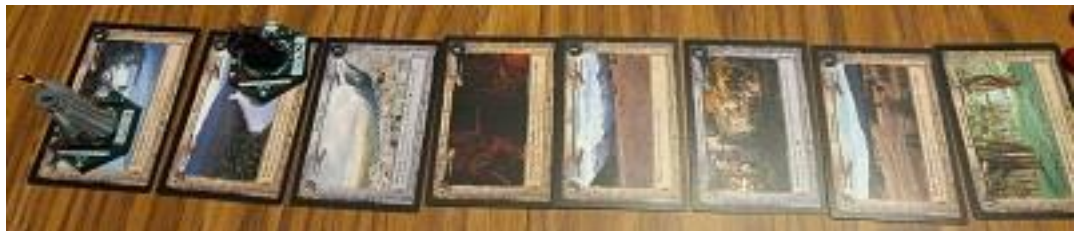
Hmmm... No choice.

I headed into Site 9. Shadow tokens filled the pot and the only question was if Dan had any orcs left in his hand to play...

Two On One

Here's an interesting and illogical mechanic -- one-on-one skirmishing. One Fellowship character only skirmishes one Shadow character. Throughout the game, this was no problem -- both of us had enough Fellowship characters to face up against orcs. Some characters, but not the ones we had, are allowed to fight two Shadow characters.

Dan (Gandalf figure) succeeds in reaching Site 8. My group (Boromir figure at site 7) soon reaches Site 8 and then must make a decision.



However, if the Shadow characters outnumber the Fellowship characters, the Shadows are allowed to gang up on one character. Baring special cards, that's almost always a wound and often instant death.

But I had an equal number of characters to Dan's orcs. The only question was if Dan had any orcs left in his hand to play...

End Game

So he did. One good-sized Uruk-Hai card came out, so he could double up on whatever Fellowship character he wanted...and he wanted Frodo and the ring. No matter how I stacked up, two cards vs. Frodo always resulted in doubled strength and instant death.

Game over, hobbit.

I looked at my one undrawn card -- Samwise! Sam, Sam, Sam...why are you hiding in the Shire? I would have gladly provided the Uruk-Hai with your hobbit flesh if it meant Frodo and the ring could live...

Thoughts

Good balanced game that came down to the last turn, even with wiggles and wobbles. Good decision points: small group generates fewer Shadow tokens vs large group that can afford to lose more characters. Do you try for the "double move" with a diminished hand of cards or not?

Thanks, Dan, for bringing *LOTR TCG* back to the tabletop. Quite entertaining.

Star Wars Skirmish: Imperial Assault

by Russ Lockwood

The thought came unbidden. "Use the Farce, Russ."

"Ahhh, don't you mean Force?" I asked.

"Nope, this is your brain calling. Definitely Farce."

I had to agree. When Marc asked if I would give *Star Wars Imperial Assault* miniatures game a spin, I said sure. It sounded familiar, but lots of games do. As he unloaded the 32mm miniatures and square-gridded cardboard maps, it really looked familiar. Alas, memory failed me.

Star Wars Imperial Assault scenario start. My four rebels against the Imperials.

Then the special dice came out. Hmmmm.... Then he explained the rules. Hmmmm.... Then we played. More Hmmmm....

After the game, I looked through the back issues of the AAR -- we played this in January 2020! A pre-pandemic game. Well, nuthin' like playing a game again that you've completely forgotten about...

Two Sides Of The Force

Imperial Assault offers two modes: Skirmish and Campaign. Skirmish is basically a one-off game. Campaign is more RPG-ish, where completed missions generate cash and experience points that can be used to "buy" equipment and skill cards for use in future missions.

In this particular Skirmish scenario, which I termed Action in Imperial Base LeCarre, four Rebels (Jedi, Wookiee, Soldier, Spy) are discovered in a room with two terminals. The Imperials (Commander, three Storm Troopers, a Droid, and a Laser MG) need to either wound one of the four Rebels or get next to a terminal and stop the download. The Rebels must exterminate all Imperials to get away.

Each figure comes with a card with the character name, attributes, special skills, and damage. Movement is usually four or five squares for most characters. Fighting is either Shooting or Melee.

Fighting requires the roll of special colored dice, the number and type are indicated in on the character card or on the weapon card. Each die possesses some combination of burst icons, special icons, and numbers.

My Jedi (left) and Spy confront the Imperial droid.



The burst icons indicate hits to the target. The special icons can be used to pay for special actions listed on a character card -- like stunning a target instead of hitting it.

The numbers indicate range from firer to target. If the numbers don't add up to equal or exceed the range in squares, the shot misses. You can "strain" (no idea what that represents other than a game mechanic to make up for shortcomings in the system) to add 1 to the numbers.

Hence, if you are setting up a scenario from the movie, say shooting across a docking bay or out at a Bespin docking bay or on the moon of Endor, the numbers will often not be enough to reach. You can strain until you get a hernia and you still won't reach. At least in this scenario, maximum range was about 5 or 6 or so, so most die rolls could reach. Sometimes, even a three-square shot barely reached.

End of Game 1. A Storm Trooper ends terminal load (bottom left corner).

As you'd expect, characters take a certain number of hits and become wounded. Then after they take more, they are dead. The Rebels took from 10 (Spy) to 14 (Wookie) hits to wound and an equal number more to kill.

All characters get two actions, mostly move and shoot or shoot and move or do something and either move or shoot. Players alternate activations by character.

And that's about all you need to know. I took the four pre-rolled (so to speak) Rebel characters versus Marc's six Imperial characters. After a successful infiltration, our tapping of the computer must have triggered an alarm. An Imperial team was sent to investigate...

Imperial leader Marc contemplates a response to the aggressive Rebel attack.

Let's Make A Deal

I sent the Wookie to the foot locker to see what was inside. Who knows, maybe it had something useful. Nope. Just 100 credits (useful if you were playing the Campaign RPG game).

The Imperial Droid moved and opened Door Number 1. Alas, the lounge suite wasn't there, but my Jedi was. He moved and attacked the droid and inflicted some damage. Then the Laser MG opened up and nailed my Jedi for hit points. My spy shot the Storm Troopers. The storm troopers shot the Jedi until he suffered 10 hits out of his 12.

My soldier opened Door Number 2. Nope, not a new speeder, just a clear line of sight to the Laser MG. My Soldier shot. Apparently, the bullet ran out of power because I didn't have enough die-rolled numbers to make a 6-square range. The Laser MG put a world of hurt on the Soldier. My Soldier closed the door.

So the shootout went until the Wookiee clobbered a Storm Trooper. Eventually, the Jedi pounded the droid into scrap metal and then retreated. Imperial shots scattered damage among the Rebels.

And then a Storm Trooper ran down the hallway to a terminal and won the game for Marc.



Game The Second

OK, experience shows. We reset. First goal: destroy the Laser MG. Then destroy the Droid. Then, mop up the Storm Troopers. Save the Commander for last -- his special power was "Cower" behind a Storm Trooper (the trooper takes the hits, not the Commander). Second goal: block the passageway to prevent a trooper from accessing the terminal.

This time, the Soldier opened the door and then opened up on the Laser MG, scoring some hits.

The Droid moved and opened the door. The Jedi meleed the Droid. The Storm Troopers shot the Jedi. Then the Wookiee charged the L MG and completed its destruction. The Commander moved away from the Wookiee. The Spy shot the Droid.

Round two began with the Jedi destroying the Droid and running away. The Troopers followed and shot the Spy. The Spy gunned down one Trooper and retreated. The Wookiee sliced another and advanced.

Round three saw the end of the Imperials.

The Wookiee chopped the LMG team as the Jedi charges into the Imperial room.



If It Was A Campaign Mission

At this point, I asked Marc what would happen had this been a Campaign mission. To the rulebook he went...

Winning gets you credits and an Experience Point. I shuffled through the associated skill cards that upgrade a character at a cost of one to four experience points. Naturally, the better upgrades cost the most. Likewise, the more expensive the equipment card, the better the weapon.

Suitably upgraded, it would be off to the next mission. I think a dozen missions made up the Campaign.

Interesting that the rules say a player only plays one character, not multiple characters. I figured one against six Imperials would be a suicide mission. Not exactly. Extra ability and equipment cards shower on a character when outnumbered.

Note that a dozen or so expansions are available, all expensive, but with gorgeous 32mm miniatures and lots of printed cardboard.

Thoughts

After two games, I remembered how it played, although we both sometimes forgot to check the special abilities. Once used, you remember.

The Strain mechanic is a mystery to me. You can strain to move an extra square. You can strain to extend a shot an extra square. You can strain to invoke some other special ability. All Jedi and non-Jedi can strain. I can understand that at a Jedi level -- use the Force. But when I strained, I called it using the Farce.

We modified the Shoot rules. I believe the rules as written allow you to shoot through squares containing friendly characters. Being miniatures players, Marc and I decided to disallow that.

"Chewy, duck! I'm firing!"

Angry reply: "We're in melee. Why are you going duck hunting?"

"No, no, no. You duck!"

Angrier reply: "I'm not a duck, I'm a Wookiee!"

Ba-dum-bum. Now, that's what's called Using the Farce in this nice introduction to skirmish *Star Wars*.



S

Both ships reinforce shields (counters).

Starship Combat: Talonashi Maru

by Russ Lockwood

Wow, that Captain Kirk is a tactical genius. Here I am playing the Talonashi Maru scenario as captain of a Federation heavy cruiser, and I can't outmaneuver a Klingon heavy cruiser -- ooops, the game didn't pay the licensing fee. Make that a Talon heavy cruiser.

I'm going to call this game *Talon* a simpler version of *StarFleet Battles (SFB)*. Back in the day, I played SFB a couple of times and never got my head wrapped around how hard it was to make intact *SFB* starships act like TV starships. The best SFB players knew how to allocate and re-allocate scarce energy right before making a zoom and doom run. A streamlined version of the game was released about 25 years later that was better but still quirky.

So along comes *Talon* with its 2-inch hex grid and 2-inch hex-shaped ships. No rosters -- dry erase markers tick off system boxes. A Player's Aid Sheet has Weapon charts, Movement charts, Energy allocation charts, and so on.

Of course I took the Napoleon.

Energy Borg: One of Five

Each ship type has a corresponding Energy Allocation chart that sets speed, turn rate, and extra energy. The faster you go, the less extra energy per turn and the longer it takes you to turn the ship. The slower you go, the quicker you can turn the ship and the more energy.

Speed is 1 through 5. For the Federation Heavy Cruiser, at speed 1 or 2, you move one or two hexes during a six-impulse turn and get 4 energy. You need to move straight one hex before turning 60 degrees. At speed 3, you get up to three hexes of movement and 3 energy, but need two hexes of forward movement before being able to turn 60 degrees. At speed 4, it's 4 movement, two energy, and two hexes before turning. At speed 5, it's 5 movement, one energy, and three hexes before turning.

As you can see, you have to make a choice. The energy generation allows you to reinforce shields by 1, power up the weapons, or reduce the hexes before turning by one hex.

I slid into the captain's seat.

"Suggestions, Mr. Spock?"

"Self-destruct. That'll save everyone some time."



There is an impulse chart that prompts movement and spending energy.

Mid game maneuvers.

As for the Klingons, oops, Talons, their ship is more maneuverable. At speed 3, it gets three hexes

of movement and 3 energy, but needs only one hex of forward movement before being able to turn 60 degrees.

Weapons have firing arcs. After discharge, they need to be recharged -- a series of red and yellow boxes. Red boxes can be re-energized only after a full turn, but one energy recharges one yellow box during the turn. More yellow boxes can be recharged at the end of the turn when re-energizing a red box.

Talonashi Maru Game

So, its shipo-a-shipo and I made the first mistake on the very first impulse. I turn. Now I'm in a turning war of maneuver. I think nothing of it. I've watched all the recreations of Kirk maneuvers.

Looking at all the checked-off boxes on the Napoleon, it was clear I was in trouble.

Then came the first exchange of fire. The Klingon, ooops, Talon, Heavy Cruiser possesses four disruptors, two per side. I have two phasers, one per side, and a photon torpedo bank.

You guessed it. Marc used his superior turning to line up all his disruptors on one of my sides. Each disrupter hits on a d6 roll of 2-6 for two damage. His first 4d6 shot hit three times and took out 6 shields (I had reinforced the shield with an extra shield using energy) on my port side.

No worries, I fire back with one phaser bank and the photon torpedo bank.

Mr. Sulu said, "Phasers are on target, Captain, but..."

"But what?"

"Torpedoes only fire ahead, not to the side. The Talon ship is out of arc," Sulu explained.

"What dimwit at FedBuShips designed this toothless tiger?" I blurted. "Sulu! Get us closer!"

We break away, recharge the phaser bank, and once again, I am outmaneuvered. I lose most of my starboard shields (Marc fortuitously rolled only two hits instead of four on his 4d6 roll).

"Scotty. Repair the shields," I order.

"Ach, I kenna do it," he replied. "Shields don't regenerate."

This is ridiculous. I speed up and put some distance between us and try and turn around. At higher speed, my turning ability is even worse. Ooops. Not enough distance. Marc continues to keep away from the photon torp arc. I slow down for better turning, but now I am at a speed disadvantage.

Yup. There goes my rear shields.

"Mr. Spock, time for the Corbomite Maneuver."



"Illogical, Captain. Corbomite is a fictional substance. Any maneuver without an actual substance would be pointless."

About this time I realize the pointlessness. I have a four-hex lead, but both of us pour on the maximum speed. I need about a 20 hex break to turn around and do a frontal shoot and scoot.

Oh yeah, another nuance I failed to pick up on: lose the initiative. Make Marc go first so I can keep his ship in my frontal arc at all times.

I called Sick Bay. "Bones, morale's a shambles up here. Romulan ale for the entire crew!"

"Dammit, Russ. I'm a doctor, not a barkeep!" The comm went dead.

I kept flying at maximum speed and broke off the battle with a ship still intact except for shields.

Thoughts

When up against a Talon Heavy Cruiser, take a Federation Light Cruiser -- it has almost as many boxes, can match the maneuverability, and most important of all, the ship designers figured out how to mount a phaser bank and a photon torpedo bank that can fire front, port, and starboard.

It's easy to pick up the basic Talon game system. Marking the counters with dry erase markers offers an instant glance at damage and capabilities without referring to a separate sheet of paper.

As for the hex-based system, it is simpler than SFB. The hex grid simplifies weapon arc determination over miniatures arc determination as well as movement and facing, but I prefer the greater flexibility of miniatures, which I find more believable than hexes. Of course, such has it always been -- hex grid versus angle degrees.

Still, it's a good way to introduce gaming concepts to youngsters. Even oldsters can learn a trick or two. Nuances optional, but recommended.

As for the Federation Heavy Cruiser, it's a shoot and scoot one Trek pony...

WWII Duel: Axis and Allies Naval Miniatures

by Russ Lockwood

Marc had read about the *Axis and Allies* (A&A) Naval Miniatures game in Solomons Slot (see the 6/19/2025 AAR) one-off scenario, Bruce's 1940 Norway Campaign game (see the 4/21, 5/23, and 6/19 2025 AARs) and Bruce's other double-blind campaigns and wanted to give the game a spin. So up came a Japanese vs American one-off scenario.

The US force: USS Iowa, USS Baltimore, USS Atlanta, USS Salt Lake City, USS St. Lo, USS Princeton, and three Wildcat fighter squadrons.

I gave him a point total and let him pick his US ships and planes. He chose the *USS Iowa*, *USS Baltimore*, *USS Atlanta*, *USS Salt Lake City*, *USS St. Lo*, *USS Princeton*, and three Wildcat fighter squadrons. He didn't see a larger carrier -- for some reason I had separated the ship cards in half when I put the ships away, so to be fair, he only had half the cards. No worries, it's a learning scenario -- any ships will do.

Akagi, Shokaku, their aircraft, and two escorting destroyers.



I picked the IJN carrier *Akagi*, IJN carrier *Shokaku*, two destroyers, and six air squadrons: two Zekes, two Vals, and two Kates.

In the A&A point system, these two forces were even up. Hey, I never said the system's point system was balanced. So, it was my air attacks vs his surface attacks.

Note: We did not use any special abilities. This was just a basic introduction. So, no extra dice for escorts or push the attack dive bombing, etc.

Knife Fight in a Closet

Each square in A&A represents 5,000 yards and holds a maximum of two ships of any type. After a quick overview of the card stats, we put the ships on opposite ends of the map and started.



The last turn.

Most ships move two squares, each square offset in a brick pattern that equates to hexes. I didn't move. He moved maximum. We started 10 squares apart, or about 30 miles. Consider it a reverse Leyte Gulf. Sort of.

The air attacks went in for a few turns, but Wildcats and AA handily aborted most attacks and in the end shot down three of my six Japanese squadrons. I managed to place two dive bomb hits on the *St. Lo*. All torpedo attacks missed.

Then the *USS Iowa* came in range as I sent out my two destroyers in suicidal torpedo runs. The cruisers took care of them while the battleship took care of my carriers.

Yes, I know, I should have been steaming in the opposite direction. Well, I should never have put CVs by their lonesome within 30 miles of a surface fleet, either, but he got a chance to try a number of combat combinations.

Thoughts

Marc certainly learned how A&A played, sans special abilities, although reading the cards he understood how the game could change with the special abilities. Certainly, he appreciated me keeping the carriers on the map. Worth another go at some time...



HMGS Next Generation: Hot Gaming

by John Spiess

Medievals at Tarrytown: NY

We started summer camp events at the Hackley School in Tarrytown, NY. Given that it was almost 100 degrees outside, all the gamers playing our games were VERY happy to be inside with great air conditioning. The school also provided a nice lunch for everyone, including ice cream.

The Tarrytown gamers enjoy a medieval melee.



WWI Air Warfare at Greenwich: CT

We played a *Wings of War* game at the Greenwich, CT, Library where the Germans had to shoot down two British balloons. We had four German players in airplanes and two British players flying support planes. As always, this is a great game for kids and they had a great time. We will be running games every day from Monday to Friday,

Upper: The Greenwich gamers and librarian.

Lower: The Greenwich gamers in flight.



Another piece of good news is that it looks like both Andrew (blonde hair, white shirt) and Ash (red shirt) will make it to Historicon. Andrew also runs a *Bolt Action* after school club at Greenwich High School. We have another seven game days planned between now and Historicon, so we will be talking up the convention as much as possible.

Medieval Castle Siege in Trumbull: CT

The siege was our first event at Trumbull Library. We were part of their summer kickoff event, which also included some medieval fencing demonstrating the arms and armor of the period.

The Trumbull gamers, siegers and siegees.

The kids loved both events. This was a very young crowd of mostly 4th to 6th graders with one or two middle school kids. We had to compensate by having one large castle wall run down the middle of a 20-foot long table. This way, the kids could



reach everything. It actually worked out really well, since we were using *Tactica Siege* rules. We just told everyone to take three to four rounds of back and forth bow fire, and then just send everyone in with the scaling ladders.

By keeping it simple, they picked up the basics right away/ We played multiple games with switching sides so each kid could play both attacker and defender.

A long table with lots of happy medieval gamers.

A few parents also played. Check out the dice in the box. Four sixes out of 6d6 dice. Joe Tomasulo would be proud (That's a NYWA reference).

I had Dave Flynn with me this time. Dave is a Stamford school history teacher who is thinking about adding miniature gaming to his curriculum. Thanks to John Manning for also stopping by to help as well.

The library wants us back for the Fall program. They proposed a couple ideas we can definitely help on.



Battle of Hastings in Ridgefield: CT

The game came down to a final morale die roll at the end. At one point, the two army commanders, William and Harold, were within two squares of each other. In the end, Gabriel and Morris barely won the game as the Normans. So it was pretty much a historical result.

Hastings gamers ponder the ridge defense and attack.

One other note that was really great in the bigger picture....

I have noticed that one of our wonderful regular attendees is really starting to talk more and engage with the other kids at each session he attends. Last night, he was laughing and really interacting with everyone. I spoke with his mom last night, and it looks like while they will be away in July, they should be attending Fall-In. Gabriel also plans on attending Fall-in.



American Revolution in Simsbury: CT

As part of the 250th Anniversary theme, John Manning and I ran another American Revolution miniatures game. In my opinion, this was one of our best events yet. While the Continentals still can't manage to hold off those Crown bayonet charges, we had a great group of kids who picked up the rules easily. And the additional girls that just popped in were wonderful. So, we had 10 players in total.

The Patriots and Redcoats of Simsbury gamers.

Our network is also growing since one of the kids' parent is an art teacher at the school. We spoke about getting these events directly into the classroom. While the reference would have to come through the library, this is not a problem since we are now well regarded as a four-year ongoing partner in Simsbury.



HMGS Outreach: Mixing History and Gaming

by Dave Allnutt, Outreach Director

First, the outreach committee would like to thank all of you who answered the call last month for volunteer outreach coordinators in Boston, greater DC/Northern Virginia, and Pittsburgh.

You responded with several volunteers for both coordinators and to assist our existing coordinators continue our mission of spreading the good word of HMGS and what the hobby has to offer.

All Regional Outreach Coordinators

Richard Claydon: Boston	ocboston@hmgs.org
Hayes Wauford: Carolina	occarolinas@hmgs.org
Sean Barnett - DC Metro / northern Virginia	ocmetrodc@hmgs.org
Cliff Brunken - Philadelphia	ocphilly@hmgs.org
Charles Sherrange - Pittsburgh	ocpittsburgh@hmgs.org

Contact them to find out how you can help grow our historical miniatures hobby in your area.

If you don't see your area in the listing above, please contact me at outreach@hmgs.org and ask.

Here are mini-bios of the coordinators:

Richard Claydon: Boston Area

Richard has been wargaming since he was a teenager and grew up in the east of England near Cambridge. He has reenacted various historical periods Tudor, English Civil War, Napoleonic and early 17th century America. President of Boston Trained Bands (an informal club) that met at the Hobby Bunker in Malden MA starting in the early 2000s. This club has presented numerous Games at local conventions and Historicon including Bunker Hill 1775 (Best Of Show 2009), Battle of the Dunes 1658, Olustee 1864, Battle of Maldon 991, First Battle of Ypres 1914, King Philip's War 1675, Battle of Lundy's Lane 1814.

The set up at the Woburn Public Library in the Historic Artifact Room (Mini Museum).

Boston Trained Bands started hosting a hosted an August game day in 2009 and it has continued, with new organizers, at the Hobby Bunker's new location in Wakefield. Richard has already been in contact with the Woburn Public Library and hosts games in their awesome H. H Richardson Gothic Revival Fireplace South Gallery room.

He has participated in presenting games at the American Heritage Museum in Hudson MA, Old Sturbridge Village, and Fort Devens Museum.



Sean Barnett: Greater DC/ Northern Virginia Area

Sean Barnett has been involved with wargaming for many years, going back to his first wargame, Tactics II, in 1975. He's been attending and running miniatures games at HMGS East conventions since the 1990s and he has recently been giving talks with the HMGS War College. He has been a playtester of several published games (*GURPS*, *Scorched*

Earth, Check Your 6!, and *Fireball Forward*) and he has written short books of scenarios for the *Fireball Forward* miniatures game system centered on the World War II battles of Villers-Bocage and Operation Epsom.

Professionally, Sean has been a defense analyst, nuclear engineer, and attorney. He's currently an adjunct engineer at the RAND Corporation where most of his work has involved military operational assessments and wargaming. He has published several reports and articles related to wargaming and he has co-authored a book on the potential impact of alternative technologies on the battle of Gettysburg.

Hayes Wauford: Carolinas Area

Hayes Wauford has been a historical miniature wargamer since age 12, first being introduced to the hobby through Wargames Illustrated Issue 89.

Hayes is an active gamer in his native North Carolina whilst also running games and attending HMGS conventions. Hayes helped run a local convention for two years and has been active in the Triangle Simulation Society, specifically helping grow the group's online and social media presence. Hayes is also an avid boardgamer, from *Advanced Squad Leader* to eurogames.

Hayes started the Camel City Wargamers group to cater to the Winston-Salem, NC area. He has also led a weeklong summer camp for rising 5th through 9th grade students for 3 years. This has introduced over 50 new young gamers to the hobby through an immersive week of gaming, painting, modeling and history lessons. Hayes has additionally led two "Afternoon Academies," hosting games weekly for similar age students, and done presentations at area schools using wargames as a way to teach about the American Civil War and American War of Independence.

Hayes is a NC State Graduate, majoring in Political Science. In his professional life Hayes has won numerous awards for historic restoration and preservation projects. Hayes has served on many non-profit boards including the historic sites of Bethabara and Old Salem.

Hayes is a three-time Skeet Shooting World Champion, active member of the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers AWI reenactment group, and proud husband and father to two boys who also love wargaming and history.

Cliff Brunken: Philadelphia Area

An award-winning gamemaster and a member of several gaming groups (HMGS, DelVal, MAPHOGS), and Co-founder NJCON.

He has been a HMGS volunteer for over 18 years. He has served in numerous positions (Senior Staff Registrar for Fall In, Senior Staff Events Manager for several Fall In's and Historicon 2021, 2024-2025). In addition, he is actively involved in HMGS operations, serving on the Election Committee (2019-present), Awards Committee (2023-present), and Outreach Committee (newly formed). Finally, he is working with HMGS Director of IT and his team to implement and improve our new software registration system, Tabletop Events.

Cliff is a credited playtester for several historical rule sets, including *Shako II*, *LaSalle v1*, *Flames of War – Vietnam v1*, and *Flames of War – North Africa v2*. He has also contributed to several scenario books, including Michael Hopper's Napoleonic series (1805, all four 1809 books), *Perfidious Albion*, *The Rise of Albion*, *Ruthless Tombstone* campaign, and *Tropic Lightning* (FoW supplement).

Professionally, he is an IT professional with a Financial Auditing background. He holds a BS in Finance from Pennsylvania State University and a MS in Computer Science.

As part of the Outreach team, he has run events at Fort Mifflin (2+ years), aboard the USS Olympia (4+ years), and Brandywine Battlefield. Currently part of the PAX Unplugged and Pennsylvania Area Gamers Expo team that has successfully registered new HMGS members at each show

Charles Sherrange: Pittsburgh Area

Charles started his wargaming as a kid in the late 80s playing against his most common opponent to this day, his father David. His wargaming journey started with rolling dice against plastic army men then to old Avalon Hill games and Airfix Napoleonics. He has been an active member of HMGS and an attendee at most of the conventions since his first Historicon in the Fredericksburg heat in 2016. Charles has run multiple games at various conventions, and won a PELA for his French and Indian war skirmish at Fall In! 2023. He is also an avid tournament player for Bolt Action, a frequent gamer in the Pittsburgh area, and regularly games historical miniatures from most periods, board games, and RPGs. His non-gaming hobbies include visiting the various rich historical sites in the Pittsburgh region.

1810 Battle of Grand Port at Woburn: MA

by Richard Claydon

We held our event at the Woburn (MA) Public Library as part of its Summer Reading Program Kick Off with theme of games.

Our Area was in the Historic Artifact Room (Mini Museum) of the library surrounded by items from the town's history going back to the 17th century. The game was the Mauritius Campaign Battle of Grand Port August 1810 and inshore frigate action.

The captured fort fires on the French frigates.



The Mauritius campaign of 1809–1811 was a minor military campaign of the Napoleonic Wars fought between British and French forces over France's Indian Ocean colonies of Isle de France (Mauritius) and Isle Bonaparte (Réunion). Lasting from the spring of 1809 to the spring of 1811, the campaign saw the British and French navies deploy substantial frigate squadrons to either protect or disrupt British-flagged shipping in the region.

Two French frigates ram and board an English ship, forcing it to surrender.



We also had a scavenger hunt where kids looked for Fort Ile de la Passe, British Royal Navy Ship, French Imperial Navy Ship, whales, and other items. My boys and I played intermittently through the afternoon talking to visitors as we played. Six Children did the scavenger hunt (winning French and British flag stickers) and 17 children and 44 adults watched/asked about the game.

Whales play near the French ships.



Other activities included: Children's Room – All day children's summer reading registrations, children's scavenger hunt, and friendship bracelets; Program Room – Lawn games, mega LEGOs, and other playtime fun from 1-3pm; Ground Floor Lobby – Visit the Friends of the Library for tasty treats and check out the book sale; Circulation & Reference Desks – All day adult summer reading registrations; Teen Room – All day teen summer reading registrations and games; Maker Space – Show your style with airbrush tattoos; Richardson Gallery (Fireplace Area) & Frizzell Study Hall – Come meet talented local authors at the Local Author Book Fair or participate in the adult scavenger hunt for additional chances to win prizes from 1-3pm.

Ring Quest: LOTR

by Russ Lockwood

All the *Lord of the Rings* games we had played inspired Renaud to create his own version of *LOTR*. The first time we played, with me as the Sauron player, we hit a couple bumps, but it had potential. For this second time, it was smoother.

Renaud, chief hobbit hider and bottle washer, begins the quest to return bad jewelry.

Note that when faced with two possible mechanics, Renaud always harkened back to the original *LOTR* books. I have to say that while I remember the movies pretty well, I had not read the books in 30 years, so my reactions were a tad fuzzy.

When we stopped the game on some point or another, we also discussed the books and the books versus the movies. Hmmm. Maybe time for a re-read?

Somewhere I have the original cardboard encased four-book set made popular in the late 1970s. I'll probably need a new set because I likely need a larger font!

Twin Quests: Ring and Army

For the Fellowship player (Renaud), the Frodo and Sam counter needs to get to the Mount Doom space. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are on one counter. Merry and Pippin are on one counter. Gandalf the Gray has his own counter as does Gandalf the White. Boromir has his own counter. In addition, there are quite a few rumor counters available to the Fellowship player. All these are placed face down on Rivendell.

The Balrog versus Gandalf the Gray at Cirith Ungol. Long they fell...

The Sauron player has two orc counters, a warg counter, a crow counter, and four Nazgul counters (Witch King, one Nazgul, two Nazguls on one counter, and five Nazguls on one counter). All these are placed face down in various spaces across Middle Earth.

In addition, Sauruman and Gollum have counters, but both are only available for long-range spying every other turn. On the other turn, Gollum is available to the Fellowship player to keep a counter hidden.

In addition, both sides have a number of armies scattered around Middle Earth, but these are all locked in place until a certain turn, which had yet to be determined. The ending turn is also changing.

Hide and Seek

In this game, the Fellowship scatters. It doesn't have to, just that it's far more difficult to find Frodo when multiple piles move out. Certain spaces trigger certain events. For example, if Aragorn takes a certain path, he gains the Army of the Dead. Fellowship characters can enter Cirith Ungol (Shelob's lair) via the secret path.

Characters pin other characters, even if the "character" is a rumor (dummy counter). We discussed whether rumors would be powerful enough to pin Nazgul riding fell beasts.

So, I tried to track down Frodo and slay him to take the ring. Renaud tried to hide him among all the counters. Some of his counters headed over the snow pass, others through the Mines of Moria, others northward, others to the Gap of Rohan, and others just scattered to confuse me.

And he certainly did. We played that all characters and rumors pin enemy characters if they move atop the enemy characters. Characters that start the second half of any turn are pinned. No flying over an enemy character.

Rumors are removed upon reveal. They come back the very next turn atop any character or unrevealed rumor. Sauron's character minions sure have their work cut out trying to find actual characters.



Before, character combat was deterministic. Now, it involves dice. I like the dice better, but that's me.

Merry and Pippin face orcs and Nazgul.

Army Maneuvers

Armies remain locked in place until either hobbit counter is found or a certain turn -- which has been changed. Armies in Mordor require a Nazgul counter to lead them. Otherwise, they stay in Mordor.

Some spaces are fortresses, such as Helm's Deep. Minas Tirith, Lothlorien, Minas Morgol, Barad Dur, and others. If the Sauron player can capture certain fortresses, he wins. If the Fellowship player can capture certain fortresses, he wins. Armies mostly toss one die each, with more dice from characters who decide to lead an army instead of continue on the quest to dump the ring.

Incidentally, characters are ignored by armies and visa-versa.



The Game

So we played and discussed. I scattered to try to find hobbits. I found Boromir early on a wide circle trying to get to Minas Tirith. I found the Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli counter swinging wide in the other direction. Gandalf and the hobbits went up the middle as per the book up until Lothlorien.

I was unable to stop hobbits from getting to Cirith Ungol, where the luck of the random monster draw found the Balrog (not Shelob) there. The Balrog killed off Gandalf the Gray (who came back as Gandalf the White a few spaces away) and found and killed Merry and Pippin.

That released the armies, which advanced in multiple directions. The Nazgul were called home to Mordor immediately. I congregated a quartet of armies led by a Nazgul at Minas Tirith, which found Boromir leading the defense. Right about this time, the orcs found Frodo and Sam. In a quick skirmish, Frodo was forced to give up the ring.

Grabbing the ring ended the game. More discussion about mechanics and distances. Renaud added more spaces to the map to offer alternate ways to get into Mordor. The Nazgul, swept downriver, start the game on Turn 2 (not one) to get the game timing to match the book timing. A few other things were tweaked as well.

Thoughts

The basic concepts remain intact. The hide and seek aspect proved the most enticing. So many times, I said to myself, "Where is that little bugger?" I was forced to cast a wide net. Sometimes I was sure a particular counter was Frodo, but alas, it was but a rumor. Good job on spreading the counters, Renaud. At a certain point, searching manages to find the majority of the Fellowship character counters. Then it's a case of concentrating a lot of bad guys atop Frodo and Sam. Interesting mechanics. Keep going.

Dominion: Card Game

by Russ Lockwood

We had some time left, so I introduced Renaud to *Dominion*. I've extolled the virtue of the game. It's not much on storyline, but the mechanics are solid and replayable.

I only have the basic set, but that was enough to explain concepts and put in a quick game. Renaud built a nice deck that turned over quickly. In the end, he beat me by two provinces.

While he was unimpressed with storyline, he found some of the card mechanics interesting. I noted that I thought it would make a great pre-campaign set up type of game -- the expansions add all sorts of people and places that could populate a map. I tried it once, but was that a botch job!

Thanks for the games, Renaud.





The A-Team preps for another encounter with evil. Clockwise: GM Sean (tan shirt), Ed, Fred, Jordan, Connor, and Steve.

Any Teleport Into a Storm: *D&D*

by Russ Lockwood

After securing the Eye of Stirling tower and using its lenses to spy out an opening into the catacombs beneath the city of Stirling, we had revived ourselves at Sheffield and dropped off treasures for safekeeping. Now we were out to squish a lich. Our often-shifting lineup consisted of Tazan Rell the Archer (Russ), Hammer the Mage (Ed), Balien the Wizard-Fighter (Fred), Rufus the cleric (John), the return of Frank the cleric (Jordan), Gavriel the wizard (Connor), and Cristof the wizard (Steve).

I visited Nevar the Alchemist (Dan) and dropped off the various bits and pieces collected from dragons, yetis, and other creatures as related before. We chatted about the adventures. His expanded lab at Sheffield was shaping up nicely.

A week later, the A-Team set off to go back to the Eye. We rode spell-bound ethereal horses to the Eye of Stirling.

Satisfied that no evil reclaimed this place, we debated how best to approach the city of Stirling. The fastest way would be down the road, a route Frank favored. The rest of us demurred. Using the lens again, we saw plenty of skeletons, ghouls, and other undead marching about -- too easy to be discovered. We equally dismissed the open grassland for much the same reason.

So, we kept to the base of the mountains with enough cover to hide from flying creatures. Alas, we were not completely stealthy, for we must have tripped some magical wire -- invisible eyes floated around us until Balien used Frank's magic wand to zap them all. It's always good to have a magic user who can see invisible spy stuff.

At a cave, we debated going inside, for rumors were that within this cave was a passage to the catacombs. Too slow and too much fighting. We aimed to cut the head off the undead snake, not play with its minions.

At this point, with the city in our sights, we still debated over entry. At one point, Frank the Cleric suggested we build some sort of a Trojan Horse-type offering. I immediately suggested a Rabbit.

Our goal was the destruction of the lich, which meant finding some unknown item containing his essence. Our only clue was it was located in the "Shadows."

The Guardpost

In the foothills outside Stirling, we found the entrance to the catacombs via a guard post. Down we went in single file through a narrow tunnel until we reached a strong door, which was fortunately unlocked. I guess when you're a big bad lich, you don't worry about locks. We entered and found a small anteroom with two open coffins, one smashed and one with grave soil.

We enter the catacombs.

While vampires don't need to sleep in this universe, they do need to sleep on grave soil to heal. Balien sprinkled some holy water on the grave soil.

We had a choice of corridors left or right and so headed right, ignoring closed doors. We had a sneaking suspicion that inside the doors were skeletons and other low-level undead. We were after the big cheese, not the moldy crumbs. We sent our recon ghost book ahead, which did a fine job until it reached a main hallway and flickered out of existence.

At the entrance of a wider corridor leading deeper into the city, a vampire that had been literally hanging around dropped to the floor to greet us. Despite our initial reaction to slay the undead, we decided to talk.

Turns out Velcro the Vampire was a bit miffed at his bosses, for he had been demoted from the city to the catacombs. Indeed, he had once been in the City of Dread before being booted. He was quite helpful in explaining how to find the teleport circle that would get us from Stirling City to the City of Dread as well as a list of sub-leaders he would not mind seeing bumped off: Lady Siddhartha the Banshee, White Duchess the Vampire, Black Tooth the Ghoul, Iron Mauler the Masked Wight, Ernie Kovacs the Flame Lich, Scroll-Bound King the Librarian Mummy, and the slipperiest character of all, Vaseline the Archivist Mummy. In addition, there was our old friend Morty the Dragon Lich with his bud Tommy the Zombie Dragon Turtle.

Just as we previously made deals with Fireass the Red Dragon and Dunkin' Drow the Unibrow, so we made a deal with Velcro the Vampire. He would grant us safe passage to and from the teleport circle and we'd see about bumping off some of the aristocracy of the City of Dread so he can be known as Velcro Jefferson who's Movin' on Up.

He led us only so far and pointed to a stairway. "Up there and out." He hurried back to his post. We headed up into the ruined cathedral of Pelor -- ruined except for the altar and a bowl of holy water that were bathed in magical sun rays. Rufus of the Light and Frank of the Pelor Light both said a few words at the altar, pulled some holy water, and drank. They felt inspired and energetic.

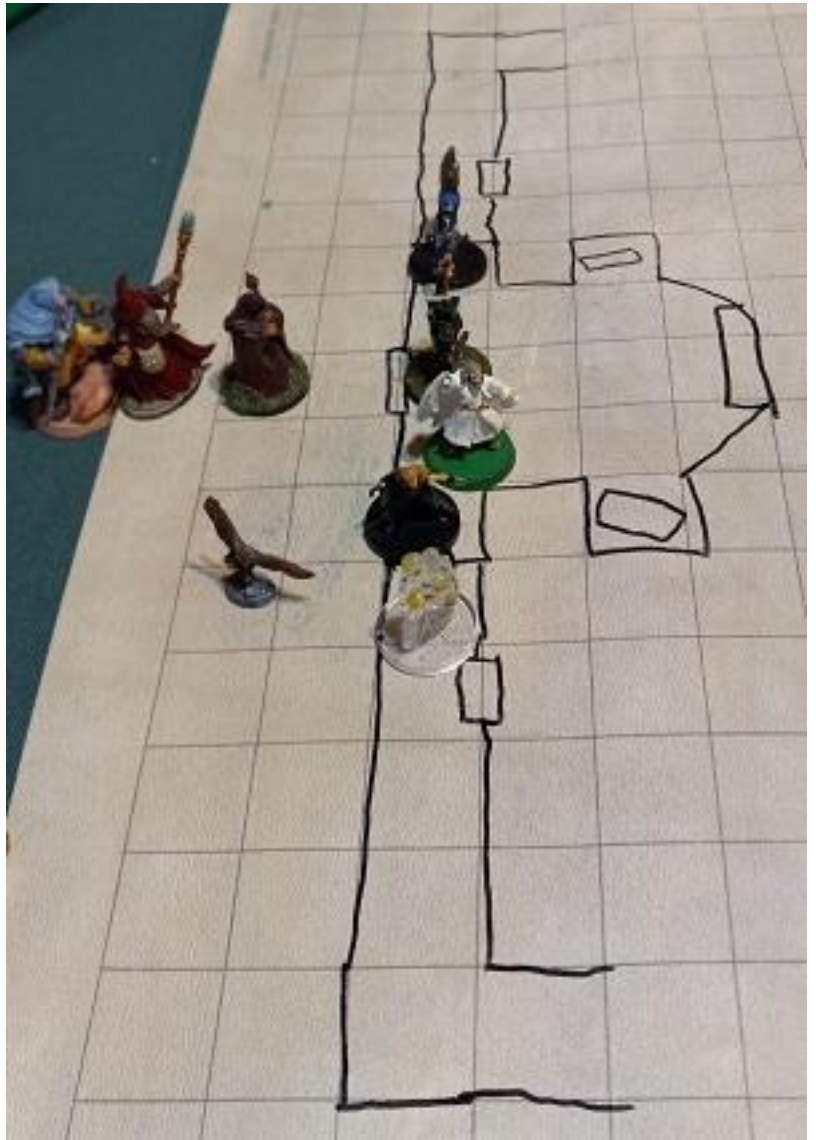
At seeing such beneficial effects, Cristof figured that with all the undead around, a bit of go-go juice might prove helpful. Alas, to a non-cleric, it was but a nice sip of water.

We hopped into the teleport circle with its elaborate design and symbology, but nothing happened. We grapevined to the right. We grapevined to the left. We stepped back, stepped back, stepped forward, stepped back, stepped forward, and scuffed into another right grapevine. Then back into a left grapevine. Stomp/clap!

Nothing happened.

Fortunately, Cristof remembered he had a magic chime of opening.

Ding-Dong, A-Team calling. We emerged on a teleport circle in the City of Dread.



C'mon Baby Light My Fire

This pedestrian-friendly city had minor undead aristocrats of every type strolling down the middle of the streets while ill-clad human, elf, dwarf, and other living slaves cowered alongside the buildings.

Hammer immediately transformed into the image of Velcro the Vampire and led us “slaves” off the circle. We had no idea where we were going, but in a clever bit, Hammer asked a ghoul leading a skeletal guard where Lady Siddhartha's mansion was, for he professed ignorance of the City of Dread. We were not in rags, but fully armored and ready for action. Fortunately, ghouls are not that bright.

The ghoul would tell him, but wanted some treasure. Our experienced Hammer/Velcro proffered a gold piece. Our relative newcomer Frank piped up, “I'll give you 50 gold pieces!”

The rest of the party held a collective breath. Way to go, Frankie, we're trying to sneak casual...

The ghoul, no fool, took the cash. He leaned over to Hammer/Velcro and said, “I would have told you for the one gold piece.”

We were soon in a rural section of the city. Hammer walked up the stairs and knocked, to be met by a banshee maid. From the back of the mansion, a most cacophonous wailing that passed for harmony met our ears. Cristof immediately put a deaf spell on himself.

To the maid, Hammer/Velcro spun his story about delivering these non-undead. She said she had not heard of such a delivery. Alas, he apparently committed a faux pas by entering the mansion instead of being invited in. She opened her mouth and banshee screamed.

Saving rolls all around except for the prescient Cristof, who eliminated the maid. Others fired up spells.

Within the mansion, skeletal guards closed in. I'm guessing that since skeletons don't have ears, they're immune to banshee screams. In any case, Rufus banished them into dust.

Then I made a mistake.

Lady Siddhartha

As I had been affected by the maid's scream, I was dead last in the pecking order. My head pounded, although it was rapidly clearing from the maid's sonic reverberations. I absent-mindedly opened the door to the ballroom and spotted Lady Siddhartha leading her choir of four bansheettes.

Oh, my ears rung anew with the worst version of *Freebird* I ever heard.

Oh, I should have waited a tic so that everyone might have a chance to act before Lady Siddhartha. Nope. I just opened the door.

Knowing I had surprise, I drew an arrow and shot at the Lady, but the debilitating effects of such noise made me miss. The thunder from my bow certainly dissipated the echoing caterwauling.

“Who dares interrupt my choir practice?” Lady Siddhartha demanded. She opened her mouth and screamed. The four bansheettes screamed. It was saving throws all around. Amazingly, after five successful saving throws, I was unaffected. Obviously, my ears had grown used to such wailing. Rufus dropped like a two-ton hippo.

Next thing I knew, the A-Team piled into the ballroom, flinging fireballs and spells. The four bansheettes lay crispy and the Lady Siddhartha dissolved under the attacks. All that was left was her magic red dress.

Cristof claimed it, for a red dress with a +2 to defense would suit his wardrobe. Apparently, one size fit all.

“So Cristof,” I asked, “Will you be wearing that commando like Lady Siddhartha?”

Cristof knew his need for a bit of better armor was going to get a ribbing.
“Tazan. It's more of a cloak.”

“Nope, I see a blood red sun dress.”

The rest of the A-Team was starting to enjoy his discomfort.

I added, “Will you be putting it on over your head, or stepping in and pulling it up from your ankles?”

Balien chimed in, “Would you like me to zip you up?”

“It's a cloak.” Cristof insisted.

I pondered, “So, when you wear your dress, will it be as an A-line or a mini-skirt?”

“It's a cloak! A cloak!” Cristof protested, then slapped his head with his hand. “Now I'm going to be nicknamed Klinger.”

The rest of the group shook their heads. “Definitely a dress.” “He said dress.”
“The Lady may be a tramp, but she wears a dress.”

“Hmmm...Cristof,” I said, then sang. “Devil in a red dress, red dress, red dress, Devil with a red dress on.”



The guffaws continued.

Eventually, we composed ourselves. I was almost about to concede that he may call it a cloak all he wants...and then I'd start with Little Red Riding Hood jests. Actually, he might have saved some grief by calling it a kilt... Nah...

We ended up looting the place. Six paintings were worth 250 gold each. I claimed a magic ring of regeneration that healed 1d6 HP per 10 minutes and would regrow a severed limb in 1d6 days. I would have to switch between it and the Charisma Ring. I could only use one ring at a time.

I thought we would arm the slaves for a good ol' fashioned Spartacus revolt, but Hammer/Velcro proved the wiser. He commanded human slaves to maintain the mansion as is and call it Velcro's mansion. It would serve as our base for the moment.

A Mummy is a Terrible Thing To Paste

Next on our hit parade was a couple of mummies: The Librarian and the Archivist. Once again Hammer/Velcro led the way after asking a wight for directions. This wight wasn't greedy and Frank didn't offer any cash. We noticed that Cristof's dress leaked blood from the hemline. I'm not sure that helped him fit in, but he was still pleased with his defensive upgrade.

The Library.

The pyramid-shaped Library of Lost Knowledge had one entryway staffed by a front-desk ghoul. Upon entry, it said, "Tell me a fact."

I thought a moment and said, "The Sacred Grove is occupied by an Ent."

Instantly, I forgot all about the Sacred Grove's occupant. Every fact told vanished from its speaker's memory. Frank was quick on the uptake and memorized all the facts except his own. Once inside, he relayed them back to us and one of us returned the favor. Clever twist on the name, that.

We descended the stairway. We emerged on the main floor from the base of pedestal. We looked over our shoulders. It was a 40-foot tall demon statue sitting cross-legged on the pedestal holding a fire pit in its lap. We couldn't help noticing that one of its gem eyes was gone, but the other was still in. Oooh... Sparkly.

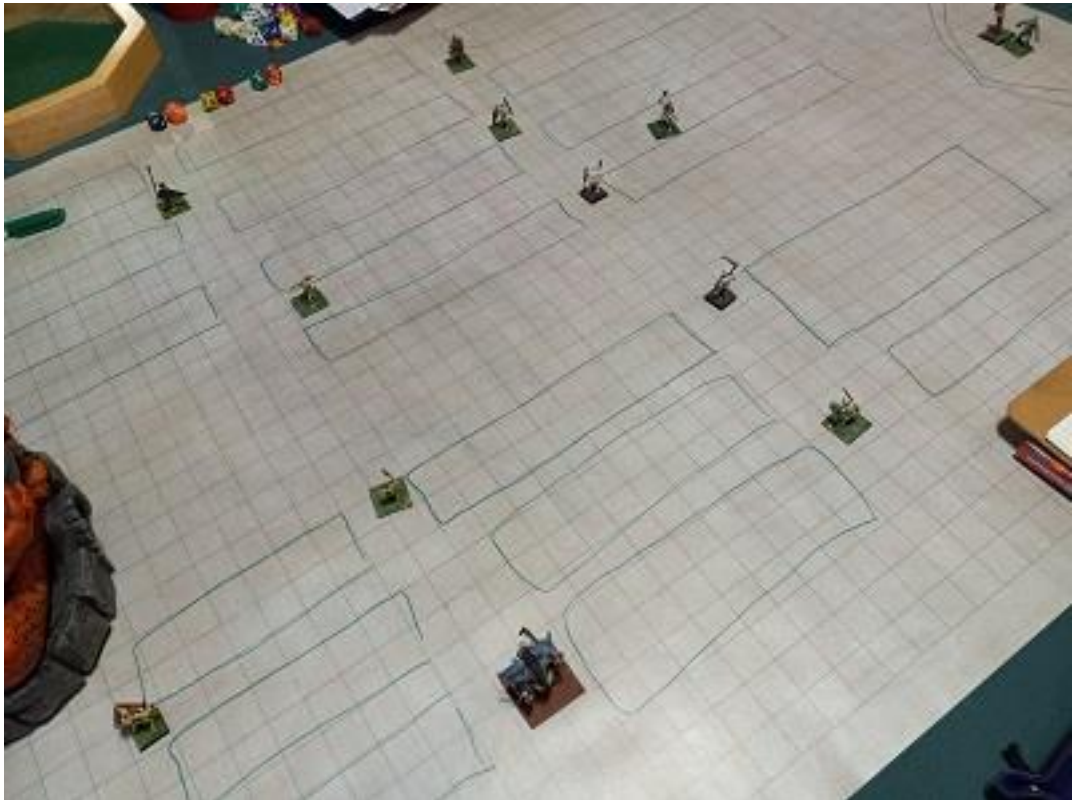
At the far end was a mummy standing on a 15-foot tall stage. Technically, it was a mummy with scrolls for wrappings. Oho! We found the Scroll-Bound King. We hemmed and hawed at the entrance trying to figure out a plan in this huge facility. In the end, we decided on hey diddle diddle, go right up the middle.

Balien tried to throw a spell, but the Scroll-Bound King countered it. Or maybe it was his advisor next to him -- a lich. Could this be Ernie Kovacs the Flame Lich? Dunno.

No matter, the skeletons closed, a Beholder appeared, and the giant statue animated and moved towards us with surprising speed. Battle broke out.

"How dare you!" the Scroll-Bound King yelled and tossed a Harm spell at Hammer, which was countered. Cristof ran up, drew his magic dagger and stabbed the Scroll-Bound King for 5 HP.

Really? A hundred spells in his repertoire and Cristof pokes the paperboy for a lousy 5 HPs? What is that dress doing to our mage?!



The Scroll-Bound King used his legendary abilities to cast a Bludgeoning spell on Cristof good for 19 HP of hurt and 22 more of Necrotic damage.

The lich used a Disintegrate spell on Gavriel good for 68 HP. Then the lich popped open a portal and exited stage center. Wonder where he's going?

The Scrolling king popped Gavriel for 15 HP of hurt and 29 more of Necrotic damage. Gavriel dropped to the floor, necrotic rot beginning to form.

At about this time, I remembered to yell, "Hippo in the Library!" That would set Rufus into full combat mode, and for once, it was actually appropriate.

Hammer cast a Wall of Ice between us and the statue. Balien slew the Scroll-Bound King. Another mummy shambled down the aisles among the stacks. Rufus turned a trio of skeletons into dust. Frank dealt with more skeletons.

Somewhere in there, ol' Vaseline the mummy hit me for minor damage, but gave me a full-body case of toenail fungus. As I screamed my disgust, Cristof yelled, "No problem. It's a 10-minute fix."

Oh great, now I'm going to have to call his dress a cloak.



Marcellus Mayhem

From an upper floor, our old enemy Captain Marcellus the Pirate Skeleton swung down to our level like an undead Captain Blood. On the way down he blared a horn -- six extra-tough berzerker skeleton warriors appeared in a scrum over Gavriel's body. We needed the wizard, so Rufus healed him while others battled Marcellus.

The Beholder floated among the stacks, zapping us enough that some hid behind the stacks.

We concentrated on Marcellus. Then I shafted him for 54 HP that tallied all our efforts to an astounding 200+ HP. The red lights of his eyes faded and he fell, only to pop back up. Shiver me timbers, he's got that spell that gives him 1 HP when he perishes. I would have said "died," but he's already undead.

The statue comes alive!

He soon teleported away as he had done so many times. I figured his horn-brought skeletal berzerkers would go too, but I was disappointed. The battle continued and they were far tougher than ordinary skeletons.

Next thing we know, the demon statue moved down the main aisle towards us, pushing the book shelves aside. It hit Hammer's Wall of Ice, took some damage, and shattered the wall into ice cubes. Cristof screamed about the potential water damage to the books.

Then it kept going. We scattered out of the way. Rufus turned a lot of the skeletons into dust.

Meanwhile, the Beholder flung Paralysis rays, Slow rays, and Enervating (necrotic) rays at us with various degrees of success. If we were underwater, it'd probably fire manta rays at us, but we were in a library. As we inflicted damage on the Beholder, Balien finally managed to kill it off.

That left the dwindling number of berzerker skeletons. The rest of the party soon took care of that. But this 40-foot tall demon, that was another matter.

Balien was convinced the eye gem was the on-off switch. He climbed up and tried to pry the eye out with a dagger. No good.

I scaled the demon statue and gave it a try with a hand axe, hoping to chip away the stone. Nope. The gem held.

Rufus climbed up next, but didn't make it to the eye.

The statue brought its hands up to its eyes to slap at us. One hand whacked Balien, but I managed to literally slip through its fingers.



Balien tried again and succeeded in popping it out. As he lost his footing, he flung the gem over his shoulder and right into my hands. The demon statue became an unmoving statue again.

The last skeleton crumbled under party attention. The fight was over.

Balien and Tazan scale the statue's head, with Rufus only halfway up. In the background, Connor looks up a spell. Photo by Ed.

Library Looting

Gavriel, Frank, Rufus, and Christof began stripping the Scroll-Bound King of his scrolls. Oh, where is the dignity in looting his pants? The wizards and clerics didn't care -- magic was magic. Who knows what unwashed arcana was being held among the Evil Undead-hood of the Traveling Pants?

Cristof then headed to the shelf section on dragons and swept a half dozen books into a bag of holding. Rufus was more selective in his choice: *An Atlas of the World*.

Marcellus disappears again. The statue comes closer. The skeletons linger (green and yellow hoops), and Gavriel takes on the Mummy and a skeleton.

The rest of us headed for the base of the pedestal and the stairway out. That lich advisor teleported somewhere

after the first go round of battle. We expected undead reinforcements and would prefer not to be here when they arrived.

Hammer put on his illusion, this time cleverly selecting Marcellus as the image, and led us out of the library. As we exited, he spied the local skeletal cavalry constables on the move and nonchalantly turned us in the opposite direction. We zigged and zagged through alleys and secondary streets back to the late Lady Siddhartha's mansion, newly renamed Vampire Velcro Mansion. I believe our vampiric ally will be pleased. Hammer changed back to Velcro so the human servants would not be confused.

At some point, and in all the excitement I forgot when, a messenger arrived with a scroll for Lady Siddhartha. Hammer accepted it. When he opened it, it crumbled away. We guessed it was a personal message, perhaps involving the choir performance. Dunno.

So we rested and recuperated, cared for by the human slaves.

So ended another spectacular *D&D* adventure. Thanks, Sean, for the GMing and Fred for the hosting.



Old Guard Games: Milwaukee, WI

by Mike

I decided to take a drive to Milwaukee and stopped in at a gaming store called Old Guard Games (3132 N. Downer Ave.). This converted long-closed book store offers 4,000 square feet of upstairs shopping and 3,000 square feet of basement gaming tables.

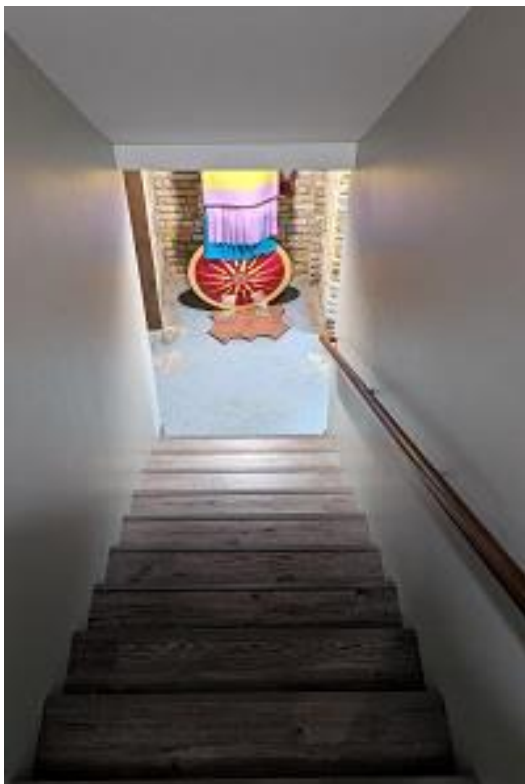
It concentrates on *Warhammer 40K* and *Star Wars: X-Wing* with a good mix of *Settlers of Catan*, *Magic*, *Pokemon*, and other games as well as historical miniatures.

While I was there, I saw a *SAGA* tournament, which I think is every two months. Another popular ruleset at the store is *Bolt Action*.

Opened in 2024.

The local newspaper did an article on the opening:

<https://milwaukeearecord.com/arts/21-photos-from-the-grand-opening-of-old-guard-games/>



The Old Guard Games store: outside and inside.

NEWS

HMGS Election Results: 2025

by John Snead

Here are the official 2025 HMGS Board Election results as verified by the election committee.

Vote-Now.com LLC conducted the HMGS election process for 2025. Vote-Now.com delivered ballots to all 1,528 people who were HMGS members, as of the Sunday of Cold Wars 2025. Each ballot was uniquely coded for both security and confidentiality. There were 1,524 ballots sent out by email and 4 members who don't have valid email addresses in our system. Of the 1,528 members, 55 have requested hard copy ballots. Those who were sent both email and paper ballots were only allowed to submit one ballot. There were no Referenda.

Polls opened March 27, 2025 and closed May 16, 2025. Vote-Now.com had to receive all ballots by midnight on the 16th to be counted. Vote-Now.com received ballots from 448 voters (29.3%) of the members contacted, compared to 420 (29.9%), in 2024. One (1) additional member opted out of voting and is considered as Abstaining (0.1%). Of the ballots received, 439 were e-ballots, 9 were cast by mail, and 0 were cast by phone.

Board of Directors (448 voters indicated a choice on this ballot (vote for 4):

Votes	Name	Percentage
265	Jon Lundberg	59.2%
248	Dave Allnutt	55.4%
239	Frank Luberti	53.3%
222	David Hill	49.6%
187	Dale Zartman	41.7%
183	Steve Robertson	40.8%
145	James Russell	32.4%
115	Russell Orr	25.7%
65	Dennis O'Toole	14.5%
11	Jeffrey Gatlin	2.5%

Thank you to all who ran. Congratulations to the returning and new HMGS board members: Jon Lundberg, Dave Allnutt, Frank Luberti and David Hill. Congratulations to the new Board Alternate, Dale Zartman

ATO's *Tiger Wings*: Next *Fighting Wings* Wargame

by Russ Lockwood

Against The Odds magazine's next Kickstarter will be *Tiger Wings*, part of the *Fighting Wings* (FW) series of games designed by J.D. Webster covering air combat in World War II. The series goes into great detail in attempting to model all aspects of the air war as realistically as possible, which results in a fair amount of complexity.

Tiger Wings is both a stand-alone game and also an expansion module of tactical air combat in the Far East in WWII between the Japanese and the Allies from 1941 to the end of 1942.

Contains: One full color 22x34-inch double-sided mapsheet; 280 full color 1/2-inch die-cut counters; Rules length 20 pages; Charts and tables - 16 pages; Extra Rules, Planes, and Scenarios - 40 pages; Complexity - Medium; Playing time - Up to 2 hours; How challenging is it solitaire? - Good.

The aircraft cards and scenarios in *Tiger Wings* are fully compatible with the rest of the *FW* series games. The game is played in three dimensions. Aircraft may be in level, climbing, or diving flight. Some may be at higher or lower altitudes than others. Players must mentally visualize the vertical altitude relationship between aircraft but horizontal relationships will be clearly visible on the map. The rules also allow players to recreate important aspects of WW II tactical air combat beyond simply the technical aspects of the aircraft involved.



Designer J.D. Webster explained: “*Tiger Wings* will be, essentially, third edition *Buffalo Wings*, but with most of the *BW* expansion rules added in and more. *Tiger Wings* will fall between the full *Fighting Wings* system and *Buffalo Wings* in complexity, but *Tiger Wings* will have a smoother feeling flight rules set.”

ATO plans to launch the Kickstarter for *Tiger Wings* in the 4th quarter of 2025.

More Info:

<https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=198>

CouncilCon 2025: Sep 5-7 Schenectady, NY

by Russ Lockwood

The Schenectady Wargamers Association (SWA) will host the CouncilCon 2025 convention on September 5-7, 2025 at Proctors Theatre, 432 State St, Schenectady, NY 12305 (518-346-6204). Sessions go from 2pm Friday through 7pm Sunday.

Friday and Sunday Badges are \$25 each. Saturday Badge is \$35. Full Weekend Badge is \$65. Looks like about a dozen vendors.

There is a game and gaming item auction at 2pm to 3pm on Sunday. Listing price is at least \$1 per item or bundle and SWA takes a 20% cut. The website didn't mention a flea market.

Info: <https://swa-gaming.org/>

Old School Tactical 5: France 1940 Wargame

by Russ Lockwood

In *Old School Tactical Volume 5: Battle for France 1940* the squad-level system expands with the German Blitzkrieg into France. French troops include: Regular Army and Colonial troops, Char B1 bis, and Somua S35 tank units. German units include motorcycle troops, armored cars, and early panzers.

This will be via KickStarter, with the project starting on July 22. Info at:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/markhwalker/old-school-tactical-v5-battle-for-france-1940>

Lofton: Sixth Civil War

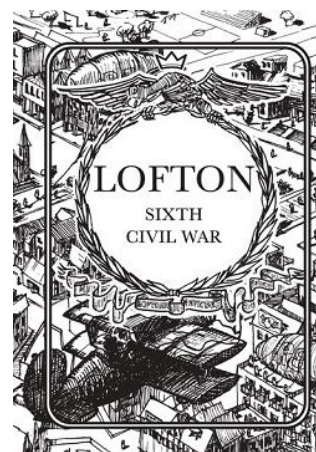
by Russ Lockwood

Long-time wargamer and artist Jose Neira penned a graphic novel about a fantasy civil war called *Lofton: Sixth Civil War* (Spanish language: ISBN 978-9942-51-376-2 and English language: 978-9942-51-451-6). Publishing plans include Kindle and other epub, but if you want to know more, e-mail him at pepeneira@yahoo.com

American Revolution: Continental Rifles YouTube

by Russ Lockwood

The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table posted a lecture by West Virginia University's Dr. John Weaver about Continental rifles in the American Revolution. The history of rifle use starts with the Seven Years War and progresses to use



in the Revolution. Includes archived illustrations from the Smithsonian and other sources. The first 45 minutes or so is the lecture and the next 45 minutes consists of questions and answers.

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RerMF6IdJS0>

GHQ Releases Batch 3: 1/285 MicroArmour

by Russ Lockwood

GHQ released its Batch 3 group of unpainted 1/285 scale (6mm) MicroArmour packs (\$13.99 each). It consists of:

WWII T27 Xylophone Truck-mounted (3/pk), JS-1 (5/pk), WWII Tiger I mid-variant (5/pk), Modern M1A2T (5/pk), Modern Type 84 Bridger (1/pk), Modern BMD-4M Sinita (5/pk), and Modern T-80BV (5/pk).

GHQ also released Micronaut packs (1/2400): Modern French La Fayette Class Frigate (1/pk - \$13.99) and WWII UK CV Implacable Class (1/pk - \$23.99)

Info: www.ghqmodels.com or 612-374-2693

Worldographer 2025: Update

by Russ Lockwood

Inkwell Ideas released a new update (Beta 1.10) of Worldographer 2025 with several bug fixes and some other improvements. A great quality of life change is that you can right click any Terrain or Feature button on those tabs/toolboxes and see a Configure link to configure that specific terrain or feature. It is a lot faster than going to the Configure menu, picking Configure Terrain or Features, then selecting the type/subset, then scrolling through everything to find the one you want to edit. Plus, the controls are larger so they are easier to use.

Note: Because it is a significant rewrite, it requires a new paid license to un-lock the pro features. A pre-2025 key won't work.

Worldographer 2025 is available for Windows, Mac, Linux, and Java. It is available in two versions: Free or Pro. Both versions are the same download and the same program. However, some "Pro" features are not usable in the free version. Unlock these features by entering a code that is for sale in the online store.

Info: <https://worldographer.com/2025-preview-release/?syclid=d1i3biovdli573ddb2eg>

Inkwell Ideas: GenCon

by Russ Lockwood

Going to GenCon? Stop by Inkwell Ideas (Booth # 150) along the left side wall if you're looking from the main front entrances of the Exhibit Hall. Ask about Worldographer, Hexploration Decks/Tiles/Kit, and other items.

SEE WHAT'S NEW FROM GHQ!



Unpainted 1/285th (6mm) Scale WWII Micro Armour
**T27 Xylophone,
Truck-mounted**
US132 - 3/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285th (6mm) Scale WWII Micro Armour
JS-1
R84 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285 / 6mm Scale WWII Micro Armour
Tiger I, mid-variant
G612 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285 / 6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
M1A2T
T8 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285 / 6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
Type 84 Bridger
RC36 - 1/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285 / 6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
BMD-4M Sinita
W142 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285 / 6mm Scale Modern Micro Armour
T-80BV
W143 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/2400th Scale Modern Micronauts
FF La Fayette Class
HFN3 - 1/pk - \$13.99USD



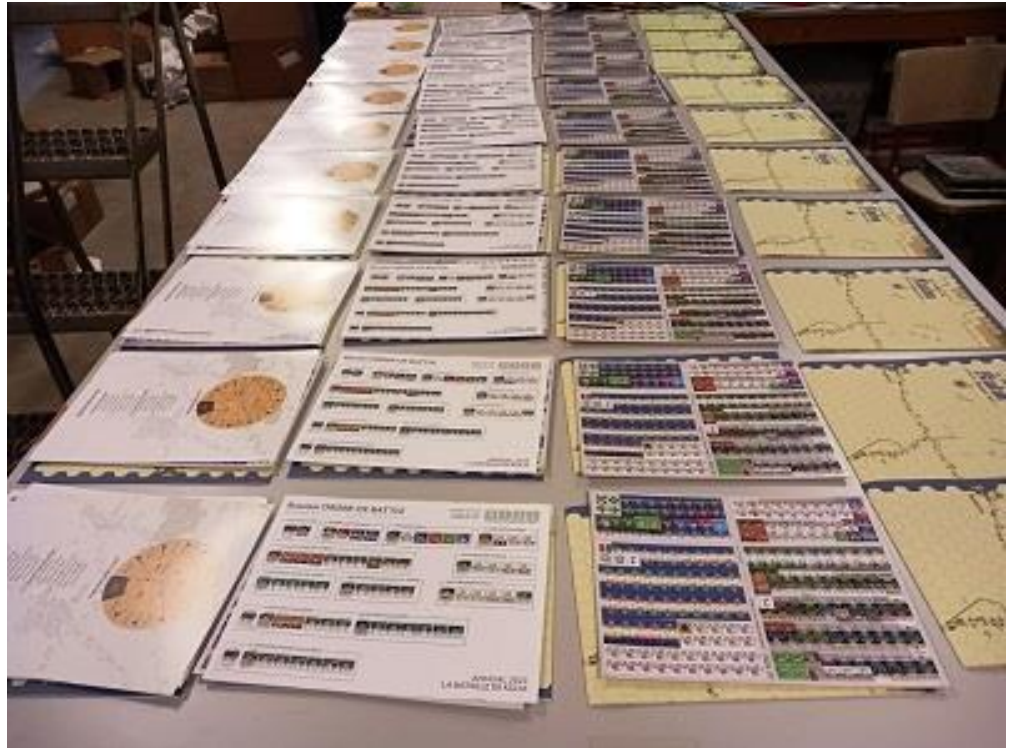
New Wargame:
La Bataille de Kulm 1813
by Russ Lockwood

Against The Odds magazine is assembling *La Bataille de Kulm 1813*, an extension of the *La Bataille* system. Napoleon had just won victories at Lützen and Bautzen, and the Battle at Dresden was a terrible blow to the Allies. He wanted to follow up with a knock-out punch aimed at the retreating Allied armies by sending the French I Corps to block their escape route. Instead, he saw his own troops captured and scattered, fatally weakening his own army.

Includes: One full color 22x34-inch mapsheet; 420 colorful die-cut 1/2-inch counters; 28 page rules booklet; 8 pages of charts and tables. Complexity is medium with a playing time of up to 4 to 6 hours. Average solitary playability. Cost: \$59.95 (USA) or \$94.95 (Outside USA).

Designed by Lembit Tohver. Development by Jack Polonka and Steve Rawling. Graphic Design by Charles Kilber and Mark Mahaffey.

Info: <https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=195>



Arnhem Solitaire: Man to Man Wargame
by Russ Lockwood

Combat! is a solitaire wargame system of WWII man-to-man combat. This is the third game in the series and introduces the British Armed Forces in the fight for Arnhem Bridge. The player will control friendly forces and attempt to complete a scenario against enemy forces that are controlled by the game system. At the start of each turn the player will play 1 card from their hand to the Initiative track. This card will determine the initiative values for each of the player's friendly teams and may have other effects depending on the card. After this the player will assign orders to each character on his side. This will determine the actions that the character can take this turn. Once the friendly characters have orders assigned to them, the player will draw an Enemy AI Card for each Alerted Enemy Character. These cards will determine the Initiative value for each Enemy Team and the Order that they will receive. The Order determines the actions that an Enemy Character will take that turn.

The game turn is then played through in four Impulses. From the lowest initiative value to the highest each Character (Friendly and Enemy) will perform the action specified on their Order counter. All Characters will act on Impulse 1 before moving to Impulse 2, then Impulse 3 and finally Impulse 4. At the end of the turn all Orders are removed and the played cards returned to the respective decks.



Each soldier (friendly and enemy) is represented by a 1-inch counter with 5/8-inch informational markers showing morale, wounds, orders etc. With individual names (for friendly and enemy characters) each game tells a varied and memorable story.

Game Information: Complexity: Medium; Solitaire Suitability: 10 out of 10 – Designed specifically for solitaire play; Time Scale: 30-90 seconds per turn; Map Scale: 10 yards per hex; Unit Scale: Single man per counter; man-to-man combat; Players: One; Playing Time: Three to five hours per scenario.

Game Components: Three 24x38-inch game maps and one 11x17-inch map; Six counter sheets (1-inch playing pieces); Two Decks of Playing Cards (52 cards for Allied, 50 cards for German); One Display Mat; One Impulse/Turn Track; One Player Aid Card; One Rulebook; Two 10-sided and one 6-sided dice; and Box and Lid set. Cost: \$139.00

COL Frost Com 5 8 7 6 5 T	PVT Webb Rifle 7 7 7 T	PVT Moon Rifle 6 7 7 T
MAJ Crawley Com 7 6 5 5 T	PVT Gockel Rifle 6 7 4 T	PVT Pickering Rifle 7 6 7 T
LT Douglas Com 3 6 8 7 5 T	PVT Kent Bren 6 6 6 T	PVT Scott Rifle 6 6 6 T

New Wargame: *Trying Men's Souls 1776* by Russ Lockwood

Against The Odds magazine continued taking pre-orders for *Trying Men's Souls*, the American Revolution campaign for Long Island and New York City.

In early 1776, the British raised a massive army and fleet to bring the American colonists to heel and end the rebellion. Landing in July at undefended Staten Island in New York, by August, the fleet ferried over 32,000 men onto the shores of Long Island.

Opposing them was the largest American army ever assembled with 23,000 men under the command of General George Washington. His plan centered on the hope the British would incur such high losses in taking the American defenses that an assault on Manhattan would be impossible.

Includes: One full color 22x34-inch mapsheet; 264 colorful die-cut 5/8-inch counters; 12 page rules booklet; 2 pages of charts and tables. Complexity is medium. Average solitaire playability. Cost: \$34.95 (USA) or \$54.95 (Outside USA).

Designed by Paul Rohrbaugh. Development by Russ Lockwood. Graphic Design by Mark Mahaffey.
Info: <https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=191>



Never too early to plan...



BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

Wellington's Waterloo Allies. by Andrew Field. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 284 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *How Soldiers From Brunswick, Hanover, Nassau and the Netherlands Contributed to the Victory of 1815*

As the subtitle indicates, strengths, weaknesses, and military effectiveness of Allied units at Waterloo receive detailed examinations based on their practices and performance. Along the way, a few myths receive scrutiny as native source material conflicts with popular British accounts.

For example, the British Guards hold Hougoumont against relentless French attacks is true, but apparently the flight of Nassau co-defenders is only partially true. According to non-English accounts, two companies of a Nassau battalion did retreat away from the farm looking for ammunition after expending all their ammo slowing down the French advance outside the farm complex. The other companies held fast in the buildings.

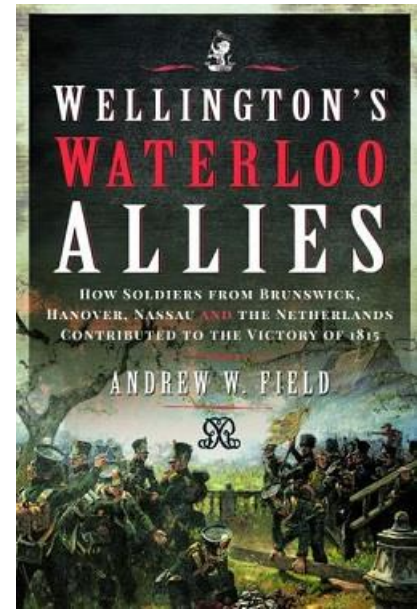
Each chapter covers a national contingent, including arms, training, and battle performance at Quatre Bras and Waterloo. Most contain maps that help to set up a tabletop scenario, but most maps do not contain a scale and terrain. You'll have to pull the troop numbers from the text.

The book contains 20 black and white maps and five black and white illustrations. Most maps do not include a scale or terrain.

Note that the book does not cover King's German Legion or the Prussians.

An insightful book on some overlooked allies.

Enjoyed it.



Wars and Soldiers in the Early Reign of Louis XIV: Volume 7 Part 1. by Bruno Mugnai. Softcover (7.1x9.7 inches). 388 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Armies of the German States 1655-1690*

Subtitle: *Century of the Soldier No. 113*

Helion deserves praise for the *Century of the Soldier 1618-1721* series. The volumes never cease to amaze me with the amount of information about fascinating armies, wars, and campaigns. I would probably add “underappreciated eras” to my litany, but that reflects my own ignorance of the period.

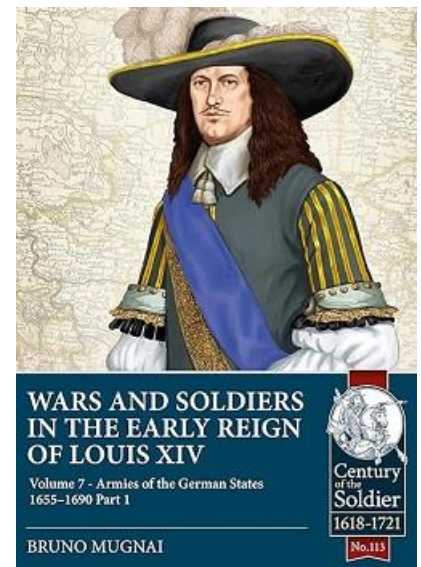
This volume covers the armies of Brandenburg, Bavaria, Saxony, and Munster. Unit compositions, commanders, changing orders of battle, and campaign exploits provide an extensive analysis of each of these states' capabilities and actual results. Further, you get an extensive examination of uniforms, colors, and equipment of the force: infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

Fascinating to me is how the princes dealt with various emergencies and overlapping demands on their slender forces. Whether it was off to fight the Ottomans in the Balkans or close to home in and around the Netherlands, the balancing of taxation, political will, and international entanglements make this an interesting era.

One typo: “31 June 1671” (p153) is likely incorrect barring a different interpretation of the school rhyme “30 days has September, April, June, and November.”

The book contains 158 marvelous black and white illustrations, often period, 27 black and white photos, 31 black and white maps, and 16 pages of color plates with 31 uniform and 27 flag illustrations. Note that the pages containing the flags has layout problems, with some flag illustrations overlap, with the white space clearly showing where some flag should have been. Sloppy.

Another minor point: I wish many of the period illustrations reproduced in black and white, especially those of paintings, be printed in color. It's great that the caption notes a color, but when you have a black and white image, it loses a bit of impact. On the flip side, printing a specialty book like this in color would increase the price. I can dream, though...or hope to find said paintings on the internet.



On the plus side, the commentary on the color plates runs from p280 to p292. The chart in Appendix I on regiments, battalions, squadrons, and companies includes commander, campaigns, noted dates, and uniform colors -- it's a little 1970s-1980s-ish, but wargamers revel in this type of info -- run from p295 to p332. Finally, the Army Lists and OOBs run from p337 to p372 and for you campaign fans, includes info on garrisons.

This is a great package full of info for late 17th Century buffs and gamers. You can start to pull numerous tabletop scenarios from within its pages. Best of all, it's well written for such a tome. Enjoyed it.

Polaris: Submarines, Missiles, US Navy, and the Royal Navy. by John Boyes.
Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 398 pages. 2025.

I'm normally not that fond of Cold War missile technology, but I became entranced with this mixed history of ballistic missiles from the V-2 on, development of submarine missile systems, and the development of nuclear warheads.

The US reverse engineered captured V-1 rockets. Republic-Ford came out with the JetBomb 2 (JB-2) Loon that would have been used in the invasion of Japan. The company delivered 1,391 JB-2s to the USAAF by Sep 15, 1945 along with some to the USN for ship and sub launch testing (p49).

The Germans built a prototype submarine launching system for V-2 rockets called Prufstand XII, but so late in WWII they couldn't test it properly. The Western Allies captured much of the German rocket development team and materials and that jumpstarted efforts to field US rocketry in general.

However, post-war, the USAF refused to work with the USN on joint development of solid fuel missile to replace liquid fuel missiles. A visiting UK Lord Mountbatten suggested to a frustrated Adm. Rickover that the USN borrow a Royal Navy "observer" with missile experience (p69).

Besides the battle with the USAF over which service gets control over nuclear weaponry, the USN internecine infighting proved quite entertaining. Things never do seem to change when it involves internal politics and program funding.

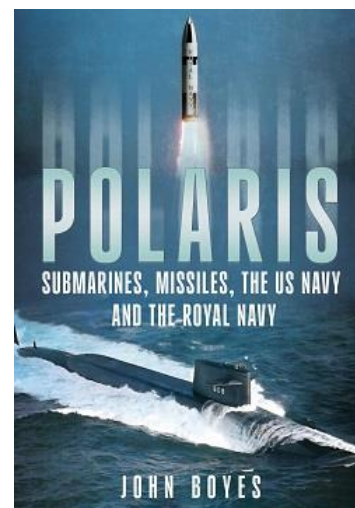
The new rocket, launching system, and submarine technology was developed and tested, setbacks overcome, and the US began to build nuclear missile-equipped submarines. Construction and deployment of all the Polaris-equipped subs takes up much of the rest of the book. The US also had a fair share of mishaps while developing the technology.

Incidentally, Adm. Rickover wanted to sue Revell and Renwal plastic model companies when they brought out their *USS Nautilus* model with full interiors (p88). He claimed the models gave the Soviets free intelligence. Nowadays, you can visit the USN Submarine Museum in Groton, CT, (see the 5/20/2023 AAR for my visit) and walk onto the actual *USS Nautilus*, the world's first nuclear-powered submarine.

The book has a part II with the UK Royal Navy building and fielding four submarines with Polaris missiles. On the one hand, it seems a bit bolted on -- might have been better off as a separate book. On the other hand, RN development of sub-launched nuclear missiles and submarines minimized duplication of US effort.

The RN program suffered a number of problems, including finding hull cracks in the second sub hull a week after launching, numerous collisions and groundings, and yet more failed launches. The US and UK had a touchy relationship when it came to sharing information.

Couple minor typos: "resistant to mould and mildew" (p165) should be "mold" and duplicate sentences (p100). The book contains 67 black and white photos, 58 black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps. An informative book, of course, but a surprisingly interesting one as well. Enjoyed it.



Gettysburg Surgeons. by Barbara Franco. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 341 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Facing a Common Enemy in the Civil War's Deadliest Battle*

During the American Civil War Battle of Gettysburg, 664 Union and 444 Confederate surgeons (p xvi) treated the wounded at aid stations and hospitals set up in tents and buildings near the front line. Indeed, figuring out how the battle would go and picking a location close enough to the front line to minimize ambulance transport time and yet far enough back not to suffer from fire or capture was one of the primary jobs of commanding surgeons (p72).

But first, the book takes you through 19th century surgeon training, such as it was in an era with limited medical facilities and research. As most states didn't have any licensing requirements, a certificate from a medical college served as confirmation that a surgeon had at least some formal education and testing.

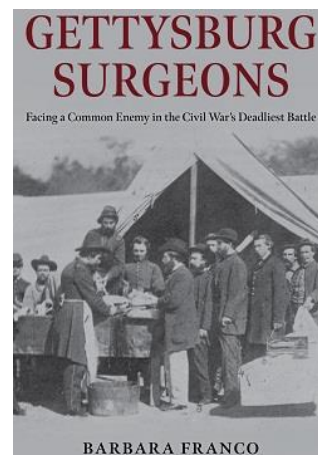
ACW surgeons had to provide their own horse and equipment (p39) as well as their own food on campaign (p44). They soon learned to pool resources and hire a cook/servant to attend to that.

The bulk of the book covers individual surgeons in varying levels of detail, from mentions of their unit and posting to mini-biographies in an appendix. Of course, all did as best they could under primitive conditions. For the Union, that was made worse when Gen. Meade ordered most medical baggage left behind in order to race to Gettysburg. Only one Corps surgeon defied his order and that Corps had full tent and medical equipment to the betterment of treating the wounded.

The book contains 45 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, and five black and white maps.

Both sides' medical staff treated a total of about 30,000 casualties during and after the battle. The last patients left in November. Surgeons were captured, either directly or because they stayed behind to care for the wounded as their units retreated. Usually, captured surgeons were considered non-combatants and released soon after the battle. Around this time, that started to change and after Gettysburg, surgeons were sometimes not exchanged or released.

For a campaign game, medical treatment deserves some attention. Here's a book that helps you do so. Enjoyed it.



German Command Headquarters in the West: Then and Now. by Jean Paul Pallud. Hardback (7.3x10.0 inches). 112 pages. 2024 from 2008.

Subtitle: *Hitler's Commanders at OB West*

This is another *After the Battle* book, where photo-heavy articles in the magazine are reprinted in book form. The *After the Battle* theme is finding locations in WWII photographs and photographing them in a modern context.

In this case, it's a 2008 article about various headquarters and defensive bunkers mostly in Paris and chateaus outside Paris. The book also includes stills from the movie *The Longest Day* where the actors filmed inside the WWII-era HQ buildings.

The text explains the HQ use of the buildings as well as architectural details. The photos showcase said buildings with the captions explaining what you see. On occasion, a caption needs a bit clearer identification of the people in it -- the ol' "two people but only one name" syndrome. If you are better at rank identification than I am, this may not be a problem.

One typo: "driven to Met" (p57) is likely driven to Metz.

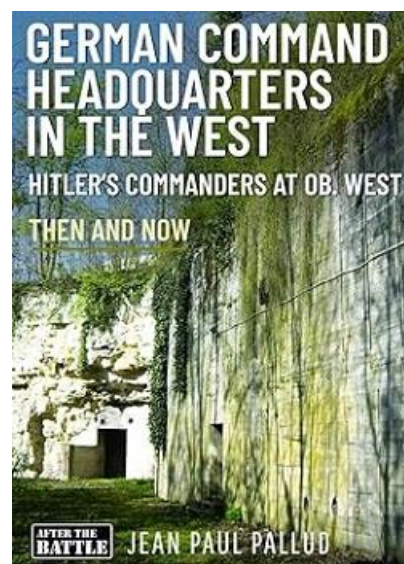
The book contains 180 black and white photos and five black and white illustrations.

One of the photos (p82) is an aerial view of Paris you can use as a map to find concrete bunkers. A separate map (p83) does much the same thing.

Some of the wartime HQs are public buildings, or at least private buildings like hotels you can at least enter, but most are in private hands and unavailable for entry. For example, one of the bunkers was incorporated into a house (p94).

Next time you're in Paris, you may want to see if you can find some of these places. If you can't get there, here's an alternative.

Enjoyed it.



War in Ukraine Volume 7: Air and Missile Warfare March-June 2022. by Tom Cooper, Adrien Fontanellaz and Milos Sipos. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 93 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Europe at War 43*

As this war is ongoing and coverage in an internet world rampant, it's nice to read succinct accounts of the various Russian ground operations and air support. Seemingly random missile attacks on Ukrainian civilian targets are also covered.

Because of the low number of aircraft, this is almost a strike by strike recap of the air support given to Russian offensives trying to surround and divide portions of Ukraine. They don't work, mostly due to Ukrainian heroism and better training.

I found the Snake Island campaign of Russian attack and Ukrainian counter-attack interesting, mostly because I had heard of it. The other half-dozen Russian offensives were interesting because I didn't know half of them and I only knew of the other half only slightly. Units and numbers, when available, are embedded in the text for those seeking to move battles from the page to the tabletop.

The book contains 139 color photos, four color illustrations, six color maps, and 33 color camouflage profiles (11 vehicles, 15 aircraft, six helicopters, and one drone).

If you want to dig a little deeper than generic TV news coverage, the *War in Ukraine* series is an excellent place to start.

Enjoyed it.



Opening the Gates of Hell. by Richard Hargreaves. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 504 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Operation Barbarossa June-July 1941*

This well-researched tome focuses on the build-up at the border between Germany and the Soviet Union and the two months after the invasion of the USSR began on June 22, 1941. At least that's how it starts...

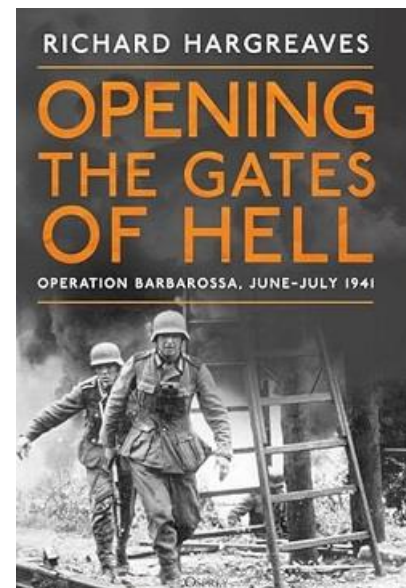
It's pretty apparent Stalin feared the German armed forces. Despite all indications, spy reports, and border violations by Luftwaffe recon aircraft, he forbade any measures that might cause a provocation. First-person accounts by German and Soviet commanders and soldiers explain the increasing tension along the border and the Soviet front-line pre-invasion frustration at not being able to even shoot AA at the Luftwaffe, must less engage in aerial combat.

A quote from the Swedish Ambassador puts the German build-up in perspective. "We face either a battle of global significance between the Third Reich and the Soviet Empire, or the most gigantic case of blackmail in world history." (p50)

Then comes the actual start of combat operations with devastating surprise attacks and mostly disjointed defense efforts. The push of the panzers, defense of Brest fortress, air superiority, and the rest get a fresh look.

The text weaves first-person accounts into a narrative instead of dropping excerpts -- a much appreciated style that emphasizes readability. Sure, some excerpts are set apart, but not the usual overwhelming number that interrupt the narrative and seem to be the rage today. Books are more than dumping excerpts on a page. Kudos to Hargreaves for creating satisfying prose.

Pz IIIs pass a burning BT-7. Image from web.



Yet, somewhere around the halfway point, details about atrocities and war crimes perpetuated by the Soviets, the Poles, and the Baltic State populace come to the forefront. Or, at least they seem to overwhelm combat operations. The Soviets slaughtered inmates in prisons before the Germans could reach the prison. The Baltic populace slaughtered

the local Communists that failed to evacuate fast enough. And everybody took vengeance against the Jews for a variety of perceived transgressions. Such horrors become a bit much to digest, even though they are important to document.

Some points stick out. German infantry usually marched about 20 miles per day. In early July 1941, the Bulgarian ambassador brought a peace offer from Stalin -- but it was a ruse to buy time (p421). After one month, the German 29th Motorized Infantry Division was pulled from combat for a refit after losing 700 dead and 1,900 wounded and with only 12 tanks left operational (p435). Over the radio, German propaganda broadcast a portion of Lizst's *Les Preludes* before the reading of the war news about the Eastern Front (p108). Who knew Barbarossa had a theme song?

The book contains 19 black and white photos and five black and white maps.

One odd mention: the 11th Panzer Division was nicknamed the "Ghost Division" (p61).

I thought that was the 7th Panzer, but maybe the 11th also received the nickname for its rapid infiltration of Soviet defenses and even faster exploitation.

11 Pz insignia. Image from web.



This well-written examination of the first month of Operation Barbarossa examines the well-executed plan of the Germans, the chaos and confusion of the Soviets, and the brutality of populations primed for vengeance by oppressive rule. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Dornier Do 217. by Chris Goss. Hardback (7.1x9.9 inches). 236 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *From Bomber to Nightfighter*

If you ever wanted a pictorial of the Dornier DO-217, here's your book. The upgrade to the original DO-17 "Flying Pencil" bomber extended its capabilities through a number of variants, eventually being converted into a nightfighter.

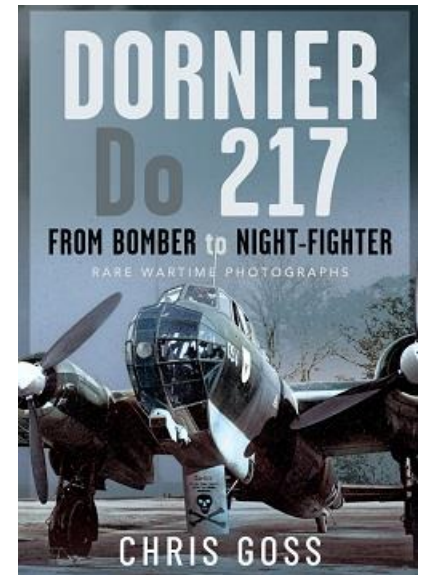
The book contains 288 black and white photos of the plane from all angles, although Photoshopping seems minimal judging by the number of dark photos and occasional blurry ones. I would've liked to see more effort at pixel lightening and sharpening. The book also contains 20 black and white illustrations.

Fortunately, when you have so many photos, plenty showcase various attributes that should please modelers. The photos are organized by year, so you can trace the variants and changes that occurred as WWII continued.

There's not a lot of text except for the captions. Indeed, quite often each page will contain one photo, a one-sentence caption, and 40% blank white space. I'm uncertain if the photo was supposed to be turned 90 degrees to take up the entire page and it wasn't. Or, maybe the junior layout person couldn't figure out how to crop images to fit. Or maybe text was supposed to be there and didn't show up by deadline or was dropped. And yet, on one page (p156), text about Major Joep snakes around a photo and fills the page. Dunno. Odd, though.

Still, it's photo-copia for DO-217 enthusiasts.

Enjoyed it.



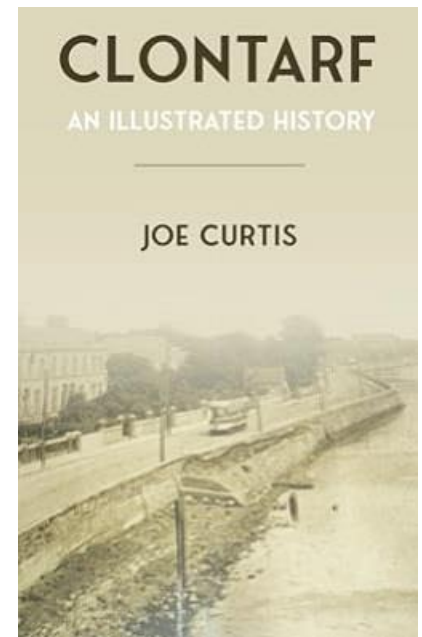
Clontarf: An Illustrated History. by Joe Curtis. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 148 pages. 2025.

The *Images of America* series publishes hyper-local collections of old photographs centering around a specific place, usually a town. For example, I have one called Prallsville Mills and Stockton, which is a proverbial stone's throw from my house (see the 8/25/2024 AAR or hmgs.org for the book review).

Clontarf is in Ireland, known to me as a 1014 battle site where Irish King Brian Boru defeated the Vikings. So, a good look around the battlefield with old photos sounded like a good idea.

Er...not so much. I was expecting shots of the battlefield terrain as it was in the 19th century. Alas, the book contains only an 1892 illustration of the battle. That's it. One illustration. The rest of the book contains old photos of the town of Clontarf.

Now, I happen to enjoy looking at old and modern photos. Clontarf seems



like a lovely town to wander about -- seaside walks, castle, gardens, and impressive churches, manors, and other buildings.

But if you're looking for battlefield photos, this is not it.

The book contains 172 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps.

Most photos are sharp, even the interior ones. Some are darker and some taken from old newspapers are a tad blurry.

If I ever cross the pond to visit the battlefield, this book highlights the highlights of presumably nearby Clontarf. You might even use it for a modern horror RPG adventure involving Viking and Irish spirits. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

US Navy Atlanta-Class Light Cruisers 1940-49. by Mark Lardas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *New Vanguard 340*

I almost abandoned this booklet in the first few pages. The second paragraph about the number of 5-inch guns was so poorly written, I had to read and re-read it to make sense. A typo "carrying 16in. eight of the newest turrets" (p4) that should read "carrying 16 in eight of the newest turrets" didn't help. It's about the ship armed with sixteen 5-inch guns. The next few pages meandered around other countries' light cruisers.

I persevered and it got better. I found the analysis of AA guns -- the 1.1-inch "Chicago Piano" versus the 20mm Bofors -- especially interesting. As the war progressed, the Bofors replaced the 1.1s and later the 40mm replaced the 20mm.

The booklet continues with the design, fitting out, and wartime exploits of the four Atlanta-class light cruisers (*Atlanta*, *San Diego*, *Juneau*, and *San Juan*). The *USS Atlanta* was sunk at Guadalcanal and the *USS Juneau* was sunk with the five Sullivan brothers on board (p35) -- all lost and instrumental in changing USN policy regarding brothers serving on the same ship. The *USS San Diego* was the first ship to dock at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan (p40).

Also covered are the four light cruisers that upgraded the *Atlanta's* design (*Oakland*, *Reno*, *Flint*, and *Tucson*) as well as mentions about the next upgraded light cruiser line CL-154, which was cancelled in 1945.

The booklet contains 33 black and white photos, two color photos, three black and white illustrations, one color two-page cutaway illustration of the *USS San Juan*, 10 color camouflage profiles of ships, one color illustration of a 5-inch turret layout, and three color one-page action illustrations.

So, started out shaky but made a fine recovery. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

Tanks in Ukraine 2022: New Vanguard 341. by Mark Galeotti. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2025.

This tank-by-tank analysis of Ukrainian, Russian, and Western-supplied tanks used in the ongoing war offers the specs and analysis of capabilities treadheads will enjoy. OBs, numbers, and Western shipments factor into numerous Russian offensives that had varying degrees of success.

For example, the Czech Republic sent 72 upgraded T-72M4 CZ variants to Ukraine plus the "T-72 Avenger" -- a \$1.3 million crowd-funded upgraded tank that was included in the deal (p36).

The Russians apparently invaded with 3,417 tanks (p43) and lost about 1,500 tanks in 2022 (p34), of which 544 were captured (p38). Ukraine started with about 1,000 tanks and lost about 250 (p43). The booklet ends with a series of lessons, some obvious and others not so much, learned in a modern tank war, including fielding a tank is better than not fielding one, better optics improve chance of kill shots, tank battles are short-ranged affairs, and survivability and recovery are key to maintaining a tank force.

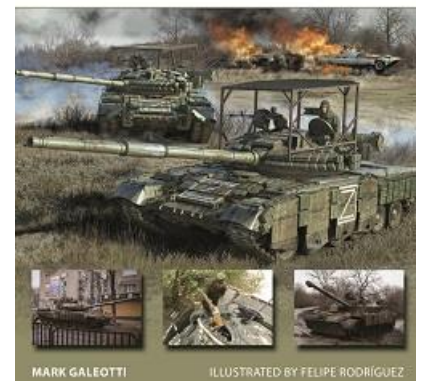
The booklet contains 40 color photos, one color one-page action illustration, one color map, 11 color camouflage profiles of tanks, and two color camouflage profiles of other armored vehicles.

Enjoyed it.

US NAVY ATLANTA-CLASS LIGHT CRUISERS 1940-49



TANKS IN UKRAINE 2022



Second Sirte 1942: Campaign 417. by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Desperate Battle to Relieve Malta*

A British Malta-bound convoy from Alexandria (Egypt) ran into the intercepting Italian Navy and the German Luftwaffe in March 1942. The convoy had only four fast merchant ships (although one had engine trouble that slowed it) plus an escort of cruisers and destroyers. The Italians intercepted with cruisers and destroyers, and later, the battleship *Littorio* and a variety of Italian and German aircraft.

The booklet covers the usual commanders and ships, plans, and background campaign info on First Sirte, the strike on Taranto, and the situation in March 1942. It all leads up to a dramatic recap of the naval battle with the Italians getting the better of the Royal Navy, but not enough to stop the convoy. The Italian ships all turned away as evening fell, in part because of orders from above not to risk the ships and in part because the British ships had radar and the Italian ships did not -- a disadvantage in a night fight. Indeed, a storm did more damage to the Italian Navy than gunfire from the Royal Navy.

The air attacks did away with one merchant ship and continued even after the three remaining British merchant ships entered the harbor at Malta. Most of the supplies were lost from the bombing.

Interesting that a 12 to 13-knot merchant ship makes about 300 miles per day (p26), for those interested in strategic movement.

The booklet contains 59 black and white photos, one color illustration, one black and white illustration, four color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and three color battle plot illustrations.

This is a perfect naval WWII Mediterranean Sea scenario for the tabletop, although rules need to duplicate smoke screens. How to duplicate Italian surprise at British destroyers steaming out of the smokescreen to launch torpedoes may be up to the players. Still, a tidy little battle, here.

Enjoyed it.

Swordfish Units of World War 2: Combat Aircraft 157. by Matthew Willis. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

This British biplane, already somewhat obsolete as the war started, nonetheless served with distinction with the British Navy. The air attack on Taranto was a highpoint in their service, just topping the crippling of the *Bismarck*, but Swordfish served throughout the Atlantic and Mediterranean campaigns, including in the Middle East and in attacks against Vichy French ships.

As expected from this volume in the series, lots of air to air battles and first-person pilot recaps dominate the booklet. Somewhat surprising to me is that the Mark I was augmented by the Mark II and Mark III versions. In addition, Swordfish served in the Normandy campaign and even into 1945. Recon, convoy escort, bombing, torpedo attacks, and more were part of its repertoire.

The booklet contains 61 black and white photos and 22 color camouflage illustrations. It could use a few maps and a larger text font.

Otherwise, it's a good aircraft profile and overview of actions.

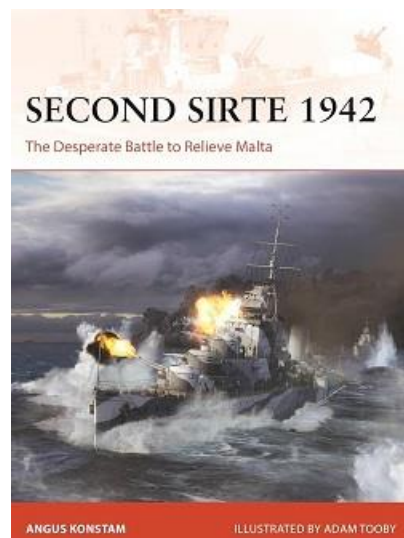
Enjoyed it.

Mediterranean Sweep: The USAAF in the Italian Campaign. by Thomas McKelvey Cleaver. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 328 pages. 2025.

If you enjoyed *Clean Sweep: VIII Fighter Command Against the Luftwaffe 1943-1945* about Allied air operations on the Western Front, you're going to enjoy this one, too. This also takes the US perspective with plenty of first-person pilot accounts of WWII missions and actions.

Oddly enough, the book starts with Allied negotiations with Italians over Italy's surrender. It's a relatively succinct diplomatic dance that only ended with the invasion of Salerno and Messina (around p67).

The Luftwaffe in mid-1943 was still a dangerous opponent able to launch



bombing raids. For example, 105 JU-88 bombers raided the port of Bari and sunk 17 ships and damaged eight more. It also exposed a British merchant ship carrying mustard gas bombs (p114-117).

Allied pilot claims are always high, but the USAAF eventually wrested control of the skies. The Italian air force is almost never mentioned, but Mount Vesuvius erupted and rained rocks and ash down on US B-25s at Pompeii air base -- 88 bombers were destroyed (p117-120).

Fun fact: USAAF maintenance crews often restored wrecked German planes so aircraft crews could practice against the actual enemy planes (p98).

Funner Fact: The CO of a bomber group was so tired of P-38s from the fighter group missing rendezvous, he hopped in a ME-109G and “attacked” the fighter group’s airfield by buzzing and firing all around. Funny, the P-38s supposedly never missed another rendezvous (p95).

The first-person pilot stories often repeat as that is the nature of air-to-air dogfighting, but the anomalies draw you onward. For example, Lt. Brown flew as a wingman so close to his leader that his bullets were going over the leader’s wing while strafing. Told to move over, Lt Brown did and ran his P-47 into the top of the only 100-foot-long pine tree in the area. With a smashed canopy and sawdust and wood chips in the cockpit, he followed his leader’s instructions and flew back to base, landing safely even without hydraulics. Brown announced he had used up his luck and he never flew again and the plane never flew again either (p167-168).

Damage to P-47 flown by Lt. Sullivan (not Brown) into trees during strafing run. Image from web.



You even get Joseph Heller info, who was a combat navigator on B-25s in Italy during WWII. After the war, he went on to write *Catch 22*.

Finally, the most humorous pilot nickname was bestowed on a P-47 flight leader named Hare – they called him “Wabbit” (p217). If you’re not sure why that’s funny, you’ve never gone hunting with Elmer.

The book contains 18 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

As I noted before, the air combats can get repetitive, but the exceptions prove most entertaining and keep you reading.

Enjoyed it.

Exploring Nationalism. by Andrew Sangster. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 200 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Identifying Its Forms, Particularly Those Which Lead to War and Mayhem*

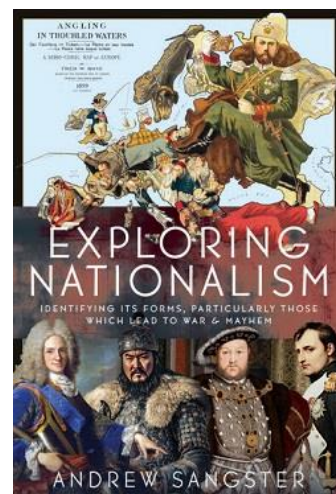
This high-concept book examines how patriotism can warp into aggressive nationalism and its close cousin irredentist nationalism. The former simply means grabbing land, resources, or power. The latter means grabbing land, resources, or power using an argument that since said land once belonged to a country, it should again.

Either way, coveting thy neighbor’s possessions usually means war -- either via pressured diplomacy or outright military attack. Whether it comes from a mass desire or the ego of one leader, ‘this means war’ often means the same thing throughout history. As Mark Twain noted, “History may not repeat itself, but it sure rhymes.” A litany of reasons why nationalism changes to aggression are investigated.

Leaders often forged nations out of tribal areas and/or religious commonality. The victims of forced commonality often had little choice. More than a few assumptions about historical peoples and aggressive nationalism require you to be better informed than I to appreciate all of them.

Each chapter explores common forms of nationalism in historical periods, from cavemen to modern times. If you can recognize the pattern, you might be able to avoid the inevitable wars. That takes the willpower of a public which refuses to allow aggression to occur within their political system. It’s a tall order, especially in autocratic systems.

The author has an unfortunate tendency to stumble over dates. The “defeat of Austria in 1914” (p90) is really 1918. Or, “America entered the war in April 1916” (p103) should be 1917. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1937 (p108) was in 1939. These are the easy ones to pick out, but given enough errors, I started to wonder about other dates I didn’t know off the top of my head.



One other typo: “right of wrong” (p179) should be “right or wrong.”

The book contains nine black and white photos and nine black and white illustrations.

The author, a reverend as well as historian, covers the moral ground of an amorphous subject. You may or may not agree with his examination, but this is as fine a place to start as the world confronts Putin's land grab of Ukraine and China's continuing campaign to grab Taiwan. It's not a new tune. The song remains the same. Understanding that is the first step in confronting land grabs.

Enjoyed it.

The Advance on Caen: 6-9 June 1944. by Tim Saunders. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 252 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *From Sword Beach Towards the City*

The plan was to grab Caen on D-Day. The actual result was a slog towards this hub city. This is the first book of two that examines the British efforts to capture the city and the German efforts to defend it.

It's well laid out and well told, with the potential for scores of scenarios small and large. You'll need other sources, but this shows you what to search. Outcomes could be drawn-out and bloody or short and surrender.

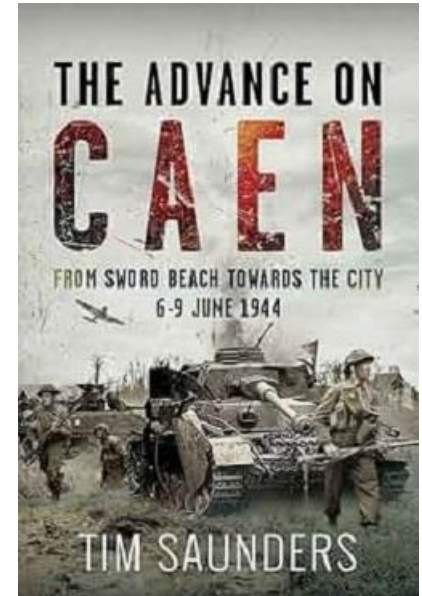
Along with the history, the analysis discusses how British communication, intelligence, and fire plans could have been much better. Such shortcomings gave the Germans time to implement their own plans to contain the invasion and drive it back into the sea. For example, I was reminded about a German counter-attack that reached the coast at Lion-sur-Mer before withdrawing. The thought of better German coordination is just as chilling.

A typo: “FW-109” (p165) is really FW-190.

The book contains 104 black and white photos, eight black and white illustrations, and 57 black and white maps. Those maps are marvelous visual references to the text descriptions, although I rather wish they included the scale. I think they're 1:25000, but the text mentions 1:12,500, so I am at a loss. In any case, they can often be used to set up tabletop terrain.

I look forward to the second book.

Enjoyed it.



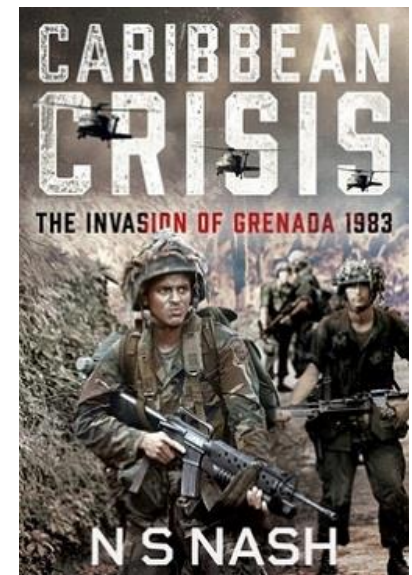
Caribbean Crisis: The Invasion of Grenada 1983. by N S Nash. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 248 pages. 2025.

My recollection of the Grenada action is the US defeated the Cuban troops and Communist local forces and restored the island to its democratic political system. My recollection is in need of better information. Fortunately, here's just the book.

The political situation in Grenada is far more complex than communist insurgency and Cuban help. The slow march to dictatorship and the various coups eventually landed this island in US President Ronald Reagan's crosshairs. He used the pretext of the safety of 600 US students at the medical school as the justification for intervention.

The real twist is that Grenada was an independent country that was part of the British Commonwealth. Think of the uproar should the UK invade Puerto Rico. In any case, a coup by Gairy in 1979 began the “rule by proclamation” and he was sideswiped by his Marxist sidekick Bishop and soon a 1983 coup by Couderc essentially began a civil war in 1983. Hence the claim US students were in danger. The US secret operation was inadvertently revealed by CBS News in an Oct. 21, 1983 report that stated a US Navy evacuation was forthcoming.

The description of the clumsy and mistake-plagued operation to land troops and kick the Cubans off the island and restore democracy showed that the US military learned nothing from the ill-fated Iranian hostage rescue debacle. According to the book, US forces had no modern maps of the island, the part of the 82nd Airborne division assigned to the invasion was left without a logistical chain, and communications were a disaster. That's just the start and it all makes for a fascinating read.



Unfortunately, a few typos, most minor, mar the book: “army in a state of rut and demoralization” (p24) is likely “rot”; “two Barbadians ... the young man” (p43) should be “men”; “Plan 2360 ... 2,360” (p67) is one or the other; and “see page xxx” (p70) lacks the actual number.

The book contains 54 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, and 10 black and white maps.

In some ways, this serves as a checklist of pre-operation planning mistakes that led to actual operational problems. Or you can think of it as a primer on what commanders should be checking before engaging in a military operation. Either way, a fascinating book.

Enjoyed it.

We Stormed the Reichstag. by Vassili Subbotin, Translated by Tony Le Tissier. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 147 pages. 2025 reprint of 2017 reprint of 1980 book.

This eye-witness account by a Soviet war correspondent describes the vicious advance across the river to the Reichstag against heavy German resistance. Attached to the 150th Division, one particular company started the attack -- understrength -- with 83 soldiers and ended with only 26 (p47).

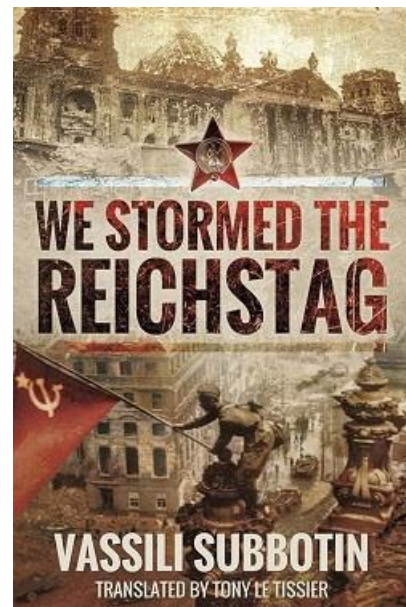
The first half describes the attack and the flag raising captured in a photo and the second half describes post-war visits to various places and former comrades. No atrocities against Berliners are mentioned.

Couple typos: “morning of 2 March” (p23) is probably “May” and “They weren't used this” (p36) is likely “to this.”

The book contains 18 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and one black and white map.

The lead up to the Berlin battle and the building-by-building combat bring a ring of authenticity to the fight. The post-battle interviews with one soldier or another can be enlightening, if a somewhat more positive spin than you'd expect.

Enjoyed it.



The Siege of Dunkirk: 1944-1945. by Graham A. Thomas. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 228 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *And the Capture of the Channel Ports*

I've reviewed a few books about the German attack on Dunkirk (France) in 1940, but here's one on the reverse: The Allied attacks on Dunkirk and other ports on the English Channel. To wit: Le Havre, Cap Gris Nez (technically more a fort than a port), Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk.

Note that the first 50 pages or so cover D-Day, capturing Caen, and advancing up the coast. The actual attacks on the ports starts after that.

Of the group, Dunkirk successfully held out through the end of the war in large part because Monty ordered it screened as the British and Canadian forces headed for Antwerp (Belgium). The others were captured with various speed, although the ports were wrecked and mostly useless for supplying the Allied armies.

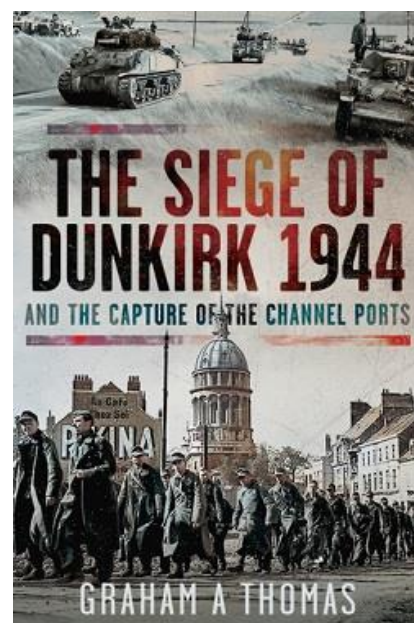
Two chapters contain period reports of the 1st Czech Independent Armored Brigade and the 7th Royal Tank Regiment fighting around Dunkirk. I suppose separating out these units was important, but I would have preferred their exploits to be included in the main narrative. But that's just me.

A minor typo: “by attacking a night” (p23) reads better with “at night.”

The book contains 31 black and white photos and six black and white maps.

The various operations are all well recapped and analyzed, with movements, attacks, counter-attacks, and surrenders offering insight into the campaign to secure the Channel ports. You can scour the text to pull info for some tabletop scenarios, although the maps could be more detailed. Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.



HOTOL: Britain's Spaceplane. by Dan Sharp. Hardback (8.5x12.0 inches). 424 pages. 2024.

First off, HOTOL stands for Horizontal Takeoff and Landing and was the UK version of the US Space Shuttle except it was supposed to take off like an ordinary jet (the horizontal part) instead of the Space Shuttle's vertical takeoff. As you may not have heard of it, understand it never quite made a flight.

At first, I thought this would be a system-by-system technical briefing about design and development -- it certainly contains enough of that type of information. Yet, it also contains a quite readable account of the engineering idea (heat exchangers with air-breathing engines) that started the political process to fund its design and development. British government policies and procedures plus commercial interests in an era of tight budgets receive ample coverage on what backed initial interest and ultimately cancelled it.

The book contains "over 400" period engineering and marketing diagrams, illustrations, and photos. I didn't count 'em, but that number seems right. Kudos for using a large page format so the imagery can also be large.

Lots of technical details, often taken from period reports and memos, populate this tour-de-force of project history. While all these engineering challenges, political squabbles, and economic pressures do little to enhance tabletop gaming, the story is an interesting one.

I would hope that a future book about SpaceX rockets would be as balanced and well-written as this one about HOTOL. What say you, Tempest Books?

Enjoyed it.

Jungle Ghosts: Walking Point in Vietnam. by Ed Mann. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 326 pages. 2025.

This first-person account of tactical combat in the Vietnam War offers a twist: a look at how the guy who walked point (i.e. scouting ahead) did his job. Although a veteran hunter as a kid, stalking North Vietnamese soldiers and avoiding ambushes proved a bit of a learning curve.

Fortunately, his company captain, was apparently a complete coward and avoided the NVA and VC when he could, giving Mann time to learn how to read the jungle and look for signs of potential trouble.

His descriptions of Vietnam terrain and NVA bunker camouflage put you in the grunt-level view. Early on, he realized that staying in a bomb crater would be suicide and demanded his squad leave and reach the treeline. It proved a wise decision as NVA mortars worked over the now empty crater. That was just the start of him realizing that he could understand situations and signs.

His next lesson came when he missed spotting bunkers. When he hit the dirt, his head was within a couple feet of a bunker gun port (p83-84), fortuitously abandoned. It's interesting that he found the NVA sacrificed bunker fields of fire for more effective camouflage. That's something to include in a tabletop game.

As he gained experience and learned his trade, he was not perfect, but good enough that his platoon was mostly intact. His discussion of reported body counts versus reality helps explain why the US switched its measurement of success from bodies to tons of rice captured.

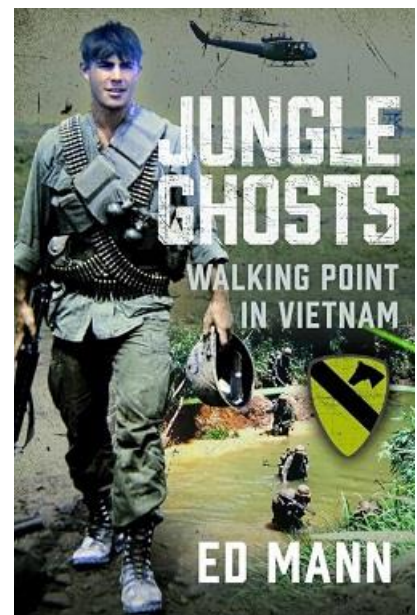
The book contains 14 black and white photos, 20 color photos, and one black and white cartoon.

It's a smooth read and one game masters might want to consult in fine-tuning Vietnam War skirmish scenarios.

Enjoyed it.

Araguaia War: Latin America at War 46. by Antonio Luis Sapienza. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 60 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Counterinsurgency Operations Against the Communist Guerrilla in Brazil 1967-1974*



Subtitle: *Volume 2 Counterinsurgency and Legacy: The Struggle for Control in Araguaia*

The Communist guerrilla group Força de Guerrilha de Araguaia (FOGUERA) never became very large: 85 at its peak. Yet it took the Brazilian Army more than a few years to squash the group using a mixture of military intel, a goodly number of troops, and a bit of bribery.

After initial flops, the Army bribed the locals to locate the leaders or small groups. The Army then moved in with its own small groups led by local guides and attacked from air and ground. Any captured guerrillas were executed. It was brutal, but effective.

Each loss hurt FOGUERA and dissuaded locals from joining. Ultimately, only one escaped: Michael Gomes de Almeida (p28), who was found living under an assumed name in 1996. By then, national amnesties forgave remaining guerrillas and Army personnel of all crimes.

The booklet contains 165 black and white photos, 16 color photos, two black and white illustrations, three color maps, one color illustration, three vehicle color camouflage profiles, 10 aircraft color camouflage profiles, and five helicopter color camouflage profiles.

Enjoyed it.

Sturmartillerie Crewman: Casemate Illustrated. by Simon Forty and Richard Charlton Taylor. Softcover (7.0x10.00 inches). 128 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Sturmgeschütz, panzerjäger and sturm artillerie*

This particularly fine example of the *Casemate Illustrated* series that concentrates on the crew of the various self-propelled guns, including anti-tank, assault, and artillery.

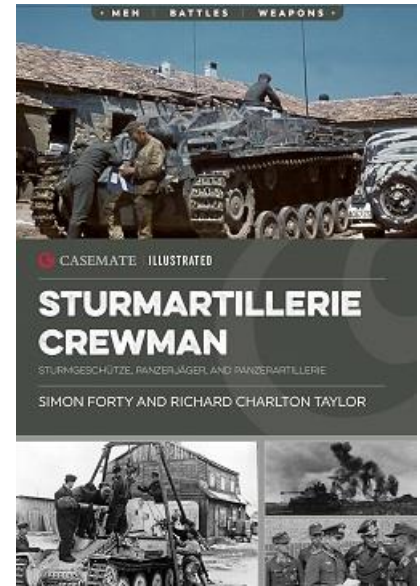
Training, day-to-day duties, and tactics offer a glimpse into wartime life for these crewmen who manned turretless armored vehicles ranging from the STuG to the JagdTiger. A section on the vehicles themselves is included with just enough detail to be helpful. A section on battlefield exploits puts the theoretical into practice.

Those who model will enjoy the many photos of uniforms -- in training and in the field. One of the best is a black and white period photo of a sturmarmillerie officer next to a color photo of a similar uniform (p41). You get to see how it's worn and the color of it.

The booklet contains 110 black and white photos, 35 color photos, one black and white illustration, one color map that's a quarter of a scenario -- needs a scale and actual units, but a nice layout of a German defensive position.

The writing's a bit sharper in this volume in the series. As usual, the illustrations cascade all over the pages in a visual treat.

Enjoyed it.



Verdun 1914: The Opening Moves. by Christina Holstein. Softcover (5.5x8.5 inches). 286 pages. 2025.

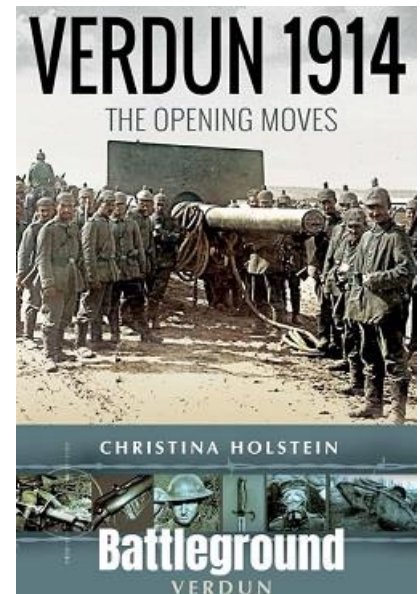
Subtitle: *Battleground*

There must be a couple hundred of these marvelous *Battleground* books. They generally follow the same format -- first half history and second half combo touring the battlefield auto routes and more history. It's pretty amazing what you can still find in terms of WWI monuments, cemeteries, and bunkers around Verdun (France).

One interesting tech circa March 1915 (p214): Earth Conduction. The French stuck an antenna into the ground to use electromagnetic induction to eavesdrop on German communications. The Germans later refined the tech into their Moritz sets.

The book does an excellent job of zeroing in on an individual or action, putting his actions in context of a larger skirmish or action, and pairing a photo to the text. You can often put a face to a name. And many times you'll find a map or another, sometimes detailed, sometimes not, linked to that. Makes me want to join a Troy T or Bill Gray WWI game...

The book contains 219 black and white photos, 27 black and white maps (some with scales some maddeningly not), and one black and white illustration.



Best part: I never knew just how close the Germans came to pinching off Verdun. Truly, 'twas a tenacious defense.

Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Caesarian Legionary versus Pompeian Legionary. by William Horsted.

Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Rome's Civil War 49-45 BC*

Subtitle: *Combat 82*

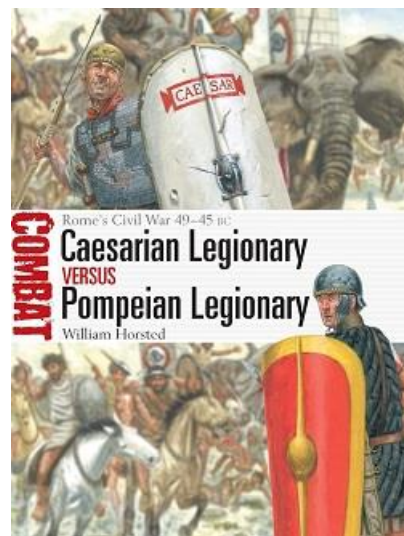
I admit to being baffled about why this book exists. The two forces were just about identical in terms of individual soldiers. Even the author notes "in most respects the armies of the two sides...were indistinguishable" (p8).

Don't get me wrong -- the text details the arms, armor, and equipment and if you didn't know anything about the Roman Civil War legionnaires, this is a great overview.

Yet it's the three battles covered that make the booklet: Dyrrachium (Jul 10, 48 BC), Thapsus (April 6, 46 BC), and Munda (March 17, 45 BC). I've reviewed books that deal with those battles in detail, but for an overview, *Combat 82* hits all the high points.

The booklet contains 54 color photos, one black and white photo, four color uniform illustrations, four color maps, two color diagrams, and three color two-page action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.



Yugoslavia 1941-44: Anti-Partisan Operations - Campaign 418. by Pier

Paolo Battistelli. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

I didn't know many details about the partisan war in Yugoslavia. I knew the Germans almost caught Tito once, but otherwise, it's just a drain on German troops.

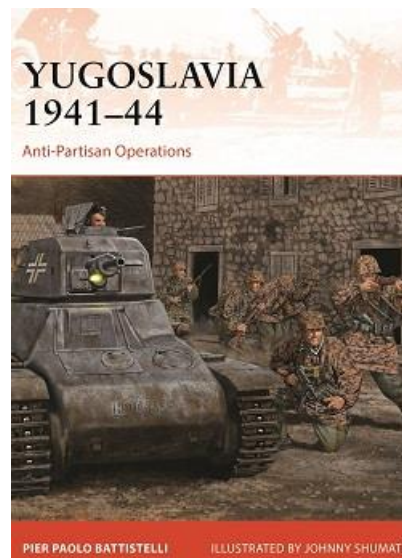
Here's where the Osprey *Campaign* series is at its best. Using the well-known format, it examines all the major German anti-partisan operations against Tito and his guerrillas. I had no idea that some failed and others succeeded in driving the partisans out of the area and off to another part of the country akin to Chinese Long Marches. Forces included Germans, Italians, Bulgarians, Croats, and of course the Yugoslav partisans. There is a nice order of battle sorting out the combatants.

Interesting that Axis coordination was minimal, so the Germans would push the partisans out while the Italians often failed to block the exits. Italian occupation was less retributational than German and resulted in fewer partisans, but the partisans were generally left alone. It wasn't until 1943 that the Germans realized they needed to get the partisan problem under control and pumped in more and more troops.

The booklet contains 75 black and white photos, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and two color two-page minimally useful 3D maps.

Note that the operations covered are more at the battalion and regimental level than ambush-level skirmishes. And that's a fine way to start learning out the Yugoslavian partisans and Axis counter-measures.

Enjoyed it.



Halo: The Fall of Reach. by Eric Nylund. Softcover (5.3x8.2 inches). 447 pages. 2029 reprint of 2010 reprint of 2001 book.

I rather enjoyed the *Halo* video game -- so much so that my Xbox 360 died after years of yeoman service. I had just binge-watched the TV series and picked up this discount bin book that breathlessly touts "The origin story of the Master Chief!"

The good news is that this book does indeed cover the Master Chief and the origins of the Spartan program as well as the AI Cortana. The battles against the Covenant take center



stage up through the loss of the planet Reach.

The bad news is that everything in the game and first year of the TV series is in the book almost verbatim, so it was more recap and less origin. Makes sense given the time frames.

I will note that some UNSC weaponry in the book seems, if I recall right, not to be in the game. Indeed, the effectiveness of the generic UNSC assault rifle in the book is far more deadly than in the game.

That said, the space battles oft ignored in the game are interesting in the book. Makes me want to go out and get another Xbox...

Enjoyed it.

Seeds of Victory: Defeat, Triumph, and the American Way of War. by James Ellman. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 324 pages. 2025.

Nine chapters dissect American military debacles from the American Revolution to Afghanistan that were eventually overcome and made into victories.

For example, Washington's debacle at the Battle of Long Island and retreat across New Jersey culminated with a surprise attack and victory at Trenton (NJ) and Princeton (NJ). In another example, Pearl Harbor led to Midway.

The problem was underestimating the enemy capabilities, overestimating US abilities, inadequate training, and trying to slide by on the cheap. The key to each turnaround was a willingness to change leaders as well as change strategy and tactics. Analysis follows each historical recap to explain why the debacle occurred, how factors and approaches changed, and how the new leadership implemented those changes.

To me, the most interesting chapter was covering the WWII US Army Air Corp. The idea that the bombers always get through continued to be held by the leaders despite escalating losses -- the Schweinfurt mission being particularly deadly -- and without a sufficient number of sufficient range escort fighter until the P-51 started making an appearance. Then came the change from close bomber escort to free-ranging fighter sweeps ahead of the bomber mass.

The booklet contains 32 black and white photos, 16 black and white maps, and one black and white illustration.

Two map typos "Bearregard" should be Beauregard (p102) and "Mills" should be miles (p204).

As for the future, among the recommendations: spread the pain of military service to civilian sector, support democratic friends (such as Ukraine), pick one strategy (either peer to peer or counter-insurgency), and don't stint on training or equipment.

Enjoyed it.

