

Fall In 2025: Zip In and Out

Triumph & Tragedy: WWII Europe

German Triumph and Allied Tragedy: *T&T*

Guilford Court House: American Rev 1781

Duel For Middle Earth: *LOTR*

What's Up Doc? Blinking

HMGS Next Generation: Gaming Education

HMGS Outreach: Speech at Raytheon

News: New Products and Information

Orcus Gate 333: Thanatos *D&D*

Books I've Read

Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster

Rhineland: Last Defense 1944-45

Mapping the Silk Road: Ptolemy's Tower

1066: The Lost Hastings Battlefield

Alexander the Great Avenger

Warfare in the Age of Crusades

Tiberius: Roman Commander to Emperor

Defenders of the Reich: WWII Luftwaffe

Jungle Commandos: Arakan, Burma 1945

Lone Star Shadows: Echoes of the Forgotten

Sudden Death: USMC Radioman in Vietnam

Medieval Nuns At War

Hermann Balck: Hitler's Forgotten General

10th Mountain Div WWII: Casemate Special

Midget Submarines 1939-45: Casemate Spec.

Why Appeasement Failed: Ignored Evidence

Apollo 1 in Photographs

Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society

Kamikaze Flying Bombs: Suicide Aircraft

The Mahdi & Africa



Happy Thanksgiving



Photo at 11:15am on Friday in the downstairs Ballroom.

Fall In 2025: Zip In and Out

by Russ Lockwood

Sadly, I was only able to attend Friday of Fall In 2025, much as I would have liked to go on Saturday as well. Yet, I was still able to see old friends, meet new gamers, play in a game, and do some shopping.

WAMP's Mark Z. (white shirt) umpires his Guadalcanal game.



The traffic was not too bad on Friday and I arrived after the usual two and a quarter hour to two and a half hour trip to the Wyndham (Lancaster Host). At 11:00am or so, the upper expansion parking lot was empty save for a few cars, so I parked there and walked into the Lampeter. The tournament area was already humming.

Up the stairs and the scan of my pre-registration code zipped out my badge and ticket. Picked up a paper convention book and I went a walkabout.

Here's where seeing old friends, and with tongue in cheek on the "old" aspect, I wandered about saying hello and looking at the various games. Nice to once again see e-mail addressees in person...

Mitch (red lanyard) runs his WWI trench game.



First stop was over to Mitch and his WWI game using the new *Chain of Command 2* rules. I had to drop some stuff off to him that I promised back at the October *Snappy Nappy* Campaign in a Day game. As he was in the middle of umpiring, I only said a quick hello and was off to the Dealer Hall.



The Dealer area from the balcony. Couldn't quite fit it all in. More booths off the left and right side of photo.

Dealer Hall

I guess I entered just after noon. Per usual, I'm overwhelmed by the variety of items offered. Sometime later, I was talking to a gamer and he mentioned he felt like he was in a golden age of shopping because pretty much anything you can think of was available, including 3D printed figures as a bonus.

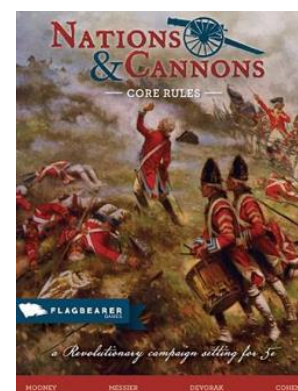
Talked to John, HMGS' IT guru, about carving me out a spot on the new Wordpress-powered HMGS website for my book reviews and AARs. Technically, a number of book reviews are transferred, but YM does not give up its files easily. Now that the registration process is working relatively smoothly -- I know some badges had some issues, but I did say relatively -- after two conventions, I felt I could ask him about teaching me to transfer and setting up the AAR on the new WordPress site.

I puttered around the dealer hall, saying hello and looking at a variety of items.

This time around, I still have unfinished and even unstarted projects, so I had nothing on my shopping list. But you never know...

Had lunch with Harvey, who runs Grogards and The Boardgaming Life blogs. I've contributed an article or three over the years and he asked if he could reprint some of the articles from the AAR. Of course I said yes.

One of the more intriguing conversations was with Pat of Flagbearer Games. He created *Nations & Cannons*, an American Revolution rule set that uses *Dungeons and Dragons* as its basis. No magic. No orcs. Just translating the *D&D* stats into historicals. The idea is to take existing *D&D* players and introduce them to the American Revolution. *N&C* came out in 2022 (see my Aug 2022 AAR for an overview) and he just came out with a hardcover Campaign Book about the American Revolution along with a half dozen scenarios, or should I call them adventures? This campaign book for 1st level through 5th level characters includes the following stories: The Spy and the Hill (Bunker Hill), The Guns of Dorchester (Siege of Boston), New York Occupied, Crossing the Delaware, The



Confederation Breaks (Haudenosaunee civil war), A Rabble from the Woods (Saratoga), and Whispers in the Valley (Valley Forge).

The company also reprinted period maps of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City as a basis for a scenario/adventure. There is also an *Almanack* that draws inspiration from period almanacs and travelogues to include expanded rules for travel, natural terrain, and weather. You still need the actual *D&D* rules, but what a marvelous way to tie *D&D* into the 250th.

Also chatted with James E. (photo) of Columbia Games. This is one of those nice to put face to e-mail times. We chatted a bit about their new wargame *Alliance*, which was introduced at Historicon.

I spent a couple hours inside the hall and then headed back to the main gaming areas.

Walkabout

I started downstairs at the Lancaster Ballroom and immediately found the WAMP corner and Mark Z. running a Henderson field game. Lots of jungle and figures plus an aircraft model made for a nice-looking game.

The Chris Parker table was nearby. I missed his *Light Bobs* game on The Battle of Princeton and his second game of *D-Day to Berlin*, but I later caught up with him on Friday night and sat for a chat for a bit. He has released an annotated and illustrated copy of *The Black Arrow*.

Battle of Princeton with Light Bobs rules.



Frank Chadwick was running his *Epic Conquest* ancient rules. I caught him at the beginning of the game as he was explaining the rules. Lovely 25mm set up.

Frank (tan) explains the rules at the start of the game.



Pete Panzeri was running one of his many games. I wandered in at the beginning, or was it the end, of his 1805 Shores of Tripoli game. Nice fort and ships.

Sci-fi was represented. I found a *Battletech Alpha Strike* game in progress with a slew of models. It's been decades since I played *Battletech*, which I remember as extremely slow since each hit had to fill in all those circles in the diagrams to do anything. I created my own rules for mecha that we played for quite some time, although not anytime lately. Hmmm. Maybe I should resurrect 'em...

Later on, I stayed a moment to observe what I think was *Freeblades*, a cooperative skirmish game in a ruined city.

That's a lot of mechs. Alpha Strike in action.

A Barbary Pirates game, complete with magnificent pirate fortifications and US Navy ships, was in full swing.

Over in the usual computer corner, I found Dave setting up an ACW





Above: *Battle of Derna 1805. Best Theme game.*
 Way Above right: *Freeblades cooperative game.*
 Way Above left: *David sets up Seven Pines*
 Left: *Panzeri's Tripoli game.*



battle of Seven Pines. What? No Napoleonics? Not to worry, John was running a game across the room. Per usual, both games looked spectacular and had the fog of war element tracked by the computer. I suspect one day that CGI holograms might supersede the miniatures, but I hope that day is far, far away. Miniatures just look too good.

A *Hail of Fire* game of the US invasion of Tarawa drew a lot of terrain oohs and aahs. I had fun playing *HoF* on the Eastern Front between Germans and Soviets at a past convention. I suspect a US-Japanese game would offer the same excitement.

Hail of Fire in action.

Just outside the Ballroom, Sharpe's Spain was set up on two tables with wonderful terrain. I took two shots, one for each table, of



Above: *Sharpe's Spain*. Best Terrain award.
Right: *Blood and Plunder*: San Juan.

the main buildings and some 40mm troops.

I loved the ships in a *Blood and Plunder* game held during the evening. Wish my photo did it justice. Then again, I wish all my photos did all set ups justice.

Also during the evening, I ran across a double blind WWII naval game, perhaps Savo Island, using a variation of *Axis and Allies* 1:1800 naval miniatures. Each commander had his own console that was hidden from the other players. Bruce, who had run at least a half dozen double blind games over the years, called it his highlight of the convention. Praise indeed.



Left: Bruce surveys the A&A carnage. Above: *B&P Ironclads*.

Beer and Pretzel Ironclads made a visual statement. I counted 20 ships in the photo and a whole lot of involved gamers. Nice fort, too.

Kamikazes Off Okinawa

Mark M. put on a WWII kamikaze game at 3pm on Friday. I had signed up beforehand -- yes, I occasionally play a game at conventions instead of gabbing away and nodding in admiration at the skill of painters and modelers. Mark is one of those clever folks who create cool models and interesting scenarios.

Mark M explains the concepts behind his Kamikaze game.

In this case, it was the concept behind the game that drew me. He brought a supersized map that used a brick pattern (hexes by another form) of the area around Okinawa and supersized US Navy ships with multiple decks. The aircraft carriers are the stars of the scenario and each has aircraft flights (four per counter) and damage control parties.

The idea is that a player is in command of an aircraft carrier and must juggle air operations -- strike forces that support abstract ground forces on Okinawa and Combat Air Patrols (i.e. fighter CAP) that intercept incoming Japanese kamikaze planes.

Picket destroyers are abstracted on the map although these and other ships (cruisers and battleships) also receive the normal sized deck plans in case kamikazes go after them instead of the aircraft carriers.

Tom and I played the USN. GM Mark played the Japanese. In some ways, this is a nice solitaire game.

Tom (left) has been playtesting the rules. Supersized carrier deck plans on left of table. Map of Okinawa and environs on right.

Japanese Arrive

Japanese planes "spawn" for lack of a better term at three bogies (one per hex) per turn. Each bogie is secret and moves in a random direction. The USN has two ways to spot them: radar and fighter CAP. These attempts are rolled on a chart or maybe

charts, I'm not sure, that also determines the type and number. Again, I'm not sure, but I do know that Tom and I cheered whenever we rolled a 1 -- the bogie turned out to be a fake and was removed from the map. Alas, that left five of six chances for real aircraft, which were a random number, type, and at a random height.

If found at a distance, we could vector in the CAP, which also had to roll to spot and acquire the now real aircraft. I gotta say, Hellcats are hell in the air on unescorted Japanese planes. Every once in a while, Japanese aircraft would get through the CAP and then have to suffer the wall of AA charts -- a three-step process of running the gauntlet of 5-inch, 40mm, and 20mm guns.



Even then, one kamikaze might still get through and commence the attack on a random ship in the formation. Intact ones would have a random entrance spot and be able to maneuver, but often it might have impaired maneuverability from damage and not quite make it.

Of course, in our game, the light carrier *USS Bataan* drew the short straw and was targeted by two intact Japanese planes.

The Schedule chart (lower left) tracks fuel remaining. On the lower decks next to red fuel tanks, a pair of damage control parties with equipment await any damage.

USS Bataan

Two Japanese aircraft made it through the CAP and AA - indeed, in explaining the game, Tom and I ran two Essex-class carriers and forgot about the smaller *USS Bataan*. In fact, we forgot to launch any CAP from it, so it had all its planes on deck, loaded and ready for action...

Problems mount: Fires (orange counters with adjacent smoke counters) on deck and in hanger bay add to damage from flooding (blue counters) on lowest deck. Planes (grey counters) are still on deck...

The first Japanese kamikaze missed the deck and landed adjacent to the ship, causing a big explosion that caused flooding in two sections. Damage Control parties raced to contain the damage. One was partially successful, but allowed another section to be flooded. The other was an abysmal failure (boxcars on 2d6 is not your friend here) and two more sections flooded. Hence, the original two flooded sections expanded into five flooded sections -- eight sinks the ship!

As for the other kamikaze, it hit the deck and landed atop a Hellcat and caused a fire. The bomb it was carrying penetrated into the hanger deck and exploded, causing two fires and associated smoke. The one remaining damage control party raced up a deck and put out the smaller fire, but the other fire expanded. The fire on the Hellcat was also extinguished without the US fighter exploding and causing more damage.

Still, the *USS Bataan* was in bad shape with a fire on the hanger deck and a flooding down in the hull.

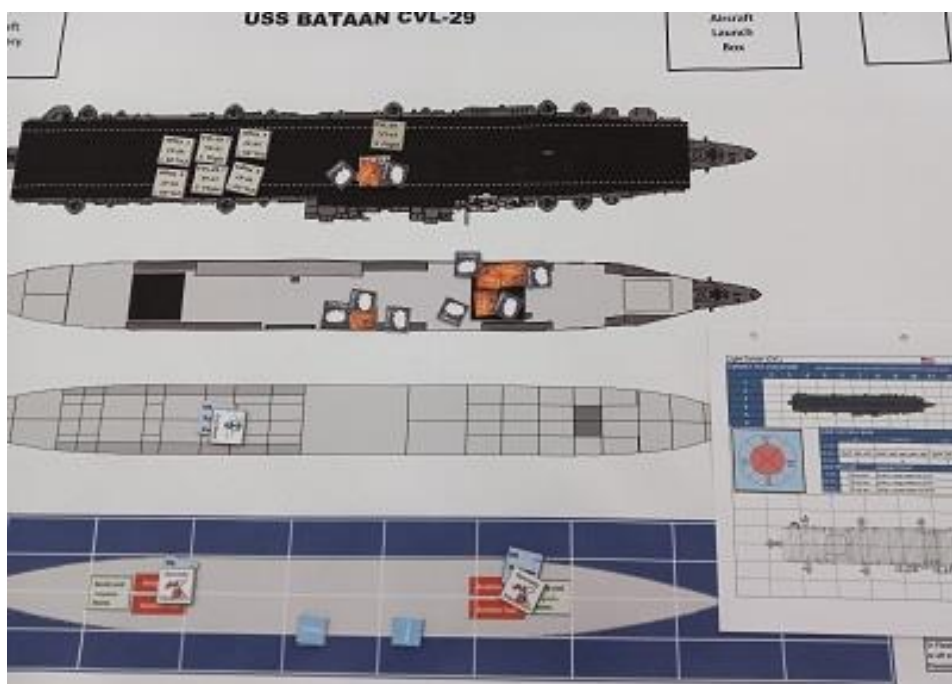
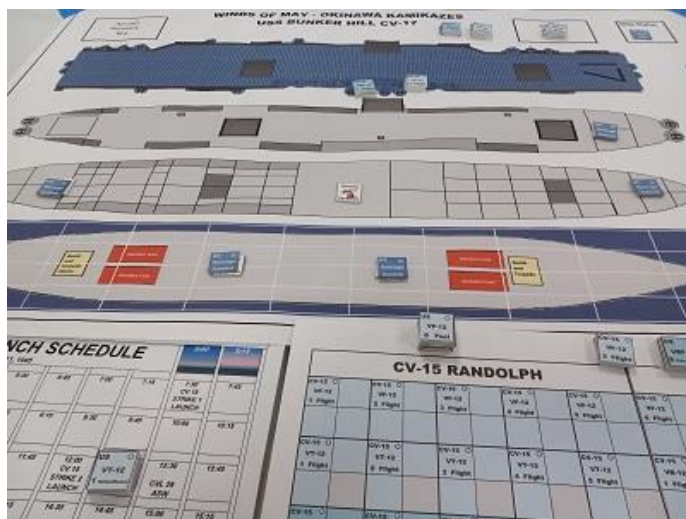
Thoughts

We played about 10 turns in three hours. As this was a learning game, quite some time was taken up explaining the rules. Yes, Tom and I made mistakes, notably concentrating so much on our own CVs that we failed to launch anything off the *USS Bataan*.

We also initially failed to vector in the Hellcats properly. We should have paid more attention to height, as the CAP spotting/intercept is better when the CAP is at the same height as the incoming kamikazes. I didn't mind, I got to see how the attack system worked.

Other Hellcats were properly vectored in and made short work of the other unescorted Japanese Vals.

I gotta say the two planes that made it through the CAP and AA were alternately cheered (the underdog kamikazes made it through) and boo'ed (look at the damage they caused the *Bataan*!).

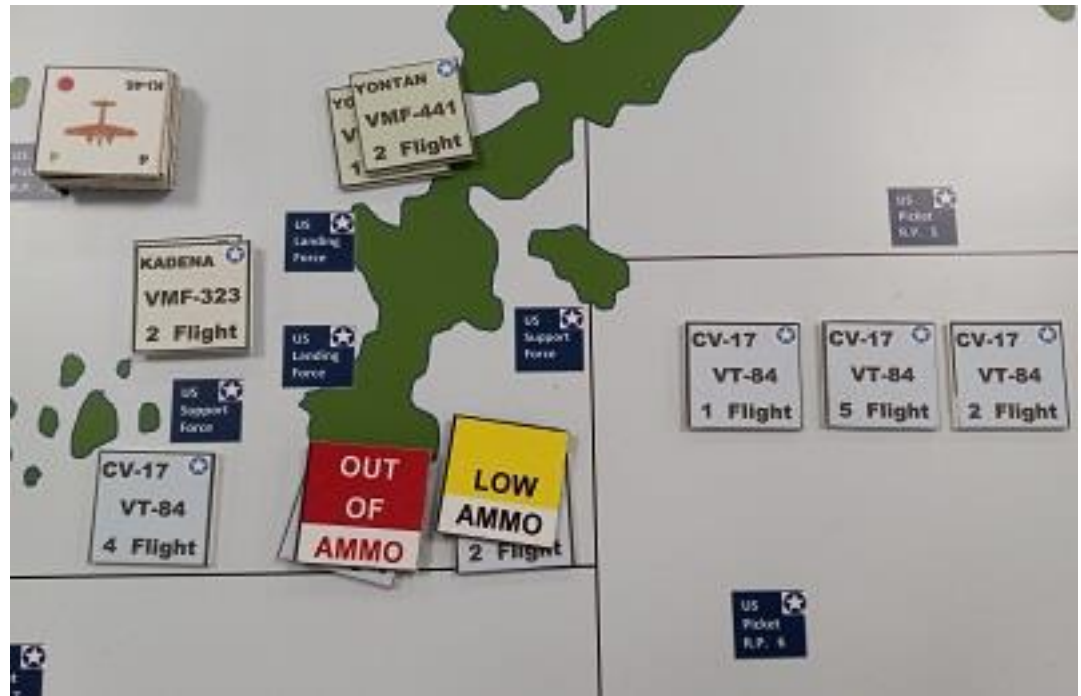


Another kamikaze hit a picket destroyer in the stern and caused two flooded sections -- contained and sealed off as those damage control teams were better die rollers than the *USS Bataan* teams. The DD was dead in the water, though, and more kamikazes were on the way...

Yet another kamikaze made it through the CAP to target a BB, but we didn't play that one out.

Other kamikazes bypassed the picket DD and continued on to try and attack the USMC landing, freighter, tanker, and munitions ships, but USMC Corsair fighters intercepted and shot them all down. Kamikazes can also target USMAC airfields.

Kamikazes (upper left) aim for USMC anchorage as USMC Corsairs scramble to intercept. Carrier fighter CAP is Out of Ammo and Low on Ammo. CV-17 bombers (right) head back to the carrier after performing ground attacks.



The game system is quite comprehensive and replicates what I've read in books about kamikaze attacks. This particular scenario was a particular day -- May 11, 1945 -- when only two picket DD forces were deployed and other CVs were around (hence, some of the Japanese bogies bypassed our particular task force via the random movement die rolls). Because Mark controlled the kamikaze aircraft via the charts instead of active movement, it played like a cooperative solitaire game. I can only imagine the additional carnage if Mark had been actively controlling the height and path of the incoming aircraft.

Mark noted more than 50 USN ships were hit by kamikazes during the Okinawan campaign.

Ship Handling Not Played

We didn't get to one of the pivotal aspects of carrier operations: landing, refueling, and takeoffs. Fighters and bombers had 20 to 25 turns of fuel, so as soon as you launch, the timer starts ticking. Putting together a strike package, flying it to Okinawa to support ground ops, flying it back to the carrier, and landing is part of the game.

Only a limited number of flights can use the deck and elevators per turn. That makes it tougher to coordinate. A random amount of fuel used in a ground attack makes it even tougher. A random number of flights are used in any ground attack and each turn not used in ground attack means the flight is circling (a turn of fuel use).

There's more, but as you can understand, coordinating flight ops requires a bit of planning and quick thinking. Sending them off at the beginning of the day is easy. Getting them all landed as they straggle back...I can begin to see how it would be a challenge.

Nicely done. Oh, some wobbles here and there that Tom and I mentioned, but overall, a nice historical system that can be used as a solitaire system or as a cooperative system.

Flea Market

After helping clean up, it was time for a trip to the flea market. Not that I needed anything, but you never know.

Sure enough, I found a boxed copy of SPI *War of the Ring* (designer edition), which is a *LOTR* game. I used to have this way back in the typical plastic tray format, but got rid of it. A buddy of mine was talking about pulling it out again, but as a double blind version. So, when I saw it, I bought it. Pure impulse buy.

I also blame Renaud -- we've been gaming a multitude of *LOTR* games. Same general plot. Radically different systems.



2:04pm in the ballroom.

Almost went for some other games and figures, but checked myself.

Game Library. Walk in and play anything you see.

Game Library

I stopped by the Game Library for a quick peek. Same wall of games for checking out to play. I've used it in past conventions.

Lectures

Always a number of them I'd like to hear, but time pressures precluded attending.



And Away I Go

With that, my Fall In came to an end. It took me two hours and five minutes for the drive home. What a pleasant day out. I only wish I could have stayed for the entire convention. Ah well, Cold Wars is coming...



8:40pm in the Ballroom.

TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY

EUROPEAN BALANCE OF POWER

by Daniel

Going back down “The List” of oldie but goodie games, I asked Marc and Russ if they would like to play *Triumph & Tragedy* (3rd Edition Rules). Both agreed, but Marc had to bow out and Fred agreed to play instead.

Triumph & Tragedy is a political/military strategy game for three players covering the attempts for European supremacy during the period 1936-45 between the Western nations, the Soviet Union, and the Axis. It has diplomatic, economic, technological, and military components, and can be won by gaining economic hegemony (25 VPs), technological supremacy (completing the A-bomb), or by capturing two capitals of one or more rivals by war.

Triumph & Tragedy has been a favorite three-player game where each game seems to take us in a different direction, which is a testament to its replay value. We used the 3rd Edition rules with the suggested optional rules for the West starting set-up. I hosted, so we used my “super-sized” map and larger custom blocks and cards for us “mature” wargamers.

Sample blocks showing 3 and 4 Strength Points face the player. Rotating the blocks will show from 1 to 4 SPs.



Action cards (left two) for diplomacy or movement and Investment cards (right two) for industry or R&D.



By random selection, Russ drew USSR, Fred drew Axis, and I was left with the West. Fred expressed discomfort playing the Axis, so I volunteered to swap and Fred played the West.

After reviewing the rules, going through the Sequence of Play, we started our starting set-ups. The West has several mandatory block placements, which we went over with Fred. All other starting blocks are whatever the player wants to select, but we suggested that the blocks in Suez and India be anything except a Fortress, since a Fortress can be built later. India and Suez are not “Home territories”, so no new units (except a Fortress) can be built.

“Peace Dividends” were selected to start off 1936, since all players were considered “at peace.”

Then “Player Order” was rolled randomly. Fred rolled a ‘5’, so turn order was USSR -West-Axis, which is a significant advantage for the Axis on the first turn: I get to see how the USSR and West spend their Production before I have to decide on mine. The West improved 2 units by 1 step each and chose 4 Investment cards and 2 Action cards. The USSR reinforced 4 units one step each, selected 4 Investment cards and 1 Action card. I decided to go heavy on

diplomacy, so I selected 5 Action cards and 5 Investment cards and used the rest to reinforce naval and submarine units at my capitals. This gave me 19 Action cards for the Government Phase.

The 19 Action cards I had to play with were quite useful. At the close of the 1936 Government Phase after all players passed, the Axis gained Hungary as an Ally, Rumania as a Protectorate, and Austria, Low Countries, Poland, Spain as Associates, despite some contesting from USSR and the West. Bulgaria became an Associate for the USSR and Norway became an Associate for the West. Each player increased their Industry by one, and the Axis acquired *“Improved Artillery”* Technology (Infantry have *First Fire*). I saved five Action cards and one Investment card.

During the 1936 Command Phase, all players declared *“Violation of Neutrality”*: The USSR attacked Persia, conquering it; the West attacked the Low Countries, conquering it; the Axis attacked Denmark and Yugoslavia, conquering Denmark and occupying part of Yugoslavia. The Axis sent her navy and submarines out through the North Sea and Italian naval units into the Mediterranean.

Germany takes Denmark, a key spot to stop any free Western movement into the Baltic.



1937

Starting 1937, nobody deserved a *“Peace dividend”*. The Player Order roll was a ‘5’ again, so the Axis had the benefit of seeing what the other two players did with their Production. The West had 8 Production, the USSR 10, and I had 13 to spend. The West and USSR spend most of their Production on upgrading units and Investment cards (the USSR added only one Action card), letting me buy 4 Investment cards, 4 Action cards, and upgrade 5 units.

At the close of the 1937 Government Phase after all players passed, the Axis gained Rumania as an Ally, Poland as a Protectorate, Austria and Turkey as Associates, but lost Spain as an Associate. Bulgaria became a Protectorate and Czechoslovakia an Associate for the USSR and Greece, Norway and the USA became Associates for the West. The West and USSR increased their Industry by one, the Axis by 2, and the Axis acquired *“Improved U-Boats”* Technology, while the USSR gained *“Air Defense Radar”* and the West *“Sonar”*. I saved 4 Action cards and one Investment card.

During the 1937 Command Phase, the USSR invaded the Baltic States, conquering it. The Axis completed the conquest of Yugoslavia and parked their submarines in the North and South Atlantic oceans. This foresight would greatly annoy the West in the near future.

1938

Starting 1938, the West gained a *“peace dividend”*. The Player Order roll was a ‘2’, so the order was Axis-West-USSR. Much of my diplomacy strategy was completed, so I spend most of my Production on unit upgrades, adding 3 Action cards and 3 Investment cards.

At the close of the 1938 Government Phase after all players passed, the Axis gained Poland as an Ally (joining Hungary and Rumania), Turkey as a Protectorate and Austria, Latin America & Spain as Associates. Bulgaria became an Ally, Czechoslovakia a Protectorate, and Sweden an Associate for the USSR, while USA became a Protectorate and Finland, Greece & Norway Associates for the West. The West and USSR increased their Industry by one, the Axis by 2. The USSR gains *“Motorized Infantry”* Technology.

During the 1938 Command Phase, all players re-positioned forces but were otherwise peaceful. The Axis shifted German and Italian units east to join the new Polish allies, opposite the USSR’s units from the Baltic to the Black seas. The Axis industry was at 17, which caused the other players mounting concerns, but who was going to do something about it?

1939

Starting 1939, all players received *“Peace dividends”*. The Player Order roll was a ‘2’, so the order was Axis-West-USSR again. The diplomacy strategy was really paying off, allowing the Axis to devote most of their Production on new or upgrading units, so only 4 Action cards and 3 Investment cards were added to my 5 cards from last turn. Both

players saw the 10 new unit steps added to the Axis forces, prompting them to add to their armies and not adding many new cards to their hands.

At the close of the 1939 Government Phase after all players passed, the Axis gained Spain and Turkey as Allies (joining Hungary, Poland, and Rumania) and Austria remained an Associate. Czechoslovakia became an Ally of the USSR, but lost Sweden as an Associate. Finland became an Ally of the West, while Greece and Norway remained Associates and the USA remained a Protectorate. The West and USSR increased their Industry by one, the Axis by 2.

During the 1939 Command Phase, the West and USSR players started talking about a Declaration of War: The USSR player asks the West to declare war on the USSR and invade Persia as a ploy to reduce the USSR Industry cost by 2 and the West taking a -1 VP hit. The West agrees eventually, despite it being a ploy. The USSR decides to declare war and attacks a German submarine in the Baltic Sea with a 1-step fleet and 4 steps of air units, eliminating it while eastern Turkey was encroached by a lone Russian unit without combat. Not the “surprise attack” I was wondering would happen, but the Axis would make sure the USSR would pay for it.

The Axis responded by attacking the Baltic States with 2 armor and 3 Infantry, which quickly eliminate the enemy Fortress and Infantry with some loss, forcing the remaining air units to retreat. The Russian Fortress in Bulgaria is eliminated without loss. In the Fall, the Axis pushed further towards Moscow, eliminating a lone Russian Infantry unit. The Russian unit in Turkey was engaged with both sides taking one loss, but failing to eliminate the Russian Infantry.

1940

Starting 1940, nobody will ever gain a “Peace dividend” again as all are at war. The Player Order roll was a ‘3’, so the order was West-Axis-USSR. Being at war reduced Axis production to 14 instead of 19, based on the lowest amount of INDustry, POPulation, and RESources (the latter is not considered during peacetime), so my opponents chose well to start a war, as I was close to the magic number of 25 for an Economic Victory – but that’s not happening anymore. It’s time to add as much to the armies and still have at least 4-5 Action cards to order the armies around and prepare for the West to join the war. Both opponents feel the same way.

The Government Phase is minimal, with the Axis passing from the start.

During the 1940 Command Phase, the West *wants* to declare war on the Axis in the Spring, but soon realizes most of his blocks are not in the right positions to attack where he wants, so he maneuvers units to prepare for a Summer offensive. The Axis start their Spring offensive before the Russians with an earlier Command card, attacking Leningrad and prosecuting the combat in Turkey from last turn. The Russian Fortress scores 2 hits against Axis ground units. The attack on Leningrad includes one air unit to bait Russian air units to swarm it, while the Axis ground units take out the Russian ground units. The strategy works: Russ attacks the lone Axis air unit with 4 of his own, rolling 10 dice for “*Air Defense Radar*” and wiping it out with overkill (he should have attacked individually until it was eliminated, allowing the other air units to attack Axis ground units – which probably would not have changed the outcome, but possibly add to the Axis losses). A 1-step Russian fleet attacks but scores no hit. The Axis armor and Infantry with “*Improved Artillery*” strike next, eliminating all the Russian ground units and forcing the Russian air units and lone naval unit to retreat, capturing Leningrad. The Russian unit in Turkey is eliminated and the road to a vacant Baku is looking sparsely guarded...

The Russians counterattack to recapture Leningrad, but most of their units are air units with only two 3-step ground units. The air units score 1 hit, but the Axis armor eliminates half the ground units with 3 hits. The Russian armor unit decides to retreat, leaving a lone Russian motorized infantry unit behind, which is eliminated by one of the Axis Infantry. Adding a little insult to injury, the other two Axis Infantry units get really lucky and score 3 hits on the Russian air units, who now have to retreat because no Russian ground units remain.

Fred is now ready to declare war on the Axis with his Summer campaign, but the Axis move first and decide to declare war on the West. It becomes a lesson in frustration for Fred: The British fleets sent after the submarines in the North and South Atlantic can’t force the U-boats to fight as they can simply “escape” combat by submerging (as submarines act before fleets). He needs carriers and/or air units to attack the submarines. The Axis Summer offensive includes a successful attack on Norway and the Low Countries, grinding down the French units present, but not quite conquering it. The West successfully attacks Barcelona from France, eliminating the Spanish Infantry and forcing the Italian fleet helping the Spanish to retreat. After the Summer season ends, Fred finds out that the West loses 11 RESources from the Axis blockade, which cripples his Production. (“Escaped” submarines still block trade, but do not block supply paths.)

The Axis complete the conquest of the Low Countries during their Fall offensive. Paris has one unit present.

The Axis are adjacent or within reach to 3 enemy capitals (Baku, Moscow, Paris) and only need to capture one to achieve a Military Victory. Axis Production will be 18 next turn after capturing cities and resources this turn.

The USSR and West have seen enough and are willing to concede.



Dan (left) as Germany and Fred as the West consider their cards at the start of Turn 2.

German Triumph and Allied Tragedy: *T&T*

by Russ Lockwood

We set up a *Triumph and Tragedy* (*T&T*) game (Third edition rules) using Dan's custom-made super-sized map and blocks -- a relief for grognard eyes. Dan played Germany, Fred the West, and I the USSR.

The Soviets have a difficult path to victory. An economic victory of Industrial production is slim -- USSR has the highest Factory Points (7) needed to increase its Industry by 1.

A military victory to seize two capitals is also slim: The capitals/sub capitals are Delhi, London, Washington DC, Berlin, Ruhr, and Rome -- closest are Delhi and Berlin. That leaves the Atomic Bomb victory (deploy eight A-bomb cards in a progression from level 1 through level 4) and the 1946 Victory Point victory (most VPs at end of game)

When I've played the USSR, I've tried various strategies, from conservative (turtle up and build) to expansionist (attacks on Persia, Romania, and/or Finland) to diplomatic (seek allied minor countries to prevent German gathering of troops and resources). I've even come close, although I once lost a game as the USSR when the Germans took Leningrad in one season and Moscow in the next. For some reason, the Second edition rules eliminated the 3 strength point unit in Moscow. The Third edition didn't put it back.



I take Persia in 1936.

For this game, I split the strategy: using a third of my Industrial Points for Diplomacy/Movement cards, a third for unit builds, and a third for Factory/R&D cards. Looking at the random cards I drew, I saw I had Spring, Summer, and Fall movement cards -- when used for movement, you can't use them for diplomacy. I had enough Factory points for 1 Industrial Point increase. Diplomacy was catch as catch can.

To Begin

The usual Germany superiority of diplomatic cards securing a series of minor countries. Germany built units up and invaded and took Denmark. U-boats headed across the Ocean to park in two spaces -- one off the US coast and the other off the South American coast.

The West built units and scatted some diplomacy.

Start of 1938. Poland (white blocks) is a Germany ally and a U-boat (top right corner) prowls off the US coast.

Besides building a couple units and scattering diplomacy, I used a Spring card to move units adjacent to the Persian border, a Summer card to invade and capture the minor country and its resources, and a Fall card to transfer units back to the European front.

End of 1939. The Turks (orange blocks) and Spain (top middle blocks) are German allies.

After that, I took the Baltic States because it is adjacent to Leningrad, one of the three capitals/subcapitals (along with Moscow and Baku). I turned Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia into allied minor countries but watched the build-up of German units. Dan's write-up has all the gory and glory details.

German Trifecta

Diplomacy is the luck of the draw and Germany got lucky. I pulled only one "Poland" diplomatic influence card all game. Germany drew four, one knocking out my influence and using the other three to turn Poland into a German allied country, complete with its six strength points of military.

Then Germany managed to grab Turkey as a minor allied country in the same way, except it was the West influence knocked out. I never saw a Turkey diplomacy card. That's more strength points.

Then Germany got Spain despite West and USSR influence. More strength points. Economically speaking, for 12 Industrial Production Points, Germany got 17 or 18 strength points plus adjacent countries areas. Good investment return.



War Declared

I declared war on Germany -- otherwise, as it had 17 Industrial points out of 25 needed to win, in four turns maximum, Germany would win. All of us had secret peace dividends VPs as well, so I figured another 1 or 2 VPs. Little did I know Dan had 4 VPs!

I couldn't do much, but I attacked a U-Boat in the Baltic with a fleet (which can't hurt a sub if the sub submerges) and air, which eliminated it.

The main reason is that Germany only had 12 resources, and wartime Industrial production depends on the lesser of Resources, Population, and Industry. Right idea, probably a turn too late.

One incredibly handy German technology was Artillery as it gave his infantry First Fire. That means instead of the defender infantry firing first and inflicting losses, the German infantry fires first and inflicts losses. When one player had that and the others don't (as R&D is random card draws), it is a powerful tech. Germany acquired Artillery at the start of the game.

1940 and End Game

The U-boats blockaded the West, dropping their resources to 6! The Low Countries (BENELUX) fell to the Germans, as did Leningrad and Norway. Indeed, one Turkish unit ended up in the Baltic States.

Fred and I saw enough. We conceded. A well-played and well-executed German plan. Thanks, Dan for hosting.

End game 1940.





The British view of the field of battle.

Guilford Court House: American Revolution 1781

by Russ Lockwood

Seeing how the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution is in full swing, Renaud set up a Guilford Courthouse scenario for his *RUSE* rules. Those following this AAR know he's been refining the rule set throughout the year as we've played a variety of historical time periods as well as sci-fi.

That begs the question: If the rules are universal, how do you differentiate the troops among the time periods?

The British (bottom) meet the first two American lines (top), with a third off photo in upper left.

Universal Soldier

Stepping into the wayback machine, you may have run across this 1970s(?) rules set. From my dim memory of playing this about a dozen years ago, each unit was given two letter grades from A through E -- one offensive and one defensive. The grades reflected a unit's morale, training, weaponry, armor, and so on. A chart compared the grades and provided how many d6s each attacking figure would get and what the attacker needed to roll on d6s to hit. There was also a priority for weapon length. Some weapons, like artillery, use an area effect template.



The differentiation rested in those pairs of grades, although there was nothing to stop comparisons of different units among the ones across the ages receiving the same letters: English longbow, American Colonial Militia, or Imperial Stormtroopers.

Schlegel's Ferry

I played this HAWKS time-warp homebrew game a long, long time ago at one of the HMGS conventions. You drew a box, opened it, and inside were the troops that you played -- from ancient to modern. The older the time period, the more troops in your unit. The newer the time period, the fewer the troops. I pulled a unit of four US troops from Vietnam. I later pulled a unit of 16 ancient skirmishers with shield and javelin.

If I recall, and that's dangerous, weapon range and to-hit numbers fluctuated based on the unit type. When your unit was eliminated, you pulled another box. He had plenty of boxes.

RUSE

RUSE's Command and Control mechanic of selecting a card with a number of unit activations reflects commanders' decision making across all time periods. I've seen him vary the deck contents for each player to reflect better and worse commanders.

So far, so good. British advance and firing trades off cannons but sends the NC militia of the first line packing.

There's even a wild card that can be slugged to the period.

Units may be given Traits to reflect lesser or greater abilities. For example, in the American Revolution game, Militia is a trait that gives an extra die to the opponent and subtracts a die of the militia units. Ranger allows movement through woods without penalty. You get the idea.

Being a skirmish game at heart, firing combat is still a d6 per figure to meet or beat a defender's highest d6 roll. The number of dice tossed by the defender depends upon range, cover, and other tactical situations. The more dice tossed by a defending unit, the more chances to roll a high defense number.

Hence, the Command and Control, Movement, and Combat subsystems are generally common across all time periods, but the number and type of activation cards and the assigned Traits can be all different. And that is how to differentiate the units.

I've been playing this long enough to understand the basic system -- the point of a universal rule set. Of course, you have to remember which units have which Traits and what they do, but Renaud provided a data summary card per unit. That helped. The printed out a list of a dozen or so traits for my units also helped, although I admit my poor brain can only remember two or three at a time.

In any case, with a random roll, I became the British side with British and Hessian troops. Renaud was the Americans.



The Battle

I faced a quartet of American militia units (10 figures each) with one cannon in the first line. More American militia units plus two dragoon units made up the second line. The third and last line were four Continental infantry units (eight figures each). All told, the Americans fielded 14 units, although the militia units possessed the Brittle trait, which made them more susceptible to shock and inaction, and the Militia trait that disadvantaged them in the dice tossing department.

Map set up. Image from web.

I had two lines. The first had seven units: four British line, one British Guards, and two Hessian. The second line had two British line, one British Guards, and one British dragoon units. A number of traits gave the British a qualitative edge, but my 11 units of eight figures each were outnumbered.

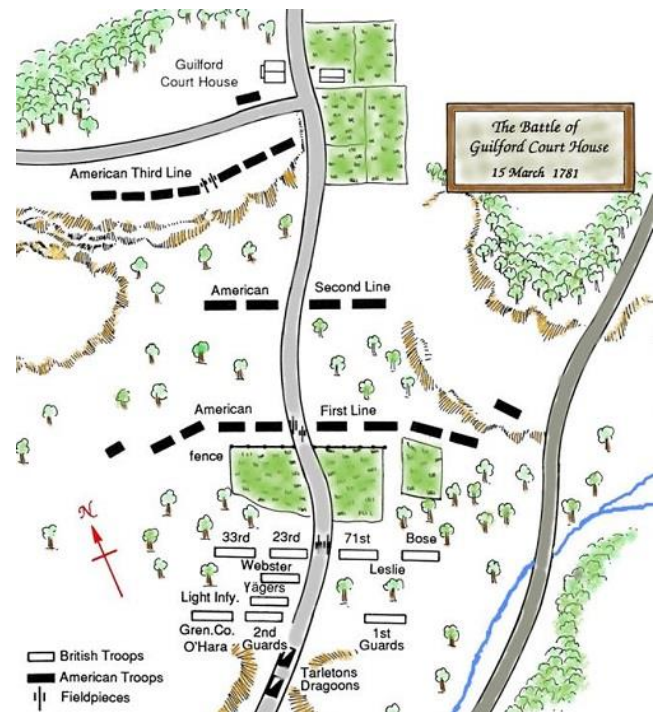
Seeing how our cannons were within range, we both played a "1" card -- Renaud won the die off and fired first. My cannoneers were annihilated in one shot. I removed the three dead figures to the appropriate data summary card, but left the cannon on the table.

"Cannon too," he said.

"But what," sez I, "Will the Americans overrun to put in a museum?"

Awww. No dice. I put the cannon away as well.

Since I couldn't fire the cannon, I advanced an infantry unit and fired at the rebel cannon to repay the favor.



British Advance

When my next turn came, I advanced the line of British one unit at a time and fired upon the first line of American militia. Sure enough, some good dice put a lot of shots into the NC Militia -- all three ran away screaming. The fourth militia unit on the right also ran, just not as far -- it might be able to rally.

The British advance reaches the second line in some discomfort. Apparently, it must have been too dark to keep in line.

Yet I was taking casualties, in part due to bad defensive die rolls. Roll a 1 or 2 on defense and the militia's 10 dice can do a number on a British unit. I mean, roll 10d6 and every 2 or higher roll is a hit and figure lost. The Hessians on my right were gunned down in one roll.

On the other hand, one American militia unit consistently rolled 6 for defense. Roll 8d6 and see if you can roll a 6 or higher. It stuck around to the end of the game, pumping out bullets with unerring accuracy. Next battle, they get a promotion or at least lose the Militia trait.

To be fair, I also rolled a lot of defensive 4s and 5s, so Renaud had a 50-50 roll and a 33% roll to take out a figure.



The End Is Nigh

Technically, I managed to eliminate five American units and put a hurt so bad on two more that they suffered battlefield "Shock." That's 7 out of the original 14 and a British win, but a successful Renaud roll on some trait (Persistence?) continued the American cause.

End game. Kudos to the American unit in the woods (top of photo right-middle).

Then his dice got about average rolls. However, my dice swooned to low roll after low roll, changed dice or no changed dice.

My losses piled up. I soon had seven units eliminated or in Shock out of my 11 despite successive efforts to Rally. Considering I had a 66.7% chance of doing so, I can't tell you the number of 1s and 2s I rolled to fail to Rally. I later got better rolls, but the damage was done.

I retreated from the field of battle.

I knew I should have left the tabletop cannon model in place. The Americans would have something to put in a museum.

Thanks, Renaud for hosting and the game.

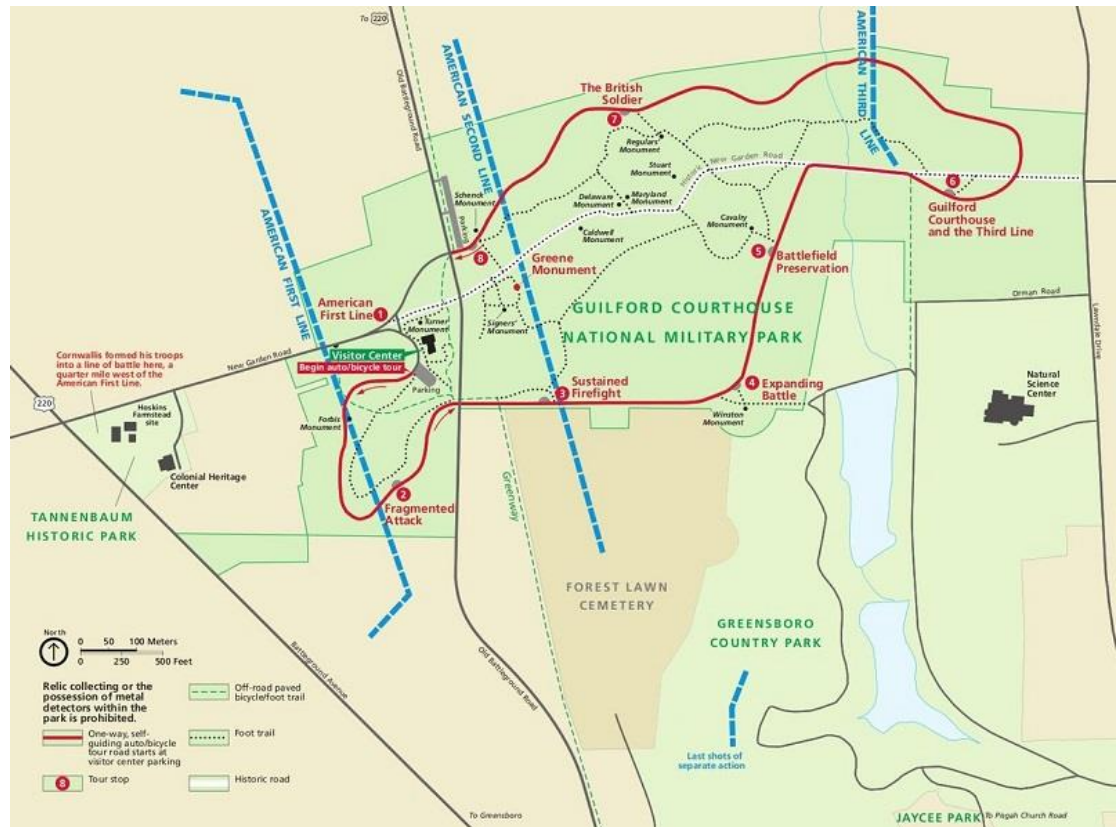


Historical Guilford Court House 1781

A British force 2,100 strong under Gen. Cornwallis met an American force of 4,400 under Gen. Greene on March 15, 1781.

National Park map.

Cornwallis deployed the 33rd Foot and Royal Welsh Fusiliers on his left wing, supported by the 2nd Guards Battalion, Grenadiers, and Hessian Jägers. On the right were the 2nd



Battalion of Fraser's Highlanders and Hessian Regiment von Bose supported by the 1st Guards Battalion. Tarleton's British Legion Horse was in reserve.

Greene deployed in three lines. In the first and closest to the oncoming British, on the right, were a regiment of 500 North Carolina militia, 200 Virginia riflemen, William Washington's 90 dragoons, and the 80-man Delaware Line. On the left were another regiment of 500 North Carolina militia, Campbell's 200 riflemen, and Lee's Legion of 75 horse and 82 foot. In the middle was a dual six-pounder cannon battery.

The second line, 350 yards behind the first, consisted of 1,200 Virginia militia. The third line, 550 yards behind the second, was made up of 1,400 Continentals from Virginia Brigade, Maryland Brigade, and a Delaware Company. Between the Virginia and Maryland units was a battery of two six-pounder cannon.

The NC militia in the first line fired and retired through the second line, which was pushed back. The British hit the third line, used their own cannon to fire at British and American alike, and charged through the gap created by cannon fire. The Americans retired.

The British kept the field after the roughly two-hour battle, but lost a quarter of their troops -- about 500 to 600 soldiers. The Americans lost about 100 killed, 200 wounded, and 1,000 missing (75 were taken prisoner by the British).

The Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, at 2332 New Garden Rd., Greensboro, NC 27410, phone 336-288-1776, was established in 1917.

National Park Info:

<https://www.nps.gov/guco/index.htm>

Map: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/guilford-courthouse-mar-15-1781>

OOB: https://www.carolana.com/NC/Revolution/revolution_battle_of_guilford_courthouse.html

Duel For Middle Earth: LOTR

by Russ Lockwood

As I mentioned in the last AAR, I am constantly amazed that the same *Lord of the Rings* plot can be adapted to a game by so many different mechanics.

I suppose it comes down to two themes: Frodo tries to return bad jewelry and orcs dance the Macarena to try and grab fortifications. The former is often via some track or movement on a map and the latter is often map movement, either hex, area, or point to point.

Duel For Middle Earth uses a Frodo track and an orc point to point system. Both are controlled by a deck-building system that comes from a common batch of cards. Players alternate paying for cards (some face down and others face up) from a pyramidal display, with each card containing some sort of resource: icons that help buy more cards or fortress tiles, generate armies that capture one or more of the seven areas on the map, gain influence and ongoing benefits among the ents, elves, dwarves, humans, hobbits, and wizards, or move Frodo or Nazgul along the Frodo track. Gold tokens serve as a wild-icon good for any needed icon.

The set up. Pyramid of cards left, plastic sliders under map, and fortress tiles right.



A plastic slider moves Frodo over the 14 spaces between the Shire and Mount Doom. A separate plastic slider over the Frodo slider allows the Nazgul to close the distance. If Frodo reaches Mt. Doom before the Nazgul reaches his space, immediate win for the Free Peoples. If the Nazgul lands on Frodo, Sauron gets the ring and the win.

Did I mention that a Ring card bought by Renaud advanced Frodo while if I bought the same card, it advanced the Nazgul? No? Neat little conundrum there. Same with Army cards. Whichever player buys the card gets the indicated armies in the indicated area.

Mid game. Note Frodo's slider (yellow ring) maintains a lead over the Nazgul (black ring). Gray orc armies dominate five of the seven areas.

Armies knock each other out on a 1 for 1 basis -- no die rolls. Any that are left control the space. Gathering enough icons to buy a tile gains a fortress in the specific space. If you can grab and control all seven spaces, you win immediately.

My collection of cards -- use the icons at the top of the card!. I also have one gold coin.

If Frodo doesn't reach Mt. Doom or the Nazgul doesn't reach Frodo by the time all three pyramids of cards are bought, then whichever player owns the majority of spaces wins the game.

By random die roll, I was Sauron the Magnificent. OK, I made up the Magnificent part, but I was the bad guy.

Game The First

After tearing off the shrinkwrap, we set up the board, tokens, and cards and proceeded to play the game incorrectly. Typical, huh? We used the wrong set of icons on the cards and so became quite the powerhouses. The three fortresses were bought in a flash.

Hmmm. Let's pause here and check the rules. Ah. Use the other icons.



Game The Second

This is more like it from a time versus capability perspective. Accumulating icons was slower and gold became dearer. In general, I concentrated on the Army cards. I managed to sweep the Free People's armies off the map and grab six of the seven areas. So close!

End of game. Free Peoples pay attention to the Army situation and Frodo (yellow ring) is within one move of dumping the ring.

Meanwhile, Renaud concentrated on a Frodo sprint to Mt. Doom.

Sometimes, realizing the other player's strategy, we had to deviate from our own. I sometimes bought Ring cards. Renaud sometimes bought Army cards. We both bought Free People's cards to get tokens.

Something Renaud pointed out that I didn't realize was that I had five of the six Free Peoples cards. One way to win is to get all six cards. I was missing the Ents and two Ent cards were available, so even if Renaud bought one, I could buy the other. Ugh.

End game. My cards.

Interesting in this second game that neither of us bought a Fortress tile -- we were both short one icon and believed that gold was not available for use to substitute for that last icon. That is incorrect. We could have used a gold coin as a wild-icon. Oh well...

In any case, our game wound down to the last two cards, one showing a somewhat generic icon and one face down. Frodo was one space away from Mt. Doom. I had armies in four of the seven areas while Renaud had only two areas.

It was Renaud's turn. If the face down card was a Ring card, Frodo would be able to slide one space and hurl the ring into the volcano. If not, I'd win on orc control.

We both eyed the face down card. Renaud's thumb lifted the corner and with a rotated wrist, he flipped the card over. Not a Ring card! Frodo gasped his last and expired on the slope of Mount Doom and Sauron won the game.

Thoughts

Far cleverer than it started out to be. Then again, playing correctly was key. There's a bit more to the game than this brief recap and we were somewhat single-minded in our strategy. The cards ensure replayability and that's a good thing. Worth another replay.



What's Up Doc? Blinking

by Russ Lockwood

One of the best episodes of the revamped Dr. Who series was *Blink*, which aired in 2007 with the 10th Doctor (played in the TV series by David Tennant). The stars, er, monsters, were the Weeping Angels -- "who are quantum-locked, meaning they can only move when unobserved. Weeping Angels feast by touching a victim; the victim is sent back in time, and the Angel feeds on the resulting time energy from the time travel caused." (Wikipedia)

The Weeping Angels returned in a 2010 two-part episode *The Time of Angels* and *Flesh and Stone*. This one had the 11th Doctor (played in the TV series by Matt Smith) along with Amelia Pond (Karen Gillan) battling aboard a spaceship full of Weeping Angels. This is also the subject of a 2022 boxed game, *Don't Blink*.

I picked the game up at a game store called The Portal, in Manchester, CT. I admit

the 50% off sticker was as much a draw as the Dr. Who "Angels" subject matter. Then again, I once bought a Dr. Who-based *Risk* game because it came with a lot of plastic Daleks.

Renaud, The Doctor, in game one. Tiles set. Spare parts (gold circular counters) set. Angels play cat and mouse with the four characters.

The Game

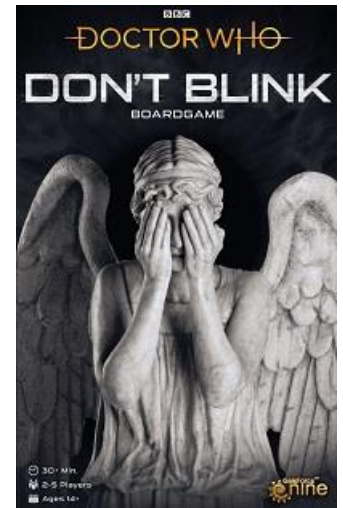
The four good guy characters are The Doctor, Amy Pond, Rory Williams (played in the TV series by Arthur Darvill), and Clara Oswald (Jenna Coleman). They start in a damaged Tardis (for those unfamiliar, a time-traveling machine disguised as a blue British Police box) in the center of a nine-tile board. Each of the nine double-sided tiles consists of 6x6 squares.

The four good guy figures are thick cardboard tokens that fit into plastic bases. The eight Angel figures are also cardboard tokens and plastic bases. I would have liked plastic figures, but at \$30 retail, you can't have everything.

Four Tardis parts (cardboard counters) are scattered in the four corners, one per corner, of the map. From a repeat map perspective, most tiles can be spun around or turned over for a number of configurations. The Tardis is a four-space cardboard token. I would have liked a plastic Police box, but ditto.

The Doctor and company get a common deck of 20 cards, which are not shuffled or randomly picked -- the player or players select which card to place by a character. Twelve are "Don't Blink," which freeze any Weeping Angel movement, four are "Blink" that allow Angel movement to continue, and four are "Special Ability" that are "Don't Blink" and also possess more or less useful traits that are used by a character and then turned over to the Angel player.

One card per character is placed face down. When an Angel comes into view, the card is turned face up.



The goal is to collect all four Tardis parts and have at least one character return them to the Tardis. The Angel player seeks to capture all four characters. The twist is that only four of the eight Angels can be activated during a turn. Four Action Points (so to speak) are available for the Angel player, who can use all or none of them on any or all activated Angels. Thus, you can use one Action for the four activated Angels, or four Actions on one activated Angel, or some distribution in between.

*Amy Pond drags Angels to freeze each other.
Image from web.*



Complications

Angels move 9 squares (never diagonally) and characters only 6 (never diagonally) through the ship, swerving around equipment and other obstacles. Character facing is important for line of sight, which freezes Angels as soon as they are spotted. This implies that characters can only be captured from behind, and one Angel tactic is to use one Angel Action Point (AP) to "Capture Attention" and force a character to turn to face, and use a second Angel to sneak up behind the character for the kill.

Likewise, the best character tactic is to go in pairs and stand back to back, or, back to wall and obstacle.

The key are the "Don't Blink" cards that basically freeze the Angels and save the character from harm. Alas, you have only 12 of these. If an Angel forces a reveal, Don't Blink cards are discarded. "Blink" cards, which don't halt Angel movement, go back into your hand.

The key here is that the character player will eventually run out of Don't Blink or Special cards, leaving only Blink cards in their hand. Then they're toast.

It's hard not to discard at least two Don't Blink cards per turn given even a semi-conscious Angel player. Quite often it's three cards.

The characters have the ability to drag a Weeping Angel in their wake -- the idea is to place multiple Weeping Angels within each other's sight to freeze them. Smart card play can alleviate that, but it could happen.

Game the First

By random selection, Renaud was the Doctor et al and I was the Angel player. Actually, we restarted the first game because we kept reading and re-reading the rules until we got the hang of card play within the sequence of events. You have to read the rules carefully.

In any case, Renaud sent out the characters by their lonesome, and I nailed the Doctor on Turn 2. The second character soon fell to my Angelic touch. It took a while, but the other two fell under my Angelic sway, too.

That's when we learned about pairing up and especially the limited line of sight through doors. The Angels can't touch the characters at first, but make them burn through Don't Blink cards.

Game the Second

We switched sides. Smarter now, well, maybe more experienced is the phrase to use, I paired up good guys into tag-team duos and sent 'em out, usually ending up with each pair back to back.

I dragged a number of Angels to the Tardis to set up the Medusa-like freeze gaze. This turned out to be a mistake.

Game the second. Same board, but this time, the characters go out in pairs.



As we learned, you can get about six turns out of the Don't Blink and Special cards. So, that's the clock mechanic.

I was able to get Clara and Rory out to a part and back. The Doctor grabbed two parts with Amy, but only the Doctor made it back to the Tardis. I ran out of Don't Blink and used Amy's Special card. That left Clara and Rory...who could only get to the part, but not back before the deck contained only Blink cards.

As it turned out, the one turn I spent using Clara and Rory as Angel movers to get them to glare at each other and freeze was a waste.

You have no choice in this game -- you must move to a part each turn or move to the Tardis each turn. Any delay is deadly.

The Mistake

In the TV show, when two or more Angels are alone, they gaze upon each other and freeze in place. In the game, a smart Angel player selects cards for only one of said Angels -- so they never stay frozen. I understand that from a gameplay standpoint, but my efforts to duplicate the TV show burned a turn without stopping the Angels from moving out.

Too many Angels in one place. Image from web.



Thoughts

First off, although the box said 30+ minutes per game, we took two hours per game. The first "game" took almost an hour just to get the hang of the rules, especially line of sight. Then we learned what to look for in the second hour.

When we switched sides for the second game, we still had to look up rules, but it was smoother in terms of play, but our analysis of positioning fronts and back took longer. At one point we laughed as we both encountered "analysis paralysis."

Don't get me wrong, to me, real time passed quickly because of trying to figure the angles of the Angels -- especially near doors. This cat and mouse aspect was quite interesting.

Yet as a whole, we think the Angels can hardly lose unless they are sloppy or the corner tiles are rotated so the parts are closest to the Tardis. If the Angels can make the good guys burn at least two or three Don't Blink cards per turn, the math of spaces needed to be traversed to and from spare parts works against the characters.

Note that one Special Card restores two Don't Blink cards to the characters' deck. However, the Angel can then use the Special Card to randomly draw and discard a card from the character's hand. In our game, I used the card to get back two Don't Blink cards and Renaud used it to randomly draw a card from my hand. Sure enough, he drew a Don't Blink card and discarded it.

Yet, that inevitability can be altered with the arrangement of the tiles. Turning a corner tile 90 or 180 degrees will alter the distance of a part from the Tardis, potentially saving a turn.

One thing to try is limiting a single Angel to using APs to do an individual action only once per turn. For example, in the rules as written, the same Angel may move up to four times for a total of 36 squares. Limiting AP to one for Movement, one for Capture Attention, and one for Capture goes a long way to fixing what we considered a play imbalance.

Picking Angels

At one point, I noted that with astute dragging of Angels, I could pick the Angels Renaud would activate. I guessed 4 for 4 on the next round and 3 for 4 for most rounds thereafter. It doesn't help save cards, but it can help you maybe, possibly, substitute a Blink card for a Don't Blink card without losing the character.

Random Angel activation, reshuffling the deck once, and flipping or rotating tiles might also help. Dunno. My universe is two games, and many times in the past I found myself thinking a game is unbalanced only to discover losing with either side.

If I find the time, worth another shot with tweaks. Then again, time is less linear and more "a ball of wobbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff."



Above: All the WWI gamers in Darien. Below right: Some of the gamers ponder the trenches.

HMGS Next Generation: Gaming Education

by John Spiess

WWI in Darien

We held a WWI Next Gen game in Darien, CT. I figured a WWI game would be appropriate so I could talk about the significance of the November 11th date. Very few kids know why we celebrate Veteran's Day on November 11th. This group of 15 was an exception since they are my regulars and they remembered the game and lesson from last year.

We had 10 German players attacking 5 French defenders, simulating one of the final German attacks on the morning of November 11th. It was the standard dash across no man's land with multiple rows of barbed wire and craters.

The Germans took the trench with horrific losses. Everyone voted for the WWII Battle of Bastogne as the next game. Kids just love tanks.

Gamers at Monmouth.

Battle of Monmouth in Greenwich

We played the American Revolution Battle of Monmouth in Greenwich, with a good turnout.

Battle of York in Rye

We played the Dark Age Battle of York in Rye. I am encouraged to see the "Swifties" show up again in Rye. They are always a fun crowd.

Siege and storm gamers in Rye.

The Battle of York was the same tournament style game that I just ran at Fall-In. Players took turns as the defending Vikings or the attacking Saxons. This is a very evenly matched scenario, so just one small tactical blunder can lose the game.



For example, each attacking player was given three assault scaling ladders. Knowing that the defenders had some oil and rocks, but not knowing where it was, the kids had to decide which troops to send up in the first wave. Sending up the better huscarls meant a greater chance of success, but also could lead to defeat if all the good troops died while climbing up.

Decisions, decisions.

More of the Dark Age battle in Rye.



Battle of Brunanburh in New Canaan

The Dark Age Battle of Brunanburh took center table in New Canaan. Entertaining per usual and a pretty exciting match.

I included some shallow streams on the battlefield just to add some variety. Aethelstan sent his cavalry around the far left flank and hit the Vikings before they could join the main force. The Vikings were caught in the stream as they tried to reach the safety of the far bank. Several gigantic melees occurred in the water. Then more troops from each side were added to the fight, and the melee expanded up and down the stream banks.

New Canaan gamers.



The Scots in the center held firm against Aethelstan, but now both flanks caved in, and the battle became a rout as warband after warband failed morale and the Scots and Vikings routed away.

As I was cleaning up after the game, an older gentleman walked in and just asked, "So how did Aethelstan do?"

It turns out he was English and was a bit of a history scholar for the Dark Age period. We had a nice conversation during which he explained that Brunanburh was probably one of the most important battles in English history that absolutely no one knows about.

I gave him a chuckle when I responded that at least seven New Canaan kids now know about it.

For those like me unfamiliar with the battle, here's a slightly edited Wikipedia synopsis: The Battle of Brunanburh was fought in 937 between Aethelstan, King of England, and an alliance of King of Dublin Olaf Guthfrithson, King of Scotland Constantine II, and King of Strathclyde Owain. The battle is sometimes cited as the point of origin for English national identity: historians suggest that "the men who fought and died on that field forged a political map of the future that remains, arguably making the Battle of Brunanburh one of the most significant battles in the long history not just of England, but of the whole of the British Isles." -- RL

HMGS Outreach: Speech at Raytheon

by Richard Claydon

I was invited to talk at the Raytheon gaming group at their local campus the other day. The invite came from one of their managers that I met at the American Heritage Museum in September. They asked me to talk about the history of wargaming and present a game. It was well attended and I used quite a bit of information from the HMGS website to talk about the historical development of war games along with some examples of games I've run.

After that we ate some pizza and played two rounds of *Bolt Action*: SAS Raid on Sidi Haneish Airfield on July 26, 1942. The players in both games managed to destroy all the German aircraft with the loss of only one jeep. For security reasons, I was not able to take any photos but we had a fun time. See the following thank you note from Sara.

"Thank you for all the support and help that went into our War Games/Board Games night! It was a large success with 25 people coming by throughout the night.

Mr. Claydon, thank you again for your presentation and teaching us your historically simulation game, I really enjoyed learning to play!

Thanks again for everyone's support to make this night a success."

NEWS

ATO PBG Brick: All 33

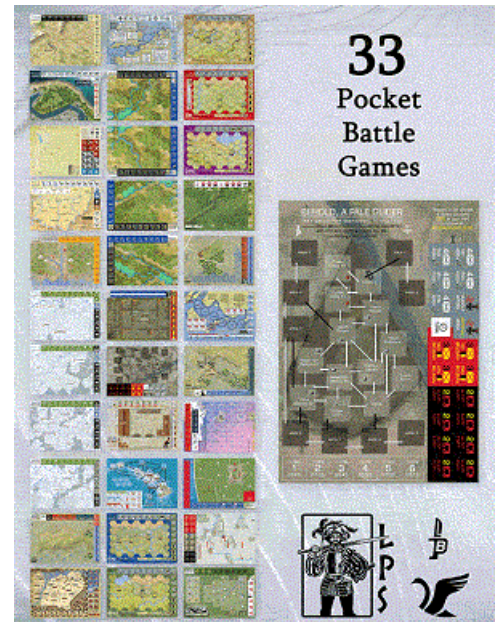
by Russ Lockwood

Against the Odds magazine often published *Pocket Battle Games* - a postcard-sized game with the counters printed around the edges or a sales promotion with actual die-cut counters. Rules were on the back of the postcard. Map on the front.

ATO kept getting so many requests about purchasing PBGs, it decided to satisfy the “completists” out there with an offer that includes ALL of them: The PBG Brick.

The Brick includes: all 33 separate postcard-size games, 290 full color 1/2-inch die-cut counters, and one deck of regular playing cards (as many games use card draws instead of dice). Cost \$100 for ziplocked package that includes shipping for USA and \$140 for ziplocked package that includes international shipping (don't know about any tariffs -- contact ATO).

Info: <https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=204>



CSW News: Back Online

by Russ Lockwood

ConSimWorld News Service is back online after dealing with long-standing technical issues and a site migration.

CSW notes it is also working to launch a new community site, along with another surprise, and we will send announcements when that time comes. Our new community site will also include exclusive access to publisher-direct specials for those who donated to CSW in 2025.

Info: <https://consimworld.com/>

KozCon: Sillyness of Scots

by Russ Lockwood and Photo by Phil

The Scots camp in *the L'Art de la Guerre* game is somewhat mobile.

Link within Phil's recap shows YouTube video by Walt Leech showing an animated knights charge using miniatures. Way cool, Walt.

Phil's recap, photos, and visual depiction of a Boghadairean Gàidhealach charge at:

<https://philonancients.blogspot.com/2025/11/a-sillyness-of-scots.html>



Rising Dragon: KS Funded Wargame

by Russ Lockwood

Flying Pig Games' *Rising Dragon* is a near future, platoon-level, chit-draw driven, tactical boardgame postulating a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. System simulates cutting-edge technologies, including robotic troops, AI-directed anti-tank swarms, hypersonic missiles, advanced amphibious operations, and good ole Main Battle Tanks, such as the China's Type-99, and infantry like America's 3rd Recon.

Platoon Level. Each counter represents 3-5 tanks, or 30-60 combatants; Scale of 150 meters per hex; 15 minutes per turn; and Continuous Chit-pull Activation in a continuous turn with numerous



impulses. Age. 14+. Players: 2. Playing Time: 1-3 Hours.

Components: Two mounted, 22x34-inch full color game boards; Six sheets of die-cut 1-inch counters and trapezoidal administrative counters; 80-page, colorful rule and scenario book, including 16 scenarios, and lots of examples of play/concepts; Player Aid Cards; and 18 injection-molded dice instead of combat results table for combat resolution.

When I last looked, Flying Pig raised \$101,976 from 530 backers on KS, far over the \$16,000 goal. The KS campaign ends on December 2, 2025. Retail price is \$125. KS price is \$110 plus shipping. As it exceeded the goal, several add-on components have been unlocked.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/markwalker/rising-dragon-platoon-level-combat-in-2034>



GHQ Miniatures: Batch 6

by Russ Lockwood

GHQ released its Batch 6 miniatures.

T-40 Tank (R86) with five 1/285 models per pack: \$13.99

V-1 Flying Bomb (G613) with four 1/285 models per pack:

\$13.99

M60TM Tank (N676) with four 1/285 models per pack: \$13.99

LeClerc SXXI Tank (N677) with five 1/285 models per pack:

\$13.99

CM-12 Tank (T9) with five 1/285 models per pack: \$13.99

CV-1 USS Langley aircraft carrier (GWS14) with one 1/2400

model per pack: \$23.99

SSBN Ohio submarine (HUS33) with two 1/2400 models per pack: \$12.50

Info: www.ghqmodels.com



Unpainted 1/285th Scale WWII Micro Armour
T-40 Tank
R86 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285th Scale WWII Micro Armour
V1 Flying Bomb
G613 - 4/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285th Scale Modern Micro Armour
M60TM
N676 - 4/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285th Scale Modern Micro Armour
LeClerc SXXI
N677 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/285th Scale Modern Micro Armour
CM-12 MBT
T9 - 5/pk - \$13.99USD



Unpainted 1/2400th Scale Great War Microscale
CV-1 Langley
GWS14 - 1/pk - \$23.99USD



Unpainted 1/2400th Scale Modern Microscale
SSBN Ohio
HUS33 - 2/pk - \$12.50USD

Newspaper War: American Revolution

by Russ Lockwood

The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table will meet virtually on Monday, December 8, 2025 from 7:30pm to 9:00pm via Zoom. The topic is: Fenno vs. Freneau: Politicized Printers, Partisan Papers, and the National Order in the Age of Washington. Dr. Shawn David McGhee, author of No Longer Subjects of the British King, will speak about a newspaper war that occurred during the early Republic.

There is no charge to attend.

To receive a link for this upcoming meeting, please send an email to: wroundtable@gmail.com

More Info:

Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table Website:

<https://www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org/washington-crossing-american-revolution-round-table.html>

Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@washingtoncrossingamerican5416/videos>

The Great War Card Game: Kickstarter Update

by Russ Lockwood

Dana Lombardy reports Lombardy Studio's Second Edition of *The Great War Card Game* drew \$9,701 in pledges via Kickstarter, far above the \$2,999 funding goal. The Second Edition includes revised rules for faster learning, larger (tarot-sized) card art that includes historical context for the cards, and a new illustrated historical guidebook about the war.

KS Info: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2030222759/world-war-one-legacy-collection?ref=2l1ry1>

Other Info: <https://lombardystudios.com/>

HMGS Conventions: 2026

by Russ Lockwood

Next up on the HMGS convention schedule is Cold Wars on February 5 to 8, 2026 at the Wyndham -- i.e the Lancaster Host to us grognards -- 2300 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA 17602. The theme will be Wild, Wild West.

Historicon is on July 15 to 19, 2026 and the Lancaster County Convention Center in downtown Lancaster, PA. The continuing theme is the 250th Anniversary of the American War of Independence.

Fall In is on November 6 to 8, 2026 at the Wyndham. The theme is Special Operations in History.

All attendees will need to register via Tabletop Events.

Info: <https://hmgs.org/conventions/>



Patriot's Week: Dec. 24-31 2025 in Trenton, NJ

by Russ Lockwood

The annual American Revolution Patriot's Week continues its run in Trenton, NJ from Dec. 24 through Dec 31, 2025. Most of the events are free to attend.

Info: <https://patriotsweek.com/events/>

Battle of Princeton Re-enactment: Jan. 4, 2026 Princeton, NJ

by Russ Lockwood

A big American Revolution re-enactment on the Battle of Princeton battlefield in Princeton, NJ, will be held on Sunday, January 4, 2026, from 9:30am to 12:00 noon.

The Princeton Battlefield is at 500 Mercer Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540.

Info from Princeton Battlefield Society: <https://pbs1777.org/experiencethebattle/>



Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton.

Orcus Gate 333: Thanatos *D&D*

by Ed

So there we are, The Hammer, Sarge, Balien, Saurus, Rufus, and Frank, standing at the gate to 333 Chez Orcus. Do we plunge in?

No. First, we set a guard in case those pesky Scarlet Bro's show up. Second, we send a team of shoppers back to Greyhawk for stuff. The healing potion market, still shrunken from the party's depredations, offered 50 low-level potions. Then Balien flew in like a plague of locusts and stripped the marketplace clean of sundry other potions. And as we reached 13th level, Plane Shift became an option, and for that, one needs keys. Frank rounded up all the keys he could get his mitts on, including blanks waiting to be tethered to a particular plane.

Frank in particular had an amusing time on his shopping expedition, telling all and sundry of our "investigation" into Thanatos 333, Chez Orcus. Showered with gifts by followers of St. Cuthbert and lauded by the town crier as He Who Would Slay Orcus, Frank even had to turn down the help of Paladins eager to volunteer -- because, well, let's face it: to succeed, we do things good Paladins are not on board with.

Entry

Back together, we took the leap and entered Thanatos, the 333rd plane of the Abyss and the cold and frozen home of Orcus. We arrived in an isolated temple on a hill, and in that temple we found a guardian cursed to stay at his post for eternity by Orcus.

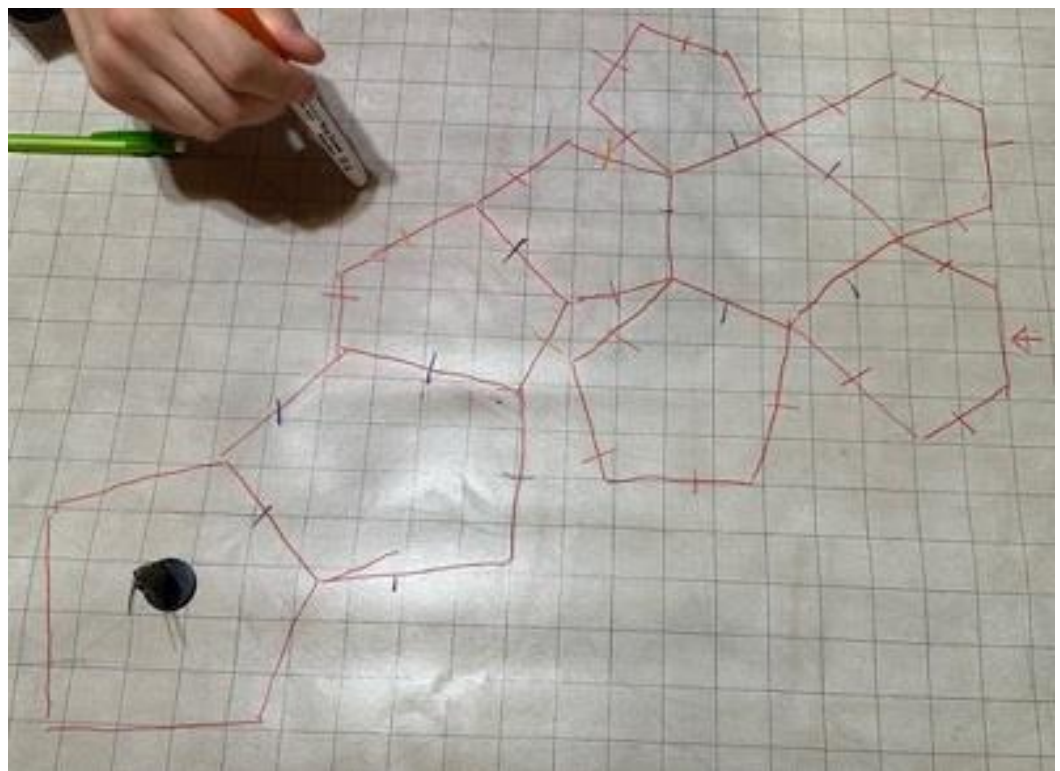
He proved eager to make a deal to escape this fate, and provided us all manner of useful information. Upon receiving our promise to NOT rat him out, he also offered the gift of one-use Heroism tats and a bony hand. Break a finger on it and we become invisible to ordinary undead.

Our part of the bargain? To retrieve Thalazar's phylactery and return it to him or destroy it. He lost nothing if we failed. "Oft evil will evil mar" as the saying goes, and Orcus's management strategy bit him on his demonic behind.

Following the lich Vaelthar's directions, we made our way to the chief Necropolis of Orcus. Along the way we witnessed full on demonic war with (wossname demon) featuring dueling red dragons and balors. We passed through a town of liches and talked our way past Sorazul, the self-appointed King of Liches.

Four Paths In The 333 Woods

Forced to choose one of four paths, we passed 10 demons torturing an angel. The group split on whether to free this celestial, copper-skinned creature. Rolling his eyes, The Hammer asked what price these demons might ask for possession of the angel, as we "needed an additional sacrifice" to Orcus. Seeing what they thought was yet another lich, they bargained. Curiously, those in favor of freeing the angel did not contribute much to the price, other than Sarge and his donation of a black dragon's head.



Maze. Photo by Ed.

Sarge sacrificed his magic axe to free the angel, named Gabriel. Once the demons had flown off with their price, he was rewarded with a Wish. He gained much in the magic axe department, ending with a +3 Vorpal Axe. The angel also provided us an ally, a Ki-Rin named Elydor Star's Honor, which we disguised with red "ruby" chains taken from the Temple of Wossname* where we'd found the gate to Chez Orcus.

**Temple of Wejazz -- RL*

In the Necropolis we found we could not make our way to the Palace of Orcus. Chaos! But in a market a Seller of Secrets accepted a secret to Show Us The Way. We used some of the vast catalog of potions and invisibled our way past the roving patrols and found ourselves in a geometric puzzle. One potion of Resistance to Electricity and more than 100 of Sarge's hit points later, we found ourselves at a wall upon which was written "Speak, Friend, and Enter."

Speak About What You Want

Ha ha, no. It said something along the lines of "Say what you want, what you really really want." Without much cogitation Frank said "loot." Before us shimmered the image of a minotaur demon prince trapped at the center of a maze littered with treasure. We debated entering to free this apparently trapped monarch of the Abyss, which would then act as a heck of a distraction for our subsequent raid on Orcus's Vault of Phylacteries. We decided not to.

Then someone said "Power" and for a few brief seconds we saw into Orcus's throne room, where he sat in conference with his many demonic generals or hair stylists or plumbers or whoever. No one lunged through to carry the fight to the Prince of Undead himself, and "Vault" revealed a vast room with walls covered in scrawls, with an altar at the far end.

Orcus's Vault Guardian?
A huge demon, an Exarch of Orcus, equipped with an axe the size of an elephant, with wings like that of a dragon.

Now, that's a melee. Photo by Ed.

How About That Phylactery?

Thalazar appeared after we entered and tried the "how to find the phylactery you want" trick our ally taught us. The trick worked.

Counterspelling the guardian's first spell failed, and the Guardian used Timestop to good effect, summoning 48 extra tough skellingtons while we stood frozen. Undaunted, the party attacked. Sarge proved so dangerous, the foe and the lair spent many actions slaying him. We brought him back and he was slain, three times during the battle. Balien proved a deadly foe, blade dancing. The Hammer's summoned eye critter blasted it every round with deadly effect.

As it reeled, it screamed and summoned 500 hit points of undead, including a Death Knight and two naughty undead eye tyrants, though the Guardian itself soon perished.

The lair effects ceased, but the remaining foes proved difficult to slay, albeit with one of the undead eye thingies cowering in a corner due to the mighty power of Pelor (well done Rufus). But with Sarge upright, the lively eye monster dead, and the death knight decapitated (Vorpal attack), it turned out not too hard after all, and we had the definite idea the host of Chez Orcus knew something was up and our time limited.

We already had the phylactery of Sorazul, King of the Liches. We then got our ally Vaelthar's phylactery, and also snagged Morgoth, Charis' dracolich mount's phylactery. Balien did the honors and summoned the horcru -- errrr,



the phylactery of Charis Bonebreaker, the whole reason we were here. Then with the possibility any second now of Orcus and whatever muscle Orcas had handy crashing in on us, someone had the bright idea of snagging just one more phylactery.

Remnants of the melee. Photo by Ed.

All In The Mind

I mean...

Who's the leader of the club,
That's made of bones and evil?
The whispered one, the maim-ed
lord, the arch-lich
Hey! there, Hi! there, Ho! there,
You're as welcome as can be.

Yeah, we picked up a bony hand
and then Plane Shifted out of there, but
not before Frank succeeded in blowing
the 333 Plane PROM into a blank key.

The Hammer sternly told
everyone in attendance "We do not talk
about Lich Club. We only discuss it using Rary's*. And I hold the things we found on vacation because I'm very hard to
spy on using magic."

**Rary's is a secure telepathy spell. --RL*

Using Rary's, upon our return, Needful Things were discussed.
Destroying the phylactery of Thalazar required a bath of good cleric blood
courtesy of Rufus.

Another Quest

Now we must discover, and quickly, how to destroy the phylacteries
of Charis and Morgoth. We can hope Sorazul, King of Liches gets some
interesting questions thrown his way. Why, exactly, Orcus must wonder, did
we liberate that phylactery? As for Vecna's hand, if it truly be Vecna's, The
Hammer seems to find this acquisition even more significant than gaining
Charis' phylactery.

Once we know how to destroy various phylacteries, we must
discover if the owners are still "dead." If so, destroy! If not, then we must
once again destroy the entity before we destroy the phylactery.

In general, we should expect blowback. Demonic blowback. We're
now higher on someone's naughty list than a certain local Paladin of our
acquaintance. And Iuz to the north remains an issue.

Decisions, decisions.

This may help explain what a phylactery is. – RL. Image from web.



BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster. by Mark Stille. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 328 pages. 2025.

"December seventh, 1941, a date that will live in infamy..."

Japan's attack on the US fleet and aircraft at Pearl Harbor served as the event for the US to become involved in WWII. Why Japan came to the decision to war on the US and how Adm. Yamamoto and his staff created the attack plan set up a detailed analysis of the attack itself.

Incidentally, according to Japanese calculations, the US 1940 Two-Ocean Navy bill meant Japan would only have 76% of US strength in 1941, 50% of US strength by 1943, and 30% of US strength by 1944 (p57).

The Japanese performed tabletop wargames about an attack on Pearl Harbor with two carriers as early as 1927 (p66). It was judged unsuccessful. On Sep. 11, 1941, the first wargame of an air strike on Pearl Harbor resulted in the loss of two carriers and 50% of the aircraft. The second wargame that day was a success, but then again, the Japanese counted one Zero equal to three US aircraft (p72). Another wargame was held Oct. 12, 1941 using only three carriers but including submarines (including midget subs) was judged a moderate success (p77-78).

As for the real attack, plane by plane, torpedo by torpedo, and bomb by bomb, the expert Japanese airmen didn't do as well as expected, although the carnage was severe enough to put the battleship portion of the fleet out of commission for months to years. Two never were repaired. Fortunately for the US, the aircraft carriers were out and about delivering planes and scouting.

Japanese aircraft handling processes on carriers could launch the prepared first strike wave in 15 minutes and the second wave soon left and then the carrier force turned and headed away. However, recovery and turn-around time of returning aircraft was another matter.

This turnaround time needed also argued against launching a second strike -- not that Adm. Nagumo was ever going to launch a second strike. A second strike return time for early December would mean a night landing. That's something the inexperienced aviators on *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* were unable to do. Indeed, they were unable to launch in darkness -- a point new to me.

Of note, and in detail, the Japanese submarines that were supposed to be blockading Pearl Harbor and sinking ships entering or leaving proved ineffectual at best. Partly, and this is new to me, it revolved around generally passive Japanese submarine operating procedures. Well explained and interesting, that.

An odd tidbit: In Jan-Feb 1941, Yamamoto entertained an option that would send 500 to 600 aircraft on a one-way mission to Pearl Harbor, with the pilots and crew ditching in the ocean to be picked up by submarines and destroyers (p90). He was talked out of it.

Analysis would not be complete without examining a second strike that went after the oil tank farms and examining what would have happened if the US was alerted and ready for the attack.

One typo: "December 77" (p372) has an extra 7.

The book contains 40 black and white photos and six black and white maps. Excellent OOBs, too.

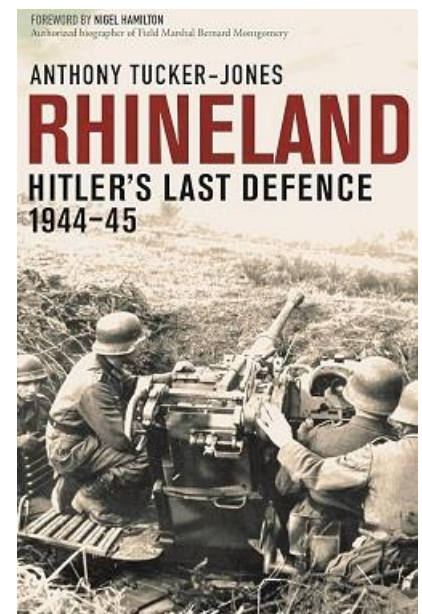
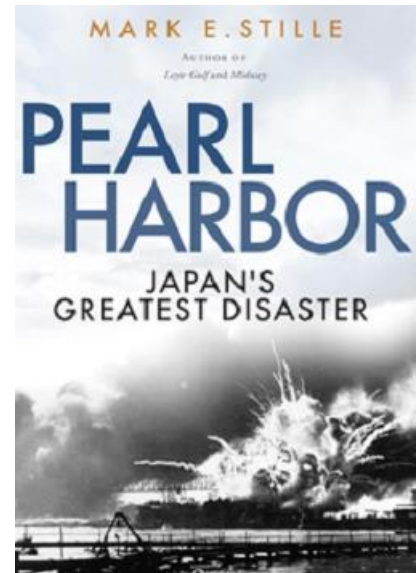
Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster will mesmerize you with details and analysis of the Japanese attack and American response. It's quite a captivating and smoothly-written account. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.

Rhineland: Hitler's Last Defense 1944-45. by Anthony Tucker-Jones. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 304 pages. 2025.

Quite often, WWII in Europe seems to end after the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945 or thereabouts. I can assure you that was not the case, as my grandfather, drafted April Fool's Day 1944, completed all his basic and advanced training and was sent to participate in the 1945 Rhineland campaign.

This particular book covers the German actions and responses to Allied



maneuvers and attacks on the Western side of the Rhine, including short recaps of Hurtgen Forest and Colmar Pocket. Per usual, Hitler demanded every square inch of the Western side be held, long after its usefulness as a buffer to the Rhine had expired. Nice bit of analysis, supplemented with German commanders' views, on that aspect.

Then comes the crossings of the Rhine -- at Remagen, by Patton, by Montgomery, and even by the French. Interesting factoid about how good and how well equipped US forces were by March 1945: The US 5th Division ferried a regiment across the Rhine at Openheim between 2200 and midnight on March 22. By early afternoon, the entire 5th Division was across. In 24 hours, 15,000 men and 1,000 vehicles had been landed on the Eastern side of the Rhine. In 36 hours, a heavy pontoon bridge was across (p145 to p147).

I knew absolutely nothing about the French crossing and the book expands upon ground operations to include a bit about DeGaulle's political motivations to grab territory as a bargaining chip at a post-war conference. Nicely summarized, that.

The book contains a full February 1945 OOB of German and Allied (US, UK, French) forces down to Division level. A Lower Rhine, March 1945 OOB of German and UK forces down to Division level is also included.

The book contains 33 black and white photos and eight black and white maps. With all the unfamiliar names, well, unfamiliar to me, I would've liked more maps, but that's me.

I was quite interested in reading about this oft-overlooked campaign.

I knew about some operations -- Remagen Bridge, Reichswald, and Operation Varsity -- from previous books, which are also covered in this book. Yet so much I didn't know. ATJ provided a considerable amount of information about US and British operations in and around the Rhine River. It's a nice, smooth read, too. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.

Mapping the Silk Road. by Riaz Dean. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 239 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Riddle of Ptolemy's Stone Tower*

The Silk Road consists of trade routes from West to China. Typically, caravans would ply the paths across Central Asia, braving weather and bandits to bring silk from China for sale in the West.

The geographer Claudius Ptolemy mapped the Roman world, including part of the Silk Road. In describing the route, he noted that a "Stone Tower" marked the midway point -- except no one has ever found it. Enter Dean, who is trying to locate the tower.

Ptolomy wrote his *Geographia*, which mentions the Stone Tower, around 140AD/CE, but it had been mentioned in Chinese texts as early as 140BC/BCE. Dean starts with these and rifles through other texts to try and pinpoint the Tower using descriptions of what was around the Tower. In some ways, this is a detective story, not unlike trying to discover what pass Hannibal used in marching through the Alps.

As the information and analysis grow, you'll learn about the empires in between Rome/Parthia and China. Bits and pieces I've read before in another books, but the full panoply of diplomatic and commercial agreements are on display here.

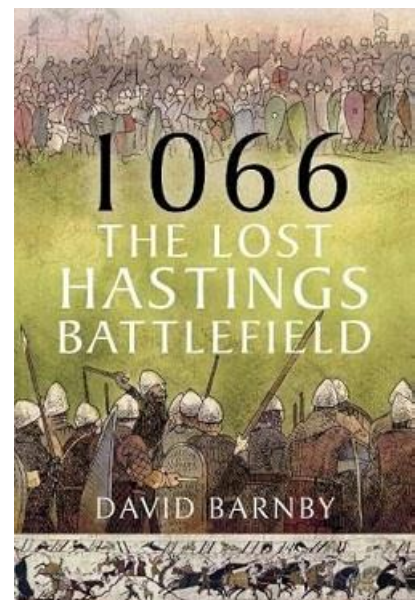
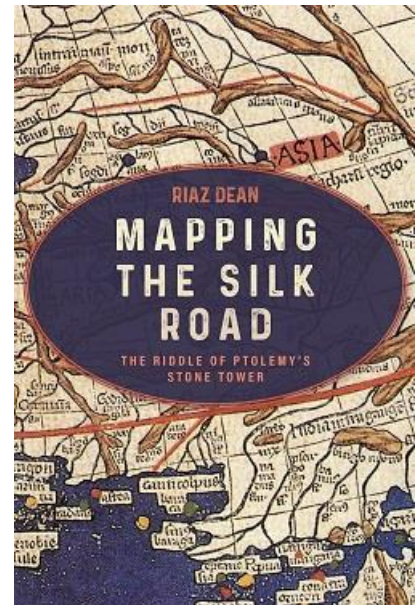
The book contains 18 black and white photos and illustrations, and six black and white maps.

In the end, he asserts there was no man-made Stone Tower -- it was the Suliemon-Too mountain that jutted up over the plain and is visible for miles around. There's more, but it seems as good an idea as any. I had never heard of the Stone Tower, but that's what makes reading this marvelous detective adventure a pleasure.

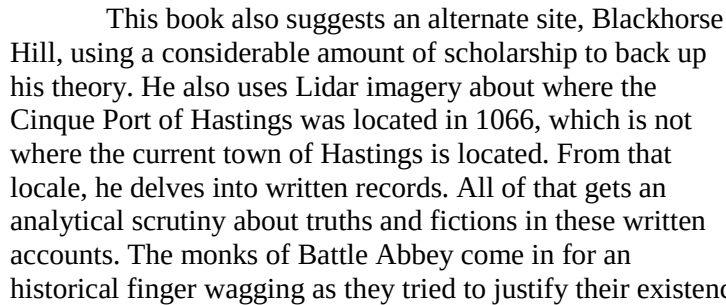
Enjoyed it.

1066: The Lost Hastings Battlefield. by David Barnby. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 212 pages. 2023.

A few years ago, I read a book *Mysteries of the Norman Conquest* (review on HMGS.org) about a walkabout around the Hastings area and the possibility of the "official" battlefield of Hastings being in the wrong spot a few



Current battlefield (upper left corner). Suggested site roughly in the middle of the map image.



Or it could be nothing -- like the numerous Holy Grail chalices, King Arthur's burial sites, and Hannibal's routes across the Alps.

Alexander the Great Avenger. by Manousos E. Kambouris. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 291 pages. 2023.

Starting off with a deep analysis of the Macedonian and Persian military organization, conscription and recruitment, weaponry, armor, and tactics, the book follows Alexander the Great's maneuvers and battles across the Persian Empire until Satrap Bessus assassinates King Darius III.



MANOUSOS E. KAMBOURIS

ALEXANDER
THE GREAT
AVENGER

The Campaign That Felled Achaemenid Persia

Charges were over 150 to 210 meters (p83), with momentum expected to break up enemy units, but the attacker's accumulation of ranks provide the defender time to shove back the initial charging ranks. Counter-charging is most difficult to do properly (p86).

A couple typos: "take on and route enemy" (p101) should be "rout"; "cash-stripped" (p101) is likely "cash-strapped." The latter might be language. Elsewhere in the book is a mention of going for the "neck," which is accurate even if the phrase is usually going for the throat. Other than these couple quibbles, the book is quite well written, especially when describing and discussing the military campaign.

I would have liked better and more detailed maps that better reflected the text. Quite often, you read about towns or cities in the text and the nearest map has plenty of urban dots and names, but often not the ones mentioned in the text.

The maps inside are like 1960s-era line graphics -- a malady in the vast majority of military books. The tactical battle maps are even more basic. Missed opportunity.

Still, what an excellent account and analysis of Alexander's campaign against Persia. Well done. Enjoyed it.

Warfare in the Age of Crusades: The Latin East. by Brian Todd Carey, Joshua B. Allfree, and John Cairns. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 328 pages. 2022.

As this covers all the major numbered crusades in the Middle East and a few of the minor crusades, it is by definition an overview. Details are certainly included, but moreso on the strategic and operational level than on the tactical level.

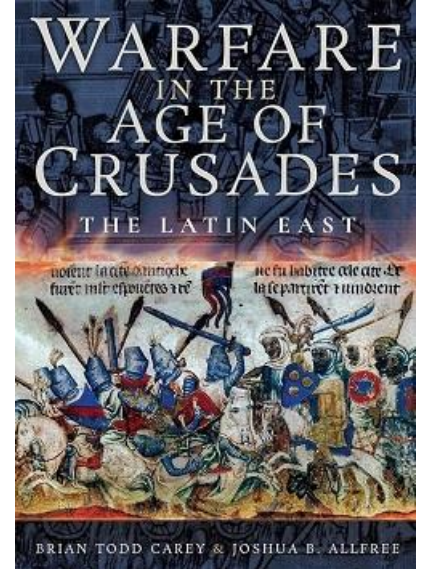
That said, the book contains 106 black and white maps with the vast majority showing multiple phases of tactical battles. Granted, they're not sophisticated -- more 1960s-era line graphics -- but they do match the text. Plenty to at least get you thinking about tabletop scenarios, from sieges to ambushes to set-piece battles.

One typo: "under cover of darkness" (p39) is used twice in the same sentence, as if copied and pasted instead of cut and pasted.

The book contains 14 color photos, 12 color illustrations, two black and white illustrations, and the 106 black and white maps.

You get a good sense of the waxing and waning of crusader fortunes based on the amount of infighting among the crusader factions as well as among the Muslim factions. The personalities involved, diplomatic overtures or not, and aftermath of clashes all contribute to better understanding of the chaos in the medieval Middle East.

Enjoyed it.



Tiberius: From Masterly Commander to Masterful Emperor of Rome. by Lindsay Powell. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 518 pages. 2025.

The biography of Rome's emperor after Augustus begins with a chronology. The actual biography is from page 1 to 202. Following are: assessments of his reign through history, including plays, paintings, and TV shows (p203-p285), his quotes (p286-p292), an examination of coins during his reign, including translated inscriptions and historic notes for each coin and type (p293-p317), glossary (p318-p324), Roman place names (p325-p327), End notes (p328-p411), and Bibliography (p412-p470).

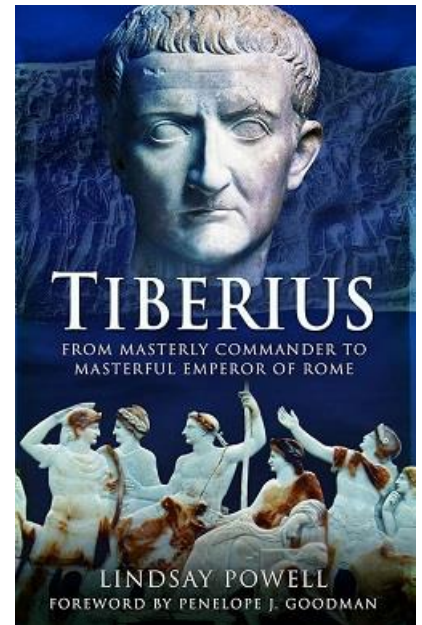
The overall impression is one of competence -- an able administrator and commander. Some of the representations through history come from distortions of events likely repeated and amplified by ancient writers.

He was, in some ways, an accidental emperor. Augustus sent him over and over again to various hot spots of rebellion or invasion, where he succeeded in retaining Rome's supremacy. His military efforts in Illyria and Germania are amply explained. Yet Tiberius also suffered from burn out and voluntarily requested a leave of absence so he could stay in Rhodes.

Eventually, he requested a return to duty. In this he was fortunate that other members of Augustus' family who were potential successors died in varying circumstances and the remainder were too young. It also didn't hurt that Livia, Augustus' wife, advocated for his return to power.

The book contains 45 color photos, 68 black and white photos, three color illustrations, 20 black and white maps, and seven black and white illustrations.

This smooth read offers a generally positive examination of Tiberius and a far more nuanced look at his life. Enjoyed it.



Defenders of the Reich. by Robert Forsyth. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 496 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Luftwaffe's War Against America's Bombers*

Forsyth spins more golden prose about the Luftwaffe with a look into the aerial efforts to stop US, and to an extent British, four-engine bombers from pulverizing German industry and infrastructure.

Starting in 1939 and going through 1945, German fighter pilots tried to stem the ever-increasing bombers and suffered ever-increasing losses. Further, German engineers created weaponry and aircraft to help down more bombers. Yet with every passing year, the Germans became more and more desperate as "experten" pilots fell and production dropped.

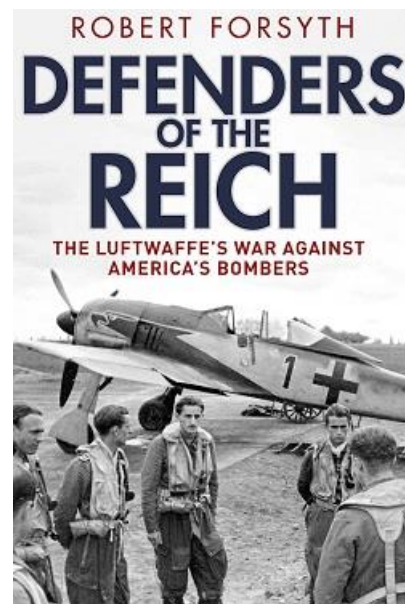
Some devices were effective -- rocket packs and 30mm cannons for example. Others, not so much -- four hinged containers held 34 regular stick grenades that were released as the ME-109 flew over the bombers (p81). Meanwhile, a variety of tactics were tried depending on the weaponry.

The prose explains tactics of attack and the strategy of the German defensive system. Plenty of first-person pilot accounts explain what it was like to attack B-17s and B-24s. In some ways, the prose repeats itself, but then again, it conveys the daily aerial battles of single- and two-engine Luftwaffe fighters, and later jets, against fighter escorts and four-engine bomber formations.

The book contains 41 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

Forsyth does a fantastic job showcasing the growing Allied material advantages and the growing desperation of the hard-pressed Luftwaffe.

Enjoyed it.



Jungle Commandos: Burma 1945. by Lucy Betteridge-Dyson. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 328 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Battle for Arakan*

I was a tad uneasy by page 50 and moreso by page 71. It took me that long to figure out why I was having concerns -- the prose brought in a lot of ancillary information that detracted from the chronological overview. I didn't seem to be getting any closer to a history of the battle than when I started.

Now, I enjoy a little background to the units and don't mind a bit of purple prose from time to time regarding the environment and soldiers' hardships, but it seemed to go on too long without hooking me into the battle.

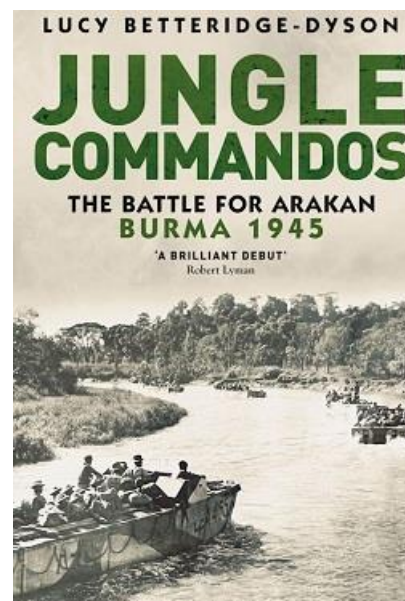
All is not lost, for the information about the 81st and 82nd West African divisions proved new to me and informative. I read little about them in other books on Burma, but in this case, the presentation was fine. Or I was getting used to skimming the prose, which I did a lot.

The OOBs are generally helpful for an overview and the tactical descriptions once battle is joined offer a fair overview of the movements and actions.

The book contains four color photos, 16 black and white photos, and four black and white maps.

I've reviewed a few books on Burma, including Robert Lyman's inspiring *A War of Empires: Japan, India, Burma & Britain 1941-45* (see the review in the September 2021 AAR). I mention this only because he offered up a quote plastered on the front cover of this book: "A brilliant debut". I'm afraid I can't agree, but in a stretch I'll give the benefit of ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

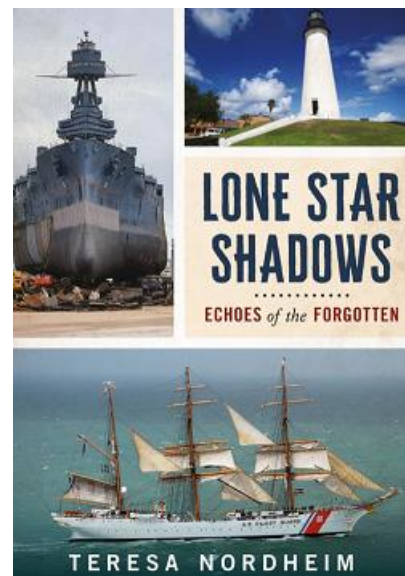


Lone Star Shadows: Echoes of the Forgotten. by Teresa Nordheim. Softcover (6.5x9.3 inches). 96 pages. 2025.

I guess I should've paid a wee bit more attention to the blurb. I thought this was a photo book of museums and military bases turned into museums in Texas. Ummm.... Sort of.

It is a photo book of some Texan museums and abandoned military bases turned into museums. It also includes lighthouses, the *USS Texas*, *USS Lexington II*, battlefields, and some abandoned forts like the Alamo and Fort Defiance.

The twist is that all these places are supposedly haunted. However, the photos never show any ghosts, spirits, or apparitions -- just photos of the places.



They're nice photos, but any effort to link them to ghosts is ineffective. I mean, for example, if you're going to talk about a "red-headed sailor" ghost on the *USS Texas* (p36), not including a photo of said red-headed ghost seems a bit useless.

The book contains 126 color photos, seven black and white photos, five color illustrations, and four black and white illustrations.

If I ever get back to Texas on vacation, I might check out some of these places, but not because of alleged ghosts.

Sudden Death. by George Uhl. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 141 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Stories of a Marine Corps Radioman in the Vietnam War*

This memoir of a Marine who carried a radio during a combat tour in Vietnam uses a framework of letters to convey the stress of combat. These letters were never actually sent home because he didn't want to alarm his family, so consider them more like diary entries. Letters by his friend and fellow radioman Paul Reed that were sent to the Reed home are also included.

Not much is about basic training at Parris Island, but he picks up his duties on cruises to the Mediterranean, Dominican Republic, and other spots. One interesting bit is about being sent to Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training run by British commandos. It was as realistic as possible without the torture (p42-p43).

The description about the battle for Hill 488 (p59-p60) may make for a good optional scenario rule. When the Marines ran low on ammo, they threw rocks at the VC. The VC thought they were grenades and popped up to be easy targets for rifle fire.

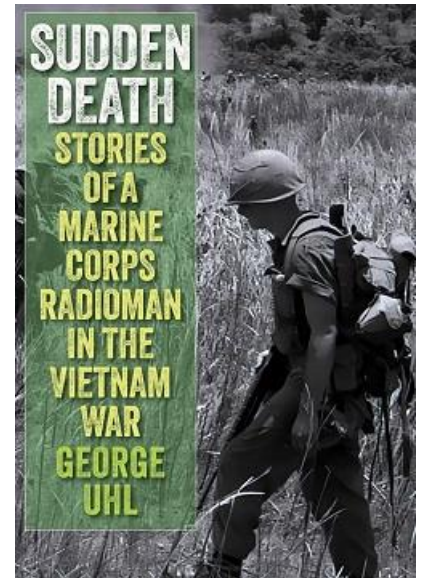
His friend, Reed, died during combat and Uhl later found out that the NVA offered the equivalent of \$700 to a soldier who killed a radioman (p75). Uhl's several brushes with death and the luck that allowed him to mostly come out unscathed are well described in the book.

One of the funnier anecdotes: The US military formed Combined Action Companies (CAC) consisting of a rifle squad and medic to live in a village with ARVN as part of counter-insurgency strategy (p95). The program name was later changed to Combined Action Program (CAP) because "CAC" is Vietnamese for "male generative organ" (p96).

The book contains 45 black and white photos and one black and white illustration.

It reads quick and offers another interesting memoir of patrol action in the jungles of Vietnam.

Enjoyed it.



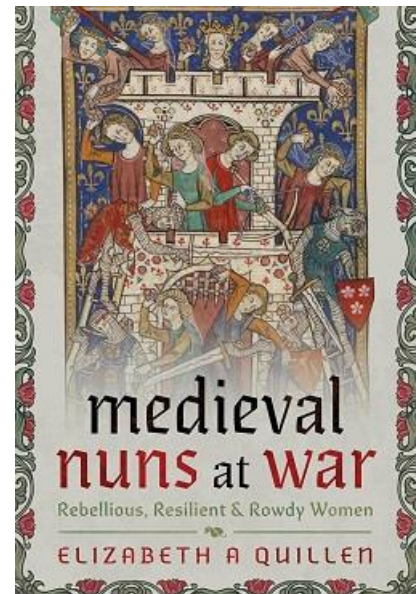
Medieval Nuns At War. by Elizabeth A. Quillen. Hardback (6.3x9.4 inches). 196 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Rebellious, Resilient and Rowdy Women*

If you were expecting to read about nuns wielding battle-axes and storming castles, you will be severely disappointed. The only "nun" (technically one who never took vows and so was a novice) to wield sword was Cataline de Erauso, who fled a San Sebastien (Spain) convent, cut her hair, dressed as a boy, and eventually became Alonso Diaz Pamiraz de Guzman. Alas, that was in 1608, which to me is the Renaissance. It's still a marvelous tale of her escape across Spain and to the New World, befriending powerful men and joining the Spanish Army -- all the while remaining undetected as a woman until much, much later. She must have been a heckuva swordswoman given the number of duels and fights she won.

The other most fascinating woman of the dozen or so profiled is Marquerite Porete, who wrote the theological book *The Mirror of Simple Souls* about the goal of spiritual progress on Earth. As it negated the concept of original sin and advocated that living people can use free will to unite with the Divine without the need for clergy, she ran afoul of the Church. They burned her at the stake in 1310.

As for the rest, the majority of nuns were abbesses who ran a convent and were able to intervene in diplomatic and political matters outside the walls. Many of them were of noble blood, and indeed some married into royalty for a



while. You will gain a considerable amount of knowledge how these women founded orders in the 1200s, apparently especially in Spain, with significant impact on secular events.

The book contains four black and white photos, six black and white illustrations, and two black and white maps.

This is a well written book. It might not serve as a source for tabletop battles, but it would be a wonderful additional source for RPG characters and settings. Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.

Hermann Balck: Hitler's Forgotten General. by Philip Kay-Bujak. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 340 pages. 2025.

To be clear, this biography discusses Gen. Balck, not the nuts and bolts of his battles. You'll learn how he approached offensive and defensive battles and his style of command rather than which company or battalion moved where -- although you'll get overviews of the attacks and counter-attacks he formulated on the Western, Eastern, and Mediterranean fronts.

He proved a tough taskmaster, constantly traveling among his front-line units to see the terrain and dispositions for himself. He was fortunate in having competent chiefs of staffs to push his orders while he was visiting the front. He also paid attention to fielding a superb repair organization to keep his panzers operational. Add in a capacity to formulate plans on the fly and you begin to see why he progressed up the ranks of the Heer. During the mid-war period, within a year he went from commanding a division to commanding a corps, then an army, and then an army group.

Unfortunately, the book suffers from considerable typos: "Coco-Cola" (p69) instead of Coca-Cola; "butd" (p121) instead of but; "noon-wearable" (p132) instead of non-wearable; "brining" (p194) instead of bringing; in the text, the town was "Rodalben" (p225) but the map on the same page is Rodalbe; "formationcould" (p233) is missing a space; advance to Caucasus mountains in "1943" (p233) is probably 1942; "Novcember" (p236) should be November; and "his leadership Russia" (p262) likely should read "in Russia." Rushed or sloppy -- not sure which.

The book contains 31 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and nine black and white maps.

It's a good biography, especially when it contrasts and compares passages from Balck's memoirs with other accounts to set the record straight. When finished, you'll understand what makes Balck tick, including his strengths and weaknesses or personality.

Enjoyed it.

The 10th Mountain Division in World War II. by Charles C. Roberts jr. Hardback (8.2x10.2 inches). 160 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Casemate Illustrated Special*

This extended edition of a *Casemate Illustrated Special* provides a picture-centric examination of all aspects of the clothing, weaponry, vehicles, and other equipment used by soldiers of the US 10th Mountain Division. There is the occasional field report, but illustrations and explanatory captions fill the pages.

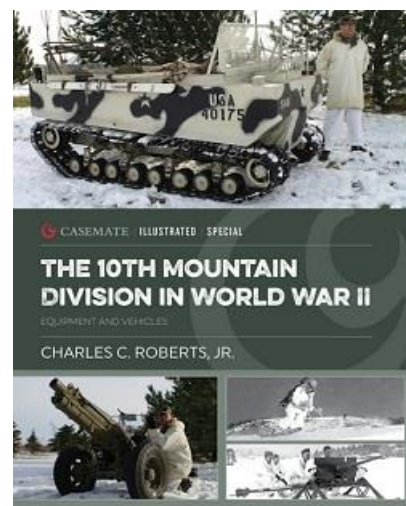
While much of the uniforms, equipment, and weaponry duplicate regular divisions, it's interesting to see WWII-era snowmobiles (technically, that would be the Eliason Motor Toboggan and the T27 Snowmobile) and other snow-centric vehicles (such as the M7 Snow Tractor). The captions don't mention any of them used in the war, but you never know. You'll just have to think outside the box.

I found one typo: "had meet" (p41) reads better as "had met."

The book contains 133 black and white photos, 241 color photos, 21 black and white illustrations, four color illustrations, and one color map.

This book offers the same visual treat as other *Casemate Illustrated Special* editions. WWII uniform buffs will discover the snow-centric items intended for the 10th Mountain. Some of them were only prototypes, but they're interesting to consider.

Enjoyed it.



Midget Submarines 1939-45. by Charles C. Roberts jr. Hardback (8.2x10.2 inches). 176 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Casemate Illustrated Special*

This super-sized version, about double the page length of a typical *Casemate Illustrated* book, offers an overview of midget submarines produced in Germany, Japan, Italy, and the UK. Design, development, and specs dominate with the occasional mission described. Also included are prototype and design-board versions as well as "manned torpedoes."

Given the American Revolution's 250th anniversary, I should note the book starts with the one-man American submarine *Turtle* launched against the British in 1775.

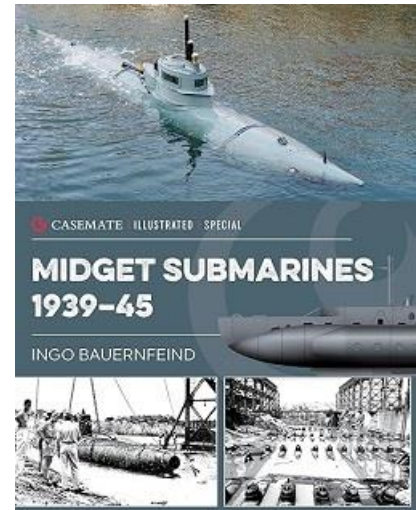
Of interest was the UK pulled a WWII German Biber midget submarine from outside storage and restored it.* I put an asterisk with that statement because the group had to replace hull and other sections that had rotted, replaced the old WWII batteries with modern batteries, and removed and did not replace the 32hp gasoline engine (the same one used in Opel Blitz trucks). Safety was the concern here.

Still, after on shore tests, the restored Biber was lowered into the mirror-still water and sailed around the surface on battery power. Then, it submerged and sailed around underwater. Photos document it all.

The book contains 116 black and white photos, 73 color photos, 26 black and white illustrations, three color illustrations, and nine color profiles.

If you know nothing about the midget subs, here's a great photo-intensive way to learn.

Enjoyed it.



Why Appeasement Failed: The Ignored Evidence. by Andrew Sanger.

Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 199 pages. 2025.

I'm not sure the title should be *Why Appeasement Failed* as much as *How Appeasement Failed*. The why seems obvious: you can't negotiate with a German psychopath leading a government of psychopaths. How that psychopath managed to pull off gaining the government and conducting diplomacy in the 1930s is the how and the crux of the book.

Neville Chamberlain comes off as the appeaser in chief, but that ignores previous UK prime ministers' efforts to bribe Hitler to not start a second world war. And it's not only the Brits. The French were just as culpable. "Munich's 'Peace in our time' was merely pulling the pin on a hand grenade." (p77)

It was a feeling of the times that after the horrors of WWI, adjusting a boundary line seemed a small price to pay to prevent another war. Yet, as we know, the line kept moving until it became a red line covering the Polish border.

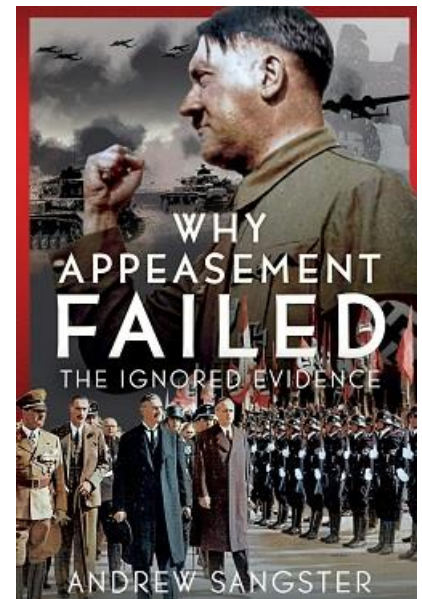
These diplomatic moves and countermoves are succinctly explained, but the key to the book is examining period literature that warned about Hitler's plans and methods, but was ignored. The analysis of *Mein Kampf* and other books provides endless speculation about what might have been had the warnings been heeded.

Of course, hindsight is marvelous. Propaganda muddies clarity. Did it really take the conquest of Czechoslovakia to figure this out? Apparently. Nonetheless, examination of several key books and journalistic reports uncover a significant shift in cultural activity that lead to the Third Reich becoming an oppressive society bent on expansion. *Mein Kampf* might be a madman's almost incomprehensible manifesto, but the plan was explained. Taking over school curriculum. Exterminating the free press. Turning minority groups into villains. These are all hallmark of dictatorships, Third Reichs and otherwise.

Interesting that in January 1934, Hitler signed a 10-year non-aggression pact with Poland (p162), which may have been tied into the German rearmament plan.

A few typos: "eastern European eastern Jews fled" (p156) has one too many easterns; "to serve German is" (p156) reads better with Germany; and "state.He" (p168) and "between1929-32" (p169) are both missing a space.

The book contains 24 black and white photos.



Reading the signs is always imperfect in the moment and yet goals and aggressions were all laid out in multiple 1930s books and reports. Hindsight or otherwise, this book takes you through the main ones. We would do well to understand how past outlines can be applied to current analysis.

Enjoyed it.

Apollo 1 in Photographs. by J. L. Pickering and John Bisney with Ed Hengeveld. Hardback (8.9x11.3 inches). 272 pages. 2025.

Nice, big coffee-table sized book presents an archive of Apollo 1 photos with obvious attention to the three NASA astronauts Gus Grisson, Roger Chaffee, and Ed White, who lost their lives in the fire on the launch pad.

The photos cover astronaut training, public introductions, more training, the fire, and the final location of the capsule. It is not a definitive examination of the processes in place, operations, or even the fire itself. If you want such an in-depth analysis of the accident, you'll need to find other sources.

Some factoids in the photo captions: Starting in December 1963, the public could drive their private cars around the launch pad on Sunday afternoons (p71).

A close-up photo of the floor near the lower forward section indicates where the fire most likely started (p228).

What happened to the Apollo 1 capsule after the investigations were concluded? It was locked away in a storage shed at Langley Research Center. In 2007, it was moved to a new climate controlled storage warehouse. In 2017, three hatches were removed and put on display at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Center. Otherwise, technicians check the warehouse twice a year (p257).

The jacket blurb says more than 500 photos -- I didn't count them, but that seems an accurate estimate. And they are all sharp.

If you are a space buff, this fascinating photo-centric history of the Apollo 1 astronauts will likely be much appreciated. Even if your interest is only centered on the tragedy, you'll likely find the photos of the inside of the capsule -- something I don't ever recall seeing -- interesting.

Enjoyed it.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. Hardback (5.7x8.5 inches). 278 pages. 2008.

Historical fiction novel found in the discount bin offers a look at the WWII German occupation of Guernsey (UK Channel Islands). The one thing you need to get used to is that the entire book consists of an exchange of letters among all the protagonists in 1946. It seems like a gimmick and it is...and once you get accustomed to it, it's an effective gimmick.

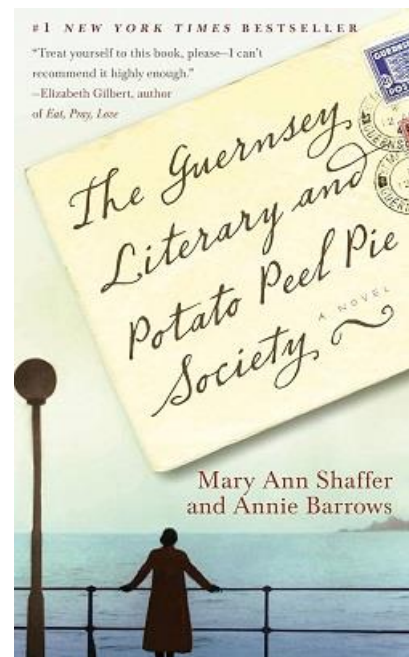
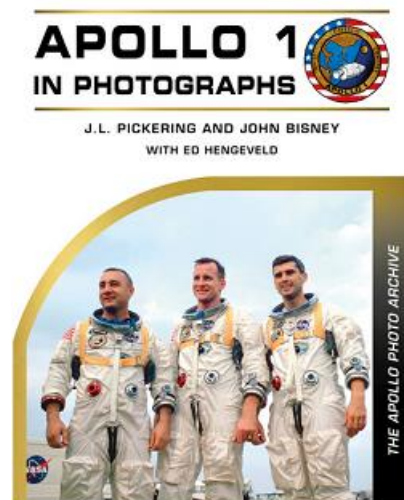
If I savvy this right, the main protagonist Juliet Ashton wrote humorous war-time home front stories for a newspaper and her collection of them post-war was a big hit. She was looking around for her next book idea and wanted to do something serious. One day, a letter from a Mr. Dawcey Adams arrives via her old London address (the house having been bombed out of existence) asking about the author Charles Lamb. It turns out Adams bought a used book that had Ashton's address written inside, so he wanted to know if she knew a bookstore which could sell him Charles Lamb books.

So begins a correspondence with him and myriad other Guernsey residents who formed the Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society under German occupation and are keeping it going post war. Slowly, as she becomes known to them, they tell their tales and thus Juliet begins to research the occupation for her next book.

Once you get used to the letter format, and I gotta say the British Royal Mail seems awfully super-efficient in 1946 moving mail between Guernsey and London, it's quite charming in its effect. Being a novel, I'm figuring events are altered to fit the story. I do have a nonfiction history book called *Jewels and Jackboots* by John Nettles about the WWII Channel Island occupation that's been on my to read list for years. The Guernsey book prompted me to pull it down.

Every once in a while, the discount bin yields a gem. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* is one such gem.

Enjoyed it.



Hitler's & Hirohito's 'Kamikaze' Flying Bombs. by William Wolf. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 222 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *The Axis' Manned Suicide Attack Aircraft of WW2*

I would vote this title "Most Likely To Have Been Created By AI." I've groused before about the "Hitler This" and "Hitler That" style of titles, but now we have the double whammy of *Hitler & Hirohito*. All we need is Mussolini and you'd hit the trifecta.

Still, never judge a book by its cover or its title, no matter what the expectations set.

First off, not all the flying bombs within are "manned" -- the German part is mostly about the design and development of the V-1. I can forgive that since it segues into the Reichenberg version, which is basically a V-1 with a cockpit. Technically, it's not a suicide aircraft because the pilot is supposed to bail out just before impact. The text goes into some detail about that tidbit as well as the US reverse engineering a captured V-1 to create its own version called the Jetbomb 1 (JB-1). The book is brilliant at ferreting out details like this often overlooked by the run of the mill experimental aircraft books

I should point out that the ME-328, powered by two pulsejet engines, is also well covered. Note that the pilot is also supposed to bail out before impact. Other German drawing-board suicide designs are discussed.

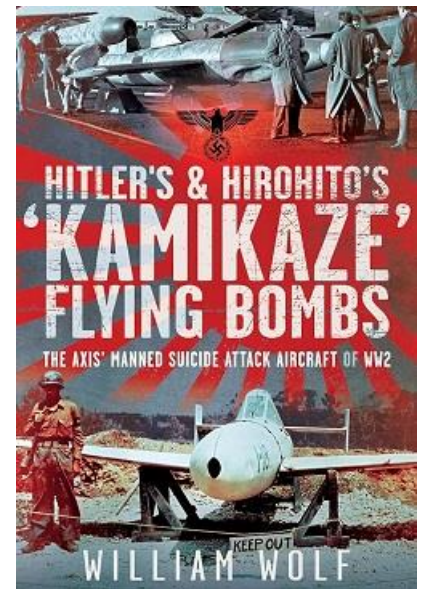
As for the Japanese, the book covers the Okha rocket-powered aircraft, which was used in the Pacific. Had it been longer ranged, it would have been more effective. Had some of the other versions been developed, moreso.

And then follows a goodly section on US Navy defensive operations and procedures to defend against kamikazes. Oddly enough, this is quite exceptional in explaining the interaction of picket ships, radar, CAP, and AA. This is the book right here.

The book contains 199 black and white photos and 39 black and white illustrations.

The design and development aspect of the book I've read before, although marvelous tidbits show up. The best part is the integrated air defense system used by the US Navy. For that, ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.



The Mahdi & Africa. by John D. Grainger. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 291 pages. 2025.

Subtitle: *Muhammad Ahmad & Sudan's Mahdist Revolution in Context*

The book covers about 100 years, centered on the Mahdi's efforts in the late 1800s to create his own Islamic Empire at the expense of numerous small local and regional kingdoms, the Egyptian Empire, and various European Empires.

The good news is that for those like me who know very little other than Gordon's defense of Khartoum and maybe a bit about Omdurman, much history about kingdoms, allegiances, and conquests funnels into those moments.

The bad news is that it becomes a whirl of names and places that overwhelm my brain RAM. Maps would be incredibly helpful, but the three included are primitive at best and that's being kind.

The book contains 10 black and white photos, six black and white illustrations, and three black and white maps.

When reading about back of beyond places, at least back of beyond to me as a Western reader, I need better cartography. Otherwise, all those place names blur together and the significance of this spot versus that spot blurs as well.

Tactical battles don't garner much coverage. This is not a book about setting up a tabletop scenario, but rather about strategic and operational movements within a political and religious context. For that comprehensive compilation, ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

