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Books I've Read



Eight Days in August: End of WWII
New Guinea Eagles: 1942-43 Volume 1
Ground Forces Korean War (3): MAA 571
SS Wiking Division in WWII: Elite 270
Refined by Fire: Chaplain in Iraq
Boneyards of Steel: Aircraft Graveyards
Somerled Lord of Isles: Medieval Scotland
Mosquito Units Far East: Combat Aircraft 163
Now I'm With The Invalids: ACW Veteran Corps
Kriegsmarine Norway Cmd 1940-45: Fleet 21
Westport 1864: Campaign 433
Murmansk 1941: Campaign 436
Carenten 1944: Campaign 437
Soviet Rifleman vs German Inf: Combat 87
ACW Siege Tactics: Elite 271
Now I'm With the Invalids: ACW Reserve
Panther vs A30 Challenger: Duel 156
The Making of Tomb Raider: 1997-2000
Javelins in Half-Light: Schnee Eifel 1944-45
Echoes of the Rain: Vietnam Tour of Duty

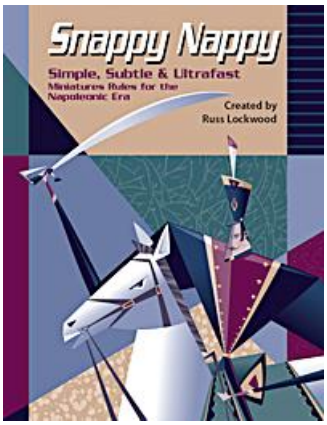




Tables set. Players set. Nametags set. Scenario set. Time for the annual rules review by James (tan cap).

SnapCon 1807: Dokhturov's Day

by Russ Lockwood



The annual SnapCon rolled into The Portal in Manchester, CT, for another *Snappy Nappy* Campaign in a Day. This year, it was the 1807 Friedland campaign. James had run the campaign a while back when experimenting with his clever Deployment Zones -- now a staple of SnapCon events.

This year, Peter and Mark GM'd the Campaign-in-a-Day spread out over 13 tables. We had our largest group of players yet -- 11 Russian and 12 French. Pre-game e-mails coordinated the players into the sides and commands. I was Dokhturov on the Russian side, with Sean as Bennigsen our C-in-C. Jim took his usual role as Napoleon.

Campaign In A Day



For those unfamiliar with a *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-In-A-Day, each infantry and cavalry unit consists of two stands, which represent a brigade per unit. Artillery is one stand representing roughly 24 guns. Each player is a corps commander. We have dispensed with the "official" hierarchy of orders and like true independent commanders, can do what we want, preferably following instructions from the C-in-C.

Russ (left) cannot match Mark M's sartorial excellence, but they share a pre-game laugh over coffee and donuts. Photo by Mark T.

Those 13 tables represent the campaign area. All players are playing in one big game. Tables are separated, and moving off one almost never means you hop onto an adjacent table. Pardon my evil GM grin, but I learned to not only make sure the tables are separated, but they are rotated so each table's north faces a different way -- the window on one table, the doorway on another, the back wall on a third, and so on. Fog of war is key here -- or as best we can do it within one room.

Theoretically, only the C-in-C has the true picture of what's happening. Talking between commanders is allowed at the same table, but all other communications are written and sent via courier (i.e. the GM, who time stamps it and delivers them after a certain amount of time).

After the first two turns, each table runs on its own turn sequence -- no turn phases coordinated between tables. When a command moves off one table, the GM walks the player and troops over to the corresponding Deployment Zone on the destination table. The arrivals must sit in the DZ, untouched, until the enemy on that destination table has its movement. Then, and only then, are the arriving troops released into the turn sequence.

It sounds a little chaotic, but what happens is corps bump into each other and while battling, other corps -- friendly and enemy -- might show up. Maneovre le derriere is real in this game.

Communication is the key here, but all understand the heat of battle. Your focus narrows to the table you're on...

For the record: The French players were: James S (Bernadotte); Karl N (Davout); Mark M (Ney); Michael K (Lannes); James C (Napoleon/Bessieres); Chris B (Massena); Rob P. (Soult); Eric B (Lefebvre); Mitch A (Murat); Rich M (Grouchy); Doug O (Poniatowski); and Ken H. (Mortier) .



Russian strategy briefing in foreground. French strategy briefing in background.

The Allied players were: Kevin C (Bagratian); Brian C (Sacken); Dan B (Uvarov) ; Steve C (Prussian); Sean S (Bennigsen / Constantine); Nathan S (Golitsyn); Mike S. (Tolstoy); Russ L (Dokhturov); Shiloh (Essen) ; Mike S. (Gorchakov); and Bob R (Lobanov).



Russ (Dokhturov) reads last minute correspondence as his and Dan's (Uvarov) troops are ready to march. Photo by Mark.

The Russian Planski

With an overall goal of keeping Konigsberg in Russian hands, C-in-C Sean put forth three strategic options: Offense with broad front march and engage the enemy; Defense centered on Heilsburg and Konigsberg with stacked defense at river crossings; or trap and destroy an over-exposed (or at least our perception of an over-exposed) Ney.

We settled on trying to trap Ney and destroy his corps before the rest of the French could react. Of course, our intel may not have been perfect and we had no guarantee that Ney would advance to continue to put his neck in a Russian noose. Everyone who has played this big-scale Napoleonic game understands no plan survives contact with the enemy.



At start: Commanders all over the place.

Dokhturov's Orders

C-in-C Bennigsen ordered me to head from my starting spot at Eylau to Heilsberg, where Essen (played by first-time *SN* gamer Shiloh) started. Essen would head off

table to Bischofsburg. We would form one pincer to cut off Ney at Bartenstein.

Did I mention that no plan survives contact with the enemy?



The Heilsberg table. Shiloh (Essen) looks to Sean (C-in-C) for inspiration. Ney has already arrived (left corner of table) just as I arrived (bottom middle of table).

Essen poked his recon cavalry onto the Bischofsburg table and quickly pulled them back. It turns out a French corps under Soult (Rob) was on the march towards Heilsberg. As his cavalry returned with the news, he set up a defense of the Alle River with infantry and artillery at the foot of the bridge.

We did not know if Soult had a pontoon train. We assumed the French had one or two pontoon trains overall, for we Russians had one, but where those were located was beyond our intel.

So, I filtered down as a reserve corps on the table and nodded approval at Essen's town defense. For a first-time player, he had grasped the essentials.



Ney (Mark M, left) arrives at Heilsberg facing Shiloh.

Soult and Ney

Soult came in on the southern Deployment Zone (DZ) and though we shouldn't have been surprised, Ney arrived on the eastern DZ. I had half my troops on the road marching into Heilsberg and the other half cutting cross country to secure an east bridge. Ideally, I would form an L-shaped ambush pocket with Essen's troops and hammer Ney into oblivion.



Ney's perspective. His troops (bottom left) come onto the flank of Essen holding the town. Soult's troops (upper left corner) storm across the bridge.

Wiley Ney would have none of that. He edged away from me, drawing me out of my spot if I wanted to influence any battle of Soult and Ney vs Essen. No, sirree. I wanted it two on two. I knew the French troops were mostly superior to our Russians, but we did seem to have an extra unit or two each over the French corps, plus an extra stand of artillery.

Another French Corps?

Of course. Of course. Just as I had started to deploy eastward against Ney, a third French corps arrived at the western DZ. That's the road to Braunsberg -- how did French get there? We had that covered. We had troops cascading down from Konigsberg and Uvarov marching over from Eylau.

I immediately started counter-marching some lads towards the western DZ. Three on two surrounded is not an envious position. You can talk about the central position all day long, but that takes a deft hand and impeccable timing to pull off the smack one flank and then march to smack the other.

And then, the third French cavalry unit was gone. It was only a scouting mission. So, there must be Russians at Braunsberg to prevent the French from moving onto the Heilsberg table.

Alas, I had lost time in confronting Ney because I had to pull my troops back towards the town and also across the river. And Ney, wiley Ney, was too clever not to take advantage of it.

Bagged by Bagration

All of a sudden, more troops arrived on my table at the eastern DZ from the direction of Bartenstein. I had to wonder if Essen and I were the ones going to be hammered.

But, no! Those new flags were Russian. We had Ney in a vice.



Bagration enters behind Ney (upper left corner) as I shake out my troops between river and town. Ney is caught in the middle.

I felt bad for him. A couple games ago, the same thing happened to me. One minute I had a friendly corps at my back and the next, an enemy corps was unlimbering artillery in my derriere. Alack and alas, my bad feelings passed rather quickly and I became almost giddy at the idea of destroying a corps.

As Ney flipped half his troops around, I recrossed the river and began to deploy anew into a swirling situation.



Ney's troops (upper left corner) fight their way towards Heilsberg, but Essen has a solid line. Meanwhile, Soult is pressing forward after taking the bridge. The red chip signifies Russian control of the town.

The Bridge at Heilsberg



The first time Essen fired at Soult's light cavalry crossing the bridge, he scored two hits. As per *Snappy Nappy*, Soult's unit now had to make two morale saves. Failures might mean cascading backwards through his other troops on the bridge, triggering more morale checks.

Dokhturov and Bagration squeeze Ney (left) while Soult takes the town of Heilsberg. The blue chip signifies French control of the town. On the far right, Dokhturov's elite troops defend the bridge and keep an eye on Soult's troops advancing around the bend in the river.

Soult's d10s rolled and came up as two 10s -- can't get any better than that. The melee went Soult's way, too. In fact, it was the beginning of a lucky Soult run than ran off Essen's initial line of defending troops.

To be fair, Essen's Russian troops were a step down from the French. Math gurus might think it only a 10% less chance, but that adds up after all the die rolls.

Essen broke the defense at the river, drove the Russian troops out of the town, and repulsed any counter-attacks. Midway through the defensive collapse, I suggested Essen change dice, for the ones he used proved horrible. The new dice proved at least a little better.

The Ney Vice Tightens



As Bagration pressed forward, so did I. Bagration suffered a number of panicked troops, but slowly chipped away at Ney from one side while I hammered the other.

Dokhturov's cavalry charge the infantry in the flank. Ney is attached and must roll morale checks…and ultimately, on the Leader Loss table.

Ney, always with audace, charged Essen's defense of the town near the bridge and sent Essen's troops backwards. I stopped an even worse debacle by firing artillery into the flanks of Ney's troops.

As Ney became strung out, I was able to pick off isolated and panicked units.

At one point, the bravest of the brave rallied an infantry brigade hugging the river when I saw the flank and charged my cavalry. Ney's unit failed to form hasty square and my horse drove deep into the unit's flank. One infantry unit disintegrated. In the melee, Ney was wounded and dragged from the battle towards the river. His remaining aides carried him to the bridge, but he was out of the battle.

Grouchy to the Rescue

While three Russian corps battled two French ones, a new cavalry unit appeared in the southern DZ -- Grouchy's cavalry corps. And it began to push behind Soult, who had advanced two infantry brigades to the west and around the bend of the river.

I countered with my one elite infantry brigade and one militia Cossack cavalry brigade, marching over the west bridge. By the time Grouchy arrived, Soult was pushing west of the town, had beat up Essen's lone cavalry unit, and was firing artillery at my cavalry unit.

My elite infantry backed up, but eventually Soult's two seasoned infantry units caught me and charged into melee. This time, I had the quality and they had the mass, but I also had the die roll. Pushed back one and then followed up to rout it away.

End of the Campaign

And that's about when it ended. The French had taken Heilsberg and we weren't going to get it back any time soon. Ney's corps and Essen's corps were equally obliterated with a couple units remaining. I was hanging in there, but a late Grouchy cavalry charge took my artillery in the flank and did considerable damage. They'd need a lot of rallying to bring them back to effectiveness.

Yet between Bagration and myself, we could put together a decent force to stop the French cavalry.

This game, I didn't do more than move from one table to another -- and got into battle quickly. To an extent, the Russian plan to trap Ney worked, although Essen and myself were almost trapped first.

In the debrief, Umpires Peter and Mark recounted a bit of who went where when, what towns changed hands, and which corps were wrecked. In the end, if you can believe it, the whole campaign ended in a tie score. I am unsure how it'd play out if we had continued for another hour beyond the five hours we had already played. Still, another great *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-in-a-Day SnapCon. Great job by the GMs and all the players. A big thank you to The Portal for making the space available. Special thanks to Mark T. for the coffee and to Peter and Mark T. for the pizza break.

Of note, one of the gamers, Eric, flew into CT from NC just for the game. Not the farthest ever, that honor goes to a gamer from San Francisco, but always a little bump to the ego that someone would travel so far for a game. A convention? Sure. But an individual game? Makes my four-hour drive seem like right around the corner...

Eric said he wanted to see how a C-in-a-D played because he wanted to GM one down in NC. He already had a one-table *SN* game going on his table. I look forward to hearing about that.



End game.

Note: For all the commander accounts, visit Peter's *Blunders on the Danube* blog – he has a separate *Snappy Nappy* section that includes maps, OOBs, recaps, and so on. Also, you can download the *SN* Quick Reference Sheet at the blog.



The troops converge on Braunsberg. High Noon: Bernadotte (James, tan cap) positions his troops as best he can against Uvarov's cavalry, waiting for Mortier's corps (Ken, lower left corner) to reach him as L'Estoq (Steve, middle) moves his Prussians around Braunsberg as Sacken (Brian, right) comes down the turnpike to join the fight. Photo by Daniel.

SnapCon 1807: Uvarov's Account

By *Daniel*

Glancing at his newly received orders along with Generallieutenant Dmitry Dokhturov (Russ), Uvarov (Daniel) was not surprised that Baron Levin August von Bennigsen (Sean) had dismissed his concerns about securing the northern and southern flanks. "We will follow the plan to trap Ney at Bartenstein. Essen is already at Heilsberg. You and Dokhturov will head to Heilsberg. If we move fast enough, we can crush Ney before he is reinforced."

Uvarov reviewed his troops comprising the Right Wing Reserve Cavalry. The Cossacks were conspicuously absent. Some of the cavalry he expected to command had been re-assigned. One of the Cossack brigades was now at the head of Dokhturov's columns of men assembling on the turnpike south of Eylau, along with the *Little Russia Cuirassiers*.

Uvarov was to assemble his horsemen behind Dokhturov, but Uvarov told the *Soum Hussars* to follow him in the opposite direction towards Braunsberg. "Let the Baron keep an eye on my men as they wait for Dokhturov. I need to see that our northern flank is secure. The Baron said L'Estoq's Prussians would be at Braunsberg. Until I see for myself, the column stays here, ready to go to Braunsberg."

Turn 1

On Turn 1, all players attended to putting their assigned forces in motion. Uvarov and the *Soum Hussars* left Eylau (Table S) and entered Table F (Braunsberg). *(Nobody is here! If the French…)*



The Braunsberg battle heats up as troops deploy.

Then, way to the southwest, the leading elements of Bernadotte's (James) I Corps appeared. *(Crap! Here come the French and nobody on*

our side is here. I have to intercept them here. The battle is going to be here.) Uvarov sends his first message to Bennigsen, telling him the French are on Table F and that his command is the only one present and able to intercept them.

Turn 2

Uvarov returns to Eylau, leaving the *Soum Hussars* to head to Braunsberg. Dokhturov has started exiting Table S. On their own initiative, the Right Wing Reserve Cavalry proceed to Braunsberg.

Turn 3

Uvarov returns with most of his Reserve Cavalry. Bernadotte's troops have not been idle. A new force appears on Table S from the north: The leading elements of L'Estoq's (Steve) Prussian Corps. *(OK. Allies with infantry. Now we have enough to work with to deal with Bernadotte's troops.)*

Now all the tables proceed at their own pace, but the pace at Table S is not so fast. Bernadotte's leading troops are infantry (12 inches movement in road column) with Bernadotte writing messages to inform Napoleon of enemies present (and probably requesting help). L'Estoq's leading elements are cavalry and infantry, but it's looking like the French will reach Braunsberg before the Prussian infantry can. (Cavalry can *go* through towns, but not occupy them.) Uvarov directs his cavalry to advance south of Braunsberg and suggests L'Estoq advance and also go around Braunsberg to the north to threaten Bernadotte from both directions.

The last of Uvarov's cavalry arrive at Table F. Messages are sent during the French half of the turn to Bennigsen to update him on the development and that we should be able to deal with situation at hand.

Continuing Battle

The next three turns seem like a delicate dance: Bernadotte's lead infantry reach Braunsberg and his other infantry fan out north and south of the town, forming squares versus all the Prussian and Russian cavalry forming up north and south of the town. One French battery joins the one infantry brigade in the town and the other forms up behind the squares south of the town with the lone Hussars unit in reserve. The Prussian infantry break out of road column into lines as the Prussian artillery Is the last to appear.

Uvarov positions his horse battery to pepper one of the southern squares while the *Soum Hussars* advance to with 12 inches of the French battery to threaten it. (This is a "phantom threat" as it can't move past the squares, cleverly positions so that musket range will prevent cavalry from charging the artillery while leaving a wide gap for the artillery to fire through, but if one of the squares can be displaced, it might open an opportunity later.)

A new French force appears from the southwest: It is Mortier's (Ken) VIII Corps. It's about half the size of Bernadotte's I Corps with two Saxon *Chevauxlegers*, two infantry brigades and a battery. As if on cue, Sacken's (Brian) Russian Corps arrives from Table F. *(Great! More infantry and cannons. Now it's 3 on 2. Still a favorable match-up.)*

"The Dance," however, continues: Only artillery exchanges happen as Uvarov's battery works on the French squares and L'Estoq's artillery works on the town. The French battery in the town returns fire, but the Prussian guns keep up a steady fire.

Mortier (Ken) is looking for a fight. His two Saxon Chevauxlegers take off for the nearest enemies they see. They find Uvarov's Reserve Cavalry formed up in a neat row and barrel into them, assisted by Bernadotte's lone Hussar unit. The Saxon *Leibkurassier Chevauxlegers* charge the *St. Petersburg Dragoons* while the *Prinz Johann Chevauxlegers* charge the *Pskov Dragoons*. The French *9th Hussars* charge the *Alexandrov Hussars*, which are supported by Uvarov's unlimbered 6 pdr horse battery.

This attack becomes a debacle: The *9th Hussars* are blasted by the Russian artillery and disperse beyond rallying; the *Prinz Johann Chevauxlegers* are overwhelmed by the *Pskov Dragoons*, supported by the *Alexandrov Hussars* and also routed; the *Leibkurassier Chevauxlegers* are outfought and driven back far to the west. *(First contact and cleared all the enemy cavalry from the field! A promising start.)*

Mortier is disappointed but undeterred. His infantry and battery move north to cover Bernadotte's left flank and dissuade the Prussian cavalry from venturing any further. L'Estoq deploys his horse battery north of Braunsberg to wear down the French squares near Braunsberg.

The bombardments from Uvarov's lone battery, L'Estoq's three batteries, and soon Sacken two batteries gradually wear down the French squares and the town occupants, briefly driving them out and soon replaced by other units. Finally, the *Soum Hussars* see the opportunity they have long waited for: the two French squares barring the path to the French battery south of Braunsberg have been hammered enough to be displaced, widening the gap. ***Заряд***

(Charge!) – and the *Soum Hussars* brave the hale of canister fire and reach the hapless gunners, cutting down all of them with their sabers. *(Now what do they do, surrounded by French squares – got to pull them back.)* An about-face and back to their own lines through the smoke and musket balls, the *Soum Hussars* survive the mission with mild casualties and are greeted by a very grateful Uvarov to rally them.

Bennigsen Arrives



Bennigsen arrives on the battlefield briefly to see for himself the progress of the battle and is pleased by the view. Uvarov directs the Baron's attention to the far southwest: Lannes (Micheal) II Corps and the French Reserve Cavalry under Murat (Mitch) have arrived. Bennigsen's smile fades. *(Now its 3 against four, but we can probably take the town and break Bernadotte's corps before Lannes and Murat make their presence felt.)*

Almost 1 PM: Bernadotte (James) feeling more surrounded despite Mortier's presence, but Lannes has arrived. Photo by Daniel.

Bennigsen leaves almost as swiftly as he arrived, but Sacken shares a new message from Count Essen that disturbs him. "Essen has asked me to help him. He's in dire straits at Heilsberg. Should I go help him?"

Uvarov looked at Sacken carefully, wondering if this was a joke. "Are you *kidding* me? It will take you at least 4 turns to exit the board and Essen will probably be a dead man by then. You've just gotten to the *good* part of this battle. I'm countermanding that request and you can tell Essen I said so! *This* battle is where you're needed and you're going to help us take this town back!" Re-assured (and probably relieved) he didn't have to exit the table, Sacken inched his artillery close to Braunsberg and shook out his infantry into columns as he neared the battered town.

L'Estoq finally positioned two infantry units in line formation to bring musket fire against the French defending the north edge of Braunsberg. Despite poor odds in the exchange of fire, the Prussians eventually wore down the French to drive them off. After three rounds of melee, the *Infantry Regiment №2 "Ruchel"* were locked in melee.

Almost 2 PM: Now we got us a big battle! Murat's cavalry is ready to launch their first charge as L'Estoq prosecutes his attacks against Braunsberg with Sacken supporting. Photo by Daniel.



To the south, Uvarov arranged his cavalry to face Murat's larger force of advancing cavalry. Onward came the *1st, 5th, and 10th Cuirassiers* charging the *St. Petersburg Dragoons* (supported by the *Ekaterinoslav Cuirassiers*), *Pskov Dragoons*, and *Alexandrov Hussars* while a light cavalry unit charged the horse battery support the *Alexandrov Hussars*. The battery's cannister fire forced back the French light cavalry. Uvarov's horsemen were apparently inspired by his presence as the melee rolls for the Russians were "10", "10", "9". The French cuirassiers were not as inspired and all were repulsed – but Murat would send more soon.

Lannes needed some time to form his troops to supplement Mortier's infantry and artillery and soon they started to bombard L'Estoq's cavalry at long range. The Prussians were reluctant to give ground and maintained covering the flank of the infantry's attack on Braunsberg.

The second wave of French cavalry charged with far better results, routing the *Alexandrov Hussars* and pushing back the *Pskov Dragoons*. The *St. Petersburg Dragoons* (supported by the *Ekaterinoslav Cuirassiers*) held their ground. An important shift in Initiative allowed the victorious *1st Dragoons* to charge the Russian battery in the flank, dispersing it completely. This left it vulnerable to a flank charge by the *Pskov Dragoons* (still recovering from their recent defeat). Uvarov personally led this charge, supported by the *Emperor Cuirassiers*. The French Dragoons were driven back, but not routed. Many of the combatants at this point were worn down with few fresh units on both sides available to mount the next round of attacks.

Decisions, Decisions

An Initiative shift again put Uvarov in a difficult decision: Attack or try to re-form a new line. Re-forming meant retreating (turning your backs to the enemy) or hold your ground – both of which look disastrous. "Well, let's charge like we've got this."

L'Estoq heard this and said "I like that." and threw his in infantry against Braunsberg again. The next turn, the *Infantry Regiment №2 Ruchel* charged in to try and take the rest of the town. *Infantry Regiment №11 Schoning* joined *Infantry Regiment №2 Ruchel* (already locked in melee) to finally drive the remaining French infantry out of Braunsberg. Bernadotte survived two close calls to ending his life but was unceremoniously "escorted" by his troops out of Braunsberg.

Sacken's artillery drove off the last of Bernadotte's squares defending south of Braunsberg driving them back in panic through several ranks of already disturbed French as well as reinforcing infantry trying to get to the front lines, upsetting some as they fled.

Uvarov committed his last fresh cavalry, the *Ekaterinoslav Cuirassiers* and *Emperor Cuirassiers*, against the worn French cuirassiers, supported by his near spent *Pskov* and *St. Petersburg Dragoons.* These attacks drove back the French, causing more disruption to the rear ranks, already congested by recently defeated cavalry trying to recover and new units trying to move forward.

Both sides now knew this would be the last turn of the game, so the French tried to attack wherever they could. The *Ekaterinoslav Cuirassiers* were charge in the flank by the French *1st Cuirassiers* while still locked in melee with the French *10th Cuirassiers*. Despite the inevitable defeat, the Russian Cuirassiers were driven back, but not routed. Mortier's rallied Saxon *Leibkurassier Chevauxlegers* charged the Russian *Soum Hussars* to regain some honor after their first defeat – but redemption was not to be theirs today and they were repulsed a second time today.

Bernadotte organized one last charge to retake Braunsberg, commandeering some of Mortier's infantry by accident. The defending Prussian *Infantry Regiment №2 Ruchel* repulsed the attack from the west with a telling volley. Bernadotte successfully led his last brigade into close combat against *Infantry Regiment №11 Schoning.* The melee lasted three rounds with the Prussians driving off Bernadotte for the last time. Braunsberg (and Table F) would remain in Russian control.

Game Thoughts

This was quite a lively battle with Braunsberg always as its center of attention. One might argue that the game may have ended at the Russian "high water-mark" as there was still plenty of battle left. Lannes II Corps was still fresh and easily driving back the Prussian cavalry north of Braunsberg, although L'Estoq still had much of his corps intact. Sacken's corps was also fresh. Murat's and Uvarov's cavalry were mostly worn, but Murat still had the larger force. Mortier's small command was also worn down, but still significant. Uvarov was quite content at completing his mission with the way things went.

My thanks to Peter and Mark for organizing this gaming event and to all the players I enjoyed playing with and against at Table F (James, Michael, Mitch, Ken, Steve, Brian) and all the players I didn't have the pleasure to "cross-swords" with on the tabletop – and to my long-time friend, Russ, for driving from NJ. It's my first time back since 2022 and it was a great gaming experience.

I've been suggesting to Russ that a "version 2" of *Snappy Nappy* was due for a few years and offered to help editing. Russ made that remark more than once during this trip, as he recognized several aspects of *Snappy Nappy* need clarification and/or further definition. I look forward to that project.



The post-game debrief is always enlightening as the commanders listen intensely. See Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog for the umpire Peter's eye view of the campaign in a day. --RL

More 1807 Friedland Action:



Above: Mike (left) and Eric on the Bartenstein table.
Right: Bob advances into a meeting engagement at Suwalken.





Mitch (left), Eric, and Karl (right) on the Bischofsburg table.

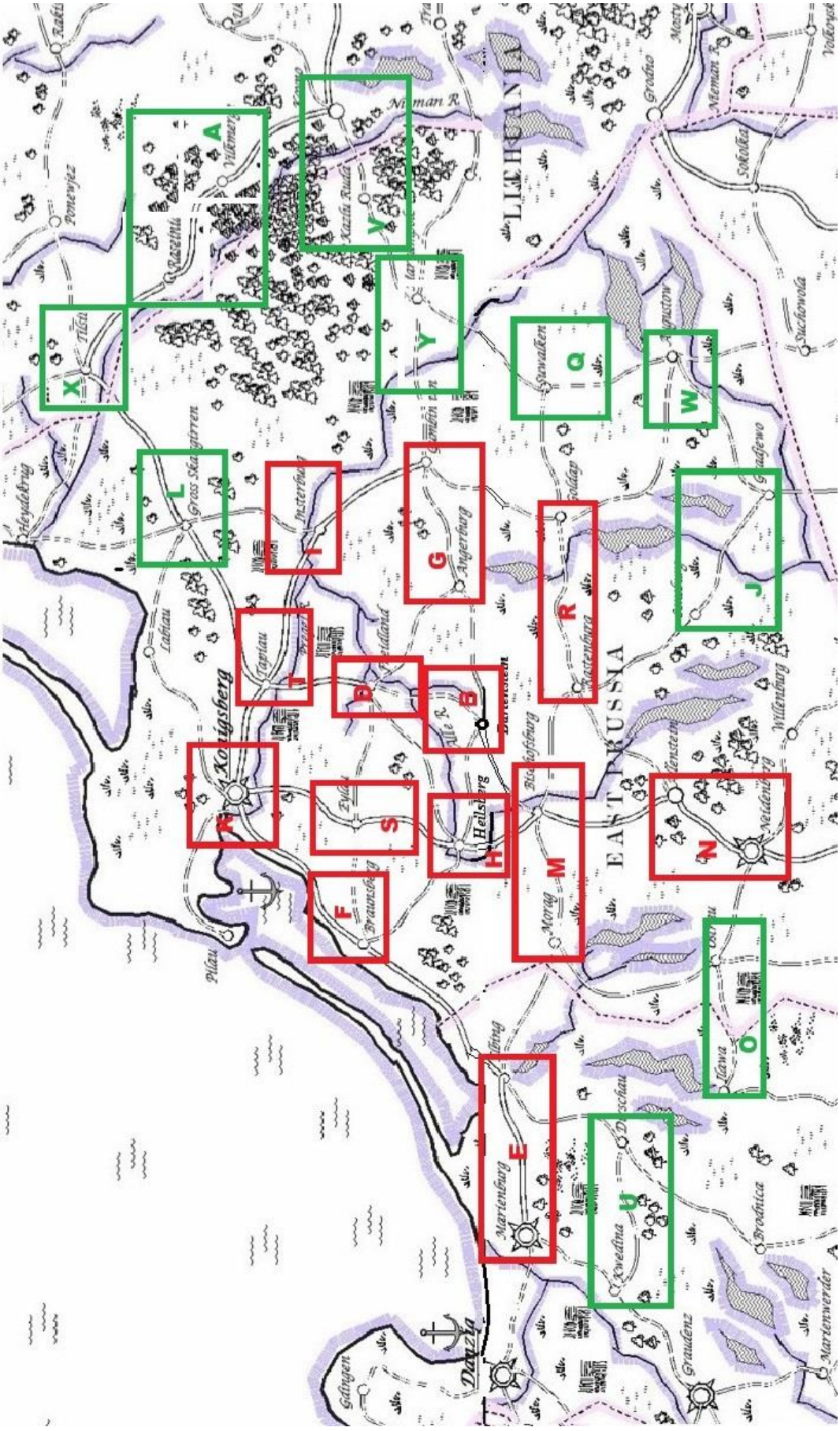


Above: Mark T sets up.



Mike S (left) and Chris on the Rastenburg table.

And the GM Map: Tables Overlaid





Renaud picks a battle.

A&A Stalingrad: Attack and Counter-Attack

by Russ Lockwood

When Dan and I played *Axis & Allies Stalingrad* earlier this year, I ran out of troops as the Germans. Then Dan as the Soviets steamrollered me during Operation Uranus. The German counter-counter-attack got no further than the historical one.

I pulled this out again and by random selection, Renaud was the Soviets and I was again the Germans. Surely, I'd be wiser now.

Not exactly. And stop calling me Shirley.

Operation Blau

The major German goal is to take all of the city of Stalingrad. The minor goal is to take a third of it plus a few key outside areas as well as a supply line back to Berlin -- or at least the edge of the mapboard.

The Soviet goal is to deny this.

A&A Stalingrad has two mapboards: one is the city of Stalingrad and the other is the operational-scale map outside the city and encompassing the Don River and points westward. The Volga is a hard dividing line -- Germans and Axis allies never cross it on either map.

The Don River forms a nice, natural flank barrier in the north, but an obstacle to cross in the east. The south is generally wide open. Stalingrad sits in the middle, beyond the Don, but on the German side of the Volga River. Germany has a temporary superiority of troops and just about total air superiority.

What German troops do **not** possess is any sort of combat superiority. A German infantry unit equals a Soviet infantry unit. A German tank equals a Soviet tank. In the summer to fall of 1942, German units could outfight Soviets. According to the book *Generalship on the Eastern Front 1941-45: A Study in Command*, in all of 1942, Germany and its allies lost 1.1 million casualties (274,000 killed or missing, the rest wounded) and 2,480 tanks while the Red Army lost

7.35 million casualties (3.25 million killed or missing, the rest wounded) and 15,000 tanks (p251-2). That's about a 7:1 historical ratio.

I suppose, design-wise and penny-pinching production cost-wise, USSR forces may divide by seven so to speak, so one Soviet figure lost actually equals seven figures lost -- so to speak. Dunno. I do know that it's hard for German forces to clear out Soviet forces in an area.



Soviet counter-attacks tie up German troops, but do leave some provinces empty that lead to the city.

The key is that each player fights only one round of combat, with a maximum of eight figures per side per area (excluding aircraft). Attacking infantry and motorized infantry hits on a 1 on a d6, artillery and STuGs on a 1-2, and tanks and aircraft on a 1-3. Unlike other *A&A* games, artillery does not boost an infantry from a hit on 1 to a 1-2.

Worse, the Germans get one infantry reinforcement every other turn. The Soviets get 16 points of reinforcements, with infantry counting as 3 points per figure, Katusha rocket trucks at 4, and tanks at 6. The Soviets have a lovely tank factory and artillery factory that churn out one free figure each every other turn.

The big Soviet pincer counter-attack (launched by turn 7) receives its forces from Stavka via card draw, with three or four units per card, or about a dozen in the north pincer and a dozen in the south pincer.

The German relief force also gets about three to six points per turn and launches three turns after the Soviets, so usually turn 10.

Stalin's Order: No Retreat!



For the first two turns, Soviet at start forces can only stay in the area or move into an Axis-occupied or Axis-controlled area. Back in the Dan game, I did a broad-front attack to mostly clear Soviet troops from the operational-scale map and then attack into Stalingrad proper. My supply lines were secure, but I lost too many troops getting into the city.

The end of Turn 1.

Soviet supply depends on three Volga ferries/ice bridges -- one per third of a city. The Luftwaffe can bomb them, but, artillery figures do double duty as pre-bombing AA (hit on a 1 on a d6).

So, if you've absorbed all this, the Germans have to roll into Stalingrad as early as possible. You don't even want to know about the city's fortified areas and the Ambush Zones.

Launch Fall Blau



I can't say my die rolls helped me. I can say in Turn 1, I rolled lower than average and Renaud rolled higher than average. With only one combat round per turn, his front line held in spots. He shuffled more troops into the contested areas on his half of the turn and they did OK at holding some areas. But a lot of it was in German hands.

At the end of Turn 5, I finally pushed into the city.

Vertyachii was taken and thus German units were NW next to Stalingrad. If I had been a bit cleverer, I would have sent a bomber into Rynok to attack the one artillery unit holding the space North of the city. A lucky roll might vacate the space and due to Stalin's order, leave it blank for me to head into the city on Turn 2.



Renaud, in order to counterattack, left two areas empty: Buzinovka and Bekenovka. He still held Kalach and the important Pitomnik, blocking access to the west and south of the city.

Meanwhile, outside the city, Germans tangle with Soviets, although the board looks mighty empty.

North of the Don turned into a stalemate in Veshenskaya at the Soviet reinforcement area. This was a distraction on my part to try and siphon USSR troops away from Stalingrad. Alas, Renaud was not buying it, only trickling in a unit or two per turn -- enough to keep the area in contention.

By the end of Turn 2, I had cleared the operations-scale board except for contested battles in Veshenskaya, Buzinovka, Kremenskaya, and Rynok. I steered clear of Ilovinska, a Soviet reinforcement area held by a Soviet unit.

However, the flanks were mighty thin of Axis units...

An Error

I used bombers in ongoing combats -- “Battles” in the vernacular of the game. Apparently, only fighters can be used in Battles. Bombers can be used in “Assaults” or just plain bombing units missions. I have no idea why this particular restriction is placed on the Luftwaffe. From all I've read, it did yeoman work in supporting combat operations.

The City Fight



With lots of Soviet artillery/AA in the city, the Luftwaffe feared to tread.

Winter came at the earliest turn, which grounds the Luftwaffe except for transport missions. I'm not sure about this rule, either, given the time scale per turn. Not every day was socked in with fog, snowstorms, and other bad weather.

I was able to punch a few units into the southern section of Stalingrad, but not enough.

In any case, with few units in the city, I only ground forward a few areas before Turn 7 came and Operation Uranus was launched.

At the end of Turn 8, it was clear the Soviets had won another smashing victory. I conceded.

Thoughts



I later watched a few videos about how the Germans can win. The one takeaway, besides roll really good dice, is to definitely use a bomber or maybe two bombers on Turn 1 to destroy that Soviet artillery starting the game in Rynok along with dumping everything you can on Vertyachii. If you can clear Vertyachii and Rynok and at least tie up surrounding areas, then on Turn 2 you can dive into the city at Spartanova and attack the first factory on Turn 3.

Germans enter city. Image from web.

You need to keep a lot of infantry alive as well, because when you cross the city limits (i.e. enter the city mapboard), each infantry and mechanized infantry figure turns into two figures. You'll still need the tanks to do the actual killing, but the infantry soaks up the casualties.

Then, you can bring in the Luftwaffe and run the gauntlet of AA fire to knock out ferries and thus the supply.

In theory, this should give the Germans a better chance at victory -- grabbing at least one third of the city, the three main areas outside, and a supply line to the edge of the map.

In practice...well, that's another game...

Thanks, Renaud, for letting me try out the same broad front strategy and get the same result.



Renaud the Barbarian enters the battle.

Conan the Arsonist: Pict Me, Pict Me

by Russ Lockwood



The village held only one thing of value: a signaling tower atop the hill. My advance attack had been so swift, it remained unlit. Villages further afield remained unaware of us and the rest of my fellow Picts following me. Plunder is easy when you can pick off one village at a time. Oh, we took losses, but not many and that's more loot for the rest of us.

I didn't even have to use any spells. I admit I am but learning the art of the arcane, but I progress in my studies under our more powerful mages.

That's when a young scout sprinted back into the village yelling about fighters coming our way. I had Krok the Hammer grab him before his fear infected the entire warband.

“Run! Run away!” the young fool spouted.

Krok smacked him up the side of his head to stop his chattering. The young pup was not of my warband.

I looked him in the eye. In a slow, measured tone, I asked, “Who are you to panic so?”

He glanced at my staff and then at the small knot of warriors that formed a semi-circle around him. His mouth hung open as he panted, but

he said nothing. At least it was better than screaming.

I shook my staff to gain his attention. “Who are you?”

“I am Ploot.”

At least his senses seem to have returned.

“So, Ploot, why are you running?”

“Fighters are coming!”

I waited a beat. “How many?”

Hmmm. Ploot may need a good thrashing to wake up his tongue.

“How many?” I disliked repeating myself. Krok started a low growl.

“A hand's worth,” Ploot jabbered. “Maybe a few more.”

I rolled my eyes. “Seven or eight fighters? Hardly worth mentioning.”

Ploot fixed me with a wild-eyed stare of fear. “I saw them. They slew all the scouts except me!”

I frowned.

Ploot babbled, “You don't understand. I saw him!”

This was getting tiresome. “Him, who?”

A chill went through me as he answered, “Conan the Barbarian.”

That could only mean one thing: he meant to light the beacon.

Fantasy *RUSE*: Activations



We used Renaud's *RUSE* rules with a slight tweak: Fixed individual figure activation sequence using Phases 1 to 6. Each side gets activation beads equal to the number of figures. These are assigned as wanted to any of the six Phases. Renaud uses a plastic medicine pill box with seven compartments -- the first six for the Phases and the last to hold “dead” beads from eliminated figures.

Beginning of Turn 2.

Previously, Renaud had used six cards, one per Phase, for a random Phase selection. Prior to that, he had used a specific sequence where a Phase only allowed a certain type of activation.

Now, players decided how many beads went into each Phase and a bead could activate any figure or even re-activate a previously activated figure if passing a die roll.

The kicker here was that the fewest beads in a Phase went first (in case of a tie, die roll off). The double kicker was that some figures were Heroes and got two beads and one figure. The triple kicker was Conan: a Legend who got three beads.

It sounded like a good upgrade. You get the flexibility of using a bead for any figure along with a Phase bidding mechanism. Let the battle begin to see if tabletop reality meets theory.

Set Up

By random selection, I was the spellcaster leader of the Picts. At least that's what Renaud called my tribal band of 25 loincloth-clad brothers -- a few archers, a few hammer-men, and mostly swordsmen.

Opposing me? Conan the Barbarian with his best gal Valeria, his big blue buddy hill giant Hrungir, a hero archer, four regular archers, a sword and shield fighter of some renown, and a wolf. My goal: keep anyone from lighting the beacon.

Ploot the Scout told me Conan and Company would be coming down the road, but might come in anywhere at half the table's edge. I scattered my lads in and around ruins and trees, with some in the fields. I could not just plop everyone next to the beacon. Indeed, I couldn't come within half a table of the beacon.

The Battle



Conan and Company emerged at the edge at the closest point to the beacon. I had a number of archers who needed a slight move to bring 'em into arc. Alas, the rule that we melee and fire at the closest target sent arrows mostly at the hero sword and shield fighter, whose shield intercepted many, many arrows. A tweak of a move got me to shoot at an archer with deadly results, then back to targeting the sword and shield fighter.

Blarg the Bopper tries to hammer Hrungir the blue giant while Conan and Valeria watch.

The wolf attacked one of my sword warriors and bit him through the neck. My sword warrior next to him gave his best James Cagney routine: “You dirty rat wolf. You killed my brudda. I'm gonna getcha, copper. I'm gonna getcha!”

Sure enough, the sword sliced through the hide and the wolf died atop the brudda. Seconds later, Conan sent the sword warrior to join his brudda in a triple decker of death.

Others of my warrior tribe charged the band of barbarians. Most of my brave lads did not survive the first round of combat.

Undaunted, Blarg the Bopper yelled his war-cry, swung his hammer in circles above his head, and charged Hrungir the Blue Giant. It was a magnificent swing and an equally magnificent miss. Hrungir's deep voice boomed, “Ho. Ho. Ho. Blue Giant,” and squashed Blarg into a red puddle.

Reposition



At start, I may have scattered my lads a bit too much towards the road, so to speak. I had to spend precious beads repositioning them. Every bead running to a new position is a bead not used for offensive action.

We both tried to use beads to re-activate a previously activated figure to lesser or greater success. I recall it being a bit less than a 50-50 success.

Conan and Valeria made the dash towards the hill. Hrungir the Blue Giant went down the middle to cover them. The archers fought a private war with my archers and a couple swordsmen.

Conan defeats two Picts (red chips), but Valeria ultimately falls. The victorious Pict does not last much longer. Clear beads indicate an activation. Red beads indicate stressed.

The sword and shield fighter went down fairly quickly due to a lucky melee roll. His victorious attacker joined him in the afterworld soon thereafter.

Snake, Rattle, and Roll



While all this bowfire and melee occurred, I started an incantation to summon a giant snake. With Hrungir the Blue Giant bearing down on me, I needed help. It took time, but in a puff of smoke, my old pal Snaky McSnake Face appeared. It was feeding time and I pointed him at the big blue boy.

I conjure Snaky McSnake Face.

Krok the Hammer would have none of this. Before ol' Snaky could orient himself, Krok charged the giant with a war cry to his personal deity Maxwell of the Silver Hammer. Krok leapt in the air and bang-bang, Krok's hammer came down on Hrungir's head and buried itself into the giant's skull. Twas a noble strike that will be remembered in song.

Hrungir crumpled to the ground, but not before the swing of his axe bit into Krok and sliced him in twain. Krok gasped his last breath as his blood mingled with the giant's blood. I pledged to bury him well.

Krok the Hammer swings…



Conan the Destroyer

A knot of my Pict warriors charged Conan. One even managed to get through his defense to slice him before Conan's sword separated head from body. My lad had a mighty fine round head, for it bounced away quite some distance. Another of my swordsman swerved to attack Valeria and slew her with a mighty strike, only to be cut down by a vengeful Conan. The pile of bodies grew about the barbarian.

Snaky McSnake Face sped towards Conan, but the mighty barbarian slew the last swordsman and raced up the hill. Snaky got close, but Conan climbed the ladder and sparked the beacon into flame. If the surrounding villagers did not see the fire, they would see the smoke billowing into the sky.

With more than half my tribal band slain, I called upon the survivors to retreat and regroup.

Thoughts

The new activation sequence worked well: simple to understand and use.

A word about how a low-level hammer-boy slew high-level Hrungir. In the system, hits translate to damage rolls of either one or two d12s. The strength of the target determines what you need to roll to damage the target. I recall Hrungir was a strength 10, so I need to roll a 10, 11, or 12 to put incapacitating damage onto the big boy, but, and this is

an important but, a roll of 12 is instant death. To anyone. Or anything. I rolled 1d12 and fortune found the 12 on the die. Instant death to the jolly blue giant. Oh yeah, that 8% chance felt as good as it was unexpected.

Melee combat is simultaneous, so Hrungir's attack struck Krok and sadly took him out. Loincloth-clad human warriors don't last long in combat, although bad d12 rolls have been known to let them survive.

After a couple years of playtesting, Renaud's homegrown "universal" *RUSE* system works pretty well. Then again, I've played the various evolutions.

Thanks to Renaud for another fine game.



Conan climbs the ladder to light the beacon. Snaky McSnake Face didn't get there in time.

Lockwood's Trophy: *CoC2* Tourney Winner

by Russ Lockwood



I'm not a tournament player, but while wandering around HMGS' Historicon 2026, I met my gaming buddy Mitch, who was hosting a *Chain of Command 2* tournament. He showed me a misprint in the program guide: The first round was a reasonable and actual 1:00pm start, but the second and third rounds started at 1:37am (yep, the wee hours of the morning). Understandably, only one person signed up.

So, I said I'd play so that he could run the tournament. Then a third player signed up, so I bowed out. Then another signed up. I was back in. My first game was against Ken, who obviously knew the rules better than I did.

What he didn't know was just how bad the dice would be to him that afternoon and how good they'd be for me. It's the old adage: better a lucky general than a good one. The end result was that I won. You can read all about it in the July 2026 AAR on the hmgs.org website. And I thought that was the end of it.

However, the winner of the other game didn't want to do another round. Neither did I, but you can't have two winners of a tournament. So, Mitch declared it was down to one die roll: highest takes all. I rolled high and "won" the tournament. Remember, better lucky than good.

Fast forward to the *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-in-a-Day game and Mitch brings in this shiny trophy...with my name on it. You gotta be kidding me. The photo is real, not AI generated.

I'm rather pleased. I never won a HMGS tournament before. I once stepped in to fill a slot and came in second place in a *Dragon Dice* National Tournament. I've won Dan's basement War of the Roses Tournament a few times. MagWeb received an Honorable Mention in a national web design contest (Mercedes Benz won and Claritan came in second). But I've never had my name engraved on a bonafide trophy for all eternity.

It's a major award. I don't have a bay window looking out over the street, so I gotta clear some space on the fireplace mantle. Oh....and alert the media.

Then Mitch gave me the bad news. I didn't get to keep the trophy, not even for a little bit. Oh, I cited that the NHL players on the winning team got to keep the Stanley Cup for a week or two each.

Nope.

Didn't Brady throw the Lombardi Trophy across the water to Gronk on another boat?

That didn't cut it either.

Ah, well. I'll have to be satisfied with a photo and memory of aiding a fellow gamer.

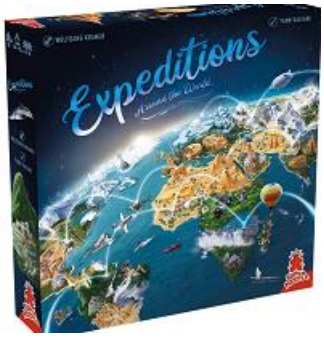
Thanks, Mitch.



Dennis (left) and Dan plot their next move.

Expeditions: World Sightseeing

by Russ Lockwood



Apparently, two different games are named *Expeditions*. One is a hex-based wargame with little plastic mechs and a sequel to a game called *Scythe*. I never heard of either, although post-game I did a little web searching. Ah.

The other is the one I bought because it looked cool and was half off. It has little plastic arrows, punch out cardboard tokens, a lot of cards, and a map of the world with archeological and natural wonder sites.

Dan and Dennis came over expecting to play mechs and had read its rules and watched a YouTube video. They were on the edge of saying it was all bait and switch when I showed them the box cover. Not my fault both games carried the same name. To be fair, both of them fall in my interest. Well, we'll all learn together.

Set Up

Expeditions is a point-to-point game of visiting various archeological and natural wonder sites. All the big names are here: Great Wall, Giza, Machu Pichu, Victoria Falls, Great Barrier Reef, Tiera del Fuego, and so on along with a lot of places I had never heard of plus a number of generic stops like the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean.

Each of these has an associated card and in a three-player game, we get 12 each. These are our secret objectives. I guess whomever is funding the expedition insists on it. A further six spots and cards are placed in view. These are public objectives. First come, first grab the card and the 1 VP.

Of the 12, we pick four to identify publicly -- press release I guess -- and put a token on each of the four spaces. This does two things: First, if you visit, you get 1 VP for the spot and 1 VP for the token, and second, it gives the other players a clue about where you're likely to go.

Expedition Trio

Three expeditions (red, blue, and yellow) start from a compass point that's around Copenhagen. Each player picks one colored plastic arrow and places it on a dotted line path pointing to the next spot. For example, Copenhagen is one dotted segment away from Rome, Athens, Stonehenge, and other spots.

The key is that all players can use any colored expedition. A player does not own a colored path. Anyone can use it. You must place the new arrow at the end of the path and you can't double back along the same color.

Some spots are blue squares that provide a free arrow. Other spots are red stars that give you a Ticket -- that can either be turned in for a free arrow, destroy the last-placed arrow on any path, or saved. You start with three Tickets and may use up to two of them in your turn.



Mid to late in the first game.

As you might imagine, paths are quite interactive among players. Since no player owns a path, you can place arrows to direct the path to the sites (cards) you hold in your hand. Likewise, other players divert the path away from your sites. Since the game has about 100 cards, and thus each arrow gets placed differently, each play of the game is different.

There's a bit more to it involving closed loops and such, but that's the gist of it.

Expedition One

We headed out in three different directions, mostly because of the cards we held. As the path lengthened, all of a sudden, you find some sites (cards) bypassed. Then you have to figure out how to bend a colored expedition to that site.

It's difficult to recap a game, for we placed arrows quickly and looked up rules when we came to a conundrum. Sure enough, we screwed a few things up and corrected them on the fly. No worries, it's a learning game.

The paths grew and grew as we all diverted here, extended there, and even destroyed everywhere. All of us were reaching our private sites and occasionally grabbing a public site.

The game ends when one player visits all the private sites. For game one, that was me.

As for scoring, I had all 12 private cards plus four tokens, plus one common card for a total of 17. Dan tallied his points and also came up with 17. Dennis was a few points behind. The tie breaker came down to Tickets. Dan had one and I did not, so Dan won the first game.

Expedition Two

We were smarter now and learned how to use the free arrows and Tickets.

We discovered that a free arrow (blue square) could be of any color, and thus, placed on any expedition. We had played it to be the same color.

Also, we learned that you could use up to two Tickets per turn, not the limit of one we had been using. Yes, it pays to read the rules.

In the second game, Dennis took it, Dan was second, and I was third.



Early in the second game.

Thoughts

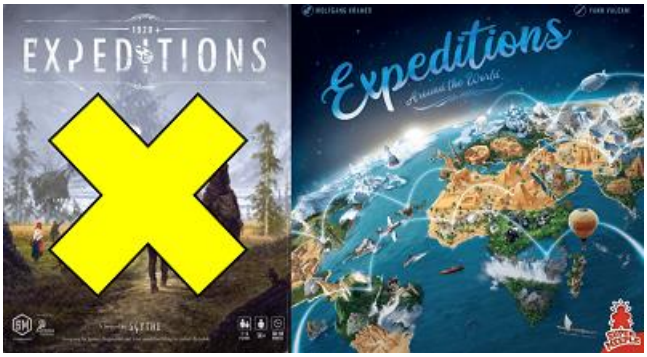
In a way, *Expeditions* has some elements of *Settlers of Catan*, in that you placed Expedition arrows like *Settler* roads and ships, but without dice, no thief, and simplified scoring. The ability to divert the paths proved interesting. In the second game, we played a little more defensively and also created a few closed loops.

Each game took about an hour and a quarter or so. It was fairly easy to grasp, although we needed to look up some nuances.

It's a clever little game and I can see this as a nice bonus geography lesson.

Unexpected Expedition: What? No Mechs?

By Daniel



When Russ invited me to a Wednesday game, he said it was a new game, just out of the shrinkwrap, called *Expeditions*. I look it up on BoardGameGeek and find *Expeditions* by Stonemaier Games (2023) – a relatively new sci-fi exploration/exploitation game based loosely on another popular game called *Scythe*. I download the rules, watch a video solo game, get a feel for the game (and liked it enough to want to play) and I'm thinking I've got enough information to give this a go.

I arrive a little ahead of "starting time", say "Hello" to Dennis and Russ and gaze upon the board Russ just set-up.

Welcome to *Expeditions: Around the World* by Super Meeple. Originally published in 1996, there are also 2005, 2016, and 2023 editions. Russ got the 2023 edition.

NOT what I was expecting. I explained that I thought it would be the Stonemaier game and that I looked it up, read the rules and watched a video replay. Dennis exclaimed "I did the same thing!"

The board shows a map of the world with many different branching paths, and players advance the "expeditions" by placing plastic arrows (three different colors to distinguish each "expedition"). When an expedition arrives at a location that matches one of your private site cards or one of the public site cards, you score that card. Certain spaces on the board allow you to play again immediately, and other spaces allow you to pick up a bonus action card ("Ticket") that you can play at any time on one of your turns. The game ends when someone has claimed all of their cards, then whoever has the highest total score wins.

While a little bit of a let-down (I told Russ the other game had mechs and that should be the *next* game he picks up) the game was fairly easy to play. We mastered the mechanics the first game and figured out the "cat and mouse" strategies during the 2nd game. Russ ended the first game by claiming his last destination, but I tied him in points (paying more attention to the 6 "open" destinations than my opponents and claiming more of them) and ended up winning the "tie-breaker" by having a spare "ticket". Dennis ended the second game by claiming his last destination and had a clear lead in points over both of us.



A four-player set up. The game allows up to six players.

HMGS Next Generation: Battles in Libraries

HMGS Next Generation, formed to offer historical and some non-historical miniatures gaming to kids, started in Connecticut and expanded to New York. Now, it's expanding with baby steps into New Jersey. The first game by Mike and Sam was the 1776 Battle of Trenton at the Hunterdon County Library in Flemington, NJ, a few months back. It's now expanded to the Mendham Library. -- RL



Mike discusses how Union and CSA troops found themselves in Gettysburg.

ACW Gettysburg: Mendham

by Mike

Photos by April Kirchdoerffer, Mendham Township Library Adult Programming & Marketing Coordinator



HMGS Next Generation in NJ ran a game portraying the July 2, 1863 Battle of Sickle's Salient at the Mendham Township Library in New Jersey. We had five players, of which three had played in my previous American Revolution December 26, 1776 Battle of Trenton game at the Library. Not quite veterans, but certainly good, smart teens.

For the American Civil War game, I used 15mm figures and a battle mat I crafted. The Union players managed to repulse the Confederate attack on the northwestern leg of the Union salient, whereas Law's brigade of Hood's division evicted Vincent's Union brigade from its position on Little Round Top.

We adjudicated the game as a tie, sort of, although one individual insisted that given a bit more time Hood's division would have cut through and behind Sickle's III Corps, go on to the town of Gettysburg, and then Washington DC to put an end to the war. Perhaps, perhaps not.

As usual, we introduced the game by way of images and blurbs on how the war came about, where it took place, and what the forces on the tabletop would attempt to achieve in the game.

Following the game, the players, the librarian, and parents appreciated the information on Sickle's donation of his amputated leg as a historical and medical artifact and that he as a politician had been rewarded for his blunder. He was given credit for his role in preserving the Gettysburg battlefield as a park. There is, obviously, a huge statue of him there, overshadowing the stone raised in remembrance of many of the fallen troops of III Corps.

HMGS Next Generation: Gaming Colors

by John Spiess



Halloween Theme: Rye

The library wanted a Halloween themed game this month, so I ran the Castle battle (right) from the movie "Army of Darkness." It was pure glorious bedlam! We had 17 kids playing at one point.

I guess there's something to be said about skeletons...





Skeleton Siege: New Canaan

There is just something about skeletons. The kids agreed that this was probably the most fun game they have played yet. They especially liked the mechanical dragon breathing fire. One gamer was so excited during the game that he couldn't stop jumping up and down.

We had one new player who actually came over and shook my hand afterwards to say thank you. That was a really nice gesture. He will definitely be back.

Despite all the dead skeletons outside the wall, the skeleton army proved too numerous and tough. One gamer had one hero left who ran out through the breach for a heroic last stand. It was epic. We actually got him to give a small smile.





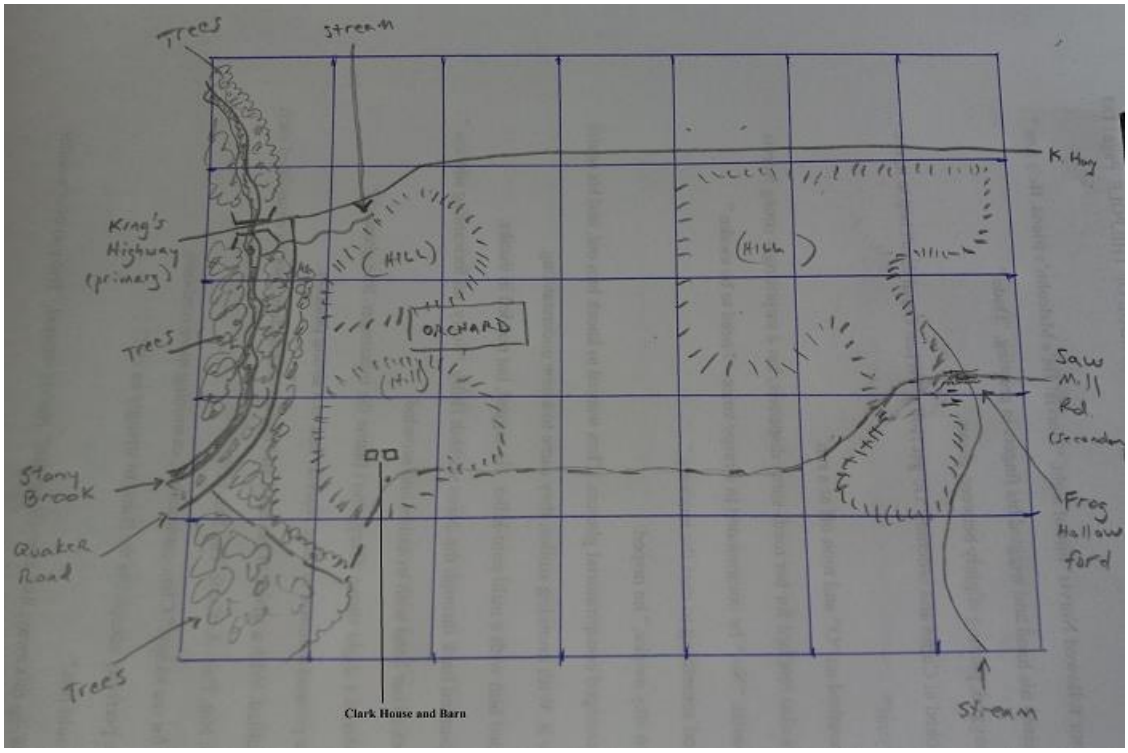
WWII: Harrison

Retention success: All the kids in the game previously attended our gaming events with three of them saying they are attending Fall In. Four grandparents also stayed for the event since they were very interested in the history aspect. The grandparents said they would be making the trip to Historicon in 2027. I had met them all at previous events. They all commented on how history taught today is drastically different from years ago.

When the parents came for pickup, I think everyone really enjoyed the history lesson that I gave along with some interesting trivia and tidbits of the battle.

The kids seemed to have a great time and even helped clean everything up. I told everyone to try and bring more friends since that is how we will grow the group.

The library director stopped in. She said she wants to expand the program to the other library branch in Harrison.



My original hand-drawn map that Mike turned into a custom-made snowy battle mat.

Battle of Princeton 1777: Flemington

by Russ Lockwood

With crucial assistance from Rich Kane, I umpired the tabletop 1777 Battle of Princeton at the Hunterdon County Library on Route 12 in Flemington, NJ, as part of the Game Fest event. *A Nations & Cannons* game -- specialized *Dungeons & Dragons* (*D&D*) offshoot set during the American Revolution without magic or monsters, but with soldiers and civilians -- was in the corner, a regular *D&D* game was on the right, and a *What A Tanker* game was next to my table. A *Wings of War* -- WWI air combat with miniature planes -- game was also set up but I didn't see any participants.

For Princeton I had four kids on the American side and two kids and an adult on the British side. The event was scheduled for two hours. Prior, I had created a simple set of miniatures rules and Mike, Sam, and I playtested it using Mike's custom-made homemade battlefield map and Sam's 15mm figures. As a result, I simplified the rules even further and compressed the starting locations and timed entry along with giving the Brits a tad more troops and the Americans a tad fewer. Oddly enough, with Sam versus Mike, the game ended pretty much historically.



The end of British Turn 2 of the playtest. Frog Hollow at top.

The Forces



OK, I admit that OOB purists would find the forces a bit skewed, but OOB purists have to consider an audience of kids who have likely never played a miniatures game. The British had three main regiments of foot units. The Americans had more. A lot more. I started the British foot at six stands, the Americans at four. The British shot better and saved better. One entire American command was militia rated that shot OK, but meleed and saved poorly. The British had grenadiers and cavalry, but only a single stand of each.

Thus, you had American quantity versus British quality. The playtest found the balance needed a bit of a tweak. Now we'll see what the kids can do.

The Library Game

The British force centered around the 17th Foot pushed forward to the orchard and set up a firing line. Flank support came from the second force centered around the 55th Foot and a bit of the third force. The 40th Foot (main unit of the third force) covered the road at Frog Hollow.

Rich offers tactical tips. Hunterdon County Library had a prohibition in place about showing photos of kids, so just about all the photos I took I couldn't use. Some creative cropping was necessary here.

The Americans formed up into two main lines, the first line including Mercer holding until the second line under Cadwalader was able to march up and support. Miflin was on the march and would get there in time on the left by the stream. On the right, Sullivan formed line at Frog Hollow with a unit borrowed from Hitchcock. As for Hitchcock, he saw the gap between the 40th and 55th Foot and started to form and advance.



The British 40th Foot defends the ford at Frog Hollow. The Americans shake out into line and advance. Note the lead unit took hits and lost a base along with two extra hits applied.

All the gamers generally picked up the Igo-Ugo rules fairly quickly. They understood the difference in moving in column versus line, how to change formation, and how to fire. They understood hits could be saved and failed saves added a ring of death to a stand -- and when rings equaled figures, the stand was removed and a morale check occurred. They understood that failed morale checks caused their unit to turn around and flee. It was still on the field, but usually needed a turn to about face and march back into battle.

Like I said, it was all geared for simplicity (at least compared to the usual miniatures rules). I had a quick reference sheet so they could see the rules were followed.

They may not have grasped tactics, but I heard Rich explain concepts like supporting reserves, maximizing firepower via formation, and concentrating firepower via positioning.

As I tried to explain at one point, miniatures is not about fixed spaces like a boardgame, but about open time and distance calculations. At first, I just prompted, "What do you want to do?" or "Where do you want to go?" Later on, they asked if they could move here or there and shoot at this or that. To me, that's progress about thinking about time, distance, and opportunity.



By Turn 6, the end of the game, the Americans cross the stream and outflank the British 40th Foot.

Middle Game

The Americans were holding their own on the left at the orchard, learning about British discipline. The center started edging into the flank of the British. The right, at Frog Hollow, the girl learned about massed and better British fire, and then quickly responded with her own massed firepower from three increasingly battered units while she had fourth cross up stream and flank the British 40th Foot.

The two hour time period went quickly and it was time to reset and start the second Battle of Princeton game, but the kids wanted to play on. Fine, but the only hiccup was fitting in two new players, who had to learn what the other kids had been playing for two hours. One was completely lost and the second, an adult, asked a lot of questions as she grasped the rules. The kids that remained lost interest as they had to wait for the other two to get up to speed. It's asking a lot for a new player to learn in 15 minutes what the others had learned over two hours.

We called it after about 45 minutes. The British were really hammered.



End of game positions in the center and right. British grenadiers and cavalry drive the flanking Americans into the woods (right) and hold onto orchard (rectangle with model trees removed). In the center, the Americans are starting to outflank the Brits and are bringing up artillery for additional flanking fire.

Historical Result?

In general, yes. The Americans pressed into the weak British center and enfiladed the British right at the orchard. Charges by the British grenadiers and cavalry helped stall the American advance, but the Brits could only do so much to shore up flanks.

The 40th Foot on the British left at Frog Hollow did the best it could, scoring early, but numbers -- and a smart American deployment just outside British charge range but inside firing range -- told.

For a historical game, I couldn't have been more pleased with the kids' playing...and the adults' too. I would have liked to spend a little more post-game time about the historical battle vs the game, but I was able to hand out two pages of information pointing them to the NJ DEP Park Service web page for the Battle of Princeton and the Princeton Battlefield Society web page.

We packed it up and sent it back with Mike the next day's Mendham Library game.



At HCL, a What a Tanker game umpired by Mike (right). Jordan (green shirt) is the HC Library's teen librarian and set up the game fest along with Maryjean. He also GM'd the Nations and Cannons game.

Battle of Princeton 1777: Mendham

by Mike

We had a small group of four yesterday after two cancellations: three kids and one of the fathers -- a former wargamer.

A couple changes from Russ' OOB. We had given the Brits two more generals to boost morale and longevity. It might have been a factor, but the GM running the American troop deployment also delayed the arrival of what became the "second wave" -- perhaps too late.

The Battle

By the end of the game, the British still held the orchard and controlled both flanks. Part of the reason was the fantastic die rolling beyond all odds.

Meanwhile, the British regiment on Flocktown road was still holding Frog Hollow ravine. The girl had positioned her unit in the center on top of Mercer Heights. She decided that the American units below was ready for their demise and came off the hill. That was unresolved when the game ended. She might have been right.

Anyway, all the British units remained on the field when we stopped the game about 20 minutes past the official end time. I called it a British victory because the British army in Trenton was also coming up Mercer/Post road post-haste.

Thoughts

So, one British victory out of four games. I have that Brit victory down to exceptional die rolling, but then, so are most of our games. However, that would also imply it can go either way. Good.

The added generals could make a difference - and they obviously do have potential for a larger role - then they should be mortal and subject to firing effects.

We played enfilade as shooting at a column, and that the artillery stands as regimental guns that can move full and shoot. I think I called it three-actions, but in reality the argument should be that they are not limbered but manhandled by a trained crew to do just that.

As to running this scenario for grown-up kids, Sam wants to allow defensive fire, although the firing charts will probably have to be reworked.

I will say that the players' enthusiasm and the two moms' willingness to let their kids play the second game as well as the first, a total of 3.5+ hours, was a pleasant surprise. The moms never expected the kids to last the game's 1 hour 40 minute duration.

NEWS

Wargame Designer Survey: First Game
by Russ Lockwood

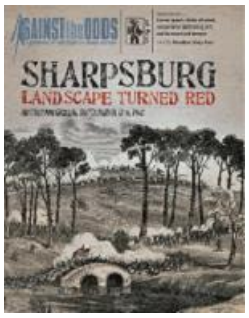
I filled out Jonaton Dyer's survey asking about wargame designers' first games they designed. The survey received 115 replies out of 210 sent, a 54.8% response rate.

The responses themselves varied in length, scope and clarity. Respondents had carte blanche to add as much or little detail in their replies as they wished. Some diligently kept to the brief, while others took the opportunity to reflect, reminisce, or set the record straight.

The most common theater of conflict for our respondents' first game design was WWII. If anything, I expected the share WWII games to be higher, between 40% and 50%. In fact, it only inspired 30.6% of the games mentioned. This was, however, the only theatre to attract higher than 20%. The next most prolific theatres were Napoleonic (10%), American Civil War (7.5%), and Ancients and Cold War/Near Future with 6.4% each.

Survey results on Dyer's blog: https://fastgame-goodgame.blogspot.com/2026/10/feature-where-do-i-begin-inspiration.html

ATO Magazine: Issue #64 Sharpsburg
by Russ Lockwood



Against the Odds magazine is about to release Issue 64, with the wargames *Sharpsburg: Landscape Turned Red* and *Tunisgrad: The End in North Africa* inside.

Sharpsburg is a two player area-impulse game simulating the great battle of Antietam as it is known in the north, or the battle of Sharpsburg as known in the south. One player takes command of the Union Army under General George B. McClellan and the other, the Army of the Confederate States of America under Robert E Lee.

Tunisgrad is a two-player hex-based mini-game covering the seven-month period in 1942 and 1943 where Allied forces first drove back, and then eventually pocketed, all Axis forces remaining in the Tunisian area of North Africa.

Issue 64 costs $39.95 (including shipping inside USA) or $59.95 (including international shipping).

For full disclosure, I am the Developer for both games.

Info: https://www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=202

New Wargame: 1965 Operation Rolling Thunder
by Russ Lockwood



High Flying Dice Games released the wargame *Falling Skies: Operation Rolling Thunder, March-December 1965*. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, believed they had a war winning strategy with massive air strikes against targets in North Vietnam and the Ho Chi Minh Trail -- the route through Laos and Cambodia that funneled men and material to Communist forces in South Vietnam. Dubbed Operation Rolling Thunder, phased airstrikes against targets that progressively worked their way closer to Hanoi and Haiphong, would convince the North Vietnamese government of the futility of waging war against South Vietnam and encourage them to seek a negotiated peace settlement. Trusting that the policy of regulated and judicious use of force that was used successfully in the Cuban Missile Crisis would also lead to victory here in Vietnam, Operation Rolling Thunder was launched weeks before the first US ground troops were to land at Danang. However, the historical result was far from what was anticipated in Washington, DC.

Includes: One 11x17-inch map sheet; One page of 96 double-sided counters; and 10 pages of rules. Air units represent flights of six to 10 aircraft. Each turn represents a month of time. Two-player and solitaire versions included. Players will also need a standard deck of playing cards, a six-sided (d6) and a ten-sided (d10) set of dice. Price: $20.95 plus sales tax (where applicable) and shipping/handling. Mounted counters can be had for an additional $8.00. A custom card set for *Falling Skies* is also available. A custom card set is available for $12.00.

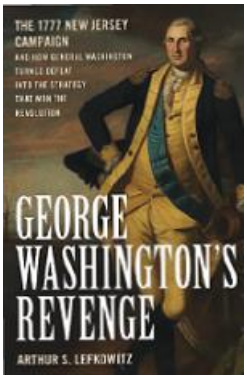
Info: https://www.hfdgames.com/skies.html

Lefkowitz Lecture: Date Change to Nov. 18

by Russ Lockwood



Princeton Battlefield Society (PBS) changed the lecture date of Arthur Lefkowitz, discussing his book *George Washington's Revenge: The 1777 New Jersey Campaign* to Wednesday, November 18. The lecture begins at 6:00pm at the Nassau Club in Princeton, NJ. Tickets are a $50 donation to PBS. Labyrinth Books will be onsite to sell copies of the book and Lefkowitz will be signing copies.



The book covers the American Revolution in New Jersey during the first six months of 1777. Slides will follow Washington's retreat route from Princeton to Morristown followed by his strong defensive position in the Watchung Mountains and the Battle of Short Hills.

For full disclosure, I am a Trustee of PBS.

Info: https://pbs1777.org/

Wargame in Progress: *Symphony of Destruction*

by Russ Lockwood

I've been reading the newsletters of 10K Games, which has spent the last five years designing and developing a WWII east front game based on Army Group North efforts from 1941-1944. *Symphony of Destruction* is ambitious...





From the August 2026 newsletter, a tentative contents list for the game: 12 Maps – 22" x 17" folded once. We will likely offer unfolded tubed maps as well; 3480 Counters – 20 sheets at 174ea using 5/8-inch counters; Rule book; Scenario Book – Approximate 10-12 scenarios ranging from tiny to full campaign; Learning scenarios showing how the Horsemen Unleashed system rules work: Movement, Combat, Air, Logistics, and Command and Control; Soviet Order of Battle booklet; German Order of Battle booklet; Many Charts & Play Aids - To be determined; Game Designers booklet; 2-3 Decks of Cards (for the card assisted system); three D10 Dice; and a Box about 9x12x4 inches. No price, yet.

Yep, that's a monster game.

Other info: "Game complexity for *SoD* is also going to be on the high end – or rather game sophistication. That said, with good game design I believe you can make a game that is not overly complex whilst retaining a depth and sophistication that challenges players."

Scale is "divisional level, 10 km per hex, 3 days per turn." Although the examples show regiments, brigades.

Availability: "By Consim in 2027 we should be in the last stages of editing and preparing to get things ready for print."

More info: https://10kgames.com

Analyzing the Ten Crucial Days: David Price

by Russ Lockwood

Author David Price breaks down the strategic elements that define Washington's Ten Crucial Days Campaign of late 1776 and the early days of 1777 in a lecture for the Washington Crossing American Revolution Roundtable. Now on YouTube: https://youtu.be/iw6Ae1hkk34

Battle of Princeton Diorama

by Russ Lockwood

A hand-crafted diorama, created by Princeton Battlefield Society Trustee Kim Gallagher with help from Trustee Mark Herr, of the 1777 Battle of Princeton debuted at the Princeton 1776 Fest at the Morven Museum on October 3. The diorama in 25mm scale features the American counter-attack at the Clarke Farm.

Although packed away at press time, the goal is to place it on exhibit at various venues, and, ultimately, in a battlefield Visitor's Center.

Full disclosure: I am a trustee of the PBS.



Kim explains the battle on the Princeton town part of the diorama.



And the decisive American counter-attack is on the Clarke Farm part of the diorama.

Exhibition: Hunterdon at War

by Russ Lockwood



Hunterdon County draftees on the Flemington Courthouse steps in September 1917.

The Hunterdon County Historical Society will explore the military service and sacrifices of Hunterdon County residents throughout American history in its upcoming exhibition: *Answering the Call: 250 Years of Service and Sacrifice in Hunterdon County*. Opening Saturday, Nov. 14, the exhibition will be on view at the Doric House, 114 Main St., Flemington, through March. Admission free. Donations welcome.

Spanning the American Revolution through the Vietnam War, the exhibition will highlight the men and women who served in the Armed Forces during some of the nation's most challenging times. It also will explore life on the home front, offering a broader look at how war affected communities throughout Hunterdon County.

Rare artifacts and photographs from the historical society's collections will bring these stories to life. Among the featured objects are the uniform buttons belonging to British Cornet Francis Geary, who led the December 1776 raid on Flemington, but on his return trip to Pennington was shot and killed by local militia just north of Ringoes. Also on display will be a rare 1777 map drawn by British Major Samuel Holland depicting the provinces of Quebec, New York and New Jersey, including what was then Hunterdon County. Visitors will also see the death mask of New Jersey's last surviving Civil War veteran; the coat and bicorne hat worn by John Purcell of Lambertville, who served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during the Spanish-American War; World War II WAVE uniforms worn by Joan Callahan of Flemington; and more. The exhibition will run on Saturdays through the end of February, 2027.

The exhibition will include a special salute to former long-time HCHS trustee John Kuhl, showing a few artifacts from when he served in the Navy in Antarctica. Info: https://hunterdonhistory.org/

Full disclosure: I am a trustee of the HCHS.

Lecture: Flemington Fairgrounds and Speedway

By Russ Lockwood



The Flemington Speedway…now a Walmart, Lowe's, etc.

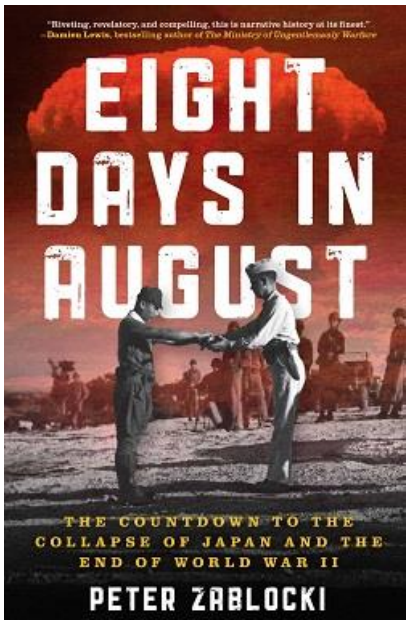
The Flemington Fairgrounds and Speedway evoke memories of summer nights filled with the sounds of music and roaring engines, along with the unmistakable smells of cotton candy and hot dogs. Though the fairgrounds and speedway are gone, their stories live on. Whether you remember the excitement firsthand or are curious about what you missed, you can revisit this special chapter of local history at the Hunterdon County Historical Society's annual fall meeting.

Join HCHS on Sunday, Nov. 8, at 2 p.m. at the Flemington Presbyterian Church, in Flemington, NJ, where historian Brian Armstrong will bring the fairgrounds and speedway racing back to life through words and pictures. Admission free. Donations welcome. No reservations are required and refreshments will be served.

Full disclosure: I am a trustee of the HCHS. Info: https://hunterdonhistory.org/

Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood



Eight Days in August. by Peter Zablocki. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 314 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Countdown to the Collapse of Japan and the End of World War II*

This well-written account chronicles the eight days prior to the Japanese accepting surrender terms, concentrating especially on the political battles within the Imperial Council.

As the atom bombs dropped and the Soviets attacked, the Council remained divided between understanding that further resistance was futile and honor demanded resistance until obliteration.

The details surrounding the debate prove horrifying to think what would have happened had Japan suffered a rain of atomic bombs. Meanwhile, the Soviets violated the neutrality pact and raced across Mongolia heading to reclaim areas lost during the Russo-Japanese War.

The Emperor finally was persuaded that surrender was the only option, but unconditional surrender and the prosecution of the Emperor was unthinkable.

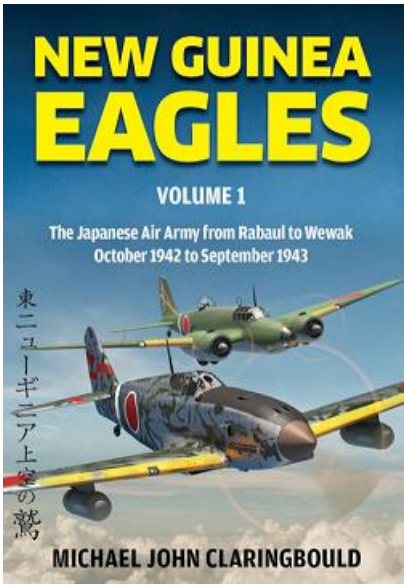
Even after the decision to surrender, some junior officers decided the Peace faction officials needed to be killed and the Emperor safeguarded so Japan could continue the war. The coup d'etat's planning, execution, and collapse prove fascinating.

The book contains a number of typos regarding "aids" (p20, 79,87, 91) that should be "aides." Also, "in inside" (p238) should have the "in" deleted.

The book contains 31 black and white photos and one black and white map.

As this is written from the Japanese perspective, details normally skipped over are investigated within the context of various aspects of the failing war effort. Only a legalistic parsing of the Allied text finally turned the debate into a decision to end the war.

Enjoyed it.



New Guinea Eagles: Volume 1. by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.9 inches). 208 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Japanese Air Army from Rabaul to Wewak October 1942 to September 1943*

This offers up the Japanese perspective of WWII air operations in the Papua New Guinea area, with an offshoot to Guadalcanal and the Solomons. The key to all of Claringbould's books resides in the extensive use of Japanese archives to offer an oft neglected perspective due to language and distance.

Besides the accuracy of Japanese airframes in operation and in repair, Claringbould compares and contrasts the aerial victory claims of both sides per operation. For example, after the air battles during the first Japanese convoy to Lae, the Americans claimed 84 kills and 36 probables. Actual Japanese losses were 16 (p57). Often the Japanese claims were little better, especially in reporting results of bombing Allied airfields. Overall, the overclaim rate was three to five times more than actual losses (p179).

In and among the recaps of air battles, you'll find anecdotes worthy of wartime propaganda to justify such (over)claims. Like an old movie star tabloid newspaper, the fanciful air actions are supported by an iota of truth.

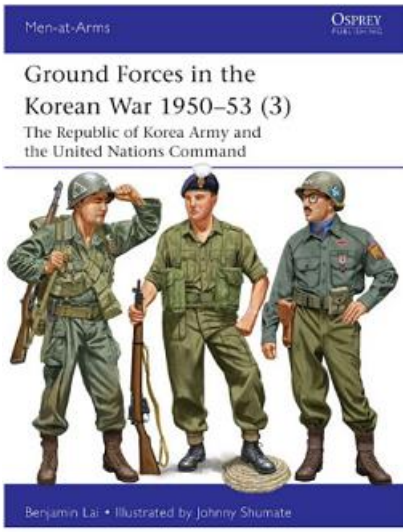
New to me were the engine problems of the Ki-61 Hien fighter. It uses a license-built BMW DB601a engine, but, and this is a big but, not the Bosch fuel-injection system. The Germans refused to allow that to be built. The Japanese workarounds never quite got it right. Hiens proved to be good aircraft when they worked, but they also suffered epidemic engine problems and considerable numbers of planes were lost during transfer flights. At one point, the Japanese commander grounded the entire fleet. Worse, the engines had to be shipped out of theater for repair because Papua New Guinea didn't have major repair facilities for that engine. The Japanese had to rely on the Ki-43 Hayabusa fighter.

The book contains 66 black and white photos, two color photos, 42 color aircraft camouflage and markings illustrations, seven color maps, and four color illustrations.

Claringbould weaves action with explanatory context to give you a clear picture of Japanese aerial success that faded to parity and edged into failure. Plenty of scenarios can be pulled from these pages. The next volume covers October 1943 to April 1944. I look forward to it.

Enjoyed it.

Ground Forces in the Korean War (3): Men-At-Arms 571. by Benjamin Lai. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *The Republic of Korea Army and the United Nations Command*

As you might expect from a *Men-At-Arms* series volume, you get full details on the uniforms of the South Korean Army and the various countries participating in the war under the UN banner.

The South Korean kit started with surplus Imperial Japanese Army uniforms and arms, was supplemented with locally-made (if fragile) uniforms, and finally equipped by the US Army. Notable to me was that the US C-rations were considered inedible by the South Korean soldiers. It took a while for the US to produce a South Korean version acceptable to soldiers.

Division by Division, the arms and equipment are quickly discussed in a couple of paragraphs as well as associated upgrades. For example, ROK started the war without a tank but was soon trained on M-36s. Time was needed to equip ROK Artillery with 105mm and 155mm guns. And so on. The ROK Marines are covered as well.

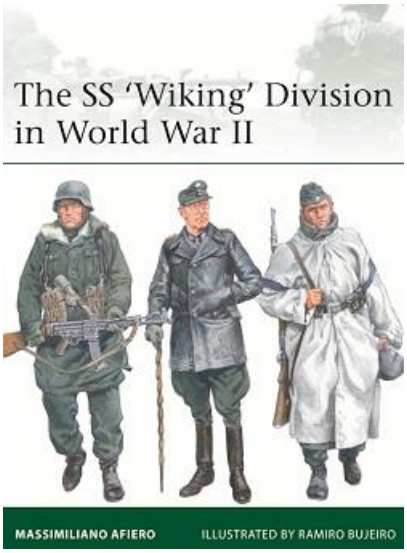
As for the associated UN troops, UK and Commonwealth sent the most, but contingents included Colombia, Ethiopia, Thailand, Turkey, Philippines, France, Greece, and the Netherlands. Non-combat troops, mostly medical, came from six other countries.

The booklet contains 37 black and white photos, seven color photos, 25 color uniform illustrations, and 25 other color illustrations of badges, patches, and equipment.

This is also nicely written with a little bit of style for a compilation volume.

Enjoyed it.

SS Wiking Division in WWII: Elite 270. by Massimiliano Afiero. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2026.



This unit history by an acknowledged expert on Axis forces covers the unit's formation in 1940 as the "Germania" division and later upgraded evolutions to Panzergrenadier division and then Panzer division.

The unit was supposed to be filled with volunteers from Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, and Norway, but a dearth of willing non-Germans led to filling out the division with German troops. Later contingents included more recruits from non-German countries.

The division served on the Eastern Front from 1941 to 1945, starting in Poland, fighting its way across the USSR to the Caucuses, then retreating over the years before ending its days backpedaling through Austria to surrender to the British a week after the German surrender was signed.

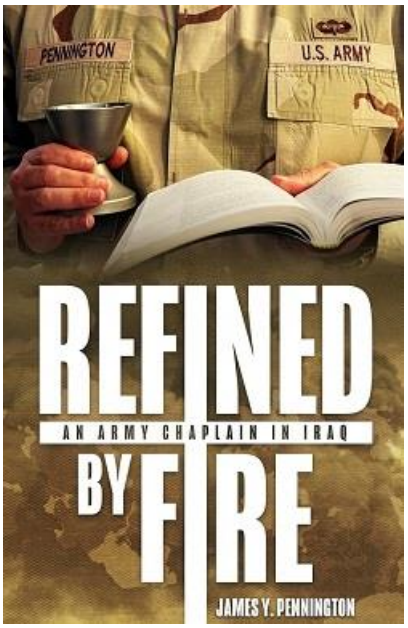
The overview of attacks, defenses, maneuvers, and other combat operations is nicely written. This unit participated in many of the hot spots of the war, including being trapped in the Korsun Pocket. Reorganizations, equipment upgrades, and other aspects of TO&E are summarized.

The booklet contains 52 black and white photos, 21 color uniform illustrations, and 14 other color patches, badges, and equipment. I would have liked to see maps supplement the unit history. I may have a fair knowledge of major USSR cities, but others elude me. Context of geography versus battles is important. Then again, fitting four years of combat and only combat into 64 rather readable pages represents an admirable feat of prose.

This volume provides an overview of the unit's history. Other books can fill in the details, but it's a nice start.

Enjoyed it.

Refined by Fire: An Army Chaplain in Iraq. by James Y. Pennington. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 197 pages. 2026.



My impression of Army chaplains revolve around conducting services or last rites, often out in the field, or maybe offering a prayer for better weather, as in that scene from the movie *Patton*. The services part is certainly true of this brigade-level chaplain Pennington. Yet he also served as an impromptu morale officer in the rear areas as well as front-line spiritual guide.

Coming out of the Baptist ministry, he volunteered at age 38 and was sent to the Mosul, Iraq, area for a year 2003-2004. Attached to a Stryker brigade, he split his time between brigade HQ area and front-line units. As he put it, he concentrated on supplying spiritual support to those who sought him out, performing makeshift services, baptisms, and other ceremonies.

What is interesting is that since he did not carry a gun, he was assigned an assistant who did. In those early days, snipers, mortars, and other attacks could happen at any time. Indeed, he narrowly escaped a mortar attack inside the brigade base. In the aftermath of this and other attacks, he aided the injured soldiers' medical convalescences and survivors' mental health. The anecdotes are quite poignant in their retelling.

This constant combat stress manifested into PTSD and a criticism of the US Army's patchwork of mental health practices. He discusses a number of therapies and praised the work of the hospital in Germany during his six-week program. While "cured" might be too strong a word, two of the therapies helped him cope and then adjust to all that he witnessed in the war.

Of interest was how he perceived the war (mostly encapsulated p145-150) and made sense of the trauma and suffering -- a chaplain's search for meaning. He thought about the hope and transformation he witnessed among the death and destruction -- the old woman who pushed her way through a crowd to vote in her first Iraqi election.

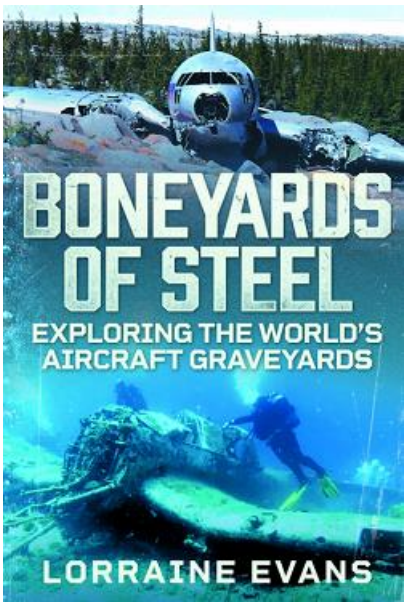
Being a chaplain, Pennington offers the view that God has a plan that we may not initially perceive but may, given contemplation and maturity, recognize in time. That's my rather simplistic summary, but if you want a broader theological interpretation, matters of faith get discussed throughout the book.

The book contains 14 black and white photos and one black and white map.

Religion remains an important facet of the military ever since animal entrails were examined for ancient pre-battle portents. This memoir offers one aspect of ultramodern military service that may be mentioned in passing, but deserves a closer look. Here's that closer look.

Enjoyed it.

Boneyards of Steel. by Lorraine Evans. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 215 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *Exploring the World's Aircraft Graveyards*

You've probably heard of a desert US airbase in Arizona that mothballs military and civilian aircraft just in case they are needed again. For example, a B-52 was pulled and refurbished relatively recently-ish. I guess it's less aircraft graveyard than aircraft purgatory.

It may not surprise you that this is not the only place aircraft are or were stored. During WWII, the US produced 295,000 aircraft (p2) of which about 150,000 were surplus after the war. Those that weren't sold or given away as military aid were scrapped to recover various metals. Of note, of that 295,000, 21,583 were lost to accidents in the US. Sometimes, aircraft that could not be repaired were stripped for parts or scrapped were just buried. Iraq buried MiG fighters during the US invasion once the Coalition forces achieved air supremacy.

In any case, the book details sites of buried, scrapped, displayed, or stored aircraft through modern times. From government sites to individuals to sunken remains, this book travels the world (or at least the internet) to catalogue them. I gotta give the guy in Bulgaria credit -- he put a MiG-21 in his garden. A shout out to entrepreneurs who turned aircraft junkyards into "museums."

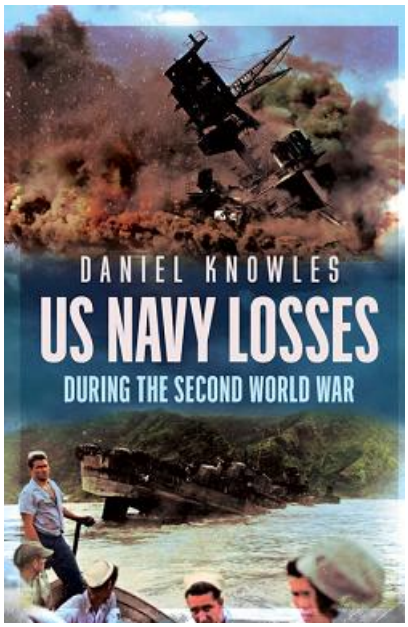
The book contains 39 black and white photos. Allow me to contribute one from my father-in-law's photo collection -- he took it while stationed on Guam during WWII. This was a major B-29 base for the bombing of Japan

and had its share of accidents and shot-up planes that made it back. One of these wrecks may have been his as he once related the story that his aircraft landed on the beach just short of the runway.

In any case, if you're interested in aircraft wrecks, repurposed planes, parts used as commemorative markers or tombstones, or those in storage, this book offers a compilation of all of the above. It's sometimes a bit rapid fire, but you gotta smile when an exploration of Loch Ness in 1976 didn't find the monster, but did find a WWII Wellington bomber, which was raised in 1985 (p51).

Enjoyed it.

US Navy Losses During the Second World War. by Daniel Knowles. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 240 pages. 2026.



In an encyclopedic format, each class of ship is a chapter and each entry within the chapter offers photos of USN ships and short captions of where and how the ship was sunk.

In alphabetical order, each ship within a class gets a table with designation, date of loss, location, and a sentence or two of notes about the loss plus one or more black and white photos. Smaller boats, for example PT boats, are listed in tables

The top photo of the cover shows the *USS Arizona*, lost at Pearl Harbor, and the bottom photo shows the destroyer escort *USS Halligan*, lost west of Okinawa.

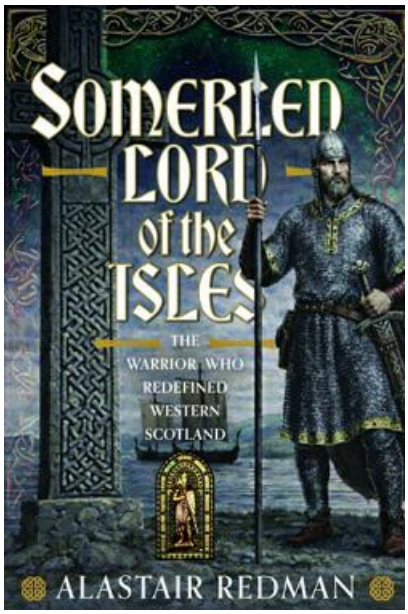
Indeed, the number of destroyers and other ships sent back to the US for repair often ended up being scrapped when the war ended. Incidentally, the book notes the destroyer escort *USS Frederick C. Davis* was the past Allied ship sunk in the WWII European Theater -- torpedoed by *U-546* on April 24, 1945 (p137).

The book contains 371 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, and six black and white illustrated damage report locations. Many photos are of the stricken ships in various stages of sinking. Other photos are of ships sailing peacefully.

While not exactly scintillating reading, it does offer a quick snapshot of WWII USN losses.

Enjoyed it.

Somerled Lord of the Isles. by Alastair Redman. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 272 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *The Warrior Who Redefined Western Scotland*

The research about Lord Somerled seems there, but the prose and the formatting proved so distracting, I stopped reading on page 37. I skipped here and there throughout the rest of the book, but found the rest the same and gave up.

This seems like it was written by bulletpoint. Each chapter covers a particular topic, divided into ultrashort subheaded sections -- usually two or three paragraphs long -- better adapted for scrolling than reading. The prose has no flow. It's just a bunch of related points jammed together. And given some of the melodramatic prose, I wondered if it was written by AI.

The book contains 19 black and white photos and nine black and white illustrations that seem generated by AI.

Maybe, to give the benefit of the doubt, it was meant to be read on the phone in short spurts and someone figured the multitude of parts could be published in book format.

Alas, this is not a biography, or at least a traditional biography. It has what information I suppose there is about Somerled and his era, but to my old-school way, it seems like a collection of 3x5-inch cards with notes without the prose to link them all and make sense of the man and his times.

Mosquito Units in the Far East: Combat Air 163. by Jeremy Walsh. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.



For all the vaunted success of the wooden Mosquito aircraft during WWII, the plane suffered considerable teething pains. A series of problems may have been sabotage (p17). Structural failures included undercarriage doors that flew off and wings buckling during flight -- traced to improper manufacturing. To be fair, the plane was not rated for acrobatics, although pilots may have had such ideas in the heat of combat.

Recon and bombing/strafing missions were its forte. Combat recaps include the occasional air battle, which mostly consisted of opening the throttle and speeding away. Of note, upgrades eventually extended the recon range to 2,600 miles.

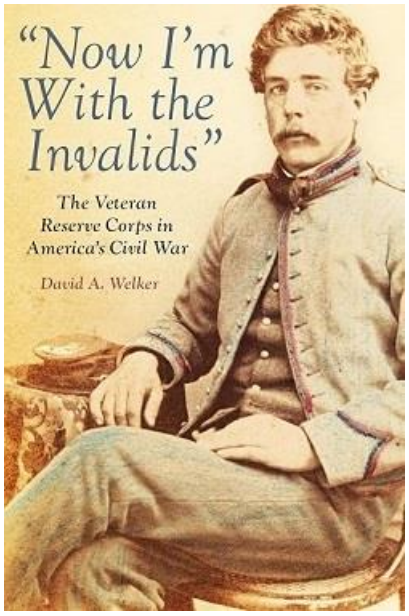
The booklet contains 50 black and white photos and 22 color camouflage profiles -- the latter especially good for modelers and miniature painters.

I wish the font would be larger -- my common complaint about most Osprey booklets. A third of the page is empty white space just begging for the text to be extended and enlarged to help grognard eyes.

Squinting aside, if you want a profile of Mosquito design, development, and Burma-India air operations, here's a neat little booklet to get you started.

Enjoyed it.

Now I'm With The Invalids. by David A. Welker. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 318 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *The Veteran Reserve Corps in America's Civil War*

Conventional wisdom of the American Civil War said that the North had plenty of troops to replace the losses suffered in the first couple years. This book tells a slightly different tale about the manpower requirements being so heavy, even conscription needed help to fill the ranks.

Enter the Invalid Corps, later renamed Veteran Reserve Corps. Soldiers who had been wounded, but still effective enough to perform secondary functions. They served as prisoner guards, nurses, escorted draftees to their units, and on occasion quelled draft riots. This allowed fully fit soldiers to be transferred to active combat.

About 20.8% of draftees failed to report to their units (p119), so tracking them down and making sure all reported was an important part of keeping the Union war effort going. On the positive side, they also ensured draftees with bounty money were not targeted by robbers.

On occasion, they battled Confederate raids and in one case, they defended against Early's 1864 raid -- a nice scenario that includes a map.

The Confederates also started an Invalid Corps on Feb. 17, 1864 for non-battle duties, but didn't, or couldn't, put in the resources needed to create a robust Corps.

Of note, the original When Johnny Comes Marching Home lyrics (p213) included a line about the Invalid Corps.

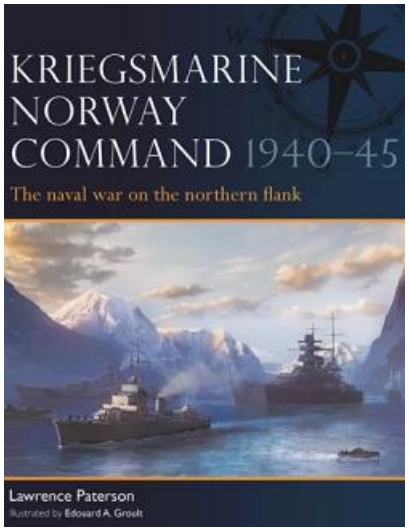
One maybe typo: Cap Cadwallader (p226) might be Camp Cadwalader.

The book contains eight black and white maps, 16 black and white photos, and two black and white posters.

I didn't know about the Veteran Reserve Corps, nee Invalid Corps, and so came away the wiser about Union manpower retention and use.

Enjoyed it.

Kriegsmarine Norway Command 1940-45: Fleet 21. by Lawrence Paterson. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *The Naval War on the Northern Flank*

Although the German Navy took a beating during the 1940 invasion of

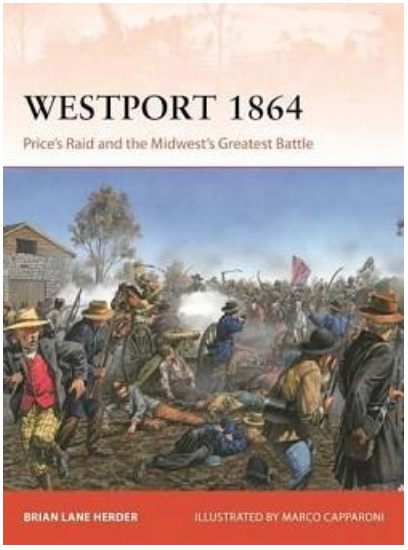
Norway, the remaining ships plus some captured Norwegian ones kept up the naval presence throughout WWII. The famous operations were against the Allied Arctic convoys to the USSR, but another main focus was making sure cargo runs made it through as well as maintain the U-boats assigned to the theater.

A variety of combats in and around the Arctic offer some choice scenario ideas. Besides convoy PQ-17, one good one might be the sailing of the *Tirpitz* against convoy PQ-12, which also could have included QP-8 had the German battleship found either. British torpedo planes found the *Tirpitz*, but to no effect. That foray burned a lot of fuel and it took three months to build back the oil stocks (p56).

The booklet contains 36 black and white photos, five color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

This overview offers a fine glimpse into the German Navy's operations in Norway.

Enjoyed it.



Westport 1864: Campaign 433. by Brian Lane Herder. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Price's Raid and the Midwest's Greatest Battle*

The war for border state Missouri during the American Civil War proved initially successful for the Confederates, but ultimately victorious for the Union.

While considered a sideshow in the strategic sense of the war, it was nonetheless an important state to hold. The Confederates wanted to hold elections that would create a CSA victory and pro-CSA state at a time when the Union was advancing. The Union, suffering from a bit of war weariness, wanted to maintain momentum going into the presidential elections.

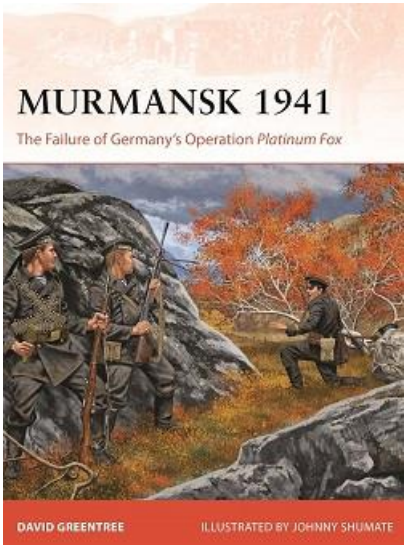
The *Campaign* format provides a good order of battle with all the regiments and artillery batteries, although without troop numbers -- you can pull most out of the text, although you'll have to figure out how to divide troop numbers for larger organizations into the regiments. The number of guns is included in the OOB.

One typo: "charge clammed into them" (p86) should be "slammed."

The booklet contains 28 black and white photos, 19 color photos, eight color maps, two black and white maps, three color two-page action illustrations, one color 3D illustration, five black and white illustrations, and 12 other color illustrations.

The CSA invasion of Missouri would make for a good campaign setting and this book has all you need to do so. Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.



Murmansk 1941: Campaign 436. by David Greentree. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Failure of Germany's Operation Platinum Fox*

WWII in the far north of Finland proved to be a hostile work environment. If the enemy didn't kill you, the frozen weather could. Never mind that logistics was a feat unto itself.

Yet, the Germans launched an attack that was supposed to capture Murmansk, a full-year open port made famous later in the war for Allied ships that discharged cargo there.

The subtitle provides the bottom line result, but the text within crafts a recap explaining how the German plan lacked a certain finesse and severe losses impacted the advance.

The usual Campaign format covers the opposing forces, plans, and commanders, as well as the drive by the German mountain units against Soviet troops that slowly fell back, even as they launched amphibious spoiling attacks.

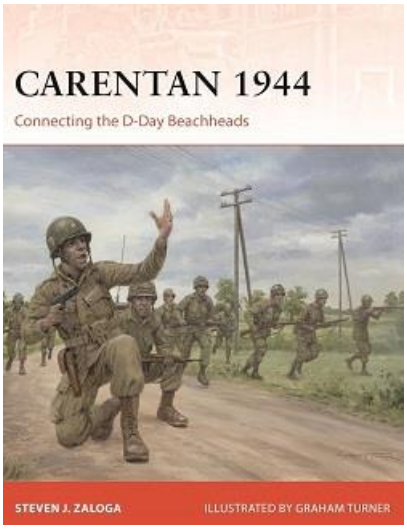
One typo: "Far from supplies dumps" (p45) should be "supply dumps."

The booklet contains 60 black and white photos, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and three color 3D maps.

I'm fond of the *Campaign* series. *Murmansk 1941* adds another sparkling volume to the series.

Enjoyed it.

Carenten 1944: Campaign 437. by Steven J. Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *Connecting the D-Day Beachheads*

This booklet covers from the US parachute drop to the German counterattack by parts of the 6th Fallschirmjager and 17th SS Panzergrenadier divisions during the D-Day campaign in 1944.

All the usual *Campaign* chapters are included: chronology, troops, training, weaponry, orders of battle, opposing commanders, opposing plans, and the battle itself. It's a winning format.

As for the battle itself, the US troops advanced upon Carenten against increasingly stiffening German resistance of the 6th Fallschirmjager. German engineers blew a bridge before all of the German troops were across, hindering movement. The Causeway across the soup of flooded fields hindered the US troops, but US artillery and lack of German reinforcements convinced the 6th to withdraw just as the 17th SS division arrived. The German counterattack proved ineffective and a US attack by 2nd Armored Division sent both German divisions fleeing.

The booklet contains 65 black and white photos, four color photos, two black and white illustrations, four color maps, three two-page color action illustrations, and three 3D color maps.

Well written, astute analysis, and the plethora of illustrations make this another fine *Campaign* volume.

Enjoyed it.

Soviet Rifleman vs German Infantryman: Combat 87. by Jacek Zabielski. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.



Subtitle: *Operation Bagration 1944*

Operation Bagration caught the Germans out of position and the Soviets tore a strategic hole in the German front line during the summer of 1944. Not only did the Red Army have material and manpower superiority, it had learned the lessons of the art of maneuver and Stalin was giving his front commanders more leeway in directing the offensives.

Per usual, recruitment, training, and equipping of the troops is covered in depth, along with tactics and logistics. The German troops were still more than a match for the Soviets, but Soviet quantity was a quality all its own.

Three battles are covered: Vitebsk-Orsha (June 22-27, 1944), Minsk (June 27-July 7, 1944), and Vilnius (July 3-July 13, 1944). Breakthroughs and pincer movements, along with the command decisions directing the troops, receive ample description and analysis to highlight Soviet advances.

The TO&E of a typical German and Soviet infantry division (p78) is especially helpful in creating larger-scale scenarios where the base unit is a company. Or, with a little imagination, you can create a "bathtub" scenario where a small tabletop unit represents a larger historical unit.

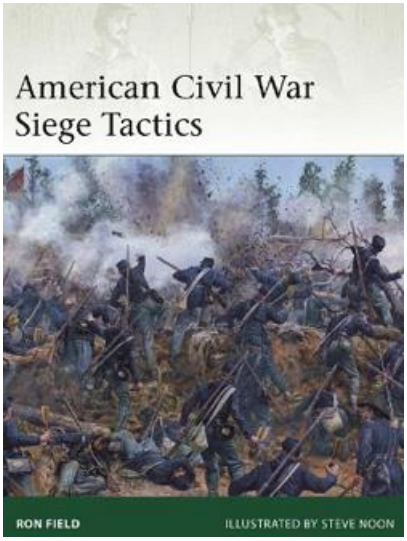
Don't confuse this title with *German Infantryman vs Soviet Rifleman: Barbarossa 1941*.

The booklet contains 50 black and white photos, four color uniform illustrations (front and back Soviet and front and back German infantry), four color maps, and three color two-page illustrations.

Altogether, a nice explanation of pros and cons of each side's soldiers.

Enjoyed it.

American Civil War Siege Tactics: Elite 271. by Ron Field. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2026.



This overview covers the usual ACW siege tactics, including saps, mining and tunneling, trenches, rifle pits, artillery bombardments, blockade, and storming. New to me is Professor Robert Grant's Calcium Light -- an oxygen-hydrogen combination that heats a block of calcium oxide, producing a light that's bounced off a reflector dish to light up the night. It was used by the

Union at Fort Wagner, helping Union sharpshooters pick off CSA soldiers as they tried to repair damage to the fort (p35).

Three sieges are covered in a bit more detail: Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and Petersburg.

The booklet contains 23 black and white photos, 31 black and white illustrations, six color illustrations, one black and white map, and seven color one-page illustrations.

For a quick overview, it does the job nicely.

Enjoyed it.



Panther vs A30 Challenger: Duel 156. by Ivo van der Spoel. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Operation Market Garden 1944*

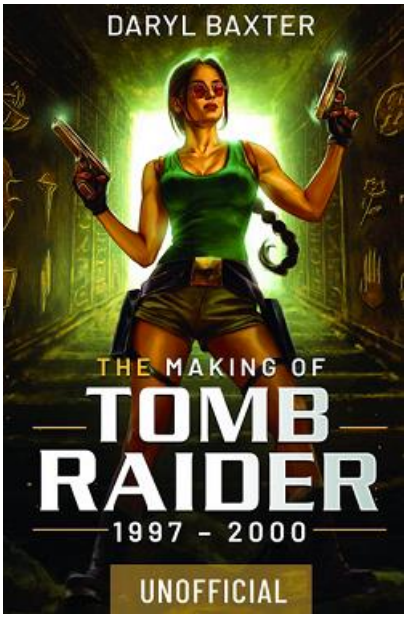
Although both designs began in 1941 to create an uparmored and upgunned tank, and both had considerable problems with early production, but the Germans proved far better at following through with mass production. The Challenger was considered a stopgap effort and only 200 vehicles were ordered. The Panther, is, well, the Panther of legend and reality.

This volume follows the usual *Duel* format of design, development, tech specs, and context of the combats. In these two tanks' cases, they met during Operation Market Garden, although only minimally at the Battle of Son in the Netherlands during Operation Market Garden.

The booklet contains 47 black and white photos, three color photos, six color illustrations, two color maps, three color Challenger camouflage illustrations, three color Panther camouflage illustrations, one color two-page illustration, and two color gunner-eyeview illustrations.

It's concise, well written and full of illustrations -- another excellent volume in the Osprey lineup.

Enjoyed it.



The Making of Tomb Raider: 1997-2000. by Daryl Baxter. Hardback (8.5x12.0 inches). 251 pages. 2026.

This is not the making of the movie, its sequel, or the reboot. The movies pop up on TV from time to time and I enjoy from time to time.

No, this is a history of the making of the video games for Playstation: *Tomb Raider 3*, *TR4*, and *TR5*. It's mostly transcriptions of interviews from the principal programmers, level designers, voice-over actress, and others at Core, the company that produced the games about one every year. So, you basically can read the oral histories of the game makers.

I have never played any of them, so a lot of the discussions about particular levels and scenes is lost on me. But I did review computer games in the 1980s and 1990s for *Creative Computing*, *A+*, *Personal Computing*, *Computer Shopper*, *PC Sources*, and other various computer magazines as well as ran the ComputServe forum for *Computer Gaming World* back in the day.

What I did find fascinating was buried in all those interviews -- was the time pressures and some of the tricks of the trade. Hidden "secrets" to uncover as you investigated the rooms that could be used as future triggers (like grabbing a key for later use), types of traps, and use of Full Motion Video (I call 'em cut scenes) to hide programming bugs.

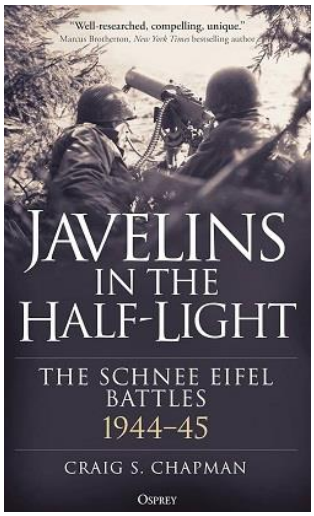
They worked insane hours to design, program, and bug check their levels to meet a November deadline, presumably for December holiday sales. Bug checking was never long enough and the games shipped with occasionally notable glitches, but reviews and sales were good enough to do *TR3* which led to *TR4* and that led to *TR5*. Each version generally added more features, which required more sophisticated programming and caused no end of problems. Apparently, the kayak was a right royal pain. A big battle over *TR5* required a variety of incentives to keep the team programming, but as the series was a cash cow, so it was produced. *TR6* was started, but never produced.

All was not unicorns and rainbows: personnel issues with boredom, bonuses, and conflicts occurred. Sure, 25-30 years on generate a little bit of rose-colored memories, but it's also obvious certain things still rankle.

The book contains 111 color game screen shots, 16 color photos, one black and white photo, 24 color storyboard illustrations, and 50 black and white storyboard illustrations.

The more familiar you are with *TR3*, *TR4*, and *TR5*, the more you'll like this book. Yet even though I never played these particular games, I was fascinated at the detailed behind-the-scenes oral histories by many of the key makers of the games.

Enjoyed it.



Javelins in the Half-Light. by Craig S. Chapman. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 341 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Schnee Eifel Battles 1944-45*

The US VIII Corp swept in and expected to capture the rugged ridge known as the Schnee Eifel without too much trouble. The Germans were on the run, the quality of their replacements fell, logistical support was failing, and the war would be over by Christmas.

Not exactly. The Germans rallied enough troops and inserted enough replacements into a tangled forest saturated with concrete bunkers of the West Wall. Sure, the bunkers had been neglected, stripped, and looted, but 1,000- to 1,200-square foot bunkers about 300 to 500m apart and 1km in depth still represented a considerable obstacle. Not as much as the terrain, but something that needed firepower and outflanking to destroy.

After grinding their way to the top, the Americans stopped and consolidated. Units were transferred elsewhere. A semi-truce descended over the region and unchanging routines set in. Then the Germans launched the Battle of the Bulge, bypassed and trapped the US 106th Infantry Division, and headed west...until they couldn't and the Americans swept back into the area for the third great battle for the Schnee Eifel.

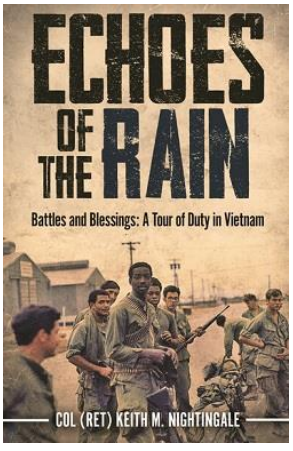
It's all well researched in a well-told tale. Although concentrating on battles at the Company level, the text burrows down to a platoon and sometimes squad level view of battles. Like classic WWII accounts, it's an American-centric view with German perspectives sprinkled in.

As for the 106th, a miscommunication over a scratchy phone line left most of the division in place. Division commander Jones thought he heard Corps commander Middleton say to hold the position. Middleton thought Jones heard the actual order to pull back and defend the Our River (p153). The Germans had left only a training unit facing the front of the 106s while the German 18th VolksGrenadier Division flowed around both ends of the Schnee Eifel -- the Losheim Gap pincer with more troops and support doing better than the other pincer. The result was history.

The book contains 16 black and white photos, one black and white illustration of a bunker, and six black and white maps. I would have liked more maps set at the company level because much of the book follows companies, but then again, I do enjoy books that closely pair text to maps.

Chapman chops the actions up to equalize the chronological timing across multiple units. I prefer staying with a unit a little longer, but I don't mind too much because it's quite the readable account.

Enjoyed it.



Echoes of the Rain. by Keith M. Nightingale. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 244 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Battles and Blessings: A Tour of Duty in Vietnam*

This is not the traditional memoir per se, but includes all the elements of one from the author's experience. The main narrator, the lieutenant who was promoted to captain, does not even have a name. In fact, no real names are used. It takes getting used to, but the prose is so smooth, you quickly adapt.

What you do get is a company-level eye view of patrolling the Vietnam countryside, ambushing and being ambushed, and occasionally settling into firebase occupation. I hesitate to call the generic events. The situation and actions are real, but they are not slugged to a specific date, time, and place.

Since it's the captain's point of view, it's all about the tactics of patrol order, nighttime defensive positions, and even the procedures for insertion, exfiltration, and "log days." The latter, aka logistics and resupply, offers soldiers a short break and the all-important resupply of ammo and c-rations.

Several tabletop scenarios can be pulled from the pages, including the battle in an abandoned rubber-tree plantation, Interesting was the use of mechanical ambushes, where US platoons laid out camouflaged claymore mines on trails. The VC and NVA weren't the only ones using trail traps.

The book contains one black and white photo (of the cover) and one black and white map of Vietnam.

It's a smooth read about company combat operations in Vietnam, complete with various complications and a copious amount of terrain descriptions. There's even reaction to a Bob Hope USO show.

Enjoyed it.